

The Pilot Land Reform Program and Land Reform in Pilot Villages:  
A Study of Pilot Land Reform and Party Consolidation in Lucheng, Shanxi

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土改的试点与试点的土改：山西潞城土改整党试点研究

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**Abstract**

William Hinton's widely influential *Fanshen* is notable for its nuanced description of the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) consolidation and land reform in Long Bow village (Hinton's pseudonym for Zhangzhuang 张庄). But how representative was Long Bow? What was the situation in other villages? Did Hinton accurately describe what really happened in the party consolidation and land reform? Or did he miss important points? Scholars have either considered the situation in Long Bow as representative of the general situation of party consolidation and land reform in northern China or else have left these questions open, and thus have failed to distinguish between pilot programs of party consolidation and the overall consolidation of the party. Based on documents from the Communist Party Committee of Lucheng county and pilot villages including Long Bow, this article seeks to clarify the sequence of events surrounding party consolidation and land reform in Long Bow and its role in the pilot program of land reform and party consolidation in Lucheng county by setting Long Bow in the context of the larger administrative region of which it was part and reviewing the historical process of the land reform and party consolidation pilot program. In this way, this article reveals the historical significance of land reform and party consolidation for rural political change and democratic development.

**Keywords:** Lucheng county, land reform, party consolidation, pilot, Long Bow village

**提要**

韩丁的《翻身》因对张庄土改整党的细腻描述而成为展现中共革命的优秀作品，影响甚广。不过，作为个案，张庄具有多大的代表性？同时期其他村庄的状况如何？韩丁是否真实地展现了土改整党的原貌，是否遗漏了重要内容并影响对于中共革命的评判？长期以来学界

或者将张庄的情形扩展为北方土改整党的普遍状况，或者对这些问题存而不论，以致无法廓清土改整党的丰富全貌，也未能明晰整党试点与全面整党的阶段区分。本文以潞城县委和包含张庄在内的各整党试点村的档案材料为基础，试图通过重新梳理土改整党试点的历史过程，将张庄置于更大的区域和行政空间内进行讨论，以此明了张庄土改整党的来龙去脉及其在潞城县土改整党试点中的地位，并揭示土改整党对于乡村政治变革及民主发展的历史意义。

**关键词** 潞城、土改、整党、试点、张庄

## **Introduction**

William Hinton's *Fanshen* is notable for its fine-grained and wide-ranging description of the CCP's consolidation and land reform in Long Bow village, Shanxi. Long Bow has in fact become a staple of academic works. Long Bow's fame is due neither to cadres like Chen Yonggui of Dazhai village, who was hailed as an exemplar of selfless dedication, nor to the agricultural economic success brought by collectivization, but rather because Hinton described meticulously and in depth life in the village, people's thinking, and their changing ideas in the process of making revolution. From the perspective of peasants and cadres, Hinton revealed the impact that the revolution, and the experience of participating in it, had on ordinary people. Compared with the raw facts, Hinton's "at the scene" observations added a more perceptual experience and flesh-and-blood content. He saw the kind of subtle emotions and changes in people's thinking that are not easily found in historical materials but that are crucial to an understanding of history change and the knowledge and evaluation of future generations. He also

envisaged a more revolutionary process that would resolve various contradictions and conflicts with the active participation of everyday people, which has been precisely the attraction of the Chinese revolution.

Long Bow, however, was not the only village during the pilot program of party consolidation and land reform in Lucheng. Around the same time, other villages carried out party consolidation and land reform, although scholars have not had an entirely clear picture of what was involved. At that time, Lucheng county had a total of 164 administrative villages, of which 19 were initially designated as pilot villages. Later, following the instructions of the prefectural party committee, some cadres were reassigned to guide production, reducing the number of pilot villages to 11 (“Preliminary Review,” 1948). The villages belonging to the five districts of Lucheng county mentioned in the archival files were Jincun, Heshi, Zaozhen, Dongyi, Dongguan, Long Bow, Nanchui, Shiliang, Huayuan, Manliuhe, Huangnian, Jiacun, Xiliu, and Qiangcheng (“Chen Zhenhua’s Report,” 1948).<sup>1</sup> Long Bow was located in the fifth district. (See Figure 1.)

In view of this background information, one may ask: Aside from Longbow, what was the situation regarding party consolidation and land reform in other villages in Lucheng? In what ways were Long Bow and these other villages similar or different? What was the overall situation with the party consolidation and land reform pilot program in Lucheng?

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<sup>1</sup> Initially, the county committee considered Huayuan and Manliuhe as one village and sent one work team to carry out party consolidation there. Later, the county committee believed that the two villages had not carried out land reform together and should not be treated as if they were a single village.

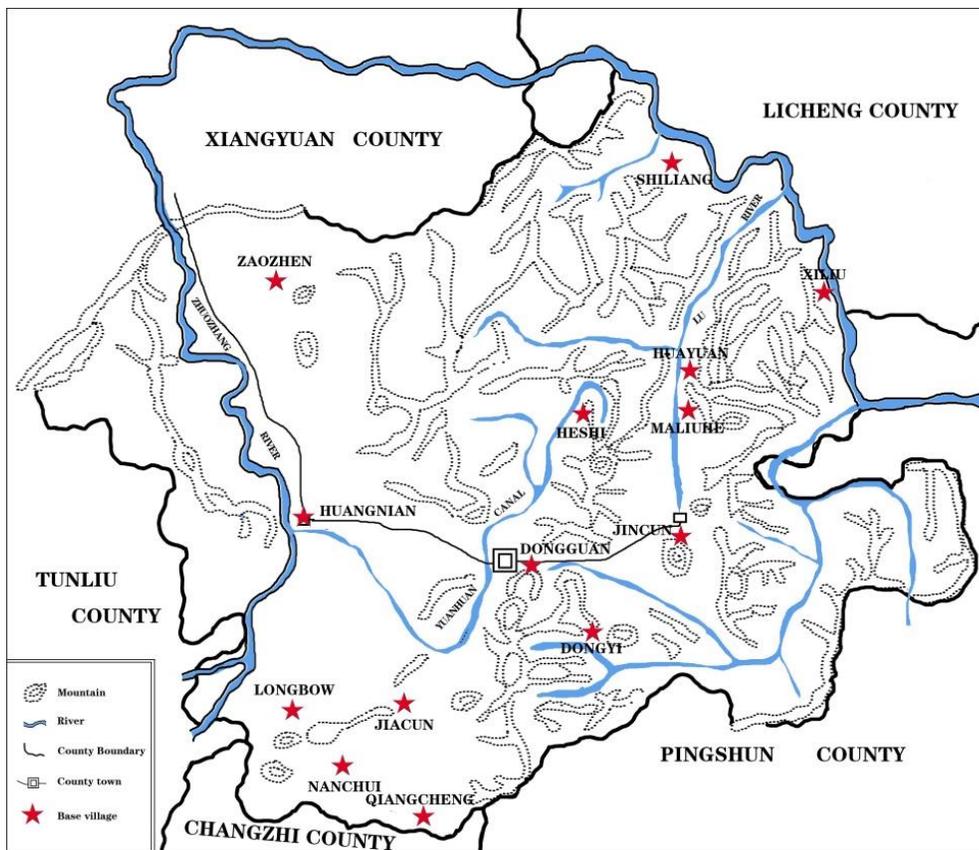


Figure 1. Pilot villages in Lucheng, Shanxi.

Source: *Map of Lucheng County* and *Map of Rivers and Mountains of Lucheng County*, File A1-2-200, Archives of Lucheng City, Shanxi.

