

**Document 13.3: Excerpt from “The Masses Can Do Anything,” statement by Mao Zedong, September 29, 1958**

*In 1956, Mao Zedong made significant efforts to travel throughout China to assess the state of affairs and be as visible as possible to the people. He referenced such trips in later speeches as he tried to rally China’s population to embrace the Great Leap Forward, an initiative that was in the planning stages in the late fifties. He made this statement to a reporter of the Xinhua [News] Agency.*

During this trip, I have witnessed the tremendous energy of the masses. On this foundation it is possible to accomplish any task whatsoever. We must first complete the tasks on the iron and steel fronts. In these sectors, the masses have already been mobilized. Nevertheless, in the country as a whole, there are a few places, a few enterprises, where the work of mobilizing the masses has still not been properly carried out, where mass meetings have not been held and where the tasks, the reasons for them, and the methods have still not been made perfectly clear to the masses or discussed by the masses. There are still a few comrades who are unwilling to undertake a large-scale mass movement in the industrial sphere. They call the mass movement on the industrial front ‘irregular’ and disparage it as ‘a rural style of work’ and ‘a guerrilla habit’. This is obviously incorrect.

However, while devoting ourselves to iron and steel production on a large scale, we must not sacrifice agriculture.... The 1959 task in agriculture is to achieve a leap forward even greater than that of 1958. Consequently, we must organize the industrial and agricultural labour force effectively and extend the system of people’s communes throughout the whole country....

Source: Mao Zedong, “The Masses Can Do Anything,” 29 Sept. 1958, transcribed by the Maoist Documentation Project. HTML revised 2004 by Marxists.org