

SWP

**discussion
bulletin**

Published by the
SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY

116 UNIVERSITY PLACE
NEW YORK 3, NEW YORK.

Vol. 20, No. 8

May 1959

THE CHINESE PEASANT COMMUNES

(Table of Contents Inside)

65¢

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

The material in this bulletin is intended to give the comrades an over-all picture of the National Committee discussion on the question of the Chinese peasant communes.

Discussion in the NC has centered on two draft resolutions on the communes:

A Secretariat Draft (approved by the Political Committee) which appears at Page 25.

A Draft proposed by the NC Members in Los Angeles, which will be found at Page 39.

Concerning further discussion procedure we wish to call the comrades' attention to Motion number 3 of the Political Committee, at Page 60, which reads:

"To concur in the recommendation of the Los Angeles NC members that at least one of them come to New York a week before the Convention to work in a small commission to see if a common resolution on the communes can be worked out for presentation to the Plenum and the Convention."

Editor

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
1. Excerpts from Political Committee Minutes of March 24, 1959	1
2. The Chinese Communes (Article withdrawn from magazine) -- by Daniel Roberts	3
3. The Chinese Communes (Proposal for a political line submitted to the Political Committee by the Los Angeles NC group)	10
4. Letter from A. Swabeck to F. Dobbs (March 17, 1959)	12
5. On the Chinese Peasant Communes -- by Myra Tanner Weiss	16
6. Letter from F. Dobbs to J.P.Cannon (March 20, 1959)	20
7. Letter from J.P.Cannon to F.Dobbs (March 23, 1959)	21
8. Letter from F.Dobbs to J.P.Cannon (April 7, 1959)	24
9. Draft Resolution on Chinese Communes (Submitted by Secretariat)	25
10. Letter from W.F.Warde to F.Dobbs (April 9, 1959)	32
11. Letter from A. Swabeck to F.Dobbs (April 9, 1959)	33
12. Letter from W.F.Warde to F.Dobbs (April 12, 1959)	34
13. The Draft Resolution on the China Communes A Commentary -- by Liang	35
14. Excerpt from Political Committee Minutes of April 14, 1959	37
15. Letter from J.P.Cannon to F.Dobbs (April 21, 1959)	38
16. The Communes in China (Draft Resolution Proposed by NC Members in Los Angeles)	39
17. Peng Letter on Chinese Communes	42
18. On the Chinese Situation -- by Mei Lei-tar (Hong Kong)	46
19. Letter from F.Dobbs to J.P.Cannon (April 29, 1959)	50
20. Letter from J.P.Cannon to F.Dobbs (May 6, 1959)	51
21. Excerpts from Political Committee Minutes of May 12, 1959	54
22. Letter from J.P.Cannon to F.Dobbs (May 14, 1959)	56
23. Letter from Jerry to J.P.Cannon (May 11, 1959)	59
24. Circular to NC on Plenum and Convention Dates (May 19, 1959)	60

EXCERPTS FROM POLITICAL COMMITTEE MINUTES OF MARCH 24, 1959

CHINESE COMMUNES

Report by Dobbs: At March 3 PC meeting it was agreed to continue discussion on communes following week and temporarily hold up magazine article on subject. Three days later staff member fell ill. With tight staff situation, printshop pressing us on magazine, publication schedule and special unemployment issue of paper in preparation, we were thrust into difficulties. In consultation with PC members readily available decision made to postpone next meeting to alleviate pressures on staff and run magazine article on communes signed by individual written in manner not to be construed as official statement.

Meantime, tape of March 3 PC discussion sent to Los Angeles NC members. On March 13 they sent following telegram: "Group here considers approach to commune question much too negative and hyper-critical and fails to take as starting points inherited Chinese reality at time of revolution and positive economic achievement since. Will call you Friday afternoon three your time for elaboration."

In telephone conversation same day they indicated doubts after listening to tape that magazine article adequate. We expressed opinion they were unduly apprehensive about article, explained our unusual staff problem and indicated magazine ready to go to press. They asked if sentence could be inserted describing it as discussion article. We agreed this could be done. They then asked us to hold up magazine and send them copy of article which they would immediately study and send their proposals for editorial changes. This was done and they were informed a page of magazine could be made available for anything they wanted to add on subject.

We next received telephone call from Los Angeles asking that article be pulled out of magazine and suggesting hole be filled by article on different subject sent in by L.A. comrade. Commune article pulled in response to this request and other article substituted.

Los Angeles NC group then sent their March 15 proposal for a political line on the Chinese communes. Immediately thereafter letter of March 17 received from Arne commenting further on proposal. Myra also submitted memorandum on subject.

Letter sent to branches reporting article on communes would not appear in magazine as previously announced.

On March 20 letter sent to Los Angeles NC group expressing Secretariat's views on their proposal. Reply sent from Los Angeles on March 23, received today.

Work on draft resolution now going forward. Secretariat recommends that PC continue discussion on communes but that action be held up until resolution is ready.

Motion: That we continue discussion when we have resolution before us and call a special meeting of PC for discussion.

Carried.

#

The Chinese Communes

by Daniel Roberts

AFTER slowing down their plans for economic growth in 1957, the Chinese Communist party leaders decided on another big push, which they named the "Great Leap Forward" in industry and agriculture. A new five-year plan was begun in February 1958. In this plan, they announced, the first three years would be the hardest. They called for the greatest exertions possible by the industrial workers and the peasantry.

Mobilization of the greatest possible labor force among China's 650 million people was the keynote struck at the Second Session of the Communist party's Eighth Congress in May 1958 and in articles and speeches in the following months.

In early September, in connection with the Quemoy-Matsu crisis, the government mobilized millions of militia for military duty. It will be recalled that after a few weeks of bombarding the offshore islands, the Chinese government tapered off the shelling. The immense army that had been recruited was not disbanded but turned to labor.

The previous month, Mao Tse-tung had visited Honan province, where 27 cooperative farms, including 43,000 people, in four townships, had merged to form the Weihsing (Sputnik) commune. The commune had taken over all land, had announced an irrigation program for the area under its jurisdiction and had brought all non-farming work under the same unified control.

Mao declared that this experiment convinced him that the commune pattern was the best form of economic organization for the countryside. The Communist party at once proceeded to organize communes all over China. By the end of September about one-third of the Chinese peasants were reported to have dissolved their cooperative farms into the larger commune units. By December about 27,000 communes were reported, embracing about 98% of the peasantry. They replaced some 800,000 cooperative farms, although originally Mao had declared that the changeover would take several years.

Together with the change of farm organization from cooperative to commune, a drastic change in the way of life has been introduced, designed to mobilize agricultural labor to the maximum degree. All adults from sixteen years up are included in the labor pool. Mothers leave their younger children in nurseries to be tended by the old people. Everyone eats in mess halls to save cooking time of housewives.

In short, the Chinese countryside has been mobilized for what Mao Tse-tung has called a "three-year hard battle against nature." "Huge forces can now be deployed wherever and for whatever work is needed," says Elsie Fairfax-Cholmeley, who reports on the communes in the *New World Review*. (Feb. 1959.) And R. H. S. Crossman, who like Mrs. Fairfax-Cholmeley visited several communes last fall, speaks of shifting huge forces about.

The Chinese Communist party itself talks of an "agricultural army." The CP leaders stress that this is a figure of speech, and is not to lead to military methods of command by party cadres over the peasantry. However, some of the party's rhapsodies about the communes portray a literal militarization of farm labor.

Thus one nationally distributed party magazine describes the following scene: "At daybreak, bells ring and whistles blow to assemble . . . In about a quarter of an hour the peasants line up. At the command of company and squad commanders, the teams march to the fields, holding flags. Here one no longer sees peasants in groups of two or three, smoking and going slowly and leisurely to the fields. What one hears are the sounds of measured steps and marching songs. The desultory living habits which have been with the peasants for thousands of years are gone forever . . . Individualism has absolutely no market here." (Quoted by Stanley Rich in the *New Republic*, Jan. 5, 1959.) The communes operate on the basis of the "five togethers" — "eat together, live together, work together, study together and play together."

The communes are assigned a series of tasks in their own territory — agricultural production, development of industry (we shall see later of what this consists), afforestation, soil and water conservation, electrification, education, care of the old people, etc. They are also to supply forces for work on national projects such as harnessing major rivers, cutting new canals in certain regions, etc. And, indeed, these national projects take vast numbers of laborers. Here are some examples culled from official *Hsinhua News Agency* releases: Over 750,000 engage in a huge water-conservation project in Ahnwei. (Probably on the project to reharvest the Huai River, whose levees were dynamited by Chiang Kai-shek's forces during the civil war.) In the Yangtze River Delta area, 300,000 plant tree saplings along the banks of the new canals. In Inner Mongolia, 278,000 work as part of the force seeking to harness the Yellow River.

In the communes, pay is to be in kind and in money. All are to receive free a minimum of food for subsistence, plus housing, some clothing, nursery care for children and a variety of services ranging from haircuts to burial. The communes are also instructed to set up a fund out of the surplus for wages in cash. These are to be paid to women personally instead of to their mothers-in-law as was the practice under the patriarchal family, which evidently survived in places despite previous claims by the Chinese CP that it had been completely eradicated. It seems that even in the cooperative farms, patriarchal family rules persisted.

The Communist party states that the communes are not transient forms of organization tied to the "three-year hard battle" but the forms in which China will evolve from "socialism" (which the CP claims they are building now) to

communism. By merging economic and political administration, the commune is supposed to bring about the gradual elimination of state compulsion over persons and usher in the mere "administration of things." Development of commune industry supposedly presages the merger of urban and rural areas. Compulsion on all to perform some manual work for a stated period (including doctors, engineers, teachers, etc.) is supposed to wipe out the difference between manual and mental work. Pay in kind and in cash is supposed to represent a stage in applying the communist principle "from each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs." In short, the communes as now constituted are touted as the road to communism in China.

It is noteworthy, however, that the Chinese CP decided to "delay" the introduction of the communes in the cities. Here, the party spokesmen admit, there is too much resistance. People have yet to be convinced, the CP leaders say.

What is the significance of the Chinese communes? What should be the attitude of revolutionary socialists the world over toward them?

IF THE communes were really an attempt to take the peasants straight to communism, they would deserve to be roundly condemned. Merger of town and country, unity of hand and brain work, emancipation of women in a socialist sense, replacement of the bourgeois family by a higher form, abolition of private property on the land — all these are irrational and utopian objectives as long as China's technological development and industrial equipment remain low. Communist social relations can *evolve* only on the basis of a technology that stands higher in its development and

universal application than the heights reached under capitalism in the advanced industrial countries.

It is impossible to create a communist mold and hope that communism will then flow into that mold. Historical development cannot be forced like that. All that can result from the attempt is a caricature that serves to bring the name of socialism and communism into disrepute in China and throughout the world. It could bring the Chinese workers' state to the brink of ruin. In my opinion there is more to the communes than appears in these irrational slogans, as I shall indicate shortly. But it still needs to be underscored that there is danger that a wing of the Chinese Communist party high command, intoxicated by the slogan of marching straight to communism, will persist on building communes long after basic changes of course need to be introduced. In the meantime, these slogans sow confusion about what socialism really is.

Revolutionary socialists condemn any attempt to drive the peasantry by force to "communism." But they can give full support to the "three-year hard struggle against nature" — an economic forced march in agriculture that is imposed on China, if it is to conquer famine and if it is to lay the basis for advancing to a modern industrial status. China reported famines in major areas of the country as recently as 1953. The 1956 harvest, too, was bad. The CP leaders speak about the "virtual solution of the food problem" in 1958 — which means that it is not yet actually solved. (*Hsinhua News Agency* reports, Nov. 22, 1958.)

The real blame for China having to wage this costly battle against nature falls on England, Japan, France, Germany, Czarist Russia, and above all, the United States — or, more particularly, on the ruling classes in these countries. They sapped China's strength by carving up the country into spheres of influence, by exploiting it mercilessly, by promoting the rule of local warlords, then by propping the venal, dictatorial Chiang Kai-shek regime, and by upholding the semifeudal landowners and usurers.

Today, the imperialist cold war against China — waged by blockade, nonrecognition, and refusal of economic aid — forces the Chinese people to repair the damage by their own efforts and to climb out of economic backwardness through heroic exertions.

The magnitude of the problem confronting China can be gauged by the need to feed 650 million people on an arable land area considerably smaller than America possesses.

Arable land in China at present is roughly equivalent to the area of a rectangle bordered by the U.S.-Canadian frontier, the Mississippi, the Gulf of Mexico, and the eastern edge of the Rocky Mountains — or about a fifth of the total land area of the United States. It is worked by about 500 million peasants. The great bulk of China's population is concentrated in that amount of land surface, too.

In addition, Chinese agriculture must supply raw material for China's industry and a surplus both of food and industrial raw material (cotton, hemp, silk, etc.) for export. China must solve these problems without food credits abroad (despite the \$9 billion worth of surplus food in U.S. granaries). It must solve the problem with little agricultural machinery and with almost no chemical fertilizer.

How then can the problem be solved at all? In China's favor is its traditional intensive agriculture, maintained for 4,000 years, an agriculture with a know-how that brings highest per-acre yields in the world. "Chinese agriculture is primarily distinguished by its intensity," says the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. (1946 Edition, Vol. 5, p. 544.) "This is made possible only by the unremitting labor which the struggle for existence demands and the traditional skill born of 40 centuries of transmitted experience." For 4,000 years, Chinese farmers produced a yield per acre approached in Great Britain only in the nineteenth century, when British farming methods became the model for the Western world.

The rational kernel in the program of the Chinese communes is to rehabilitate traditional Chinese agriculture. For that is what the CP directives amount to, even if the party

leadership rarely acknowledges it. Deep plowing (turning the soil to a depth of as much as five feet), layer by layer fertilization, intensive collection of manure; i.e., sewage particularly, (which is now to take priority over all commune projects including steel making), heavy use of composts, combination irrigation and rain — all these are the traditional methods of Chinese agriculture. The CP spokesmen in one place say that "The planned reduction of the arable land and the production of sufficient farm products by concentrating on a smaller area of land is a new method that has now been discovered." (*Peking Review*, Dec. 16, 1958, p. 12. My emphasis.) However, they correctly state in another place that "the experiences accumulated by the Chinese peasants should be summed up to become China's new soil science." (*Hsinhua News Agency* Jan. 1, 1959, p. 43.) A recent Conference on Soil Science criticized the once-hailed but now-abandoned program to cultivate virgin soils as a "divorce from the actual production practices of the Chinese peasants." "The Conference noted that China's bumper harvests [in 1958] were the result of careful cultivation, heavy manuring, close planting and other measures. Of these, careful cultivation and the use of large quantities of organic fertilizer were characteristic of China's farming." Actually, "close planting and other measures," are also part of traditional Chinese farming. These techniques won ungrudging admiration from F. H. King, Chief of the Division of Soil Management, U. S. Department of Agriculture, back in 1909. King's book, *Farmers of Forty Centuries*, describes the traditional practices in remarkable detail.

Now, what happened? Why is the Chinese Communist party calling for the introduction of methods that are traditional Chinese practices? Are the leaders trying to take credit for having "directed" people to do what they were doing anyway? The most likely explanation, in my opinion, is that in the fifty years since King described Chinese agricultural methods, there has been a partial breakdown of the system. Civil war beginning in 1911, decades of warlordism, the Japanese imperialist invasion, twenty years of civil war before the Chinese CP emerged victorious over Chiang Kai-shek, the Korean conflict — all these undoubtedly brought impairments.

In addition, the corrupt Kuomintang regime neglected the upkeep of levees, dams and canals, which are so vital to Chinese agriculture. (King estimated in 1909 that there were fully 200,000 miles of canals in China, Korea and Japan. "Indeed," he wrote, "it is probable that this estimate is not too large for China alone." In an area 175 by 160 miles, in the Yangtze Delta, he estimated no less than 25,000 miles of canals.)

