

Land Policy and Systematic Transformation in Chinese Rural Areas (1950—1978)

POLITIQUE DE TERRE ET TRANSFORMATION SYSTÉMATIQUE DANS LES RÉGIONS RURALES CHINOISES (1950_1978)

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Abstract: Based on historical review of the Chinese rural land policy from 1950 to 1978, we looked back the devious journey undergone in Chinese rural areas during this period. At first, the landlord's ownership was transferred into the peasant's ownership; and then private ownership was transferred into public ownership. The radical transformation of property right and process of agricultural cooperation went against the economic law and the wills of the mass peasants, which led to laggard rural productive forces and long-term low peasants' income level. During the policy transformation process, political and ideological factors played the predominant role, which led to harmful results. The experiences in this period demonstrated that the economic developmental model and systematic arrangement in Chinese rural areas should satisfy the peasants' free wills and protect the peasants' essential interests. Only in this way could the Chinese rural economy gain fast development.

Key Words: Chinese Rural Areas, Land Policy, System Arrangement, Ideology, Interests

Abstrait: Basés sur une révision historique de la politique de terre dans les régions rurales de Chine de 1950 à 1978, nous avons mené un examen rétrospectif sur le parcours détourné qu'avaient traversé ces régions pendant cette période. Au début, les terres des propriétaires fonciers avaient été transférées comme propriétés des paysans ; et puis, les propriétés privées avaient été transféré comme propriétés publiques. La transformation radicale du droit de propriété et le processus de la coopération agricole après la réforme de terre allaient à l'encontre de la loi économique et de la volonté des paysans, ce qui avait conduit à un retard des forces productives dans les régions rurales et à un niveau de revenu très inférieur pour les paysans chinois. Dans ce processus de transformation de politiques, les facteurs politiques et idéologiques avaient joué un rôle prédominant, d'où des résultats défavorables. Les expériences que nous avons tirées pendant cette période montrent bien que le modèle du développement économique et l'arrangement systématique dans les régions rurales de Chine doivent satisfaire la volonté des paysans et protéger leurs intérêts fondamentaux. C'est aussi le seul moyen qui permette aux régions rurales de Chine de réaliser un développement rapide.

Mots Clés: Régions Rurales de Chine, Politique de Terre, Transformation Systématique, Idéologie, Intérêts

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1. PREFACE

The issue of land policy in Chinese rural areas is a complex one. In this article, we divided land policy evolution in Chinese rural areas into 3 periods according to its development from 1950 to 1978.

(1) The land reform period (1950-1952).

(2) The agricultural cooperation period (1952-1958).

(3) The people's commune period (1958-1978).

Based on history review of the rural land policies, we studied the rural systematic transformations during these periods and found out that essential changes took place in the aspects of land ownership, land usufruct and land management system. We analyzed the reasons for the policy evolution from 1950 to 1978 and its political, economic and social influences on Chinese rural areas.

The systematic evolution which took place from 1950 to 1978 was forcefully implemented by national governmental policies. As Mr. Zhang Hongyu, a Chinese scholar said, "Enforcement was once the primary character of the rural systematic arrangement in China". (Zhang Hongyu, 2002, p.40)

From 1950 to 1952, the national government changed the landlord's ownership into the peasant's ownership by land reform policies and realized the goal of "whoever cultivates possesses his own land", which led to great changes of economic and political relations in Chinese rural areas.

The elementary producers' cooperative period from 1953 to 1956 was the interim of the second systematic transformation in Chinese rural society. Although private land ownership was theoretically granted and the peasants got their membership in the agricultural producers' cooperative by sharing their means of production, the transformation of land usufruct and strict restriction of the members' private plots had already made property right relation inordinate. Started from 1956, Chinese rural areas stepped into the second systematic transformation period, in which the peasant's land ownership was changed into the collective land ownership. From 1956 to 1958, under the direction of the national ideological mainstream and the agricultural cooperation policy, Chinese rural areas fastened and finally completed the transformations of property right structure and property right relationship. The systematic arrangement and managing way of "partnership and equal output" was realized. In 1958, Chinese rural areas came into the people's commune period. During this period, "integration of government administration with commune management" was implemented in political life and "one large and two collectivizations" was carried out in economic life. "One large" meant the scale of the productive organization was large; the "two

collectivizations" referred to the expropriation of the peasants' means of production and part of their means of livelihood. The socialistic public ownership went to its extremity and the economic development in Chinese rural areas also went to a close, rivalless, and long-term laggard period.

This article analyzed China's rural land policy and its systematic changes from 1950 to 1978 by historical, political and policy study methods. It summarized the political and economic development of Chinese rural areas before 1978 and drew its experiences and lessons. Also, it provided evidence for the necessity and rationality of the policy adjustments and systematic transformations in the Chinese rural areas after 1978 from a historic and experimental perspective.

2. THE LAND REFORM PERIOD (1950-1952)

Background of the land reform

2.1 Conditions of Chinese Rural Land System before 1949

Before 1949, the landlord's ownership was practiced and the landlord economy system predominated in the Chinese rural areas. There was much irrationality in land ownership, land usufruct and land management power, which was reflected with the following aspects.

2.1.1 Rural Lands Were Highly Centralized

On June 14th 1950, Liu Shaoqi gave a report on the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference's (CPPCC) Second Meeting of the First National Conference. In his "Report on the Problems of the Land Reform", he mentioned, "The landlords and kulaks, who account for less than 10% of the rural population, occupy 70% to 80% of the rural lands, thus they exploit the peasants ruthlessly. On the other hand, the poor peasants, farm laborers, middle peasants and other laborers, who account for more than 90% of the rural population, occupy only 20% to 30% of the lands. They toil all the year round without enough to eat and wear." (Central Committee's Documents Research Institute, Vol. 1, p.290-291) After the People's Republic of China was founded, the National Statistical Bureau and some history scholars made a statistical account on the land possession conditions before 1949. A history scholar, Guo Dehong came to a conclusion after his studies, "The landlords and kulaks, who account for 9.43% of the total rural households and 11.55% of the total rural population occupied 50.64% of the total lands. The middle peasants, poor peasants, farm laborers and other laborers, who account for 90.66% of the total rural households and 88.41% of the total rural population, occupied 48.03% of the total lands. (Guo Dehong, 1989)

Economic historian Zhu Yuxiang made a conclusion after synthesizing various researches that in the past, the landlords and kulaks, who accounted for 10% of the rural population, occupied more than 50% of the rural lands. While the poor peasants, farm laborers, middle peasants and other laborers, who accounted for more than 90% of the rural population, occupied less than half of the lands. In some areas of southern China, the land centralization phenomenon was even more serious. The landlords and kulaks occupied 70%-80% of the rural lands, and the lands they owned were of the best quality. While the middle peasants, poor peasants and farm laborers' lands were mostly coarse lands. (Zhu Yuxiang, 1997, P36) From these facts we can see that the high-level land centralization phenomenon before 1949 was a big problem in Chinese rural areas.

2.1.2 Land Ownership and Land Usufruct Were Obviously Separated

Under the landlord's ownership, the landlords and kulaks occupied more than 50% of the rural lands, with only 10% to 40% cultivated by themselves. (Zhu Yuxiang, p.73) On the other hand, the middle peasants, farm laborers and poor peasants cultivated 60% to 90% of the rural lands but most of the lands didn't belong to themselves. There came up the phenomenon of "those who cultivate lands have no lands; while those who own lands do not cultivate lands", (Zhu Yuxiang, p.73) which showed the obvious separation of land ownership and land cultivation.

2.1.3 The Rural Economic Relationship was Irrational.

Under the economic system of the landlord's ownership, the tenant-peasants were economically connected with the landlords by tenancy. Taking advantage of the lands they owned, the landlords extracted high land rents from the poor peasants, which occupied about 50% of the total tenancy output. It was once said that "when the whole year's output came out, the landlords got half and the cultivators got half." In some areas, the landlords got 70% or even 100% of the peasants' whole year's outcome. (Zhang Chaozun, 1991, p.39) In many areas, the landlords forced the peasants to submit additional rent, preliminary rent, and bonded rent besides the land rent. Sometimes they even bore *corvée* and taxes. Furthermore, the peasants were forced to give unpaid labor to the landlords or serve in their houses. Heavy land rents and exorbitant levies set the peasants in extreme misery and they were penniless. From 1929 to 1932, approximately 17.7 million peasants were starved to death all over China. From 1946 to 1947, only in three provinces of Guangxi, Guangdong and Hunan, 17.5 million peasants were starved to death. (Zhang Chaozun, p.40)

The land system before 1949 seriously restricted the development of rural productive forces, which caused slow productivity and severe land desolation. Only in 1946, 58 million mu (1mu = 0.0667 hectares) of land

were laid waste in Henan, Hunan and Guangdong provinces altogether. There was big decrease in both total output and unit outcome of crops. (Zhang Yongquan, 1985, p.45)

The laggard rural productive forces and needy living conditions in the rural areas before 1949 was the primary motivation for the outcome of the land reform policy in 1950.

