

WRITINGS ON ORGANIZATION
AND MASS LINE

——— MAO ZEDONG ———



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EDITOR'S NOTE

We are pleased to publish a new compilation of essays and short texts by Mao Zedong. Because most of Mao's translated works are most widely available in his Selected Works, we hope to make his writings more accessible through this smaller, thematic compilation.

This collection of texts focuses on an aspect of political struggle with which Mao is not often identified in the imperialist centers: writings on organization. While it includes some more well-known articles, such as "Combat Liberalism" and "On Correcting Mistaken Ideas in the Party," it also includes lesser known ones about bureaucratism, leadership, and inner-party unity. While Mao wrote regularly about organization and mass work, this compilation intends to provide a starting point for a study on these topics.

Concretely, the following texts address the question of how to create tools for the proletariat to structure itself and make revolution in order to take State power, to establish and sustain the dictatorship of the proletariat, and pursue a principled and dialectical course of action towards communism.

We hope these texts offer revolutionaries a thought-provoking account of the Chinese Communist Party's experiences, in order to better go about the arduous work of creating the organiza-

tions and parties necessary in their respective contexts and today's conditions.

FOREIGN LANGUAGES PRESS

ON CORRECTING MISTAKEN IDEAS IN THE PARTY¹

December 1929

There are various non-proletarian ideas in the Communist Party organization in the Fourth Red Army which greatly hinder the application of the Party's correct line. Unless these ideas are thoroughly corrected, the Fourth Army cannot possibly shoulder the tasks assigned to it in China's great revolutionary struggle. The source of such incorrect ideas in this Party organization lies, of course, in the fact that its basic units are composed largely of peasants

¹ This article was a resolution drawn up by Mao Zedong for the Ninth Party Congress of the Fourth Army of the Red Army. The building of the Chinese people's armed forces was a difficult process. The Chinese Red Army (which became the Eighth Route and New Fourth Armies during the War of Resistance Against Japan and is now the People's Liberation Army) was created on August 1, 1927, during the Nanchang Uprising, and by December 1929 had been in existence for over two years. During this period the Communist Party organization in the Red Army learned a great deal and gained quite a rich store of experience in the course of combating various mistaken ideas. The resolution summed up this experience. It enabled the Red Army to build itself entirely on a Marxist-Leninist basis and to eliminate all the influences of armies of the old type. It was carried out not only in the Fourth Army but also in all other units of the Red Army successively. In this way, the whole Chinese Red Army became a genuine army of the people in every respect. In the last thirty years or so, the Chinese people's armed forces have made tremendous developments and innovations in their Party activities and political work, which now present a very different picture, but the basic line remains the same as that laid down in this resolution.

and other elements of petty-bourgeois origin, yet the failure of the Party's leading bodies to wage a concerted and determined struggle against these incorrect ideas and to educate the members in the Party's correct line is also an important cause of their existence and growth. In accordance with the spirit of the September letter of the Central Committee, this congress hereby points out the manifestations of various non-proletarian ideas in the Party organization in the Fourth Army, their sources, and the methods of correcting them, and calls upon all comrades to eliminate them thoroughly.

ON THE PURELY MILITARY VIEWPOINT

The purely military viewpoint is very highly developed among a number of comrades in the Red Army. It manifests itself as follows:

1. These comrades regard military affairs and politics as opposed to each other and refuse to recognize that military affairs are only one means of accomplishing political tasks. Some even say, "If you are good militarily, naturally you are good politically; if you are not good militarily, you cannot be any good politically"—this is to go a step further and give military affairs a leading position over politics.
2. They think that the task of the Red Army, like that of the White army, is merely to fight. They do not understand that the Chinese Red Army is an armed body for carrying

out the political tasks of the revolution. Especially at present, the Red Army should certainly not confine itself to fighting; besides fighting to destroy the enemy's military strength, it should shoulder such important tasks as doing propaganda among the masses, organizing the masses, arming them, helping them to establish revolutionary political power and setting up Party organizations. The Red Army fights not merely for the sake of fighting but in order to conduct propaganda among the masses, organize them, arm them, and help them to establish revolutionary political power. Without these objectives, fighting loses its meaning and the Red Army loses the reason for its existence.

3. Hence, organizationally, these comrades subordinate the departments of the Red Army doing political work to those doing military work and put forward the slogan, "Let Army Headquarters handle outside matters." If allowed to develop, this idea would involve the danger of estrangement from the masses, control of the government by the army and departure from proletarian leadership—it would be to take the path of warlordism like the Kuomintang army.
4. At the same time, in propaganda work they overlook the importance of propaganda teams. On the question of mass organization, they neglect the organizing of soldiers'

committees in the army and the organizing of the local workers and peasants. As a result, both propaganda and organizational work are abandoned.

5. They become conceited when a battle is won and dispirited when a battle is lost.
6. Selfish departmentalism—they think only of the Fourth Army and do not realize that it is an important task of the Red Army to arm the local masses. This is cliquism in a magnified form.
7. Unable to see beyond their limited environment in the Fourth Army, a few comrades believe that no other revolutionary forces exist. Hence their extreme addiction to the idea of conserving strength and avoiding action. This is a remnant of opportunism.

Some comrades, disregarding the subjective and objective conditions, suffer from the malady of revolutionary impetuosity; they will not take pains to do minute and detailed work among the masses, but, riddled with illusions, want only to do big things. This is a remnant of putschism.²

² For a brief period after the defeat of the revolution in 1927, a “Left” putschist tendency arose in the Communist Party. Regarding the Chinese revolution as a “permanent revolution” and the revolutionary situation in China as a “permanent upsurge,” the putschist comrades refused to organize an orderly retreat and, adopting the methods of commandism and relying only on a small number of Party members and a small section of the masses, erroneously attempted to stage a series of local uprisings throughout the country, which

The sources of the purely military viewpoint are:

1. A low political level. From this flows the failure to recognize the role of political leadership in the army and to recognize that the Red Army and the White army are fundamentally different.
2. The mentality of mercenaries. Many prisoners captured in past battles have joined the Red Army, and such elements bring with them a markedly mercenary outlook, thereby providing a basis in the lower ranks for the purely military viewpoint.
3. From the two preceding causes there arises a third: overconfidence in military strength and absence of confidence in the strength of the masses of the people.
4. The Party's failure actively to attend to and discuss military work is also a reason for the emergence of the purely military viewpoint among a number of comrades.

The methods of correction are as follows:

1. Raise the political level in the Party by means of education, destroy the theoretical roots of the purely military viewpoint, and be clear on the fundamental difference between the Red Army and the White army. At the same

had no prospect of success. Such putschist activities were widespread at the end of 1927 but gradually subsided in the beginning of 1928, though sentiments in favor of putschism still survived among some comrades.

time, eliminate the remnants of opportunism and putschism and break down the selfish departmentalism of the Fourth Army.

2. Intensify the political training of officers and men and especially the education of ex-prisoners. At the same time, as far as possible, let the local governments select workers and peasants experienced in struggle to join the Red Army, thus organizationally weakening or even eradicating the purely military viewpoint.
3. Arouse the local Party organizations to criticize the Party organizations in the Red Army and the organs of mass political power to criticize the Red Army itself, in order to influence the Party organizations and the officers and men of the Red Army.
4. The Party must actively attend to and discuss military work. All the work must be discussed and decided upon by the Party before being carried out by the rank and file.
5. Draw up Red Army rules and regulations that clearly define its tasks, the relationship between its military and its political apparatus, the relationship between the Red Army and the masses of the people, and the powers and functions of the soldiers' committees and their relationship with the military and political organizations.

ON ULTRA-DEMOCRACY

Since the Fourth Army of the Red Army accepted the directives of the Central Committee, there has been a great decrease in the manifestations of ultra-democracy. For example, Party decisions are now carried out fairly well, and no longer does anyone bring up such erroneous demands as that the Red Army should apply “democratic centralism from the bottom to the top” or should “let the lower levels discuss all problems first, and then let the higher levels decide.” Actually, however, this decrease is only temporary and superficial and does not mean that ultra-democratic ideas have already been eliminated. In other words, ultra-democracy is still deep-rooted in the minds of many comrades. Witness the various expressions of reluctance to carry out Party decisions.

The methods of correction are as follows:

1. In the sphere of theory, destroy the roots of ultra-democracy. First, it should be pointed out that the danger of ultra-democracy lies in the fact that it damages or even completely wrecks the Party organization and weakens or even completely undermines the Party’s fighting capacity, rendering the Party incapable of fulfilling its fighting tasks, and thereby causing the defeat of the revolution. Next, it should be pointed out that the source of ultra-democracy consists of the petty bourgeoisie’s individualistic aversion to discipline. When this characteristic is brought into the

Party, it develops into ultra-democratic ideas politically and organizationally. These ideas are utterly incompatible with the fighting tasks of the proletariat.

2. In the sphere of organization, ensure democracy under centralized guidance. It should be done on the following lines:
 - (1) The leading bodies of the Party must give a correct line of guidance and find solutions when problems arise, in order to establish themselves as centers of leadership.
 - (2) The higher bodies must be familiar with the life of the masses and with the situation in the lower bodies so as to have an objective basis for correct guidance.
 - (3) No Party organization at any level should make casual decisions in solving problems. Once a decision is reached, it must be firmly carried out.
 - (4) All decisions of any importance made by the Party's higher bodies must be promptly transmitted to the lower bodies and the Party rank and file. The method is to call meetings of activists or general membership meetings of the Party branches or even of the columns³ (when

³ In the guerrilla system of organization a column corresponded to a division in the regular army, with a complement much more flexible and usually much smaller than that of a regular division.

circumstances permit) and to assign people to make reports at such meetings.

- (5) The lower bodies of the Party and the Party rank and file must discuss the higher bodies' directives in detail in order to understand their meaning thoroughly and decide on the methods of carrying them out.

ON THE DISREGARD OF ORGANIZATIONAL DISCIPLINE

Disregard of organizational discipline in the Party organization in the Fourth Army manifests itself as follows:

A. Failure of the minority to submit to the majority. For example, when a minority finds its motion voted down, it does not sincerely carry out the Party decisions.

The methods of correction are as follows:

1. At meetings, all participants should be encouraged to voice their opinions as fully as possible. The rights and wrongs in any controversy should be clarified without compromise or glossing over. In order to reach a clear-cut conclusion, what cannot be settled at one meeting should be discussed at another, provided there is no interference with the work.
2. One requirement of Party discipline is that the minority should submit to the majority. If the view of the minority has been rejected,

it must support the decision passed by the majority. If necessary, it can bring up the matter for reconsideration at the next meeting, but apart from that it must not act against the decision in any way.

B. Criticism made without regard to organizational discipline:

1. Inner-Party criticism is a weapon for strengthening the Party organization and increasing its fighting capacity. In the Party organization of the Red Army, however, criticism is not always of this character and sometimes turns into personal attack. As a result, it damages the Party organization as well as individuals. This is a manifestation of petty-bourgeois individualism. The method of correction is to help Party members understand that the purpose of criticism is to increase the Party's fighting capacity in order to achieve victory in the class struggle and that it should not be used as a means of personal attack.
2. Many Party members make their criticisms not inside, but outside, the Party. The reason is that the general membership has not yet grasped the importance of the Party organization (its meetings and so forth), and sees no difference between criticism inside and outside the organization. The method of correction is to educate Party members so that they understand the importance of Party orga-

nization and make their criticisms of Party committees or comrades at Party meetings.

ON ABSOLUTE EQUALITARIANISM

Absolute equalitarianism became quite serious in the Red Army at one time. Here are some examples. On the matter of allowances to wounded soldiers, there were objections to differentiating between light and serious cases, and the demand was raised for equal allowances for all. When officers rode on horseback, it was regarded not as something necessary for performing their duties but as a sign of inequality. Absolutely equal distribution of supplies was demanded, and there was objection to somewhat larger allotments in special cases. In the hauling of rice, the demand was made that all should carry the same load on their backs, irrespective of age or physical condition. Equality was demanded in the allotment of billets, and the Headquarters would be abused for occupying larger rooms. Equality was demanded in the assignment of fatigue duties, and there was unwillingness to do a little more than the next man. It even went so far that when there were two wounded men but only one stretcher, neither could be carried away because each refused to yield priority to the other. Absolute equalitarianism, as shown in these examples, is still very serious among officers and soldiers of the Red Army.

Absolute equalitarianism, like ultra-democracy in political matters, is the product of a handicraft and small peasant economy—the only difference being

that the one manifests itself in material affairs, while the other manifests itself in political affairs.

The method of correction: We should point out that, before the abolition of capitalism, absolute equalitarianism is a mere illusion of peasants and small proprietors, and that even under socialism there can be no absolute equality, for material things will then be distributed on the principle of “from each according to his ability, to each according to his work” as well as on that of meeting the needs of the work. The distribution of material things in the Red Army must be more or less equal, as in the case of equal pay for officers and men, because this is required by the present circumstances of the struggle. But absolute equalitarianism beyond reason must be opposed because it is not required by the struggle; on the contrary, it hinders the struggle.

ON SUBJECTIVISM

Subjectivism exists to a serious degree among some Party members, causing great harm to the analysis of the political situation and the guidance of the work. The reason is that subjective analysis of a political situation and subjective guidance of work inevitably result either in opportunism or in putschism. As for subjective criticism, loose and groundless talk, or suspiciousness, such practices inside the Party often breed unprincipled disputes and undermine the Party organization.

Another point that should be mentioned in connection with inner-Party criticism is that some

comrades ignore the major issues and confine their attention to minor points when they make their criticism. They do not understand that the main task of criticism is to point out political and organizational mistakes. As to personal shortcomings, unless they are related to political and organizational mistakes, there is no need to be overcritical and to embarrass the comrades concerned. Moreover, once such criticism develops, there is the great danger that the Party members will concentrate entirely on minor faults, and everyone will become timid and overcautious and forget the Party's political tasks.

The main method of correction is to educate Party members so that a political and scientific spirit pervades their thinking and their Party life. To this end we must: (1) teach Party members to apply the Marxist-Leninist method in analyzing a political situation and appraising the class forces, instead of making a subjective analysis and appraisal; (2) direct the attention of Party members to social and economic investigation and study, so as to determine the tactics of struggle and methods of work, and help comrades to understand that without investigation of actual conditions they will fall into the pit of fantasy and putschism; and (3) in inner-Party criticism, guard against subjectivism, arbitrariness, and the vulgarization of criticism; statements should be based on facts and criticism should center on politics.

ON INDIVIDUALISM

The tendency towards individualism in the Red Army Party organization manifests itself as follows:

1. Retaliation. Some comrades, after being criticized inside the Party by a soldier comrade, look for opportunities to retaliate outside the Party, and one way is to beat or abuse the comrade in question. They also seek to retaliate within the Party. "You have criticized me at this meeting, so I'll find some way to pay you back at the next." Such retaliation arises from purely personal considerations, to the neglect of the interests of the class and of the Party as a whole. Its target is not the enemy class, but individuals in our own ranks. It is a corrosive which weakens the organization and its fighting capacity.

2. "Small group" mentality. Some comrades consider only the interests of their own small group and ignore the general interest. Although on the surface this does not seem to be the pursuit of personal interests, in reality it exemplifies the narrowest individualism and has a strong corrosive and centrifugal effect. "Small group" mentality used to be rife in the Red Army, and although there has been some improvement as a result of criticism, there are still remnants, and further effort is needed to overcome it.

3. The "employee" mentality. Some comrades do not understand that the Party and the Red Army, of which they are members, are both instruments for carrying out the tasks of the revolution. They do not realize that they themselves are makers of the revolution, but think that their responsibility is merely to their

individual superiors and not to the revolution. This passive mentality of an “employee” of the revolution is also a manifestation of individualism. It explains why there are not very many activists who work unconditionally for the revolution. Unless it is eliminated, the number of activists will not grow and the heavy burden of the revolution will remain on the shoulders of a small number of people, much to the detriment of the struggle.

4. **Pleasure-seeking.** In the Red Army there are also quite a few people whose individualism finds expression in pleasure-seeking. They always hope that their unit will march into big cities. They want to go there not to work but to enjoy themselves. The last thing they want is to work in the Red areas where life is hard.

5. **Passivity.** Some comrades become passive and stop working whenever anything goes against their wishes. This is mainly due to lack of education, though sometimes it is also due to the leadership’s improper conduct of affairs, assignment of work, or enforcement of discipline.

6. **The desire to leave the army.** The number of people who ask for transfers from the Red Army to local work is on the increase. The reason for this does not lie entirely with the individuals but also with: (1) the material hardships of life in the Red Army, (2) exhaustion after long struggle, and (3) the leadership’s improper conduct of affairs, assignment of work, or enforcement of discipline.

The method of correction is primarily to strengthen education so as to rectify individualism ideologically.

Next, it is to conduct affairs, make assignments, and enforce discipline in a proper way. In addition, ways must be found to improve the material life of the Red Army, and every available opportunity must be utilized for rest and rehabilitation in order to improve material conditions. In our educational work we must explain that in its social origin, individualism is a reflection within the Party of petty-bourgeois and bourgeois ideas.

ON THE IDEOLOGY OF ROVING REBEL BANDS

The political ideology of roving rebel bands has emerged in the Red Army because the proportion of vagabond elements is large and because there are great masses of vagabonds in China, especially in the southern provinces. This ideology manifests itself as follows: (1) Some people want to increase our political influence only by means of roving guerrilla actions, but are unwilling to increase it by undertaking the arduous task of building up base areas and establishing the people's political power. (2) In expanding the Red Army, some people follow the line of "hiring men and buying horses" and "recruiting deserters and accepting mutineers,"⁴ rather than the line of expanding the local Red Guards and the local troops and thus developing the main forces of the Red Army. (3) Some people lack the patience to carry on arduous struggles together with

⁴ These two Chinese idioms refer to the methods which some rebels in Chinese history adopted to expand their forces. In the application of these methods, attention was paid to numbers rather than to quality, and people of all sorts were indiscriminately recruited to swell the ranks.

the masses, and only want to go to the big cities to eat and drink to their hearts' content. All these manifestations of the ideology of roving rebels seriously hamper the Red Army in performing its proper tasks; consequently its eradication is an important objective in the ideological struggle within the Red Army Party organization. It must be understood that the ways of roving rebels of the Huang Chao⁵ or Li Chuang⁶ type are not permissible under present-day conditions.

The methods of correction are as follows:

1. Intensify education, criticize incorrect ideas, and eradicate the ideology of roving rebel bands.
2. Intensify education among the basic sections of the Red Army and among recently recruited captives to counter the vagabond outlook.

⁵ Huang Chao was the leader of the peasant revolts towards the end of the Tang Dynasty. In AD 875, starting from his home district Caozhou (now Heze County in Shandong), Huang led armed peasants in victorious battles against the imperial forces and styled himself the "Heaven-Storming General." In the course of a decade he swept over most of the provinces in the Yellow, Yangzi, Huai, and Pearl River valleys, reaching as far as Guangxi. He finally broke through the Tongguan pass, captured the imperial capital of Changan (now Xian in Shaanxi), and was crowned Emperor of Qi. Internal dissensions and attacks by the non-Han tribal allies of the Tang forces compelled Huang to abandon Changan and retreat to his native district, where he committed suicide. The ten years' war fought by him is one of the most famous peasant wars in Chinese history. Dynastic historians record that "all people suffering from heavy taxes and levies rallied to him." But as he merely carried on roving warfare without ever establishing relatively consolidated base areas, his forces were called "roving rebel bands."

3. Draw active workers and peasants experienced in struggle into the ranks of the Red Army so as to change its composition.
4. Create new units of the Red Army from among the masses of militant workers and peasants.

ON THE REMNANTS OF PUTSCHISM

The Party organization in the Red Army has already waged struggles against putschism, but not yet to a sufficient extent. Therefore, remnants of this ideology still exist in the Red Army. Their manifestations are: (1) blind action regardless of subjective and objective conditions; (2) inadequate and irresolute application of the Party's policies for the cities; (3) slack military discipline, especially in moments of defeat; (4) acts of house-burning by some units; and (5) the practices of shooting deserters and of inflicting corporal punishment, both of which smack of putschism. In its social origins, putschism is a combination of *lumpen*-proletarian and petty-bourgeois ideology.