Scholars have had a rather vague understanding of what distinguished the pilot stage from the full-scale implementation of party consolidation and land reform in Lucheng. Initially, a few villages, including Long Bow, carried out a pilot program. Later, the Lucheng county party committee rolled out comprehensive party consolidation in the process of ending land reform, and in three batches of villages, it brought land reform to an end, developing production and correcting “deviations,” and systematic implementing democratic party consolidation and the

establishment of the party organization and authorities in the production campaign. By December 1949, of the 166 administrative villages in the county, party consolidation had been completed in 106 (63.9%), was still in progress in 22, and had not yet started in 39. The county party committee planned for all villages to complete the process before the Spring Festival (“Report to the Prefectural Party Committee,” 1949). In other words, party consolidation and land reform in Lucheng lasted from the end of the pilot party consolidation in August 1948 to the founding of the People’s Republic. The entire process was not “abruptly stopped” (Huang, 2007: 105–7; 2013: 38),<sup>2</sup> but continued, and with a wealth of local practices. What guidance did the pilot experience provide for the overall unfolding of the campaign?

*Fanshen’s* value judgments, main narrative, discourse statements, way of thinking, logical analyses, and reflections on various issues in the process constitute a typical model of revolutionary history writing. They have thus been criticized as a product of the “class struggle theory” perspective and, in some quarters, relegated to a footnote of the paradigm of revolutionary history. Although “the theory of class struggle” can be an important theoretical framework for discussing peasant uprisings (Li, 2009: 174–84), class conflict is not the only factor and variable involved in revolution, and, in the case of China, institutional oppression and

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<sup>2</sup> Huang Daoxuan has argued that during party consolidation and land reform, with its cadre paralysis and intensification of contradictions between officials and the people, the problems in the mass party consolidation were exposed, and there were signs that the campaign was out of control. The CCP Central Committee, Huang contends, began to reflect on this and, although many regions remained at the pilot stage, suddenly victory was announced. These details are inconsistent with the actual situation in Lucheng county and the Taihang region.

peasant poverty were not the sole source of the revolution, either. Neither a high concentration of land ownership nor conflict between landlords and the peasants were as obvious as the CCP contended.

From the perspective of peasant participation, there was no active and self-conscious sense of class consciousness, and material interests were not the peasants' sole concern. Even if material interests are regarded as the main consideration, peasants did not readily respond to the call of the CCP. The causal explanations and logical inferences of the paradigm of revolutionary history and class struggle obscure many aspects of the revolution. That being said, did *Fanshen*, from the perspective of "class struggle theory" present a comprehensive description of Long Bow at the time? Are crucial elements missing because of Hinton's personal value judgments and limited vision? Would knowledge of these elements affect society's and academia's judgment of the CCP's experiment with party consolidation and land reform?

A review of the literature shows that, at least in China's northern regions, the owner-peasant economy dominated and the land issue was not prominent. Thus, how was the CCP able to mobilize peasants through land reform? Some scholars have called this the "North China puzzle" and believe that "the real secret of class struggle was not in defeating the landlord class, but in overthrowing the existing rural 'elite' or 'ruling class' (landlords, bullies, and corrupt officials). . . . The key to mobilizing the masses' political participation lay not only in stimulating their material interests, but also in satisfying their pressing demands and actively solving their most painful problems of mistreatment and corruption" (Li, 2013: 151, 155). Although the notion of class struggle was not completely consistent with rural realities, the key to its success, apart

from its rational side, was that it had a solid foundation in practice and in a homology between the CCP revolution and the peasants' interests.

How did the peasants participate in the social revolution? What was the main factor influencing each peasant's behavior? How were peasant demands expressed? What was the logic behind peasant actions and was their significance known to the CCP? And, especially crucial, what was more prominent, peasants' passive involvement or their subjective activeness? By contrast, in what ways did the ideology and revolutionary policies of the CCP break up local networks of power; were its policies effectively implemented in rural society; and did those policies substantially change peasants' ideas and behaviors, and separate them from the preexisting organizations and social relations and lead them to accept the will of the CCP? In the context of modernization and the wave of world revolution, a clear revolutionary program and the development of modern political organization were essential for the revolution's success. In some respects, the processes for the Guomindang (GMD) and the CCP were not very different, but the CCP was highly effective in guiding and persuading peasants. This was an important factor in peasants forming a sense of political identity with the CCP and supporting and participating in the revolution.

In grappling with these issues, this article uses documents of the Lucheng county party committee, the county in which Long Bow was located, and the archives of the pilot villages as the core literature for analysis. We proceed in two steps. First, the article attempts to resituate the historical process of the party consolidation and land reform pilot program in Long Bow in a larger area and administrative space; that is, it looks not only at Long Bow but also at other pilot

villages in the same period, and not only at the village level but also at the level of the county party committee, which governed the villages. Such an approach should clarify the ins and outs of Long Bow's party consolidation and land reform and its position among all of the county's pilot villages.

Second, the article focuses on the ways in which the work teams, which were responsible for enforcing the will of the CCP, went about guiding the peasants to generate, establish, and maintain their class interests and revolutionary consciousness; the methods the cadres and the masses (especially poor and hired peasants) used to express their appeals; and the significance of the pilot party consolidation and land reform program for rural political change and democratic development.

### **Work Teams in the Villages**

During the three-year civil war between the GMD and the CCP, Lucheng county was administratively part of the Taihang Special Administrative District of the Jin-Ji-Lu-Yu (Shanxi-Hebei-Shandong-Henan) Border Region Government, which comprised so-called old and semi-old liberated areas. From January to February 1948, Taihang's party committee held a meeting in Lujiazhuang, Changzhi county, to reorganize the cadres. After that, work teams were dispatched to the villages to start the work of party consolidation and land reform. The Lujiazhuang meeting was a prelude to the party consolidation and land reform in Lucheng county.

The principles, methods, and objectives of party consolidation and land reform determined by the Lujiazhuang meeting were directly related to the Yetao meeting held by the Central Bureau of Jin-Ji-Lu-Yu. Following the National Land Conference (convened in July 1947), the Jin-Ji-Lu-Yu Central Bureau met in Yetao, Handan, Hebei. In line with the center's assessment of land reform, the Central Bureau of Jin-Ji-Lu-Yu, highlighting class and the class viewpoint, observed that land reform in this area was far from thorough, and that *fanshen* (literally, "turning over"—here referring to the peasants turning into being satisfied with barely enough food from having not enough food) of poor and hired peasants was not thorough, and their demands had not been fulfilled, all of which was attributed to the ideology of the landlords and rich peasants as well as the party's bureaucratic style ("Sixth Report," 1948). The meeting's blind advocacy of the "poor and hired peasant line" directly contributed to the left-leaning tendency in the party consolidation movement to come ("Comprehensive Report," 1948).

Obviously, the elimination of landlords and rich peasants did not result in the fulfillment of the demands of the poor and hired peasants. The cadres were considered an important reason why the poor could not completely *fanshen*. This assessment reversed the previous conclusion of the party committees of the Jin-Ji-Lu-Yu Central Bureau, the Taihang region, the prefectures, and the counties that land reform had been basically completed (especially in the old areas, which occupied a larger part of the Taihang region) and directed criticism at the cadres ("Directive," 1947).

This logic was consistent with the statement by Taihang regional party secretary Lai Ruoyu, who had given a speech at this meeting. Lai asserted that in the previous land reform movement,

especially since the implementation of the central authorities' May 4 Directive, there had been no definite line on poor and hired peasants, no independent class organizations for poor and hired peasants, and no action on their demand for land. The party, Lai asserted, was seriously "impure," with most members consisting of new and former middle peasants, who did not represent the interests of poor and hired peasants. The regional party committee had given too much attention to the "historical merit" of the cadres, and in the future serious ideological struggles should be carried out ("Preliminary Examination of the Leadership," 1947). Lai's words set the tone of the party consolidation and land reform in the Taihang region, which overemphasized the poor and hired peasants, rejected the old foundation, and strengthened the struggle against cadres. In Lucheng county, this entire process was put into practice in pilot villages.

On January 14, 1948, the party committee of the Taihang region issued a directive to all the prefectural committees to put leadership in the hands of poor and hired peasants, to consolidate unity with middle peasants, and have some middle peasants participate in the peasant representative meetings. A January 22, 1948, report to the Jin-Ji-Lu-Yu Central Bureau noted that the counties in the Taihang region had begun to carry out land reform or review land reform in accordance with the gist of the Yetao meeting (Party History Research Office, 1994: 162). From January 10 to late February 1948, the party committee of the third prefecture of Taihang reported to the Lujiazhuang meeting that landlords and rich peasants still accounted for 40 percent of the members of party branches. It was with this in mind that the cadres were reorganized in line with the directive from higher-level authorities.

