

### **Document 3: The Great Leap Forward**

#### **Mao Zedong's Speech at the Supreme State Conference**

"Now our enthusiasm has been aroused. Ours is an ardent nation, now swept by a burning tide. There is a good metaphor for this: our nation is like an atom... When this atom's nucleus is smashed the thermal energy released will have really tremendous power. We shall be able to do things which we could not do before. When our nation has this great energy we shall catch up with Britain in fifteen years, we shall produce forty million tons of steel annually-now we produce only just over five million tons; we shall have a generating capacity of 450,000 million kwh of electricity-at present we can generate only 40,000 million kwh, which means increasing our capacity ten times, for which we must increase hydroelectric production and not only thermoelectric. We still have ten years to carry out the Forty Point Program for Agricultural Development, but it looks as if we shall not need ten years. Some people say five years, others three. It would seem that we can complete it in eight...

I stand for the theory of permanent revolution. Do not mistake this for Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution. In making revolution one must strike while the iron is hot-one revolution must follow the another, the revolution must continually advance. The Hunanese often say, 'Straw sandals have no pattern-they shape themselves in the making.' Trotsky believed that the socialist revolution should be launched even before the democratic revolution is complete. We are not like that. For example, after the liberation of 1949 came the land reform, as soon as this was completed there followed the mutual aid teams, then the low-level cooperatives, then the high-level cooperatives. After seven years the cooperativization was completed and productive relationships were transformed; then came the rectification. After rectification was finished, before things had cooled down, then came the technical revolution...

It is possible to catch up with Britain in fifteen years. We must summon up our strength and swim vigorously upstream."

From: The People's Republic of China: A Documentary History of Revolutionary Change, ed. Mark Selden, ed., New York: Monthly Review Press, 1979, pp. 382-383.