The methods of correction are as follows:

1. Eradicate putschism ideologically.
2. Correct putschist behavior through rules, regulations, and policies.

⁶ Li Chuang, short for Li Zicheng the King Chuang (the Dare-All King), native of Mizhi, northern Shaanxi, was the leader of a peasant revolt which led to the overthrow of the Ming Dynasty. The revolt first started in northern Shaanxi in 1628. Li joined the forces led by Gao Yingxiang and campaigned through Henan and Anhui and back to Shaanxi. After Gao's death in 1636, Li succeeded him, becoming King Chuang, and campaigned in and out of the provinces

COMBAT LIBERALISM

September 7, 1937

We stand for active ideological struggle, because it is the weapon for ensuring unity within the Party and the revolutionary organizations in the interest of our fight. Every Communist and revolutionary should take up this weapon.

But liberalism rejects ideological struggle and stands for unprincipled peace, thus giving rise to a decadent, philistine attitude and bringing about political degeneration in certain units and individuals in the Party and the revolutionary organizations.

Liberalism manifests itself in various ways.

To let things slide for the sake of peace and friendship when a person has clearly gone wrong, and refrain from principled argument because he is an old acquaintance, a fellow townsman, a school-mate, a close friend, a loved one, an old colleague, or old subordinate. Or to touch on the matter lightly

of Shaanxi, Sichuan, Henan, and Hubei Finally he captured the imperial capital of Beijing in 1644, whereupon the last Ming emperor committed suicide. The chief slogan he spread among the masses was "Support King Chuang, and pay no grain taxes." Another slogan of his to enforce discipline among his men ran: "Any murder means the killing of my father, any rape means the violation of my mother." Thus he won the support of the masses and his movement became the main current of the peasant revolts raging all over the country. As he, too, roamed about without ever establishing relatively consolidated base areas, he was eventually defeated by Wu Sangui, a Ming general who colluded with the Qing troops in a joint attack on Li.

instead of going into it thoroughly, so as to keep on good terms. The result is that both the organization and the individual are harmed. This is one type of liberalism.

To indulge in irresponsible criticism in private instead of actively putting forward one's suggestions to the organization. To say nothing to people to their faces but to gossip behind their backs, or to say nothing at a meeting but to gossip afterwards. To show no regard at all for the principles of collective life but to follow one's own inclination. This is a second type.

To let things drift if they do not affect one personally, to say as little as possible while knowing perfectly well what is wrong, to be worldly wise and play safe and seek only to avoid blame. This is a third type.

Not to obey orders but to give pride of place to one's own opinions. To demand special consideration from the organization but to reject its discipline. This is a fourth type.

To indulge in personal attacks, pick quarrels, vent personal spite, or seek revenge instead of entering into an argument and struggling against incorrect views for the sake of unity or progress or getting the work done properly. This is a fifth type.

To hear incorrect views without rebutting them and even to hear counterrevolutionary remarks without reporting them, but instead to take them calmly as if nothing had happened. This is a sixth type.

To be among the masses and fail to conduct propaganda and agitation or speak at meetings or conduct investigations and inquiries among them,

and instead to be indifferent to them and show no concern for their well-being, forgetting that one is a Communist and behaving as if one were an ordinary non-Communist. This is a seventh type.

To see someone harming the interests of the masses and yet not feel indignant, or dissuade or stop him or reason with him, but to allow him to continue. This is an eighth type.

To work half-heartedly without a definite plan or direction; to work perfunctorily and muddle along—"So long as one remains a monk, one goes on tolling the bell." This is a ninth type.

To regard oneself as having rendered great service to the revolution, to pride oneself on being a veteran, to disdain minor assignments while being quite unequal to major tasks, to be slipshod in work and slack in study. This is a tenth type.

To be aware of one's own mistakes and yet make no attempt to correct them, taking a liberal attitude towards oneself. This is an eleventh type.

We could name more. But these eleven are the principal types.

They are all manifestations of liberalism.

Liberalism is extremely harmful in a revolutionary collective. It is a corrosive which eats away unity, undermines cohesion, causes apathy and creates dissension. It robs the revolutionary ranks of compact organization and strict discipline, prevents policies from being carried through and alienates the Party organizations from the masses which the Party leads. It is an extremely bad tendency.

Liberalism stems from petty-bourgeois selfishness, it places personal interests first and the interests of the revolution second, and this gives rise to ideological, political and organizational liberalism.

People who are liberals look upon the principles of Marxism as abstract dogma. They approve of Marxism, but are not prepared to practice it or to practice it in full; they are not prepared to replace their liberalism by Marxism. These people have their Marxism, but they have their liberalism as well—they talk Marxism but practice liberalism; they apply Marxism to others but liberalism to themselves. They keep both kinds of goods in stock and find a use for each. This is how the minds of certain people work.

Liberalism is a manifestation of opportunism and conflicts fundamentally with Marxism. It is negative and objectively has the effect of helping the enemy; that is why the enemy welcomes its preservation in our midst. Such being its nature, there should be no place for it in the ranks of the revolution.

We must use Marxism, which is positive in spirit, to overcome liberalism, which is negative. A Communist should have largeness of mind and he should be staunch and active, looking upon the interests of the revolution as his very life and subordinating his personal interests to those of the revolution; always and everywhere he should adhere to principle and wage a tireless struggle against all incorrect ideas and actions, so as to consolidate the collective life of the Party and strengthen the ties between the Party and the masses; he should be more concerned about the

Party and the masses than about any private person, and more concerned about others than about himself. Only thus can he be considered a Communist.

All loyal, honest, active and upright Communists must unite to oppose the liberal tendencies shown by certain people among us, and set them on the right path. This is one of the tasks on our ideological front.

REFORM OUR STUDY⁷

May 1941

I propose that we should reform the method and the system of study throughout the Party. The reasons are as follows:

I

The twenty years of the Communist Party of China have been twenty years in which the universal truth of Marxism-Leninism has become more and more integrated with the concrete practice of the Chinese revolution. If we recall how superficial and meager our understanding of Marxism-Leninism and of the Chinese revolution was during our Party's infancy, we can see how much deeper and richer it is

⁷ Mao Zedong made this report to a cadres' meeting in Yanan. The report and the two articles, "Rectify the Party's Style of Work" and "Oppose Stereotyped Party Writing," are Comrade Mao Zedong's basic works on the rectification movement. In these, he summed up, on the ideological plane, past differences in the Party over the Party line and analyzed the petty-bourgeois ideology and style which, masquerading as Marxism-Leninism, were prevalent in the Party, and which chiefly manifested themselves in subjectivist and sectarian tendencies, their form of expression being stereotyped Party writing. Mao Zedong called for a Party-wide movement of Marxist-Leninist education to rectify style of work in accordance with the ideological principles of Marxism-Leninism. His call very quickly led to a great debate between proletarian and petty-bourgeois ideology inside and outside the Party. This consolidated the position of proletarian ideology inside and outside the Party, enabled the broad ranks of cadres to take a great step forward ideologically, and the Party to achieve unprecedented unity.

now. For a hundred years, the finest sons and daughters of the disaster-ridden Chinese nation fought and sacrificed their lives, one stepping into the breach as another fell, in quest of the truth that would save the country and the people. This moves us to song and tears. But it was only after World War I and the October Revolution in Russia that we found Marxism-Leninism, the best of truths, the best of weapons for liberating our nation. And the Communist Party of China has been the initiator, propagandist, and organizer in the wielding of this weapon. As soon as it was linked with the concrete practice of the Chinese revolution, the universal truth of Marxism-Leninism gave an entirely new complexion to the Chinese revolution. Since the outbreak of the War of Resistance Against Japan, our Party, basing itself on the universal truth of Marxism-Leninism, has taken a further step in its study of the concrete practice of this war and in its study of China and the world today, and has also made a beginning in the study of Chinese history. These are all very good signs.

II

However, we still have shortcomings, and very big ones too. Unless we correct these shortcomings, we shall not, in my opinion, be able to take another step forward in our work and in our great cause of integrating the universal truth of Marxism-Leninism with the concrete practice of the Chinese revolution.

First, take the study of current conditions. We have achieved some success in our study of present

domestic and international conditions, but for such a large political party as ours, the material we have collected is fragmentary and our research work unsystematic on each and every aspect of these subjects, whether it be the political, military, economic, or cultural aspect. Generally speaking, in the last twenty years we have not done systematic and thorough work in collecting and studying material on these aspects, and we are lacking in a climate of investigation and study of objective reality. To behave like “a blindfolded man catching sparrows,” or “a blind man groping for fish,” to be crude and careless, to indulge in verbiage, to rest content with a smattering of knowledge—such is the extremely bad style of work that still exists among many comrades in our Party, a style utterly opposed to the fundamental spirit of Marxism-Leninism. Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Stalin have taught us that it is necessary to study conditions conscientiously and to proceed from objective reality and not from subjective wishes—but many of our comrades act in direct violation of this truth.

Second, take the study of history. Although a few Party members and sympathizers have undertaken this work, it has not been done in an organized way. Many Party members are still in a fog about Chinese history, whether of the last hundred years or of ancient times. There are many Marxist-Leninist scholars who cannot open their mouths without citing ancient Greece; but as for their own ancestors—sorry, they have been forgotten. There is no climate

of serious study either of current conditions or of past history.

Third, take the study of international revolutionary experience, the study of the universal truth of Marxism-Leninism. Many comrades seem to study Marxism-Leninism, not to meet the needs of revolutionary practice, but purely for the sake of study. Consequently, though they read, they cannot digest. They can only cite odd quotations from Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Stalin in a one-sided manner, but are unable to apply the stand, viewpoint and method of Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Stalin to the concrete study of China's present conditions and her history, or to the concrete analysis and solution of the problems of the Chinese revolution. Such an attitude towards Marxism-Leninism does a great deal of harm, particularly among cadres of the middle and higher ranks.

The three aspects I have just mentioned, neglect of the study of current conditions, neglect of the study of history, and neglect of the application of Marxism-Leninism, all constitute an extremely bad style of work. Its spread has harmed many of our comrades.

There are indeed many comrades in our ranks who have been led astray by this style of work. Unwilling to carry on systematic and thorough investigation and study of the specific conditions inside and outside the country, the province, county, or district, they issue orders on no other basis than their scanty knowledge and "It must be so because it seems so to

me.” Does not this subjectivist style still exist among a great many comrades?

There are some who are proud instead of ashamed of knowing nothing or very little of our own history. What is particularly significant is that very few really know the history of the Communist Party of China and the history of China in the hundred years since the Opium War. Hardly anyone has seriously taken up the study of the economic, political, military, and cultural history of the last hundred years. Ignorant of their own country, some people can only relate tales of ancient Greece and other foreign lands, and even this knowledge is quite pathetic, consisting of odds and ends from old foreign books.

For several decades, many of the returned students from abroad have suffered from this malady. Coming home from Europe, America, or Japan, they can only parrot things foreign. They become gramophones and forget their duty to understand and create new things. This malady has also infected the Communist Party.

Although we are studying Marxism, the way many of our people study it runs directly counter to Marxism. That is to say, they violate the fundamental principle earnestly enjoined on us by Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Stalin, the unity of theory and practice. Having violated this principle, they invent an opposite principle of their own, the separation of theory from practice. In the schools and in the education of cadres at work, teachers of philosophy do not guide students to study the logic of the Chinese revolution;

teachers of economics do not guide them to study the characteristics of the Chinese economy; teachers of political science do not guide them to study the tactics of the Chinese revolution; teachers of military science do not guide them to study the strategy and tactics adapted to China's special features; and so on and so forth. Consequently, error is disseminated, doing people great harm. A person does not know how to apply in Fuxian⁸ what he has learned in Yanan. Professors of economics cannot explain the relationship between the Border Region currency and the Kuomintang currency,⁹ so naturally the students cannot explain it either. Thus a perverse mentality has been created among many students; instead of showing an interest in China's problems and taking the Party's directives seriously, they give all their hearts to the supposedly eternal and immutable dogmas learned from their teachers.

Of course, what I have just said refers to the worst type in our Party, and I am not saying that it is the general case. However, people of this type do exist. What is more, there are quite a few of them and they

⁸ Fuxian County is about seventy kilometers south of Yanan.

⁹ The Border Region currency consisted of the currency notes issued by the Bank of the Shaanxi-Gansu-Ningxia Border Region Government. The Kuomintang currency was the paper currency issued by the four big Kuomintang bureaucrat-capitalist banks from 1935 onwards with British and US imperialist support. Mao Zedong was referring to the fluctuations in the rates of exchange between these two currencies.

cause a great deal of harm. This matter should not be treated lightly.

III

In order to explain this idea further, I should like to contrast two opposite attitudes.

First, there is the subjectivist attitude.

With this attitude, a person does not make a systematic and thorough study of the environment, but works by sheer subjective enthusiasm and has a blurred picture of the face of China today. With this attitude, he chops up history, knows only ancient Greece but not China and is in a fog about the China of yesterday and the day before yesterday. With this attitude, a person studies Marxist-Leninist theory in the abstract and without any aim. He goes to Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Stalin not to seek the stand, viewpoint and method with which to solve the theoretical and tactical problems of the Chinese revolution but to study theory purely for theory's sake. He does not shoot the arrow at the target but shoots at random. Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Stalin have taught us that we should proceed from objective realities and that we should derive laws from them to serve as our guide to action. For this purpose, we should, as Marx has said, appropriate the material in detail and subject it to scientific analysis and synthesis.¹⁰ Many of our

¹⁰ See Karl Marx, "Afterword to the Second German Edition" of *Capital* in which he wrote: "The latter [the method of inquiry] has to appropriate the material in detail, to analyze its different forms of development, to trace out their inner connection. Only after this work is done, can the actual movement

people do not act in this way but do the opposite. A good number of them are doing research work but have no interest in studying either the China of today or the China of yesterday and confine their interest to the study of empty “theories” divorced from reality. Many others are doing practical work, but they too pay no attention to the study of objective conditions, often rely on sheer enthusiasm and substitute their personal feelings for policy. Both kinds of people, relying on the subjective, ignore the existence of objective realities. When making speeches, they indulge in a long string of headings, A, B, C, D, 1, 2, 3, 4, and when writing articles, they turn out a lot of verbiage. They have no intention of seeking truth from facts, but only a desire to curry favor by claptrap. They are flashy without substance, brittle without solidity. They are always right, they are the Number One authority under Heaven, “imperial envoys” who rush everywhere. Such is the style of work of some comrades in our ranks. To govern one’s own conduct by this style is to harm oneself, to teach it to others is to harm others, and to use it to direct the revolution is to harm the revolution. To sum up, this subjectivist method, which is contrary to science and Marxism-Leninism, is a formidable enemy of the Communist Party, the working class, the people and the nation; it is a manifestation of impurity in Party spirit. A formidable enemy stands before us, and we must overthrow him. Only when subjectivism is

be adequately described.” Karl Marx, *Capital*, vol. I (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1963), 19.

overthrown can the truth of Marxism-Leninism prevail, can Party spirit be strengthened, can the revolution be victorious. We must assert that the absence of a scientific attitude, that is, the absence of the Marxist-Leninist approach of uniting theory and practice, means that Party spirit is either absent or deficient.

There is a couplet which portrays this type of person. It runs:

*The reed growing on the wall—top-heavy,
thin-stemmed, and shallow of root;*

*The bamboo shoot in the hills—sharp-tongued,
thick-skinned, and hollow inside.*

Is this not an apt description of those who do not have a scientific attitude, who can only recite words and phrases from the works of Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Stalin and who enjoy a reputation unwarranted by any real learning? If anyone really wishes to cure himself of his malady, I advise him to commit this couplet to memory or to show still more courage and paste it on the wall of his room. Marxism-Leninism is a science, and science means honest, solid knowledge; there is no room for playing tricks. Let us, then, be honest.

Second, there is the Marxist-Leninist attitude.

With this attitude, a person applies the theory and method of Marxism-Leninism to the systematic and thorough investigation and study of the environment. He does not work by enthusiasm alone but, as Stalin says, combines revolutionary sweep with

practicalness.¹¹ With this attitude he will not chop up history. It is not enough for him to know ancient Greece, he must know China; he must know the revolutionary history not only of foreign countries but also of China, not only the China of today but also the China of yesterday and of the day before yesterday. With this attitude, one studies the theory of Marxism-Leninism with a purpose, that is, to integrate Marxist-Leninist theory with the actual movement of the Chinese revolution and to seek from this theory the stand, viewpoint, and method with which to solve the theoretical and tactical problems of the Chinese revolution. Such an attitude is one of shooting the arrow at the target. The “target” is the Chinese revolution, the “arrow” is Marxism-Leninism. We Chinese Communists have been seeking this arrow because we want to hit the target of the Chinese revolution and of the revolution of the East. To take such an attitude is to seek truth from facts. “Facts” are all the things that exist objectively, “truth” means their internal relations, that is, the laws governing them, and “to seek” means to study. We should proceed from the actual conditions inside and outside the country, the province, county, or district, and derive from them, as our guide to action, laws that are inherent in them and not imaginary. That is, we should find the internal relations of the events occurring around us. And in order to do that we must rely not on subjective imagination, not on

¹¹ See Joseph Stalin, *The Foundations of Leninism*, Foundations (Paris: Foreign Languages Press, 2020), 104.

momentary enthusiasm, not on lifeless books, but on facts that exist objectively; we must appropriate the material in detail and, guided by the general principles of Marxism-Leninism, draw correct conclusions from it. Such conclusions are not mere lists of phenomena in A, B, C, D order or writings full of platitudes, but are scientific conclusions. Such an attitude is one of seeking truth from facts and not of currying favor by claptrap. It is the manifestation of Party spirit, the Marxist-Leninist style of uniting theory and practice. It is the attitude every Communist Party member should have at the very least. He who adopts this attitude will be neither “top-heavy, thin-stemmed, and shallow of root” nor “sharp-tongued, thick-skinned, and hollow inside.”

IV

In accordance with the above views, I would like to make the following proposals:

1. We should place before the whole Party the task of making a systematic and thorough study of the situation around us. On the basis of the theory and method of Marxism-Leninism, we should make a detailed investigation and study of developments in the economic, financial, political, military, cultural, and party activities of our enemies, our friends, and ourselves, and then draw the proper and necessary conclusions. To this end, we should direct our comrades' attention to the investigation and study of these practical matters. We should get our comrades to understand that the twofold basic task of the lead-

ing bodies of the Communist Party is to know conditions and to master policy; the former means knowing the world and the latter changing the world. We should get our comrades to understand that without investigation there is no right to speak, and that bombastic twaddle and a mere list of phenomena in 1, 2, 3, 4 order are of no use. Take propaganda work, for instance: if we do not know the situation with regard to the propaganda of our enemies, our friends, and ourselves, we shall be unable to decide on a correct propaganda policy. In the work of any department, it is necessary to know the situation first and only then can the work be well handled. The fundamental link in changing the Party's style of work is to carry out plans for investigation and study throughout the Party.

2. As for China's history in the last hundred years, we should assemble qualified persons to study it, in cooperation and with a proper division of labor, and so overcome the present disorganized state of affairs. First it is necessary to make analytical studies in the several fields of economic history, political history, military history, and cultural history, and only then will it be possible to make synthetical studies.

3. As for education for cadres, whether at work or in schools for cadres, a policy should be established of focusing such education on the study of the practical problems of the Chinese revolution and using the basic principles of Marxism-Leninism as the guide, and the method of studying Marxism-Leninism statically and in isolation should be discarded. Moreover,

in studying Marxism-Leninism, we should use the *History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks), Short Course* as the principal material. It is the best synthesis and summing-up of the world communist movement of the past hundred years, a model of the integration of theory and practice, and so far the only comprehensive model in the whole world. When we see how Lenin and Stalin integrated the universal truth of Marxism with the concrete practice of the Soviet revolution and thereby developed Marxism, we shall know how we should work in China.

We have made many detours. But error is often the precursor of what is correct. I am confident that in the context of the Chinese revolution and the world revolution, which is so intensely alive and so richly varied, this reform of our study will certainly yield good results.

RECTIFY THE PARTY'S STYLE OF WORK¹²

February 1, 1942

The Party School opens today and I wish it every success.

I would like to say something about the problem of our Party's style of work.