After returning from Lujiazhuang, Lucheng county party secretary Chen Zhenhua ordered all of the county's cadres to reflect on their mistakes and make a public self-criticism, stressing that Lucheng's poor and hired peasants had not yet *fanshened* and hence the cadres were not entitled to eat, as an archival document put it, if they could not find any poor and hired peasants in the villages ("Nine-Month Comprehensive Report," 1948). Of the 178 cadres of Lucheng county who were involved in the reorganization at Lujiazhuang, fifty-two, or 30 percent, were disciplined: ten were expelled, four were suspended, three were placed on probation, one was dismissed from work, five were warned in public, eleven were "advised" in public, ten were warned face-to-face, and eight were advised face-to-face ("Nine-Month Comprehensive Report," 1948).

The cadres in place after the Lujiazhuang reorganization formed the work teams. At the end of February and the beginning of March 1948, the work teams were stationed in the party consolidation pilot villages to carry out the land reform's party consolidation experiment. It was also in March 1948 that Hinton arrived in Long Bow (Lucheng City Records Compilation Committee, 1999: 40). And, also at that time, a work team had just entered Long Bow. Some cadres were unhappy about being asked to play a central role in the party consolidation and land reform in the village. This feeling stemmed from two sources. First, the fact that their job required them to leave home could lead to conflict between spouses or family conflicts. Second, cadres were concerned about the demanding nature of the work and about being criticized by higher levels. Many thought they could not produce the desired results and believed there were no solutions to the problems they would encounter ("Nine-Month Comprehensive Report,"

1948).<sup>3</sup> Their superiors failed to handle mobilization properly when transferring the cadres into the villages, failed to provide sufficient assistance when it came to working methods, failed to implement measures to take care of the cadres' families, and resorted to issuing high-handed orders, all of which caused hard feelings. For example, Jia Maoze of the Jincun village work team complained that "cadres can't go back home after they're transferred. In the past, we were excited about leaving. This time we leave because it's an order" ("Party Day Records," 1948).

Furthermore, some work team cadres who had been reorganized were criticized, and their initiative was blunted. Song Tianshun, a member of the Manliuhe work team, thought his family were poor peasants, but they had been classified as middle peasants in the class identification conducted during the Lujiazhuang meeting. He refused to accept the decision ("Notes of the Manliuhe Work Team," 1948). Wu Changsun, a member of the Zaozhen work team, mentioned that some problems had been created by his comrades in the consolidation of Lujiazhuang ("Notebook," 1948). In its summary, the county party committee mentioned, "In the reorganization of Lujiazhuang, there was too much pressure and too much focus on punishment; in the party consolidation back home in the villages, there was leftist tailism and a crackdown by the poor peasant leagues. All this not only affected the cadres but also their families in the

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<sup>3</sup> Cadres who were assigned to villages to lead the work of party consolidation and land reform were required to go back to their home villages, where they would be screened as part of party consolidation. Although the county party committee proposed that the cadres who participated in the party consolidation in Lujiazhuang not go back when the party branch in their own village undertook party consolidation, but only be examined at the people's representatives' conference, some cadres actually participated in the party consolidation in their own village.

villages, which intensified conflict. Therefore, some of the comrades were alienated, making them dissatisfied and ready to defy the party” (“Nine-Month Comprehensive Report,” 1948).<sup>4</sup>

The high-handed way the county party committee handled cadre mobilization; the manner of and attitudes in the reorganization; the punishments meted out during the reorganization; and the worries, fear of difficulties, negative feelings, and confrontations—all these greatly affected the work teams. Later in the party consolidation and land reform, work teams with left-leaning tendencies insisted that, in party consolidation, the party should lean to the left and use relatively extreme work styles and methods. This even led to the idea that “‘left’ is better than ‘right’” and “‘everything depends on the higher-ups, who can get whatever they want” (“Record of the Experimental Village Meeting,” 1948a).

After entering the village, the work teams mainly started their work by reorganizing the party branches and mobilizing the poor and hired peasants. Once work on these two tasks was fairly far along, the work teams turned to the work of public party consolidation. According to guidance from the county party committee and the results of practice in each experimental village, the general steps for reorganizing the party branches were as follows: party consolidation conducted within the party; representatives of poor and hired peasants participate in party branch meetings; poor and hired peasants hold a meeting or set up a peasant group to consolidate the party; people’s representatives hold a meeting to consolidate the party; a party branch is formally

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<sup>4</sup> When we speak of party consolidation back home, we refer to the fact that some cadres, while working as work team members, also participated in various activities surrounding party consolidation and land reform in their own villages.

established.

Mobilization of the poor and hired peasants required the following steps: conducting individual interviews with poor and hired peasants; collaborating to increase the number of poor and hired peasants recruited; discussing the qualifications of the poor peasant masses and reviewing the poor and hired peasants; electing representatives of the poor and hired peasants, formally establishing a poor peasant league, electing the poor peasant league committee, and formally classifying peasants into classes for the first time; uniting with the middle peasants, carrying out rectification and establishing a peasant association, electing the standing committee of the association, and carrying out classification for a second time; the establishment of a people's congress, and the organizing of village government. In a final step, the people's congress reached a decision on the class status of each household (in effect, a third round of classification), followed by a review of the issue of land reform and a conclusion to the movement ("Chen Zhenhua's Report," 1948).

The step-by-step procedures for the party consolidation and land reform appeared to be well organized and the overall objectives appeared relatively clear, but in reality things were extremely complicated. This was because the thinking of the county party committee and the work teams was only gradually clarified based on practice and on the ideas of the cadres and the masses and their understanding of land reform.

### **Reorganizing the Ranks of the Poor and Hired Peasants**

According to the Lujiashuang meeting and the county party committee, the primary task of the work teams after entering the village was to visit the poor and hired peasants, arrive at an understanding of the situation of the villages and their cadres, and mobilize the poor and hired peasants to establish their own organizations. Because the poor and hired peasants were mobilized gradually, in order to expand the poor and hired peasant groups, examine the poor and hired peasants, and elect the representatives to participate in party consolidation, a great deal of work was required.

After the Draft Agrarian Law was issued in 1947, because of a lack of understanding of the policies involved, especially on how to continue the land reform, the cadres and masses were confused, and the attitudes and understanding of all strata were different and so were their expectations. The poor and hired peasants and middle peasants were looking forward most to solving their own problems and settling accounts with self-seeking and unjust cadres. When entering the villages, the work teams needed to know about the situation of the feudal struggles in the villages, the status of the poor and hired peasants' "turning over" (i.e., whether they had *fanshen*ed or not), and the status of the party branches, and they needed to spend their time overcoming their ignorance of the poor and hired peasants—all this drew time away from tackling pressing problems. Even more important was that they had just been reorganized. Under the premise of rejecting the "old foundation" and following the poor and hired peasant line rather than the middle peasant line, they were cautious about mobilizing the poor and hired peasants.

*Fanshen* described how the work team in Long Bow first selected some peasants to form a temporary poor peasant league to carry out self-reporting, mass assessments, and initial

classifying and planned to expand the temporary poor peasant league on this basis to link up with the majority of poor and hired peasants (Hinton, 1980: 313–53). Hinton, however, failed to describe the setbacks the work team experienced in its initial mission to visit the poor peasants, the first test they had to manage when entering a village. The Long Bow work team initially visited more than a dozen poor and hired peasants, but did not provide clear instructions to the villagers about resolving the issue of outsiders being labeled “spies” and was incapable of recognizing and confirming who could be relied on. The only people they visited were poor and hired peasants. Only after the head of the work team reported to the county and got back to the village did the situation improve. More than twenty honest and reliable poor and hired peasants were identified out of more than fifty people visited. These twenty were relied on to mobilize others (“Materials on Long Bow,” 1948). In the experiment in party consolidation in other villages, the work teams experienced the same setback during their initial visit to the poor and hired peasants. This experience was related to the work teams’ understanding of these peasants and their attitudes and methods of work as well as to the poor and hired peasants’ desires, habits of expression, sense of participation, and ideological understanding.