Furthermore, the long years of war and revolution were marked by ravaging inflation that repeatedly broke the economic bonds between city and country, bringing with it a lessening incentive for the farmers to maintain the highest possible per-acre yield. (A similar result happened in Great Britain at the end of the nineteenth century, when the price of farm products collapsed, and the labor cost of maintaining intensive agriculture became thereby prohibitive.) The 1949 U.S. State Department *White Paper* on China reports that agricultural production had shifted from cash crops to crops for local consumption, and that one of the outstanding needs in China is *chemical fertilizer*, indicating a breakdown of the traditional fertilizing methods and of the traditional rhythm of agriculture through which all organic waste was returned to the soil. The current feverish campaign to collect "night soil" and animal manure and to make traditional "chemical" fertilizer out of bone, eggshell, ashes, and feathers, is further indication that such a breakdown took place.

(In the Feb. 23 *New York Times*, Tillman Durdin reports that in Fukien 250,000 persons and in Heilungkiang 700,000 have been designated for fertilizer and manure work. "In Honan Province, Governor Wu Chih-pu led 6,500 functionaries on manure-collecting forays into the country-

side. They scraped together 2,000 tons of manure and decaying vegetable matter." In Shantung more than 32,000 workshops have been set up to make fertilizer. "They consist of fireplace cauldrons in sheds of reed matting thrown up in a few days and use such things as saltpeter, feathers, bones, hair, ashes, old leather, eggshells and lime as raw materials." In Ahnwei, 200,000 "small plants" have turned out 400,000 tons of fertilizer. The campaign has not been without its adverse effects. The *People's Daily* recently reported that in some Shantung areas, "acute hardship had been caused because many kang, the traditional type of North China brick beds heated by slow-burning fires underneath — had been torn down in the high-pressure drive to accumulate material for manuring.")

Lacking food credits abroad, or the possibility of obtaining sufficient supplies of chemical fertilizer, the Chinese government was compelled to restore China's traditional farming methods and rehabilitate its technical basis in rivers, dams, canals, reservoirs and supplies of fertilizer. Lacking machinery, only a full mobilization of available manpower could perform the task. The old methods not only had to be restored wherever they had become impaired, but had to be extended to areas where they had not been used before.

In a visit to a commune in Ankou, Elsie Fairfax-Cholmeley reports essentially on this aspect. (*New World Review*, Feb. 1959.) The program for the communes in this area "included the building of 300 reservoirs, an increase in the number of wells with mechanical pumps from 38 to 1,391, and the digging of many ponds." (The pumps she refers to are probably the traditional Chinese "chain pumps" operated by footpower.) "Land once waterlogged was drained. Plowing on 70,000 acres was deepened from the former five or six inches to one foot . . . Huge quantities of green manure, pond mud, sewage and other fertilizer were amassed." In experimental plots the earth was dug to a depth of five feet and bottom fertilizer was added at a rate of sixty tons an acre. In the spring, 70,000 peasants from various cooperatives (this was before their merger into communes) "had banded together to deepen a river bed and build new canals connecting with farmland." In short, Ankou, was adopting China's traditional farming methods.

The most ambitious of all projects pursued by the Chinese government in its agricultural policy is to bring the Hwang Ho — the Yellow River — under control. This is a crucial project. Periodically over forty centuries the state power has attempted it. But the Hwang Ho remained "The Ungovernable," and it continued to justify its other designations, "The Scourge," and "China's Sorrow," too.

Unlike the Yangtze and the Pearl, the Yellow River mixes its blessings with calamities in the form of floods. In one such flood in 1887, the river killed almost a million people. And yet, in other years, the North China plain through which it runs suffers drought. As a result, in the northern areas, drought alternates with flood every five or six years. Periodic famines are the result. Entire armies of laborers are now at work on the program to harness the Hwang Ho. Last fall, the government claimed that it succeeded in preventing a flood, though the waters reached the flood heights of earlier years.

Road building and railroad construction are also vital for China, in contrast to the past when it relied most heavily on its waterways for transportation.

Finally, among other projects the communes are to undertake, which would be designed "public works" in this country, are afforestation and the development of fisheries. Both are traditional countryside endeavors in China, although afforestation never replaced the forest lands cut down in the past. It barely sufficed to supply organic matter for green manure and wood for fuel. Fisheries have been traditionally associated with agriculture. Ponds dug for irrigation were also used for breeding fish. This in turn added to the value of the pond mud as fertilizer.

THE communes, according to the Chinese CP program, are supposed to develop "industry" simultaneously with agriculture. Some of the pronouncements set the immediate goal as half and half — one half of the labor force to be involved in work in the fields and the other half in industry. Furthermore, the party proclaimed the "policy of simultaneously employing modern and indigenous methods of production." (*Peking Review*, Dec. 28, 1958, p. 6.)

The Chinese Communist party leadership, not in Lenin's, but very much in Stalin's tradition likes to embellish and disguise. In its parlance, a shed becomes a factory and making hoes or wheelbarrows becomes machine industry.

Here is an example cited by R. H. S. Crossman. "In a corner I spotted five old ladies sitting in a circle and asked what they were doing. 'That,' I was told, 'is the ball-bearing section. Sure enough, a thin iron rod had been cut into slices a centimetre thick, and each old lady was rounding a slice with a pestle and mortar, while a couple of boys were polishing the finished article. 'They aren't up to much yet and they don't last long in our cartwheels,' I was told." (*New Statesman*, Jan. 10, 1959.)

The list of "industrial" activities conducted by the communes falls mainly into two categories. One of these is the processing of agricultural products, such as flour, vegetable oil, rice wine, beer, etc. These are traditional activities of the Chinese countryside, employing cumbersome and laborious methods. (The CP refers to them as "indigenous" methods.) This does not in the least negate their value. On the contrary, China will have to multiply by many times traditional products made through traditional methods, while modern methods can only be introduced slowly as long as China is cut off from foreign aid. (Soviet agreements with China cover importation of modern machinery and equipment for steel and other heavy industry.)

The other main category of commune "industries" is making tools for the fields and for the huge public projects. Again, to combine modern and indigenous tools means to vastly multiply the indigenous tools — carrying poles, baskets, pails, wheelbarrows, carts, shovels, hoes and the like. If in the process, the wheelbarrow and block-and-tackle should come to supersede the carrying pole, this would be progress — albeit modest — indeed.

It would appear that the output of the local backyard steel furnaces in the countryside went largely into these traditional tools. Thus the *Peking Review* (Dec. 9) speaks of using the steel so made for "crude machines."

Pots and pans collected from households seem to be a principal source of "raw material" for commune furnaces. Presumably the families won't need them any more since they are to eat in mess halls. Crossman reports that at two communes, "I was at once surrounded by scores of men, women and children, clapping their hands and laughing, as they described how they had just contributed all their home cooking utensils to be melted down in the furnaces for the Surpass Britain campaign." At the third commune, he noted, "Beyond were furnaces and the usual pile of surrendered cooking utensils." Charcoal, as in primitive times, was the principal fuel.

However, this phase has now come to an end, and steel-making in "native-type" furnaces is apparently being shelved. An editorial in the *Peking Daily* (Jan. 20) suggests that localities where "it is too costly to carry out steel and iron production should quickly discontinue operations and divert their manpower to other fields of work." It also suggests that "native-type" furnaces should be converted (i.e., give way) to "foreign-type" furnaces. (Quoted in the Feb. 10 *Christian Science Monitor*.)

Revival of traditional agriculture, traditional domestic industries and traditional public works — these are the fields in which the mobilization of labor through the communes can substantially increase the total fund of Chinese goods — above all, of food. This is not yet a "great leap forward" to modernization of the economy and to socialist abundance. When properly understood, however, which means when stripped of the inexcusable sloganeering and false

promises of what can be achieved in the immediate future, the program emerges as essential preparation for a great leap forward.

It should be recognized, of course, that part of the preparation includes genuine modernization in the countryside such as installation of small power plants, requiring only low dams for hydraulic generation. *Hsinhua News Agency* reports 4,500 such stations in Szechwan with a total capacity of 100,000 kilowatts. These can replace traditional vegetable-oil lighting with electric lights, thus making the oil available as industrial raw material. In addition, construction of huge, modern power plants are included in the great river-harnessing projects. These mark the real leap forward from traditional to modern public works.

RESPONSE of the peasants to the communes is reported in the capitalist press as varying from "going along" to enthusiastic. However, from Macao, Portuguese enclave near Hong Kong, some reports have filtered through of peasant "risings" against the communes. The two sets of reports are not necessarily contradictory. Both can be true. The reaction of the peasants may vary in different sections of the country. The degree of preparation for the move will also affect the amount of support. Furthermore, how brutally or how intelligently the move is carried through would have its effect on peasant acceptance or rejection. Thus, plowing under the old homes for fertilizer before new ones are built and forcing peasants to sleep in the open (this too has been reported), would not predispose the peasantry to accept the program. Neither would a monotonous diet of cold rice or sweet potatoes with no other vegetables and no meat. There have been reports that before joining the communes some peasants killed their chickens and pigs. This seems to be confirmed by a recent editorial in the *People's Daily* admitting a decrease in China's livestock.

It is impossible to tell from here how the program has been put into practice throughout most of China. Foreign observers have seen only selected communes. No one has traveled systematically from commune to commune to report on overall results. That there have been many abuses is attested to by the decisions of the December plenary session of the Central Committee calling for measures slowing the pace of work and easing other rigors of communal life.

The question of peasant acceptance or rejection of the communes goes deeper than this, however. Does setting up the communes violate the peasants' petty-bourgeois aspirations to be individual farmers? That is the most important question. Millions of Russian peasants fought Stalin's forced collectivization in 1929-1932 because it outraged their individual-proprietor outlook. No matter how rational the three-year hard battle against nature might otherwise be, if it collides with the peasants' aspirations to the point that they sabotage the program, the country will be brought to ruin. It is true that the peasants are going into the communes not from individual ownership but from cooperative farms, similar to the Soviet Union's collective farms. But were they reconciled to the cooperatives? The communes, furthermore, take away even the small individual plots that the farmers were allowed to own under the cooperatives.

In the absence of sufficient trustworthy information, I can only state an opinion based on a number of historical factors. It is entirely possible, I believe, that the great majority of peasants are willing to defer the realization of individual-farming aspirations for a limited time. It is entirely possible that they have decided to accept a temporary "militarization" of life for the sake of an economic forced march.

The peasantry, furthermore, learned to sacrifice in the long war of liberation against the Japanese and in the civil war. Again, participating in the construction of huge public works under state administration is an ancient tradition in China as throughout Asia. For millennia, prosperity — whether for the laboring peasant or an exploiting caste or



class — has hinged on building and keeping up tremendous public works. The old cycle saw the periodic breakdown of the system as dynasties decayed. The revolutions that then occurred brought to power fresh forces who organized repair of the damage and construction of new works. The Mao regime, blocked from large-scale international aid has not been able to escape this historical pattern. They would do better to acknowledge it publicly.

Individual ownership after land distribution following the victory of the revolution in 1949 brought no viable solution for the peasant. The allotment often came to less than a half an acre. For the poor peasants, it sometimes came to as low as one *mu* (one-sixth of an acre). By American standards, where forty acres rates as a subsistence farm, such an allotment would signify outright starvation. The

comparison, however, is somewhat deceptive. In 1909, King cited 2.5 acres as the holding of a well-to-do Chinese peasant, and he visited a capitalist farmer who operated on 25 acres. Just the same, a few *mu* mean slow starvation even on the basis of Chinese skills and agricultural methods. And if we suppose deterioration of soil fertility and impairment of irrigation for decades, then the allotment was clearly too small a plot for subsistence. The distribution could not be permanent. A great many people needed to get off the land. But Chinese industry could absorb only a small proportion. The land remained overpopulated.

Under these conditions, the feeling of proprietorship could not assert itself very vigorously. Later, under the cooperatives, there were too many rivalries, too little coordination for major area-wide projects that were needed,

too much imbalance between work in the fields and development of processing — flour milling, etc. And there probably was still too much crowding on the land.

The communes offer the peasants the prospect that necessary public works at least will be undertaken, that the land will be restored to its wonted fertility, that necessary processing units will be established, etc. Furthermore, this year's bigger harvests mean food for all and the prospect, if successes through commune efforts continue, of wage payments — if not this year then in the subsequent years. (The Chinese government claims that the 1958 harvest was nearly double last year's. Conservative estimates, such as Tillman Durdin's in the Jan. 13 *New York Times*, place it at 25% — still a remarkable increase.) From all this we can suppose acceptance of the economic forced march, if too many abuses do not attend the introduction of the communes. But it would be rash to conclude that the Chinese peasants are now "growing over" to socialism — let alone communism — through the communes.

We can expect that the very economic successes of the communes in the "three-year hard battle" will foster social differentiation. Some people will be absorbed in the Communist party hierarchy, contributing to a bureaucratic layer separating out from the rest of the peasantry. Others will obtain a permanent place as wage workers in the processing industries or migrate to the cities as industry expands there. Still others will be involved for long periods in the huge nationally sponsored public works. And then we can also expect that tens of millions of peasants will want at last to engage in individual farming plus some form of voluntary cooperation.

To this day, a big section of the Russian peasants — whose income is higher than that of the Chinese — continue to display petty-bourgeois aspirations. Isaac Deutscher is correct when he writes that "The Russian collective farm has remained a halfway house between the private farm and the commune." (*The Reporter*, Nov. 13, 1958.) In Eastern Europe we have seen the peasant seizing every opportunity at his disposal to break out of the collectives and return to private farming. He succeeded in Yugoslavia, Hungary and Poland. Until the development of technology in agriculture really merges town and country — that is, really wipes out the difference between industry and agriculture — the basis for socialist relations on the land will remain precarious.

For, once semifeudal bonds are broken, the soil is cleared for bourgeois and petty-bourgeois relations. They can be surmounted only gradually (or totally only for limited periods of time under exceptional circumstances). Lenin was referring to this law when he declared after the revolution that the Russian countryside generated capitalism spontaneously and by the hour.

To defend the concept that communes are the road to communism in China, a spokesman for the Communist party offered the following rationalization: "Limited by economic and technical conditions, the small-peasant economy can only engage in extensive farming and receive a small amount of grain from vast areas at the mercy of nature. It is only in the socialist and communist eras that the way opens to the people to use the land correctly with their full initiative." (Tsao Kuo-hsing in the *Peking Review*, Dec. 16, 1958.) Thus, it is claimed, communal property and intensive agriculture go hand in hand. We have already seen that China's 4,000-year history gives the lie to this contention. Again, in England intensive agriculture was introduced in the sixteenth century side-by-side with the enclosure of the common lands. As long as extensive farming prevailed, in which "a small amount of grain," was reaped from "vast areas at the mercy of nature," the common lands had to be maintained. But intensive agriculture and private property went hand in hand. Individual farming can finally be surmounted only on the highest technological levels, which China simply does not yet possess.

Pressures for dissolving the communes as combined economic and political units in China can therefore be expected

to mount precisely to the degree that traditional agriculture and public works are restored and their scope is extended — that is, to the degree that the "three-year hard battle" is fought to a successful conclusion. Just as the bureaucratic abuses that accompany the sloganeering of today can undermine peasant acceptance of the communes, so sloganeering of the same type can bring catastrophe in the future, if the CP leadership seeks to defy pressures for dissolving the communes. Forced collectivization in Russia is a reminder of how bureaucrats, depending on dictatorial command instead of democratic planning, can inflict blows on agriculture from which the country takes decades to recover. (Soviet agriculture has not yet fully recovered from Stalin's crimes in this field.)

