

COLLECTIVIZATION OF CHINESE AGRICULTURE

—A Review of Two Studies published by
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Chūgoku Kyōsantō no Nōgyō Shūdanka Seisaku (Agricultural Collectivization Policy of the Chinese Communist Party), by Shin'ichirō Satō, Tokyo: Institute of Asian Economic Affairs, 1961, 383 pp.

Chūgoku Jīnmin Kōsha no Sōshiki to Kinō (Organization and Functions of the Chinese People's Communes), a joint study by Akira Doi, Tokio Furuta, Hideo Yamamoto, Yūjirō Matsuzaki, and Hideo Yonezawa, Tokyo: Institute of Asian Economic Affairs, 1961, 307 pp.

I

"Agricultural Collectivization Policy of the Chinese Communist Party" (Asian Economic Research Series, No. 11) is the result of a study which Mr. Shin'ichirō Satō, Lecturer at Takushoku University, Tokyo, conducted in compliance with the request, and under the research programme for 1959, of the Institute of Asian Economic Affairs.

This study was attempted in order to bring to historical light, in a factual manner, the process of farm collectivization in China. In tracing developments along this line, the study goes back to the period before the People's Republic was established. In content, the volume is divided into two parts. One is a historical study inquiring into the circumstances in which the Chinese Communist Party set up its revolutionary bases in the interior and made use of the traditional mutual-aid organizations already existing among the Chinese peasantry. The other is a theoretical study of these organizations themselves. The volume also contains statistical tables and a chronology appended. The Part I for historical study is the most characteristic part of this study, while the statistical tables and the chronology provide convenient reference for the readers.

It is said that the subject of people's communes in China, which is now a matter of great concern not only in Japan but throughout the world, can be correctly comprehended only by tracing the Chinese Communist Party's historical experiences in its policy of collectivizing agriculture. To meet such a requirement, historical studies of this kind have gradually begun to appear. But it has so far been considered very difficult to deal with the history of the Chinese Communist Party in the years of its activities on those revolutionary bases, because of limitations of available source materials. Moreover, it has been considered too difficult for anyone to study the traditional mutual-aid organizations among the Chinese peasantry, except for those who have actually lived in rural China or who happen to have the advantage of hold-

ing possession of or having access to those kinds of material which were scattered or lost during the war.

The author of this book is one of the very few scholars who has such an advantage, and apparently he has made the most of it in preparing the present volume. As mentioned above, material on the period of revolutionary bases has recently begun to be collected and published piece by piece in China, though it is still limited in number, and Mr. Satō of course has used some of the more important ones among these publications.

In the following, I will give a brief outline of the work in the order of Part I for historical study, Part II for theoretical study, and Appendix—Statistical Tables and Chronology.

Part I has the heading of "Organizational Structure of the Agricultural Mutual Aid and Cooperation Movement" and comprises five chapters. Chapter 1 deals with the traditional mutual-aid organizations in agriculture, and Chapter 2 and the rest are devoted to the development of the mutual aid and cooperation movement (prior to the establishment of the People's Republic) as a link of the revolutionary movement led by the Chinese Communist Party.

Chapter 1, which is most outstanding of the whole volume, gives detailed explanations of *pien kung* and *po kung* or "systems to adjust labour and achieve mutual aid concerning manpower", (p. 5) *cha kung* or "a system under which men collectively exchange labour to achieve mutual aid, and also sell labour in a group", (p. 11) and *kên t'ao*, *pang t'ao*, *ta t'ao*, *niu chü*, and *ch'a huo* or "systems which adjust labour and achieve mutual aid concerning draught-animals and farming tools". (p. 26) This chapter goes on to attempt to extract common characteristics for all these systems.

Chapter 2 distinguishes the periods in the Party's history: the first civil war of revolution (January 21, 1924 to July 15, 1927), the second civil war of revolution (July 15, 1927 to September 22, 1937), the war against Japan (September 22, 1937 to August 15, 1945), and the third civil war of revolution (August 15, 1945 to September 30, 1949). After describing the circumstances of each period, it traces the development of the mutual aid and cooperation movement against that background.

