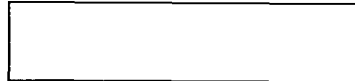
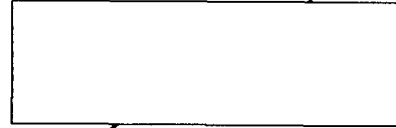


~~SECRET~~

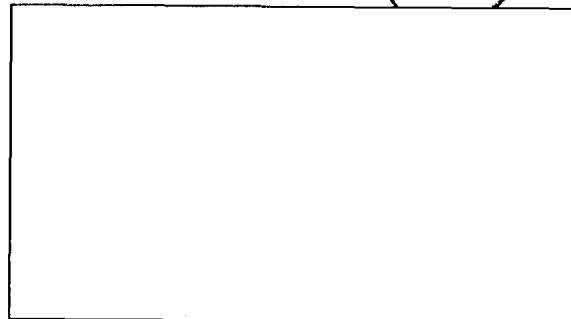


OCI No. 3936/59
Copy No.

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

CURRENT INTELLIGENCE STAFF STUDY

THE COMMUNE: CONCEPTION AND EXPERIMENTATION, SPRING 1958
(Reference Title: ESAU III-59)



Office of Current Intelligence

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

~~THIS MATERIAL CONTAINS INFORMATION AFFECT-
ING THE NATIONAL DEFENSE OF THE UNITED STATES
WITHIN THE MEANING OF THE ESPIONAGE LAWS,
TITLE 18, USC, SECTIONS 793 AND 794, THE TRANSMIS-
SION OR REVELATION OF WHICH IN ANY MANNER TO
AN UNAUTHORIZED PERSON IS PROHIBITED BY LAW.~~

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

OCI No. 3936/59
Copy No.

SINO-SOVIET BLOC AREA
OFFICE OF CURRENT INTELLIGENCE
Reference Title: ESAU III-59

CURRENT INTELLIGENCE STAFF STUDY

The Commune: Conception and Experimentation, Spring 1958

This study is a working paper, reflecting information received through July 1959. Like the first two ESAU papers, it will later be refined to serve as a chapter in a comprehensive account of the "commune" program.

This paper has not been coordinated outside OCI. The ESAU group would welcome either written or oral comment, addressed to Philip L. Bridgham, the responsible analyst, or to W. P. Southard, the acting coordinator of the ESAU Project.

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

SUMMARY

An earlier chapter has traced the emergence of the commune as the byproduct of a tortuous process of devising a program of economic development adapted to China's specific conditions, in particular a huge population supported by a weak agricultural base. The party decided in autumn 1957 that the key to rapid growth of agricultural production was the massive and intensive application of China's abundant labor supply. Because increases in production were to be reinvested, it was necessary to formulate new nonmaterial incentives, chief among which was the promise of a happy future in a Communist society.

The objective of the party's Chengtu conference, held in March 1958, was to devise ways and means of realizing the advanced goals called for at the Nanning conference two months earlier. The party at Chengtu decided on the construction of thousands of small-scale industrial installations in rural areas. This was to be a mass campaign--the feasibility of which was doubted by some of the party's economic specialists--to exploit the underemployed labor force of the collectives. Following the September 1957 decision to organize a huge peasant labor army for agricultural production and construction, the Chengtu decision to initiate a mass movement in rural industrial construction appears to have been the second decisive development leading to the establishment of communes.

The commune itself apparently was conceived at the Chengtu conference. A campaign to merge small collectives began immediately thereafter in two pilot provinces. Some of these "large cooperatives" amalgamated 20 to 30 existing collectives, and many other features of the later communes appeared in these early prototypes.

There have been elaborate efforts by the Chinese Communist party to present the commune movement as having been from its inception the product of a spontaneous and irresistible demand by the people. One indiscreet official, however, publicly admitted that the mergers of collectives resulted from an unpublished central committee directive, probably sent out soon after the Chengtu conference.

Although the commune was yet to be revealed, there were indications in April that the rate of advance toward Communism

- i -

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

had been accelerated. Second-level party spokesmen referred to "Communist society" as an early prospect and "Communist undertakings" as an immediate task. One spokesman resurrected the concept of the "era of Mao Tse-tung," foreshadowing a fresh emphasis on "Mao's ideology" and a virtual disappearance of citations of Soviet experience.

There are several indications that Mao was in fact as well as in name the driving force behind the headlong advance toward socialism and Communism. One of these is his article written in April 1958, entitled "Introducing a Cooperative," in which he rejoiced in the "Communist spirit" surging in China, implied an intention to move into a more advanced stage of "production relations," and described the Chinese people as excellent raw material for bold ventures.