On the one hand, according to the records, “some work teams do not know how to start their work when they first enter a village. They do not conduct preliminary investigations or understand the situation. . . . On seeing a dilapidated house, they go in and talk with anyone in rags, and do not find out where the landlords live or else they find people who are unreliable. This was reflected in the phenomenon of moving three times with their bedding each night. Some of the work team members see only what is wrong.” The Heshi work team was “afraid to

go into good houses after entering the village, afraid to meet cadre families, afraid to enter any dwelling except those of poor and hired peasants, afraid to meet the objects of struggle, and think that anyone not dressed in rags cannot be a poor or hired peasant. They look everywhere for the poor, and are impatient with the slow progress.” At the same time, the Heshi village work team initially was of two minds about whether the new middle peasants should be included in the scope of the mobilization. At first, they thought the new middle peasants had already *fanshened* and would not stand with the poor and hired peasants. Only later did they realize that it was not only the poor and hired peasants who had not *fanshened* that should be mobilized but also lower middle peasants short on land and the new middle peasants. From here, they could work vigorously (“Semi-Monthly Investigation,” 1948).<sup>5</sup>

On the other hand, the poor and hired peasants put forth a variety of responses during their interviews. Some of them “say a sentence when asked, are silent when not asked, speak hesitantly and incoherently, or don’t say anything,” and some “complain and compare themselves with others on meeting us, have objections about this and that, saying this person is wrong about one thing and that person is wrong about something else” (“Comrade Chen Zhenhua’s Summary Speech,” 1948). Some poor and hired peasants remained fatalistic: “In the past, no one oppressed or exploited us; my grandpa was to blame—he shouldn’t have rushed my

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<sup>5</sup> What needs to be emphasized is that in practice, all the party consolidation experimental villages classified the new middle peasants as poor and hired peasants, and Heshi even included lower middle peasants. Shortly after the party consolidation, the county party committee proposed that the new middle peasants should be treated as poor and hired peasants and be permitted to join the poor peasant league.

father out, giving him nothing” (“Summary Report,” 1948). This attitude tested the work teams’ patience and mobilizing skills. The poor and hired peasants were reluctant to express their inner wishes and real thinking because of their habits of expression and unfamiliarity with the work team members. They especially had their doubts about whether the cadres could be reorganized and whether the opinions they expressed could be dealt with. They worried that if they made any suggestions, the cadres would take revenge, thinking the poor and hired peasants really should not be in charge.

The main goal for the work teams was to visit the poor and hired peasants and encourage them to actively participate in the initiative. Next, based on information gained through these interactions, the work teams selected “decent” and honest poor and hired peasants and mobilized them to understand the real situation in the village. The work teams had to balance mobilizing widely, identifying reliable poor and hired peasants, and subjecting them to strict scrutiny; none of this was easy. In some villages, some poor and hired peasants deliberately pretended to be poor, pretended that they had not *fanshened*, hid things in their homes (to protect them from confiscation), and then complained to the work team that the cadres had not led them to *fanshen* and had not given them “fruit” (confiscated property) (“Summary of the Filling-in the Gaps,” 1948). Some often approached the work team on their own initiative, making it easy for the work team to build confidence but also get stuck in misunderstandings.

In Long Bow, at the very beginning, Shen Quande, an activist resident, was someone on whom the work team relied. The work team started its investigation on account of his strong anti-cadre sentiment. When the work team asked him, “Will the landlord speak to you honestly?”

he replied, ‘Yes, because he opposes the cadres.’ Shen even got a landlord who lived in the same courtyard with him to ask the cadres to pay wages. This kind of opposition to the cadres, rather than objectivity and fairness as the standard for mobilizing the poor and hired peasants, was the type of deviation that for a while put the work team into a predicament (“Materials on Long Bow,” 1948; Hinton, 1980: 355–56).

After the launch of the poor and hired peasant groups, the work team experienced twists and turns when it continued to expand those (temporary) groups. One mistake was “closing the door” by setting excessively strict standards for joining the (temporary) groups, resulting in the exclusion of many poor and hired peasants. Of the approximately two thousand people in Huangnian, only around a hundred were mobilized. Those who had done some work for the Maintenance Committee (维持会) of the Japanese puppet government for a short while and those who had stolen because of starvation in famine years were rejected. Those who were poverty-stricken and had nothing at home shortly after “turning over” were not regarded as poor and hired peasants, either (“Preliminary Review,” 1948).

The other mistake was indiscriminately accepting people without careful screening and without doing ideological work, resulting in a mixed pool. Some thought that certain poor and hired peasants were motivated and had achieved something, and the door was opened to such people. Likewise, Xiliu village let large numbers of poor and hired peasants into the groups and also let them leave in large numbers. To this, the masses shouted, “Chaos! Chaos!” (“Preliminary Review,” 1948). It should have been clear that what was involved was daunting: relying on the reliable poor and hired peasants to contact others, to investigate and carry out research, and to

provide ideological guidance while taking precautions against running the whole show, exclusionism, tailism, and mass sectarianism. The omission of any link could cause the work to run into trouble or go in the wrong direction.

After the launch of the campaign, a review of the poor and hired peasants based on the initial class review was necessary. This review concerned the purity of the poor and hired peasants, the effectiveness of the mass reorganization, as well as the rectification and reform of the party members. The county committee ordered the work teams to initially classify the villagers according to the standards set by the higher authorities and organize the poor and hired peasants who had been mobilized to examine each other's family class composition and historical relationships, and in the process arrive at a preliminary understanding of the class composition of each household. After this, based on their own specific conditions, the villages gradually clarified and unified the standards for reviewing the poor and hired peasants and for participating in the poor and hired peasant groups as well as for establishing discipline in the poor peasant league, which was also a process by which the poor and hired peasants gradually increased their class consciousness ("Letter from Chen Zhenhua," 1948). However, some of the work teams carried out alternative arrangements, such as examining anyone found by the poor and hired peasants. As a result, the poor and hired peasants reluctantly said, "We'll mobilize the ones you want." Some teams did not trust people who were already established and conducted a secret screening on their own.

In Long Bow, *Fanshen* recorded in rich detail the process of the self-reporting, public discussion, and mutual review by the poor and hired peasants (Hinton, 1980: 312–25, 341–55),

but it did not describe the discussion among the poor and hired peasants about the structure of the poor peasant league. Heshi village classified people into seven groups which they proposed should be excluded from the poor peasant league. The first group consisted of fawning cadres. The remaining six groups were made up of residents who did no manual labor, were married to or intimate with landlord women, addicted to opium, wouldn't work with the good cadres and masses, made no contribution, and were sly or lazy. This exclusionary process gradually enhanced the discipline of the poor peasant league: "Do not shield landlords, do not be air raid shelters [i.e., people who hid property of relatives to prevent it from being seized], do not form factions, do not encroach on the interests of the middle peasants, obey the leadership, and implement the resolutions." The role of the poor peasant league was also clarified: "Overthrow the old feudal order and establish the new order: democracy, solidarity, freedom and equality; ensure that whoever has not *fanshened* thoroughly (economically and politically) does so; unite with the middle peasants and ensure that the middle peasants have the same status as the poor and hired peasants, and do not infringe upon them economically; implement democracy, avoid domination and privileges, and resolutely carry out the [party's] policies and oppose extreme democracy" ("Work Notebook," 1948; "Peasants' Opinions," 1948).

