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CHOU EN-LAI

# A GREAT DECADE

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AS the Chinese People's Republic celebrates the tenth anniversary of its birth, people throughout the world, irrespective of their political opinions, cannot but acknowledge that truly earth-shaking changes have taken place in China. The Chinese people have changed from slaves living in a hell on earth into fearless masters of their fate. The entire nation looks back upon the great victories already won with rejoicing and looks to the future with full confidence.

Let us see what changes China has undergone in the past decade; why they have taken place and what main lessons can be drawn from them.

It is well known that ten years ago China was extremely backward economically. At that time, China stood twenty-sixth in the world's output of steel, and twenty-fifth in output of electric power. Its output of coal was relatively larger: it took ninth place. Its output of cotton yarn, product of its relatively better developed cotton textile industry, still gave it no better than fifth place. There were only 3 million industrial workers in the country, less than 0.6 per cent of the population. Though vast old China always claimed to be an agricultural country, it was obliged to import wheat, rice and cotton every year for several decades preceding liberation. Customs returns show that 6,000 million catties<sup>1</sup> of grain were imported in 1933 while 6,900,000 *tan*<sup>2</sup> of

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<sup>1</sup> A catty is equivalent to 0.5 kilogram or 1.1023 pounds.

<sup>2</sup> A *tan* is equivalent to 50 kilograms or 110.23 pounds.

cotton were imported in 1946. For a long time there was an unfavourable foreign trade balance. Year after year there was a deficit in the state budget. In the twelve years from the outbreak of the anti-Japanese war in July 1937 to May 1949, the volume of currency issued by the reactionary Kuomintang government increased over 140,000 million times while commodity prices rose over 8,500,000 million times.

So deplorable was the state of affairs in China at the time that the U.S. Secretary of State, George C. Marshall, in the statement which he read to the Congressional Committees on Foreign Affairs and Foreign Relations in executive session in February 1948, had to acknowledge that even the incessant outpouring of U.S. aid could not rescue China from its economic crisis. He asserted that "China does not itself possess the raw material and industrial resources" which would enable it to become a first-class power within the foreseeable future. In August 1949, Dean Acheson, who succeeded Marshall as Secretary of State, in his letter to U.S. President Truman, ridiculed the "promises" of the Chinese Communist Party to solve the problem of "feeding the population." He predicted that no government in China would succeed in tackling this problem.

But even in June 1949, Comrade Mao Tse-tung solemnly declared at the opening ceremony of the Preparatory Committee of the People's Political Consultative Conference in Peking: "The Chinese people will see that, once its destiny is in the hands of the people, China will, like the rising sun in the east, flood the earth with its brilliant rays, swiftly wash away the dirt left behind by the reactionary government, heal the war wounds and

build up a new, strong and prosperous people's democratic republic of China which will be true to its name."

Whose prediction has come true?

According to the adjusted planned figures for 1959 (it can now already be foreseen that most of the planned targets will be overfulfilled), the total output value of industry and agriculture will be 5.3 times that of 1949; of this total the value of industrial production will be 11.7 times larger. Steel output will reach 12 million tons, 76 times the 1949 figure of 158,000 tons; coal, 335 million tons, more than 10 times the 1949 figure of 32,430,000 tons; electric power, 39,000 million kilowatt-hours, more than 9 times the 1949 figure of 4,310 million kilowatt-hours; and cotton yarn, 8.2 million bales, 4.5 times the 1949 figure of 1.8 million bales. In 1958, China jumped to seventh place in the world in steel, third place in coal, eleventh place in electric power and second place in cotton yarn production. Even though modern industry had been introduced for nearly a century, fixed industrial assets totalled less than 13,000 million yuan by 1949 in old China; in the ten years of New China the value of newly added fixed industrial assets amounts to around 45,000 million yuan. In old China, after nearly seventy years of power development, power generating capacity amounted to less than 1.9 million kilowatts by 1949; in ten years in New China the new power generating capacity added is more than three times that figure. By 1949 after nearly sixty years of development of its iron and steel industry annual steel making capacity was less than one million tons in old China; the new annual steel making capacity added in ten years of New China is more than ten times that figure.