Mao's article of April 1958 recommended a particular "cooperative" (collective farm) as the model for all the remaining 700,000 collectives in China. One important feature of this collective was a novel system of income distribution, which resembled the remuneration system adopted subsequently by the communes.

There was no public reference to the virtually certain discussion of the commune program at the party congress of May 1958. The proceedings of the congress nevertheless made clear some important developments.

The congress illustrated the new dominant role of the party, and of the "party-machine" leaders within the party, in both the formulation and the implementation of economic policy. Liu Shao-chi provided the rationale for this development, declaring that "ideological and political work is always the soul and guide of every kind of work," that the "subjective enthusiasm of the masses is a mighty driving force," and that economic production would depend on arousing the "enthusiasm of the masses." In other words, the highly complex work of the economic specialists was being displaced by a program of exhortation and coercion.

Liu revealed to the congress the party's "general line of socialist construction." Deriving from "practical experience" and "Comrade Mao Tse-tung's thinking," the line called for building socialism "by exerting our utmost efforts and pressing ahead consistently to achieve greater, faster, better, and more economical results."

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

Party journals almost immediately began to assert that this distinctive line was "significant" for other members of the bloc. The Chinese Communists apparently were convinced that the line had already proven itself and merited study and possible emulation. A "party-machine" leader stated that grain production in 1958 would increase 50 percent, and several spokesmen claimed that China's increase in industrial production in 1958 would be the "largest in the world." The latter was to be attributed in large part to the widespread development of local industry. One of the articles praising the local industry program in China in effect denied a theoretical formulation subsequently advanced by Khrushchev.

The "general line" announced at the party congress declared that the basic construction of socialism would be completed in the "shortest possible time." The party press asserted at the time that the "day of constructing Communism /in China/ is not very far off." A "party-machine" leader told the congress that most of China's provinces would achieve by 1962 the 1967 goals of the Draft Agricultural Program. The central committee journal implied that China would achieve a Communist society before the end of the century. Chinese Communist leaders were confident that they had discovered a short-cut to socialism and Communism.

The "leap forward" on the production front demanded a leap on the ideological front. The medium was to be theoretical magazines published by party committees at various levels. One aim was to sustain mass enthusiasm through the first stage of the "three years of bitter struggle" (1958-60). The second aim, not yet explicit, was to prepare the peasants for the pending organization of communes.

The substantive content of this mass indoctrination campaign was both radical--going to the early writings of Marx, Engels and Lenin for doctrinal authority--and chauvinistic--reviving the concept of "Mao's ideology." The latter was a good indication that the Chinese intended to proceed along a distinctive Chinese road of socialist construction.

The most important of Mao's theoretical concepts in this period was his version of "uninterrupted revolution," with which he sought to justify both the commune program and the

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

headlong advance toward Communism. The concept was expanded by Mao--far beyond the Soviet interpretation--to govern the entire course of revolution in China.

As of June 1958, the commune as the chosen instrument for China's "uninterrupted revolution" was yet to be revealed, but it was increasingly evident that some revolutionary change in social organization was imminent. The Soviet party leadership appeared to be in blissful ignorance of the plans of its junior partner.

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

Introduction

An earlier chapter of this study has traced the emergence of the commune as the by-product of a protracted and tortuous process of devising a program of economic development adapted to China's specific conditions--the so-called "general line of socialist construction" promulgated by Liu Shao-chi at the party congress session of May 1958. First and foremost of these specific conditions was China's huge and rapidly growing population, which had to be supported by a weak and relatively unproductive agricultural base, giving rise to a serious Malthusian problem of population threatening to outstrip food supply.

After several false starts, the leadership decided at the September-October 1957 plenum of the central committee to adopt a new approach to the knotty problem of agricultural development, an approach which substituted the human factor (labor power) for the technical factor (machinery) as the key to raising agricultural output. The anticipated increment in production was to be siphoned off for reinvestment in agricultural development, including the financing of small-scale industrial installations serving the agricultural sector. For this reason it became necessary to formulate a new set of psychological and moral incentives which would take the place of material incentives in stimulating maximum labor enthusiasm among the people. Chief of these was the promise of a bright and happy life in a future Communist society in China. This in brief was the situation just prior to the convocation of Communist China's leadership at the crucial Chengtu conference in March 1958. It is to this conference, where the communes are believed to have been initially conceived, that we now turn.