2.2 Policy Program of the Chinese Communist Party

The Chinese Communist Party always regarded solving land problems as her main task to rescue the poor peasants and develop rural productive forces. As early as in the Chinese revolutionary war period (The Chinese revolutionary war period is from the 1920s to the 1940s. It includes the Land Revolutionary War, the Anti-Japanese War and the Liberation War under the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party), the Chinese Communist Party had tried various kinds of rural land policies to stimulate the peasants' producing enthusiasm and push forward rural economy. The land reform policy after 1949 was the extension of her rural land policy in the past to a large extent. It was an important part of the Chinese Communist Party's program of new democratic revolution. It was also one of her policy measures to consolidate the new regime and get involved in the economic realm. (Feng Kaiwen, 1999)

2.2.1 Contents of the Land Reform Policy

In June, 1950, the Chinese Communist Party held the Third Plenum of the Seventh Central Committee and passed the resolution of implementing land reform all over the country. The central government of People's Republic of China promulgated "the Land Reform Law of People's Republic of China", "the Organizing Statutes of Peasant Associations", "A Decision on Classifying Rural Classes" and "the Land Reform Statutes of Towns and Suburbs". These ordinances definitely prescribed the guideline, route and specifics of the land reform, which became the guidance of the land reform.

The "Land Reform Law" stipulated that the aims for the land reform were "to abolish the landlord's land ownership of feudalistic exploitation; carry out the peasant's land ownership; release rural productive forces; develop rural production and open up the way for the industrialization of new China." (Central Committee's Documents Research Institute, 1992, No.1, p.336)

The specific contents of the land reform were as follows:

First, confiscating the landlords' lands, maintaining the property of the rich peasants and protecting the interests of the middle peasants.

The “Land Reform Law” prescribed that the landlords’ lands; farm animals; farm tools; redundant foodstuff and their superfluous houses in the countryside be expropriated. But all the other properties could be maintained. The kulaks’ self-cultivated and employee-cultivated lands and other properties were protected from encroachment. The middle peasants’ lands, including the rich middle peasants’ lands and other properties were protected from being encroached.

Second, realizing the peasant’s land ownership

The “Land Reform Law” prescribed that all the expropriated lands and means of production be taken over by the peasant associations and distributed among the peasants who had no lands or were lack of means of production. But the ones that were prescribed to be turned over to the state according to the “Land Reform Law of the People’s Republic of China” could be reserved. The distribution of lands was practiced with township or administrative villages which were equal to township as its basic unit. Based on previous farming lands, the lands were distributed by quantity, quality and location. Also they were transferred and adjusted according to rural population. The former landlords also got their shares. After the land reform, the peasants became land owners. The government issued land ownership certificate to the peasants and admitted the land owners’ free management, trade and lease of their lands.

2.2.2 Effects and Evaluation of the Land Reform Policy

2.2.2.1 Results of the Land Reform

The rural land reform after 1950 changed the landlord’s land ownership to the peasant’s land ownership. At the end of 1952, the land reform in the newly liberated areas (note: liberated areas: the areas that were occupied by the Chinese Communist Party) came to an end. Combined with former liberated areas, about 300 million peasants who had few or no lands before the land reform got 700 million mu (note: 700 million mu (亩) equals to about 115 million acres) of land altogether. Also, they were exempted from heavy land rents which were required by the landlords annually. The peasants got their own live stocks; farm tools; houses and foodstuff. (Lin Yunhui, 1989, p.127)

The land reform made the cultivator possess their own lands, which aroused the peasants’ producing enthusiasm greatly. The peasants then worked day and night, launching a patriotic movement to increase production. In the winter of 1950, over 98 thousand ponds, 22.5 thousand dykes, 4139 kilometer-long canals and 1940 ditches were constructed only in Hunan province. More than 7.5 million mu of land benefited from these activities. (Lin Yunhui, 1989, p.130) Rural economy was dramatically recovered and developed. Compared with 1949, the total value of agricultural production was increased by 48.5% by the end of 1952. From 1949 to 1952, the total output of foodstuff was

increased by degrees of 29.8% each year. During this period, the total output of cotton was increased by degrees of 134.8% each year. (Zhang Chaozun, p.40)The peasants’ living was greatly improved.

2.2.2.2 Evaluation of the Land Reform Policy

The implementation of land reform policy from 1950 to 1952 was the first rural systematic transformation since People’s Republic of China was founded. The landlord’s ownership was transferred into the peasant’s ownership by governmental power. (Feng Kaiwen) Some scholars thus described the land reform movement as a “revolution”. (Zhang Hongyu, p.41)

The land reform policy was economically beneficial to the tenant-peasants. The Chinese Communist Party changed the landlord’s ownership to the peasant’s ownership by governmental force, which met with the vast poor peasants’ wills and interests. The peasants got their own share of land and obtained their living insurance, thus this policy was warmly supported and welcomed by them. The poor peasants and middle peasants were greatly inspired by the policy, which promoted the development of rural economy.

The land reform policy clearly regulated that kulak economy be maintained and that middle peasants be protected. The kulak economy was the capitalistic economy in rural areas. Since it had relatively strong throughput, maintaining kulak economy was beneficial to the development of rural productive forces and recovery of national economy. Also, maintenance of kulak economy was good for making kulaks keep neutral during the land reform, which could better protect the middle peasants and eliminate their concerns on production and development. It made their hearts at ease and strengthened their confidence of further development and production, which was beneficial to the stability of rural society. (Cheng Tongshun, 2000, p.11)

The Chinese Communist Party’s land reform policy rearranged land resources and set up a more “fair” society, which satisfied the poor peasants’ strong desires for lands. “New relationship between the government and the peasants was established. The new regime not only strengthened its control over the peasants, but also expanded and solidified its foundation in the rural areas”. (Zhang Hongyu, p.41) Therefore, the land reform from 1950 to 1952 was not only an economic transformation, but also a political movement.

3. THE AGRICULTURAL COOPERATION PERIOD (1952—1958)

3.1 Background for the Outcome of the Agricultural Cooperation Policy

3.1.1 New Conditions after the Land Reform

After the land reform, there appeared two trends in the rural areas. First, the rural production relation was adjusted and rural production was greatly promoted. The living conditions of former middle peasants and rich middle peasants were continuously improved. The former poor peasants and farm laborers got free lands and their living conditions were also improved. Second, the 'polarization' phenomena appeared after the land reform. Some of the peasants became rich within a short time. They bought lands, employed laborers and enlarged their management scale. These people became the "neo-kulaks". However, a small part of the rural households were bogged down due to a series of reasons such as being short of funds and producing tools, natural disasters, or being not able to manage their lands well. Thus they had to sell their lands or borrow money to live from hand to mouth.

3.1.2 To Realize Socialistic Modernization Was the Vested Goal of the Chinese Communist Party

To realize socialistic modernization was not only the established goal of the Chinese Communist Party, but also the deep-seated reason for the implementation of the agricultural cooperation policy after 1952. After the land reform, although the peasants' producing and living conditions were improved, the general economic situation of the rural areas was not optimistic. The rural land management was based on household, which was small-scale and lack of funds. The average amount of money one rural household could afford to buy producing tools in one year was 3.5 yuan RMB. (Cheng Tongshun, p.15) The peasants' producing tools were rough and they were starving for live stocks and farm tools. The independent farming method based on the household unit made the peasants unable to construct irrigation and water conservancies. Thus the peasants' abilities to withstand natural disasters were rather weak. According to the survey on 15432 rural households in 23 provinces after the land reform, the average occupation of means of production per household is as follows. (See Table 1)

The development of industry required agricultural support in funds, market, farm produces and labor force. However, after the land reform the level of rural productive forces was still quite laggard. Few farm produces were left surplus and their commodity exchange rate was rather low. According to the survey on 13245 households from 18 provinces in 1955, the average commodity exchange rate of each rural household's farm produces was only 25.7%. The highest rate of the rich households was no more than 43.1%. (Tong Dalin, 1956, p.23) The lagging rural development condition showed that agriculture was not able to support industrial development.

Faced with the trend of rural "polarization" and the demand from industry, the Chinese Communist Party decided to change production relations gradually, adjust

land ownership and land usufruct, and organize the peasants to carry out the agricultural cooperation policy in order to develop rural productive forces and promote industrial accumulation. In Sep. 1951, "The Central Committee of the Communist Party of China's Decision on the Implementation of mutual Cooperation in Rural Production (Draft)" pointed out, "In order to overcome the difficulties in separate management; in order to help the poor peasants rapidly increase their production and gain ample food and clothing; in order to help our country obtain much more commercial foodstuff and industrial raw materials than we do now; in order to enhance the peasants' purchasing power and make our country's industrial products more salable, we must 'organize' and stimulate the peasants' enthusiasm in mutual cooperation. Such kind of mutual cooperation was practiced by collective laboring based on the peasants' private estates, and its developmental foreground was agricultural collectivism or socialization." (Central Committee's Documents Research Institute, Vol. 1, p.510)

3.2 Controversies among the Chinese Communist Party's Leadership

In the early 1950s, the leaders of the Chinese Communist Party had vehement controversies about agricultural cooperation and how long it should take to transfer from private ownership to collectivization. The focus of the controversy was whether or not to turn into socialism immediately after the land reform.