The imperialists ridiculed our adjusted 1959 plan as a "big leap backward." As everybody knows, 1958 was a year of an exceptionally big leap forward in China's industrial and agricultural production, with the verified output value of industry 66 per cent bigger than in 1957. The adjusted 1959 target for output value of industry is still 25.6 per cent higher than in 1958, the year of the exceptionally big leap forward. This is obviously a continued great leap forward on the basis of an exceptionally big leap forward. Such a rate of leaping advance is beyond anything the imperialist countries dare dream of. Let us compare our speed of development with that of the two leading imperialist countries. In the nine years between 1950 and 1958, China's total output value of industrial production rose at an average annual rate of 28 per cent whereas the comparable rate in the U.S. was 3.7 per cent and in Britain 2.9 per cent. In 1958, the year of the exceptionally big leap forward in China's industry, industrial production fell by 6.5 per cent in the U.S. and by 0.9 per cent in Britain compared with the previous year. If our speed is described as a "big leap backward," how should their speed be called?

To belittle the great significance of our big leap forward, bourgeois commentators have advanced another paradoxical argument: China's rate of development is great only because its original level was very low. But what are the facts? Our rate of growth manifests itself not only in the average annual percentage increase, but also in absolute volume. China's steel output was 158,000 tons in 1949 and will reach 12 million tons in 1959, that is, an increase of 11,842,000 tons in ten years, roughly equivalent to the net increase in the 29 years between 1872 and 1901 in the U.S., or in the 67 years between



1869 and 1936 in Britain. Why could the U.S. and Britain not progress at that time at the same leaping rate as China is doing today? What argument can your bourgeois sophists produce to explain away the crawling rate of progress in the capitalist countries?

As a result of this rapid rate of industrial growth, especially in heavy industry, marked changes have taken place in the composition of China's national economy. In 1949, the total value of industrial output accounted for 30 per cent of the total value of industrial and agricultural output while the output value of means of production accounted for 26.6 per cent of the total value of industrial output. By 1958, the proportions reached 63.6 per cent and 57.3 per cent respectively. Now we have ourselves begun to produce about 500 types of steel and 6,000 types of rolled steel, many new types of heavy-duty machine tools, 2,500-ton hydraulic forging presses, complete sets of coal mining and coking equipment, equipment for big blast furnaces more than 1,500 cubic metres in volume, jet planes, various types of motor vehicles, tractors, sea-going vessels with a deadweight of 5,000 tons, 72,500-kilowatt hydro-electric power generating equipment and 50,000-kilowatt thermo-power generating equipment, complete sets of textile, paper-making and sugar-refining equipment and other products. There has also been a marked change in the geographical distribution of industry. Formerly over 90 per cent of the iron and steel industry was concentrated in Northeast China. With the exception of Tibet, iron and steel bases of varying sizes and numbers have been established in every province, municipality and autonomous region in the country. Power plants were concentrated previously in a few large cities and industrial bases. Now all large,

medium-sized and small cities and even some rural areas have power stations of varying sizes. Previously the textile industry was mainly concentrated in Shanghai, Tsingtao, Tientsin, and Wusih. Now many new modern textile mills have been built in most of China's provinces. Big industrial bases have been built in many areas that were formerly desolate and inaccessible like Inner Mongolia, Sinkiang, Chinghai and Kansu and cities with very few people. All these facts show that the foundation has been laid for the industrialization of China. No force in the world can prevent our country from developing into a prosperous and powerful, big industrial country in the not too distant future.

While developing industry, we have not forgotten to develop agriculture. In these ten years, the total value of China's agricultural output will have increased two and a half fold. In 1959, the total grain output will reach 550,000 million catties, 2.5 times the 1949 figure of 216,200 million catties. This year, the total cotton output will reach 46.2 million *tan*, 5.2 times the 1949 figure of 8.89 million *tan*. Our total grain output has ranked first in the world since 1952. Last year, our total cotton output ranked second in the world. Of course in terms of per capita output the agricultural level of our country, like the industrial level, is still quite low. But the crux of the problem is rate of development. Although our country has very limited agricultural machinery and chemical fertilizer, and the United States has many times as much as our country, grain output went up 130 per cent in our country between 1949 and 1958 while in the United States it only rose 25 per cent. During the same period, our cotton output shot up 372 per cent while in the United States it dropped 28 per cent.