- 1 -

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

I. The Commune Conceived (March-April 1958)

Little more is known of the secret proceedings of the Chengtu conference than of its predecessor in Nanning. It was later described as having been convened by the "central committee and Chairman Mao" and as having brought together "responsible comrades of provincial and municipal party organs and of the concerned departments of the central government." There are several indications, however, that the conference outranked its predecessor in the quantity and quality of leadership in attendance and in the significance of the policy decisions adopted. For example, Chou En-lai remained in Peiping for at least part of the period during which the Nanning conference was in session, but he unquestionably participated at Chengtu. Of the full membership of the politburo, only the relatively unimportant Chen Yi and Ho Lung were left in Peiping to greet visiting delegations during the period of this conference. The second clue bearing on the relative importance of these two conferences is that the one at Chengtu was of longer duration, lasting through much of the month of March. Mao is known to have arrived in this southwestern provincial capital on 5 March; his departure, in company with a number of prominent party leaders, did not take place until 28 March.

If the basic purpose of the Nanning conference was to arouse revolutionary optimism and promote the drawing up of a series of advanced goals, the objective at Chengtu was to devise ways and means of realizing these goals. Support for this view is provided by an editorial on 27 April in People's Daily stating, "If several months ago /Nanning/ the question was to think of things none dared to think of in the past, do things which were considered to be impossible in the past, combat all sorts of rightist conservatism and draw up advanced plans and advanced targets, then the question today /Chengtu/ is to put into effect the advanced plans and advanced targets already compiled..."

Among the major policy decisions reached at Chengtu to carry out these ambitious goals was the adoption of a mass line for industrial development which enlarged greatly the scope and objectives of the local industry program. No longer considered a mere adjunct to the agricultural sector, this undertaking to construct thousands of small-scale industrial installations in rural areas was hailed as

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

a major means of accelerating socialist industrialization for the economy as a whole and as a distinctive feature of China's program of socialist construction.

Of even greater significance, it was decided at Chengtu to transform the program into a mass campaign penetrating beyond local levels of government to exploit the underemployed labor force of the agricultural producer cooperatives. Since this was the last element of China's own "general line of socialist construction" to be adopted, it is interesting to note that at least one of the reasons for its belated appearance was the resistance of a number of "economic workers and technical personnel" who questioned the feasibility of applying the mass line to the industrialization process. Mao himself was to attack these skeptics as late as October 1958, citing their contemptuous references to the mass movement in industry as "irregular," "of rural style," and "analogous to the practice of guerrilla warfare."

Following the decision at the September 1957 central committee plenum to organize a huge peasant labor army to engage in agricultural production and construction, this decision at Chengtu to initiate a mass movement in rural industrial construction appears to have been the second decisive development leading to the establishment of communes in China. Indeed, it is possible to argue plausibly on purely deductive grounds that the communal organization was a necessary corollary of the rural industrialization program, as the Chinese Communists themselves contended in subsequent explanations of the derivation of the people's commune.

The events and published discussions following the close of this conference provide external evidence to support the conclusion that the commune itself was conceived at Chengtu. That the decision was not made earlier is suggested by a Study article appearing while the conference was still in session. In a very strong plea that the socialist principle of distribution "according to work" must not be changed, the author cited the early experience of the Soviet Union with agricultural communes, concluding that the Russians organized "a communal system in the spirit of equalitarianism...but soon found that this system was not suited to production relations under socialism and changed to collective farms." Such views would not have been disseminated by the party organ after the decision to establish communes had been reached.

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

The best evidence that the concept of the commune originated in the March party conference is that a campaign to merge small agricultural producer cooperatives began immediately thereafter, principally in the two provinces of Honan and Liaoning, which had been selected as the vanguards in the communalization movement. The record indicates that cooperative mergers were performed in two ways:

The first way was a relatively modest undertaking to double or triple the size of the cooperative and, in effect, was no more than an effort to regain the ground lost during the widespread dissolution of agricultural producer cooperatives in 1957. Liu Shao-chi, who was to play a leading role in the commune movement, was reported as advocating cooperative mergers of this type in Szechuan Province almost immediately after the close of the Chengtu conference.

The second method was the experimental formation of greatly expanded "large cooperatives," which represented the amalgamation of 20 to 30 of the existing collectives. The best known example of this second type was the precursor of the famous Sputnik Commune, which was to serve as the model for all China during the high tide of communalization in September.

In addition to the quantitative change in size, a number of qualitative changes in April indicate that this new type of "large cooperative" was in fact the embryo of the commune. There was the intensive development of small-scale industry; the incorporation of handicraft, supply and marketing, and credit cooperatives into the large collective; the formation of communal dining rooms and nurseries, although described as merely temporary during the busy farming season; the establishment of primary and middle schools to be run by the cooperatives; and the concerted effort to train large numbers of cadres and activists who would be both "red" and "expert." All of these characteristic features of the commune were introduced in April in the pilot provinces of Honan and Liaoning, and to a lesser extent in other provinces as well. This period of experimentation, which has marked the preparatory stage in all previous mass movements undertaken by the Chinese Communists, was to extend through the month of June. It should be emphasized that these early prototypes of the commune were described as collective farms at the time; the identity of this revolutionary social organization was not revealed to the peasant membership until the end of this trial period.