Communist production cannot be arbitrarily introduced, particularly in a single relatively primitive area. Nor can communist family relations and the communist status of women. In the Chinese commune, the woman gains in status by becoming a wage earner (assuming that the communes will have sufficient surplus to pay an amount respectable enough to be called wages). She will thus acquire a status as high as the one enjoyed by women in capitalist countries. But she will not have won socialist liberation. Moreover, separation of the sexes in barracks, child rearing by inexperienced nurses, canteen food that is inferior to home-cooked meals, laundries that damage the clothes more than they clean them, and the like, are not inducements for women to remain in the communes. A return to hearth and home — if freed from the slavery of the patriarchal family — may seem preferable. Will the Chinese CP seek to hold the women in the commune by force? Already there are concessions. Families may eat at home if they prefer.

HAVE said that in my opinion to restore China's traditional intensive agriculture is not yet a "great leap forward" but prepares such a leap. What then would the real leap be? The problem can be defined in the following way: By restoring traditional farming methods, China can obtain a yield *per acre* on par with that of any other country in the world (if not higher). But the yield *per man-hour* will still be far smaller than that obtained in modern industry whether in China or in any of the economically advanced countries. And it will still be far smaller than that obtained in agriculture in the West. In the last analysis, economic progress is measured by economy of labor time. China will not have succeeded in making the really great leap until it has succeeded in winning parity in labor-time with the United States.

Of course, comparisons between man-hours absorbed in China's traditional intensive farming and in American extensive farming are not entirely fair to the Chinese. U.S. agriculture is extremely wasteful of soil fertility. Soil conservation and soil improvement is practiced relatively little in this country. Where fertilizer is used, it is primarily inorganic and not applied in such a way as to improve the heritage of land for future generations. Bad farming practices, which continue to this day, led King to predict in 1909 that sooner or later American agriculture would have to learn from the Chinese. We will have to turn to greater use of irrigation, grading of soils for best crop usage, long-range planning that returns all forms of organic waste to the soil. We shall have to learn the value of rice cultivation. King added, however, that "this country need not and could not adopt their *laborious methods* of rice culture, and while, let us hope, those who come after us may never be compelled to do so, it is nevertheless worth while to study them, for the sake of the principle involved." (My emphasis.)

King foresaw a fruitful interchange leading to common agricultural practices in which the West — particularly the U.S. — would learn intensive cultivation from the Chinese in return for providing mechanization of farms and of food-processing industries.

Successful working-class revolutions in Western Europe

and the United States, leading to the elaboration of a world socialist economic plan, would enable China to take the great leap forward in the shortest possible time. For one thing, China would immediately be freed from the burden of having to feed its population almost exclusively from the produce of its own soil. Accumulated surpluses in other areas could equalize the load. Chinese agriculture would become a constituent part of world agriculture, which in turn would form a single branch of world economy, abundantly equipped to feed the world's population. The process of mechanizing Chinese agriculture would begin on a huge scale and would be completed at a rapid pace. As more and more people in China were released from the soil by farm mechanization, they would be available for industrial work in China supplied by a world pool of machines and plants; or they might migrate to other lands — say to the United States — to help in transforming agriculture here on an intensive basis. Or they could carry out the program of the Chinese Communist party to turn the grassy plateaus of China, now virtually unused, into cattle-raising areas.

A socialist overturn in Japan alone would transform China's prospects overnight. The economies of the two countries would gear together naturally. Japan would be able to mass-produce power-driven pumps, plows, carts, trucks, lift forks, and dredges for China's farms (and for its own, for Japanese farming resembles Chinese farming), while making equipment available for industrial development.

Are these prospects utopian? No. They are the real prospects that the Chinese working people can use as guides. The Chinese revolution was but one link in the chain of socialist revolutions of our epoch. Its victory has accelerated the process of socialist revolutions throughout the world. What the Chinese CP leaders lack most, unfortunately, is an international revolutionary orientation. In fact, their program of building "socialism" in one country rejects the program of world revolution. And that deprives their foreign policy, too, of the most effective approach to the working people in the West. Even now the working people in Europe, the U.S. and Japan should be demanding recognition of the People's Republic of China (where this is not yet accorded) and applying pressure on their governments to extend long-term credits to the hard-pressed Chinese people.

Without immediate international aid, China will not be able to "leap" ahead in agriculture or industry. But it will be able to take a series of painful steps forward, enabling it better to hold out against imperialism and facilitating a later leap. By correct economic policies China can begin "catching up" with techniques in capitalist countries and go a distance on the road to higher labor productivity. The process however, will be arduous and perilous and would still await international socialist aid to be completed.

In such a transition period, the caliber of leadership is decisive. To work out a balanced plan of national development geared to actual needs, social realities and realizable goals; not to strain human labor to the point of exhaustion (which would only lower labor productivity); to offer modest but important improvements in living standards commensurable with gains in productivity — these are some of the tests of leadership that face the CP heads. They will face even more difficult tests in the period ahead. Should the majority of the peasants, after trying out the communes, assert their aspirations to toil the land on an individual basis, it will be necessary to retreat from the premature communization of the land. Instead of trying to arrive at "communism" by brute force, it will be necessary to build a number of model communes with the latest equipment and cultural facilities that can attract the rest of the peasantry to finally abandon private farming of their own volition.

THERE is continued evidence that the Chinese Communist party is deeply divided over policies that touch on these very questions. Such is the meaning of the state-

ment, in the recent "Resolution on Some Questions Concerning the People's Communes," that "The urgent tasks at present are to quickly achieve a unity of views on the communes among all members of the Party and among the people . . ." (*Peking Review*, Dec. 23, 1958.)

In an article in *Pacific Affairs* (Dec. 1958.), Roderick MacFarquhar points to speeches by various party leaders in the last two years as evidence of two tendencies which he calls respectively the "pragmatists" and the "sloganeers." The "pragmatists," he says, would seem to be led by Premier Chou En-lai while the "sloganeers" appear to be headed by Liu Shao-ch'i, First Deputy Chairman of the party. (Mao Tse-tung is supposed to be currently backing the "sloganeers.")

The "pragmatists" favor maintaining, in the words of Chou En-lai, a "reasonable rate of growth for the national economy and [placing] the plan on a forward-looking and completely sound basis, to ensure a comparatively balanced development of the national economy." This should be based on first taking account of the needs and possibilities.

The "pragmatists" are also said to have favored better treatment for intellectuals and the freer atmosphere set forth in the "Hundred Flowers Policy" in 1956 and early 1957. "By encouraging freer thinking," says MacFarquhar, ". . . it was hoped that greater efficiency could be achieved." But the "bloom and contend" policy gave rise in the spring of 1957 to student demonstrations. The workers indicated dissatisfaction with economic conditions and resentment against the growth of a privilege-seeking bureaucracy.

The "sloganeers" then took over. "Instead of looking to [the intellectuals] to provide the technical know-how for economic advance, they look now to the peasants to achieve that advance by sheer hard work alone . . ." is how MacFarquhar sums up their program. How many bottlenecks and dislocations this "hard work alone" might produce is immaterial to them.

(That the introduction of the communes went hand in hand with contempt for technical knowledge is attested by reports that, for instance, *surgeons* must perform manual labor daily for a few hours in addition to their practice. And this in the face of China's acute shortage of trained medical personnel!)

It would appear that at last December's plenary session of the Central Committee, a compromise was reached between the contending groups on a more moderate approach to the communes. Commune leaders were warned to see that workers are permitted eight hours of sleep a day and four hours for meals and study, leaving the work-day at twelve hours. Women who are menstruating should be given light tasks or allowed to rest. "Scientific methods" of production should be observed. Finally, the Central Committee's resolution declares that communism cannot be established overnight but requires a long process of evolution based on mechanization.

The trouble continues to be, however, that the party leadership is not based on the working class and does not seek to chart its way by Leninist revolutionary theory. The party is bureaucratized. The cadres form an economically privileged and privilege-seeking layer. They are trained in Stalinism and Maoism; that is, a brand of empiricism given to use of Marxist phrases. The party leadership does not foresee trends and does not shape its policies accordingly. It tends instead to swing drastically from one course to another in reaction to events without thinking out the ultimate consequences.

The achievements of the Chinese revolution — as of the Russian revolution — are prodigious, even under bureaucratic leadership. But the ability of bureaucratic misleadership to retard the struggle and bring victory into question must not be lost sight of either.

It is for these reasons that Marxists in this country, without wavering in their campaign to win diplomatic recognition and long-term credits for China, must go slow in their evaluation of such phenomena as the Chinese communes and remain critical in their assessment.

THE CHINESE COMMUNES

(Proposal for a political line submitted to the Political Committee by the Los Angeles NC group.)

The Communes are less than a year old and still in flux. Although we cannot give a definitive judgment on all their aspects, this much can be stated at this juncture to make our attitude plain:

The weight of the available information indicates that the original impulse for the formation of the Communes came from the peasants themselves. The basis of the impulse was the urgent need to break through the too narrow framework of the collectives and provide that broader field required for the fullest mobilization and application of labor, in order to raise production and cope more effectively with other problems of the economy. The greater size and multiple functions of the Communes mark a qualitative advance of the Chinese Revolution.

In the pace of their formation, the Communes represent a forced march, necessitated by the urgent need to mobilize quickly large labor forces for increasing production and associated tasks. As with all forced marches, hardships are inevitable. For these, the major part of the blame rests squarely on the imperialist foes of revolutionary China, who by blockade and boycott deny her access to markets and credits for heavy machinery in the quantities needed to accelerate the country's economic transformation. Aside from such help as the Soviet Union and the East European countries can afford, the Chinese people are compelled, literally, to try and lift themselves by their own bootstraps.

But despite the forced pace at which they have been established, the Communes also mark "a great leap" forward for China, for the colonial peoples, for the working class of the world -- not to socialism or communism, as the Stalinist leaders claim and many friends of the Chinese Revolution sincerely but mistakenly believe -- but from age-old barbarism to civilization, from starvation to a living diet, from labor on dwarfish farm plots to large aggregates of labor on the land and in the crafts, from individual helplessness to mutual aid, from stagnation to progress, from hopelessness to hope for millions of peasant families.

The Communes have plowed up and pulverized the crust of archaic agricultural relations which has held China back for centuries. This was an indispensable condition for further advance. Then they have assembled the laborers on the land into the distinctively new form of cooperative colonies of varying dimensions and functions. These cooperative groupings have not only helped to rescue the poorest and most unfortunate from the scourge of hunger; they have already significantly increased the productivity of agriculture. This economic yardstick is for historical materialists the basic measure of progress

China's peasants have been able to accomplish these things thanks to the advantages inherent in the new productive form of the Commune: (1) By the power of collective labor; (2) by the utilization of formerly surplus and periodically idle laborers; (3) by a more rational division of the available work; (4) by bringing the new land under cultivation; (5) by the conversion of labor into

capital improvements through the creation of public utilities, especially in flood control and irrigation; (6) by the more extensive development of the crafts and small local industry.

Neither the Commune nor its advantages and achievements would have been possible without the elimination of private property -- feudal and capitalist ownership -- by the Chinese Revolution. It cleared the way for this forward leap, not only by the establishment of new forms of property and relations of production, but by setting up an independent state which is not dominated either by foreign imperialists or native possessing classes.

As socialist partisans of the Chinese Revolution, we hail the Communes. We defend their progressive character against the host of class enemies who try to distort and diminish its significance. We do this in spite of Stalinist exaggerations and despite any bureaucratic distortions and repressions. The new developments manifestly testify to the creative initiative of the Chinese people emerging from destitution and endowed with new energy by their revolution.

Although the Communes are still in the experimental stage and have not attained fixed or final form, they have opened another chapter in the onward march of the Chinese and colonial revolution -- an integral part of the world movement toward the socialist future of mankind.

March 15, 1959.

Los Angeles, California
March 17, 1959

Dear Farrell:

It is unfortunate that the first attempt to express our opinion publicly about the Chinese communes turned out the way it did. I am sure we all agree on the great importance of the subject, especially insofar as its broader implications are concerned. To me the subject embraces what I consider to be, next to the Russian Revolution, the greatest forward leap in the entire history of mankind.

This makes it only more regrettable that precipitate action was taken to set the article on the communes in type before a full and conclusive discussion in the PC had made possible the elaboration of a line of policy to follow.

As matters stand now, I prefer to consider this regrettable incident as a bygone. I prefer not to discuss the contents of the article except to say that my disagreement with its approach to the question and the analysis made is fundamental in nature. The other NC members here expressed similar fundamental disagreement.

This being the case, I take it for granted that we will now proceed to a most careful consideration of the question and a thoroughgoing discussion in order to arrive at a correct policy. With this in mind I submit the views that I have already expressed here as a preliminary contribution to the discussion.

The paramount importance of developments in China since the political overturn, and more specifically, the role that the communes play in these developments is obvious to us and need no further emphasis here. Our discussion should, therefore, start out from the realities of the situation in China and the material conditions out of which the communes arose. In their present initial stage, the latter represent gigantic forces in motion. We must view them as such; and in no case can we afford to let our dialectical approach yield place to the static view.

It is true that information coming out of China is not too plentiful; it is often contradictory and a fully rounded picture is difficult to obtain. But a sifting out of the basic evidence that is available points clearly to the permanent revolution that is now unfolding on Chinese soil. In fact, the permanent revolution has caught up with the CP leadership regardless of its lack of formal recognition of this process.

This leadership took power in the name of its program of a "bloc of four classes" and it clung then to a theory of "revolution in stages." It held to the view that China had to pass through an allegedly "new" stage of capitalist development.

However, when the imperialist forces marched to the Yalu river and clamped an economic blockade on China, the CP leaders were compelled to turn the helm. They were left no alternative but to follow the outline of the Communist Manifesto and proceed to "wrest, by degrees, all capital from the bourgeoisie, to centralize all means of production in the hands of the state." They were obliged to nationalize production, impose the monopoly of foreign trade and

institute state planning. These were the fundamental prerequisites for a workers state, which China is today, even though a Stalinist deformed type thereof.

But no decisive steps toward industrialization, let alone the creation of new productive relations, could be taken without a basic transformation of the primitive Chinese agriculture. And so, the Stalinist leaders had no alternative but to undertake the collectivization of the innumerable small peasant holdings. They had to accept this alternative in spite of the extremely limited technical resources available. Nevertheless, for a backward country like China, the same as for the Soviet Union in the past, collectivization must be understood as the most essential and fundamental part of the socialist transformation.

This lesson we have learned effectively from the Old Man, and it is reinforced by actual events. Similarly we have learned that industrialization of a backward country becomes the motive force for cultural elevation, and by that, the only conceivable basis for socialism. Every advance in industrialization strengthens the foundation of working-class rule.

Indisputably these were the next decisive steps taken toward the creation of new productive relations: collectivization of peasant holdings alongside of industrialization with such aid to the latter as the Soviet Union could give. That is, this was the line of development until the peasant collectives were found to be too narrow for the gigantic task of lifting China out of its primitive heritage. Apparently then, as a result of a mighty surge from below, collectives combined into the vastly enlarged formation of communes. They were combined, moreover, with certain localized industry that became an integral part of the communes, to provide better tools for them and to process agricultural materials, etc. The communes made possible the huge undertakings of irrigation projects, afforestation, mountain terrace building, improvements of soil, crop and stock and a beginning of flood control.

The communes represent a further decisive step taken toward the socialist transformation. To say that they serve merely to restore the public support to agriculture that had fallen into disrepair by a decaying system, or had been destroyed by civil wars, is to miss entirely the essential point. The communes must be viewed as the real beginning of a new China. Not only are they the primary source of the huge projects already mentioned, but they facilitate more universal education, they represent a step toward the emancipation of women from household drudgery and they have already instituted, as I understand it, a certain degree of local self-government which will tend to counteract bureaucratic centralization and weaken bureaucratic control. Above all, the communes become a source of providing the highest degree of accumulation of capital possible under Chinese conditions to carry on the erection and expansion of modern industry in the urban centers.