After the poor and hired peasants reviewed and got familiar with the discipline and tasks of the poor peasant league, the election of the representatives who would participate in the party consolidation became an important task. The representatives' personal prestige, objectives, and serious attitude as well as their thinking, behavior, and opinions on the cadres' reviews would directly affect the party members and cadres who participated in the rectification and the work

teams that presided over the work. To participate in party consolidation meetings in the party branches, the representatives first needed to know their party. The county committee asked the pilot villages to discuss the nature of the party, the reasons for the party's consolidation, and the qualifications of party members and representatives of the party consolidation before the actual election of the representatives.

The work in Heshi and Long Bow was relatively meticulous. During the discussions in Heshi, the poor and hired peasants there decided that “the party is the party of the poor and hired peasants” and serves the poor and hired peasants, that some of the poor and hired peasants had not *fanshened* or *fanshened* thoroughly because of bad members within the party, and, finally, that the party members and cadres need reforming. They gradually understood the qualifications for selection as a representative and defined them as “born to poor and hired peasants, laboring around the year, decent, selfless, serving enthusiastically, or truly representing the views of the masses.” Some of the representatives were dismissed in the review: the three culprits Li Bingwen, Wang Shuiwen's wife, and Wang's relative Meng Jushui, a gambler, who colluded with one another. At the same time, the work team guided the analysis of the poor and hired peasants' sectarian tendencies as well as their private sentiments and misgivings (“Semi-Monthly Investigation,” 1948; “Record of the Experimental Village Meeting,” 1948a). The work for the election in Longbow was very meticulous and fulfilled the requirements of the county committee (“Letter from Chen Zhenhua,” 1948). This helped the poor and hired peasants understand the content, objectives, and methodology of party consolidation as well as establish consistent standards for party consolidation and overcome blindness, sectarianism, and extreme tendencies

(“Record of the Experimental Village Meeting,” 1948b).

However, in some villages the election of representatives was not rigorous. Some villages selected representatives who denounced party members, and others selected representatives who were glib (“Preliminary Review,” April 22, 1948). People in Manliuhe only paid attention to those who dared to speak up. As a result, three opportunists infiltrated the group. The reason these infiltrators wanted to participate in the consolidation was to overthrow the cadres and become cadres themselves (“Summary Report,” 1948).

In the village of Jincun, the process of reorganizing the poor and hired peasants deviated from the norm. This was because of “historically prominent sectarian struggles of the masses” (“Mass Mobilization Materials,” 1948),<sup>6</sup> as well as because the work team was incautious and its members failed to fully communicate with each other and resolve internal conflicts. After the work team arrived in Jincun, it failed to carry out sufficient ideological mobilization. In two or three days, it admitted dozens of people and set up four poor and hired peasant groups. In expanding the ranks of the poor and hired peasants, the work team created stringent qualifications and later thought they should mobilize in depth, and thus middle peasants and unqualified poor and hired peasants were pulled into the group. During the review, the work

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<sup>6</sup> Jincun consisted of neighborhoods that historically were locked in sectarian struggle. Under the warlord Yan Xishan, the village consisted of two groups, each divided into eight neighborhoods, later reduced to six. After liberation, a democratic regime was established. After the rent reduction and other campaigns, the power of landlords was greatly diminished. Because of the factionalism, seventy-three families in the village were attacked and beaten up, and thirty-four of them were chased out of their own homes as well. See “Mass Mobilization Materials,” 1948.

team leader selected seventeen poor and hired peasants who did not have enough land and food as the backbone. Two days later, half of these people were found to be unacceptable.

The work team also forced the dismantling of the teams that the poor and hired peasants had create on their own, asked them to reorganize themselves, and chose not to rely on the five-member leading group elected by the masses. Rather, they manipulated and conducted their own screening. Contradictions also arose among the team members, each of whom thought that the people he mobilized were good and should not be excluded. The poor and hired peasants in the east and the west both wanted to have more residents in their respective neighborhoods pass the screening. Under the influence of sectarian struggles and without adequate discussion, the work team purged seven problematic poor and hired peasants and one middle peasant. The poor and hired peasants thought the work team was acting irresponsibly. During the election of representatives, the work team did not fully organize the preparation by the poor and hired peasants before the forty representatives were elected, affecting the subsequent party consolidation. The Jincun work team ignored the previous work and discarded the poor and hired peasant teams that were already in place three times in succession, called “three ups and three downs” by the county party committee, panicking those at all levels. The following is a depiction of Jincun’s reorganization of the poor and hired peasants: “Each woman has her way of walking, and each cadre has his way of doing things” (“Mass Mobilization Materials,” 1948).

After entering the pilot villages, the work teams encountered certain difficulties in reorganizing the poor and hired peasants. Once they became acquainted with the village, the work teams gradually figured out how to mobilize the poor and hired peasants. From the initial

mobilization to the selection of the poor and hired peasant representatives, the process in each pilot village was broadly the same, except that each work team had varying degrees of understanding about how to educate and guide the poor and hired peasants. Some were relatively careful and exacting, such as in Heshi and Long Bow. Others were comparatively careless, such as in Jiacun and Jincun. Thus, there were differences in the level of understanding and awareness of the poor and hired peasants and differences in the quality of the work. From the perspective of mass participation, although some work teams had replaced the poor, their main role was to guide. The masses were mobilized in varying degrees, which was consistent with the county party committee's requirement of mobilizing rather than simply reorganizing and relying on those who had already been mobilized to contact more poor and hired peasants ("Letter from Chen Zhenhua, 1948").

### **Preparations for Party Consolidation Within the Party**

The work teams also started to rectify the ranks of party members. After entering a village, the work teams met with the party branches, conducted preliminary inspections of the village and party members, tried to get a clear idea of the principle of party consolidation, and initially mobilized party members for criticism and self-criticism.

The convening of the Lujiazhuang meeting and the issuance of the Draft Agrarian Law, the "Report to Peasants," and the "Report to Party Members" produced an atmosphere of doubting and blaming cadres, putting great ideological pressure on them. According to *Fanshen*, shortly

after the work team entered Long Bow, Zhang Quan'er, a member of the team, was attacked when he returned to the district office from Shen Quande's home after dusk. Somebody grabbed him from behind, pulled him down, choked him until he was unconscious, and then dragged him to a nearby well (Hinton, 1980: 290). Obviously, the work team members confronted the village cadres because it seemed they were being targeted for assassination. Although this scenario did not occur in other pilot villages, the atmosphere there was tense as well. For example, some village cadres acted first, before the arrival of the work team cadres, and established "fake" peasant leagues, which created the false impression that the village had already mobilized the poor and hired peasants. Some burned the account books on the distribution of "fruits," and bribed and threatened the poor and hired peasants who had not *fanshened*. After the district cadre arrived in the village, some village cadres took a wide range of resistance measures. Some even knocked on the door of the district leader in the middle of the night ("Comrade Chen Zhenhua's Summary Speech," 1948).

These actions showed that forces in the village were resisting party consolidation and land reform. But why did this occur? *Fanshen* provides no answer. The confrontation with village cadres was directly related to the manner and attitude of the work team after entering the village. Affected by the Lujiazhuang meeting, and in order to form an atmosphere of ideological struggle and promote the work of party consolidation, the work team tended to exert pressure on cadres, and deliberately excluded party members and village cadres.

Shortly after the work teams entered the villages, they received instructions from the county party committee: undertake reorganization together but disperse and go back home to eat. The

county party committee believed that “this will contribute to the concentration of energy and promote the efficient use of time” (“Comrade Chen Zhenhua’s Summary Speech,” 1948). In Long Bow, after the attack incident, the work team thought the party branch was responsible and that they should not show any weakness; thus, they severely pressured the party members and had Wang Wenze detained by the public security bureau. Party members were scared and tried to put all the blame on Wang. The work team also suspended all the village party members and non-party cadres, dissolved all mass organization, and assembled the cadres for party consolidation. The cadres even ate and slept together, causing some of them to fall ill. The political commissar said his mother was terrified that he might be detained. An elderly woman who lived in the same courtyard with a party member was not allowed to join the Poor Peasant League (“Materials on Long Bow,” 1948; Hinton, 1980: 291).