- 4 -

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

There have been elaborate, if not farcical, efforts by the Chinese Communist leadership to present the commune movement as having been from its very inception the product of a spontaneous and irresistible demand raised by the broad masses of the people. In the voluminous Chinese Communist literature which purports to trace the origins of the commune, all but one article call the early cooperative mergers a spontaneous development. In an account appearing in People's Daily on 2 September describing the April-May movement to establish large cooperatives in Liaoning Province, the author committed the indiscretion of admitting that the cooperative mergers resulted from a "directive of the central committee of the party," a directive which must have been issued shortly after Chengtu. The almost invariable explanation, however, was that the large cooperatives were established to satisfy the urgent demands of the masses, who, according to some accounts, were determined to effect these large-scale mergers even if the authorities refused to honor their requests.

Although the commune was yet to be revealed as a vehicle for accelerating the advance to Communism, there were a number of indications during April that the rate of advance toward this distant goal had been stepped up. Since most of the top leaders were touring the provinces--a practice which would occupy much of their time and energies throughout 1958--it remained for lesser figures to present these new perspectives to a National Conference of Young Workers' Representatives meeting in Shanghai. Lu Ting-i, Director of the Chinese Communist party's propaganda department, employed this occasion to assert that "the young generation ...will personally build a Communist society in China." Hu Yao-pang, secretary of the Young Communist League, developed this theme at great length, inciting his audience to cultivate the same lofty ambitions as those displayed by Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Mao Tse-tung, and concluding with the following peroration:

"We are people living in the era of Mao Tse-tung, and youth of the era of Mao Tse-tung. Our revolutionary forerunners have created a new country for us and established a bright avenue for Communism...Comrades, let us closely unite to contribute our efforts for the fatherland, the people, and Communist undertakings under the leadership of the great party and Chairman Mao."

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

Hu's remarks were important, not only because they treated "Communist undertakings" as an immediate concern for the youth of China, but also because they foreshadowed the impending revival of a "cult of personality" built around Mao-Tse-tung. The ensuing adulation of Mao, already linked in Hu's speech with the classical founders of Marxism-Leninism, was soon to dominate Chinese Communist discussions of revolutionary theory and practice. As a parallel development, references to the Soviet model and to the applicability of Soviet experience to China's program of socialist construction were to disappear almost completely from Chinese Communist publications.*

That Mao was in fact, as well as in name, the driving force behind the headlong advance towards socialism and Communism was already becoming clear in April. An editorial in the party newspaper of 27 April provides striking evidence of this: "We have already erred twice in 'opposing rash advance'--in the cooperativization high tide of 1955 and in the production-construction high tide of 1956--and we absolutely cannot make the same mistake again." By invoking two major campaigns which Mao had sponsored in 1955-56, a fact known to all, the editorial managed in one sentence to emphasize the leading role of Mao in the current campaign and to serve notice on skeptical party elements that they should mend their ways.

The final clue to the momentous decision taken at the Chengtu conference is to be found in an article written by Chairman Mao for the first issue of Red Flag, a new theoretical journal of the central committee. In retrospect, it appears that a major objective of this new publication was to launch and promote the communalization movement. Although the first issue did not appear until 1 June, Mao's article, entitled "Introducing a Cooperative," was written on 15 April and took as its text a report presented by a cooperative director on 20 March, presumably at the Chengtu conference. Only two paragraphs in length and couched in cryptic language, the article nevertheless qualifies as an important document in the chronology of the communes.

*During the spring of 1958, Soviet theoretical discussions of the commune took the line that even in the advanced USSR the commune was a distant prospect.

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

After pointing out that "the Communist spirit is surging forward throughout the country," Mao went on to assert that "China is forging ahead in its socialist economic revolution" (where transformation of the relations of production has not yet been completed)." Since the transformation of production relations in the stage of cooperativization had already been virtually completed, this passage suggests an intention to move into a more advanced stage of production relations--that of the commune. But a more revealing passage was the following:

"Apart from China's other characteristics, its 600 million people are first of all "poor" and secondly "white." This seems a bad thing, but in fact it is a good thing. Poor people want change, want to do things, want revolution. A clean sheet of paper has nothing on it, and so the newest and most beautiful words can be written and the newest and most beautiful pictures painted on it."

This statement was to serve as a theme of many subsequent discussions of the commune movement, both during its early organizational phase and during the latter phase of rationalization and justification of this audacious experiment. With the advantage of hindsight, it is fair to conclude that the inspiration for this flight of poetic imagery was in fact the commune, conceived as "the newest and most beautiful picture" which would soon be painted in China.