Can any one deny that these decisive steps so far in the evolution of the workers state correspond to the needs of the real situation in China? To cite but one example: their first concrete manifestation has been a rise in the standard of living for these

formerly poverty stricken, rent-wracked and famine-ridden peasants who had in the past attempted to eke out a miserable existence on their small plots.

The further development of the communes -- and there is no reason to assume otherwise -- will tend to accelerate the interacting process that leads logically in the direction of eliminating rural idiocy and establish greater harmony between city and country in the process of production. Through the communes the peasants will tend to become proletarianized and this will serve, in turn, to cement a firmer alliance between them and the working class in the urban centers. It is even possible to foresee the communes being the important class instruments for advance of socialist construction i.e., from the initial stage of state property to genuine peoples property.

In these developments there is no evidence to lend serious support to contentions that the communes are mere reflections of bureaucratic regimentation brought about forcibly. Least of all can the slightest credence be given to the bourgeois propaganda of "barracks communism." On the contrary, all the available evidence points toward the communes arising out of a stormy upsurge of popular forces -- a materialization of the tremendous reserves of human energy and ingenuity unleashed by the revolution. The real source of the mighty advances made in China is the revolution.

This is a far cry from the original intentions, program and concepts of the Mao regime. Instead of China's passage through an allegedly "new" stage of capitalist development, the permanent revolution prevailed. The permanent revolution had unfolded through the successive stages that we have witnessed. Each new stage represented higher levels than the preceding, new conquests and new gains for the people of China in the transition from a backward semi-colonial country to its future socialist affirmation. Once again this shows that the laws of historic development are stronger than the intentions, designs and power of any bureaucratic regime.

The permanent revolution did not unfold on Chinese soil exactly in the form we had foreseen. But its whole essence, its whole content is clearly revealed. To us this should serve as a reminder that such historic developments do not always conform to patterns or norms that we visualize. What is important is to recognize and to understand their true nature and their real essence.

Trotsky once touched on the problems of the Soviet Union during its early days in words to the following effect: in building our socialist society we shall have to proceed with the means at hand, with the means carried over from the past, for the means of socialist production have not yet been created. This is pertinent for China today. If the peasants would have been compelled to await relief from their abysmal misery pending the creation of technical means for mechanized agriculture, the revolution could have been seriously endangered.

China, as we know, started out as a workers state with very little capital in any form. But it did possess a huge source of surplus labor power which could be, and which was, turned into

elements of variable capital. Precisely in this we witness the first steps in the essential role performed by the communes. Savings for the accumulation of necessary capital, virtually impossible under conditions of scattered peasant holdings, were made possible by the communes. It was made possible by their combined labor in both industrial and agricultural projects. While this is carried on still more or less with the primitive means of the past, occurring as it does in further combination with accumulation of capital for industrialization in modern terms, it becomes progressive indeed. It is a practical demonstration of the laws of uneven and combined development.

The conclusion to be drawn from all of this seems clear. We must view the communes as a progressive development. Our position toward them must be unconditional support, i.e., support regardless of the bureaucratic regime.

Criticism of the bureaucratic excesses, arbitrariness, waste and mismanagement in these developments is due, of course. But such criticism can be justified, it can have value and it can have real meaning only on the basis of an affirmative position in support of the communes. But such support does not change in the least our rejection of peaceful coexistence based on the status quo of capitalist relations. We remain principled opponents of the theory and practice of socialism in one country which is directly interconnected with the acceptance of the status quo and its deadly consequences to the international working-class movement. That this theory still remains the guiding concept of the Chinese Stalinists was evidenced during the events in Hungary. It can, moreover, if it should remain unchecked and be carried to its logical conclusion, lead to serious conflicts between the two mighty sectors of the Soviet orbit.

Finally, it goes without saying, that we conceive as one of our major tasks the continuation of the struggle for recognition of and the free flow of trade with China.

Comradely yours,

Arne Swabeck

ON THE CHINESE PEASANT COMMUNES

By Myra Tanner Weiss

The August 29, 1958, decision of the Politbureau of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party to unify the Chinese peasant cooperatives into communes initiated the third stage in the Chinese peasant revolution. The first came with the victory against Chiang Kai-shek and his expulsion from the mainland. The peasants destroyed the ancient Asian feudal relations and took the land for cultivation by small individual households.

The second stage of the revolution in relations on the land began in 1955 when the CCP organized the peasants into cooperatives. At that time the Militant welcomed the organization of cooperatives as a step toward greater production on the land. We defended this stage against imperialist and Social Democratic attack. We refuted the charge that the CCP was proceeding to repeat the crimes of Stalin with a forced collectivization, pointing out that Stalin's first crime came with the belated attempt to collectivize peasant relations. The Chinese were tackling this historic need only five years after the destruction of Asian feudal relations, before a new, rich layer of peasants could emerge and consolidate itself.

The present campaign to organize the cooperatives into communes represents a step further in the development of cooperation in agricultural production. In addition it will facilitate the construction of large water-control projects, transportation and encourage the development of supplementary small manufacturing enterprises in the towns.

The plans for communal feeding and communal care of the children will help Chinese women overcome some of the inequalities that remained after their initial liberation from virtual slavery. Subsistence provision by the Communes, in addition, will lower the cost of agricultural labor, making possible a larger surplus product to meet the pressing demands of industrialization.

Our first task is to defend the Chinese revolution including its third stage, the formation of Communes, against the imperialist opponents. Their cry of "slavery" represents, not sympathy with the Chinese peasant or his aspirations, but flows from their rage at a revolution that excluded imperialist exploitation of the vast resources of China, human and material.

No one can answer the imperialist slanders more effectively than the Marxists. The job of defending the progress of the Chinese revolution cannot be left to those who only repeat like a catechism the decrees and explanations issued by the CCP. Our defense of the Communes must provide a critical appraisal and a warning of the dangers inherent in the great problems China faces.

The utterly fantastic characterization of the organization of Communes as the beginning of the transition from socialism to communism, to the extent that it is meant seriously by the CCP, represents a dangerous ultra-left mistake which in the long run would lower rather than increase the productivity of agrarian labor. Contained in this concept is the idea of going over to state ownership ("ownership by the whole people") of the product of labor instead of owner-

ship by the collective. This would be, indeed, far more "revolutionary" than anything the Russians attempted outside of war communism. But it would have tragic consequences.

Revolutionary enthusiasm and hope of the Chinese peasants could suffice as an incentive for the hard labor that is needed only for a relatively short period of time or for specific projects around which enthusiasm can be engendered. But for any extended period, the laws of value must be allowed to regulate production on the land. Only through the laws of value can the necessary compulsion to labor be provided without the construction of a gigantic rural state machine of overseers to press production on the land.

The CCP, a centrist formation schooled in Stalinism, reacting empirically to events, is already retreating from this initial adventurism. The second resolution on the Communes, December 10, 1958, while repeating the nonsense about transition to "communism," is mostly devoted to postponing that happy event. For example, it says, ". . . this transition will be realized, by stages and by groups, on a national scale only after a considerable time. Those who, because they fail to understand this, confuse the establishment of people's communes with the realization of ownership by the whole people, making impetuous attempts to abolish collective ownership in the countryside prematurely, and trying hastily to change over to ownership by the whole people, will not be doing the right thing and therefore cannot succeed."

The editors of the Monthly Review, obviously trying to be objective in their evaluation of the communes, nevertheless made the mistake of welcoming that aspect of CCP policy that is most dangerous. The editors of MR recall Marx's advice to the British workers in *Value, Price and Profit*, not to ask for a "fair day's wage" but for the abolition of wages, by which Marx meant for them to struggle for a socialist society. However the Monthly Review editors ask, "If the Chinese Communists have now accepted this advice in earnest, can socialists chide them for it?"

But fortunately the Chinese Communists have not accepted the policy of the abolition of wages, at least for the present. In the August resolution, the CCP calls for the introduction of wages -- where possible. Peasant labor has been paid largely in kind or by a point system -- a form of piece wages. In the December resolution the CCP calls for a faster increase in wages than in subsistence provisions. It even assures a very large wage differential: "Wages must be increased gradually as production expands. For the present after deducting the items freely supplied, wage scales in the rural areas can be divided into six to eight grades, and the highest grade may be four or more times as much as the lowest grade." (Wage differentials are even higher among the city workers.)

The December resolution correctly warns that "Some people, attempting to 'enter communism' prematurely, have tried to abolish the production and exchange of commodities too early, and to negate at too early a stage the positive roles of commodities, value, money and prices. This line of thinking is harmful to the development of socialist construction and is therefore incorrect.

The basic wealth of China comes from agricultural labor. The social surplus value needed to industrialize China must come largely from the peasants. The organization of cooperatives in 1955 increased agricultural production considerably. But a revolutionary peasantry is also in a position to improve its level of subsistence. A maximum rate of accumulation of capital must assure such an improvement, if for no other reason than to consolidate the workers' power. But it must also limit it.

The proposal for the organization of communes undoubtedly will meet the favor of poor peasants and the poorer collectives. But the Chinese state is also impelled to launch communes in order to assure its source of capital for industrialization and in order to guarantee an adequate supply of raw materials for light industry (the CCP proposes one-third of the arable land be planted with industrial crops). In addition, industry cannot yet meet the peasants' demand for industrial goods. The development of town production, even on a small scale, will help to provide these tools and consumer goods and will add absolutely to the social surplus product.

The organization of communes will help to meet all these needs and so basically represents a step forward in the development of agricultural production. If those adventurist utopians within the CCP who advocate the "transition to communism" are held in check, new progress will be made. There undoubtedly is a struggle on now within the CCP over these policy questions. Symptoms of this struggle exist in the fact that Mao Tse-tung was removed in December as head of the government and the organization of a five-month campaign of "inspection" involving the sending of tens of thousands of cadre elements throughout the countryside.

While we do not have sufficient information to get an accurate picture of this internal struggle, it is obvious that ultra-leftism is supplemented by a rightist tendency based on the richer peasants and collectives and aiming to preserve discriminatory differentials.

It must be remembered that the social revolution in China is still far from complete. The Chinese Communist Party enjoys great prestige, but it is not inexhaustible. Only two years ago in a speech made on February 27, 1957, to the Supreme State Conference, Mao Tse-tung pointed out that "Marxists are still a minority of the entire population as well as of the intellectuals. Marxism therefore must still develop through struggle." Even more forcefully he pointed out, "Class struggle is not yet over. The class struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, the class struggle between the various political forces. . . will still be long and devious and at times may even become very acute."

To consolidate the revolution and make maximum progress in the difficult struggle for industrialization, above all else real proletarian democracy is needed. But China and even the Soviet Union will never enter the era of socialism, let alone communism without the aid of the workers in the imperialist sector of the world. The crisis of the death agony of capitalism impels the imperialists to prepare for the eventual launching of war against the non-capitalist countries, to re-open these territories to capital investment. Forced to prepare its own defense against powerful enemies an already difficult problem is aggravated a thousandfold for revolutionary China.

We cannot for one moment accept the CCP's view of the resolution of this international conflict. In Mao Tse-tung's theory that the imperialists are just "a paper tiger," the CCP has pointed out that the first world war brought the end of capitalism in Russia. The second ended capitalism in East Europe and China. "If the imperialists should insist on launching a Third World War, it is certain that several hundred million more will turn to socialism; then there will not be much room left in the world for the imperialists. . . "

Stalinism stood for decades as a monstrous obstacle to the revolution in the advanced countries. The axis of the world revolution thereby shifted to the undeveloped lands where the proletariat was weakest. That obstacle to the revolution in the imperialist countries is now weakened. The workers, above all in the United States, have the responsibility of defending the great Chinese revolution by fighting for our own victorious revolution against the most powerful of capitalist forces. We have a job of our own to do. Our struggle and our victory will decide the fate of China as well as all mankind.

March 19, 1959.

New York, N.Y.
March 20, 1959

Los Angeles

Dear Jim:

We received the proposal for a political line on the Chinese communes submitted to the Political Committee by the Los Angeles NC group. Copies have been distributed to the PC members for study in advance of the next meeting.

The Secretariat does not think the proposal constitutes a satisfactory statement of political line on the subject. Our criticism centers on two points in the proposal.

We disagree with the statement that ". . . the original impulse for the formation of the Communes came from the peasants themselves."

We are dissatisfied with the formulation: "Aside from such help as the Soviet Union and the East European countries can afford. . . ." The expression "can afford" might be construed to mean we give the Kremlin bureaucracy credit for doing all they can to help China.

To convey our thoughts more fully the Secretariat is preparing a draft resolution on the subject of the Chinese communes. You will be provided copies as soon as the draft is ready. On this basis we recommend a delay in formal PC action pending a further exchange of views between us.

Concretely we suggest that the proposal of the Los Angeles NC group be submitted only for discussion by the PC at this time rather than for an immediate vote.

If possible we would like to have your opinion of this procedural recommendation in advance of the March 24 PC meeting.

Comradely,

Farrell Dobbs

Airmail
Special Delivery

Los Angeles, Calif.
March 23, 1959

Farrell Dobbs
New York, N.Y.

Dear Farrell:

I received your letter of March 20. We were not able to get a formal meeting of the NC group together, but I talked to George and he consulted the others by telephone, except Milt, and he couldn't be reached.

1. It is agreed that the Los Angeles NC group proposal be taken as material for discussion by the PC, and not as a motion for a formal vote.

2. There is no insistence on the statement "the original impulse for the formation of the communes came from the peasants themselves." The factual information is rather scanty on this point anyway, and the process very likely was inter-acting. What we are most concerned about is that the resolution deal with the facts of the situation, insofar as information makes this possible, and that the new facts be considered in the light of our basic policy adopted by the 1955 Plenum.

We think the essential fact, however impulses from below and decrees from the top may have interacted, is that the merger of the collectives into larger communes, like all the other radical measures taken by the empirical bureaucracy, which we have regarded as progressive, was dictated by the imperative necessities of the situation. In this case it was the necessity to increase agricultural productivity by integrating it with public works for the conservation and more efficient use of the water supply -- which was too big a project for the smaller collectives -- and to utilize idle and surplus peasant labor in other projects. It is inconceivable and unbelievable that hundreds of millions of peasants could be mobilized in these larger communes in such a short time unless they saw tangible prospective benefits for themselves.

3. There is no objection to leaving out the phrase "aside from such help as the Soviet Union and the Eastern European countries can afford. . . ." -- if this is taken to imply that the Kremlin bureaucracy is doing all it can for China. At the same time, it is obviously true, and fully confirmed, that the Soviet Union has substantially aided China by building modern automated plants, by supplying engineering and technical personnel to help the Chinese to move faster along the line of modern industrial construction, and by helping the Chinese to train engineers and technical specialists of their own.

This has been an important help to China. I first read an impressive account of some of it in the book by a French journalist who is neither pro-Russian, nor pro-Chinese: "600,000,000 Chinese." Something has been given, or traded as the case may be, as the imperialists ruefully observe, to say nothing of the not unimportant circumstance that China carries out its whole internal program behind the shield of Russian military power. No doubt Chinese developments could be greatly accelerated if the Russian and Chinese

economies were integrated in a true spirit of international socialism. But if it is thought necessary to say that in a resolution dealing with the communes, recognition of the cooperative help already given should not be ignored.

