

**Document 12.9: Excerpts from reports and writing related to land reform leading up to the founding of the People's Republic of China, 1946-1948**

From "A Three Months' Summary," by Mao Zedong, October 1, 1946

The experience of these three months has proved that the peasants stood with our Party and our army against the attacks of Chiang Kai-shek's troops wherever the Central Committee's directive of May 4<sup>1</sup> was carried out firmly and speedily and the land problem was solved radically and thoroughly. The peasants took a wait-and-see attitude wherever the "May 4th Directive" was not carried out firmly or the arrangements were made too late, or wherever this work was mechanically divided into stages or land reform was neglected on the excuse of preoccupation with the war. In the coming few months all areas, no matter how busy they are with the war, must resolutely lead the peasant masses to solve the land problem and, on the basis of the land reform, make arrangements for large-scale production work next year.

Source: *The Selected Works of Mao Zedong, Vol IV*. Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, third printing 1969, pp.116.

From "Greet the New High Tide of the Chinese Revolution," by Mao Zedong, February 1, 1947

The Land Problem: In about two-thirds of the territory in each Liberated Area, the Central Committee's directive of May 4, 1946, has been put into effect, the land problem has been solved and the policy of land to the tillers has been carried out; this is a great victory. There remains around one-third of the territory, however, where further efforts must be made to arouse the masses fully and put the policy of land to the tillers into

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<sup>1</sup> On May 4, 1946, the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party issued the "Directive on the Land Question." It changed the policy which had been in place during the War of Resistance Against Japan. Rather than reducing rent and interest payments, now land would be confiscated from landlords and distributed among peasants.

effect.

In places where the policy of land to the tillers has been carried out, there are still shortcomings insofar as the solution was not thorough—mainly because the masses were not fully aroused, so that the confiscation and the distribution of land were not thorough and the masses became dissatisfied. In such places, we must check carefully and must “even up” to ensure that the peasants with little or no land obtain some and the bad gentry and local tyrants are punished.

In the entire process of carrying out the policy of land to the tillers, we must unite firmly with the middle peasants, and it is absolutely impermissible to encroach on the interests of the middle peasants (including the well-to-do middle peasants); if cases occur where the interests of the middle peasants are encroached upon, there must be compensation and apology. Moreover, during and after the land reform, appropriate consideration in accordance with the will of the masses should be given to ordinary rich peasants and middle and small landlords, and it should be given in accordance with the “May 4th Directive.” To sum up, in the land reform movement in the rural areas we must unite with the masses who support the reform and isolate the small number of feudal reactionaries who oppose it so that we can speedily realize the policy of land to the tillers.

Source: *The Selected Works of Mao Zedong*, vol 4. Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, third printing 1969. 123–124.

#### From the Outline Land Law of China, October 1947

*The National Land Conference of the Communist Party of China was held in September 1947 in Hubei Province. The law written at the conference was published by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China on October 10, 1947. It stipulated the following:*

Abolish the land system of feudal and semi-feudal exploitation and put into effect the system of land to the tillers.

All the land of the landlords and the public land in the villages is to be taken over by the local peasant associations and, together with all other land there, is to be equally distributed among the entire rural population, regardless of sex or age.

The peasant associations of the villages shall take over the draught animals, farm tools, houses, grain, and other property of the landlords, requisition the surplus of such property of the rich peasants, distribute all this property among the peasants and other poor people who are in need of it and allot the same share to the landlords.

Source: Transcription by the Maoist Documentation Project, revised 2004 by Marxist.org. [http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-4/mswv4\\_24.htm#bm4](http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-4/mswv4_24.htm#bm4)

From “The Present Situation and Our Tasks,” December 25, 1947

*Mao Zedong presented his report to the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party.*

To carry out the land reform resolutely and thoroughly, it is necessary to organize in the villages, as lawful bodies for carrying out the reform, not only peasant associations on the broadest mass basis, including farm labourers, poor peasants and middle peasants and their elected committees, but first of all poor peasant leagues composed of poor peasants and farm labourers and their elected committees; and these poor peasant leagues should be the backbone of leadership in all rural struggles.

Our policy is to rely on the poor peasants and unite solidly with the middle peasants to abolish the feudal and semi-feudal system of exploitation by the landlord class and by the old-type rich peasants. Landlords or rich peasants must not be allotted more land and property than the peasant masses. But there should be no repetition of the wrong ultra-Left policy, which was carried out in 1931-34, of “allotting no land to the landlords and poor land to the rich peasants.”

Although the proportion of landlords and rich peasants in the rural population varies from place to place, it is generally only about 8 per cent (in terms of households), while their holdings usually amount to 70 to 80 per cent of all the land. Therefore the targets of our land reform are very few, while the people in the villages who can and should take part in the united front for land reform are many—more than 90 per cent (in terms of households).

Source: *The Selected Works of Mao Zedong*, vol. 4. Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, third printing 1969. 164.

For further developments in land reform during the revolution, see <http://www.marx2mao.com/Mao/DT48.html> “Different Tactics for Carrying Out the Land Law in Different Areas,” February 1948.