Capital construction has made rapid progress in the rural areas. In the initial stage after liberation there were only 240 million *mou*<sup>1</sup> of irrigated land in the country. With the construction of large numbers of rural water conservancy projects and reservoirs in the past ten years, the total irrigated area has been expanded to more than 1,000 million *mou*. Vast numbers of small factories have been set up in the rural areas, mainly for the purpose of serving agriculture. Forestry, livestock breeding, side-occupations and fishery, closely related to agriculture, have also shown marked growth. From 1949 to 1958, a total of 500 million *mou* of land were afforested, the number of big draught animals increased from 60 to 85 million head and of pigs from 57 to 160 million head.

Great progress has been made, too, in communications and transport in keeping with the expansion of industry and agriculture. In 1949, there were less than 22,000 kilometres of railway open to traffic in China. This figure increased to over 31,000 kilometres in 1958. Now the railway network has been extended to all provinces and autonomous regions in the country except Tibet. During the same period, the total highway mileage was extended from 80,000 to 400,000 kilometres. In 1950, China's civil aviation lines totalled only 11,000 kilometres while in 1958, it increased to 33,000 kilometres. In the nine years from 1949 to 1958, the total volume of railway freight transport in terms of ton-kilometres increased more than 10 times, lorry transport more than 27 times and steamship and tug-boat transport more than 10 times. The volume of freight carried by wooden junks, animal-drawn

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<sup>1</sup> A *mou* is equivalent to 0.0667 hectare or 0.1647 acre.

carts and other non-mechanized vehicles also markedly increased. Many gigantic projects were built during these nine years, such as the Chengtu-Chungking Railway, the Paoki-Chengtu Railway, the Yingtian-Amoy Railway, the Tienhsui-Lanchow Railway, the Paotow-Lanchow Railway, the Yangtse River Bridge at Wuhan, the Chinghai-Tibet Highway, the Sikang-Tibet Highway and the Sinkiang-Tibet Highway. Projects now under construction include the Lanchow-Sinkiang Railway, the Szechuan-Kweichow Railway, the Neikiang-Kunming Railway, the Hunan-Kweichow Railway and several big bridges to span the Yangtse and Yellow Rivers. By 1958, as a result of building simple roads on a large scale, 97 per cent of China's county towns were accessible by lorry. Rapid development has also been made in postal and telecommunication and broadcasting work. The total number of post and telecommunication offices in the country grew from over 20,000 in 1949 to more than 60,000 in 1958. Telephone lines reach 98 per cent of the rural people's communes in the country.

The volume of retail sales in China in 1958 was 3.2 times that of 1950. Compared with 1950, the increase in sales in the main consumer goods was: grain, 62 per cent; edible vegetable oils, 97 per cent; salt, 94 per cent; sugar, 300 per cent; aquatic products, 240 per cent; cotton cloth, 120 per cent; and machine-made paper, 270 per cent. Commodity prices have been consistently steady in China since 1950 thanks to the steady increase in supplies of consumer goods, the thorough elimination of speculation, the balancing of state revenue and expenditure and the balancing of bank credits. Certain planned adjustments were made only in the relative prices between industrial and agricultural products.

China's foreign trade has also seen tremendous changes in the past ten years. The right to administer the customs was taken back out of the hands of the imperialists after the victory of the Chinese revolution in 1949. A change has also begun to take place in the long-existing excess of imports over exports. In 1958, the total volume of imports and exports was 3.1 times the 1950 figure. Imports increased by 190 per cent and exports by 230 per cent. In the main, imports and exports have been balanced. Contrary to pre-liberation conditions when imports mainly consisted of consumer goods, now over 90 per cent are means of production such as machinery, raw materials and other materials. This has played a tremendous role in China's economic construction. China's exports are still mainly agricultural products, but the proportion of industrial products in the total volume of exports has gradually grown from 9.3 per cent in 1950 to 27.5 per cent in 1958.

