

## Week 4 (1): Communication, cooperation, and conflict in the Mao Era

### ***Mass line and the peasant movement***

- The 1920s is known as the year of “liberation”. Chinese Peasants began organizing into powerful peasant associations in the twenties with and without the help of organizers from the communist party and Socialist Youth League.
- After Mao’s investigation in his home province, Hunan, he submitted a “Report on an Investigation of the Peasant Movement in Hunan.”
- He was thinking the ideas of peasant militants, systematizing them, and passing them on to party leaders. He hoped that they would listen to what peasants were saying by their words and their actions and thereby be inspired to trust the peasantry, throw in their lot with them, and help them organize their own revolution
- the method of on the spot social investigation pioneered by Mao and other revolutionaries in the twenties is an important legacy that continues to shape policy formation processes in the eighties.
- the power of the largest landlords and local officials had collapsed under the organized collective weight of the peasant associations.
- Maos’s investigation and report on the peasant movement in Hunan was an early example of an approach to political communication that would later be identified as “the mass line”.
- the mass line implies to three distinct power relations: between cadres and the masses, between party cadres and the mass of ordinary party members, and between the party as the revolutionary vanguard and the masses.
- the mass line is a theory of political communication, political organization and political participation.
- Despite appearances, however, the mass line does not mean democracy in the sense of autonomous self-government. Rather, it is government on the people’s behalf by leaders who, in the final analysis, are not responsible to the people, but to the party.
- The party’s most important task is to enlighten the masses.
- in 1957, Mao drew on the Yan’an legacy with the following observation: “this democratic method of resolving contradictions among the people was epitomized in 1942 in the formula, ‘unity, criticism, unity.’ To elaborate it means starting from the desire for unity, resolving contradictions through criticism or struggle and arriving at a new unity on a new basis.
- the key to success lay in adequate social investigation and organization of those who would be affected by policies. People were organized first to articulate their needs and then on the basis of agreement with systematic summaries and analyses of commonly perceived problems, to participate directly in schemes to resolve them.

### ***Mass Line and the Peasant Movement After Liberation - Land Reform***

- The relatively democratic communication between leaders and led and the specific stages and organizational techniques, as well as the use of representative committees and mass organization, were all reminiscent of the land reform in the Jiangxi Soviet.

- The speed and administrative nature of land reform in the South caused many peasants to identify it as something important from the outside. Underlying this problem is a tendency to treat “peasants” as a mass, so that applying the mass line can mean taking ideas and practical experiences of peasants in one part of the country and applying them to peasants in another area despite considerable cultural and even socioeconomic differences.

### ***Mutual Aid***

- Mutual Aid teams were built upon traditional forms of labor exchange, of sharing draft animals and other means of production, and of collective labor.
- The purpose of mutual aid was to raise productivity and increase the security of members by achieving economies of scale through the sharing of available means of production.

### ***Supply and Marketing Cooperatives and Contract systems***

(These two sub-sections are very short, therefore, I would recommend you to read it in the reader instead)

### ***The Corporative Movement***

- Elementary producers’ cooperatives were a step beyond the mutual aid teams inasmuch as they involved the pooling of land as well as collective labor.
- Distribution of proceeds was based on relative contributions of labor and land and other means of production. In other words, the cooperative was a sort of point-stock operation in which differences in individual members’ incomes derived in part from differences in the size of initial individual investment.
- In the more advanced producers’ cooperatives, the link between formerly private productive assets, including land, animals and technology, on the one hand, and remuneration, on the other, would be broken.
- Incomes would be derived solely from workpoints calculated according to the type, quantity, and quality of work performed. The value of each workpoint would depend on the productivity of the collective as a whole.
- Collective labour increasingly became peasants’ only sources of income as the scope for legal economic activity was increasingly narrowed to crop production to meet quotas. They had not only given up legal title to private ownership of the major means of production but were also losing control over the planing and management of rural production.

### ***The Great Leap Forward and the People’s Communes***

- In a matter of months cooperatives were merged to become brigades in much larger people;s communes made up of one to ten thousand or more households.
- In a massive campaign to increase China’s output of steel, peasants built hundred of thousands of small furnaces to produce largely useless, substandard pig iron.
- Some quite reasonably point out the positive gains inasmuch as many peasants got their first introduction to industrial technology and skills in 1958. This knowledge eventually bore fruit in later attempts to industrialize many rural villages in the sixties and seventies.

- The people's communes took over many functions formerly handled by local governments, such as provision of education, health, cultural and welfare services and facilities. However, decentralization was achieved by greatly strengthening the authority of local party cadres.

### ***New Economy Policies of the Early Sixties***

- In May 1961, the party's program for revitalizing the rural economy was outline in a document popularly referred to as "the sixty articles." the size of people's communes was generally reduced to the boundaries of the former townships.
- to stimulate private production, rural markets were revived. Goods were designed in three categories: (1) those that could be sold only to the states at fixed prices, (2) those that could be sold on the open market once states sales quotas had been fulfilled , and (3) those whose production and circulation was completely unregulated.
- Planning remained, but its character began to change away from Soviet-style command or imperative planning toward indicative planning based on regulated price incentives and contract negotiations.
- the "three freedoms and one contract" included freedom to toll private plots, freedom sell good in rural markets, and freedom for rural collective enterprises to manage their operations independently with responsibility for their own profits and losses. the "contract" was an agreement between the team and member household to fulfill output quotas according to a responsibility system.