Part II on theory comprises five chapters. Chapter 1 reviews the Marxist theory of agriculture and discusses, in this context, the position of the agricultural mutual aid and cooperation movement of China. Chapter 2 and the rest are attempts to give a systematic account of the mutual aid and cooperation movement which has already been brought to historical light in Part I. Chapter 2 deals with the subject of *pien kung*; Chapter 3, the subject of *cha kung*; Chapter 4, the movement toward mutual-aid teams and cooperatives led by the Chinese Communist Party; and Chapter 5, the relationship of this movement with the land reform campaign.

The discussion of this Part II is extremely hard to follow, and will invite a variety of dissenting views from the readers, because the author, from his unique position of anti-communism, has tried to interpret the Marxist theory of agriculture and, with this approach, formulated his own system of ideas about the mutual-aid and cooperation movement of China. It is a matter for regret that the author did not make his points more easily under-

stood by the readers, which he could have done if he had built up his arguments on his own unique views of the Chinese communist movement, irrespective of the Marxist theory of agriculture. Further, if I may be so frank, I should say that he would have been more successful had he had his contention as seen in Part II endorsed by free use of the great stock of material which he has referred to in Part I, instead of dividing the volume into these two parts as it has actually been.

Along with Part I, the statistical tables in the Appendix constitute another characteristic of the present study. In these tables, relevant figures have been quoted from "The Peasants' Movement during the Period of the First Civil War of Revolution" (Peking: People's Press, 1953), "Historical material of the Farm Cooperativization Movement in China", Vol. I (Peking: San-lien Publishing House, 1957), and "Collected Documents of the Shensi-Kansu-Ningsha Frontier District Council" (Peking: Ko Hsü-eh Publishing Co., 1958). This kind of work requires particular perseverance, and is not a task that anyone can shoulder easily. These tables, brought to light in this way, provide a very convenient reference even for those readers to whom the sources mentioned above are available, not to mention those who have no access to them.

"Chronology of the Chinese Communist Party on the Farm Collectivization" covers the period from 1911 to 1949, and an entry has been made under each of such headings as "Division of Periods and their Background", "Legislations, Regulations, Instructions and Reports", "Matters on Mutual-Aid and Cooperation", and "Newspapers, Editorials and Comments".

Also a "Chart of Distribution of Mutual-Aid Organizations in China" and "Notes on Chart of Distribution of Mutual-Aid Organizations in China" have been appended at the end of the volume, along with an index by subjects and one by terms. All these also provide convenient references.

II

"Organization and Functions of the Chinese People's Communes" (Research Report Series, No. 15) is the result of a study conducted by a committee with that name as one of the projects for 1959 of the Institute of Asian Economic Affairs. This committee, under the chairmanship of Mr. Akira Doi (Shōwa Dōjin Kai), included Tokio Furuta (Research and Legislative Reference Bureau, National Diet Library), Hideo Yamamoto (National Research Institute of Agriculture, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry), Yūjirō Matsuzaki (Japan Asian Trade Co.), and Hideo Yonezawa (Director, China Studies Institute), who had a share of writing under the following headings:

- Chapter 1. Origin and Growth of People's Communes..... Akira Doi.
- Chapter 2. Organization and Operation of People's Communes
..... Tokio Furuta.
- Chapter 3. The System of Ownership in People's Communes
..... Hideo Yamamoto.
- Chapter 4. Distribution of Products in People's Communes

..... Yūjirō Matsuzaki.

Chapter 5. Distribution of Commodities in People's Communes

..... Hideo Yonezawa.

In Chapter 1, "Origin and Growth of People's Communes," the writer, Mr. Doi, deems it necessary to view the "origin and growth of people's communes and its changes" as "a process" (p. 7) in order to avoid confusion in understanding the system. Accordingly, he traces developments in the order of three resolutions which seem to have marked important turning points in the history of people's communes—namely, the Pei-tai-ho Resolution (of the Extensive Congress of the Central Political Bureau of the Chinese Communist Party of August 29, 1958), the Wuchang Resolution (of the 6th Plenum of the Central Committee of the 8th National Congress of Representatives from November 26 to December 10, 1958), and the Lushan Resolution (of the 8th Plenum of the Central Committee of the 8th National Congress of Representatives of August 16, 1959.)

In the meantime, Mr. Doi presents and tries to solve some problems, of which the following comes first as the starting point of his discussion.