The work teams’ suppressive attitude, the poor and hired peasants’ dissatisfaction with the cadres in the visiting work teams, and even the opinions of a couple of poor and hired peasants inconsistent with the facts and public opinion caused party members to fall into the situation where “the masses push on a fallen wall and beat a broken drum.” The party members were generally in a low mood. They were held completely responsible for the fact that poor and hired peasants had not completely *fanshened*—and had to return most of the “fruits” they had received. Therefore, the party members might be subject to villagers’ retaliation. Many regretted joining the party, with its fluctuating ideology. In this way, conflicts between the work teams, village party members, and cadres were inevitable.

This was the first time party consolidation involved organized criticism and self-criticism in party branch meetings. Peasant party members had to clearly understand the party's nature, goals, and the qualifications for membership; clarify the nature and causes of the thinking, behaviors, and mistakes made by themselves and other party members; adjust to the situation of party consolidation by publically admitting their mistakes and listening to the opinions of others; and attempt to improve their public speaking skills through practice. These tasks required the active guidance of the work team. Notably, for the majority of the work team from the countryside, their understanding of the party and party consolidation was unsatisfactory. Their previous study of relevant theoretical knowledge still required testing through rigorous practice, and deviations were inevitable. As the county party committee complained, some work teams criticized party members as ineffective but good people, but they did not analyze the reasons behind this assessment. Others mistook the "Report to Party Members" as a weapon, and engaged in blindly criticizing and labeling, without analyzing the specific issues or teaching methods of reflection. Thus, party members were frightened or overwhelmed ("Preliminary Review," 1948).

In Long Bow, some party members did not speak out at the outset, but the situation was quickly changed as party members started their ideological struggle with each other. The chairman of the peasant association declared: "I shouldn't have joined the party." Everyone criticized him, saying: "Without the leadership of the CCP, you couldn't *fanshen*. Who forced you to be a member of the party? You should reflect on that." After such discussions, those present who had made mistakes could make a clean breast of it ("Materials on Long Bow," 1948).

In Manliuhe, party members did not take the initiative to engage in introspection or listen to others' opinions, which resulted in an unprincipled peace. Later, the work team organized two party members of the Huayuan small group who had done a relatively good job of self-reflection, and had them make speeches at the general meetings of the party branch. The work team had private talks with some members to mobilize them to become the backbone of party consolidation. Only by doing so did the ideological struggle gradually begin ("Summary Report," 1948).

Selecting and cultivating the backbone of party consolidation was of great significance to the internal party consolidation. The focal point of party consolidation within the party was training the backbone to carry out ideological struggle within the party and ideologically prepare the way for the second round of party consolidation with the poor and hired peasant representatives in the party branch meetings ("Preliminary Review," 1948). Jiacun village, for instance, had established a party consolidation committee and recruited good party members as the backbone, achieving relatively satisfactory results in cadres' self-reflection and reform and making a relatively clear distinction regarding the party members' mistakes and failure to distinguish between right and wrong. Hence, there were no deviations. However, in most experimental villages, since the "old foundation" was excluded, there was no selection of a backbone during the internal party consolidation.

The criticism and self-criticism within the party branches had, to a certain degree, helped party members in their understanding of themselves and others, and familiarized them with the content of party consolidation and how it should be carried out. This facilitated a smooth start to

the open-door party rectification campaign. However, before welcoming the poor and hired peasant representatives to attend the party branch meetings for open-door party consolidation, there was still a need for the party to start a discussion and to undertake ideological preparation on “why party consolidation, why opening up the party, why the people’s representatives should participate in the party consolidation, and what the attitude of the representatives in the party consolidation should be” (“Preliminary Review,” 1948). All this was intended to mentally prepare party members for the inclusion of poor and hired peasant representatives in the party branch meetings. Unlike previous internal party consolidation, this time party members would face the masses who were the objects of their own management. Naturally, cadres were bound to be worried about retaliation for the contradictions and disputes arising from their daily management. In response, at the end of the internal party consolidation, Heshi village discussed how to deal with the opinions of the poor and hired peasants in preparation for the second review (“First Party Consolidation,” 1948). Although Heshi’s work team actively guided party members to consider the opinions of the poor and hired peasants, the team thought the issue was the unwillingness of party members to admit mistakes and required them to “refrain from trying to justify their own mistakes” and “avoid defensiveness and arguing.” Later, a few extreme people took advantage of this position and tried to exact revenge on cadres (“Record of the Experimental Village Meeting,” 1948c; “Party Consolidation in Heshi, Lucheng,” 1948). In the pilot villages, work teams with a left-leaning bent even encouraged the poor and hired peasants to go to extremes: “In the process of party consolidation, no matter what opinion poor and hired peasants have about party members. . . , they should express their opinion about party members”

(“Basic Situation,” 1948). Thinking like this became an important source of extreme democracy.

Compared with other pilot villages, Jincun also deviated in the process of reorganizing the party’s ranks. Initially, internal party consolidation was handled relatively well and party members engaged in careful introspection. All the party members conscientiously pursued the problems that had been encountered, made suggestions, analyzed the issues they confronted, and started an adequate ideological struggle. Most party members felt these activities were helpful to themselves and good for their transformation. At this time, the work team attended a meeting in the county seat, where there was a new leader responsible for party rectification. This individual believed that the party members had not done a good job of reflection, had an attitude that was not honest and frank, suspected or hated other party members, treated problems too casually, and sowed confusion. On this note, a chaotic and vicious cycle of torturing party members to extract confessions ensued. In this atmosphere, party members distrusted each other and resisted the new leader (“Summary of More Than Two Months,” 1948).

After a preliminary discussion within the party about what had transpired in the pilot villages, and combining this with the opinions of the poor and hired peasants, the situation of party members in the villages gradually became clear. The work teams formed some tentative conclusions about the class origins of party members, their performance in the land reform movement, the nature of their errors and work style, whether they put themselves or the masses first, and how they disposed of confiscated property. Each party member could also make a general judgment on what punishment he or she should receive based on integrating his own information and clarifying the facts and nature of the mistakes made.

Due to differences in the leadership skills of the work teams in the pilot villages and differences in the awareness and understandings of party member cadres, there were also differences in the party consolidation within the party in terms of the speed and depth of ideological struggle and between democratic debate and extreme suppression. As far as the county party committee and the work teams were concerned, clarifying the primary goal of party consolidation at each stage was still the first priority and directly affected the effectiveness of party consolidation.

### **Open-Door Party Consolidation**

That poor and hired peasant representatives participated in the party branch meetings and were asked to express their opinions about party members meant the beginning of a new stage: open-door party consolidation.

The instructions of the county committee were that the task of the poor and hired peasant representatives was to absorb the opinions of all poor and hired peasants and raise questions about and challenges to all party members on behalf of all poor and hired peasants. Each party member reported his or her own class status, family background, history, and mistakes. Next, each party member reported on his or her motives, current understanding, attitudes for the future, and self-imposed discipline. Finally, party members, and even more so poor and hired peasants, made additional comments, and then party members engaged in self-reflection for a second time. This process was repeated until all party members had been reviewed, at which time it was

decided whether party members had passed or failed the review. Deliberation over punishments followed a similar process, leading to a decision on whether a person qualified for party membership and whether a cadre should be retained (“Letter from Chen Zhenhua,” 1948; “Preliminary Review,” 1948).<sup>7</sup>

The way the county party committee worked and the content of its work were based on prior practice but also feedback on the actual work done by the work teams. Obviously, the feedback was more significant in guiding the work teams. Some work teams were subjectively unprepared for the reorganization of the ranks of the poor and hired peasants and party members. As a result, during the open-door party consolidation, a “retaliation tendency” emerged among poor and hired peasants. The work of Heshi village was relatively solid. Its work team guided the party members and poor and hired peasants to conduct a thorough discussion about reorganizing the poor and hired peasants and party consolidation within the party. The work team especially provided positive guidance on how to manage the potential extreme tendency of retaliation and attitudes of party members toward the opinions of poor and hired peasants. However, contradictions and conflicts continued during the process of opening the door and reorganizing the party. On the one hand, this type of conflict was caused by delegates seeking to get revenge: “When delegates participated in the party consolidation, they were driven by the emotion of

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<sup>7</sup> The county party committee proposed that the minimum number of representatives should equal the number of party branch members; the maximum was twice that number. This facilitated organizing the manpower for the ideological struggle against the party members. But the number of poor and hired peasants also had to be taken into consideration, and generally a quarter to a third of those would be acceptable. Too many people and it would end up a mass assembly.

retaliation and advocated that [all] cadres be replaced and not allowed to join the poor and hired peasant league. . . . Some comrades in the work teams were afraid of crossing the poor and hired peasants, and did not dare to take corrective action in time” (“Record of the Experimental Village Meeting,” 1948c). This type of conflict was also due to the inconsistency in the evaluation criteria for party members as well as the poor and hired peasants’ unclear understanding of the purpose of party consolidation (“Heshi Village,” 1948).