The cooperative introduced in Mao's article deserves separate mention.* One commendable feature was the progress already achieved by this cooperative in implementing Mao's call at the Nanning conference: "Struggle hard for three years in order to basically change the appearance of the countryside." A more interesting feature was the novel system of income distribution adopted by the cooperative following a period of experimentation. The essence of this system was that income payments would be made on a monthly basis in accordance with a dual standard of work performance and of need. If individual households were unable to fulfill their quotas of labor days for acceptable

*The report describing the experiences of this cooperative, which Mao recommended as a model for all the remaining 700,000 agricultural producer cooperatives in China, has never been translated.

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

reasons, their livelihood requirements would still be met through this method of advance payments. Moreover, the cooperative was preparing to introduce a "fixed-wage system" for its members in 1959, when public reserves would have risen to the necessary level. Thus Mao was on record at this early date as favoring a distribution system based partly on need and oriented toward the payment of wages, two distinctive characteristics of remuneration under the people's commune.

- 8 -

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

II. The Commune and the "General Line of Socialist Construction"
(May-June 1958)

The last of the three major party conferences during the first half of 1958 was the second session of the eighth party congress which met in Peiping from 5 to 23 May. Unlike those at Nanning and Chengtu, two of the principal speeches delivered at the congress were published in full and a third was summarized. As in the antecedent conferences, however, a major address by Chairman Mao was not reported, and no public reference was made to the almost certain discussion of communes at this party gathering. The published reports of Liu Shao-chi and Tan Chen-lin, although purporting to deal extensively with the party's future tasks, were remarkably reticent about future developments in the countryside. Thus in spite of the expanded coverage, it is still necessary to resort to newspaper and journal discussions in order to understand the proceedings of this congress.

One aspect of the session was clear almost at the outset--the new dominant role of the party and of the leaders of the party organization, both in the formulation of economic policy and in the implementation of that policy. In place of the senior government administrators and economic specialists (Chou En-lai, Chen Yun, Li Fu-chun, Li Hsien-nien, and Po I-po) who had figured prominently in the discussions of the first session of the eighth party congress in September 1956 and who had been instrumental in formulating the "retrenchment" policies of the period from November 1956 to September 1957, a new cast of characters, together with Chairman Mao, dominated the proceedings of the May party congress. They were to continue to dominate and control the two principal campaigns of 1958, the "great leap forward" and the communalization movements. These men, who have been described in POLO papers as the "party-machine" leaders and, in the context of events in 1958, as the "exhorters," were--in order of importance--Liu Shao-chi (second only to Mao in party leadership and Mao's heir apparent), Teng Hsiao-ping (chief of the party's secretariat) and Tan Chen-lin (the secretariat's specialist since 1957 in rural policy and agriculture.)

The rationale for the party's arrogation of authority and control over China's economic-development program was provided by Liu Shao-chi in the following passage from his speech to the congress.

- 9 -

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

"Ideological and political work is always the soul and guide of every kind of work...It should be realized that machines are made and operated by men, and materials are produced only through the efforts of men. It is man that counts; the subjective initiative of the masses is a mighty driving force...Some people say that ideological and political work can produce neither grain nor coal nor iron. This is like failing to see the woods for the trees. One may ask: Have we not produced more grain, coal, and iron by formulating and carrying out correct political lines, by correctly handling contradictions among the people, and by raising the socialist consciousness of the workers and arousing the enthusiasm of the masses, and are we not going to produce more and more by so doing? (Underlining supplied)

Thus "economic work," by definition a highly complex activity involving economic planning, cost accounting, calculation of work norms, and provision of material incentives based on work performance, was being displaced by "political and ideological work," by definition an undertaking to arouse "the subjective initiative of the masses" and the "enthusiasm of the masses" to a maximum production effort through a program combining political persuasion and coercion. Among the factors prompting this new application of the "mass line" to economic development must have been the opportunity it afforded the top leaders of the Chinese Communist party to exert an even greater measure of control over China's program of socialist construction.

Liu Shao-chi's report to the congress, while intentionally vague on future developments, provides an indispensable source for understanding the genesis and evolution of China's own "general line of socialist construction" from December 1955 to the congress session in May 1958. Since much of the discussion in earlier portions of this study is devoted to this subject, it is sufficient here merely to reproduce the "general line" as enunciated in final form and to describe certain of the new features and implications of the "line" which were noted at this time by Liu and other commentators. The official formulation of this key Chinese Communist policy was as follows:

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

"In the light of practical experience gained in the people's struggle and of the development of Comrade Mao Tse-tung's thinking in the past few years, the party central committee is of the opinion that the following are the basic points of our general line, which is to build socialism by exerting our utmost efforts, and pressing ahead consistently to achieve greater, faster, better, and more economical results:

To mobilize all positive factors and correctly handle contradictions among the people;

To consolidate and develop socialist ownership--that is, ownership by the whole people and collective ownership--and to consolidate the proletarian dictatorship and proletarian international solidarity;

To carry out technological revolution and a cultural revolution step by step, while completing the socialist revolution on the economic, political, and ideological fronts;

To develop industry and agriculture simultaneously while giving priority to heavy industry; and

With centralized leadership, over-all planning, proper division of labor, and coordination, to develop national and local industries, and large, small, and medium-size enterprises simultaneously.

