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**REQUEST FOR OPINIONS ON
THE SEVENTEEN-ARTICLE DOCUMENT
CONCERNING AGRICULTURE**

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REQUEST FOR OPINIONS ON THE SEVENTEEN-ARTICLE DOCUMENT CONCERNING AGRICULTURE

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In November this year a seventeen-article document was agreed upon after consultations held by Comrade Mao Tsetung in Hangchow and Tientsin with secretaries of the Party committees of fourteen provinces and the Inner Mongolian Autonomous Region. The Central Committee holds that the document should be confirmed at the conference of secretaries of the provincial, municipal and autonomous region Party committees to be convened by the Central Committee on January 10 so that it can be incorporated in the 1956 plan and begin to be carried out in earnest. To this end, on receiving this message please summon the secretaries of all the prefectural Party committees and of some of the county Party committees under your jurisdiction to make a detailed study of the following questions:

- (1) Whether all or only some of the articles can be carried out and whether the conditions are sufficient for carrying out each article;
- (2) Whether any additions to the seventeen articles are needed (additions which are practicable can be made); and
- (3) Whether you are ready to incorporate the seventeen articles in your 1956 plan and carry them out right away.

Please complete your study of these questions and have your opinions ready by January 3, 1956.

The seventeen articles are as follows:

* Circular drafted for the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party and sent to the Shanghai Bureau and the provincial and autonomous region Party committees.

1. Regarding the pace of the co-operative transformation of agriculture, the work of establishing co-operatives of the elementary type should in the main be accomplished by the latter half of 1956, and it is advisable for the provinces, municipalities and autonomous regions (Sinkiang excepted) to set a target for co-operative membership of 75 per cent of the peasant households and let the lower levels exceed this somewhat and reach about 80 to 85 per cent.

As for co-operation of the higher stage, you should strive to accomplish it basically by 1960, or if possible a year sooner, by 1959. To this end it is necessary for the counties, and preferably the districts, to take direct charge of setting up one or more large co-operatives of the advanced type (each with over a hundred households) in every county or district in 1956 and then another batch in 1957 -- these two batches should account for about 25 per cent of the peasant households and serve as models. Is this possible or not? What should be the size of a co-operative when small co-operatives merge into big ones? Several co-operatives forming one township, one co-operative forming one township, or one co-operative embracing several townships -- are all three forms practicable? Which is the more suitable figure for the total number of co-operatives in the country -- 300,000, 400,000, or 500,000? The figure is 100,000 in the Soviet Union; would over 300,000, or 400,000, be more suitable for us? Further, which way is better -- to merge the co-operatives first and then raise them to the higher stage, or to merge and raise them at the same time, or to raise them first and then merge them? Please consider these questions as well.

2. As for the admission of landlords and rich peasants into co-operatives, perhaps during 1956 you could act upon the suggestion made by Anhwei, Shansi and Heilungkiang Provinces, that is, allowing those who behave well to join and those who behave neither well nor badly to take part in co-operative production but without co-operative membership, while compelling those who behave badly to engage in production under the co-operatives' supervision. This method can be adopted by all the old co-operatives which have strong cadres. There are many advantages to this, though there is one disadvantage, namely, those upper-middle peasants who are as yet unwilling to join the co-operatives will inevitably feel obliged to do so, and moreover they will have to be admitted before the landlords and rich peasants so as to save their face. Is this good or not? Or shall we postpone the adoption of the above method for a year, that is, until 1957? Please consider which alternative is better.

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3. As for the composition of the leadership in a co-operative, two-thirds should come from among the present-day poor peasants plus all the new lower-middle peasants who were formerly poor peasants, while one-third should come from among the old lower-middle peasants and the old and new upper-middle peasants.

4. Conditions for increasing production: (a) carry out a few fundamental measures (the details still have to be discussed, and some differences may be allowed for different places); (b) spread advanced experience (materials on models are to be collected every year and published in a volume by each province).

5. In 1956 every province, prefecture, county, district and township should draw up a long-term comprehensive plan embracing all the necessary items, with stress on county and township plans. A draft should be prepared in the first half of the year and finalized in the second, subject to further revision. The plan should cover a period of at least three years, preferably seven, possibly as many as twelve. This must be done without delay. Have you made any arrangements for it? While many plans are likely to be rough-and-ready for lack of experience, you should strive to have a few counties and townships draw up more realistic plans so that they can be recommended as models.

6. Make an over-all plan for the protection and breeding of cattle, horses, mules, donkeys, pigs, sheep, chickens and ducks, and especially for the protection of young animals. The breeding plans will be discussed, so please have your opinions ready.

7. In co-ordination with the plans for river basins, there should be widespread construction of small water conservancy projects to ensure basic control over ordinary floods and droughts within seven years.

8. Within seven years, basically eliminate a dozen or so insect pests and plant diseases harmful to crops.

9. Within twelve years, make most of the waste land and barren hills productive and achieve afforestation by planting trees according to specified requirements in every possible place, that is, around every house and every village, by roadsides and watersides as well as on waste land and barren hills.

10. Within twelve years, in most regions 90 per cent, and in some regions 100 per cent, of the needed fertilizer is to be supplied by the localities and co-operatives themselves.

11. Within twelve years, the average yield of grain per *mou* should reach four hundred catties in the areas north of the Yellow River, the

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Chinling Mountains, the Pailung River and the section of the Yellow River inside Chinghai Province, five hundred catties in the areas south of the Yellow River and north of the Huai River, and eight hundred catties in the areas south of the Huai River, the Chinling Mountains and the Pailung River. As for cotton, oil-bearing crops, soya beans, silk, tea, jute, sugar-cane, fruit and other items, please suggest a quota for each item for discussion.

12. Within seven years, basically eliminate a number of those diseases most harmful to human beings and livestock, such as schistosomiasis, filariasis, bubonic plague, encephalitis, cattle plague and hog cholera. Please study which of the endemic diseases in your province or region can be basically wiped out within seven years, which will take longer, and which cannot be wiped out under present conditions.

13. Get rid of the four pests, that is, within seven years basically exterminate rats (and other harmful animals), sparrows (and other birds which damage crops, but whether it is advisable to exterminate crows remains to be investigated), flies and mosquitoes.[\[1\]](#)

14. Within seven years, basically wipe out illiteracy, setting a literacy target of 1,500 to 2,000 characters.

15. Within seven years, build according to specified requirements the different kinds of roads (highways, roads and paths) needed in the provinces, prefectures, counties, districts and townships.

16. Within seven years, install wired broadcasting networks so that broadcasts can reach every

township and every co-operative.

17. Within seven years, complete the installation of telephone networks connecting townships and large co-operatives.

Please consider the above points with other comrades concerned and complete preparations by January 3. The Central Committee may first summon the secretaries of some provincial Party committees to a meeting around January 4 to study these matters for several days and to have suggestions ready for the coming conference on January 10.

NOTES

^[1] The directive on health work drafted in March 1960 by Comrade Mao Tsetung for the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party says, "There is another thing. Stop killing sparrows; instead, wipe out bedbugs. The slogan should be, 'Exterminate rats, bedbugs, flies and mosquitoes.'" [p. 280]