Some of the leaders, with Liu Shaoqi as their representative thought that first of all, the neo-democratism was a long-term course. The peasants' private ownership shouldn't be easily waved, weakened or negated. Kulak economy should be granted and capitalism within the rural areas should be developed. Second, considering the relationship between industrialization and agricultural cooperation, agricultural cooperation couldn't be realized until industrialization was accomplished. Only when rural productive forces and state industrialization were developed to a certain degree could socialistic rural collectivization be carried out under the free wills of the peasants. (Liu Yong, 2001, p.174-175) However, some of the leaders, with Mao Zedong as their representative thought that kulak economy should be limited and socialism could be realized by "new productive forces which came out of collective management and that private ownership would be waved by socialism". (Liu Yong, p.176-177)

At the end of this controversy, Mao won out. On Dec. 15th, 1951, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China passed the strategic design for carrying out socialistic construction in the rural areas, that was, to take a direct transformation to socialism after the land reform by the route of the mutual aid group to the elementary agricultural producers' cooperative to the

advanced agricultural producers' cooperative, without undergoing the long term neo-democratism construction period from modern industrialization to agricultural collectivism to socialism. (Central Committee's Documents Research Institute, Vol. 1, p.510-522)

3.3 Policy Contents and Effects of the Agricultural Cooperation Period

3.3.1 Policy Contents and Effects of the Mutual Aid Group Period (1951-1953)

The mutual aid group period was from Dec. 1951 to Nov. 1953. The mutual aid group was a type of simple cooperative group in which rural households carried out independent management. The lands, live stocks, and other kinds of means of production were privately owned and the farm produces belonged to the land owners. There were two kinds of mutual aid group: temporary group and permanent group. Mutual cooperation was realized by public usage of labor force, live stocks and farm tools under the rule of equivalent exchange to conquer the difficulties existed in dispersive individual management.

Although the mutual cooperation group was the Chinese Communist Party's transitional form of realizing socialistic target in the rural areas, the basic systems of the peasant's land ownership and the family-based land management were not changed during the mutual cooperation period. Lands, farm tools and other kinds of means of production or produces still belonged to the peasants themselves. The distribution of farm produces were connected with land ownership and labor quantity the members provided. Mutual cooperation was based upon the peasants' free wills, thus it was accepted by the peasants.

The establishment of mutual aid group mitigated the problems of labor force and producing funds within individual household management and helped some poor peasants solve the difficulties in production, which led to improved output and private incomes of the peasants. (See Table 2 and table 3) The mutual cooperation group developed very fast. From 1951 to the end of 1952, the number of rural mutual aid group increased from 4.08 million to 80.26 million. The number of participated household increased from 21 million to 453.64 million. (Chen Tingxuan)

3.3.2 Policy Contents and Effects of the Elementary Agricultural Producers' Cooperative Period (1953-1956)

3.3.2.1 Background of the Policy

In the early 1950s, with the beginning of the planned large-scale economic construction, the contradictory between industrial construction demand and agricultural production supply, especially foodstuff supply became more and more severe. The Chinese

Communist Party then put forward the policies of state monopoly for purchase and marketing of farm produces to guarantee industrial demand for farm produces. Meanwhile, the Chinese Communist Party began to consider fastening the process of adjusting rural production relationship in order to fundamentally meet the demand of industrialization. Thus the process of transformation from mutual aid group to elementary agricultural producers' cooperative was started and the steps towards agricultural cooperation were fastened.

Faced with the conflict between foodstuff supply and industrial demand, Mao Zedong thought that dispersive laggard individual agriculture was not able to resolve the vital foodstuff problem, which was concerned with national economy and people's livelihood. He emphasized that production relationship should be changed and that private ownership should be transferred into public ownership to realize socialism and promote the development of productive forces. Only in this way could the conflict between supply and demand be settled. (Mao Zedong, 1977, Vol. 5, p.117, 120)

3.3.2.2 Policy Contents

In Oct. and Nov. of 1953, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China passed the "Decision on the Implementation of Planned-Purchase and Planned-Supply of Foodstuff" (The Central Committee's Documents Press, 1993, vol.4, p.477-488) and "The Government Administration Council's Order on the Implementation of Planned-Purchase and Planned-Supply of Foodstuff". (The Central Committee's Documents Press, 1993, Vol.4, p.561-564) These two documents prescribed that the peasants must sell their harvest to the state according to certain quantity, variety and price set by the government, which was called "requisition by purchase". If it happened to be a poor harvest year or the government purchased too much foodstuff so that the peasants couldn't feed themselves, then the government would take the circumstances into consideration and sell the state treasury stored foodstuff to the peasants, which was called "reselling to the place of production".

With respect to land ownership, private land ownership was admitted and the peasants committed their shares by confiscating their means of production, such as lands and farm tools. The land usufruct belonged to the cooperative. The cooperative members were allowed to keep private plots, but the acreage per member owned couldn't supersede 5% of the total average acreage of the whole villagers. With respect to producing management, the elementary cooperative carried out the systems of unitive management and collective laboring. Job contract was put into effect within the production team. The production team managed a fixed amount of lands and dominated a fixed number of producing tools. Under the guidance of the elementary cooperative's producing plan, each production team arranged their producing plan

according to their own conditions. The elementary cooperative made a unitive distribution of products under the rules of “distribution according to work load” and “profit sharing according to share”.

3.3.2.3 Policy Adjustment

The elementary agricultural producers’ cooperative took an immoderate development in the winter of 1954 and spring of 1955. In some areas, people were aroused to precipitate establishing the elementary cooperative against the tenet of free will and mutual benefit, which led to panic and dissatisfaction among the peasants. In 1954, the central government over levied 3.5 billion kilogram so-called “surplus grain” from the peasants in non-disaster areas, (Lin Yunhui, p.242) which seriously encroached the peasants’ interests and led to various degrees of tension within the rural areas. In a certain province, 111 peasants committed suicide because of the forceful foodstuff purchasing. (Lin Yunhui, p.537) In many areas, peasants began to slaughter batches of pigs and cows and sell their livestock, which severely affected rural production.

In order to solve these problems, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China adjusted the policy and put forward the three-word guideline of “pause, withdraw and develop”, (Lin Yunhui, p.545) which was the policy of pausing development, making appropriate constringency and resuming development according to different conditions in different areas.

3.3.2.4 Policy Analysis

The elementary agricultural producers’ cooperative was the beginning of China’s agricultural cooperation process. Also, it started the second systematic transformation in the rural areas after the land reform. Although it theoretically granted private land ownership, the change of land usufruct and land management indicated that the relationship of property right had already been blurred. The Chinese rural land system was transferring from the peasant’s ownership into the collective ownership.

Since mutual cooperation on base of the peasant’s interests and free wills was encouraged during the early period of the elementary cooperative, there were some active achievements in producing performance. In the earliest 1 or 2 years, the elementary cooperatives increased their production by 20% to 30%. (See Table 4) (Bo Yibo, 1991, p.326, 343) However, generally speaking, although the elementary cooperative enhanced the poor and lower-middle peasants’ income, it reduced the rich peasants’ income. (See Tale 5) Although distribution according to work and land reward was combined in product distribution, which gave attention to the interests of the rich peasants who had more lands, the blurriness of property right still harmed their interests in general. The impetuous rash advance during the cooperation process also violated the peasants’ free wills of mutual benefit, which brought dissatisfaction from the interest-harmed peasants. Still,

due to the numerous peasants’ faith, support and dependence on the Chinese Communist Party after the land reform and the Communist Party’s ideological indoctrination, the elementary agricultural producers’ cooperative gained development despite some problems.

3.3.3 Policy Contents and Effects during the Transformation to the Advanced Agricultural Producers’ Period (1956-1958)

3.3.3.1 Policy Background

In the spring of 1955, the Central Rural Working Department began to rectify the elementary cooperative according to the policy of “pause, withdraw and develop” under the guidance of Deng Zihui. However, Mao Zedong changed his attitude and criticized the constringency endeavors. He emphasized that the elementary cooperative should be greatly developed, which led to a controversy among the central leaders. Deng Zihui pointed out that the administrative command style within the elementary cooperative’s developmental process was against the principle of free will and mutual benefit. The main reasons for the intense situation in the rural areas were agricultural cooperation, monopoly purchase and selling of foodstuff and reform on private ownership. Also, he said that it was meaningless to implement large-scale production without realizing mechanization first. However, Mao Zedong argued that the intense situation in the rural areas was a reflection of the rich and rich-middle peasants’ resist to socialism. He said, “In recent years, a spontaneous force of capitalism within the rural areas developed day by day. Neo-rich peasants showed up everywhere. Many rich-middle peasants are striving to become rich peasants.…… If we let this tendency continue, the polarization phenomena within the rural areas will become more and more serious”. He thought that this problem could only be settled by agricultural cooperation. (Mao Zedong, Vol. 5, p.187) Also, he insisted the necessity of industrialization’s demand from agricultural cooperation. He claimed that “the problems grown out of agricultural cooperation could be basically settled within 3 five-year plan periods ……” (Mao Zedong, Vol. 5, p.181-182) and criticized that Deng Zihui and some other comrades were making a “right opportunism” mistake.