Why must there be a revolutionary party? There must be a revolutionary party because the world contains enemies who oppress the people and the people want to throw off enemy oppression. In the era of capitalism and imperialism, just such a revolutionary party as the Communist Party is needed. Without such a party it is simply impossible for the people to throw off enemy oppression. We are Communists; we want to lead the people in overthrowing the enemy, and so we must keep our ranks in good order—we must march in step, our troops must be picked troops, and our weapons good weapons. Without these conditions the enemy cannot be overthrown.

What is the problem now facing our Party? The general line of the Party is correct and presents no problem, and the Party's work has been fruitful. The Party has several hundred thousand members who are leading the people in extremely hard and bitter struggles against the enemy. This is plain to everybody and beyond all doubt.

¹² This speech was delivered by Mao Zedong at the opening of the Party School of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China.

Then is there or is there not any problem still facing our Party? I say there is and, in a certain sense, the problem is quite serious.

What is the problem? It is the fact that there is something in the minds of a number of our comrades which strikes one as not quite right, not quite proper.

In other words, there is still something wrong with our style of study, with our style in the Party's internal and external relations, and with our style of writing. By something wrong with the style of study we mean the malady of subjectivism. By something wrong with our style in Party relations we mean the malady of sectarianism. By something wrong with the style of writing we mean the malady of stereotyped Party writing.¹³ All these are wrong; they are ill winds, but they are not like the wintry north winds that sweep across the whole sky. Subjectivism, sectarianism, and

¹³ Stereotyped writing, or the "eight-legged essay," was the special form of essay prescribed in the imperial examinations under China's feudal dynasties from the 15th to the 19th centuries; it consisted in juggling words, concentrated only on form, and was devoid of content. Structurally the main body of the essay had eight parts—presentation, amplification, preliminary exposition, initial argument, inceptive paragraphs, middle paragraphs, rear paragraphs, and concluding paragraphs. The fifth to eighth parts each had to have two "legs," i.e., two antithetical paragraphs, hence the name "eight-legged essay." The "eight-legged essay" became a byword in China denoting stereotyped formalism and triteness. Thus "stereotyped Party writing," characterizes the writings of certain people in the revolutionary ranks who piled up revolutionary phrases and terms higgledy-piggledy instead of analyzing the facts. Like the "eight-legged essay," their writings were nothing but verbiage.

stereotyped Party writing are no longer the dominant styles, but merely gusts of contrary wind, ill winds from the air-raid tunnels. (*Laughter.*) It is bad, however, that such winds should still be blowing in the Party. We must seal off the passages that produce them. Our whole Party should undertake the job of sealing off these passages, and so should the Party School. These three ill winds, subjectivism, sectarianism, and stereotyped Party writing, have their historical origins. Although no longer dominant in the whole Party, they still constantly create trouble and assail us. Therefore, it is necessary to resist them and to study, analyze, and elucidate them.

Fight subjectivism in order to rectify the style of study, fight sectarianism in order to rectify the style in Party relations, and fight Party stereotypes in order to rectify the style of writing—such is the task before us.

To accomplish the task of overthrowing the enemy, we must accomplish the task of rectifying these styles within the Party. The style of study and the style of writing are also the Party's style of work. Once our Party's style of work is put completely right, the people all over the country will learn from our example. Those outside the Party who have the same kind of bad style will, if they are good and honest people, learn from our example and correct their mistakes, and thus the whole nation will be influenced. So long as our Communist ranks are in good order and march in step, so long as our troops are picked troops and our weapons are good weapons, any enemy, however powerful, can be overthrown.

Let me speak now about subjectivism.

Subjectivism is an improper style of study; it is opposed to Marxism-Leninism and is incompatible with the Communist Party. What we want is the Marxist-Leninist style of study. What we call style of study means not just style of study in the schools but in the whole Party. It is a question of the method of thinking of comrades in our leading bodies, of all cadres and Party members, a question of our attitude towards Marxism-Leninism, of the attitude of all Party comrades in their work. As such, it is a question of extraordinary, indeed of primary, importance.

Certain muddled ideas find currency among many people. There are, for instance, muddled ideas about what is a theorist, what is an intellectual, and what is meant by linking theory and practice.

Let us first ask, is the theoretical level of our Party high or low? Recently, more Marxist-Leninist works have been translated and more people have been reading them. That is a very good thing. But can we therefore say that the theoretical level of our Party has been greatly raised? True, the level is now somewhat higher than before. But our theoretical front is very much out of harmony with the rich content of the Chinese revolutionary movement, and a comparison of the two shows that the theoretical side is lagging far behind. Generally speaking, our theory cannot as yet keep pace with our revolutionary practice, let alone lead the way as it should. We have not yet raised our rich and varied practice to the proper theoretical plane. We have not yet examined all the problems

of revolutionary practice—or even the important ones—and raised them to a theoretical plane. Just think, how many of us have created theories worthy of the name on China's economics, politics, military affairs, or culture, theories which can be regarded as scientific and comprehensive, and not crude and sketchy? Especially in the field of economic theory: Chinese capitalism has had a century of development since the Opium War, and yet not a single theoretical work has been produced which accords with the realities of China's economic development and is genuinely scientific. Can we say that in the study of China's economic problems, for instance, the theoretical level is already high? Can we say that our Party already has economic theorists worthy of the name? Certainly not. We have read a great many Marxist-Leninist books, but can we claim, then, that we have theorists? We cannot. For Marxism-Leninism is the theory created by Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Stalin on the basis of practice, their general conclusion drawn from historical and revolutionary reality. If we merely read their works but do not proceed to study the realities of China's history and revolution in the light of their theory or do not make any effort to think through China's revolutionary practice carefully in terms of theory, we should not be so presumptuous as to call ourselves Marxist theorists. Our achievements on the theoretical front will be very poor indeed if as members of the Communist Party of China we close our eyes to China's problems and can only memorize isolated conclusions or principles

from Marxist writings. If all a person can do is to commit Marxist economics or philosophy to memory, reciting glibly from Chapter I to Chapter X, but is utterly unable to apply them, can he be considered a Marxist theorist? No! He cannot. What kind of theorists do we want? We want theorists who can, in accordance with the Marxist-Leninist stand, viewpoint, and method, correctly interpret the practical problems arising in the course of history and revolution and give scientific explanations and theoretical elucidations of China's economic, political, military, cultural, and other problems. Such are the theorists we want. To be a theorist of this kind, a person must have a true grasp of the essence of Marxism-Leninism, of the Marxist-Leninist stand, viewpoint, and method and of the theories of Lenin and Stalin on the colonial revolution and the Chinese revolution, and he must be able to apply them in a penetrating and scientific analysis of China's practical problems and discover the laws of development of these problems. Such are the theorists we really need.

The Central Committee of our Party has now made a decision calling upon our comrades to learn how to apply the Marxist-Leninist stand, viewpoint, and method in the serious study of China's history, and of China's economics, politics, military affairs, and culture, and to analyze every problem concretely on the basis of detailed material and then draw theoretical conclusions. This is the responsibility we must shoulder.

Our comrades in the Party School should not regard Marxist theory as lifeless dogma. It is necessary to master Marxist theory and apply it, master it for the sole purpose of applying it. If you can apply the Marxist-Leninist viewpoint in elucidating one or two practical problems, you should be commended and credited with some achievement. The more problems you elucidate and the more comprehensively and profoundly you do so, the greater will be your achievement. Our Party School should also lay down the rule to grade students good or poor according to how they look at China's problems after they have studied Marxism-Leninism, according to whether or not they see the problems clearly and whether or not they see them at all.

Next let us talk about the question of the "intellectuals." Since China is a semicolonial, semifeudal country and her culture is not well developed, intellectuals are particularly treasured. On this question of the intellectuals, the Central Committee of the Party made the decision¹⁴ over two years ago, that we should win over the great numbers of intellectuals and, insofar as they are revolutionary and willing to take part in the resistance to Japan, welcome them one and all. It is entirely right for us to esteem intellectuals, for without revolutionary intellectuals the

¹⁴ This was the decision on recruiting intellectuals adopted by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China in December 1939, which is printed under the title "Recruit Large Numbers of Intellectuals" in the *Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung*, vol. II, Works of Maoism (Paris: Foreign Languages Press, 2021), 279–281.

revolution cannot triumph. But we all know there are many intellectuals who fancy themselves very learned and assume airs of erudition without realizing that such airs are bad and harmful and hinder their own progress. They ought to be aware of the truth that actually many so-called intellectuals are, relatively speaking, most ignorant and the workers and peasants sometimes know more than they do. Here some will say, "Ha! You are turning things upside down and talking nonsense." (*Laughter.*) But, comrades, don't get excited; there is some sense in what I am saying.

What is knowledge? Ever since class society came into being the world has had only two kinds of knowledge—knowledge of the struggle for production and knowledge of the class struggle. Natural science and social science are the crystallization of these two kinds of knowledge, and philosophy is the generalization and summation of the knowledge of nature and the knowledge of society. Is there any other kind of knowledge? No. Now let us take a look at certain students, those brought up in schools that are completely cut off from the practical activities of society. What about them? A person goes from a primary school of this kind all the way through to a university of the same kind, graduates and is reckoned to have a stock of learning. But all he has is book learning; he has not yet taken part in any practical activities or applied what he has learned to any field of life. Can such a person be regarded as a completely developed intellectual? Hardly so, in my

opinion, because his knowledge is still incomplete. What then is relatively complete knowledge? All relatively complete knowledge is formed in two stages: the first stage is perceptual knowledge, the second is rational knowledge, the latter being the development of the former to a higher stage. What sort of knowledge is the students' book learning? Even supposing all their knowledge is truth, it is still not knowledge acquired through their own personal experience, but consists of theories set down by their predecessors in summarizing experience of the struggle for production and of the class struggle. It is entirely necessary that students should acquire this kind of knowledge, but it must be understood that as far as they are concerned, such knowledge is in a sense still one-sided, something that has been verified by others but not yet by themselves. What is most important is to be good at applying this knowledge in life and in practice. Therefore, I advise those who have only book learning but as yet no contact with reality, and also those with little practical experience, to realize their own shortcomings and become a little more modest.

How can those who have only book learning be turned into intellectuals in the true sense? The only way is to get them to take part in practical work and become practical workers, to get those engaged in theoretical work to study important practical problems. In this way our aim can be attained.

What I have said will probably make some people angry. They will say, "According to your explanation, even Marx would not be regarded as an intellectual."

I say they are wrong. Marx took part in the practice of the revolutionary movement and also created revolutionary theory. Beginning with the commodity, the simplest element of capitalism, he made a thorough study of the economic structure of capitalist society. Millions of people saw and handled commodities every day but were so used to them that they took no notice. Marx alone studied commodities scientifically. He carried out a tremendous work of research into their actual development and derived a thoroughly scientific theory from what existed universally. He studied nature, history, and proletarian revolution and created dialectical materialism, historical materialism and the theory of proletarian revolution. Thus Marx became a most completely developed intellectual, representing the acme of human wisdom; he was fundamentally different from those who have only book learning. Marx undertook detailed investigations and studies in the course of practical struggles, formed generalizations, and then verified his conclusions by testing them in practical struggles—this is what we call theoretical work. Our Party needs a large number of comrades who will learn how to do such work. In our Party there are many comrades who can learn to do this kind of theoretical research; most of them are intelligent and promising and we should value them. But they must follow correct principles and not repeat the mistake of the past. They must discard dogmatism and not confine themselves to ready-made phrases in books.

There is only one kind of true theory in this world, theory that is drawn from objective reality and then verified by objective reality; nothing else is worthy of the name of theory in our sense. Stalin said that theory becomes aimless when it is not connected with practice.¹⁵ Aimless theory is useless and false and should be discarded. We should point the finger of scorn at those who are fond of aimless theorizing. Marxism-Leninism is the most correct, scientific, and revolutionary truth, born out of and verified by objective reality, but many who study Marxism-Leninism take it as lifeless dogma, thus impeding the development of theory and harming themselves as well as other comrades.

On the other hand, our comrades who are engaged in practical work will also come to grief if they misuse their experience. True, these people are often rich in experience, which is very valuable, but it is very dangerous if they rest content with their own experience. They must realize that their knowledge is mostly perceptual and partial and that they lack rational and comprehensive knowledge; in other words, they lack theory and their knowledge, too, is relatively incomplete. Without comparatively complete knowledge it is impossible to do revolutionary work well.

Thus, there are two kinds of incomplete knowledge, one is ready-made knowledge found in books and the other is knowledge that is mostly perceptual and partial; both are one-sided. Only an integration

¹⁵ See Stalin, *The Foundations of Leninism*, 19.

of the two can yield knowledge that is sound and relatively complete.

In order to study theory, however, our cadres of working-class and peasant origin must first acquire an elementary education. Without it they cannot learn Marxist-Leninist theory. Having acquired it, they can study Marxism-Leninism at any time. In my childhood I never attended a Marxist-Leninist school and was taught only such things as, “The Master said: ‘How pleasant it is to learn and constantly review what one has learned.’”¹⁶ Though this teaching material was antiquated, it did me some good because from it I learned to read. Nowadays we no longer study the Confucian classics but such new subjects as modern Chinese, history, geography, and elementary natural science, which, once learned, are useful everywhere. The Central Committee of our Party now emphatically requires that our cadres of working-class and peasant origin should obtain an elementary education, because they can then take up any branch of study—politics, military science, or economics. Otherwise, for all their rich experience, they will never be able to study theory.

It follows that to combat subjectivism we must enable people of each of these two types to develop in whichever direction they are deficient and to merge with the other type. Those with book learning must develop in the direction of practice; it is only in this way that they will stop being content with books

¹⁶ This is the opening sentence of the *Confucian Analects*, a record of the dialogues of Confucius and his disciples.

and avoid committing dogmatist errors. Those experienced in work must take up the study of theory and must read seriously. Only then will they be able to systematize and synthesize their experience and raise it to the level of theory; only then will they not mistake their partial experience for universal truth and not commit empiricist errors. Dogmatism and empiricism alike are subjectivism, each originating from an opposite pole.

Hence there are two kinds of subjectivism in our Party, dogmatism and empiricism. Each sees only a part and not the whole. If people are not on guard, do not realize that such one-sidedness is a shortcoming, and do not strive to overcome it, they are liable to go astray.

However, of the two kinds of subjectivism, dogmatism is still the greater danger in our Party. For dogmatists can easily assume a Marxist guise to bluff, capture, and make servitors of cadres of working-class and peasant origin who cannot easily see through them; they can also bluff and ensnare the naive youth. If we overcome dogmatism, cadres with book learning will readily join with those who have experience and will take to the study of practical things, and then many good cadres who integrate theory with experience, as well as some real theorists, will emerge. If we overcome dogmatism, the comrades with practical experience will have good teachers to help them raise their experience to the level of theory and so avoid empiricist errors.

Besides muddled ideas about the “theorist” and the “intellectual,” there is a muddled idea among many comrades about “linking theory and practice,” a phrase they have on their lips every day. They talk constantly about “linking,” but actually they mean “separating,” because they make no effort at linking. How is Marxist-Leninist theory to be linked with the practice of the Chinese revolution? To use a common expression, it is by “shooting the arrow at the target.” As the arrow is to the target, so is Marxism-Leninism to the Chinese revolution. Some comrades, however, are “shooting without a target,” shooting at random, and such people are liable to harm the revolution. Others merely stroke the arrow fondly, exclaiming, “What a fine arrow! What a fine arrow!” but never want to shoot it. These people are only connoisseurs of curios and have virtually nothing to do with the revolution. The arrow of Marxism-Leninism must be used to shoot at the target of the Chinese revolution. Unless this point is made clear, the theoretical level of our Party can never be raised and the Chinese revolution can never be victorious.

Our comrades must understand that we study Marxism-Leninism not for display, nor because there is any mystery about it, but solely because it is the science that leads the revolutionary cause of the proletariat to victory. Even now, there are not a few people who still regard random quotations from Marxist-Leninist works as a ready-made panacea which, once acquired, can easily cure all maladies. These people show childish ignorance, and we

should enlighten them. It is precisely such ignorant people who take Marxism-Leninism as a religious dogma. To them we should say bluntly, "Your dogma is worthless." Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Stalin have repeatedly stated that our theory is not a dogma but a guide to action. But such people prefer to forget this statement which is of the greatest, indeed the utmost, importance. Chinese Communists can be regarded as linking theory with practice only when they become good at applying the Marxist-Leninist stand, viewpoint, and method and the teachings of Lenin and Stalin concerning the Chinese revolution and when, furthermore, through serious research into the realities of China's history and revolution, they do creative theoretical work to meet China's needs in different spheres. Merely talking about linking theory and practice without actually doing anything about it is of no use, even if one goes on talking for a hundred years. To oppose the subjectivist, one-sided approach to problems, we must demolish dogmatist subjectiveness and one-sidedness.

So much for today about combating subjectivism in order to rectify the style of study throughout the Party.

Let me now speak about the question of sectarianism.

Having been steeled for twenty years, our Party is no longer dominated by sectarianism. Remnants of sectarianism, however, are still found both in the Party's internal relations and in its external relations. Sectarian tendencies in internal relations lead to

exclusiveness towards comrades inside the Party and hinder inner-Party unity and solidarity, while sectarian tendencies in external relations lead to exclusiveness towards people outside the Party and hinder the Party in its task of uniting the whole people. Only by uprooting this evil in both its aspects can the Party advance unimpeded in its great task of achieving unity among all Party comrades and among all the people of our country.

What are the remnants of inner-Party sectarianism? They are mainly as follows:

First, the assertion of “independence.” Some comrades see only the interests of the part and not the whole; they always put undue stress on that part of the work for which they themselves are responsible and always wish to subordinate the interests of the whole to the interests of their own part. They do not understand the Party’s system of democratic centralism; they do not realize that the Communist Party not only needs democracy but needs centralization even more. They forget the system of democratic centralism in which the minority is subordinate to the majority, the lower level to the higher level, the part to the whole and the entire membership to the Central Committee. Zhang Guotao¹⁷ asserted his

¹⁷ Zhang Guotao was a renegade from the Chinese revolution. In early life, speculating on the revolution, he joined the Communist Party. In the Party he made many mistakes resulting in serious crimes. The most notorious of these was his opposition in 1935 to the Red Army’s northward march and his defeatism and liquidationism in advocating withdrawal by the Red Army to the minority-nationality areas on the Sichuan-Xikang borders. He also openly carried out trai-

“independence” of the Central Committee of the Party and as a result “asserted” himself into betraying the Party and became a Kuomintang agent. Although the sectarianism we are now discussing is not of this extremely serious kind, it must still be guarded against and we must do away completely with all manifestations of disunity. We should encourage comrades to take the interests of the whole into account. Every Party member, every branch of work, every statement and every action must proceed from the interests of the whole Party; it is absolutely impermissible to violate this principle.

Those who assert this kind of “independence” are usually wedded to the doctrine of “me first” and are generally wrong on the question of the relationship between the individual and the Party. Although in words they profess respect for the Party, in practice they put themselves first and the Party second. What are these people after? They are after fame and position and want to be in the limelight. Whenever they are put in charge of a branch of work, they assert their “independence.” With this aim, they draw some people in, push others out and resort to boast-

torious activities against the Party and the Central Committee, established his own bogus central committee, disrupted the unity of the Party and the Red Army, and caused heavy losses to the Fourth Front Army. But through the patient education by Mao Zedong and the Central Committee, the Fourth Front Army and its numerous cadres soon returned to the correct leadership of the Central Committee of the Party and played a glorious role in subsequent struggles. Zhang Guotao, however, proved incorrigible and in the spring of 1938 he slipped out of the Shaanxi-Gansu-Ningxia Border Region and joined the Kuomintang secret police.

ing, flattery, and touting among the comrades, thus importing the vulgar style of the bourgeois political parties into the Communist Party. It is their dishonesty that causes them to come to grief. I believe we should do things honestly, for without an honest attitude it is absolutely impossible to accomplish anything in this world. Which are the honest people? Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Stalin are honest, men of science are honest. Which are the dishonest people? Trotsky, Bukharin, Chen Duxiu, and Zhang Guotao are extremely dishonest, and those who assert “independence” out of personal or sectional interest are dishonest too. All sly people, all those who do not have a scientific attitude in their work, fancy themselves resourceful and clever, but in fact they are most stupid and will come to no good. Students in our Party School must pay attention to this problem. We must build a centralized, unified Party and make a clean sweep of all unprincipled factional struggles. We must combat individualism and sectarianism so as to enable our whole Party to march in step and fight for one common goal.