Only one year and several months after the completion of the organization of advanced agricultural producers' cooperatives throughout the country at the end of 1956, and while "they had not yet had time long enough to play a role in production, why did they have to be reformed into a new system of people's communes?" (p. 13) More precisely, "Was it not the case that the major motivation behind organizing people's communes was the shortage of labour and production means which had resulted from two drives for large-scale expansion, namely, the nation-wide development of irrigation and waterway facilities from the winter of 1957 to the spring of 1958, and the accompanying construction of rural industries for the expansion of agricultural production? In other words, was it not that the people's communes were bound to rise as the result of the 'great leap forward' which was carried out in complete defiance of the production capacity of the existing agricultural producers' cooperatives, and on that account further acceleration of the 'great leap forward' was necessitated to consolidate the basis of farm collectivization?" (p. 13)

After presenting the problem in this way, Mr. Doi goes on to maintain that the communization policy gave rise to the practices of "excessive leveling" (particularly in the field of distribution) and "excessive concentration" (particularly as represented by the system of communal ownership) as mentioned in the initial Pei-tai-ho Resolution, and that under the Wuchang and Lushan Resolutions or in the course of the "consolidation of the communes", the communes consequently receded gradually to the line of advanced agricultural producers' cooperatives or became much the same as the Soviet kolkhoz.

"As it was envisaged at first, the people's commune would be a system much more advanced than the Soviet kolkhoz in terms of the unity of administrative and communal authority, the integrated management and control of agriculture, industry, commerce, education, and military affairs as well as the "collectivization of living". But, following the "consolidation", "the people's commune, in the face of realities, had its practices of excessive

levelling and concentration rectified in keeping with its own production capacity”.

And as administration was separated from production and distribution once again, as well as industry from agriculture, it became the same system as the Soviet kolkhoz insofar as its production brigades were concerned. This is what Mr. Doi means, when he holds that the people's commune has “receded to the line of the Soviet kolkhoz”. (p. 73-4)

Mr. Doi, however, does not forget to point to the “aspect of progress” as well as the “aspect of regression”. In view of the fact that the commune has come to draw and use the capital and labour it needs from production teams by its administrative power, (p. 74) and that “the existence of enterprises which the commune directly runs”, the commune is, the author maintains, “more advanced than the Soviet system”, and “is certainly taken as a sprout to grow into communism”. (p. 76)

Chapter 2 deals with the theme of the “Organization and Functions of People's Communes”. Its author, Mr. Furuta, who takes the stand that “in present circumstances” “one should be modest enough to listen to what the Chinese interpret in their own material”, outlines the political background of people's communes at the outset and then sets out to explain, in reference to that material, the system and structure of people's communes, the question of unifying administrative and communal authority. He then describes the education, militia, family system, and mess halls in the commune, the new labour system known as “labour army system”, and the urban people's communes. Here Mr. Furuta tries to give an outline picture of the people's commune, with some appropriate comments added to the main thread of his discussion. Particularly relevant materials have been collected painstakingly, and the issue of communes has been discussed in a rather broad perspective. In addition, Western material in the subject has been referred to, though not in any volume. This chapter will be particularly useful for those who have little direct access to Chinese source materials.

Here I may quote a few of more interesting comments of the author.

(1) “The basic and consistent policy of people's communes” is “the policy of building up socialism very rapidly through total mobilization of manpower”. (p. 87) It sprouted at the end of 1955, steadily grew firm in 1956-57 and was formally adopted at the Congress of the Chinese Communist Party of May, 1958. It was, as the author sees, laid down in the resolution of the Chinese Communist Party Central on the establishment of people's communes at the end of August. This policy represented the “mixture and unification of necessity and possibility”. (p. 88) It was because a variety of measures taken to create practical conditions for turning the necessity into the possibility became fully matured or were considered to have become matured” (p. 88) that a policy was adopted in the Pei-tai-ho decision to materialize the communization of the whole country.