Through all this we will build our country, in the shortest possible time, into a great socialist country with a modern industry, modern agriculture, and modern science and culture."

One of the most striking features of the formal promulgation of China's "general line of socialist construction" was the almost immediate claim appearing in both Study and People's Daily that the line constituted a new development of the Marxist-Leninist theory of socialist construction and as such was "significant...for the other fraternal states engaged in building socialism." This assertion was remarkable on two counts: first, that it was advanced within a month after the "line" was formally announced; and second, that it should have been advanced at all, since there was a good chance that it would incur the displeasure of the Soviet Union, always jealous of its leadership prerogatives in the bloc. As an explanation for this novel development, it is suggested that the Chinese Communists were convinced that the "general line" had already proven itself in practice and therefore deserved

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

serious study and possible emulation by other bloc countries, especially those Asian countries faced with problems and difficulties similar to those already surmounted in China.

Two reports delivered by Tan Chen-lin in East China in June support this conclusion. After revealing that the Chengtu conference in March had estimated an increase in 1958 grain production of 10 to 20 percent, he noted that a more recent estimate of the increment was in excess of 50 percent, thus constituting a victory of "historic significance" which would basically solve China's food problem. As such, it represented "the application of dialectic materialism and the 'mass line' to production and construction and a new development of Marxism on the question of socialist construction." More succinctly, Tan asserted that the production increase in agriculture had demonstrated once and for all that "Marxism can produce grain."

China's spectacular achievements in socialist construction were not confined to agriculture. In a series of articles beginning in May, the claim was advanced and reiterated that Communist China's estimated increase in industrial production in 1958 would be the "largest in the world" and, specifically, would rank "first among socialist countries." This was attributed in large part to the widespread development of local industry consisting of small- and medium-size industrial installations, a distinctive feature of China's own "general line."

One of the articles lauding the local industry program deserves special mention. In effect, it denied the argument subsequently advanced by Khrushchev (in late 1958) that socialist industrialization, a prerequisite for completing the building of socialism, required a highly modern, technical, and automated industrial base. Citing the early scriptural writings as his authority, in this case a quotation from the works of Lenin, the author asserted that industrialization on an extensive scale, rather than large-scale industry per se, was all that was required to complete the stage of socialist construction. It should be emphasized that this apparently innocuous formulation provided a theoretical justification for reducing drastically the period of time necessary to complete the socialist stage and enter the higher stage of the transition to Communism. In this sense, it offers a significant clue for understanding the time factor as expressed in the planning and policy statements surrounding the "great leap forward" and commune programs in the latter half of 1958.

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

The classic example of telescoping the passage of time appeared in Liu Shao-chi's congress report, in which he characterized the age as one when "twenty years are concentrated in a day." There were more specific indications, however, that the tempo of advance to socialism and Communism was being greatly accelerated. In place of the earlier estimate (as, for example, in the 1 January 1958 People's Daily editorial) that a 10-to-15-year period would be required to complete basically the construction of a socialist society in China, the "general line" now specified that this would be accomplished "in the shortest possible time." The implications of this change were spelled out in a People's Daily editorial of 4 May in the following passage: "Successes...in the great leap forward in production show that we shall not only be able to build socialism, but complete this work ahead of schedule. Since this is so, the day of constructing Communism [In China] is not very far off."

Replacing the original timetable, which had called for completion of the Draft Agricultural Program in 1967, Tan Chen-lin confidently informed the congress session that most of China's provinces would achieve by 1962 the targets set forth in the program. The mechanization of agriculture, rural industrialization, and the electrification of the countryside, goals which had appeared remote only a few months previously, were also to be realized in a number of provinces by the end of the Second Five-Year Plan in 1962.

In a rare early reference to the estimated period of time necessary to "complete our country's transition from socialism to Communism" (underlining supplied), a People's Daily editorial on 1 June implied that China would achieve a Communist society before the end of the century. These were the heady dreams inspired by the successes already claimed for the "great leap forward" in socialist construction in 1958 and by the confident belief that China had indeed discovered a short cut to socialism and Communism.