4. In drafting the new resolution, it is important for us to bear in mind that we adopted a basic resolution on the Chinese revolution in 1955. The present resolution should represent a continuation and development of that line, unless there is a definite and motivated proposal to change it. Long before we adopted the 1955 resolution defining the nature of the Chinese state, we took an affirmative attitude toward the revolution itself -- and toward all the revolutionary anti-capitalist measures which the Chinese empirical leaders were compelled by circumstances to initiate. I expressed this affirmative policy of the party in my second lecture on "America's Road to Socialism" in the Fall of 1952. And even at that early time I was only expressing the well-settled position of the party.

5. I don't think we should get into a big terminological hassle about the expression, "the great leap forward," because the Chinese Stalinists falsely represent it as the transition from socialism to communism. Our basic task in evaluating the new developments is not to make our polemic against Stalinism the premise and the take-off point for our analysis -- that would be a factional and not a Marxist method of approach. We have to start with the reality inherited by the revolution and recognition of the new reality represented by the changes and advances that have been made and are still being made.

That's the way the Old Man taught us to deal with the First Five Year Plan in the Soviet Union. His positive and affirmative support of the over-all progress, represented by the big transformation beginning in 1928, provided the framework within which his polemical criticism of the Stalinist methods was all the more pertinent and effective. Trotsky's basic Marxist method of beginning with soviet reality, as it had been and as it was changing; his unwavering support of the progressive features of the new program; and his polemical criticism within that framework -- is what makes all of his writing on the Soviet Union stand up against all others to this very day.

Trotsky wrote as one who was involved in the Russian developments of the early thirties. He was a partisan of their over-all progressive nature and a critic of the Stalinist methods -- from the standpoint of their harmful and retarding effect on the developments represented by the First Five Year Plan.

We cannot expect to do the same thing in respect to the Chinese revolution with his power, sweep and authority; but we must, under all circumstances, stick to his method. We cannot, even by implication; or by the distribution of emphasis; or by the piling up of details and secondary points until they outweigh the main point -- give the impression of outsiders who are merely watching, waiting and criticizing.

I hope the resolution drawn up for the PC will not be too long and too detailed, so full of on the one hands and on the other hands,

that the line does not come through sharp and clear. After the line is agreed upon and clearly stated, there will be plenty of time for elaboration on all the different aspects of the new developments.

Fraternally,

James P. Cannon

JPC:jh

New York, N.Y.
April 7, 1959

Los Angeles

Dear Jim:

You will find enclosed a copy of a Draft Resolution on the Chinese Communes prepared by the Secretariat.

We hope the Los Angeles NC group will be able to give the draft immediate attention and send us your views without delay.

Comradely,

Farrell Dobbs

FD:ra

Enc.

Airmail

cc:Arne

George

Milt

F.

DRAFT RESOLUTION ON CHINESE COMMUNES
(Submitted by Secretariat)

We consider the Chinese Revolution the most important development since the Russian Revolution of October 1917. We are for the unconditional defense of the People's Republic of China and have maintained that position at all times, including the decisive period of the Korean War. In all conflicts between China and world imperialist reaction we take the side of China without demanding that the Chinese people first meet democratic or socialist norms.

We defend the Chinese revolution from the standpoint of the interests of the world socialist revolution. This requires us to analyze the social and economic forces and to determine their varying and often contradictory movement. The same applies to the stages of the developing Chinese revolution. As in the Russian revolution we support those forces, phases and aspects that serve the cause of world socialism.

For example, we were partisans of national unification, the peasant uprising, the overturn of Chiang Kai-shek's dictatorship and its imperialist backers, the abolition of warlordism and landlordism, the monopoly of foreign trade, nationalization of industry, introduction of planned economy, collectivization of agriculture, and renovation of social relations, including the freeing of women and children from patriarchy.

We have never been partisans of the accompanying bureaucratic deformations. As our resolution "The Third Chinese Revolution and Its Aftermath," adopted in 1955, states: "The contradiction between the conquests of the revolution and the bureaucratic rulers is the central internal contradiction of Chinese society, determining its movement. At the same time, it is the point of departure for the Trotskyists to base their policy for China."

This dialectical approach governs our attitude to the "rural people's communes" sponsored by the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party in August 1958, with modifications approved by the Central Committee at its Sixth Plenary Session, Dec. 10, 1958.

As defined by the Central Committee, the "rural people's communes" constitute "a new social organization. . . which combines industry, agriculture, trade, education and military affairs and in which government administration and commune management are integrated." According to the same source, "Within a few months starting in the summer of 1958, all of the more than 740,000 agricultural producers' co-operatives in the country, in response to the enthusiastic demand of the mass of peasants, reorganized themselves into over 26,000 people's communes. Over 120 million households, or more than 99 per cent of all China's peasant households of various nationalities, have joined the people's communes." Further: "What we describe as getting organized along military lines means getting organized on the pattern of a factory. . . . The forces of large-scale agricultural production, like the forces of large-scale industrial production, constitute an industrial army. The modern industrial army was organized by the bourgeoisie, each factory being like a military

camp. The discipline for the worker standing before the machine is as rigid as that in the army. . . . We are now applying this system to the rural areas, thus establishing a socialist industrial army for agriculture based on democratic centralism, which is free from exploitation by the landlords and rich peasants and is elevated above the level of small-scale production." The institution of "people's communes" thus involves primarily the mobilization of China's vast rural labor force, its expansion, organization for work on most efficient lines possible in the given conditions, and its application to China's most pressing tasks. These include (a) the rehabilitation and extension of agriculture and public works; (b) the achievement of higher rural self-sufficiency in production of simple tools and food; (c) the supply of greater agricultural surpluses for state use, principally in industrializing China.

Sources and Limits

The objective sources of this forced march as well as the limits of what it can accomplish are found in four contradictory relationships: (1) between imperialism and the Soviet bloc; (2) between China and the other members of the Soviet bloc; (3) between Chinese industry and agriculture; (4) between the Chinese proletariat and peasantry. These relationships are influenced by the central contradiction between the conquests of the Chinese revolution and the bureaucratic rulers.

(1) Through its control of the world market, imperialism has barred the entire Soviet bloc from commodities needed to facilitate industrialization. This has forced the peoples in these countries to make the transition under untold privations, hardships and difficulties, including bureaucratic parasitism. The Chinese revolution decisively strengthened the Soviet bloc, but China's enormous needs also brought additional strains. The imperialists sought to increase these by walling off China as tightly as possible. Primary responsibility for the extraordinary efforts forced upon the Chinese people, including the current mobilization of agricultural labor along military lines, thus rests with world imperialism. The successes of the Soviet bloc, due primarily to planned economy, are all the more spectacular in face of the imperialist blockade. What the Chinese people, virtually barehanded, have been able to accomplish, thanks to the overturn in social relations, offers the most instructive contrast to the relative stagnation in countries like India where a capitalist class, subservient to imperialism, still rules.

(2) The united front of the Soviet bloc countries has greatly bolstered their defense against imperialist aggression. On the one hand, the overturns in Eastern Europe and especially in China enabled the Soviet Union to more than hold its own in the cold war. On the other hand, the People's Republic of China, under the shield of Soviet military might, has been far freer than was the Soviet Union in the early days to turn to domestic problems, and has had the advantage of limited Soviet economic and technical assistance, enabling it to register phenomenal rates of growth in the most varied fields. The benefits of this cooperation suggest its extension through the integration of economies and a common plan for the entire area from the Baltic to the Pacific. The main obstacle to this step, which would constitute the greatest leap forward in this

sphere since the introduction of planned economy in the Soviet Union, is the bureaucratic caste. The parasitic interests of this caste stand in opposition to the economic need for a unified joint plan that would give China the maximum help possible.

(3) The most difficult problem facing China is to bridge the gap between industry and agriculture while modernizing an industrially backward country. Both industrial and agricultural production must be raised sufficiently to maintain a normal exchange of goods between city and countryside while at the same time guaranteeing the surplus needed for industrialization. The millions in the armed forces must likewise be fed, clothed and housed and the bureaucratic apparatus consumes more than its share of the national income. The enormous disproportion between agriculture and industry lends special acuteness to the problem. The destruction of landlordism enabled the Chinese peasantry to rapidly increase production, relieving the immediate threat of famine which has periodically plagued China. The introduction of collective farms and mutual assistance brigades assured further increases in agricultural production, signifying for the Chinese people an end to hunger and the beginning of encouraging surpluses.

This was a most important development. The appearance of these surpluses made possible a rapid differentiation in the peasantry. The surpluses also opened the possibility of narrowing the labor force directly engaged in crop raising and shifting the surplus of peasants thus formed. Industry was too undeveloped to absorb them. A possible substitute was big public works projects. To do this required amalgamating the collectives into "rural people's communes," wiping out the small plots and family holdings of livestock and poultry. This might be received with reluctance among those peasants who had settled down; but simple cooperation applied on a scale involving tens and hundreds of thousands of laborers assures success in projects beyond the scope of collectives, particularly in flood control, irrigation and water transport; and these have an immediate effect, apparent to all, in the productivity of agriculture. The structure of the "rural people's communes" also enables the government to bring nationwide planning to bear in agriculture through administrative measures; and gives it direct control of the surplus. Thus the decision to form "rural people's communes" is a reflection of the compelling necessity to extract the most from the country's main resource: labor power applied to the soil.

At the same time, the unplanned and unforeseen institution of "rural people's communes" indicates a certain breakdown of overall planning insofar as it affects the balancing of relations between industry and agriculture. This is evident in the assignment of industrial tasks to the rural organizations. What industry cannot supply agriculture, agriculture must supply for itself. The breakdown of balanced planning extends even to the division of labor within the communes. A striking instance is provided in the Dec. 10 resolution where the Central Committee specifies the tasks of the communal kitchens. These must not only prepare "varied and appetizing" food; they must help supply it. "The communal eating establishments should have dining-rooms, and they should efficiently run their own vegetable gardens, bean-curd mills, bean-noodle mills, and condiment shops; they should raise pigs, sheep, chickens, ducks and fish."

A similar symptom is apparent in industry. In putting "the emphasis on the repair of existing railroads" instead of the projected construction of new lines, Red Flag, the theoretical magazine of the Chinese Communist Party called on the railroad officials to help themselves by producing iron and steel on their own and making their own rails, machine tools, and cement instead of relying wholly on other industries for these.

A section of the top leadership of the Chinese Communist Party appears to take a realistic view of the problem which it is hoped the "rural people's communes" will help solve, for along with the characteristic exaggerations, such statements as the following are included in the Dec. 10 resolution: "Three years of hard battle plus several years of energetic work may bring about a great change in the economic face of the country. But even then there will still be a considerable distance to go to reach the goals of a high degree of industrialization of the entire country and the mechanization and electrification of our country's agriculture; and there will be an even longer distance to go to reach the goals of an enormous abundance of social products, of a great lightening of labour and of a sharp reduction of working hours."

In this "hard battle" the peasant "communes" can play an effective role by extending cooperation, division of labor and planning in the countryside. They can facilitate the development of handicrafts and small manufacture thereby helping to relieve the demand for goods which industry is still too undeveloped to provide. They can help bring a more rational organization of essential domestic labor through communal kitchens and nurseries. They can assist in organization of military defense and education. But they can at best only ameliorate, not end, the lack of balance in exchange relations between industry and agriculture. The solution to this problem, as Trotsky long ago stressed in the case of the Soviet Union, cannot be isolated from the fate of the socialist revolution in the more advanced industrial countries now ruled by capitalism. Even after 40 years, the Soviet Union has not yet solved this problem. For China the same problem is even more complex and acute.

(4) The final major contradiction is especially important in determining the limits of the forced march in agriculture. This is the relationship between the Chinese proletariat and peasantry. The decisiveness of this alliance was heavily stressed, and correctly so, in our 1955 resolution.

After the defeat of the 1925-27 Revolution, which centered in the cities under the impulse of the proletariat, the next great upsurge occurred in the countryside in the form of peasant uprisings. When the peasant armies marched on the cities, they were greeted by the working class, which supported them in overthrowing the Chiang dictatorship. The ascendancy of the proletariat in the reconstituted alliance began when the petty-bourgeois Mao regime, under the needs imposed by the Korean War, found itself compelled to take such far-reaching measures as to qualitatively alter the state structure. But the ascendancy of the proletariat has not yet been consolidated politically; the deformed workers state has not yet enjoyed the benefits of either a workers regime or proletarian democracy.

Strains in the alliance appeared early. When the workers began formulating their own demands and to move under their own power upon the destruction of Chiang's rule, they were ordered back. At a later stage, when peasants flocked from the countryside to the cities seeking work, they were ordered to return. In the absence of democratic means of expression, it is difficult to determine the depth and seriousness of such rifts. Nevertheless the fate of the Chinese revolution hinges on preventing them from deepening and disrupting the alliance.

In a country where the two classes are of such disproportionate size and social weight, the satisfaction of peasant needs becomes all the more decisive to the maintenance of favorable relations. As in the Russian Revolution, this was secured in the opening stage of the Chinese Revolution by fulfilling the peasant demand for redivision of the land. The peasantry responded by rapidly increasing production, thus ending the threat of famine.

But production on the basis of individual ownership was insufficient to meet the needs of a relatively isolated planned economy whose primary task was industrialization at an extremely high rate in an undeveloped country devastated by years of rapacious plundering imperialist invasion and civil war.

The problem was met by organization of collective farms at a forced-march pace.

For a number of reasons, some of which have already been indicated, this enormous step in the direction of establishing socialist forms in the countryside, likewise proved inadequate, and the still more sweeping measure of establishing "rural people's communes" was undertaken. Even though this "big leap" appears to have the approval of the peasantry, who are quite capable, as Chinese history eloquently demonstrates, of combining in elementary tasks transcending their individualistic outlook, it is by no means guaranteed that a retreat may not be required at the next stage.

The actual willingness or lack of willingness of the peasantry to proceed down the road of collectivization constitutes one of the most important limits to what the "rural people's communes" can achieve. To toy with the idea that the great mass of peasants have sufficient socialist consciousness to proceed smoothly from collective ownership to "ownership of the whole people," meaning the direct appropriation of the entire labor product by the state in return for the state's providing the means of subsistence to the peasantry, can break the bond between the workers and peasants upon which the whole existence of the workers state depends. Our support of the "rural people's communes" must, therefore, be governed by the readiness of the peasants to accept them.

The Central Committee's Dec. 10 resolution, while repeating the theoretical nonsense about a "transition from socialism to communism," itself warns against a series of mistakes stemming from this very theory. "This transition will be realized, by stages and groups, on a national scale only after a considerable time." Moreover, "It must be stressed that during the course of a necessary historical period commodity production by the people's communes and the exchange of

commodities between the state and communes and among the communes themselves must be greatly developed. Such production and exchange of commodities are different from those under capitalism, because they are conducted on the basis of socialist public ownership and not in an anarchic way on the basis of capitalist private ownership. Continued development of commodity production and continued adherence to the principle of 'to each according to his work' are two important questions of principle in expanding the socialist economy." Observance of such reservations about the "rural people's communes" would render meaningful the warning contained in the very next passage: "Some people, attempting to 'enter communism' prematurely, have tried to abolish the production and exchange of commodities too early, and to negate at too early a stage the positive roles of commodities, value, money and prices. This line of thinking is harmful to the development of socialist construction and is therefore incorrect."

Political Course of the Regime

In a workers state which replaces the system of individual capitalist enterprise with nationalization and planning, correct leadership and correct policies are decisive in the long run. The claim of the CCP that socialism has already been achieved in China and that the "rural people's communes" represent a transition form to communism, is not only a theoretical error of the most profound character but the source of gross blunders and mistakes in organizational and administrative practices. Its source is the theory of "socialism in one country" taken from Stalin by the leaders of the CCP. It has already produced a series of costly errors. As our 1955 resolution states: "The collision of Stalinism with each of the sequences of the permanent revolution on Chinese soil has deformed the revolution and obscured its proletarian nature."