(2) With regard to militia, while referring to the statement of General Fu Chiu-tao (Chief of the Mobilization Department of General Staff of the People's Liberation Army), the author points out that the purpose of militia is to be ready for both normal and war times, though actually it is more in-

clined for "normal times". (p. 110) Further, he refers to the opinion which Chairman of the Council of Joint Staffs of the Japanese Defense Agency, Keizō Hayashi had published in the *Asahi Shimbun*. Hayashi has been quoted as saying that the communization campaign, in which an extended total of 50 odd million men from the Chinese Army and about 6 million time-expired soldiers participated, "and which mobilized idle family labour, was perhaps aimed to further organization of manpower and to disperse industrial centres in the interior at the same time. From the military point of view, this campaign may be said therefore to be aimed at building up a powerful reserve army in preparation against a future emergency. Such a system as this will provide a power to stand even against a nuclear attack". (p. 110)

In Chapter 3, the author, Mr. Yamamoto, tries to throw light mainly on the aspect of ownership of people's communes. Here he takes the viewpoint that one cannot understand the question of people's communes unless one studies the movement toward mutual aid and cooperation or the process of development from mutual-aid teams in agricultural production to the elementary and advanced agricultural producers' cooperatives following the land reform. From this point of view, he reviews the historical process in greater detail, then explains the system of ownership of people's communes with special reference to the "three-grade ownership" system. Lastly he discusses future prospects.

Since the author is an expert on agricultural problems of new China and particularly has been an attentive observer of the development of cooperativization and communization, he has been able to grasp what is essential to the question and seems to appeal to the readers with his forecast of future prospects on a basis of historical inquiry.

"Farm Collectivization Policy of the Chinese Communist Party", which I have reviewed above, is greatly different in viewpoints from this Chapter 3. But it will contribute very much to the understanding of the subject, when it is read along with the historical description given here by Mr. Yamamoto.

Chapter 4 deals with the distribution system in people's communes. Here the author, Mr. Matsuzaki, expresses his basic ideas on the subject. From April to May of 1960, he had the chance to visit rural and urban people's communes and to listen personally to Chinese experts' explanations. He states, "As I saw and heard that, apart from the system of supply, the system of distribution of products in people's communes had been for the most part carried forward from advanced agricultural producers' cooperatives, I keenly felt the need for the more firmly grasping and understanding of the system used in those cooperatives". (p. 197)

Accordingly, after reviewing the distribution system of mutual-aid teams and advanced agricultural producers' cooperatives in retrospect, Mr. Matsuzaki quotes explanations he heard from the directors of three people's communes he visited (the Hwangpu, Kiangtung and Fusuiching people's communes), and analyzes the question of the distribution system following a comparative study of the system in those three communes.

The subject of distribution system provides an important key to probing the essential character of people's communes. The fact that Mr. Matsuzaki

ki is not a student of Chinese economy (he is a businessman engaged in trade) has only made his account more substantial and helped him to give the readers more valuable suggestions on the question of people's communes.

In this Chapter, Mr. Matsuzaki seems to have laid more emphasis than anything else on the subject of Section 3, "Specific Problems with Which the Distribution System of People's Communes are Confronted". Here he proceeds with his analysis by clarifying where the issues lie. In brief, he poses to himself and tries to answer these questions: (1) "The question of unequal economic development between production brigades and teams on a higher level of production and those on a lower level of production"; (2) "The question of the difference in earnings between those members of a commune who have more labour power and less dependents and those who have less labour power and more dependents"; (3) "The question of the grades and difference in basic wages and of deciding a multiplier between maximum and minimum wages"; and (4) "The question of arranging supplies for a family of commune members who has other sources of wage income than the commune". (p. 277)

Chapter 5 deals with the subject of the distribution of commodities in people's communes. Section 1 explains how commercial institutions were reorganized around the time of communization (The commercial system, or the question of the purchasing and sales department of people's communes has been dealt with at the end of this section). Section 2 and the rest take up the subject of commodity production and categorized management of commodities and that of the distribution of commodities, and lastly explain the problems of prices, currency, and financing.

The subjects dealt with here are in the field where source material is most scanty and where things undergo more changes than anywhere else so that, at the time this study was being made, they seemed virtually impossible to be taken up for discussion. Nonetheless, the author has been able to collect a considerable amount of material and, while referring to it, to form an outline of the subject.

It is worth noticing that the author here has already pointed out a fact which is discussed by scholars at the present time in 1962. That is, that although the "unification of three cooperatives" (rural credit cooperatives, purchasing and sales cooperatives, and agricultural producers' cooperatives) has allegedly taken place, the all-district purchasing and sales general cooperative and the national purchasing and sales cooperative are still in existence.

Also, referring to a laborious collection of the material which is hardly accessible to the public or which has so far been overlooked, the author tries to explain some subjects which are still to be studied fully, such as the system of categorized management of commodities, the commodity distribution within the commune, the system of contract between the state and the commune, and the problem of prices in this regard.