The leap forward on the production front demanded, according to the dialectic, a leap forward on the ideological front. This was to be accomplished by a campaign initiating the masses into the mysteries of Marxist-Leninist theory which, appropriately, was launched on the 140th anniversary of the birth of Karl Marx--the eve of the May Party congress. The medium for promoting the campaign was a series of theoretical

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

magazines to be published beginning 1 June by party committees at various levels, including the new theoretical journal of the central committee entitled Red Flag.

Although the purposes of this campaign were variously stated, it was apparently designed to accomplish two objectives. The first was to sustain the "heaven-storming enthusiasm" of the masses during the trials and tribulations experienced during the initial period of their "three years of bitter struggle" (1958-60). This aim was stated succinctly in a May journal discussion denying that a policy of material incentives was the only way or even the best way to stimulate production. Rather, the article continued, "To raise the class consciousness of laborers and establish their Communist ideology is the best way of raising their production activity." The second purpose, perhaps only implicit at the outset of the campaign, was to prepare the peasants for the impending organization of communes. The two purposes were reflected in a provincial party secretary's report appearing in People's Daily on 18 May:

"It is necessary to develop the Communist ideological liberation movement and raise up the Communist work style among the masses so that everyone will have ideals and ambitions, dare to create, and strive to become advanced. Then with the initiative of the 600 million people sufficiently mobilized...this will quicken the process of completing the building of socialism and moving ahead to Communism."

It is important to note the substantive content of this mass indoctrination campaign. In general the tone of the new theoretical magazines might be described as radical and chauvinistic. The term "radical" refers to the pronounced tendency of the theoreticians to go to the early writings of Marx, Engels, and Lenin in search of doctrinal authority for Communist China's innovations in theory and practice. The chauvinistic aspect was manifested at the very outset of the campaign by the revival of a concept which had not appeared in Chinese Communist literature since 1953--the concept of "Mao's ideology." The reappearance of this concept, which had proved distasteful to the Soviet Union in the past, was a good indication that the Chinese Communists intended to proceed on a distinctive Chinese road of socialist construction. What is more, the concept clearly implied

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

that the Chinese regarded Mao as the ranking Marxist-Leninist theoretician of the day and, as such, eminently qualified to provide theoretical guidance in their audacious commune experiment.

Indeed, as the campaign unfolded, it was not uncommon to see "Mao's ideology" given precedence over "Marxism-Leninism," and on occasion seemingly equated with the entire body of Marxist doctrine. The following extract from a 31 May issue of Study provides a good illustration of this development:

"Following the development of the all-people "rectification" campaign, there has universally appeared throughout urban and rural areas a torrential leap-forward movement... In order to enable our ideology not to lag behind the situation which is developing at the pace of 1,000 miles per day, we must destroy superstition, liberate our ideology, and firmly overcome subjectivism. The basic method /of liberating our thinking/ lies in the thorough study of Chairman Mao's ideology and in studying the policies and important resolutions of the party. Chairman Mao, combining the universal truths of Marxism-Leninism with the specific practice of China's revolution, and using the methods, viewpoint, and stand of Marxism-Leninism, creatively analyzes and solves the problems of China's revolution, synthesizes China's revolutionary experiences, elevates them to the level of Marxist-Leninist theory, and thereby enriches and develops Marxism-Leninism. Chairman Mao's works are discussions of the various basic problems of our country's revolutionary practice and employ the freshest, liveliest, and most correct language. Quite a few of these problems transcend the limits of our own national experience. The study of Chairman Mao's works is the best way for us to receive and grasp the weapon of Marxism-Leninism. Chairman Mao's ideology concentratedly reflects our people's most basic ideals and most urgent aspirations. Chairman Mao's working method is to proceed from the masses and return to the masses. By studying Mao's ideology, we can then become intimately linked with the masses and can, in the complex conditions of actual life, ascertain the proper direction and develop unlimited wisdom and power."

- 15 -

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

The presentation of Mao as the outstanding Marxist-Leninist theoretician of the age was unprecedented. The claim for Mao's pre-eminence was to appear overtly on at least one occasion--in the 13 September issue of People's Daily. Full credit for the formulation of China's own "general line of socialist construction," already hailed as a contribution to Marxist-Leninist theory, was given to Chairman Mao. The party organ Study published a special issue in mid-June marking the anniversary of Mao's "contradictions" speech, which a number of authors characterized as "a great, creative contribution to the development of Marxist-Leninist theory." It was still another theoretical innovation of Mao, however, his version of "uninterrupted revolution," which was to dominate the theoretical discussion of the party and, to a lesser extent, the mass indoctrination campaign throughout the remainder of 1958.