The CCP leadership took power in the name of its program of a "bloc of four classes" and its Menshevik theory of "revolution in stages." It held the view that China had to pass through an allegedly "new" stage of capitalist development. However, when the imperialist forces marched toward the Yalu River and placed an economic blockade on China, the leaders were compelled to abandon the program they had proclaimed. In view of the backwardness of China's industrial development, the scarcity of capital and the low level of productivity, the CCP was obliged to introduce measures of the democratic revolution plus socialist forms.

This was not done in one step, however. The CCP leadership started by attempting to conciliate the bourgeoisie, the richer peasants, and even landlords. Whereas the New Economic Policy in the Soviet Union represented a necessary retreat after a period of thoroughgoing revolutionary struggle and "military communism" imposed by the Civil War, the Chinese Communist Party clung to its petty-bourgeois nostrums, abandoning them only under the enormous pressure of the developing revolution.

By 1955 the policy of permitting the remaining segment of Chinese capitalists to retain their exploitive position had to be given up. But the campaign against the "five evils" did not suffice to bring the growing sector of state industry into harmony with the

sector of capitalist enterprise which was also expanding. Under pressure of the Chinese working class and the deepening need to industrialize, the CCP began a campaign to "socialize" both industry and agriculture. Joint private-state enterprises in the cities and cooperatives and collectives in the countryside were started.

In the ensuing struggle between the capitalists and the state, the CCP oscillated between attack and conciliation. In January 1956 the CCP declared an end to guaranteeing profits for the capitalists. Within a month, under pressure from the urban rich, it rescinded the decree. But concessions to the bourgeoisie in no way solved the problem of accumulating adequate capital in the hands of the state for industrialization. For this it was imperative to turn to the peasantry and organize agriculture along collective lines.

The first peasant cooperatives were established on the pattern set for the joint private-state enterprises. Shares in the collective product corresponding to their private holdings were issued to the peasants. This served to preserve the layer of newly rich peasants which had arisen as a result of the division of the land. At the same time it fostered the appearance of a new layer of economically privileged peasants in the cooperative administration. In addition a new differentiation between rich and poor cooperatives began to emerge. Most important of all, these steps stood in the way of mobilizing the peasant masses on sufficient scale for the vast national projects required to raise productivity on the land, feed the peasants, supply them with the necessary simple tools and provide the surplus product needed to feed the cities and to industrialize.

Again the leadership of the CCP moved empirically and abruptly. It passed its now famous directive "in response to the enthusiastic demand of the mass of peasants" amalgamating the cooperatives into 26,000 "communes."

The resolution of the contradiction between the conquests of the revolution and the bureaucratic rulers is the task of the Chinese workers. It is expressed in the program of the vanguard calling for the institution of proletarian democracy. They will find additional bases of support for their political demands in the experience of the "communes" as these reveal on a new plane and in a still more glaring way the empirical, maneuverist, nationalistic and bureaucratic character of a petty-bourgeois leadership trained in the school of Stalinism.

Politically advanced workers in the U.S., while defending the progressive character of the "rural people's communes" and wishing them success, can best demonstrate their international class solidarity and help the Chinese people in the difficult tasks before them by resolutely continuing their own class struggle. In its general propaganda the Socialist Workers Party places high such demands as "Hands Off China," "Recognize the People's Republic of China," and "Extend Long-Term Credits to China." It will find it easier to advance the socialist cause the better it defends the Chinese revolution.

April 6, 1959.

Los Angeles, Calif.
April 9, 1959

Dear Farrell:

We received the copy of the Draft Resolution on the Chinese Communes prepared by the Secretariat.

Unfortunately, Jim is out of town this week in the desert and we will not be able to get together for a discussion on it until early next week.

From a first reading of the draft, I believe that the approach and the appraisal of the Secretariat expressed in the draft does not coincide with the thinking of the group here, as set forth in our original memorandum.

That means it will take some time to straighten out our differences, or at least to clarify them.

Comradely,

WFW

Los Angeles, Calif.
April 9, 1959

New York

Dear Farrell:

George has already informed you that the draft resolution on the Chinese Communes does not correspond to the views that we here hold. I want to reinforce this by saying that it is impossible to agree with the draft, either in its approach to the question or the theoretical evaluation made. In its present form the draft is entirely unacceptable. It would be tragic indeed if we, who are the only serious proponents of the theory and concept of the permanent revolution, should fail to recognize its actual unfolding in life on Chinese soil.

Unfortunately, due to certain circumstances, our NC group here will not be able to meet until next Tuesday to consider the draft. Noting, however, the very great divergence of views it would be a mistake not to allow all the time necessary for a thorough discussion of such an important question.

Comradely yours,

Arne

Los Angeles, Calif.
April 12, 1959

Dear Farrell:

We have all read the Secretariat draft and, as indicated in my letter of April 9, its approach to and appraisal of the Commune problem differs in certain essentials from the viewpoint expressed in our original Memorandum.

Enclosed is a commentary on the Draft by Liang, with which we all agree.

We believe that the Resolution should be much shorter than the Draft, consisting of the central points required at this time to make our main line on the Communes clear, leaving side issues, secondary questions and disputed aspects for later elaboration and discussion or treatment in articles for the press or internal bulletins.

If, for any reason, the Secretariat would prefer to have us prepare a Draft Resolution of this type for its consideration, we will undertake to complete it without delay. Or, if you think it would save further time, we would be willing to send some one from here to consult with the Secretariat to try and work out a mutually agreeable document on the spot in New York.

Fraternally,

William F. Warde

THE DRAFT RESOLUTION ON THE CHINA COMMUNES
A Commentary

By LIANG

1.

The draft largely repeats the sins and errors of the Roberts article. It is written, to a considerable extent, in the manner of a factional polemic against the Stalinists.

2.

Notably absent from the draft is an explicit, unequivocal assertion of the progressive character of the Communes as superior forms of socio-economic organization, proven by the great productive increases already achieved and the smashing of outworn social and family relationships. It is not impossible that the Communes will prove to be the prototypes of the organization of future Chinese society. The draft resolution says nothing of all this. It does, however, suggest that there may be a "retreat" from the Communes. But a retreat would not vitiate the progressive character of the Communes, any more than a retreat from collectivization in the Soviet Union would have vitiated the progressive character of the collective farms.

3.

A basic Marxist criterion for appraising the Communes was contained in Par. 5 of our March 15 proposal for a political line on this question, as follows: "The Communes have plowed up and pulverized the crust of archaic agricultural relations which has held China back for centuries. This was an indispensable condition for further advance. Then they have assembled the laborers on the land into the distinctively new form of cooperative colonies of varying dimensions and functions. These cooperative groupings have not only helped to rescue the poorest and most unfortunate from the scourge of hunger; they have already significantly increased the productivity of agriculture. This economic yardstick is for historical materialists the basic measure of progress." The draft resolution simply ignores this.

4.

The one explicit reference to the progressive character of the Communes is a perfunctory statement in the final paragraph of the draft -- "wishing them success." This apparent endorsement of the Communes is largely cancelled out, however, by the preceding paragraph which places "communes" in quotation marks and appears to limit their usefulness to "reveal(ing) on a new plane and in a still more glaring way the empirical, maneuverist, nationalistic and bureaucratic character of a petty-bourgeois leadership trained in the school of Stalinism." Anti-Stalinist factionalism here takes precedence over scientific analysis.

5.

On Page 7 of the draft, Par. 4, our support of the Communes is made to depend, not on their essentially progressive character, but on "the readiness of the peasants to accept them." How and by whom is this "readiness" to be determined? It might be recalled that we supported, with great consistency, the collectivization of farming in the Soviet Union despite peasant resistance. What we opposed was the rude and violent forcing of the peasantry by the Stalin regime. In the case of China's communes, there is no evidence so far of mass coercion by the Peking government, but considerable evidence of voluntary peasant cooperation.

6.

Bare comparisons of the Soviet bureaucracy with the Peking regime are mechanical and misleading. Peking has shown itself to be much closer to the masses and more responsive to their demands and needs than the Stalin regime in the Soviet Union during the great collectivization. The fact that the Communes are administered by elected councils, not by bureaucratic edict, is an important fact demanding a place in the resolution. Peking pays heed to popular complaints and modifies policies and practices accordingly. Not to acknowledge this is to lay ourselves open to accusations of carping criticism and irresponsible factionalism.

7.

The continuing drumfire of hostile comment on the Communes by capitalist propagandists places us squarely before the need to take a clear-cut position on what, essentially, is a class-struggle issue: FOR or AGAINST the Communes? The draft resolution fails to take such a clear-cut position. There is no need to repeat our well-known opposition to "bureaucratic deformations" (Par. 4 of the draft resolution). There is a need to make clear our support of the developing Chinese revolution in all its stages, the present stage being the Communes.

April 10, 1959.

EXCERPT FROM POLITICAL COMMITTEE MINUTES OF APRIL 14, 1959

CHINESE COMMUNES

Motion of Secretariat: That we recommend to Los Angeles NC group that they submit their version of draft resolution on Chinese communes.

Carried.

Los Angeles, Calif.
April 21, 1959

Farrell Dobbs
New York, N.Y.

Dear Farrell:

Enclosed herewith is our draft of a resolution on the Chinese communes. It was written after extensive consultation and discussion of all the NC members here. The draft was then gone over line by line at another meeting Sunday night, and approved by all.

In my letter of March 23 I outlined the reasons for our basic approach to this question and will not repeat them here. We have deliberately left out all critical and secondary points since we believe it to be essential for the resolution to be limited to the basic thesis points of analysis and affirmative support. Once this framework of the party's position is established, informational elaboration and criticism of the Chinese CP's theories and methods can find their proper place in articles.

Without a prior clear statement of basic position on the new developments, emphasis on details, secondary points and criticisms would be unbecoming to a political party that has long ago identified itself with the Chinese revolution, and recognized it as essentially an extension of the Russian revolution of 1917 in the unfolding process of the permanent revolution on an international scale.

We regard our proposed draft resolution not as a new statement of policy on the Chinese revolution, but rather as a supplement to our basic resolution adopted in 1955, applying its basic line to the evaluation of the new developments.

Fraternally,

Jim

James P. Cannon

JPC:jh
encl.

THE COMMUNES IN CHINA

(Draft Resolution Proposed by NC Members in Los Angeles)

1. The establishment of communes in China marks a new stage in the still-developing Chinese Revolution. This higher stage is the latest manifestation of the process of permanent revolution which continues to assert its power despite the deformations and limitations imposed on its unfolding by the Communist Party regime. The earlier stages were the overthrow of the Kuomintang regime, the expulsion of the imperialists leading to national unification, the redistribution of the land, the confiscation of capitalist property, the collectivization of farming. At each stage, the revolution has met the hostility of the world bourgeoisie. The sustained attacks on the communes by the organs of the class enemy testify to their recognition that the great step from the collectives to the communes is profoundly revolutionary. A class-struggle issue is clearly involved. This requires us to take a clear and unequivocal stand. Just as we proclaimed our support of the Chinese revolution in its preceding stages, so now we must declare ourselves revolutionary partisans of the communes. To support a revolution consistently, one must support its every advance.

2. In the pace of their formation, the communes represent a forced march. Within a few months 740,000 agricultural producers' cooperatives (collectives) were reorganized into 26,000 people's communes. These embrace more than 120 million households, representing about 500 million people. The basis for the change was the need to break through the too narrow framework of the collectives and provide that broader field required for the fullest mobilization and application of labor, in order to raise agricultural production quickly and carry out conservation and irrigation projects, build roads, houses, etc. As with all forced marches, hardships are inevitable. These spring, in the main, from the insufficiency of implements, machines and technical experience. For these deficiencies, the major blame rests on the imperialist foes of revolutionary China. After robbing the country for a hundred years, they now, by blockade and boycott, deny China access to markets and credits for machinery and equipment in the quantities needed to accelerate the country's economic transformation. Help from the Soviet Union and the East European countries is not enough to compensate for denial of access to Western capitalist markets and credits.

3. Despite the forced pace at which they have been established, the Communes mark a great advance for China, for the colonial peoples, for the working class of the world. The advance, by way of such collectives, is from barbarism to civilization, from starvation to a living diet, from enslavement for women to equality, from small-scale peasant farming to large aggregates of labor on the land and in the crafts, from individual helplessness to mutual aid, from hopelessness to hope for millions of rural families. The communes have plowed up and pulverized the crust of outworn social and family relations which have held China back for centuries. They have assembled the laborers on the land into distinctively new cooperative colonies of varying dimensions and functions. These cooperative groupings have not only helped rescue the poorest and most unfortunate from the scourge of hunger; they have already achieved great productive increases in farming and have made possible the completion of

great public works. This economic yardstick is for historical materialists the basic measure of progress.

4. The economic advantages deriving from the communes have already been proven. The 1958 cotton crop and the early rice crop were double that of 1957. The wheat crop was up 6 per cent. Work teams opened up 69 million acres to new irrigation. The latter is fifty times the irrigated areas of America's biggest river project, Grand Coulee, and six times that of India's spectacular Bhakra-Nangal on the Sutlej River in the Punjab. These and derivative accomplishments are due to the advantages of the new productive form of the commune: (1) The power of collective labor; (2) the utilization of formerly surplus and periodically idle laborers; (3) a more rational division of the available work; (4) bringing new land under cultivation; (5) conversion of labor into capital improvements through the creation of public works, especially flood control and irrigation; (6) more extensive development of the crafts and small local industry.

5. The great advance represented by the communes is not a leap to socialism or communism, as some Stalinist leaders have claimed and as some friends of the Chinese revolution sincerely but mistakenly believe. The communes are, however, a superior type of socio-economic organization, surpassing any yet installed in a predominantly peasant country. The large-scale utilization of cooperative labor and the resulting production of agricultural surpluses can serve to speed up the accumulation of capital imperatively needed for China's industrialization. In this way the communes can make an indispensable contribution to the building of the economic basis for socialism. In addition to the demonstrated economic advantages, they have accelerated the liberation of women from domestic slavery, opened up new avenues of cultural development, and are narrowing the age-old cultural gulf between city and country.

6. The communes are only a year old and still in the experimental stage. Certain changes have already been introduced into them following the resolution of the Central Committee of the Chinese CP last December. Their organization and operation will very likely undergo further modifications. But such revisions, and even a retreat from their present status, would not vitiate the progressive character of the communes any more than the retreat from collectivization in Poland has negated the progressive character of collective farms over private proprietorship and individual production.

7. It is incorrect to equate the advance to the communes with Stalin's campaign to collectivize farming in the Soviet Union in the early 1930's. We supported the collectivization at that time despite peasant resistance. What we opposed was the rude and violent forcing of the peasantry by the Stalin regime. We denounced the use of the Red Army to dragoon the peasants into the collectives and condemned the killings and mass deportations. The circumstances are different in the case of China's communes. There is no evidence so far of any large-scale coercion by the Peking government while there is considerable evidence of voluntary peasant cooperation. It is also important to note that the communes are administered by elected councils and that Peking has reacted more sensitively and quickly to administrative excesses and peasant complaints.

8. Summing up: The communes represent a new stage of the Chinese revolution. They are a higher type of socio-economic organization. They are helping to clear away the accumulated debris of an ancient past and to promote the powers of production necessary for the foundations of a new socialist society.

April 21, 1959.

PENG LETTER ON CHINESE COMMUNES

(The following are excerpts from a letter from Peng to J. dealing with the rural people's communes. The letter is dated April 7.)

The People's Commune perplexes people at present. It is a highly complicated issue not only because it is happening in China for the first time, but also because it is happening for the first time on such a large scale within the Soviet bloc. In addition, the rigid blockade of the Chinese mainland makes it hard to get dependable facts, especially about the real reaction of the big peasant mass. All we have are the CCP official reports. It is therefore difficult to understand the People's Commune correctly without an authentic Marxist method and without thoroughly absorbing the forty-year experience with collectivization in Russia and the ten-year experience with collectivization in Yugoslavia and the rest of Eastern Europe.