Cadres from the outside and those from the locality must unite and combat sectarian tendencies. Very careful attention must be given to the relations between outside and local cadres because many anti-Japanese base areas were established only after the arrival of the Eighth Route Army or the New Fourth Army and much of the local work developed only after the arrival of outside cadres. Our comrades must understand that in these conditions it is pos-

sible for our base areas to be consolidated and for our Party to take root there only when the two kinds of cadres unite as one and when a large number of local cadres develop and are promoted; otherwise it is impossible. Both the outside and the local cadres have their strong and weak points, and to make any progress they must overcome their own weak points by learning from each other's strong points. The outside cadres are generally not up to the local cadres in familiarity with local conditions and links with the masses. Take me for instance. Although I have been in northern Shaanxi five or six years, I am far behind the local comrades in understanding local conditions and in links with the people here. Our comrades going to the anti-Japanese base areas in Shanxi, Hebei, Shandong, and other provinces must pay attention to this. Moreover, even within the same base area, owing to the fact that some districts develop earlier and others later, there is a difference between the local cadres of a district and those from outside it. Cadres who come from a more developed to a less developed district are also outside cadres in relation to that locality, and they, too, should pay great attention to fostering and helping local cadres. Generally speaking, in places where outside cadres are in charge, it is they who should bear the main responsibility if their relations with the local cadres are not good. And the chief comrades in charge should bear greater responsibility. The attention paid to this problem in some places is still very inadequate. Some people look down on the local cadres and rid-

iculate them, saying, "What do these locals know? Clodhoppers!" Such people utterly fail to understand the importance of local cadres; they know neither the latter's strong points nor their own weaknesses and adopt an incorrect, sectarian attitude. All outside cadres must cherish the local cadres and give them constant help and must not be permitted to ridicule or attack them. Of course, the local cadres, on their part, must learn from the strong points of the outside cadres and rid themselves of inappropriate, narrow views so that they and the outside cadres become as one, with no distinction between "them" and "us," and thus avoid sectarian tendencies.

The same applies to the relationship between cadres in army service and other cadres working in the locality. They must be completely united and must oppose sectarian tendencies. The army cadres must help the local cadres, and vice versa. If there is friction between them, each should make allowance for the other and carry out proper self-criticism. Generally speaking, in places where army cadres are actually in positions of leadership, it is they who should bear the main responsibility if their relations with the local cadres are not good. Only when the army cadres understand their own responsibility and are modest in their attitude towards the local cadres can the conditions be created for the smooth progress of our war effort and our work of construction in the base areas.

The same applies to the relationship among different army units, different localities, and different departments. We must oppose the tendency towards

selfish departmentalism by which the interests of one's own unit are looked after to the exclusion of those of others. Whoever is indifferent to the difficulties of others, refuses to transfer cadres to other units on request, or releases only the inferior ones, "using the neighbor's field as an outlet for his overflow," and does not give the slightest consideration to other departments, localities, or people—such a person is a selfish departmentalist who has entirely lost the spirit of communism. Lack of consideration for the whole and complete indifference to other departments, localities, and people are characteristics of a selfish departmentalist. We must intensify our efforts to educate such persons and to make them understand that selfish departmentalism is a sectarian tendency that will become very dangerous, if allowed to develop.

Another problem is the relationship between old and new cadres. Since the beginning of the War of Resistance, our Party has grown enormously, and large numbers of new cadres have emerged. That is a very good thing. In his report to the Eighteenth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (B), Comrade Stalin said, "... there are never enough old cadres, there are far less than required, and they are already partly going out of commission owing to the operation of the laws of nature." Here he was discussing the cadres situation and not only the laws of nature. If our Party does not have a great many new cadres working in unity and cooperation with the old cadres, our cause will come to a stop. All old

cadres, therefore, should welcome the new ones with the utmost enthusiasm and show them the warmest solicitude. True, new cadres have their shortcomings. They have not been long in the revolution and lack experience, and unavoidably some have brought with them vestiges of the unwholesome ideology of the old society, remnants of the ideology of petty-bourgeois individualism. But such shortcomings can be gradually eliminated through education and tempering in the revolution. The strong point of the new cadres, as Stalin has said, is that they are acutely sensitive to what is new and are therefore enthusiastic and active to a high degree—the very qualities which some of the old cadres lack.¹⁸ Cadres, new and old, should respect each other, learn from each other and overcome their own shortcomings by learning from each other's strong points, so as to unite as one in the common cause and guard against sectarian tendencies. Generally speaking, in places where the old cadres are mainly in charge, it is they who should bear the chief responsibility if relations with the new cadres are not good.

All the above—relations between the part and the whole, relations between the individual and the Party, relations between outside and local cadres, relations between army cadres and other cadres working in the locality, relations between this and that army unit, between this and that locality, between this and

¹⁸ See "Report on the Work of the Central Committee to the Eighteenth Congress of the C.P.S.U.(B.)," in *Collected Works*, by Joseph Stalin, vol. XIV (London: Red Star Press, 1978), 404–406.

that department and relations between old and new cadres—are relations within the Party. In all these relations it is necessary to enhance the spirit of communism and guard against sectarian tendencies, so that the ranks of our Party will be in good order, march in step and therefore fight well. This is a very important problem which we must solve thoroughly in rectifying the Party's style of work. Sectarianism is an expression of subjectivism in organizational relations; if we want to get rid of subjectivism and promote the Marxist-Leninist spirit of seeking truth from facts, we must sweep the remnants of sectarianism out of the Party and proceed from the principle that the Party's interests are above personal or sectional interests, so that the Party can attain complete solidarity and unity.

The remnants of sectarianism must be eliminated from the Party's external as well as its internal relations. The reason is this: we cannot defeat the enemy by merely uniting the comrades throughout the Party; we can defeat the enemy only by uniting the people throughout the country. For twenty years the Communist Party of China has done great and arduous work in the cause of uniting the people of the whole country, and the achievements in this work since the outbreak of the War of Resistance are even greater than in the past. This does not mean, however, that all our comrades already have a correct style in dealing with the masses and are free from sectarian tendencies. No. In fact, sectarian tendencies still exist among a number of comrades, and in some cases to a

very serious degree. Many of our comrades tend to be overbearing in their relations with non-Party people, look down upon them, despise or refuse to respect them or appreciate their strong points. This is indeed a sectarian tendency. After reading a few Marxist books, such comrades become more arrogant instead of more modest, and invariably dismiss others as no good without realizing that in fact their own knowledge is only half-baked. Our comrades must realize the truth that Communist Party members are at all times a minority as compared with non-Party people. Supposing one out of every hundred persons were a Communist, then there would be 4,500,000 Communists among China's population of 450,000,000. Yet, even if our membership reached this huge figure, Communists would still form only one percent of the whole population, while 99 percent would be non-Party people. What reason can we then have for not cooperating with non-Party people? As regards all those who wish to cooperate with us or might cooperate with us, we have only the duty of cooperating and absolutely no right to shut them out. But some Party members do not understand this and look down upon, or even shut out, those who wish to cooperate with us. There are no grounds whatsoever for doing so. Have Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Stalin given us any grounds? They have not. On the contrary, they have always earnestly enjoined us to form close ties with the masses and not divorce ourselves from them. Or has the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China given us any grounds?

No. Among all its resolutions there is not a single one that says we may divorce ourselves from the masses and so isolate ourselves. On the contrary, the Central Committee has always told us to form close ties with the masses and not to divorce ourselves from them. Thus any action divorcing us from the masses has no justification at all and is simply the mischievous result of the sectarian ideas some of our comrades have themselves concocted. As such, sectarianism remains very serious among some of our comrades and still obstructs the application of the Party line, and we should carry out extensive education within the Party to meet this problem. Above all, we should make our cadres really understand how serious the problem is and how utterly impossible it is to overthrow the enemy and attain the goal of the revolution unless Party members unite with the non-Party cadres and with non-Party people.

All sectarian ideas are subjectivist and are incompatible with the real needs of the revolution; hence the struggle against sectarianism and the struggle against subjectivism should go on simultaneously.

There is no time today to talk about the question of stereotyped Party writing; I shall discuss it at another meeting. Stereotyped Party writing is a vehicle for filth, a form of expression for subjectivism and sectarianism. It does people harm and damages the revolution, and we must get rid of it completely.

To combat subjectivism we must propagate materialism and dialectics. However, there are many comrades in our Party who lay no stress on the propa-

ganda either of materialism or of dialectics. Some tolerate subjectivist propaganda and regard it with equanimity. They think they believe in Marxism, but make no effort to propagate materialism and do not give it a thought or express any opinion when they hear or read subjectivist stuff. This is not the attitude of a Communist. It allows many of our comrades to be poisoned by subjectivist ideas, which numb their sensitivity. We should therefore launch a campaign of enlightenment within the Party to free the minds of our comrades from the fog of subjectivism and dogmatism and should call upon them to boycott subjectivism, sectarianism, and stereotyped Party writing. Such evils are like Japanese goods, for only our enemy wishes us to preserve them and continue to befuddle ourselves with them, so we should advocate a boycott against them, just as we boycott Japanese goods.¹⁹ We should boycott all the wares of subjectivism, sectarianism, and stereotyped Party writing, make their sale difficult, and not allow their purveyors to ply their trade by exploiting the low theoretical level in the Party. Our comrades must develop a good nose for this purpose; they should take a sniff at everything and distinguish the good from the bad before they decide whether to welcome it or boycott it. Communists must always go into the whys and wherefores

¹⁹ Boycotting Japanese goods was a method of struggle frequently used by the Chinese people against Japanese imperialist aggression in the first half of the 20th century, as in the patriotic May 4th Movement of 1919, after the September 18th Incident of 1931, and during the War of Resistance against Japan.

of anything, use their own heads and carefully think over whether or not it corresponds to reality and is really well founded; on no account should they follow blindly and encourage slavishness.

Finally, in opposing subjectivism, sectarianism, and stereotyped Party writing, we must have in mind two purposes: first, “learn from past mistakes to avoid future ones,” and second, “cure the sickness to save the patient.” The mistakes of the past must be exposed without sparing anyone’s sensibilities; it is necessary to analyze and criticize what was bad in the past with a scientific attitude so that work in the future will be done more carefully and done better. This is what is meant by “learn from past mistakes to avoid future ones.” But our aim in exposing errors and criticizing shortcomings, like that of a doctor curing a sickness, is solely to save the patient and not to doctor him to death. A person with appendicitis is saved when the surgeon removes his appendix. So long as a person who has made mistakes does not hide his sickness for fear of treatment or persist in his mistakes until he is beyond cure, so long as he honestly and sincerely wishes to be cured and to mend his ways, we should welcome him and cure his sickness so that he can become a good comrade. We can never succeed if we just let ourselves go, and lash out at him. In treating an ideological or a political malady, one must never be rough and rash but must adopt the approach of “curing the sickness to save the patient,” which is the only correct and effective method.

I have taken this occasion of the opening of the Party School to speak at length, and I hope comrades will think over what I have said. (*Enthusiastic applause.*)

OPPOSE STEREOTYPED PARTY WRITING²⁰

February 8, 1942

Comrade Kai Feng has just stated the purpose of today's meeting. I now want to discuss the ways subjectivism and sectarianism use stereotyped Party writing (or the Party "eight-legged essay")²¹ as their instrument of propaganda or form of expression. We are fighting against subjectivism and sectarianism, but they will still have a hiding place to lurk if at the same time we do not get rid of stereotyped Party writing. If we destroy that too, we shall "checkmate" subjectivism and sectarianism and make both these monsters show themselves in their true colors, and then we shall easily be able to annihilate them, like "rats running across the street with everyone yelling: Kill them! Kill them!"

It does not matter much if a person produces stereotyped Party writings only for himself to read. If he passes them on to someone else, the number of readers is doubled, and already no small harm is done. If he has them posted up, mimeographed, printed in newspapers, or published in book form, then the problem becomes indeed a big one, for they can influence many people. And those who produce stereotyped

²⁰ This speech was delivered by Mao Zedong at a cadres' meeting in Yanan.

²¹ For stereotyped Party writing, see the current compilation's "Rectify the Party's Style of Work," pp. 43–67. The text can also be found in *Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung*, by Mao Zedong, vol. III (Paris: Foreign Languages Press, 2021), 38, Note 1.

Party writing always seek large audiences. Thus it has become imperative to expose and destroy it.

Stereotyped Party writing is, moreover, one brand of the “foreign stereotype,” which was attacked by Lu Xun a long time ago.²² Why then do we call it the Party “eight-legged essay?” Because, besides its foreign flavor, it has some smell of native soil. Perhaps it too can be counted as creative work of a sort! Who says our people have not produced any creative works? Here is one! (*Loud laughter.*)

Stereotyped Party writing has a long history in our Party; particularly during the Agrarian Revolution, it sometimes became quite rampant.

Viewed historically, stereotyped Party writing is a reaction to the May 4th Movement.

During the May 4th Movement, modern-minded people opposed the use of the classical Chinese language and advocated vernacular Chinese, opposed

²² Opposition to stereotyped writing, whether old or new, runs all through Lu Xun's works. The foreign stereotype, developed after the May 4th Movement by some shallow bourgeois and petty-bourgeois intellectuals and disseminated by them, existed for a long time among revolutionary cultural workers. In a number of essays, Lu Xun fought against the foreign stereotype as found in their ranks and condemned it in these terms:

A clean sweep should be made of all stereotyped writings, whether old or new. . . . For instance, it is also a kind of stereotype if all one can do is to “hurl insults,” “threaten” or even “pass sentence” and merely copy old formulas and apply these indiscriminately to every fact, instead of specifically and concretely using formulas derived from science to interpret the new facts and phenomena which emerge every day. (“A Reply to Zhu Xiuxia's Letter,” appended to “Giving the Show Away.”)

the traditional dogmas and advocated science and democracy, all of which was quite right. The movement then was vigorous and lively, progressive and revolutionary. In those days the ruling classes indoctrinated students with Confucian teachings and compelled the people to venerate all the trappings of Confucianism as religious dogma, and all writers used the classical language. In short, what was written and taught by the ruling classes and their hangers-on was in the nature of stereotyped writing and dogma, both in content and in form. That was the old stereotype and the old dogma. A tremendous achievement of the May 4th Movement was its public exposure of the ugliness of the old stereotype and the old dogma and its call to the people to rise against them. Another great and related achievement was its fight against imperialism, but the struggle against the old stereotype and the old dogma remains one of the great achievements of the May 4th Movement. Later on, however, foreign stereotyped writing and foreign dogma came into being. Running counter to Marxism, certain people in our Party developed the foreign stereotype and dogma into subjectivism, sectarianism and stereotyped Party writing. These are the new stereotype and the new dogma. They have become so deeply ingrained in the minds of many comrades that today we still have a very strenuous job of remolding to do. Thus we see that the lively, vigorous, progressive, and revolutionary movement of the May 4th period which fought the old feudal stereotyped writing and dogma, was later turned by some

people into its very opposite, giving rise to the new stereotyped writing and dogma. The latter are not lively and vigorous but dead and stiff, not progressive but retrogressive, not revolutionary but obstacles to revolution. That is to say, the foreign stereotyped writing, or stereotyped Party writing, is a reaction to the original nature of the May 4th Movement. The May 4th Movement, however, had its own weaknesses. Many of the leaders lacked the critical spirit of Marxism, and the method they used was generally that of the bourgeoisie, that is, the formalist method. They were quite right in opposing the old stereotype and the old dogma and in advocating science and democracy. But in dealing with current conditions, with history, and with things foreign, they lacked the critical spirit of historical materialism and regarded what was bad as absolutely and wholly bad and what was good as absolutely and wholly good. This formalist approach to problems affected the subsequent course of the movement. In its development, the May 4th Movement divided into two currents. One section inherited its scientific and democratic spirit and transformed it on the basis of Marxism. This is what the Communists and some non-Party Marxists did. Another section took the road of the bourgeoisie. This was the development of formalism towards the Right. But within the Communist Party, too, the situation was not uniform. There, too, some members deviated and, lacking a firm grasp of Marxism, committed errors of formalism, namely, the errors of subjectivism, sectarianism, and stereotyped Party

writing. This was the development of formalism towards the “Left.” So it can be seen that stereotyped Party writing is no accident, but is, on the one hand, a reaction to the positive elements of the May 4th Movement and, on the other, a legacy, a continuation or development of its negative elements. It is useful for us to understand this point. Just as it was revolutionary and necessary to fight the old stereotyped writing and the old dogmatism during the period of the May 4th Movement, so it is revolutionary and necessary today for us to use Marxism to criticize the new stereotyped writing and the new dogmatism. If there had been no fight against the old stereotype and the old dogmatism during the May 4th period, the minds of the Chinese people would not have been freed from bondage to them, and China would have no hope of freedom and independence. This task was merely begun in the period of the May 4th Movement, and a very great effort—a huge job on the road of revolutionary remolding—is still necessary to enable the whole people to free themselves completely from the domination of the old stereotype and dogmatism. If today we do not oppose the new stereotyped writing and the new dogmatism, the minds of the Chinese people will be fettered by formalism of another kind. If we do not get rid of the poison of stereotyped Party writing and the error of dogmatism found among a section (only a section, of course) of Party comrades, then it will be impossible to arouse a vigorous and lively revolutionary spirit, to eradicate the bad habit of taking a wrong attitude

towards Marxism and to disseminate and develop true Marxism; furthermore, it will be impossible to conduct an energetic struggle against the influence of the old stereotyped writing and dogma among the whole people, and against that of foreign stereotyped among many of the people, and impossible to attain the purpose of demolishing and sweeping away these influences.

Subjectivism, sectarianism, and stereotyped Party writing—all three are anti-Marxist and meet the needs not of the proletariat but of the exploiting classes. They are a reflection of petty-bourgeois ideology in our Party. China is a country with a very large petty bourgeoisie and our Party is surrounded by this enormous class; a great number of our Party members come from this class, and when they join the Party, they inevitably drag in with them a petty-bourgeois tail, be it long or short. Unless checked and transformed, the fanaticism and one-sidedness of petty-bourgeois revolutionaries can easily engender subjectivism and sectarianism, of which foreign stereotyped writing, or stereotyped Party writing, is one form of expression.

It is not easy to clean out these things and sweep them away. It must be done properly, that is, by taking pains to reason with people. If we reason earnestly and properly, it will be effective. The first thing to do in this reasoning process is to give the patient a good shake-up by shouting at him, “You are ill!” so as to administer a shock and make him break out in a

sweat, and then to give him sincere advice on getting treatment.

Let us now analyze stereotyped Party writing and see where its evils lie. Using poison as an antidote to poison, we shall imitate the form of the stereotyped eight-section essay and set forth the following “eight legs,” which might be called the eight major indictments.

The first indictment against stereotyped Party writing is that it fills endless pages with empty verbiage. Some of our comrades love to write long articles with no substance, very much like the “foot-bindings of a harlot, long as well as smelly.” Why must they write such long and empty articles? There can be only one explanation; they are determined the masses shall not read them. Because the articles are long and empty, the masses shake their heads at the very sight of them. How can they be expected to read them? Such writings are good for nothing except to bluff the naive, among whom they spread bad influences and foster bad habits. On June 22 last year the Soviet Union began waging a gigantic war against aggression, and yet Stalin’s speech on July 3 was only the length of an editorial in our *Liberation Daily*. Had any of our gentlemen written that speech, just imagine! It would have run to tens of thousands of words at a minimum. We are in the midst of a war, and we should learn how to write shorter and pithier articles. Although there is as yet no fighting here in Yanan, our troops at the front are daily engaged in battle, and the people in the rear are busy at work. If articles

are too long, who will read them? Some comrades at the front, too, like to write long reports. They take pains over writing them and send them here for us to read. But who has the hardihood to read them? If long and empty articles are no good, are short and empty ones any better? They are no good either. We should forbid all empty talk. But the first and foremost task is to throw the long, smelly foot-bindings of the harlot into the dustbin. Some may ask, "Isn't *Capital* very long? What are we to do about that?" The answer is simple, just go on reading it. There is a proverb, "Sing different songs on different mountains." Another runs, "Fit the appetite to the dishes and the dress to the figure." Whatever we do must be done according to actual circumstances, and it is the same with writing articles and making speeches. What we oppose is long-winded and empty stereotyped writing, but we do not mean that everything must necessarily be short in order to be good. True, we need short articles in war time, but above all we need articles that have substance. Articles devoid of substance are the least justifiable and the most objectionable. The same applies to speechmaking; we must put an end to all empty, long-winded speeches.