Under the advocacy of Mao Zedong, the agricultural cooperation process went to its climax under the clamor of anti-“right opportunism”. By May 1956, the total amount of households that participated in the agricultural producers’ cooperative reached 11013, which occupied 91.2% of the total households in rural China. Among them, those who participated in the advanced agricultural producers’ cooperative occupied 61.9% of the total household amount. (Lin Yunhui, p.576) By the end of 1956, this number became 87.7% and reached 96% in 1957. (Cong, Jin, 1989, p.68) The transformation which was supposed to take 3 five-year plan periods according to the original plan came out to

be finished within only 4 years.

3.3.3.2 Policy Contents

The transformation from the elementary cooperative to the advanced cooperative was another rural systematic transformation after the land reform. With respect to the ownership of means of production, the cooperative members' primary producing materials became public property of the advanced agricultural producers' cooperative according to the principle of socialism. When the advanced cooperative expropriate farm animals, large-scale farm tools and other tools which formerly belonged to the cooperative members but were not in use when managing family sidelines, their price should be decided according to the local conditions and paid to their previous owners by stages. Private plots were allowed.

With respect to management system, producing responsibility and collective laboring were practiced. Production team was the basic laboring unit of the advanced agricultural producers' cooperative, which was in charge of certain amount of lands, farm animals and farm tools. Production contracts and overfulfillment encouragement were allowed within the production teams.

With respect to distribution system, land reward was abolished and products were distributed by the advanced agricultural producers' cooperative according to the cooperative members' work.

3.3.3.3 The Problems

During the transformation from the elementary agricultural producers' cooperative to the advanced agricultural producers' cooperative, lots of problems came up because of the authority's lack of objective estimation of the actual productive forces and consideration on the interests of various strata within the rural areas, which led to the later "cooperative-withdrawal storm". Around autumn harvest of 1956, cooperative-withdrawal happened in 8 provinces including Liaoning, Anhui, Jiangxi, Sichuan, Henan and so on. In Ningbo, Zhejiang province, those who withdrew from the advanced cooperative occupied 5% of the total cooperative member households; with 20% more households had the intension of withdrawing from the advanced cooperative. Among the 302 cooperatives in Xianju county, Zhejiang province, 116 cooperatives were completely disintegrated; 55 were partly broken down; the number of cooperative-participated households declined from 91% to 19%. The cooperative-withdrawal phenomena also happened in some areas of 12 counties in Henan province. In May 1957, within one of the most seriously cooperative-withdrawal affected counties in Jiangsu province, Tai county, collective cooperative-withdrawal happened in 62% townships and 46% advanced cooperatives. (Lin, Yunhui, p.211-213)

The primary reasons for the cooperative -withdrawal

were as follows: (Lin, Yunhui, p.214-216)

First, after the transformation to the advanced agricultural producers' cooperative, land reward was abolished and the peasants' income was generally balanced. However, the incomes of the rich-middle peasants, who were previously in high level; and the poor households, who were lack of work force, were obviously reduced. In the economic crops areas, the rich-middle peasants occupied about 15% to 20% of the total rural households. They were in high production and income level before they joined the advanced cooperative because of their advantage of "two strengths and three goodnesses" (strong labor force, strong funds, good techniques, good possession and good planning). After they joined the advanced cooperative, the distribution relation was changed and their advantages were lost. Their interests were harmed, so they stoutly asked to withdraw from the cooperative.

Second, during the transformation from the elementary agricultural producers' cooperative to the advanced cooperative, the cooperative members' scattered trees, fruit trees and reed ponds were all expropriated by the advanced cooperative, which led to intense dissatisfaction within the rural households. Also, the prices of the members' farm animals, farm tools and fruit trees were not reasonably converted and paid to their previous owners as scheduled, which led to interest loss of the members, especially some rich-middle peasants. They suffered most from the transformation, thus they decided to withdraw from the advanced cooperative.

Third, because of the different producing conditions among various brigades and teams, the incomes were also different. The rich villages, brigades or teams were strongly dissatisfied with the forceful expropriation of their extra lands, foodstuff, live stocks and farm tools. Therefore, the peasants in such villages, brigades or teams asked to break up or withdraw from the cooperative. According to the statistic of Ru County in Henan province, peasants of 17 cooperatives struggled to break up or withdraw from the cooperative, which occupied 48.5% of the total advanced agricultural producers' cooperative of this county. (Lin, Yunhui, p.215)

Fourth, the advanced cooperative disobeyed the usual natural pattern and forcefully changed the regular farming law, which led to output reduction. According to a certain village in Hebei province, the farming tradition was to plant wheat in spring and corn in autumn. However, after the transformation to the advanced cooperative, the knee-high corn was destroyed and sweat potatoes were planted. By then, the proper time to plant sweat potatoes had already passed. The anti-natural discipline actions led to extremely poor harvest that year.

Fifth, the level management in the advanced cooperative was rather backward. The producing plan was extremely unreasonable, the labor management was

in chaos, the accounts were in a mess and the work division was unbalanced, which led to income reduction of the peasants, especially the rich-middle peasants. So they asked to withdraw from the advanced cooperative.

3.3.3.4 Policy Adjustment

Aimed at the cooperative-withdrawal storm, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Department issued a series of policy documents to adjust the temporal conditions. The primary contents of these documents were as follows:

First, with respect to the means of production, part of them, such as fish ponds, orchards and trees could be temporarily managed by their original owners without being expropriated by the advanced cooperative. The cooperative members were allowed to raise a certain amount of large farm animals and the cooperatives must pay rents to the owners if they use the members' farm animals. A certain amount of lands were distributed to the members to plant vegetables.

Second, with respect to management method, the previous way of stereotyped management was replaced. Large-scale, small-scale or individual management were all allowed especially in sideline production.

Third, with respect to producing management, collective laboring was no longer advocated. Production teams were allowed to make job contracts, output contracts and finance contracts. Also they were allowed to carry out the system of production quota overfullfillment encouragement. Work and power were divided between advanced cooperative and production teams. The rule "production contract was made within the production team; job contract was made within the group; and field management contract was made within the household" was implemented. The household was able to make farm work contract, but it couldn't be the unit of producing contract.

Forth, with respect to distribution system, work division was practiced and workpoint system was carried out. Some work could be contracted with individual members and profits was divided pro rata. Some work was allowed to be managed individually, assuming sole responsibility for his profits or losses and the cooperative only took away certain amount of the accumulation fund or public welfare fund.

Fiftn, the cooperative members were able to manage family sidelines as long as this didn't affect the cooperative's production. Also, the members had the freedom to withdraw from the cooperative.

3.3.3.5 Effects of the Policy Adjustment

The various policies above didn't fundamentally solve the advanced cooperative's malady of centralized management. Also, the cooperative members' work was not properly connected with their gains of production and distribution. The distribution problem that harmed the peasants' interest was not completely solved, which

led to dissatisfaction among the peasants. In some areas, such as Yongjia in Zhejiang province and Yancheng in Jiangsu province, peasants spontaneously implemented "fixing of farm output quotas for each household", which was to make job contracts with production groups or households on the basis of making job or output contracts with production teams. The "fixing of farm output quotas for each household" achieved good results. The responsibility with such management was clear and definite, thus the producing quality was improved. The way of management was simple, thus the fussy work of allocation and accounting by the cooperative or team cadres was unnecessary. The cooperative members could plan and manage the production themselves, which effectively combined collective management with family management. The labor reward was tightly connected with labor amount people afforded, which conquered equalitarianism to a large degree and was welcomed by the peasants.

However, the method of "fixing of farm output quotas for each household" aroused controversy. Some people thought that socialistic rural economy should only be collectively managed instead of dispersively managed. Collective management was socialistic, while dispersive management was "work on one's own", which was a reflection of small-scale peasant economy and was not socialistic. (Liu, Yong, p.44-45) While the other people argued that "fixing of farm output quotas for each household" was a beneficial exploration to cooperative system and that during temporal period of hand laboring and live stock farming, "large-scale management wouldn't bring many benefits". (Liu, Yong, p.46-47) As a result of this controversy, those who were against "fixing of farm output quotas for each household" won out. "Fixing of farm output quotas for each household" and "work on one's own" was regarded as leading to the capitalistic direction, which was called a guideline mistake and was suppressed finally.

3.3.3.6 Analysis and Evaluation on the Agricultural Cooperation Policy

The agricultural cooperation movement in the 1950s was the second systematic transformation of the Chinese rural society after the land reform. The essential of this movement was the thorough transformation of property right relationship——to change the land and primary means of production from the peasant's ownership to the collective ownership. The transformation of property right consequently brought up changes of management and distribution system. As a result, the peasant's interests were harmed and their producing enthusiasm was plastered.