In concluding my review of this book, I must add the following to what I have stated above.

As is well known, the people's commune originated in the latter half of 1958, and this study was conducted only less than two years after the first commune came into being. At that time, material on people's communes had been brought to Japan only in fragments, while the system of communes itself was still on the move in a large way. Probably for this reason, it seems that the five authors of this book were engaged in such heated controversies over how to understand the problem of people's communes that they could not reach agreement in the course of a study over a single year. The director of this study group, Mr. Doi, says, in "Outline of the Report" attached to the beginning of the volume, that there were three different viewpoints among the authors.

One of these is represented by Mr. Doi himself, who takes the position in his discussion that the people's commune at its initial stage "is not a system suitable for the present stage of production power in China". The second viewpoint is seen in the opinion of Mr. Hideo Yonezawa who takes the "position that the system of people's communes served greatly to expand production". The last viewpoint is the opinion of Mr. Hideo Yamamoto who says, "the social community called the people's commune means a step forward taken towards an ideal society". (p. 3)

Mr. Doi says that he regarded such conflict of views as inevitable in view of the level of Japanese studies of people's communes at that time and that, instead of unifying those views, he preferred to present them as they were to the readers and let each writer develop arguments according to his own viewpoint.

This gives the present volume the look of a collection of independent treatises, but, on the other hand, it may have made this study a success in that the writers could set forth the arguments of their own so freely, approaching this problem of great complexity on its varied aspects and thereby only making their discussion the more graphic.

For those readers who may not have a preliminary knowledge of the people's commune, I would recommend to begin with reading the volume from Chapter 2, "Organization and Operation of People's Communes" down to the end and then to go back to Chapter 1.

III

I may conclude my review with the impressions that came up to my mind when I had gone through these two studies.

(1) It may be safe to say that China has been undergoing such rapid changes for more than ten years since the establishment of the People's Republic that students of Chinese affairs have just been intent on the task of running after events taking place in succession. Until 1958 or the time the people's commune emerged, China had been advancing largely along the line of socialist construction set in the Soviet Union, and those observers who could unmistakably grasp the conditions following the Revolution of 1917 did not lose the sight of the direction in which the Chinese were proceeding. Once communization got started, however, China began to grope for its own

way of socialist construction. As a result, most students and observers of Chinese affairs, who failed to see what the Chinese really meant to do, and in what direction, were quite embarrassed, and did not know what to say. Even the Soviet Union, with its advanced experience in socialist construction, has not yet announced its official view on the people's commune.

(2) What, then, is to be done in order to appreciate correctly the unique road to socialism that China is pursuing now? It seems in this connection that we in Japan have just discovered some dependable approaches to the question. One of them is to attach importance to historical studies. This of course does not mean to study the 3,000 years of Chinese history. It means to study the course of activities of the Chinese Communist Party over the past forty years, for if one is to understand new China in its proper perspective, one must review in retrospect the Party's activities since the period of the revolutionary bases which it built in China's interior. Mr. Satō's "Farm Collectivization Policy of the Chinese Communist Party" is representative of such an attempt. It is reported that he is carrying forward his study of farm collectivization to the period after 1949.

(3) However, this type of study might result in a mere investigation of historical facts unless it is carried on always with attention paid to what is actually going on today. To this end, a historical study will have to be connected with a study of actual moves of people's communes as they are now.

Reading the results of the two study projects which I have brought under review in the above, I have the impression that these studies have been conducted with practically no contact with each other. There may be reasons for this, but this might be a matter which the Institute of Asian Economic Affairs might take into consideration in order to make the most of these outstanding studies and to develop them further.

(4) Today, Japanese research on Chinese subjects is more highly appreciated among the sinologists of the West, apart from those of socialist countries, a fact of which we can be proud before the world. This is not because individual Japanese scholars and students have a higher level of ability or higher qualifications, but probably because Japan has accumulated knowledge about China over hundreds of years and has always had a number of scholars in any specialized field of Chinese studies. More especially, it is because Chinese studies in Japan, whether they are right or wrong, are not merely documentary but humanizing in their approach. This can be well said of the authors of these two books.

At the same time, what we have to do in promoting the Chinese studies in Japan is to find out the way to unify the efforts of those scholars with such characteristics on a still higher level where they can more fully demonstrate their abilities.