The second indictment against stereotyped Party writing is that it strikes a pose in order to intimidate people. Some stereotyped Party writing is not only long and empty, but also pretentious with the deliberate intention of intimidating people; it carries the worst kind of poison. Writing long-winded and empty articles may be set down to immaturity,

but striking a pose to overawe people is not merely immature but downright unscrupulous. Lu Xun once said in criticism of such people, "Abuse and threats are not fighting."²³ What is scientific never fears criticism, for science is truth and fears no refutation. But those who write subjectivist and sectarian articles and speeches in the form of Party stereotypes fear refutation, are very cowardly, and therefore rely on pretentiousness to overawe others, believing that they can thereby silence people and "win the day." Such pretentiousness cannot reflect truth but is an obstacle to truth. Truth does not strike a pose to overawe people but talks and acts honestly and sincerely. Two terms used to appear in the articles and speeches of many comrades, one being "ruthless struggle" and the other "merciless blows." Measures of that kind are entirely necessary against the enemy or against enemy ideology, but to use them against our own comrades is wrong. It often happens that enemies and enemy ideology infiltrate into the Party, as is discussed in Item 4 of the Conclusion of the *History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks), Short Course*. Against these enemies, we must undoubtedly resort to ruthless struggle and merciless blows, because the scoundrels use these very measures against the Party; if we were tolerant of them, we should fall right into their trap. But the same measures should not be used against comrades

²³ "Abuse and Threats Are Not Fighting" was the title of an essay written in 1932 Lu Xun, *Selected Works*, trans. Yang Xianyi and Yang Gladys, vol. III (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1980), 197.

who occasionally make mistakes; to them we should apply the method of criticism and self-criticism, the method indicated in Item 5 of the Conclusion of the *History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks), Short Course*. The comrades who in the past loudly advocated “ruthless struggle” and “merciless blows” against comrades who occasionally made mistakes did so because, for one thing, they failed to make any analysis of the persons they were dealing with and, for another, they were striking a pose in an effort to intimidate. This method is no good, no matter whom you are dealing with. Against the enemy this tactic of intimidation is utterly useless, and with our own comrades it can only do harm. It is a tactic which the exploiting classes and the *lumpen*-proletariat habitually practice, but for which the proletariat has no use. For the proletariat the sharpest and most effective weapon is a serious and militant scientific attitude. The Communist Party lives by the truth of Marxism-Leninism, by seeking truth from facts, by science, and not by intimidating people. Needless to say, the idea of attaining fame and position for oneself by pretentiousness is even more contemptible. In short, when organizations make decisions and issue instructions and when comrades write articles and make speeches, they must without exception depend on Marxist-Leninist truth and seek to serve a useful purpose. This is the only basis on which victory in the revolution can be achieved; all else is of no avail.

The third indictment against stereotyped Party writing is that it shoots at random, without consider-

ing the audience. A few years ago a slogan appeared on the Yanan city wall which read, "Working men and peasants, unite and strive for victory in the War of Resistance Against Japan!" The idea of the slogan was not at all bad, but the character "工" [*gong*, meaning working] in "工人" [*gong ren*, meaning working men], was written as "𠂇" with its perpendicular stroke twisted into a zigzag. How about the character "人" [*ren*, meaning men]? It became "𠂇," with three slanting strokes added to its right leg. The comrade who wrote this was no doubt a disciple of the ancient scholars, but it is rather baffling why he should have written such characters in such a place, on the Yanan city wall, at the time of the War of Resistance. Perhaps he had taken a vow that the common people should not read them; it is difficult to explain otherwise. Communists who really want to do propaganda must consider their audience and bear in mind those who will read their articles and slogans or listen to their speeches and their talk—otherwise they are in effect resolving not to be read or listened to by anyone. Many people often take it for granted that what they write and say can be easily understood by everybody, when it is not so at all. How can people understand them when they write and speak in Party stereotypes? The saying "to play the lute to a cow" implies a gibe at the audience. If we substitute the idea of respect for the audience, the gibe is turned against the player. Why should he strum away without considering his audience? What is worse, he is producing a Party stereotype as rau-

cous as a crow, and yet he insists on cawing at the masses. When shooting an arrow, one must aim at the target; when playing the lute, one must consider the listener; how, then, can one write articles or make speeches without taking the reader or the audience into account? Suppose we want to make friends with a person, whoever he may be. Can we become bosom friends if we do not understand each other's hearts, do not know each other's thoughts? It simply will not do for our propaganda workers to rattle on without investigating, studying, and analyzing their audience.

The fourth indictment against stereotyped Party writing is its drab language that reminds one of a *biesan*.²⁴ Like our stereotyped Party writing, the creatures known in Shanghai as "little *biesan*" are wizened and ugly. If an article or a speech merely rings the changes on a few terms in a classroom tone without a shred of vigor or spirit, is it not rather like a *biesan*, drab of speech and repulsive in appearance? If someone enters primary school at seven, goes to middle school in his teens, graduates from college in his twenties and never has contact with the masses of the people, he is not to blame if his language is poor and monotonous. But we are revolutionaries working for the masses, and if we do not learn the language of the masses, we cannot work well. At present many of our comrades doing propaganda work make no study of language. Their propaganda is very dull, and few people care to read their articles or listen to their talk.

²⁴ A tramp or beggar.—Ed.

Why do we need to study language and, what is more, spend much effort on it? Because the mastery of language is not easy and requires painstaking effort. First, let us learn language from the masses. The people's vocabulary is rich, vigorous, vivid and expressive of real life. It is because many of us have not mastered language that our articles and speeches contain few vigorous, vivid and effective expressions and resemble not a hale and healthy person, but an emaciated *biesan*, a mere bag of bones. Secondly, let us absorb what we need from foreign languages. We should not import foreign expressions mechanically or use them indiscriminately, but should absorb what is good and suits our needs. Our current vocabulary has already incorporated many foreign expressions, because the old Chinese vocabulary was inadequate. For instance, today we are holding a meeting of *ganbu* [cadres], and the term *ganbu* is derived from a foreign word. We should continue to absorb many fresh things from abroad, not only progressive ideas but new expressions as well. Thirdly, let us also learn whatever is alive in the classical Chinese language. Since we have not studied classical Chinese hard enough, we have not made full and proper use of much that is still alive in it. Of course, we are resolutely opposed to the use of obsolete expressions or allusions, and that is final; but what is good and still useful should be taken over. Those who are badly infected by stereotyped Party writing do not take pains to study what is useful in the language of the people, in foreign languages, or in classical Chinese,

so the masses do not welcome their dry and dull propaganda, and we too have no need for such poor and incompetent propagandists. Who are our propagandists? They include not only teachers, journalists, writers and artists, but all our cadres. Take the military commanders, for instance. Though they make no public statements, they have to talk to the soldiers and have dealings with the people. What is this if not propaganda? Whenever a man speaks to others, he is doing propaganda work. Unless he is dumb, he always has a few words to say. It is therefore imperative that our comrades should all study language.

The fifth indictment against stereotyped Party writing is that it arranges items under a complicated set of headings, as if starting a Chinese pharmacy. Go and take a look at any Chinese pharmacy, and you will see cabinets with numerous drawers, each bearing the name of a herb—*danggui*,²⁵ *shudi*,²⁶ *dahuang*,²⁷ *mangxiao*²⁸ . . . indeed, everything that should be there. This method has been picked up by our comrades. In their articles and speeches, their books and reports, they use first the big Chinese numerals, second the small Chinese numerals, third the characters for the ten celestial stems, fourth the characters for the twelve earthly branches, and then capital A, B, C, D, then small a, b, c, d, followed by the Arabic numerals, and what not! How fortunate that the ancients and the foreigners created all these symbols

²⁵ *Angelica sinensis*—Ed.

²⁶ *Rehmannia*—Ed.

²⁷ *Rhubarb*—Ed.

²⁸ *Mirabilite*—Ed.

for us so that we can start a Chinese pharmacy without the slightest effort. For all its verbiage, an article that bristles with such symbols, that does not pose, analyze, or solve problems and that does not take a stand for or against anything is devoid of real content and nothing but a Chinese pharmacy. I am not saying that such symbols as the ten celestial stems, etc., should not be used, but that this kind of approach to problems is wrong. The method borrowed from the Chinese pharmacy, which many of our comrades are very fond of, is really the most crude, infantile, and philistine of all. It is a formalist method, classifying things according to their external features instead of their internal relations. If one takes a conglomeration of concepts that are not internally related and arranges them into an article, speech, or report simply according to the external features of things, then one is juggling with concepts and may also lead others to indulge in the same sort of game, with the result that they do not use their brains to think over problems and probe into the essence of things, but are satisfied merely to list phenomena in ABCD order. What is a problem? A problem is the contradiction in a thing. Where one has an unresolved contradiction, there, one has a problem. Since there is a problem, you have to be for one side and against the other, and you have to pose the problem. To pose the problem, you must first make a preliminary investigation and study of the two basic aspects of the problem or contradiction before you can understand the nature of the contradiction. This is the process of

discovering the problem. Preliminary investigation and study can discover the problem, can pose the problem, but cannot as yet solve it. In order to solve the problem, it is necessary to make a systematic and thorough investigation and study. This is the process of analysis. In posing the problem too, analysis is needed; otherwise, faced with a chaotic and bewildering mass of phenomena, you will not be able to discern where the problem or contradiction lies. But here, by the process of analysis we mean a process of systematic and thorough analysis. It often happens that although a problem has been posed, it cannot be solved because the internal relations of things have not yet been revealed, because this process of systematic and thorough analysis has not yet been carried out. Consequently, we still cannot see the contours of the problem clearly, cannot make a synthesis, and so cannot solve the problem well. If an article or speech is important and meant to give guidance, it ought to pose a particular problem, then analyze it, and then make a synthesis pointing to the nature of the problem and providing the method for solving it; in all this, formalist methods are useless. Since infantile, crude, philistine, and lazy-minded formalist methods are prevalent in our Party, we must expose them; only thus can everybody learn to use the Marxist method to observe, pose, analyze, and solve problems; only thus can we do our work well and only thus can our revolutionary cause triumph.

The sixth indictment against stereotyped Party writing is that it is irresponsible and harms people

wherever it appears. All the offenses mentioned above are due partly to immaturity and partly to an insufficient sense of responsibility. Let us take washing the face to illustrate the point. We all wash our faces every day, many of us more than once, and inspect ourselves in the mirror afterwards by way of “investigation and study” (*loud laughter*), for fear that something may not be quite right. What a great sense of responsibility! If we wrote articles and made speeches with the same sense of responsibility, we would not be doing badly. Do not present what is not presentable. Always bear in mind that it may influence the thoughts and actions of others. If a man happens not to wash his face for a day or two, that of course is not good, and if after washing he leaves a smudge or two, that too is not so pleasing, but there is no serious danger. It is different with writing articles or making speeches; they are intended solely to influence others. Yet our comrades go about this task casually—this means putting the trivial above the important. Many people write articles and make speeches without prior study or preparation, and after writing an article, they do not bother to go over it several times in the same way as they would examine their faces in the mirror after washing, but instead offhandedly send it to be published. Often the result is “A thousand words from the pen in a stream, but ten thousand *li* away from the theme.” Talented though these writers may appear, they actually harm people. This bad habit, this weak sense of responsibility, must be corrected.

The seventh indictment against stereotyped Party writing is that it poisons the whole Party and jeopardizes the revolution. The eighth indictment is that its spread would wreck the country and ruin the people. These two indictments are self-evident and require no elaboration. In other words, if stereotyped Party writing is not transformed but is allowed to develop unchecked, the consequences will be very serious indeed. The poison of subjectivism and sectarianism is hidden in stereotyped Party writing, and if this poison spreads it will endanger both the Party and the country.

The aforesaid eight counts are our call to arms against stereotyped Party writing.

As a form, the Party stereotype is not only unsuitable for expressing the revolutionary spirit but is apt to stifle it. To develop the revolutionary spirit it is necessary to discard stereotyped Party writing and instead to adopt the Marxist-Leninist style of writing, which is vigorous, lively, fresh, and forceful. This style of writing has existed for a long time, but is yet to be enriched and spread widely among us. When we have destroyed foreign stereotyped writing and stereotyped Party writing, we can enrich our new style of writing and spread it widely, thereby advancing the Party's revolutionary cause.

The Party stereotype is not only confined to articles and speeches, but is also found in the conduct of meetings. "1. Opening announcement; 2. report; 3. discussion; 4. conclusions; and 5. adjournment." If this rigid procedure is followed at every meeting,

large or small, everywhere and every time, is not that another Party stereotype? When “reports” are made at meetings they often go as follows: “1. the international situation; 2. the domestic situation; 3. the Border Region; and 4. our own department”; and the meetings often last from morning till night, with even those having nothing to say taking the floor, as though they would let the others down unless they spoke. In short, there is a disregard for actual conditions and deadly adherence to rigid old forms and habits. Should we not correct all these things too?

Nowadays many people are calling for a transformation to a national, scientific, and mass style. That is very good. But “transformation” means thorough change, from top to bottom and inside out. Yet some people who have not made even a slight change are calling for a transformation. I would therefore advise these comrades to begin by making just a little change before they go on to “transform,” or else they will remain entangled in dogmatism and stereotyped Party writing. This can be described as having grandiose aims but puny abilities, great ambition but little talent, and it will accomplish nothing. So whoever talks glibly about “transformation to a mass style” while in fact he is stuck fast in his own small circle, had better watch out, or someday one of the masses may bump into him along the road and say, “What about all this ‘transformation,’ sir? Can I see a bit of it, please?” and he will be in a fix. If he is not just blabbering but sincerely wants to transform to a mass

style, he must really go among the common people and learn from them, otherwise his “transformation” will remain up in the air. There are some who keep clamoring for transformation to a mass style but cannot speak three sentences in the language of the common people. It shows they are not really determined to learn from the masses. Their minds are still confined to their own small circles.

At this meeting, copies of *A Guide to Propaganda*, a pamphlet containing four articles, have been distributed, and I advise our comrades to read and re-read it.

The first piece, composed of excerpts from the *History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks), Short Course*, deals with the way Lenin did propaganda work. It describes, among other things, how Lenin wrote leaflets:

Under Lenin’s guidance, the St. Petersburg League of Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Class was the first body in Russia that began to *unite Socialism with the working-class movement*. When a strike broke out in some factory, the League of Struggle, which through the members of its circles was kept well posted on the state of affairs in the factories, immediately responded by issuing leaflets and Socialist proclamations. These leaflets exposed the oppression of the workers by the manufacturers, explained how the workers should fight for their interests, and set forth the workers’ demands. The

leaflets told the plain truth about the ulcers of capitalism, the poverty of the workers, their intolerably hard working day of 12 to 14 hours, and their utter lack of rights. They also put forward appropriate political demands.

Take note, “well posted” and “told the plain truth!” Again:

With the collaboration of the worker Babushkin, Lenin at the end of 1894 wrote the first agitational leaflet of this kind and an appeal to the workers of the Semyannikov Works in St. Petersburg who were on strike.

To write a leaflet, you must consult with comrades who are well posted on the state of affairs. It was on the basis of such investigation and study that Lenin wrote and worked.

Every leaflet greatly helped to stiffen the spirit of the workers. They saw that the Socialists were helping and defending them.²⁹

Do we agree with Lenin? If we do, we must work in the spirit of Lenin. That is, we must do as Lenin did and not fill endless pages with verbiage, or shoot at random without considering the audience, or become self-opinionated and bombastic.

The second piece is composed of excerpts from Dimitrov’s statements at the Seventh World Con-

²⁹ See *History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks), Short Course* (Paris: Foreign Languages Press, 2020), 30–31.

gress of the Communist International. What did Dimitrov say? He said:

We must learn to talk to the masses, not in the language of book formulas, but in the language of fighters for the cause of the masses, whose every word, whose every idea reflects the innermost thoughts and sentiments of millions.³⁰

And again:

The masses cannot assimilate our decisions unless we learn to speak the language which the masses understand. We do not always know how to speak simply, concretely, in images which are familiar and intelligible to the masses. We are still unable to refrain from abstract formulas which we have learned by rote. As a matter of fact, if you look through our leaflets, newspapers, resolutions and theses, you will find that they are often written in a language and style so heavy that they are difficult for even our Party functionaries to understand, let alone the rank-and-file workers.³¹

Well? Does not Dimitrov put his finger on our weak spot? Apparently, stereotyped Party writing exists in foreign countries as well as in China, so you can see it is a common disease. (*Laughter.*) In

³⁰ George Dimitrov, *The Fascist Offensive and Unity of the Working Class* (Paris: Foreign Languages Press, 2020), 86–87.

³¹ Dimitrov, 103.

any case, we should cure our own disease quickly in accordance with Comrade Dimitrov's injunction.

Every one of us must make this a law, a Bolshevik law, an elementary rule:

*When writing or speaking always have in mind the rank-and-file worker who must understand you, must believe in your appeal and be ready to follow you! You must have in mind those for whom you rewrite, to whom you speak.*³²

This is the prescription made out for us by the Communist International, a prescription that must be followed. Let it be a *law* for us!

The third article, selected from the *Complete Works of Lu Xun*, is the author's reply to the magazine *The Dipper*,³³ discussing how to write. What did Lu Xun say? Altogether he set forth eight rules of writing, some of which I shall pick out for comment here.

Rule 1: "Pay close attention to all manner of things; observe more, and if you have observed only a little, then do not write."

What he says is, "pay close attention to all manner of things," not just to one thing or half a thing. He says "observe more," not just take a look or half a look. How about us? Don't we often do exactly the opposite and write after having observed only a little?

³² Dimitrov, 105.

³³ *The Dipper* was a monthly published in 1931 and 1932 by the League of Chinese Left-Wing Writers. "In Reply to the Question Put by *The Dipper*" is included in the collection *Two Hearts* (Lu, *Selected Works*, III:162).

Rule 2: “Do not force yourself to write when you have nothing to say.”

What about us? Don't we often force ourselves to write a great deal when it is all too clear that there is nothing in our heads? It is sheer irresponsibility to pick up the pen and “force ourselves to write” without investigation or study.

Rule 4: “After writing something, read it over twice at least, and do your utmost to strike out nonessential words, sentences, and paragraphs, without the slightest compunction. Rather condense the material for a novel into a sketch, never spin out the material for a sketch into a novel.”

Confucius advised, “Think twice,”³⁴ and Han Yu said, “A deed is accomplished through taking thought.”³⁵ That was in ancient times. Today matters have become very complicated, and sometimes it is not even enough to think them over three or four times. Lu Xun said, “Read it over twice at least.” And at most? He did not say, but in my opinion it does no harm to go over an important article more than ten times and to revise it conscientiously before it is published. Articles are the reflection of objective reality, which is intricate and complex and must be studied over and over again before it can be properly

³⁴ From *Confucian Analects*, Book V, “Gongye Chang.”

³⁵ Han Yu (768–824) was a famous Chinese writer of the Tang Dynasty. In his essay “The Scholar’s Apologia,” he wrote, “A deed is accomplished through taking thought and fails through lack of thought.”

reflected; to be slipshod in this respect is to be ignorant of the rudiments of writing.

Rule 6: “Do not coin adjectives or other terms that are intelligible to nobody but yourself.”

We have “coined” too many expressions that are “intelligible to nobody.” Sometimes a single clause runs to forty or fifty words and is packed with “adjectives or other terms that are intelligible to nobody.” Many who never tire of professing to follow Lu Xun are the very ones who turn their backs on him!

The last piece is taken from the report on how to develop a national style of propaganda, which was adopted at the Sixth Plenary Session of the Sixth Central Committee of the Communist Party of China. At that session held in 1938, we said that “any talk about Marxism apart from China’s specific characteristics is only Marxism in the abstract, Marxism in a vacuum.” That is to say, we must oppose all empty talk about Marxism, and Communists living in China must study Marxism by linking it with the realities of the Chinese revolution.