As Comrade Mao Tse-tung anticipated, "With the upsurge in economic construction, there will inevitably appear an upsurge of cultural construction." From 1949 to 1958, the number of students in higher educational institutions increased from 117,000 to 660,000, a 5.7-fold increase, and in secondary specialized schools from 229,000 to 1.47 million, a 6.4-fold increase, the number of middle school students increased from 1.04 million to 8.52 million, an 8.2-fold increase, while the number of primary school pupils rose from 24.4 million to 86 million, a 3.5-fold increase. Primary education was in the main made universal in many counties and cities in 1958 and 85 per cent of all school-age children throughout China were enrolled in school. The literacy campaign and spare-time literacy classes have also developed greatly among

the factory and office workers, the peasants and urban population. The Communist Party's policy of "education serving the political interests of the proletariat and education combined with productive labour" was carried out in all grades of schools, thus deepening the socialist revolution on the educational front.

Scientific research has shown great development in the past ten years. By the end of 1958, there were more than 840 special research institutes in the natural sciences and technology and more than 32,000 research workers, approximately 20 times and 50 times more respectively than at the time of liberation.

The same period witnessed a tremendous growth in the fields of publishing, the cinema, the theatre and other arts.

The public health service has also developed rapidly in the past ten years. In 1958, there were over 5,600 hospitals and sanatoria in the country with 440,000 beds, a more than fivefold increase compared with 1949. In addition, over 900,000 simple beds were set up in small cities and the rural areas. Technical personnel in the public health service numbered 2,160,000 in 1958, 2.8 times the 780,000 in 1950.

The standards of the people's material and cultural life were greatly raised with the development of construction in all fields. This is fully demonstrated by the growing volume of retail commodity sales and the development in culture, education and public health mentioned above. In 1949, there were altogether 8 million workers and employees in enterprises, public undertakings and state organs. This number had risen to more than 45 million by the end of 1958, an increase of 5.7-fold, in which the number of industrial workers grew from 3 to 25.6 million,

an 8.5-fold increase. Not only was the phenomenon of unemployment left over from old China completely wiped out, but the scope of employment was also markedly expanded. On an average two out of every five of the urban population are employed. The average wages of Chinese office and factory workers more than doubled between 1949 and 1958. The personal income of the peasants nearly doubled. The number of workers and employees enjoying labour insurance grew from 600,000 in 1949 to 13,780,000 in 1958. Since the peasants throughout the country joined the people's communes, the overwhelming majority of those who lack labour power are being provided with grain or meals free of charge. The old hard life in which they had to worry about where their food would come from will soon become a memory of the past.

The state has given great attention to construction in the areas inhabited by the national minorities. State investments in the national minority areas amounted to more than 7,000 million yuan between 1950 and 1958. Now new industrial bases have been established and railways and highways built in many national minority areas. The total industrial output value of the national minority areas in 1958 was ten times what it was in 1949, and grain output and the number of livestock more than doubled. The volume of sales in national minority areas by state-owned commercial enterprises and supply and marketing co-operatives increased 5.7-fold in 1958 compared with 1952, and the volume of purchases 6.2-fold. The number of national minority students rose to over nine times the pre-liberation total. There were 775 hospitals and sanatoria with over 34,000 beds; in addition there were over 14,000 clinics and health centres. The trend towards a constant decrease of population among

the minority peoples which continued for hundreds of years has been completely reversed and a new phenomenon of the growing improvement of their economic and cultural life has appeared. In the Tibet region, things were somewhat different, because democratic reforms there had long been held up in the past. But since the rebellion was put down, the people there have also energetically embarked on their advance towards a new life. It will not take very long to build a happy and progressive Tibet.

Everybody knows too that ten years ago the political situation in China was abysmally dark and reactionary. The lackeys of the imperialists—the comprador capitalists, feudal landlords, warlords, bureaucrats, local despots and evil-minded gentry—rode roughshod over the people and bled them white. The broad mass of the people were in a state of slavery and utterly without rights. People of many national minorities suffered national oppression under the Han rulers in addition to oppression by the imperialists, and the aristocrats, landlords and slave-owners of their own nationalities. The country remained split for a long time; imperialist wars of aggression, the free-for-all fighting among different groups of warlords and the counter-revolutionary civil wars launched by the reactionary rulers continued for several decades and played havoc with the people. During the Kuomintang regime, bandits, gangsters, superstitious sects and secret societies ran riot everywhere; appalling lawlessness and utter disorder prevailed.