At the same time, when the representatives participated in party consolidation, fierce conflicts also broke out. During the election of the representatives, Manliuhe deviated regarding the work of two “opportunists” who had infiltrated the elected representatives. When the representatives participated in the party rectification, the preparation inside the party and for the poor and hired peasants proved to be insufficient. In the party consolidation, representatives made false charges, and even accused the wrong persons, and forced cadres to admit mistakes they never made (“Summary Report,” 1948). This situation was related to the representatives’ lack of understanding of how rectifying the party should be carried out. However, the situation was also due in large part to poor and hired peasants seeking revenge, a phenomenon common in the pilot villages (“Preliminary Review,” 1948).

Party members also expressed a variety of thoughts regarding being disciplined and waiting for discipline. Although the work teams had guided the ideological preparations among party members before the party consolidation, the party members were still panic-stricken in front of the poor and hired peasant representatives, afraid of being beaten, wronged, or regarded as dishonest and recalcitrant. As a result, some accepted all the charges made by the poor and hired

peasants (“Heshi Village,” 1948; “Statistics on Party Consolidation,” 1948). Some party members in the pilot villages tried to protect each other when poor and hired peasants were going to seize, tie up, and beat cadres. Thus a tendency of sectarian division between party members and poor and hired peasants arose. This situation showed that party members and poor and hired peasants needed to continue reviewing each other and reorganize their own ranks in light of the new situation after the delegates participated in the party consolidation. In doing so, they would gradually clarify the goals of rectifying the party, increase their awareness of party consolidation and refine their criteria for judging cadres, and adopt a correct attitude on party consolidation.

Even the work teams had to review themselves based on the party’s open-door policy and had themselves to undergo rectification in order to correctly guide the party members and cadres and the poor and hired peasants in the ideological struggles. In this way, the party members, faced with the opinions of delegates and other party members, could be pressured to recognize their own mistakes. Furthermore, the poor and hired peasants could be guided in time to grasp both the concrete standards for judging party members and the objectives of practical reshaping, rather than simply struggling against party members, which would lead to a deviation. Such a deviation was mainly manifested in two ways. First, the poor and hired peasants were allowed to attack party members unreasonably, and no leadership was exercised to prevent this (“Summary Report,” 1948; “Preliminary Review,” 1948).

Second, instead of carrying out ideological education and mobilization, the work teams took sole charge of everything and then led the party rectification in the wrong direction. In Dongguan, for instance, the work team completely dominated the party consolidation. An agreement could

not be reached on the election of an interim secretary of the party branch. Jin Sanze was elected at the work team's behest, but he was arbitrary and had a bad work style. The party members were dissatisfied and complained that the work team was covering up for Jin ("On the Work of Cadres," n.d.).

Jincun experienced a considerable deviation in the open-door party consolidation stage because of the work team's failure to provide proper guidance. The work team's previous deviation in the reorganization of the ranks of poor and hired peasants and internal party consolidation drew the attention of the county party committee, and the county leaders personally intervened in and led party consolidation but failed to reverse the situation. County magistrate Wu personally entered and led the village, thinking "not enough pressure is being applied to the party members" and "party members ought to be upbraided, and any opinion by the poor and hired peasants is right." This thinking fed into the extremism among the poor and hired peasants, and "some party members were ready to report this, but were not allowed by the poor and hired peasants. Additionally, they prohibited seventeen party members from leaving the village. Junior party members grumbled behind their back and senior party members were depressed, but no one dared to say a word. Regardless of the quality of party members' reflection, the masses doggedly seized on any perceived problem, saying the party members were not honest and refused to allow them to leave. This deepened the emotional resistance of the party members, and later they did not even talk about mistakes, but day after day they just lay on the kang learning characters and reading the newspaper" ("Summary of More Than Two Months," 1948).

Many poor and hired peasants wanted to gain “fruits” during this stage of the rectification. This was also one of the important reasons why the poor and hired peasants were dissatisfied with the cadres. The work teams’ pledge to completely *fanshen* the poor and hired peasants after they entered the village boosted the poor and hired peasants’ expectations. Therefore, after representatives participated in the party consolidation, some pilot villages tended only to chase after “fruits.” Party members simply reflected on their errors and accepted criticism without any analysis. The representatives either challenged the party members or chased after “fruits.” The situation was stuck in the details of the arguments. Party members were reduced to yes-men who did no work. There was no real struggle to rectify the style and thinking of party members and cadres. It was not easy to eliminate the propensity of poor people to pursue “fruits.” This was also one of the important reasons why, later, poverty-stricken peasants gradually regressed in the party consolidation.

Heshi launched a positive ideological struggle inside and outside the party during the open-door party consolidation. At the time, party members sincerely accepted poor and hired peasants’ criticism, and the poor and hired peasants were understanding and tolerant toward party members. The open-door party consolidation in Long Bow also went smoothly (“Report on Nearly Half a Month of Work,” 1948). In other pilot villages, such as Manliuhe, Jiacun, and Jincun, the same moderate tone emerged in party consolidation (“Summary Report,” 1948; “Work Report,” 1948). When poor and hired peasants, as one of the subjects of party consolidation, gained the right to examine the cadres, the peasants’ tolerant and principled criticisms and challenges were conducive to the introspection of party members and effectively

relieved the repressive tension of the ideological struggle. This was particularly evident in Long Bow.

In the pilot villages, the anti-cadre and revenge-seeking mentality, and the “eating rice” thinking (concern for immediate and personal benefit) had not only not been effectively overcome but became increasingly serious after high-level leaders began to make corrections, especially regarding the phenomenon of extreme democratization. Some seized the opportunity to take advantage of the corrective actions, causing serious problems of instability and social disorder in Lucheng county (“Report to the Prefectural Committee,” 1948). Notably, the impact was more negative and lasting than Hinton represented in *Fanshen*. Party members who were being rectified were at a loss when it came to the party’s demand for democracy and lack of effective mass mobilization methods as well as worried about being disciplined again and being called to account by the masses again. Therefore, in this generally negative atmosphere, cadres deserted their jobs and left for home, a phenomenon that grew into a serious problem throughout the Taihang region (Tao, 1948). Hinton underestimated the impact that party consolidation had on cadres and the tremendous efforts the CCP made in rescuing cadres and reversing the trend of cadres simply giving up.

In practice, the work teams in the pilot villages generally focused on the participation of poor and hired peasant representatives in the party branch meetings to carry out ideological struggle as the key point for rectifying the party and guiding the poor and hired peasants and party members to discuss and understand the party’s objectives, methods, and approaches to party rectification. Even in Heshi village, where ideological mobilization was relatively adequate,

it was recognized that the education of the masses about party consolidation was insufficient (“Record of the Experimental Village Meeting,” 1948c). Hence, in the process of the open-door party consolidation, deviations arose, especially regarding the principle of party consolidation, which was to educate and reorganize, not rough up and beat people, and to help the masses grasp the standards of evaluating cadres on the basis of right or wrong, good or bad.

