**“THE OTHER CHINA: How Do We Know China? Let Us Count the Ways...” By Miriam London and Ivan D. London, *Worldview Magazine,* July-August 1976.***Rather than relying on state-run media and tours, Miriam and Ivan London investigated the conditions in China from 1965-1975 by interviewing refugees who made the dangerous escape to Hong Kong by swimming through shark-infested waters. The two quotes below come from peasants from different provinces of China (all relatively close to Hong Kong) who commented on the functionality of the commune system.*

***I. A peasant from Chekiang (Zhejiang) Province:***  
**Interviewer:** Some correspondents who have visited China have been told by brigade leaders that peasants have incentive to work harder because they share in the surplus. Do you think working harder can improve your lot? **Peasant:** Impossible! [He laughs.]   
**Interviewer:** Why? **Peasant:** You just become more tired--that’s the only result you’ll see. Because what the land produces has to go to meet so many requirements. Actually, what each person gets is too little to make a difference.... I can understand why a brigade leader would say that. He was talking to a foreigner and he didn’t want the brigade or the country to lose face.

**2. *A peasant from Fukien (Fujian) Province:*  
Interviewer:** Some people say peasants get more if they work harder and the harvest is greater. Is this true? **Peasant:** Yes.   
**Interviewer:** Do peasants prefer to work harder on the private plot or on the commune land? **Peasant:** On the private plot.   
**Interviewer:** Why? **Peasant:** Because, after all the deductions by the State, a peasant would have little left over from work on the commune fields.

**3.** When asked routinely which vegetables were of better quality, those grown on the collective land or on his private plot, the…peasant from Kwangtung [Guangdong] seemed flabbergasted by such an obvious question. “Of course, those you plant by yourself!” he replied. “It’s different to work on collective land! When you work on your own, you put your whole heart in it....You take better care. But when you work on the collective land, you think things like, well-- just pour some water on those vegetables over there.

***In comparison, the following is a report published in* The New York Times *in 1975.***

**Big '75 Grain Harvest Is Indicated for China**

PEKING, Dec. 10 (Reuters) —A Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman confirmed today that last year's grain harvest was 274.9 million metric tons.

Observers said this meant that this year's harvest could have topped a record total of 280 million metric tons since the New China News Agency said in Hong Kong on Nov. 10 that China's 1975 grain harvest was expected to exceed that of 1974.

Last year's figure was first disclosed by the Vice Minister of Agriculture, Yan Likung, at the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization conference in Rome last month.

**Collective Questions:**

1. **Are the reports from the peasants or the Chinese Foreign Ministry more reliable? Why?**

1. **Why did peasants argue that the commune system was inefficient?**
2. **Why would the Chinese government want to give the allusion that their agriculture sector is booming?**
3. **Are refugees the most reliable source of information regarding something like a famine? When answering the question, take into account what their experiences would have been as well as how their perception of the government.**