What tremendous changes have taken place in all this in the past ten years! The corrupt, iniquitous government which trampled upon the people is gone and has been replaced by an honest, industrious and hard-work-



ing government which really serves the people, a government of the kind the people dreamed of for generation after generation. The situation in which the people had no rights has ended once and for all; the broadest mass of the people enjoy democracy in law and in fact and to the widest extent in the administration of the public affairs of the country. National oppression has been eliminated; our motherland has become a big family in which all nationalities are completely equal and give fraternal aid to one another. The country has achieved a unity of unprecedented firmness. Bandits, gangsters, superstitious sects and secret societies as well as prostitutes, beggars, gambling houses and narcotic drugs have all been swept away; there is law and order everywhere. The broad mass of the people, united as one and full of vigour, are building their own happy life eagerly, courageously and with boundless energy.

What a pitiful position China occupied ten years ago in international affairs is well known. For many years, China had been a colonial and semi-colonial country. The imperialist powers regarded our country as rich booty from which everyone snatched what he could. The European imperialists tried to carve China up; the Japanese aggressors wanted to devour it alone and did swallow nearly half of it between 1937 and 1945. The United States, after the Second World War, was bent on taking over the place of the Japanese aggressors. China, the most populous country in the world, was not only deprived of the rights which were its due in international political life, but was almost deprived of the right to manage its own affairs.

The colonial and semi-colonial old China has now gone for ever; the people's new China has emerged, independ-

ent and free. As Comrade Mao Tse-tung declared at the founding of the People's Republic of China: "Our nation will henceforth join the big family of peace-loving and freedom-loving nations in the world. It will work bravely and industriously to create its own civilization and happiness and will, at the same time, further world peace and freedom." The weakness of China is being transformed into its opposite—strength. At the same time, internationally, the situation in which China had no rights is changing to its opposite. Over all the territory which has been liberated, it fully exercises its sovereignty; it must also exercise its right to have its say on all major international questions which concern its interests and the interests of world peace. U.S. imperialism, while launching its aggressive war in Korea, seized our territory Taiwan and tried to spread the flames of aggression from Korea to the Chinese mainland in a futile attempt to strangle new-born China by force of arms. The Chinese people waged a mighty struggle to resist U.S. aggression, aid Korea, protect their homes and defend their motherland, and they crushed this aggressive scheme. Taiwan is still occupied by U.S. imperialism, but the Chinese people are determined to liberate Taiwan and no force whatsoever can prevent them from doing so. Up to now U.S. imperialism is still trying hard to isolate and exclude New China from international affairs. This attempt, however, is becoming more and more a failure with every passing day. Now we have established full or partial diplomatic relations with 33 countries, economic relations with 93 countries and regions, and cultural contacts and exchanges of friendly visits with 104 countries and regions. We are closely united with the great Soviet Union and the other

socialist countries. In accordance with the "five principles" and the Bandung Declaration, we have established and developed relations of friendship and co-operation with many nationally independent countries in Asia and Africa, forming a vast area of peace. As one of the big powers of the world and as a member of the great socialist camp headed by the Soviet Union, we have been contributing, as is our duty, to the defence of world peace and the development of human progress.

How is all this swift, flying progress to be explained? How has it taken place?

The swift, flying progress of People's China is, in the final analysis, due to the fact that Chinese society has undergone a most thoroughgoing democratic revolution and socialist revolution and that China has established a socialist society based on public ownership of the means of production.

If the Chinese people had not overthrown imperialism, feudalism and bureaucrat-capitalism which weighed upon them like three great mountains, they would, as a matter of course, only find themselves for ever plunged in poverty and backwardness. And if, after toppling these mountains, they had not taken the road of socialism at once, had not carried out thoroughly the socialist revolution, or had not embarked on planned socialist construction, but, after achieving national independence, had taken the road of capitalism like some other countries, they could not possibly have made such rapid progress in the past ten years, not to mention the big leap forward that has taken place since last year.

The reactionary view that an economically and culturally backward country cannot realize socialism has long been torn to pieces by Lenin and Comrade Mao Tse-