The report said:

Foreign stereotypes must be abolished, there must be less singing of empty, abstract tunes, and dogmatism must be laid to rest; they must be replaced by the fresh, lively Chinese style and spirit which the common people of China love. To separate internationalist content from national form is the practice of those who do not understand the first

thing about internationalism. We, on the contrary, must link the two closely. In this matter there are serious errors in our ranks which should be conscientiously overcome.

The abolition of foreign stereotypes was demanded in that report, yet some comrades are still promoting them. Less singing of empty, abstract tunes was demanded, yet some comrades are obstinately singing more. The demand was made that dogmatism be laid to rest, yet some comrades are telling it to get out of bed. In short, many people have let this report which was adopted at the Sixth Plenary Session go in one ear and out of the other, as if willfully opposed to it.

The Central Committee has now made the decision that we must discard stereotyped Party writing, dogmatism, and the like once and for all, and that is why I have come and talked at some length. I hope that comrades will think over and analyze what I have said and that each comrade will also analyze his own particular case. Everyone should carefully examine himself, talk over with his close friends and the comrades around him whatever he has clarified and really get rid of his own defects.

SOME QUESTIONS CONCERNING METHODS OF LEADERSHIP³⁶

June 1, 1943

1. There are two methods which we Communists must employ in whatever work we do. One is to combine the general with the particular; the other is to combine the leadership with the masses.

2. In any task, if no general and widespread call is issued, the broad masses cannot be mobilized for action. But if persons in leading positions confine themselves to a general call—if they do not personally, in some of the organizations, go deeply and concretely into the work called for, make a breakthrough at some single point, gain experience, and use this experience for guiding other units—then they will have no way of testing the correctness or of enriching the content of their general call, and there is the danger that nothing may come of it. In the rectification movement of 1942, for example, there were achievements wherever the method of combining the general call with particular and specific guidance was used, but there were no achievements wherever this method was not used. In the rectification movement of 1943, each bureau and sub-bureau of the Central Committee and each area and prefectural Party committee, in addition to making a general call (a rectifi-

³⁶ This decision on methods of leadership was written by Mao Zedong for the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China.

cation plan for the whole year), must do the following things, gaining experience in the process. Select two or three units (but not too many) from the organization itself and from other organizations, schools, or army units in the vicinity. Make a thorough study of those units, acquire a detailed knowledge of the development of the rectification movement in them, and a detailed knowledge of the political history, the ideological characteristics, the zeal in study, and the strong and weak points in the work of some (again not too many) representative members of their personnel. Furthermore, give personal guidance to those in charge to find concrete solutions for the practical problems facing those units. The leaders in every organization, school, or army unit must do likewise, as each of these has a number of subordinate units. Moreover, this is the method by which the leaders combine leading and learning. No one in a leading position is competent to give general guidance to all the units unless he derives concrete experience from particular individuals and events in particular subordinate units. This method must be promoted everywhere so that leading cadres at all levels learn to apply it.

3. Experience in the 1942 rectification movement also proves it is essential for the success of the rectification that a leading group should be formed in each unit in the course of the movement made up of a small number of activists and with the heads of the given unit as its nucleus, and that this leading group should link itself closely with the masses taking part

in the movement. However active the leading group may be, its activity will amount to fruitless effort by a handful of people unless combined with the activity of the masses. On the other hand, if the masses alone are active without a strong leading group to organize their activity properly, such activity cannot be sustained for long, or carried forward in the right direction, or raised to a high level. The masses in any given place are generally composed of three parts, the relatively active, the intermediate, and the relatively backward. The leaders must therefore be skilled in uniting the small number of active elements around the leadership and must rely on them to raise the level of the intermediate element and to win over the backward elements. A leading group that is genuinely united and linked with the masses can be formed only gradually in the process of mass struggle and not in isolation from it. In the process of a great struggle, the composition of the leading group in most cases should not and cannot remain entirely unchanged throughout the initial, middle, and final stages; the activists who come forward in the course of the struggle must constantly be promoted to replace those original members of the leading group who are inferior by comparison or who have degenerated. One fundamental reason why the work in many places and many organizations cannot be pushed ahead is the lack of a leading group that is united, linked with the masses, and kept constantly healthy. A school of a hundred people certainly cannot be run well if it does not have a leading group of

several people—or a dozen or more, which is formed in accordance with the actual circumstances (and not thrown together artificially) and is composed of the most active, upright, and alert of the teachers, the other staff, and the students. In every organization, school, army unit, factory, or village, whether large or small, we should give effect to the ninth of Stalin's twelve conditions for the bolshevization of the Party, namely, that on the establishment of a nucleus of leadership.³⁷ The criteria for such a leading group should be the four which Dimitrov enumerated in his discussion of cadres policy—absolute devotion to the cause, contact with the masses, ability independently to find one's bearings, and observance of discipline.³⁸ Whether in carrying out the central tasks—war, production, education (including rectification)—or in checking up on work, examining the cadres' histories, or in other activities, it is necessary to adopt the method of linking the leading group with the masses, in addition to that of linking the general call with particular guidance.

4. In all the practical work of our Party, all correct leadership is necessarily “from the masses, to the masses.” This means: take the ideas of the masses (scattered and unsystematic ideas) and concentrate them (through study turn them into concentrated

³⁷ See “The Prospects of the Communist Party of Germany and the Question of Bolshevization,” in *Collected Works*, by Joseph Stalin, vol. VII (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1954), 39.

³⁸ Dimitrov, *The Fascist Offensive and Unity of the Working Class*, 108–109.

and systematic ideas), then go to the masses and propagate and explain these ideas until the masses embrace them as their own, hold fast to them and translate them into action, and test the correctness of these ideas in such action. Then once again concentrate ideas from the masses and once again go to the masses so that the ideas are persevered in and carried through. And so on, over and over again in an endless spiral, with the ideas becoming more correct, more vital and richer each time. Such is the Marxist theory of knowledge.

5. The concept of a correct relationship between the leading group and the masses in an organization or in a struggle, the concept that correct ideas on the part of the leadership can only be “from the masses, to the masses,” and the concept that the general call must be combined with particular guidance when the leadership’s ideas are being put into practice—these concepts must be propagated everywhere during the present rectification movement in order to correct the mistaken viewpoints among our cadres on these questions. Many comrades do not see the importance of, or are not good at, drawing together the activists to form a nucleus of leadership, and they do not see the importance of, or are not good at linking this nucleus of leadership closely with the masses, and so their leadership becomes bureaucratic and divorced from the masses. Many comrades do not see the importance of, or are not good at summing up the experience of mass struggles, but fancying themselves clever,

are fond of voicing their subjectivist ideas, and so their ideas become empty and impractical. Many comrades rest content with making a general call with regard to a task and do not see the importance of, or are not good at following it up immediately with particular and concrete guidance, and so their call remains on their lips, or on paper or in the conference room, and their leadership becomes bureaucratic. In the present rectification movement we must correct these defects and learn to use the methods of combining the leadership with the masses and the general with the particular in our study, in the checkup on work and in the examination of cadres' histories, and we must also apply these methods in all our future work.

6. Take the ideas of the masses and concentrate them, then got to the masses, persevere in the ideas and carry them through, so as to form correct ideas of leadership—such is the basic method of leadership. In the process of concentrating ideas and persevering in them, it is necessary to use the method of combining the general call with particular guidance, and this is a component part of the basic method. Formulate general ideas (general calls) out of the particular guidance given in a number of cases, and put them to the test in many different units (not only doing so yourself, but by telling others to do the same); then concentrate the new experience (sum it up) and draw up new directives for the guidance of the masses generally. Comrades should do this in the present rectification movement, and also in every other kind of

work. Better leadership comes with greater skill in doing this.

7. In relaying to subordinate units any task (whether it concerns the revolutionary war, production, or education; the rectification movement, checkup on work or the examination of cadres' histories; propaganda work, organizational work or anti-espionage, or other work), a higher organization and its departments should in all cases go through the leader of the lower organization concerned so that he may assume responsibility; in this way both division of labor and unified centralized leadership are achieved. A department at a higher level should not go solely to its counterpart at the lower level (for instance, a higher department concerned with organization, propaganda, or anti-espionage should not go solely to the corresponding department at the lower level), leaving the person in overall charge of the lower organization (such as the secretary, the chairman, the director, or the school principal) in ignorance or without responsibility. Both the person in overall charge and the person with specific responsibility should be informed and given responsibility. This centralized method, combining division of labor with unified leadership makes it possible, through the person with overall responsibility, to mobilize a large number of cadres—on occasion even an organization's entire personnel—to carry out a particular task, and thus to overcome shortages of cadres in individual departments and turn a good number of people into active cadres for the work in

hand. This, too, is a way of combining the leadership with the masses. Take, for instance, the examining of cadres' histories. If the job is done in isolation, if it is done only by the few people in the organization department in charge of such work, it certainly cannot be done well. But if it is done through the administrative head of a particular organization or school, who mobilizes many or even all of his staff, or many or even all of his students, to take part in the work, while at the same time the leading members of the organization department at the higher level give correct guidance, applying the principle of linking the leadership with the masses, then undoubtedly the task of examining the cadres' histories will be satisfactorily accomplished.

8. In any given place, there cannot be a number of central tasks at the same time. At any one time there can be only one central task, supplemented by other tasks of a second or third order of importance. Consequently, the person with overall responsibility in the locality must take into account the history and circumstances of the struggle there and put the different tasks in their proper order; he should not act upon each instruction as it comes from the higher organization without any planning of his own, and thereby create a multitude of "central tasks" and a state of confusion and disorder. Nor should a higher organization simultaneously assign many tasks to a lower organization without indicating their relative importance and urgency or without specifying which is central, for that will lead to confusion in the steps

to be taken by the lower organizations in their work, and thus no definite results will be achieved. It is part of the art of leadership to take the whole situation into account and plan accordingly in light of the historical conditions and existing circumstances of each locality, decide correctly on the center of gravity and the sequence of the work for each period, steadfastly carry through the decision, and make sure that definite results are achieved. This is also a problem of method of leadership, and care must be taken to solve it when applying the principles of combining the leadership with the masses and the general with the particular.

9. Details concerning methods of leadership are not dealt with here; it is hoped that comrades in all localities will themselves do some hard thinking and give full play to their own creativeness on the basis of the principles here set forth. The harder the struggle, the greater the need for Communists to link their leadership closely with the demands of the vast masses, and to combine general calls closely with particular guidance, so as to smash the subjectivist and bureaucratic methods of leadership completely. All the leading comrades of our Party must at all times counterpose scientific, Marxist methods of leadership to subjectivist, bureaucratic methods of leadership, and use the former to overcome the latter. Subjectivists and bureaucrats do not understand the principles of combining the leadership with the masses and the general with the particular; they greatly impede the development of the work of the Party. To com-

bat subjectivist and bureaucratic methods of leadership, we must promote scientific, Marxist methods of leadership both extensively and intensively.

GET ORGANIZED!³⁹*November 29, 1943*

On behalf of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, I would like to say a few words at this reception it is giving for the labor heroes and heroines and other model workers in production elected from the villages, the factories, the armed forces, the government and other organizations, and the schools in the Shaanxi-Gansu-Ningxia Border Region. What I want to say can be summed up in the words, "Get organized!" This year the peasant masses and the people in the army, the government and other organizations, the schools and the factories of the Border Region have been conducting a production campaign in accordance with the resolutions of the meeting of senior cadres convened last winter by the Northwest Bureau of the Central Committee. Great achievements and advances have been scored in every field of production this year and the Border Region has taken on a new look. Facts have fully borne out the correctness of the policy adopted by the conference of senior cadres. The gist of this policy is to organize the masses, to mobilize and organize into a great army of labor all the available forces without exception—the people, the army, the government, and other organizations and the schools—all men and women, young and old, who can contribute their labor power on

³⁹ Mao Zedong made this speech at a reception in honor of the labor heroes of the Shaanxi-Gansu-Ningxia Border Region.

a part-time or full-time basis. We have an army for fighting as well as an army for labor. For fighting we have the Eighth Route and New Fourth Armies—but even they do a dual job, warfare and production. With these two kinds of armies, and with a fighting army skilled in these two tasks and in mass work, we can overcome our difficulties and defeat Japanese imperialism. If the achievements of our production campaign in the Border Region in recent years were not great or remarkable enough to prove this conclusively, our achievements this year have really done so, as we have all seen with our own eyes.

In all the armed units of the Border Region that have been allotted land this year, the soldiers have on the average cultivated eighteen *mou* per person, and they can produce or make practically everything—food (vegetables, meat, and cooking oil), clothing (cotton-padded clothes, woolen knitwear, and footwear), shelter (cave dwellings, houses, and meeting halls), articles of daily use (tables, chairs, benches, and stationery), and fuel (firewood, charcoal, and coal). By using our own hands we have attained the objective of “ample food and clothing.” Every soldier needs to spend only three months of the year in production and can devote the remaining nine months to training and fighting. Our troops depend for their pay neither on the Kuomintang government, nor on the Border Region Government, nor on the people, but can fully provide for themselves. What a vitally important innovation for our cause of national liberation! During the last six and a half years of the War

of Resistance, the anti-Japanese base areas have been subjected to the enemy's policy of "burn all, kill all, loot all," the Shaanxi-Gansu-Ningxia Border Region has been tightly blockaded by the Kuomintang, and we were reduced to the direst straits financially and economically. If our troops had been able to do nothing except fight, we would never have solved our problems. Now our troops in the Border Region have learned to produce, and so have some of the troops at the front, while others are learning. If every man in our heroic and combat-worthy Eighth Route and New Fourth Armies becomes able not only to fight and do mass work but also to produce, we need fear no difficulty and shall be "invincible under heaven,"⁴⁰ to use the words of Mencius. Our organizations and schools have also taken a big step forward this year. Only a small part of their expenditure has come from the government, most of it being covered by their own production; they have grown 100 percent of the vegetables they consume as compared with 50 percent last year, considerably increased their consumption of meat by raising pigs and sheep, and established many workshops for making simple necessities. As the army, the organizations, and the schools now meet their own material needs fully or for the most part, less is taken in taxation from the people, who can therefore enjoy more of the fruits of their labor. As soldiers and civilians alike are increasing production, all have ample food and clothing and

⁴⁰ From *Mencius*, Book III, "Gongsun Chou," Part I, Chapter 5.

are happy. In our factories, too, production has been stepped up, secret agents have been combed out, and productivity has risen greatly. Throughout the Border Region, labor heroes have come forward in great numbers in agriculture and industry, in the organizations and the schools, and also in the army; we can say that production in the Border Region has been set on the right path. All this comes from organizing the strength of the masses.

To organize the strength of the masses is one policy. Is there a contrary policy? Yes, there is. It is one that lacks the mass viewpoint, fails to rely on the masses or organize them, and gives exclusive attention to organizing the small number of people working in the financial, supply, or trading organizations, while paying no attention to organizing the masses in the villages, the army, the government and other organizations, the schools and factories; it treats economic work not as a broad movement or as an extensive front, but only as an expedient for meeting financial deficits. That is the other policy, the wrong policy. Such a policy formerly existed in the Shaanxi-Gansu-Ningxia Border Region, but after the correct guidance given over these years, and especially after the senior cadres' conference last year and the mass movement this year, the number of people who still think this way is probably small. In the base areas in northern and central China, where fighting is intense and the leading bodies have not given it enough attention, the production campaign of the masses has not yet become widespread. However, since the

Central Committee's directive of October 1⁴¹ this year, preparations are being made everywhere for a production campaign next year. Conditions at the front are more difficult than in the Border Region; not only is there heavy fighting, but natural disasters have occurred in some places. Nevertheless, we must mobilize the entire Party, the government and the army and the civilian population both to fight against the enemy and to engage in production in order to support the war, to cope with the enemy's policy of "burn all, kill all, loot all," and to provide disaster relief. With the experience already gained in the last few years in production at the front and with the ideological, organizational, and material preparations this winter, an extensive campaign can and must be launched next year. In the frontline areas where fighting is going on, it is not yet possible to have "ample food and clothing" but quite possible and, indeed, imperative to "use our own hands and overcome difficulties."

The cooperatives are now the most important form of mass organization in the economic field. Although it is unnecessary to insist on attaching the label cooperative to the productive activities of the masses in our army, our government and other organizations, and our schools, these activities are of a

⁴¹ The Central Committee's directive of October 1 was "Spread the Campaigns to Reduce Rent, Increase Production, and 'Support the Government and Cherish the People' in the Base Areas," in *Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung*, by Mao Zedong, vol. III (Paris: Foreign Languages Press, 2021), 119–23.

cooperative nature, being carried on under centralized leadership to meet the material needs of various departments, units, and individuals through mutual help and joint labor. They are cooperatives of a sort.

Among the peasant masses, a system of individual economy has prevailed for thousands of years, with each family or household forming a productive unit. This scattered, individual form of production is the economic foundation of feudal rule and keeps the peasants in perpetual poverty. The only way to change it is gradual collectivization, and the only way to bring about collectivization, according to Lenin, is through cooperatives.⁴² We have already organized many peasant cooperatives in the Border Region, but at present they are only of a rudimentary type and must go through several stages of development before they can become cooperatives of the Soviet type known as collective farms. Ours is a new-democratic economy, and our cooperatives are still organizations for collective labor based on an individual economy (on private property). Furthermore, they are of several types. One type is the organization of agricultural labor for mutual aid, such as the “teams for the exchange of labor” and “teams for the exchange and hire of labor”;⁴³ this

⁴² See “On Cooperation,” in *Collected Works*, by V. I. Lenin, vol. 33 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1973).

⁴³ “Teams for the exchange of labor” and “teams for the exchange and hire of labor” were both labor organizations for collective mutual aid in agriculture in the Shaanxi-Gansu-Ningxia Border Region. Labor-exchange is a means by which the peasants adjust labor power among themselves. Man-workdays were exchanged for man-workdays, ox-work-

kind of organization was known as the “mutual-aid working group” or “plowing team”⁴⁴ in the Red areas in Jiangxi and is now called the “mutual-aid group” in some places at the front. So long as they are collective mutual-aid organizations which the people join voluntarily (compulsion must never be used), all of them are good, no matter how they are named, no matter whether they are each composed of a few, a few dozen, or hundreds of people, or whether they are composed entirely or partly of people who can contribute full-time labor; no matter whether the members render each other mutual aid in terms of

days for ox-workdays, man-workdays for ox-workdays etc. Peasants who joined labor-exchange teams contributed their labor power or animal power to cultivate the land of each member-family collectively and in rotation. In settling accounts, the workday was taken as the unit of exchange those who contributed more man-workdays or animal-workdays were paid for the difference by those who contributed less. “Teams for the exchange and hire of labor” were usually formed by peasants with insufficient land. Besides exchanging work among themselves for mutual aid, their members also hired themselves out collectively to families which were short of labor power.

⁴⁴ Mutual-aid working groups and plowing teams, based on individual farming, were formed by peasants in the Red areas to facilitate production through a better organization of labor power. On the principle of voluntary participation and mutual benefit, the members did an equal amount of work for each other, or if one could not give another as much help as he received he made up the difference in cash. Apart from helping each other, the teams gave preferential treatment to the families of Red Army soldiers and worked for bereaved old folk without any pay except for meals during the work. As these measures of mutual aid were of great help to production and were carried out on a reasonable basis they won the warm support of the masses.

manpower, animal power, or implements, or they live and eat together during the busy farming season; and no matter whether the organizations are temporary or permanent. These methods of collective mutual aid are the inventions of the masses themselves. In the past we summed up such experience among the masses in Jiangxi, and now we are summing it up in northern Shaanxi. In the Border Region mutual aid in labor has become much more systematic and better developed after being encouraged by the meeting of senior cadres last year and put into practice all through the current year. Many labor-exchange teams in the Border Region have done their plowing, planting, weeding, and reaping collectively, and the harvest this year is double that of last. Now that the masses have seen these substantial results, undoubtedly more and more people will adopt the practice next year. We do not expect to organize into cooperatives all the hundreds of thousands of people in the Border Region who can contribute full-time or part-time labor in one year, but this objective can be realized within a few years. All women, too, should be mobilized to do a certain amount of productive work. All loafers must be reformed into good citizens through participation in production. Such collective mutual-aid producers' cooperatives should be extensively and voluntarily organized in all the anti-Japanese base areas in northern and central China.