For the majority of work team members who were also peasants, this type of setback seemed to be inevitable. Later, higher levels issued instructions about correcting leftist deviations in the pilot villages. Even though it was after that that the county committee explicitly emphasized that “it is anti-party and left-leaning adventurism to put pressure on all party members regardless of whether they are good or bad. The purpose of party consolidation is to clean up the landlord and rich peasant style of thinking, not to ignore the differences between good and bad. The consolidation of the party is not only for the sake of land reform but also for future victories of the revolution” (“Preliminary Review,” 1948). Of course, the rise of deviations was also related to the needs, concepts, and understanding of party consolidation among poor and hired peasants and party members.

## **Conclusion**

The success of party consolidation and land reform mainly depended on two things: first, the instructions of the county party committee and the attitudes and mobilization methods of the work teams, and second, the status of the villages, including the contradictions between cadres and masses and the internal conflicts in the history of the village, as well as the consciousness of

party members and masses and their understanding of party consolidation and land reform. In the pilot villages, each village had a biased orientation, some more some less. These biases had commonalities; for example, pressuring all party members and cadres at the outset, kicking down the old foundation, stressing the poor and hired peasant line, mass retaliation, extreme democracy, and the propensity for factional strife between the poor and hired peasants and party members. This was directly related to the judiciousness and guidance—or lack thereof—of the county committee, the Taihang region, and the Jin-Ji-Lu-Yu Central Bureau. These biases also involved differences; for example, different degrees of care and caution exercised by the work teams, different methods followed by party members and cadres (ranging from ham-fisted suppression to mild education), and the different levels of political consciousness among party members and cadres and the masses. All this influenced differences in the level of enthusiasm among cadres and masses and the degree to which public confrontations in party consolidation were heated. On the whole, the work of party consolidation and land reform in Heshi and Long Bow was relatively successful, and the skill of the work teams and relative tolerance of the poor and hired peasants were obvious. In contrast, in Jincun things did not go so well, an outcome related to the historical sectarian conflicts in the village and the deficient work of the work team.

On the whole, of the many pilot villages, Long Bow was more prominent in party consolidation and land reform. However, the movement in Heshi appears to have been more effective, a reflection of the work team's meticulousness and patience with cadres and the masses, as well as its greater skill for organizing, guiding, and understanding the orientation of the movement. This was directly related to the fact that the party member base and the

relationship between party members and the masses were relatively solid and harmonious in Heshi, and that from the beginning of the movement the county party committee focused on Heshi, which it considered to be a model. This stands in stark contrast to the course of the movement in Jincun.

Hinton depicted part of what happened in the party consolidation and land reform in Long Bow in 1948 and revealed the CCP's arduous route in changing people's living conditions and transforming village cadres through land reform, as well as the subjectivity and initiative of the work team, the village cadres, and ordinary people in the process of creating sweeping social change. The attraction of the revolution lies precisely in this complex process and active practice. Hinton, however, underestimated the limitations of the revolution. From the micro case of party consolidation and land reform in Long Bow, Hinton tried to evaluate the macro, that is, the Chinese Communist revolution as a whole. This led him to overgeneralize and reach conclusions that were unconvincing. Especially after the higher-level anti-left corrections, the negative impact of the party consolidation and land reform gradually became more complicated and tortuous than Hinton's description;<sup>8</sup> there were additional details on the interaction and conflicts between the work teams, poor and hired peasants, party members, and cadres; and the CCP's remolding of cadres also experienced relatively great setbacks and challenges.

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<sup>8</sup> Due to space limitations, the negative impact of party consolidation and land reform will be discussed in another paper.

In party consolidation and land reform, the CCP adopted a pilot experimental and a gradual step-by-step approach. The pilot experiment provided the lessons needed to guide leadership and establish the principles and methods to be used in land reform. These lessons included being realistic and down-to-earth; taking the party's good and relatively good party members and cadres as the backbone; using education, treatment, and rescue as the guideline; conducting adequate preparation inside and outside the party; actively guiding party members and the masses in their ideological struggles; emphasizing the representative-party consolidation link; ensuring that the education for party consolidation and attitudes were correct throughout the entire consolidation process; and properly evaluating and handling party members and strengthening the construction of the party branches and village democracy after the party consolidation in order to solidify the achievements and clarify the leadership of the party. This list became a direct reference for party consolidation in the future. Although short-lived, the experience opened the way to expanding the party consolidation movement on a large scale to other villages and avoiding deviations in the future. This also suggests that we need a clearer understanding of the pilot villages. It was in those villages that the county party committee gave more direct guidance and exercised more influence. This was different from the democratic party consolidation in the villages in the stage of comprehensive party consolidation reform which was to follow. The representativeness of Long Bow as described in *Fanshen* thus cannot be taken for granted.

As we have discussed, the CCP and its work teams as agents, and the village cadres and the masses as the subjects, were all deeply involved and demonstrated their respective perceptions,

needs, concepts, and attitudes toward the land reform movement. All of this was wrapped up in the process of party consolidation, testing the capabilities and methods of the CCP's governance and highlighting the feasibility of the means by which the CCP reformed the peasants (including the cadres and masses) as well as the possible drawbacks, limitations, and tendencies. The nature of this party consolidation and land reform was determined by the upper levels of the CCP based on their judgment of grassroots land reform, the development of party organizations, measures needed to complete land reform, the construction of the rural grassroots organizations for land reform from the War of Resistance period to the May 4th Directive, and the lessons of cultivating and reforming cadres. Although the practice of party consolidation and land reform was governed by the CCP, it also depended on the work teams' understanding of the policies set by the upper levels and their management and mobilization methods for cadres and the masses. It was also directly related to the feelings, understanding, and participation of village cadres and the general public.

Some scholars believe that in the CCP revolution, the participation of peasants was a “mobilization-type participation” or “inverted political participation” (that is, they were “drawn in” 被卷入) and lacked the idea of active consciousness and a central ingredient of active consciousness, that is, the ability to choose how one will act (Li, 2014: 220). In the party consolidation and land reform, the peasants were placed in a weak and dominated position vis-à-vis the CCP and its work teams. However, if there had been no mobilization by the work teams, no patient persuasion, and no education, could the peasants have achieved a certain level of self-organization? Could they have reflected the enthusiasm of participation and

self-subjectivity? Moreover, the entire process of the party consolidation and land reform was also in line with the needs of the peasants. Even if it was an “inverted political participation,” as far as village politics was concerned, the entire process of the party consolidation and land reform reflected the peasants’ involvement, their decision-making power, and a certain sense that their destiny was in their own hands, which also contributed to the development of village democracy.

Land reform transformed the structure of power in the countryside, which was reflected not only in the replacement of the old elites by CCP cadres, but also in the daily political lifestyle of the people’s political participation, democratic discussions, and supervision. It can be said that the party consolidation and land reform was an important historical process for the CCP to advance the land reform movement and transform the political structure of the village. Land reform was also an important way to educate and remold the peasants. The transformation of peasant consciousness and the exercise and promotion of their self-management skills were also important concerns of the revolution. On the one hand, through effective political and democratic education, the work teams disciplined and guided cadres and persuaded and mobilized the masses; thus, the masses dared to supervise and examine cadres and manage village affairs, recognizing and safeguarding their own interests and breaking the shackles of the original social relations and the fear of local authority. On the other hand, through the establishment of democratic participation in organizations such as the poor peasant league, the peasant association, and the village people’s congresses, the peasants expressed their will, their desire to represent themselves, and their demands, all of which received attention and were responded to, achieving

a “political *fanshen*,” a certain degree of organization, and increasing awareness and understanding of political participation.

In a sense, the party consolidation and land reform successfully mobilized and educated the peasants. In essence, it was a political practice in which democratic ideas were conveyed, democratic service was the axis, and government at the upper levels and the people at the lower ranks participated together. It was a political training ground for grassroots cadres and masses. It was also a “public service” that rooted democracy in the vast countryside and constructed and cultivated the class consciousness and political consciousness of the peasants. This reflected the CCP’s highly revolutionary beliefs and ideals.

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