First, the basic principle governing our attitude toward collectivization of agriculture should be grasped. According to Marxist theory -- particularly Engels' opinion on the peasant question -- the peasantry is a transitional strata. Unlike the proletariat, the peasantry will arrive at socialized agricultural production through a long and complicated process. In the economically backward countries, this process is even more difficult and complicated. Therefore, administrative decrees or use of compulsion can absolutely not be relied on. One must use methods of persuasion, that is, of patiently showing the peasants the real benefits of collectivization.

For example, if a certain number of collectives (which the peasants have joined willingly, of course) demonstrate to the peasantry as a whole that, through the help of the workers' state, they can farm better and produce more and that the living standards of their members have improved, then more and more peasants will willingly join collective farms. Engels, Lenin and particularly Trotsky approached the question of collectivizing agriculture from this basic point of departure.

Around 1925, the Left Opposition, led by Trotsky, resolutely proposed a policy of collectivizing agriculture. But this was absolutely not the kind of collectivization that called for forcing the peasants immediately to join up. It was Stalin who started the latter practice in 1929. Stalin met with opposition from the big peasant mass and this resulted in great harm to agriculture. Trotsky vigorously denounced his policy as adventurism. In Eastern Europe collectivization was enforced on Moscow's orders. This resulted in peasant aversion for the collective farms. Tito and Gomulka relaxed collectivization as a concession to the peasants' dissatisfaction.

To sum up, the collectivization of agriculture is correct. It is a necessary stage of development from scattered agricultural production to socialized production. But it cannot be enforced by administrative orders or by measures of compulsion, but must develop in accordance with the will of the peasants and to the degree that collective farms can benefit them.

On this question, the Transitional Program says the following:

"The program for the nationalization of the land and collectivization of agriculture should be so drawn that from its very basis it should exclude the possibility of expropriation of small farmers and their compulsory collectivization. The farmer will remain owner of his plot of land as long as he himself believes it possible or necessary. In order to rehabilitate the program of socialism in the eyes of the farmer, it is necessary to expose mercilessly the Stalinist methods of collectivization, which are dictated not by the interests of the farmers or workers but by the interests of the bureaucracy." (Emphasis in original in Pioneer Publishers edition.)

At the beginning, Mao protected the interests of the landlords and rich peasants with his special, opportunistic New Democracy line. Then in 1956, he made a 180 degree turn from his ultra-right opportunism to enforce collectivization. The turn was apparently dictated not by the interests of the workers and peasants but by the interests of the bureaucracy.

The People's Commune is a step further than the collective farm and even more in the interests of the bureaucracy. The peasants are completely deprived of any freedom and in spite of the increase in production, their living standards are not improving but declining. Their health in particular is declining because of the extreme intensity of labor.

Basically, we are not against the form of the People's Commune, but against the current rabid enforcement of it by Mao's party. We consider the CP's course adventuristic and purely in the interests of the bureaucracy. The main purpose of the People's Commune is to industrialize by exploiting the peasant's surplus value to the greatest extent possible.

Of course, to industrialize is necessary. But it cannot be accomplished by depending solely on the exploitation of the peasants. The complete industrialization of China depends on the victory of the world revolution -- that is, on the help of the proletariat in the industrially developed countries. But it is just in this respect that Mao follows the Kremlin's opportunistic policy of "peaceful coexistence," which is also the policy of "socialism in one country." That is the root of sudden right and left turns (including extreme adventurism) that characterize the policies of Mao's party.

It should be realized that a backward country like China can eliminate the plights of the peasants and raise their living standards as human beings only through the victory of the international revolution. So we can say that the problem of the Chinese peasantry is an international problem.

We are not surprised at the opinions some people express about the People's Commune. They are influenced by Stalinist propaganda. Not being able to grasp the basic principles of Marx, Lenin and Trotsky about collectivization of agriculture, they easily jump to wrong conclusions on the basis of some of the CCP's exaggerated (claims of ?) achievements. This conceals a dangerous tendency to possibly capitulate to Stalinism, should they develop their ideology further. (As to the example cited by some people that the accumulation of

capital at the first stage of capitalism also depended on agriculture, etc. -- this shows that they can only use the theory mechanically.)

The conditions prevailing in the communes described by your friend in Hong Kong /a friend of mine, not a comrade -- J., though very simple, has considerable truth and is worth paying attention to. A letter that an overseas Chinese here received from his family contains this sentence: "Conditions for the government are better, but for the people they are deplorable!" This is simply expressed, but it reflects the general conditions in the communes -- the bureaucracy is better off, but the suffering of the people can hardly be described!

* * *

Note by J.: The conditions in the communes, as described by my friend and referred to in Peng's letter, are as follows:

"As to the People's Commune on the mainland, I only have heard about what is really going on. For instance, one has to work in order to be entitled to eat in the communal kitchen. There is nothing wrong with this in itself, since otherwise everybody would have to spend a lot of time to prepare two meals every day. In this way, time can be saved for increasing production. But in the rural area, the people work like cattle in the fields from dawn until night. Go to the communal kitchen to eat? You can only get vegetable and rice products. The diet that is served is completely without any consideration of the people's health. Each person's ration is three ounces of rice. How can a hard working person get enough to eat? People are constantly risking their lives to flee to Hong Kong by boat. They say that they would rather be beggars in Hong Kong than live inhuman lives on the mainland. At present, most people on the mainland are either doing farm work in the rural areas or producing steel in the cities. Everyone is undernourished and everyone's face is of a 'vegetable' pallor. In spite of the construction and production, the people are not for the government; they are angry but dare not speak. I can hardly make any judgment about the future of the regime."

* * *

A paragraph from another letter from Peng to J.:

"You mentioned to me that you have heard people say that the Chinese need only rice to eat, clothes to put on and security, but not democracy. Since the CCP has given them what they want, they support the CCP. This is similar to what the foreign capitalists (the ones that owned the factories in China) told the Chinese workers several decades ago: 'Before we came there was no work, you didn't have rice or clothes, now you work, you have rice and clothes, why are you still not satisfied?' But the Chinese workers were not satisfied with what the foreign imperialists gave them; they wanted to live like human beings and needed 'freedom' besides rice and clothes. Now the CCP -- and some foreigners too -- talk to the Chinese people as the foreign capitalists did before. We should realize that under slavery, the slaves had 'rice to eat and clothes

to put on' (supplied by the slave owners). Therefore, according to the viewpoint of these people, the slaves didn't need liberation and freedom. At present, the Chinese People's Commune is like a kind of concentration, or forced labor, camp. The people are forced to work and their work is arranged at the will of the bureaucracy. This is a new form of slavery under Stalinism. If we talk about socialism and liberation of mankind, we have to denounce this new form of slave system, and we can say that the political revolution in China is more imminent than in Russia."

#

ON THE CHINESE SITUATION

By Mei Lei-tar
(Hong Kong)

On December 10, 1958 the Eighth Central Committee of the Communist Party of China decided not to nominate Mao Tse-Tung as candidate for the chairmanship of the People's Republic of China at the coming session of the People's Congress. The official reason given for this was to let Mao "concentrate his energies on dealing with the questions of the direction, policy and line of the Party and the State" and to allow him "to set aside more time for Marxist-Leninist theoretical work."

Mao has been the unchallenged leader of China holding the power of the Party, government and armed forces since the beginning of the third Chinese Revolution in 1949. Why does he suddenly relinquish his monolithic power over state affairs? Certainly we Marxists are not satisfied with the official explanation. We must seek the real explanation from the inner logic of present Chinese society.

The main contradiction in present-day China is the contradiction between the bureaucracy and the masses. This contradiction was on the verge of creating a massive explosion during the "Hundred Flowers" campaign in 1957. The Chinese CP postponed this explosion by the following two measures. The first measure was the attack and suppression of those who really demand socialist democracy. Called "rightist," they were sent to the farms for "labor re-education." The second measure was to wage the "Great leap forward" campaign in order to convert workers' and peasants' dissatisfaction into the most intensified hard labor. Their return was a great deal of talk about the "glorious results" they had achieved.

These measures cannot eliminate contradictions. On the contrary they push them into a higher and more intensified plane. The intellectuals sent to the farms cannot endure the over-intensified hard labor, and have begun to complain that they are being misused. Workers and peasants work hard even at night. They camp at factories and in the fields but their reward is worse than ever -- the worker's wage has been reduced and the peasant can no longer get even enough to eat.

This wasn't enough, however. Mao went a step further. Under the most unfavorable economic conditions, he suddenly announced the setting up of the People's Communes. Within a short period of three months, over 500 million, or more than 99% of the peasants have been organized in over 26,000 "people's communes." The way of living of the peasants has been totally changed. Families (small-size families not the old patriarchal families which dissolved with the elimination of the feudal system) have been abolished. Fathers and mothers, sons and daughters, husbands and wives have been separated, reorganized into production and education units according to their age and sex. They now live along a strict military line. Cooking equipment has been confiscated and is being melted down to aid steel production. There are even no tables and chairs in some of the new dining halls. The peasants' mud houses and cottages have been demolished and are now being used as fertilizer. The peasants have to sleep under an open sky. Babies and young children have been taken away from their mothers and have been put in houses called "nurseries."

Here they are looked after by the old women who have little knowledge of sanitation and who are assigned to this work only because they can do no other. Mothers thus released from family work now work in the fields as hard as men and do not get sufficient rest.

Mao's non-Marxist and non-socialist policy is plunging 600 million Chinese people into slave conditions which are worse than any that could have existed in ancient Rome. Owing to the CP's tight military and police control, the Spartacus of our time has not appeared from among the Chinese masses, but the people's anger and resentment has reached a high point. Riots and chaos have occurred in various places (a peasants' riot in Wanchai village, Kwantung was witnessed in Macao). This kind of dissatisfaction and rebellion causes worry about the stability of their regime among the ruling caste of the Chinese Communist Party.

In nearly all newspapers and magazines in China there appear from time to time articles criticizing the "wrong thinking" of so-called "conservatives and retrogressives." The official line within the CP uses these articles in their struggle against those who oppose the "Great Leap Forward." From the content of these articles it is not hard to see that the opposition group extends into the Communist Party itself and is large and capable. Although political conditions in China do not allow a clear public expression of their views, we are able to see, through the articles that are designed to criticize them, that the oppositionists do not agree at all with Mao and Co.'s recent policies. They consider them to be left adventurist policies. They propose that the speed of socialist reconstruction should be geared to the existing possibilities of production and that development should proceed according to a rational plan. They oppose the official slogan -- "more, faster, better, and more economical" -- and think that the obsession with "more, faster" in quantity will inevitably lead to the greatest waste in quality.

Although they are under heavy attack and severe criticism, they are still working toward a correct course of action. According to Liu Shao-Chi's report on May 5, 1958, these same "retrogressives" held in the period from January to September 1957 a majority in the Party. They must be quite a large force in the Party and have some backing in the top leadership. We cannot be sure who is the center of this opposition, but many things indicate that Chou En-Lai is one of their supporters. Around Chou are grouped the leaders of several provinces.

The suddenness of the crisis which motivated the bureaucracy to establish the people's communes is reflected in the haphazard preparations for implementing the plan. It started in a few places. On an inspection tour of Hunan last August, Mao suddenly declared that the communes there were models for the whole country. Thus they were put into operation without any thorough preliminary discussion in the People's Congress, State Council or even in the Central Committee of the Party itself.

The bureaucracy was equally inefficient on the question of Quemoy and Matsu. Eisenhower's Quemoy policy was totally unsupported in the capitalist world and there were even dissidents among the American bourgeoisie. Had the CP kept a consistent blockade of

Quemoy and ordered the withdrawal of Chiang's army, Quemoy would have been liberated. But Mao and Co. organized people's demonstrations throughout China for the immediate liberation of Quemoy and Taiwan. Later, however, they merely announced a 12-mile territorial sea limit. When U.S. imperialism ignored this declaration and sent gunboats to Quemoy to invade the declared territorial water, Mao issued over 40 warnings but did not take any effective action. At last Peng Teh-Huai, the Chinese defense minister, ended the comedy by announcing that the blockade of Quemoy was not conducted in order to liberate the island but only to punish Chiang's army. He wanted to help Chiang's army to fight "arm-in-arm" with the People's Liberation Army against American imperialism. This opportunist, "tiger head, snake tail" policy aroused great resentment among lower cadres and even among the top leadership of the People's army itself. The dismissal of the general staff of the armed forces is the proof of this.

The differences and dissatisfactions in the Chinese CP in the last analysis are mainly the reflections of the dissatisfaction of the masses. It is this very pressure which forces Mao to relinquish his post as Chairman of the People's Republic of China. There is another important factor which should not be overlooked. This is the influence on China by the Soviet Union. We do not think that Mao's resignation is the result of Moscow's order as some bourgeois reporters contend. The Chinese Communist Party is totally independent in domestic affairs and is starting to share international leadership with the Soviet Union due to its huge prestige in the Far East. The Communist Party of the Soviet Union cannot control the Chinese Party any more, but Mao's policy of people's communes is so immature as to give Khrushchev a favourable chance to exert influence. Although he has not openly criticized the policy, he certainly has criticized some of the work being done inside the Chinese CP.

At the present juncture we should not overestimate the opposition within the Chinese CP. Basically this opposition still follows Mao's ideological line, though it has some differences in practical policy. The opposition still maintains Mao as the idol of the Chinese masses, but within the ruling circle of the Party it hopes to influence the ruling faction in the making of important decisions. This is the first phenomenon in the road to the disintegration of the top ranks.

We should also remain aware that Mao's power in the Party is not the same as Stalin's was. Stalin built his power on the ebb of the Russian revolution. He would not allow any honest criticism to be expressed. Mao, on the other hand, rode to power on the tide of the Chinese revolution and at the time of the decline of world Stalinism. Mao could not hold personal power as Stalin did and thus is subject to a certain amount of criticism from those around him.

Mao has decided to relinquish his post as chairman of the State. He was not defeated by his opponents, but withdrew of his own accord. Although he still retains the leadership of the Party, he can no longer hold unchallenged power. The decline of the central authority will inevitably lead to an intensification of the internal conflict within the ruling circle. Who will succeed to the post of Chairman of the People's Republic of China? This is an important factor in

the study of the direction which the Party's internal conflict will take. If Chou En-Lai were to succeed, gains will have been made by the "retrogressives." If Liu Shao-Chi were to succeed it would mean that the party-line "progressives" will hold power. If Chu Teh succeeds a temporary compromise will probably have been achieved. If it were very hard to elect a successor, the CP may revise the constitution and abolish the post of Chairman of the State.

At the present stage no matter how intensified the internal struggle is, the leadership of the Party will not lower Mao's prestige before the masses. They know pretty well that damage to Mao's esteem will greatly endanger the existence of their regime. This is why they hide the real causes of Mao's resignation. Sooner or later, however, the Chinese People will know those reasons. The dissatisfaction and resentment of the masses will have repercussions inside the party and intensify the struggle there. This process will lead to a huge anti-bureaucratic current and it is only through the mobilization of the masses in this way that socialist democracy will be realized.

(Received February 1959)

April 29, 1959

Los Angeles

Dear Jim:

At its meeting last night the Political Committee took the following actions:

* * *

Motion by Dobbs: To approve general line of Draft Resolution on Chinese peasant communes submitted by Secretariat and authorize Secretariat to edit draft in light of criticism made within framework of general line of resolution.

In favor

Regular -- Joe, Morris, Art P., George, Murry, Dan,
Tom, Farrell.
Alternate -- Allan H., Max, Harry, Joyce.

Motion carried.