However, such kind of land ownership transformation was historically destined to happen in China. The agricultural cooperation policy in the 1950s was the Chinese Communist Party's ideological choice. Since it was the Chinese Communist Party's target to realize socialism in China, individual rural economy

was rectified to lead for a collective way. Ideological factors made the Chinese Communist Party come up with “left-leading” ideas in her policy-making. She denied that private land ownership after the land reform could promote the development of productive forces. Instead of regarding the peasant’s land ownership as a new economic growth point and giving it protection, she destroyed it factitiously within a short time, which seriously went against the wills of the peasants.

The agricultural cooperation policy in the 1950s came out as a countermeasure to the “polarization” phenomena after the rural land reform. However, the temporal rural condition was that the rich-middle peasants were “not that rich actually. Compared with the poor peasants, their lands were a little bit more fertile; they’ve got a little bit more farm animals and farm tools; and they’ve got a little bit more opportunities to earn money. Their being a little bit richer was a result of their hard work.” (Bo, Yibo, p.362) The poor peasants’ transformation into low-middle and rich-middle peasants through hard work was a progress and was the result of rural economic development. However, such development was regarded as a potential trend of “polarization”. The tendency and harmness of social polarization were magnified. When the rich-becoming peasants asked to protect their own interests during the process of cooperative participation and cooperative combination, they were attacked as “anti-agricultural cooperation” and having “capitalistic spontaneity”.

The implementation of the agricultural cooperation policy was a reflection of the Chinese authority’s mistaken adjustment on rural producing conditions. After the land reform, the level of Chinese rural productive forces was still very low. The unsubstantial industrial basis seriously checked the development of productive forces in the rural areas. Under such circumstances, simple laboring cooperation and gradual enhancement of rural productive forces would be in better accordance with the actual conditions. The implementation of agricultural cooperation policy and the increasingly fastened step to realize cooperation made the development of production relationship go against the development of productive forces and the peasants’ free wills. It hampered further development of rural productive forces.

The agricultural cooperation policy in the 1950s was a political measure to a large extent. The leaders in power regarded controversies within the communist party and the peasants’ dissatisfaction with cooperation as the class struggle antagonism between socialism and capitalism. They mechanically used the concepts of class struggle to explain these phenomena and made economic problems politicalized. Furthermore, they carried out economic policies with political forces. Mao Zedong’s personal ideas took sovereign position during this process.

The agricultural cooperation policies after the 1950s reflected the age-long equalitarian ideology of “equal

the noble and humble; average the rich and poor”. It reflected the trend of “partnership and equal output”. Such kind of trend was awarded the “laurel” of “socialism”, and was practiced in the form of governmental policy and system.

4. PEOPLE’S COMMUNE PERIOD (1958—1978)

In 1958, the Chinese rural areas stepped from the agricultural cooperation period into the people’s commune period.

4.1 Background of the Policy in the People’s Commune Period

4.1.1 Influence of the International Communist Movement

The left-leaning ideological trend of the international communist movement was the international background of China’s “people’s commune” movement.

The hasty longing for the early coming of communism was always a problem in the communist movements. (Bo, yibo, p.768) In the 1920s, Lenin once tried to transfer the Soviet Union which was still small-scale peasant economy directly into communism. Stalin also made claims every now and then during the Soviet Union’s economic construction period that socialism would be completed soon and that people should be ready to transfer into the communist period. In 1958, Khrushchev claimed that the Soviet Union should catch up with and overpass the United State within 15 years from then on, and that Communism should be realized within 12 years starting from 1959. The ideology of Soviet Union who was then “the leading goat of socialism” had prodigious influence on the other socialistic countries. On the Moscow conference with 64 communist parties and labor parties’ representatives being presented in 1957, Mao Zedong claimed that China would catch up and surpass the United Kingdom in steel and other primary industrial production output within 15 years, (Bo, yibo, p.691) which made the thought of “running into communism” overflowed in China.

4.1.2 The Result of the Expansion of the Chinese Communist Party’s “Left-Leaning” Thought

The people’s commune was the result of the rapid expansion of the Chinese Communist Party’s “left-leaning” ideology under the leadership of Mao Zedong. In the 1950s, some of the Chinese leaders, with Mao Zedong as their representative, thought that the advantage of socialism was that it could better promote the development of productive forces. The larger the

scale of public ownership, the better it could promote the development of productive forces. The ownership by the whole people was the most advantageous form of public ownership; while the collective ownership was the basic form of public ownership. Basic form of public ownership was doomed to transfer into the most advantageous form. In 1955, Mao Zedong mentioned in the comments of his book *Socialistic Climax in Chinese rural areas*, "small-scale cooperatives were lack of manpower, lands and funds, thus they couldn't use machines to implement large-scale management. Such kind of small cooperatives were bondages to the development of productive forces, so that they shouldn't be maintained for long and should be incorporated gradually." (Mao Zedong, Vol. 5, p.257) Also, Mao criticized those who were "anti-rash advance" were "right-leaning". During the later period of the agricultural cooperation movement, the "left-leaning" thought within the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China was more and more serious. These ideologies and theories led to the people's commune movement within the Chinese rural areas in 1958.

4.1.3 The Result of the "Great Leap Forward" Movement

The people's commune was the result of the "Great Leap Forward" movement that happened in the late 1950s in China. In the late 1950s, China carried out the "overtaking Great Britain and the United States" strategy and launched the "Great Leap Forward" movement. In the aspect of the agricultural field, the "Great Leap Forward" movement mainly behaved as constructing irrigation and water conservancy. The construction of irrigation and water conservancy required uniform planning of lands, large quantities of labor forces and funds for large-scale projects. Also, cooperation and coordination of cooperatives, villages, townships, districts or even counties were required. Thus the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China adjusted the scale of agricultural cooperatives and division of administrative districts to settle these problems. The "leap forward" movement of constructing irrigation and water conservancy "stimulated the idealistic sparkles of Mao Zedong and other central leaders to change the organic structure at the grass-roots level of the rural areas." (Bo, Yibo, p.728)

4.2 Policy Contents and Results of the Early People's Commune Period

4.2.1 Policy Contents

The characters of the early people's commune period were "one large, two collectivizations and three transformations" and "integration of government administration with commune management".

The "one large" had two reflections. First, the scale

of people's commune was larger than the previous agricultural producers' cooperative. It was established with township as its basic unit. Usually there was one commune per township. Second, the management range of the people's commune was larger than the agricultural producers' cooperative. The people's commune was a grass-roots unit which made comprehensive management of farming, forestry, animal husbandry, side-line production and fishery. Also, it uniformly administrated workers, peasants, businessmen, students and soldiers. The "two collectivizations" referred to the expropriation of the commune members' means of production and part of their means of livelihood. Except a few living appliances, the commune members should hand in all of their private plots; fowls; livestock and family sidelines to the people's commune. Private ownership of means of production was completely eliminated. The "three transformations" referred to organized militarization, action for battle readiness, and collectivization of lifestyle. All the commune members from 18 to 25 age-old were organized under military system and joined in "battles" by corps under the unitive guidance of the people's commune. The supply system was put into practice. Public dining halls were set up. The distribution system was the combination of salary and foodstuff supply. The "integration of government administration with commune management" referred to the combination of people's commune with basic rural regime. The people's commune was established with the township as its basic unit. Every township had one people's commune. Township and people's commune were integrated. The people's commune was not only an economic organization, but also the grass-roots unit of the national regime.

4.2.2 Result and Analysis of the Policy

4.2.2.1 Stirring up the "Wind of Public Ownership"

The people's commune's early policy of "one large, two collectivizations and three transformations" and "integration of government administration with commune management" resulted in many abuses. The worst one was the "wind of public ownership" (Central Committee's Documents Research Institute, Vol.5, p.130) During the establishing process of the people's commune, over decades of, or even more cooperatives which had different managing patterns, economic conditions and income levels were combined together. Unitive accounting was carried out. Poor cooperatives and rich ones shared common property. The previous rich cooperatives suffered losses. The commune members' income reduced obviously, which hurt their producing enthusiasm seriously. The previous poor and laggard cooperatives could share other cooperatives' means of production so they gained benefits due to the combination of cooperatives. They mistakenly thought that as long as the extent of public ownership was raised, their living standard would be enhanced.

During the people's commune period, all the means of production like lands, work force and part of the means of livelihood belonged to the commune. The people's commune could allocate and transfer them arbitrarily. Even national departments which were above county level could allocate and transfer the commune's property. According to the Central Rural Department's report in August 1961, within the past few years, 25 billion yuan of property were indiscriminately transferred from the peasants and rural collective organizations. On average, about 48.89 yuan was indiscriminately transferred from each peasant. Meanwhile, the average annual expenditure of peasants at that time was only 68 yuan per year. (Bo, Yibo, p.765) The free and equalitarian transformation of rural materials and work forces severely harmed the producing and living conditions of the peasants.

