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North Korea's "New Doctrine of Socialist Rural Development" was adopted during the 4th Plenary Meeting of the 8th Central Committee of the Workers' Party of Korea (WPK) which was held in late December, 2021. The overriding view in South Korea is that the new doctrine features similarities to the *Saemaul* (New Village) Movement and thus has been referred to as a "North Korean-style *Saemaul* Movement" or "Kim Jong Un-style *Saemaul* Movement." The resemblance between South Korea's *Saemaul* Movement and North Korea's new rural development is displayed in the doctrine's propagation of enhancing agricultural production (to alleviate food shortages) and resolving the urban-rural gap (by improving the rural living environment).

However, such an analogy is only a partial assessment based on the fragmented reports disclosed by North Korea. The new doctrine seems more of a revival of Kim Il Sung's "Theses on the Socialist Rural Question in Our Country (Rural Theses)," which had been de facto

discarded during the agricultural reform process. Boosting farm production and closing the gap between rural and urban areas are not new agendas but old issues that were emphasized in Kim Il Sung's rural theses. The "new system of agricultural guidance," which was one of the core contents of the rural theses has been renamed as "our-style agricultural guidance system" in the new doctrine. In addition, the rural theses were adopted amid a need to increase the government's food purchase ratio by introducing the mandatory procurement plan which also seems to be the case for the new doctrine.

The "new agricultural guidance system" introduced by Kim Il Sung aimed to nationalize the cooperative farms and expedite the peasant-to-worker process. Pyeongyang at that time faced an accumulation crisis from promoting its dual policy of defense and economic development while assistance had been suspended by the Soviet Union and China. The mandatory procurement plan was introduced to overcome the accumulation crisis by exploiting the agricultural surplus of the cooperative farms. North Korea is currently confronted with another accumulation crisis due to international sanctions and the COVID-19 pandemic. Hence, the new rural doctrine can be interpreted as an attempt to increase the government's agricultural plunder by abandoning its agricultural reform

policy propagated since the 2000's and strengthening the collectivistic feature of the cooperative farms.

From a broader perspective, the new rural doctrine appears to be part of North Korea's efforts to recentralize economic management and strengthen government control on the producer and consumer goods. Hence, the adoption of the new doctrine seems to signify that North Korea has completed the theoretical work for a return to economic conservatism.

Keywords: Socialist Rural Theses, New Doctrine of Rural Development, Agricultural Guidance System, Government's Food Purchase Ratio, Accumulation Crisis, Recentralization