Besides the collective mutual-aid cooperative for agricultural production, there are three other varieties: the multi-purpose cooperative like the Southern

District Cooperative of Yanan, which combines the functions of producers, consumers, transport (salt transport) and credit cooperatives; the transport cooperative (salt transport team); and the handicraft cooperative.

With these four kinds of cooperatives among the masses and the collective labor cooperatives in the army, the schools, and the government and other organizations, we can organize all the forces of the people into a great army of labor. This is the only road to liberation for the people, the only road from poverty to prosperity and the only road to victory in the War of Resistance. Every Communist must learn to organize the labor of the masses. Communists with an intellectual background must also learn to do so; once they have set their minds on it, they can learn in six months or a year. They can help the masses to organize production and to sum up experience. When our comrades have learned, among other skills, to organize the labor of the masses—to help the peasants draw up their household production plans, to set up labor-exchange teams, salt transport teams and multi-purpose cooperatives, to organize production in the army, the schools and the government and other organizations, to organize production in the factories, develop emulation in production, encourage and reward labor heroes, and arrange production exhibitions—when our comrades have learned to bring the creative power and initiative of the masses into play, we shall certainly be able to

drive out the Japanese imperialists and, together with the whole people, build up a new China.

We Communists must be able to integrate ourselves with the masses in all things. If our Party members spend their whole lives sitting indoors and never go out to face the world and brave the storm, what good will they be to the Chinese people? None at all, and we do not need such people as Party members. We Communists ought to face the world and brave the storm, the great world of mass struggle and the mighty storm of mass struggle. “Three cobblers with their wits combined equal Zhuge Liang the master mind.”⁴⁵ In other words, the masses have great creative power. In fact there are thousands upon thousands of Zhuge Liangs among the Chinese people; every village, every town has its own. We should go to the masses and learn from them, synthesize their experience into better articulated principles and methods, then do propaganda among the masses, and call upon them to put these principles and methods into practice so as to solve their problems and help them achieve liberation and happiness. If our comrades doing local work are isolated from the masses, fail to understand their feelings and to help them organize their production and improve their livelihood, and if they confine themselves to collecting “public grain for national salvation” without realizing that 10 percent of their energy is quite enough for

⁴⁵ Zhuge Liang was a statesman and strategist in the period of the Three Kingdoms (221–265), who became a symbol of resourcefulness and wisdom in Chinese folklore.

this purpose, provided they first devote 90 percent to helping the masses solve the problem of “private grain for the people’s own salvation,” then these comrades are contaminated with the Kuomintang style of work and covered with the dust of bureaucracy. The Kuomintang only demands things from the people and gives them nothing in return. If a member of our Party acts in this way, his style of work is that of the Kuomintang, and his face, caked with the dust of bureaucracy, needs a good wash in a basin of hot water. In my opinion, this bureaucratic style is to be found in local work in all our anti-Japanese base areas, and there are comrades who are isolated from the masses because they lack the mass viewpoint. We must firmly do away with this style of work before we can have close ties with the masses.

In addition, a kind of warlord style is to be found in our army work, a style also characteristic of the Kuomintang whose army is divorced from the masses. Our troops must observe the correct principles that govern relations between the army and the people, between the army and the government, between the army and the Party, between officers and men, and between military work and political work, and relations among the cadres, and must never commit the errors of warlordism. Officers must cherish their men and must not be indifferent to their well-being or resort to corporal punishment; the army must cherish the people and never encroach upon their interests; the army must respect the government and the Party and never “assert independence.” Our Eighth

Route and New Fourth Armies are the armed forces of the people; they have always been very good, and are indeed the best in the country. But it is true that in recent years errors of warlordism of a certain kind have arisen, and some comrades in the army have become arrogant and high-handed in their behavior towards the soldiers, the people, the government, and the Party, always blaming the comrades doing local work but never themselves, always seeing their own achievements but never their own shortcomings, and always welcoming flattery but never criticism. Such phenomena are to be found, for example, in the Shaanxi-Gansu-Ningxia Border Region. The tendency has been basically overcome as a result of the conference of senior cadres and the meeting of military and political cadres last year, and of the campaigns to “support the government and cherish the people” and “support the army” during the Spring Festival⁴⁶ this year, but there is still a remainder that we must make further efforts to eradicate. These faults are also to be found in the base areas in northern and central China, and the Party organizations and the army there must endeavor to eradicate them.

Whether it is the tendency towards bureaucracy in local work or towards warlordism in army work, the fault is of the same nature—namely, isolation from the masses. The overwhelming majority of our comrades are good comrades. Those who have this fault can correct it once they have been criticized and their

⁴⁶ The Spring Festival is New Year's Day in the Chinese lunar calendar.

mistakes pointed out. But self-criticism is imperative and wrong tendencies must be squarely faced and conscientiously corrected. If anyone fails to criticize the tendency towards bureaucracy in local work or towards warlordism in army work, it means that he wants to retain the Kuomintang style and keep the dust of bureaucracy or warlordism on his otherwise clean face, and he is not a good Communist. If these two tendencies are eliminated, all our work, including, of course, the production campaign, will proceed smoothly.

Our Border Region has taken on a totally different look because great results have been achieved here in production, whether among the peasant masses, or in the government and other organizations, the schools, the army or in the factories, and the relations between the army and the people have greatly improved. All this indicates that our comrades have a stronger mass viewpoint and have made great progress in becoming one with the masses. Nevertheless, we must not be complacent but continue our self-criticism and strive for further progress. We must strive for further progress in production, too. As our faces are apt to get dirty, we must wash them every day; as the floor is apt to gather dust, we must sweep it every day. Even though the tendencies towards bureaucracy in local work and warlordism in army work have been basically overcome, these bad tendencies may arise again. We are surrounded by the concentrated forces of Japanese imperialism and Chinese reaction, and we live in the midst of the undisciplined petty bour-

geoisie, and hence great gusts of dirt of bureaucracy and warlordism blow in our faces daily. Therefore, we must not become complacent with every success. We should check our complacency and constantly criticize our shortcomings, just as we should wash our faces or sweep the floor every day to remove the dirt and keep them clean.

Labor heroes and model workers in production! You are leaders of the people, you have been very successful in your work, and I hope you, too, will not grow complacent. I hope that when you get back to the counties in the sub-regions of Guanzhong, Longdong, Sanbian, Suide, and Yanan,⁴⁷ when you get back to your organizations, schools, army units, or factories, you will lead the people, lead the masses, and work still better, and first of all get the masses organized on a voluntary basis into cooperatives, get them even better organized and in even greater numbers. I hope that, when you go back, you will do this work and propagate it, so that by next year's conference of labor heroes we shall have achieved still greater results.

⁴⁷ The Shaanxi-Gansu-Ningxia Border Region was divided into these five sub-regions.

COMBAT BUREAUCRACY, COMMANDISM, AND VIOLATIONS OF THE LAW AND OF DISCIPLINE⁴⁸

January 5, 1953

The task of combating bureaucracy, commandism, and violations of the law and of discipline should arouse the attention of our leading bodies at all levels.

In the movement against the “three evils,” our Party has basically solved the two problems of corruption and waste among many of our cadres at four levels: the central, the greater administrative area, the provincial and municipal, and the prefectural. It has also basically overcome one kind of bureaucracy—namely, that which alienates many leading cadres from those working under them. But the problem of the following kind of bureaucracy has not been basically solved in many areas, departments, and fields of work. Some leading cadres are ignorant of the people’s hardships, of the conditions in subordinate units only a short distance from their offices, and of the fact that among the cadres at the county, district, and township levels, there are many bad people guilty of commandism and violations of the law and of discipline. Or they may have some knowledge of such bad people and bad deeds, but turn a blind eye to them, feel no indignation, are not aware of the seriousness of the matter, and so take no posi-

⁴⁸ Inner-Party directive drafted for the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party.

tive measure to back up good people and punish the bad or to encourage good deeds and stop bad ones. To cite the handling of letters from the masses as an example. Reports say that a certain provincial people's government has sat on well over seventy thousand letters. As for the number of letters shelved by Party and government organizations below the provincial level, we have no idea as yet, but presumably it is by no means small. Most of the letters appeal to us to help solve problems, and many contain accusations against certain cadres whose lawless behavior requires prompt attention.

For our Party and government, bureaucracy and commandism are a big problem not only for today but for a long time to come. In terms of social origin, it reflects the survival in our Party and government of the reactionary style of work (an anti-popular style of work, a Kuomintang style of work) of the reactionary ruling classes in dealing with the people. As far as the role and methods of leadership of our Party and government organizations are concerned, it means failure to make clear the policy limits and the proper style of work when giving assignments. In other words, failure to give the cadres at the middle and lower levels receiving assignments thorough instructions on these matters. It means failure to make a proper examination, or indeed any examination at all, of cadres at the various levels, particularly at the county, district, and township levels. It means failure to carry out Party consolidation work at these three levels or, in cases where Party consolidation has started, failure to

launch a struggle to combat commandism and comb out violators of the law and of discipline. It means failure to combat and stamp out the kind of bureaucracy still existing among cadres in the leading organizations at the prefectural level and above, which finds expression in ignorance of and callousness to both the hardships of the masses and the conditions in the grassroots organizations. If we strengthen and improve our role and methods of leadership, then bureaucracy and commandism, which are harmful to the people, will gradually diminish and many of our Party and government organizations will be able to break away sooner from this Kuomintang style of work. And the sooner will the many bad people who have infiltrated our Party and government organizations be combed out and the many bad deeds still evident today be eliminated.

Therefore, in 1953 starting with the handling of letters from the masses, please make an investigation into bureaucracy, commandism, and violations of the law and of discipline and wage a resolute struggle against them in coordination with Party consolidation, Party building, and other spheres of work. Typical cases of bureaucracy, commandism, and violations of the law and of discipline should be widely exposed in the press. Serious offenders should be punished by law, and when they are Party members, they should also be dealt with according to Party discipline. Party committees at all levels should make a determined effort to punish and clear out of Party and government organi-

zations those violators of the law and of discipline who are bitterly hated by the masses, and the worst among them should be executed so as to assuage the people's anger and help educate the cadres and the masses. However, at an appropriate stage of the broad struggle against bad people and bad deeds, we should look into, evaluate, and praise models of good people and good deeds in various places so that all Party members will strive to measure up to these fine models and what is upright will prevail over what is evil. We believe that a substantial number of such models are certain to be found in various parts of the country.

COMBAT BOURGEOIS IDEAS IN THE PARTY⁴⁹

August 12, 1953

Our conference has been a success, and Premier Zhou has made a fine summing-up.

It is now clear that since the movements against the “three evils” and the “five evils”—two kinds of mistake that are different in nature—have been found in the Party. One kind is of an ordinary nature. For instance, the “five excesses”—mistakes which anyone can make and which may crop up at any time; the “five excesses” may also turn into the “five deficiencies.” The other kind is mistakes of principle, such as the tendency towards capitalism. This kind is a reflection of bourgeois ideas within the Party and a matter of stand that is contrary to Marxism-Leninism.

The movements against the “three evils” and the “five evils” dealt heavy blows to bourgeois ideas inside the Party. But at the time, only bourgeois ideas related to corruption and waste got a good thrashing, while those manifesting themselves in questions concerning the Party line were not dealt with. The latter are to be found not only in our financial and economic work but also in political and judicial, cultural and educational and other fields, and among comrades in the localities as well as at the national level.

Mistakes in our financial and economic work have been severely criticized ever since last December

⁴⁹ Speech at the National Conference on Financial and Economic Work held in the summer of 1953.

when Comrade Bo Yibo came out with his new tax system entailing “equality between public and private enterprises”⁵⁰ and also at the present conference. That system, if allowed to develop, would have led inevitably to capitalism, in contravention of Marxism-Leninism, and the Party’s general line for the transition period.

What will the transition period lead to, socialism or capitalism? The Party’s general line prescribes transition to socialism. This requires a period of struggle of considerable length. Unlike that of Zhang Zishan,⁵¹ the mistake made in the new tax system involves a question of ideology and a departure from the Party’s general line. We must unfold a struggle in the Party against bourgeois ideas. Ideologically, the Party membership falls into three categories: some comrades are firm and unwavering and are Marxist-Leninist in their thinking; quite a number are essentially Marxist-Leninist but infected with non-Marxist-Leninist ideas; and a small number are no good, their thinking is non-Marxist-Leninist. In

⁵⁰ This new tax system was introduced in December 1952 and put into effect in January 1953. Though nominally entailing “equality between public and private enterprises,” in reality it lightened the tax burdens on private industrial and commercial enterprises and increased those on State and cooperative enterprises, thus serving the interests of the capitalists at the expense of the latter. Soon after Mao Zedong made his criticism, this error was corrected.

⁵¹ Zhang Zishan was at one time secretary of the Tianjin Prefectural Committee of the Chinese Communist Party. Corroded by the bourgeoisie, he degenerated and became a big embezzler and was sentenced to death during the movement against the “three evils.”

criticizing Bo Yibo's erroneous ideas, some say his mistake stems from petty-bourgeois individualism; that's not quite right. He should be criticized mainly for his bourgeois ideas, which are favorable to capitalism and harmful to socialism. Only such criticism is correct. "Left" opportunist mistakes, as we said before, are a reflection of petty-bourgeois fanaticism within the Party; they occurred in times when we broke with the bourgeoisie. On the three occasions when we have cooperated with the bourgeoisie, namely, in the first period of cooperation between the Kuomintang and the Communist Party, in the period of the War of Resistance Against Japan and in the present period, it has been bourgeois ideology that has influenced a number of people in the Party, and they have vacillated. That was how Bo Yibo came to make his mistake.

Bo Yibo's mistake is not an isolated case. Such mistakes are found not only at the national level but also at those of the greater administrative areas and the provinces and municipalities. Each greater administrative area, each province and municipality, should call a meeting to review its work in the light of the resolution of the Second Plenary Session of the Seventh Central Committee and of the summing-up of the present conference, so as to educate the cadres.

Recently I made a trip to Wuhan and Nanjing and learned a lot, which was very helpful. Practically nothing comes to my ear in Beijing, and therefore I shall go on tour from time to time. The central leading organ is a factory which turns out ideas as its

products. If it does not know what is going on at the lower levels, gets no raw material or has no semi-processed products to work on, how can it turn out any products? Sometimes finished products are turned out by the localities, and the central leading organ need only popularize them throughout the country. For instance, take the movements against the old and new “three evils.”⁵² Both were initiated in the localities. The departments under the central authorities issue directives arbitrarily. The products from these departments ought to be top grade, but actually they are inferior in quality and there are large numbers of completely worthless rejects. Leading organs in the greater administrative areas and the provinces and municipalities are local factories for turning out ideas, and their products should be top grade too.

Bo Yibo’s mistake is a manifestation of bourgeois ideas. It benefits capitalism and harms socialism and semi-socialism and runs counter to the resolution of the Second Plenary Session of the Seventh Central Committee.

On whom should we rely? On the working class, or on the bourgeoisie? The resolution of the Second Plenary Session of the Seventh Central Committee made it clear long ago: “We must wholeheartedly rely on the working class.” The resolution also says that in the rehabilitation and development of pro-

⁵² The movement against the old “three evils” was the struggle launched in 1951 against corruption, waste, and bureaucracy. The movement against the new “three evils” was the struggle launched in 1953 against bureaucracy, commandism, and violations of the law and of discipline.

duction the following must be the rule: the production of state industry comes first, that of private industry second, and handicraft production third. The emphasis is on industry, and first of all on heavy industry, which is owned by the state. Of the five sectors of our present-day economy, the state-owned economy is the leading sector. Capitalist industry and commerce must be gradually guided towards state capitalism.

The resolution of the Second Plenary Session says that the livelihood of the workers and other working people is to improve on the basis of increased production. People with bourgeois ideas pay no attention to this point, and Bo Yibo is typical in this respect. We must lay emphasis on the development of production, but consideration must be given to both the development of production and the improvement of the people's livelihood. Something must be done for their material well-being, but neither too much nor nothing at all. At present there are quite a few cadres who ignore the people's livelihood and couldn't care less about their sufferings. There was a regiment in Guizhou Province which occupied large tracts of peasant farmland. That was a serious encroachment on the people's interests. It is wrong to ignore the people's livelihood, but the emphasis must be laid on production and construction.

The question of utilizing, restricting, and transforming the capitalist sector of the economy was also made quite clear at the Second Plenary Session. The resolution it adopted says that the private capitalist

economy must not be allowed to expand uncurbed but should be restricted from several directions—in the scope of its operations, by tax policy and by market prices, and working conditions. The relationship of the socialist economy to the capitalist economy is that of the leader to the led. Restriction versus opposition to restriction is the main form of class struggle in the new-democratic state. Now the new tax system talks about “equality between public and private enterprises”; that is at variance with the line which makes the state-owned economy the leading sector.

As for the cooperative transformation of individual farming and handicrafts, the resolution of the Second Plenary Session puts it clearly:

Such cooperatives are collective economic organizations of the working people, based on private ownership and under the direction of the state power led by the proletariat. The fact that the Chinese people are culturally backward and have no tradition in organizing cooperatives makes it quite difficult for us to promote and develop the cooperative movement, but cooperatives can and must be organized and they must be promoted and developed. If we had only a state-owned economy and no cooperative economy, it would be impossible for us to lead the individual economy of the working people step by step towards collectivization, impossible to develop from the new-democratic state to the socialist state of the future

and impossible to consolidate the leadership of the proletariat in the state power.

This resolution was adopted in March 1949, but quite a few comrades have failed to take note of it and what is no longer news strikes them as novel. In his article "Strengthen the Party's Political Work in the Rural Areas," Bo Yibo said that the individual peasants' road to collectivization through mutual aid and cooperation "is sheer fantasy, because the present mutual-aid teams, based as they are on the individual economy, cannot develop gradually into collective farms, still less can such a road lead to the collectivization of agriculture as a whole." This runs counter to the Party's resolution.

There are now two united fronts, two alliances. One is the alliance of the working class and the peasants; this is the foundation. The other is the alliance of the working class and the national bourgeoisie. As the peasants are laborers and not exploiters, the alliance of the working class and the peasants is a long-term one. Nevertheless, there are contradictions between the working class and the peasants. We should guide the peasants step by step from individual ownership to collective ownership in accordance with the voluntary principle. In the future there will also be contradictions, between state ownership and collective ownership. These contradictions are all non antagonistic. On the other hand, the contradictions between the working class and the bourgeoisie are antagonistic.

The bourgeoisie is sure to corrode people and aim its sugarcoated bullets at them. Its sugarcoated bullets are of two kinds, material and spiritual. A spiritual one hit its target, Bo Yibo. He made his mistake because he succumbed to the influence of bourgeois ideas. The editorial preaching the new tax system was applauded by the bourgeoisie, and Bo Yibo was pleased. Before the new tax system was initiated, he solicited suggestions from the bourgeoisie and reached a gentleman's agreement with them, but he failed to report to the Central Committee. The Ministry of Commerce and the Federation of Supply and Marketing Cooperatives objected at the time, and the Ministry of Light Industry was dissatisfied too. Of the 1,100,000 cadres and employees working in the financial, economic, and trade fields, the overwhelming majority are good and only a small number are not. Those who are not fall into two categories: counterrevolutionaries, who should be weeded out; and revolutionaries, including Party members and non-Party personnel, who have made mistakes and who should therefore be remolded through criticism and education.

To ensure the triumph of the cause of socialism, we must combat erroneous Right opportunist tendencies, that is, bourgeois ideas, throughout the Party, and first of all in the leading bodies of the Party, government, army, and mass organizations at the national level and at those of the greater administrative areas and the provinces and municipalities. The greater administrative areas and the provinces

and municipalities should call meetings in due time with the participation of secretaries of prefectural Party committees and commissioners of prefectures⁵³ to unfold criticism and discussion and to clarify the question of the socialist road versus the capitalist road.

To ensure the triumph of the cause of socialism, we must exercise collective leadership and oppose decentralism and subjectivism.