During the early times of the people's commune period, the commune members' private plots; poultry; farm animals; self-supporting flaky fruit trees and some large farm tools were all expropriated. Even some of the peasants' means of livelihood, such as houses; clothes; quilts and furnitures were arbitrarily transferred. Family sidelines and small pedlars were banned for the reason of eliminating bourgeois private ownership of means of production, which seriously harmed the peasants' interests. The combined distribution system of income and foodstuff supply during the early people's commune period made equalitarianism prevail in the rural areas. Public dinning hall system was carried out, which made public finance defalcate. The commune members' producing enthusiasm and working efficiency declined generally. The system of integration of government administration with commune management was carried out. The people's commune intervened in the economic affairs of the villages and brigades by administrative orders. The villages and brigades were forced to execute orders from superior levels. In such conditions, the peasants choked with silent fury.

The people's commune movement resulted in the phenomena of free appropriation of others' laboring harvest to a large extent. In the "wind of public ownership" deluged areas, the dissatisfied peasants began to slaughter batches of farm animals; poultry; livestock and destroyed their farm tools. Large numbers of work forces fled to other places. Lands were extensively cultivated and vast amount of lands were laid waste. The output of foodstuff became less and less. The peasants lived in privation and innutrition. Diseases prevailed in large scale in the rural areas.

4.2.2.2 Proneness to "Boasting and exaggeration"

Another abuse of the early people's commune period was the proneness to "boasting and exaggeration". In order to "surpass Britain and the United States" within a couple of decades of years, the central government not only made high production target for industrial materials; but also sky-high output plan for foodstuff

and other farm produces. Faced with the tremendous political pressure from the higher-up, the magistrates had no way but to ingratiate higher authorities and bodies and make false reports on foodstuff output. Overrated production value led to the government's higher requisition by purchase, which led to excessive foodstuff buying by the state. In 1959 and 1960, the rate of state monopoly purchase for foodstuff increased rapidly to 39.7% and 35.6% of the total output respectively. However, the actual total foodstuff output had been declined rapidly. In 1959, the total output of foodstuff was 340 billion jin (1 jin = 0.5 kilogram), which was 60 billion jin less than it was in 1958. In 1960, the total foodstuff output was 53 billion jin less than it was in 1959. The cotton output was 39.375 million dan (1 dan = 100 jin = 50 kilogram) in 1958. It declined to 34.176 million dan in 1959 and further declined to 21.258 million dan in 1960. The output of oil crops in 1960 was hardly half of it was in 1957. (Wei, Zhenming, 1988) The vast requisition by purchase under the condition of rapid reduction of foodstuff output stimulated panic and dissatisfaction among the peasants. The evil consequences of upgrading the people's commune came up gradually.

4.2.2.3 Policy Adjustment and Result of the Policy in the People's Commune Period

The excessive actions in the early people's commune period brought lots of bad results. Thus the central committee began to make policy adjustments in Nov. 1958.

A. Policy Adjustment and Policy Analysis

Making Clear Distinctions between Two Social Developmental Periods and Two Kinds of Ownership

In Nov. 1958, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China claimed that the distinctions between socialism and communism, the collective ownership and the ownership by the whole people should be clarified. The present period belonged to socialism, and the people's commune belonged to the collective ownership. Both of the two transformations (the transformation from socialism to communism and the transformation from the collective ownership to the ownership by the whole people) needed quite a period of time; and could only be finished gradually. (Central Committee's Documents Research Institute, Vol. 11, p.598-623) However, the adjustment of policies didn't deal with the problems which were concerned with the commune's ownership. On the Sixth Plenum of the Eighth Central Committee, the "Decisions on Some of the Problems about the People's Commune" still pointed out that "the production team was the basic unit for organizing labor force" and that "the people's commune was in unified charge of profit and loss". (Central Committee's Documents Research Institute, Vol. 11, p.618) Thus the continuous extension of "equalitarianism and indiscriminate transfer of resources" (Annotation Group of the Central

Committee's Documents Research Institute, 1989, p.2) and "wind of public ownership" were hardly checked.

The Establishment of "Three-Level Ownership and Production Brigades -Based" System.

From Feb. to Apr. 1959, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China held meetings to settle the problems of the people's commune's extra high-level ownership; rectify the "equalitarianism and indiscriminate transfer of resources" and check the "wind of public ownership". Also, the distinctions between the people's commune ownership, the production brigade ownership and the production team ownership were claimed to be made clear. The production brigade was the basic accounting unit. It was the people's commune ownership, the production team, which was below the production brigade, had part of the ownership and management purview. The previously arbitrarily transferred resources by the people's commune and the labor support between communes or brigades were declared to be clearly balanced by returning cash or compensating with labor. The previously production team-managed enterprises and lands which were transferred monopolistically by counties or communes were returned or evaluated. (Central Committee's Documents Research Institute, Vol.12, p.164-168)

During the policy adjustment process, there came up requests for resuming production team-based ownership, fixing of farm output quotas for each household, abolishing the supply system and closing down the public dining hall from various local areas. In 1959, fixing of work load quotas for each household, fixing of farm output quotas for each household and plot responsibility system were resumed in some areas. Such kind of activities showed the peasants' strong wills to repel the "mess together" and arrange their production independently. However, these activities were regarded as "furious anti-socialistic road" (Central Committee's Documents Research Institute, Vol.12, p.621) and were stopped in the end. The production brigade based ownership was changed back into the people's commune ownership.

In the late 1950s and early 1960s, famine took place in the Chinese rural areas widely. Diseases prevailed and the peasants fled from famine. Countless people were starved to death. The collective economic management was messed up and the financial system became lax. The rural economy was severely destroyed. Faced with such kind of situation, the Central Committee had to make policy adjustment again. In Nov. 1960, the "Twelve Rules" (Central Committee's Documents Research Institute, Vol.13, p.660-676) made by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China prescribed that:

(1) The basic system of the people's commune was the production brigade -based three-level ownership (three-level refers to the people's commune, production brigade and production team).

(2) The systems of job contract; production and output contract; financial affairs contract and overfulfillment encouragement were carried out by the production team. The usufruct of labor force, lands, farm animals and farm tools belonged to the production team. Nobody could transfer them arbitrarily. The production team had some producing management power, which meant they had the power to cultivate lands according to local conditions, set technical measures and arrange various farm works under the precondition of finishing contract-fixed work first.

(3) The commune members were allowed to manage private plots and small-scale family sidelines.

(4) Public dining hall system was insisted. With respect to distribution system, distribution according to work afforded by the peasants took the principle part. Supply system occupied 30% of the total amount of distribution.

In March 1961, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China constituted the "Agricultural Sixty Rules" based on the "Twelve Rules", which further affirmed the production brigade-based ownership.

These two documents changed the former commune's ownership back to the production brigade ownership, which was still characterized as the collective ownership. However, although the management method was adjusted and the commune members had more self-determination in managing private plots and family sidelines, equalitarianism and "mess together" were still the predominant ways of distribution.

Establishment of the "Production Team-Based Three-Level Ownership" System

In June 1961, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China further abolished the public dining hall and the supply system. Also, the property right of the production teams and the commune members was expanded. (Central Committee's Documents Research Institute, Vol.14, p.385-412) In February 1962, the basic accounting unit was further transferred from the production brigade to the production team. Thus the production team gained not only the producing management power, but also the distributing decision power. (Central Committee's Documents Research Institute, Vol.15, p.176-192) In September 1962, the Central Committee issued documents to enlarge the production team's power and establish the production team-based ownership. (Central Committee's Documents Research Institute, Vol.15, p.615-647) Also, the commune members were allowed to manage a spot of private plots and small-scale family sidelines. (Central Committee's Documents Research Institute, Vol.15, p.636) The production team-based management system did overcome equalitarianism among teams. However, the workpoint-based distribution method followed the "mess together" system. The "production team-based three-level ownership" system was still

accompanied with the rural polity of “integration of government administration with commune management”.

The Test and its Result of Fixing of Farm Output Quotas for Each Household and Some Analysis

In 1961, “fixing of farm output quotas for each household” was spontaneously reemerged in the rural areas. The most influential case, which happened in Anhui province, was the “land responsibility” system. Under such system, the commune members made contract with the production team to cultivate lands and complete fixed quotas for grain production. If they over fulfilled the production quota, they would be generously rewarded; but if they couldn’t fulfilled the quotas, they would compensate for the entire loss. (Liu, Yong, p.148) Gaining support from the Central Committee, this system developed very fast. By the end of 1961, 90.1% of the production teams in Anhui province established the “land responsibility” system. (Liu, Yong, p.151-152) According to a typical survey on 36 counties in Anhui province in October 1961, 36 production teams which carried out the “land responsibility” system made an average foodstuff increase of 38.9% compared with last year. (Liu, Yong, p.151-152)

The “land responsibility” system gave peasants freedom in arranging their own production under the collective ownership. It had the intension of encouragement in distribution, thus it was warmly welcomed by the peasants. However, Mao Zedong thought that taking the production team as the basic accounting unit was the last boundary. The “fixing of farm output quotas for each household” was to resume “work on one’s own”, which would lead to capitalistic direction. He criticized the “land responsibility” system, which behaved under the form of “fixing of farm output quotas for each household”. The mass peasants supported “fixing of farm output quotas for each household”, thus some of them submitted a written statement to the higher authority and explained the benefits of separate management such as “fixing of farm output quotas for each household” and “land responsibility” system. (Liu, Yong, p.161-164) The Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party faced with much resistance in criticizing and rectifying the system of “fixing of farm output quotas for each household”. (Liu, Yong, p.159)

At the same time, divergent opinions also appeared within the leaders of the Central Committee. Some of them, with Liu Shaoqi, Deng Zihui and Deng Xiaoping as their representative, supported “fixing of farm output quotas for each household”. While Mao Zedong pointed out that “fixing of farm output quotas for each household” was the collective ownership breaker. Whether or not to carry out “fixing of farm output quotas for each household” was an issue concerning with whether proletariat dictatorship or bourgeois dictatorship would be carried out; and whether socialistic road or capitalistic road would be taken. He

criticized that those who supported “fixing of farm output quotas for each household” were delegates of the interests of the rich middle-peasants. They even upheld the standpoint of the landlords, rich peasants and bourgeoisies and fight against socialism. After this, Mao claimed that class struggle should be propagandized year by year, month by month and day by day. Mao’s attitude was overwhelming in the Central Committee’s policy making process. Then all of the high leaders in Central Committee leant to Mao’s side and abolished “fixing of farm output quotas for each household” forcefully.