Motion by Woods: That we adopt general line of Los Angeles resolution.

In favor

Regular -- Woods
Alternate -- Frances
Consultative -- Tim

Motion lost.

Motion by Hansen:

1. That we inform Los Angeles of PC vote.
2. That we propose series of articles in paper that would embody this line.
3. That we hold up series of articles pending consideration of any other procedural proposals Los Angeles may have.

Carried.
Against -- Woods.

Woods voted against because he objects to point 2 of Hansen's motion.

* * *

We hope to hear further from the Los Angeles NC group at an early date as requested in point 3 of Joe's motion.

Comradely,

Farrell Dobbs

FD:ra
Airmail

Los Angeles, Calif.
May 6, 1959

Farrell Dobbs
New York, N.Y.

Dear Farrell:

The NC members here held a meeting last night to discuss the motions on the Chinese communes adopted by the PC meeting of April 28. In view of the differences of opinion in the National Committee, as well as with international comrades, we believe it would be incorrect to proceed now to carry out Point 2 of the Herrick motion and commit the party publicly to a position on which the National Committee as a whole has not yet expressed itself.

Our traditional procedure, where new events have produced serious difference in the Political Committee, has been to call a Plenum to determine publicly-stated party policy, pending action by a Convention. The most important example was the procedure taken in 1939 when a dispute arose over the Stalin-Hitler pact. The editors of the New Internationalist at that time partly committed the party to a position which was strongly objected to by a minority of the PC. A Plenum was held as soon as it could be assembled -- within a matter of weeks as I recall. The Plenum took a different position and then opened up a discussion in the Internal Bulletin, in preparation for the Convention.

The dispute which arose at the outbreak of the Korean War was referred to an enlarged meeting of the PC, with a number of out of town members present. This was accepted at the time as a substitute for the full Plenum which could not be arranged for technical reasons.

In both these procedural examples cited we were confronted with war situations which did not permit the party to remain silent or ambiguous for too long a time. The issue that has arisen over the evaluation of the Chinese communes, and our attitude toward them, does not appear to us to have such urgency. The normal procedure would be to call a Plenum to discuss the question and determine policy, pending the final action of the party Convention. This does not appear to be feasible in the present situation for a number of reasons:

1. We are almost on the eve of the party Convention where the dispute will have to be considered.
2. There is no imperative need for an immediate public statement of position on a situation that is still evolving, and concerning which there is such a big difference of opinion as to the essential facts of the situation.

It is regrettable, of course, that we have not been able to make a public announcement with general agreement even earlier; but a further delay, until the full membership of the National Committee and the party Convention have had an opportunity to consider the question, would be far better than precipitate action which might turn out to be a mistake.

From these considerations, our proposals on procedure are the following:

1. That the Chinese question be placed on the agenda of the party Convention.
2. That the discussion be opened in the Internal Bulletin; and that all material circulated to NC members up till now -- the PC resolution and the resolution of the Los Angeles NC members; the correspondence between Los Angeles and New York; the Roberts article; the communications of Peng and Mei Lei-Tar and the comments of John Liang -- be published in the first Bulletin.
3. That a second Bulletin contain discussion articles, to which the Los Angeles members will offer contributions.
4. That a Plenum be called, immediately preceding the Convention, to consider the question and make recommendations to the Convention.
5. That it be left to the Convention to decide whether the party shall make a public statement at the present time and, if so, what kind of a statement; and whether and how party discussion of the question shall be continued after the Convention.

* * *

It appears obvious to us that there are differences of opinion both in the party leadership and in our international movement -- not only as to what stand should be taken on the new developments of the Chinese communes, but also as to what the ascertainable factual information about them is and what it signifies. Serious differences of this character, on such an important question, speak very strongly against precipitate public action which is in no way necessitated by an emergency situation.

The communes have been operating for less than a year; the results of the experiment, whether positive or negative, or both, will be much more clearly established later in this year. At that time, more factual information will undoubtedly be available to verify or refute present conflicting opinions as to what is really taking place under the new developments.

As we see it, the discussion will have to be continued even after the Convention; and new information will have to be assembled as it becomes available, and reported to the party, before the dispute can be finally resolved to the satisfaction of the party.

* * *

As indicated by all that has been said above, the Los Angeles NC members do not think it necessary or wise to approach the discussion of the disputed question with a sense of urgency, or to terminate it precipitately. It should not be pushed ahead of the questions on the Convention agenda which are really urgent, nor be allowed to develop into a hard and fast conflict dominating the Convention.

The Convention will handle this question best if all concerned will recognize the primary necessity of a clarifying, informational and educational discussion of the Chinese revolution as a whole, and the place of the new development within it.

Fraternally,

Jim

James P. Cannon

JPC:jh

EXCERPTS FROM THE POLITICAL COMMITTEE MINUTES OF MAY 12, 1959

PLENUM

Los Angeles letter of May 6 placed before committee.

Dobbs outlined thinking that has developed on procedural matters relating to the commune question in Secretariat.

Los Angeles comrades now seem to feel that considerably more facts will have to come in before anyone can reach a definitive conclusion about the communes and that therefore we may be able to place this question in a subordinate position at the convention. But the fact remains that the party is now confronted with two opposing resolutions which it is proposed go to an NC meeting on the eve of convention. It is also proposed -- and we agree on the need -- to submit the two resolutions and related material to the membership for discussion.

This situation faces us with going into a convention with two opposing resolutions that imply differences in policy. If members of the party begin to take sides on the two resolutions, this can affect the selection of delegates -- and without either adequate discussion or agreement in the leadership on what the differences are, their relative importance and how they should be handled. Thus the danger does exist that we can fall into a situation all of us want to avoid if possible -- a convention so exclusively preoccupied with the commune question that we wind up with a major diversion from discussion of agenda points which have a more direct and immediate bearing on party tasks and perspectives for the next period.

Consequently we would like to advance the date of the National Committee meeting and hold it as early as possible in order to define the areas of disagreement and decide what to do about them, including handling news developments involving the communes in the press. In addition, we think it would be advantageous to handle the communes themselves in a similar manner, if we can reach agreement on some formula, rather than to postpone public consideration indefinitely. If this can be done before the convention, it would help to prevent the question from becoming preponderant at the convention.

We feel that it would be advantageous if we could have a consultation on these problems among the national leadership generally as soon as possible. We would like to avoid postponing the convention, but we also think that scheduled so closely after an NC meeting it might turn out to be advisable for a number of reasons to postpone it.

Motion of Secretariat:

1. To poll NC on possibility of holding Plenum here in New York on week end of May 23 and 24.
2. To refer commune question, including treatment in press, to Plenum.
3. To recommend that Plenum consider postponing convention until latter part of August.
4. To authorize Secretariat to prepare NC material on commune question for publication in pre-convention discussion bulletin.

General discussion.

Motion by Morris: To accept procedure outlined in Los Angeles letter of May 6.

Vote on Secretariat's Motion:

Regular -- For: Joe, Bob, Murry, George, Farrell, Tom, Dan.

Against: Morris, Woods.

Alternates -- For: Harry, Dick, Allan, Dave, Frances.

Consultative -- For: Tim.

Vote on Morris' Motion:

Regular -- For: Morris, Woods.

Against: Joe, Bob, Murry, George, Farrell, Tom, Dan.

Alternates -- Against: Harry, Dick, Allan, Dave, Frances.

Consultative -- Against: Tim

#

Los Angeles, Calif.
May 14, 1959

Farrell Dobbs
New York, N.Y.

Dear Farrell:

The NC members here held a meeting last night. All present had previously been informed of the PC proposal to hold a Plenum later this month and to postpone the Convention till the latter part of August -- and had had time for informal discussion and consideration of the proposal.

All present (including the branch organizer) were strongly opposed to the proposal from every point of view. I will list here the different reasons upon which there was unanimous agreement.

1. It is most important to hold the convention on the date previously set in order to deal with pressing problems on the agenda. It is especially important and urgent to draw a balance sheet of the three-year experience with the regroupment policy; straighten out misunderstandings which have arisen in the party ranks; close the door by official Convention action on at least incipient trends manifested in the ranks toward conciliationism; and give a pretty clear indication of what we think is possible and not possible in the electoral field in 1960.

The unemployment question, the international report and other points on the agenda must also be given full consideration without any further delay, and nothing must be permitted to interfere with it. Any further delay would only add complications and difficulties.

2. From a practical point of view, which also involves important political considerations, a change of the date of the scheduled Convention and the combined Encampment would hopelessly disrupt plans and preparations already made by comrades in the field. The plan to follow the Convention with a week's Encampment has aroused great enthusiasm among the comrades here, and I assume this has been the case also in other parts of the country.

Seventeen comrades here have already made arrangements for vacation leaves to attend the Convention; some of them plan to stay over for the Encampment. As you know, such plans to take vacation leaves from employment have to be made in advance; in some cases, at least, it would be extremely difficult to re-arrange them. Postponement of the event would be a big disappointment.

The combination of the Convention with a week's Encampment on the dates previously scheduled would give us a wonderful opportunity to consolidate the party and build up party morale and solidarity. A ten-day free association of so many comrades coming together from all parts of the country, is just what we need now.

3. The prospect of NC comrades making a long trip across the country for a Plenum in the latter part of this month, and then repeating the same pilgrimage two months later, appalls everybody. As far as the Los Angeles people are concerned, it simply can't be done.

4. The Los Angeles Local is heavily committed financially to its own week-long Vacation School and Camp in a new location beginning with the Labor Day week-end. L.A. comrades who are scheduled to give lectures at the national Encampment must also carry the same load at the Encampment here. It is simply too much to expect them to attend the Convention and the national Encampment and then shuttle back to L.A. for the local Encampment, even assuming there might be a day or two's travel time intervening between the two events.

The date of the L.A. Encampment cannot be changed. The project cannot be abandoned without doing a heavy and, as we see it, a needless blow to local plans. The annual Vacation School and Camp is the big deal of the year for the L.A. Local, which is counted on to yield financial as well as political gains.

5. It is our opinion that the postponement of the convention, in order to deal with the Chinese communes first, at a hastily arranged Plenum, would not serve the apparent purpose of preventing the subordination of our pressing national problems to the communes question at the party Convention. A further delay of the Convention would tend to shift the party interest and discussion away from the pressing national problems -- which have to be decided without any unnecessary delay -- to the commune question.

This question is by no means so urgent, since from neither point of view does it involve any change of political policy. Moreover, it is most likely that a large number of NC members in the field are not ready to make a quick and definitive decision on this question.

* * *

The NC comrades here offer a number of alternative proposals.

1. Proceed with the Convention and national Encampment as scheduled.

2. Call a Plenum to meet a full day before the Convention, to decide on how the commune question is to be handled at the Convention and to draw up a rigid time schedule for Convention Reports and discussion -- to make sure that all the pressing questions of national policy are not shunted aside by unlimited debate on one single question or another.

(It must be borne in mind that we have a wind-fall advantage in this respect. With the Marcyite screwballs out of the way, intelligent and responsible leaders can agree on an agenda and time schedule and rigidly adhere to it. Far more can be done in three days than would have been possible in a week under such conditions as prevailed at the last Plenum.)

3. If it is agreeable to the PC, at least one of the Los Angeles NC members will come to New York a week before the Convention -- to work in a small commission to see if a common resolution on the communes can be worked out for presentation to the Plenum and the Convention.

4. If a common resolution cannot be worked out at this time, our proposal will be that the discussion of the communes at the Convention be placed on the agenda after the questions pressing for decision have been dealt with -- and then confined to time-limited reports from representatives of each point of view, and such discussion as time may allow.

5. If, as is quite probable in our opinion, a majority or a strong proportion of the Convention delegates do not feel they have had sufficient information and discussion to take a definitive decision -- the Convention, after hearing the reports and such limited discussion as may be possible, may refer the question to further discussion in the Internal Bulletin, and further consideration by the next Plenum.

6. Meantime, we see no reason why the different resolutions and conflicting opinions cannot be reported to the party in the Internal Bulletin. With good will all around, it won't hurt the party a bit to see a discussion of some differences over a new and difficult question taking place, while the party leadership is cooperating on the main lines of current party policy and arranging a business-like Convention to deal with them.

7. The only motivation we can see for the proposal for a quick Plenum and a Convention postponement is a sense of urgency to make a public statement of party position. We do not see this urgency at all. Of course, it is inconvenient for us to remain silent while all others are rushing into print. But the explanation for our tardiness can be simply stated: It is a new and difficult question. Information is scanty and some of it conflicting. We are studying and discussing the question, and the party will express its opinion in due time. In the meantime, our political support of the Chinese revolution, and our criticism of the theories, methods and practices of the bureaucratic leadership -- all of which have been clearly stated many times -- remain as before.

* * *

One final point is worthy of serious consideration. Jerry's letter of May 11, which was received this morning, emphasizes our responsibility to the international movement, and particularly now to the expanding and promising movement in Great Britain. We have to keep that in mind all the time. We will render a great service to our international movement if we show that we know how to deal with a difference of opinion on a new question in a responsible manner, without permitting it to get out of hand and disrupt cooperation and solidarity in the general work of the party.

I have previously asked Jerry to send you copies of any letters he may send to me, and vice versa, so that there is full information on both sides. In case he neglected to do that this time, I am forwarding here a copy of Jerry's letter of May 11.

Fraternally,

James P. Cannon

JPC:jh
encl.

C O P Y

-59-

11th May 1959

J.P.Cannon

Dear Jim,

I have just seen a copy of your May 6th letter to Farrell and I hasten to assure you that we share very much the sentiments you express on the conduct of the discussion around the Chinese communes.

We have not yet studied the relevant material, but we want to make it clear that a public break in the S.W.P. over this matter would be a real tragedy for our international movement and especially for us in Britain.

At the time of writing our membership is nearing 500 (the largest ever for our movement in Britain) -- we shall attain an even greater increase by the end of the year.

The comrades must understand that our movement is tied in a thousand ways to you in the U.S. We appreciate all the terrible difficulties with the prolonged isolation, but comrades must try to understand that a break on this issue will affect us here also.

That is why your letter so correctly in our view takes into account the overall position. We also need to bear in mind the Pablo frontal attack which in my view must be answered.

We hope that Rose has now fully recovered and is around and about again.

Our warmest regards to you both.

Jerry

New York, N.Y.
May 19, 1959

TO ALL N C MEMBERS AND ALTERNATES:

Dear Comrades,

PLENUM AND CONVENTION DATES

With 26 of the 27 regular NC members voting in the poll, the PC proposal to hold an early Plenum has been rejected by a vote of 12 in favor and 14 against. Apart from the formal vote the poll showed an early Plenum to be out of the question because of the number of NC members who indicated they could not attend.

Among alternative proposals submitted in their reply to the poll, the Los Angeles NC members suggested: "If it is agreeable to the PC, at least one of the Los Angeles NC members will come to New York a week before the Convention -- to work in a small commission to see if a common resolution on the communes can be worked out for presentation to the Plenum and the Convention."

On the basis of the outcome of the poll and in the light of the alternative proposal of the Los Angeles NC members, the PC at its May 19 meeting adopted the following motions:

"1. To hold the Convention on June 26, 27 and 28 as previously scheduled.

"2. To schedule a Plenum at the camp, beginning at 10 am on Thursday, June 25.


"3. To concur in the recommendation of the Los Angeles NC members that at least one of them come to New York a week before the Convention to work in a small commission to see if a common resolution on the communes can be worked out for presentation to the Plenum and the Convention.

"4. To authorize the Secretariat to make the necessary arrangements for the commission.

"5. To refer the commune question to the Plenum on the basis of the outcome of the commission's work."

Further information about comments from NC members in the poll will be supplied in the May 19 PC minutes.

Comradely yours,



Farrell Dobbs
National Secretary

FD:ra
Airmail