As analyzed in a definitive discussion appearing subsequently in the 10 October issue of Study, Mao's concept of "uninterrupted revolution" sought to provide theoretical justification both for the commune program and for the headlong advance to Communism. An early formulation advanced by Marx and Engels to sanction the rapid transformation of "bourgeois-democratic" revolution into the stage of socialist revolution, the idea was expanded by Mao to become a principle governing the entire course of revolution in China, encompassing the stages of new democratic revolution, socialist revolution, socialist construction, and the transition from socialism to Communism. This concept was an ingenious, if heretical, argument for accelerating China's revolutionary process.

The time was not ripe for revealing the true dimensions of this theoretical innovation at the May party congress. Liu Shao-chi's published discussion of "uninterrupted revolution," though suggestive, confined the application of this doctrine to the past revolutionary history of the Chinese Communist movement and to the immediate future tasks of technological and cultural revolution in the stage of socialist construction. Yet there were indications in party newspapers and journals during and immediately following the congress that the concept had already matured into final form and had been the subject of extensive private discussion during the party conclave.

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

In a series of articles by provincial party secretaries published in People's Daily while the conference was still in session, there appear the following statements.

"Chairman Mao's instructions on 'uninterrupted revolution', on abandonment of superstition, on ideological liberation, and on the line of socialist construction have a far-reaching and inestimable bearing on Communist undertakings in our country."

"The future of the development of worker-peasant relations and urban-rural relations must lead to the removal of differences of a basic character between the workers and peasants and between the cities and the countryside. This is naturally a long-term process. During the current transitional period, however, we must be ideologically prepared for it, and in our practical work we must gradually create the spiritual and material conditions for the eventual goal /Communism/. If we say that during the past stage of the democratic revolution there were already found the factors and rudiments of the socialist revolution, then in the current transitional period there must necessarily also emerge the factors and rudiments of the stage of Communism."

The latter passage refers unmistakably to the premise of "uninterrupted revolution"--that rudiments of a higher revolutionary stage will appear in a lower stage--and foreshadowed the introduction of such "Communist factors" as the free-supply system under the people's communes.

The final indication of the maturity of Mao's concept at this time is provided by a People's Daily editorial on 10 June firmly linking "uninterrupted revolution" with the ultimate goal of a Communist society. The editorial observed: "In order to attain the great ideal of Communism, revolutionaries must grasp this law /of 'uninterrupted revolution'/, constantly set new tasks for themselves, and carry on revolution without interruption."

The commune was yet to be revealed as the chosen instrument for China's "uninterrupted revolution," but it was becoming increasingly evident in June that some such revolutionary change in social organization was imminent. A lengthy

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

article in the 18 June issue of Study alluded to this in a general discussion of production relations in China. Taking as its text Mao's earlier "contradictions" speech, the author attempted to demonstrate that China was ready for a more advanced type of production relations despite the existing low level of production, thus playing fast and loose with the traditional Marxist dogma that production relations are necessarily determined by the level of development of the productive forces. Less sophisticated discussions at the time implied that the "great leap forward" had already elevated the productive forces to a point where changes in the relations of production were necessary.

More concrete evidence of the impending transformation of rural society was provided by a People's Daily article on 2 June written by the secretary of the All-China Women's Federation. Here for the first time the intention to collectivize the rural household economy, a cardinal feature of the commune, was clearly revealed. After documenting the growing labor shortage in the countryside and advancing as a solution the liberation of female labor to engage in production, the author lauded the advanced experiences of Honan and Hunan provinces in establishing public mess halls, nurseries, and kindergartens as a means of releasing this additional source of labor power. As an indication that this was to become a general practice, the author stated: "Activities performed by household labor--such as bringing up children, processing food grain, preparing meals, and sewing clothing--are gradually becoming collective enterprises in society." To round out the discussion, Lenin was cited as the architect of this policy in a passage which would become a standard reference in subsequent explanations of this distinctive feature of the commune. The quotation, taken from Lenin's article "The Great Beginning," was paraphrased as follows: "The setting up of public mess halls, children's nurseries, and kindergartens is the beginning of the great Communist enterprise."

Thus the record suggests that the commune, conceived at the secret party conference at Chengtu in March, was a major topic on the agenda of the formal party congress in May. The record also suggests that the leadership of the Communist party of the Soviet Union was still blissfully ignorant of this startling development on the eve of the unveiling

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

of the people's commune. As evidence of this, a Pravda editorial on 10 June contained the following laudatory appraisal of the recently concluded Chinese Communist party congress:

"The Soviet people and all loyal friends of the Chinese people rejoice over the successes achieved by the Chinese people under the brilliant leadership of the Chinese Communist party. The Chinese Communist party, basing itself on the teachings of Marxism-Leninism, creatively applies international experience in socialist construction to the conditions in China and unwaveringly leads the Chinese people on the road of socialist construction."

- 19 -

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

~~SECRET~~