The central committee’s rural economic policy and systematic design from 1950s to 1970s was the ideological choice of the Chinese Communist Party. It was in accordance with her insistence in socialistic direction and realizing high-level public ownership. The rural economic policy and systematic transformation of the people’s commune period told us that the government fastened its step in substituting public ownership for private ownership in a wider scope and finally replaced private ownership

4.2.3 Chinese Rural Policy from the “Cultural Revolution” Period to the Pre-Reforming Period

After the 1960s, the class struggle theory further upgraded and the “left-leaning” thought swelled dramatically. Team combination, production brigade-based accounting and joint brigades accounting prevailed in various local areas. In 1966, “the Culture Revolution” broke out and the “left-leaning” line went to its utmost. The Central Committee again emphasized that productive forces should be promoted by high-level public ownership. In the “learning from Da Zhai” movement, it was again emphasized that production brigade should be the basic accounting unit. In October 1975, Hua Guofeng, who was then the vice prime minister, emphasized in the national agricultural conference of learning from Dazhai: “When the condition is permitted, we will transfer to the production brigade ownership, or even people’s commune ownership. The production brigade or people’s commune were also the basic accounting unit. In the further future, the people’s commune will transfer from the collective ownership to the ownership by the whole people, and then from the socialistic ownership by the whole people to the communist ownership by the whole people.” (Hua, Guofeng, 1975, p.20) In February 1977, the Central Committee declared that “basic accounting unit be transferred from the production team to the production brigade” in order to “further carry out the superiority of the people’s commune’s ‘one large and two collectivizations’”. The “left-leaning” trend went to its utmost during the Cultural Revolution.

4.3 The Result and Evaluation on the Policy in the People's Commune Period

The rural land policy and system arrangement during the people's commune period resulted in various economic and political problems

4.3.1 Economic Aspect

4.3.1.1 Industrial Development Seized Interests from Agricultural Development

From 1949 to 1978, the pattern of China's economic development was to realize original capital accumulation by sacrificing the interests of the peasants. The industrial development was based on system protection of the agricultural producers' cooperative and people's commune. Under the system arrangement of agricultural producers' cooperative and people's commune, agricultural profits were "deprived" in order to gain funds, raw materials and work forces required by national industrialization. During the people's commune period, the rural areas offered 540 billion yuan to the industrial development, which was 21 billion yuan each year. Each rural labor force offered about 80 yuan to the state on average every year. (See Table 6) (Xin, Yi, 2001)

4.3.1.2 Stagnation of Rural Economy

During the people's commune period, "increase without development" (Huang, Zongzhi, 2000, p.77) was the irregular characteristic of the Chinese rural areas. The peasant's income was low and the rural laboring productivity was in stagnant condition for a long time.

During the people's commune period, the conflict between population increase and people's demand for lands became more and more serious because of the growing population. From 1958 to 1982, China's population increased from 0.66 billion to 1.02 billion, which grew by 55%. In the corresponding period, the rural population increased from 0.553 billion to 0.804 billion, which grew by 45%. However, the cultivated area had little increase, with the crop planting area slightly reduced. In 1958, the total planting area of China was 2.28 billion mu, which reduced to 2.17 billion mu in 1982. In the corresponding period, the total foodstuff planting area reduced from 1.914 billion mu to 1.702 billion mu, which was reduced by almost 12%. The sharp increase of population and reduction of planting area resulted in reduced amount of average cultivated area per person from 3.45 mu to 2.14 mu, which declined by 38%. (See Table 7) (Program Department of the Agriculture Ministry of the People's Republic of China, 1989, p.130-131) According to the general economic developmental rule in most countries, one of the primary approaches to settle such kind of problem was to transfer mass surplus work forces to other industries. However, the people's commune system tied almost all of the surplus rural work forces tightly to the rural lands. Hundreds of millions of rural population were strictly controlled and population

flowage was forbidden.

During this period, planting industry played a primary role in agricultural production; and foodstuff planting played a primary role in planting industry. The thick rural labor force and rigid producing way made laboring productivity stagnant or even declined year by year. During the period after the mid 1960s, the daily output of primary farm produces kept nearly the same amount for more than 10 years, with some of them even reduced. (See table 8) The low rural laboring productivity made the peasants' living standard remain stagnated for a long term. From 1957 to 1977, the Chinese peasants' average annual income increased from 40.5 yuan to 64.98 yuan, with each person earning 1.2 yuan more each year. In the corresponding period, the average foodstuff amount each peasant processed increased only 0.5 kg per year. (Xin, Yi)

The people's commune system seriously suppressed the peasants' enthusiasm to work independently and actively. Its management system was integration of government administration with commune management; its distribution system was equalitarianism without any encouraging mechanism; its bulk purchase and marketing of farm products was monopolistic; its management system for producing and laboring was over centralized. The rights of peasants' job-choosing and migration were deprived. All of these severely suffocated the producing initiative of the grass-roots units and peasants. The people's commune system disturbed efficient arrangement of producing factors and made dramatic negative influence on rural economic development. During the people's commune's 20 year-long period, poverty and laggard were the primary character of Chinese rural society.

4.3.2 Political and Administrative Aspect

4.3.2.1 Administrative Power Was Highly Centralized

During the people's commune period, "integration of government administration with commune management" was practiced. The people's commune processed highly centralized power. Its leading was consolidated and its management was classified. The commune management committee exerted administrative power. It assigned production tasks by administrative means and push forward various rural systems. Basic party organizations had the power to allocate public properties. The commune's party committee and the production brigade's party branch became the actual power holders. The omnipotent and embrative "integration of government administration with commune management" system reflected serious defect and obstruction of the structure and function of the people's commune. It couldn't accommodate with the demands of rural development and realize efficient governance over rural areas.

4.3.2.2 Strict Control over Individual Peasants

During the people's commune period, individual peasants were organized by the people's commune and were controlled economically, politically and ideologically.

First of all, the peasant's economic lives were controlled. The peasants' economic lives went on with production teams as their basic units. The production team became the main channel for the peasants' to gain their means of livelihood. The production team, production brigade and people's commune controlled the peasants by making strict laboring disciplines. Secondly, the peasants' political lives were controlled. Besides economic control over the peasants' lives, ideological ideas were indoctrinated into the peasants' minds in order to realize political control over the peasants. During the people's commune period, production team and production brigade were not only producing units but also political organizations. The commune, production brigade and production team indoctrinated collectivistic ideas to their members to insure that the collective activities could go on smoothly. In order to maintain normal operation of the commune system, those who were against rules were not only charged with economic punishment, but also punished by political means such as being denounced and criticized at a public meeting.

4.3.2.3 General Evaluation

The people's commune was the development and continuation of the agricultural cooperation policy. During this period, rural land policy and systematic arrangement was characterized as strong enforcement. The essential of the economic and political systems of the people's commune was to further emphasize public ownership of property right and enhance the level of property right adscription. The highly collectivized and planned management way of the people's commune deprived the individual peasants' own initiative rights artificially, which made the peasants' lose their producing freedom thoroughly. The extremely equalitarian distribution system harmed the peasant's interests and seriously contused their producing enthusiasm, which resulted in low producing efficiency. Highly centralized political and economic systems bound up the peasants extensively and strictly. The peasants were fettered to the land and were forbidden to do anything other than farming, which resulted in congested rural labor force and laggard productivity. All of these led to long-term cachexia of rural economy. From the perspective of social development, such extremely rigid political and economic systems disturbed normal differentiation of rural society and moderate flow of rural population, which resulted in sluggish transformation of rural classes and laggard economic development. This further led to sharpened disparity and separation between cities and rural areas.

5. THE CONCLUSION

From 1950 to 1978, the development of Chinese rural areas underwent a devious journey. The national-made land policy was generally reflected as realizing rural systematic transformation by forceful methods. Firstly the landlord's land ownership was changed to the peasant's land ownership; then private property right was transferred into public property right. At the same time, the objective of "whoever cultivates possesses his own land", which was realized in the land reform period was substituted by "partnership and equal output" in the agricultural cooperation period and was finally changed into "one large and two collectivizations" in the people's commune period. Of all the economic systematic changes, political factor took the predominant position, thus it became the main cause of the transformations. The violent systematic changes within short periods came against the objective law of economic development. Also they were against the peasants' interests. Such kind of policy guide line and its consequent systematic changes brought up lots of bad results, which caused slow economic development and terrible rural living conditions of the peasants for a long time.

The development of the rural areas from 1950 to 1978 taught us some lessons: first, economic development must be in accordance with objective law. Instead of running against its social reality and economic developmental rules, the government's policy guide line must conform to them. Once the government's political and policy guide line goes against the objective law, the economic development policy will be inappropriately mastered by ideology, and it will lead to harmful, even odious results in consequence.

Second, history tells us the economic development model of Chinese rural areas should be established on the basis of the peasants' willingness. It should be the choice of the peasants themselves. The peasants are the principal part of rural economic development, so they should have the right to choose their own developmental ways, instead of letting the government interfere rural economic development forcefully with administrative orders. The continuous spontaneous phenomena of "fixing of farm output quotas for each household" in the rural areas during the people's commune period reflect the peasants' strong wishes to develop independently.

These facts demonstrate that the laborers' producing activity play a decisive role in the rural economic development. The land system, management system and distribution system should all be based upon the rule of satisfying the peasants' basic interests. Only in this way could the peasants' producing enthusiasm be mobilized and the rural productivity be raised. The political and economic organizing form of "integration of government administration with commune

management” during people’s commune period was not able to realize the peasants’ interests. The equalitarian distribution method further harmed the peasants’ interests and led to inefficient production in the rural areas, which finally caused poor rural producing level and long-term low peasant incomes.

After the “Cultural Revolution” in 1976, the Chinese Communist Party turned over to think on the Chinese

rural developmental conditions and the previous rural land policies. She summarized past lessons, made an ideological adjustment and rectified her policy radically. Accompanied with the political and economic reformation in China, the rural land policy also took a fundamental change. The Chinese rural political and economic development stepped into a brand new period.

Table 1. The Average Means of Production Occupation Condition of Chinese Rural Households after the Land Reform * (Zhang, Chaozun, p.44)

Farm Tool Amount Rank	Cultivated Land (Mu) *	Farm Animal	Plough	Waterweel
Poor Peasant and Farm Laborer	12.46	0.47	0.41	0.07
Middle Peasant	19.01	0.91	0.74	0.13
Rich Peasant	25.09	1.15	0.87	0.22
Landlord	12.16	0.23	0.23	0.04
Others	7.05	0.32	0.38	0.06

* 1 Mu = 0.1644 Acre

Table 2. Comparison of Farm Produce Output between the Mutual Aid Group and Individual Household in 1953* (Zhang, Chaozun, p.49)

Category Data Area	Output of Individual Households (Per Mu)	Temporary Mutual Aid Group		Permanent Mutual Aid Group	
		Output (Per Mu)	Output Higher than Individual Household (%)	Output (Per Mu)	Output Higher than Individual Household (%)
9 Townships of Henan Province	220 (Jin)	229 (Jin)	4 %	247 (Jin)	12 %
3 townships of Hubei, Hunan and Jiangxi provinces	441 (Jin)	—	—	622 (Jin)	41 %
Xiaoluo Township of Fujian Province (1954)	245 (Jin)	321 (Jin)	31 %	358 (Jin)	42 %

* Unit of Farm Produce Output: 1 Jin = 0.5 Kg

Table 3. Comparison of Average Annual Foodstuff Income per Person in Chinese Rural Areas in 1953* (Zhang, Chaozun, p.49)

Category Data Area	Average Annual Foodstuff Income Per Person of Individual Households	Temporary Mutual Aid Group		Permanent Mutual Aid Group	
		Average Annual Income Per Person	Income Higher than Individual Household (%)	Average Annual Income Per Person	Income Higher than Individual Household (%)
10 Townships of Hubei, Hunan and Jiangxi Provinces	1184	1329	12 %	1455	23 %
4 Townships in the Former Revolutionary Base Areas of Shanxi Province	767	780	1 %	989	29 %
13 Townships of the Plain Area and Southern Mountainous Area of Shanxi Province	14	922	0.9 %	110	15 %

* Unit of Average Income Per Person (1 Jin = 0.5 Kg)

Table 4. Comparison of Crop Output between the Agricultural Producer's Cooperative Members and Individual Households in 1955 (Mo, Yueda, 1957, p.96)

Category of Rural Households Category Output of Crops	The Agricultural Producer's Cooperative Members (Jin/Mu)*	Individual Households (Jin/Mu)	The higher Percent of Crop Output of the Agricultural Producer's Cooperative Members than the Individual Households (%)
	388.9	352.9	10.2
Barley	120.4	112.1	7.4
Soybean	130.8	109.9	19.0
Cotton	41.8	33.2	25.9
Jute	317.8	330.9	- 4.0
Tobacco	169.9	157.0	8.2
Sugarcane	5943.0	5425.7	9.5
Beet	1797.4	1719.7	4.5
Peanut	207.3	177.8	16.6
Colza	71.7	65.0	10.3

* 1 Mu = 0.1644 Acre ; 1 Jin = 0.5 Kg

Table 5. Incomes of Various Rural Households in 1955 * (Mo, Yueda, p.96)

Category Data Peasant Household	Total Income (Yuan)		Net Income (Yuan)	
	Average Income ⁺ per Household ⁺	Average Income per Person	Average Income per Household	Average Income ⁺ per Person
Total Income of Households Investigated	487.4	102.9	379.3	80.1
Agricultural Producer's Cooperative Member Household	463.5	94.1	399.7	81.1
Individual Household	498.2	106.4	374.8	80.0
Poor Peasant	355.6	85.2	274.9	65.9
Middle Peasant	545.1	111.0	408.3	83.1
Lower-Middle Peasant	484.0	105.0	367.3	79.6
Upper-Middle Peasant	660.0	124.1	489.1	72.5
Rich Peasant	633.7	126.1	485.0	91.2
Landlord	402.0	93.7	304.2	70.9

* The households investigated in this table include the individual household and the agricultural producer's cooperative member household. The poor peasant, middle peasant, lower-middle peasant, rich peasant and landlord are all individual households.

**Table 7 Changes of Rural Laborer Population and Cultivated Land Acreage
(Statistical Year Book of China, 1985, p.213, 252)**

	1952	1957	1962	1967	1972	1977	1982
Cultivated Land Acreage	2118.84 Million Mu	2358.66 Million Mu	2103.43 Million Mu	2149.76 Million Mu (1965)	215.231 Million Mu (1970)	224.000 Million Mu	217.132 Million Mu
Rural Laborer Population	173.17 Million	193.10 Million	212.78 Million	251.67 Million	282.86 Million	293.45 Million	320.13 Million

Table 6. Gross Amount of Accumulated Capital Provided by the Rural Areas for the Industry Development during the People's Commune Period (Feng, Haifa, 1993)

Item Amount Year	Amount of Accumulated Capital Provided by the Rural Areas (Hundred Million Yuan)	Proportion Accounted for the Total Accumulation Amount of National Income (%)	Net Outflow Amount of Agricultural Capital (Hundred Million Yuan)	Average Amount Provided by Every Rural Laborers (yuan)
1958	133.56	35.2	124.22	86.17
1959	155.31	27.8	133.26	95.28
1960	158.13	31.6	124.40	102.02
1961	105.29	54.0	74.28	53.45
1962	121.02	122.2	101.73	56.82
1963	121.41	66.3	99.22	55.19
1964	150.96	57.4	130.04	65.92
1965	157.61	43.2	140.32	67.35
1966	194.64	41.4	175.53	80.10
1967	171.75	56.5	155.63	68.15
1968	141.30	47.4	128.41	54.14
1969	160.58	45.0	145.71	59.25
1970	103.92	33.0	188.01	37.12
1971	219.18	32.0	199.53	77.18
1972	220.31	34.0	195.21	77.85
1973	254.02	34.3	218.53	87.90
1974	245.35	31.1	207.12	84.02
1975	264.52	31.9	221.99	89.67
1976	244.67	32.7	198.66	83.22
1977	270.95	32.6	220.27	92.47
1978	297.06	27.3	220.11	101.04
1979	322.22	27.8	232.11	109.60

Table 8. Daily Output during the People's Commune Period (Unit: Kg) (Program Department of Farming, Herding and Fishing Ministry, 1983, p.456-472)

Item Amount Year	Foodstuff	Paddy	Wheat	Corn	Cotton	Oil Crops	Jute
1965	6.3	6.1	5.4	7.4	0.9	2.7	4.5
1975	6.8	7.3	5.3	7.7	0.7	2.3	4.5
1976	5.7	6.6	5.0	7.1	0.6	2.6	4.0
1977	7.2	7.6	4.4	6.9	0.6	2.3	3.9
1978	6.0	7.3	5.1	7.4	0.7	2.5	4.4

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