At present we must combat subjectivism, not only in the form of rash advance but also in the form of conservatism. In the days of the new-democratic revolution both Right and "Left" subjectivist mistakes occurred. Chen Duxiu and Zhang Guotao made Right mistakes and Wang Ming first "Left" mistakes and then Right ones. The rectification movement in Yanan concentrated its efforts on combating dogmatism and opposed empiricism in passing. Both dogmatism and empiricism are forms of subjectivism. No revolution can triumph unless theory is integrated with practice. The problem was solved in that rectification movement. We were right in adopting the policy of learning from past mistakes to avoid future ones and curing the sickness to save the patient. This time the unrelenting and thoroughgoing criticism of Bo Yibo is designed to help those who have erred correct their mistakes and to ensure the victorious advance of socialism. In the present period of the

⁵³ These commissioners were the administrative heads of the commissioners' offices which were agencies of the provincial and autonomous region people's councils and had jurisdiction over several counties.

socialist revolution subjectivism is still in evidence. Rash advance and conservatism both disregard the actual state of affairs, both are subjectivist. The revolution and construction cannot succeed unless subjectivism is overcome. In the days of the democratic revolution rectification served to correct the error of subjectivism and in consequence the whole Party was united, including both the comrades who had adhered to the correct line and those who had made mistakes. From Yanan they set out for different war theatres, and the whole Party, pulling its weight as one man, went on to win nationwide victory. Today, the cadres are more mature and their political level is higher, and it is hoped that it will not take long for them basically to overcome subjectivism in their task of leadership and bring the subjective into correspondence with the objective through their efforts.

The solution of all these problems hinges on strengthening collective leadership and opposing decentralism. We have all along opposed decentralism. The directive issued by the Central Committee to its bureaus and the army commanders on February 2, 1941 stipulated that all circular telegrams, declarations, and inner-Party directives bearing on the country as a whole must have the prior approval of the Central Committee. In May, the Central Committee issued a directive calling for unified external propaganda by the various base areas. On July 1 of the same year, on the twentieth anniversary of the founding of the Party, the Central Committee issued its decision on strengthening Party spirit with

the emphasis on combating decentralism. In 1948 the Central Committee issued more directives to the same effect. It issued a directive on setting up a system of reports on January 7 and a supplementary directive in March. The Political Bureau met in September and adopted a resolution on rules governing reports to and requests for instructions from the Central Committee. On September 20, the Central Committee made a decision on strengthening the Party committee system. On March 10, 1953 the Central Committee adopted a decision on strengthening its leadership over the work of the government in order to avert the danger of government departments drifting away from its leadership.

Centralization and decentralization are in constant contradiction with each other. Decentralism has grown since we moved into the cities. To resolve this contradiction all the principal and important issues must first be discussed and decided on by the Party committee before its decisions are referred to the government for implementation. For instance, such important decisions as the erection of the Monument to the Heroes of the People in Tiananmen Square and the demolition of Beijing's city walls were made by the Central Committee and carried out by the government. Matters of secondary importance can be left to the leading Party groups in government departments. It just won't do for the Central Committee to monopolize everything. Combating decentralism will win maximum popular approval because most comrades in the Party care about collective

leadership. Party members fall into three categories in their attitude towards collective leadership. Those in the first category care about collective leadership. Those in the second do not care so much, maintaining that the Party committees had better leave them alone, but they don't mind being supervised. "Better leave me alone" reveals a lack of Party spirit, while "don't mind being supervised" shows some measure of Party spirit. We must seize on this "don't mind being supervised" and help such comrades by education and persuasion to overcome their lack of Party spirit. Otherwise, each ministry would go its own way and the Central Committee could not supervise the ministries, the ministers could not supervise the department and bureau heads, and the division heads could not supervise the section chiefs—no one, in short, could supervise anyone. In consequence, independent kingdoms would proliferate and hundreds of feudal princes would emerge. Those in the third category are only a handful. They flatly reject collective leadership and always prefer to be left alone. The decision on strengthening Party spirit puts the stress on the strict observance of discipline under democratic centralism, in other words, the minority is subordinate to the majority, the individual to the organization, the lower level to the higher level, and the entire Party to the Central Committee (a case of subordinating the majority to the minority, as this minority represents the majority). Opinions are welcome, but to undermine Party unity would be a most shameful thing. It is reliance on the political experi-

ence and wisdom of the collective that can guarantee the correct leadership of the Party and the state and the unshakable unity of the ranks of the Party.

At this conference Liu Shaoqi said he had made mistakes of a sort, and Comrade Deng Xiaoping said he too had made some mistakes. Whoever makes a mistake must make a self-criticism, and everybody without exception must put himself under the Party's supervision and the leadership of Party committees at various levels. This is a prime requirement for fulfilling the Party's tasks. Throughout the country there are quite a number of people who thrive on anarchy, and Bo Yibo is one such person. To some extent he has been corrupted both politically and ideologically and it is absolutely necessary to criticize him.

One final point. We must foster modesty, willingness to learn, and perseverance.

We must have perseverance. In the war to resist US aggression and aid Korea, for instance, we hit US imperialism where it hurt and struck fear into its heart. This was an asset, an important factor, in our country's construction. What was of the utmost importance was that our armed forces were thus steeled, the fighters displaying valor and the commanders resourcefulness. True, we suffered casualties and incurred a cost; we paid a price. But we had absolutely no fear of sacrifice; once we set our mind on doing something, we saw it through. When Hu Zongnan attacked the Shaanxi-Gansu-Ningxia Border Region, we did not pull out although we had only one county seat left, and we thought nothing of

it when we had to live on the leaves of the trees. This is the kind of fortitude we must have.

We must study and must not become conceited or look down on others. Goose eggs don't think much of chicken eggs and the ferrous metals don't think much of rare metals—such a disdainful attitude is not scientific. Although China is a big country and ours is a big Party, there is no reason to look down on small countries or small parties. We must always be ready to learn from the people of fraternal countries and maintain a genuine internationalist spirit. In our foreign trade some people are arrogant and overweening, and this is wrong. Education must be conducted in the whole Party, and particularly among people working abroad. We must study hard and work hard so as basically to accomplish socialist industrialization and socialist transformation in fifteen years or a little longer. By then our country will have become strong, yet we should still be modest and should always be ready to learn.

There are several regulations which were adopted at the Second Plenary Session of the Seventh Central Committee but not written into its resolution. The first is a ban on birthday celebrations. Birthday celebrations don't beget longevity. The important thing is to do our work well. The second is a ban on gifts, at least in the Party. The third is to keep toasts to a minimum. Toasts may be allowed on certain occasions. The fourth is to keep applause to a minimum. There should be no ban and no pouring of cold water on the masses who applaud out of enthusiasm. The fifth

is a ban on naming places after persons. The sixth is a ban on placing Chinese comrades on a par with Marx, Engels, Lenin, or Stalin. Our relationship to them is one of pupils to teachers and that is how it should be. Observance of these regulations is true modesty.

In short, we must remain modest, be willing to learn, retain our perseverance and adhere to the system of collective leadership so as to achieve socialist transformation and attain victory for socialism.

SOME EXPERIENCES IN OUR PARTY'S HISTORY⁵⁴

September 25, 1956

US imperialism is your adversary as well as ours and the adversary of the people of the world. It is harder for US imperialism to interfere in our affairs than in yours. For one thing, the United States is far away from us. But US imperialism has reached out very far, to our Taiwan, to Japan, south Korea, south Vietnam, the Philippines, and so on. The United States has stationed its troops in Britain, France, Italy, Iceland, and West Germany and has set up military bases in North Africa and in the Middle and Near East. It has reached out to every corner of the earth. It is a global imperialism. It is a teacher by negative example to the people of all countries. The people of the world should unite and help each other to chop off the tentacles of US imperialism wherever they reach. Each time we chop off one of its tentacles, we will be a little more comfortable.

In the past China was also a country oppressed by imperialism and feudalism, so our conditions and yours are quite similar. A large rural population and the existence of feudal forces are liabilities for a country, but they are assets for a revolution led by the proletariat because they provide us with a broad ally in the peasants. In Russia before the October Revo-

⁵⁴ Part of a talk with representatives of some Latin-American Communist Parties.

lution, feudalism was strong, and it was with the support of the peasant masses that the Bolshevik Party won victory in the revolution. This was even more so in China. Ours is an agricultural country, with over 500 million people living in the countryside. In the past we relied mainly on the peasants in fighting. Now also it is because the peasants are organized and agriculture has become cooperative that our urban bourgeoisie has quickly submitted to socialist transformation. Hence the vital importance of the Party's work among the peasants.

I think that in countries where feudalism is strong, the political party of the proletariat should go to the countryside and seek out the peasants. When intellectuals go to the countryside to seek out the peasants, they cannot win their trust unless they have the right attitude. City intellectuals know little about rural affairs and peasant psychology, and they never can solve the peasants' problems in quite the right way. According to our experience, it is only after a long period of time and after we have really become one with the peasants and convinced them we are fighting in their interest that we can win victory. Don't imagine that the peasants will trust us right away. Don't expect them to trust us the moment we have given them some help.

The peasants are the chief ally of the proletariat. In the beginning our Party too did not realize the importance of work among the peasants and put urban work first and rural work second. It seems to me that the Parties in some Asian countries, such as

India and Indonesia, have not done so well in rural work.

At first, our Party wasn't successful in its work among the peasants. The intellectuals had a certain air about them, an intellectual air. Therefore, they were unwilling to go to the countryside, which they looked down on. The peasants, for their part, looked askance at the intellectuals. Besides, our Party had not yet found the way to understand the countryside. Later when we went there again, we found the way, analyzed the various classes in the rural areas, and came to understand the peasants' revolutionary demands.

During the first period, we didn't have clear ideas about the countryside. Under the Right opportunist line of Chen Duxiu, the peasants, our chief ally, were abandoned. Many of our comrades looked on the countryside as a plane rather than a solid. That is to say, they did not know how to look at the countryside from the class viewpoint. It was only after they had some grasp of Marxism that they began to adopt the class viewpoint in looking at the countryside. The countryside turned out to be not a plane, but stratified into the rich, the poor and the very poor, into farm laborers, poor peasants, middle peasants, rich peasants, and landlords. During this period I made a study of the countryside and opened peasant movement institutes which ran for several terms. Though I knew some Marxism, my understanding of the countryside was not deep.

During the second period, we had to thank our good teacher, Chiang Kai-shek. He drove us to the countryside. This was a long period, a period of ten years of civil war, in which we fought against him, and thus we were obliged to make a study of the countryside. In the first few years, our understanding of the countryside was still not so deep, but later it became better and deeper. During this period the three “Left” opportunist lines which were represented successively by Qu Qiubai, Li Lisan, and Wang Ming caused great losses to our Party, and Wang Ming’s “Left” opportunist line in particular brought about the collapse of most of our Party’s rural base areas.

Then came the third period, the period of the War of Resistance Against Japan. When the Japanese imperialists invaded China, we stopped fighting the Kuomintang and fought Japanese imperialism instead. At that time our comrades could go openly to cities in Kuomintang areas. Wang Ming, who had previously made the mistake of pushing a “Left” opportunist line, now made the mistake of pushing a Right opportunist line. He had first carried out the ultra-Left policy of the Communist International, and this time he carried out an ultra-Right policy. He too was one of our good teachers by negative example and he educated our Party. We had another good teacher by negative example in Li Lisan. Their chief mistake at the time was dogmatism, transplanting foreign experience mechanically. Our Party liquidated their erroneous lines and really found the way to integrate the universal truth of Marxism-Leninism

with the concrete conditions of China. As a result, in the fourth period when Chiang Kai-shek launched an offensive against us, it was possible for us to overthrow him and found the People's Republic of China.

The experience of the Chinese revolution, that is, building rural base areas, encircling the cities from the countryside and finally seizing the cities, may not be wholly applicable to many of your countries, though it can serve for your reference. I beg to advise you not to transplant Chinese experience mechanically. The experience of any foreign country can serve only for reference and must not be regarded as dogma. The universal truth of Marxism-Leninism and the concrete conditions of your own countries—the two must be integrated.

If you are to win over the peasants and rely on them, you must conduct investigations in the rural areas. The method is to investigate one or more villages and spend a few weeks there to get a clear idea of the class forces, the economic situation, living conditions, and so on, in the countryside. The principal leaders, such as the general secretary of the Party, should themselves undertake this work and get to know one or two villages; they should try to find the time, for it is well worth the effort. Though there are plenty of sparrows, it is not necessary to dissect every one of them; to dissect one or two is enough. When the general secretary of the Party has investigated one or two villages and knows what's what, he will be able to help his comrades to become acquainted with the villages and attach importance to dissecting one

or two “sparrows”; true, they know something about the countryside, but their knowledge doesn’t go very deep, and therefore the directives they issued do not quite fit the rural conditions. Likewise, the comrades in charge of the leading bodies of the Party at the central, provincial and county levels should themselves investigate one or two villages, or dissect one or two “sparrows.” This is called “anatomy.”

There are two ways of making investigations, one is to look at flowers on horseback and the other is to get off your horse and look at them. If you look at flowers on horseback, you’ll only get a superficial impression, as there are so many. In coming from Latin America to Asia, you have been looking at flowers on horseback. There are so many flowers in your own countries that it’s just not enough to give them a glance or two and then leave, and so the second way has to be adopted, that is, to get off your horse and look at the flowers, observe them closely and analyze one “flower,” or dissect one “sparrow.”

In countries under imperialist oppression there are two kinds of bourgeoisie—the national bourgeoisie and the comprador-bourgeoisie. Do these two kinds of bourgeoisie exist in your countries? Probably yes.

The comprador-bourgeoisie is always a running dog of imperialism and a target of the revolution. Different groups of the comprador-bourgeoisie belong to the monopoly capitalist groups of different imperialist countries such as the United States, Britain, and France. In the struggle against the various comprador groups it is necessary to exploit the

contradictions between imperialist countries, first coping with one of them and striking at the chief immediate enemy. For instance, in the past the Chinese comprador-bourgeoisie consisted of pro-British, pro-US, and pro-Japanese groups. During the War of Resistance Against Japan we exploited the contradiction between Britain and the United States on the one hand and Japan on the other, first striking down the Japanese aggressors and the comprador group depending on them. Then we turned round to deal blows at the US and British aggressor forces and bring down the pro-US and pro-British comprador groups. The landlord class also consists of different factions. The most reactionary landlords are few in number, and those who are patriotic and favor fighting imperialism should not be lumped together with them when we strike. Moreover, a distinction must be made between the big and small landlords. Don't strike at too many enemies at a time, strike at a few, and even with the big landlords deal your blows only at the most reactionary handful. To strike at everyone may seem very revolutionary, but actually it causes great harm.

The national bourgeoisie is an opponent of ours. There is a popular saying in China, "Opponents always meet." One experience of the Chinese revolution is that caution is needed in dealing with the national bourgeoisie. While it is opposed to the working class, it is also opposed to imperialism. In view of the fact that our main task is to fight imperialism and feudalism and that the liberation of the

people would be out of the question unless these two enemies are overthrown, we must by all means win the national bourgeoisie over to the fight against imperialism. The national bourgeoisie is not interested in fighting feudalism because it has close ties with the landlord class. What is more, it oppresses and exploits the workers. We must therefore struggle against it. But in order to win it over to join us in the fight against imperialism, we must know when to stop in the struggle, that is, the struggle must be waged on just grounds, to our advantage and with restraint. In other words, we must have just grounds for waging the struggle, be sure of victory, and use restraint when a proper measure of victory is gained. Hence the necessity of making investigations into the conditions of both sides, those of the workers and those of the capitalists. If we know only the workers and not the capitalists, we won't be able to hold talks with the latter. In this respect, it is also necessary to investigate typical cases, or to dissect one or two "sparrows"; both methods, looking at flowers on horseback and getting off your horse to look at them, should likewise be used.

Throughout the historical period of the struggle against imperialism and feudalism, we must win over and unite with the national bourgeoisie so that it will side with the people against imperialism. Even after the task of opposing imperialism and feudalism is in the main accomplished, we must still keep our alliance with the national bourgeoisie for a certain period. This will be advantageous in dealing with

imperialist aggression, in expanding production and stabilizing the market and also in winning over and remolding bourgeois intellectuals.

You have not yet won state power but are preparing to seize it. Towards the national bourgeoisie a policy of "both unity and struggle" should be adopted. Unite with them in the common fight against imperialism and support all their anti-imperialist words and deeds, while waging an appropriate struggle against their reactionary, anti-working class and anti-Communist words and deeds. It is wrong to be one-sided; struggle without unity is a "Left" deviationist mistake and unity without struggle is a Right deviationist mistake. Both mistakes occurred in our Party and we learned bitter lessons from them. Later, we summed up the two kinds of experience and have since adopted a policy of "both unity and struggle," that is, to struggle whenever necessary and unite whenever possible. The aim of struggle is to unite with the national bourgeoisie and win victory in the struggle against imperialism.

In countries under the oppression of imperialism and feudalism the political party of the proletariat should raise the national banner and must have a Program of national unity by which to unite with all the forces that can be united, excluding the running dogs of imperialism. Let the whole nation see how patriotic the Communist Party is, how peace loving and how desirous of national unity. This will help isolate imperialism and its running dogs, and the big landlord class and the big bourgeoisie too.

Communists should not be afraid of making mistakes. Mistakes have a dual character. On the one hand mistakes harm the Party and the people; on the other they serve as good teachers, giving both the Party and the people a good education, and this benefits the revolution. Failure is the mother of success. If there is nothing good about failure, how can it be the mother of success? When too many mistakes are made, there is bound to be a turnabout. That is Marxism. "Things turn into their opposites when they reach the extreme"; when mistakes pile up, light is not far off.

A DIALECTICAL APPROACH TO INNER-PARTY UNITY⁵⁵

November 18, 1957

With regard to the question of unity I'd like to say something about the approach. I think our attitude should be one of unity towards every comrade, no matter who, provided he is not a hostile element or a saboteur. We should adopt a dialectical, not a metaphysical, approach towards him. What is meant by a dialectical approach? It means being analytical about everything, acknowledging that human beings all make mistakes and not negating a person completely just because he has made mistakes. Lenin once said that there is not a single person in the world who does not make mistakes. Everyone needs support. An able fellow needs the help of three other people, a fence needs the support of three stakes. With all its beauty the lotus needs the green of its leaves to set it off. These are Chinese proverbs. Still another Chinese proverb says three cobblers with their wits combined equal Zhuge Liang the master mind. Zhuge Liang by himself can never be perfect, he has his limitations. Look at this declaration of our twelve countries. We have gone through a first, second, third, and fourth draft and have not yet finished polishing it. I think it would be presumptuous for anyone to claim God-like omniscience and omnipotence. So what attitude

⁵⁵ Excerpts from a speech at the Moscow Meeting of Representatives of the Communist and Workers' Parties.

should we adopt towards a comrade who has made mistakes? We should be analytical and adopt a dialectical, rather than a metaphysical, approach. Our Party once got bogged down in metaphysics, in dogmatism, which totally destroyed anyone not to its liking. Later, we repudiated dogmatism and came to learn a little more dialectics. The unity of opposites is the fundamental concept of dialectics. In accordance with this concept, what should we do with a comrade who has made mistakes? We should first wage a struggle to rid him of his wrong ideas. Second, we should also help him. Point one, struggle, and point two, help. We should proceed from good intentions to help him correct his mistakes so that he will have a way out.

However, dealing with persons of another type is different. Towards persons like Trotsky and like Chen Duxiu, Zhang Guotao, and Gao Gang in China, it was impossible to adopt a helpful attitude, for they were incorrigible. And there were individuals like Hitler, Chiang Kai-shek and the tsar, who were likewise incorrigible and had to be overthrown because we and they were absolutely exclusive of each other. In this sense, there is only one aspect to their nature, not two. In the final analysis, this is also true of the imperialist and capitalist systems, which are bound to be replaced in the end by the socialist system. The same applies to ideology; idealism will be replaced by materialism and theism by atheism. Here we are speaking of the strategic objective. But the case is different with tactical stages, where compromises may

be made. Didn't we compromise with the Americans on the 38th Parallel in Korea? Wasn't there a compromise with the French in Vietnam?

At each tactical stage, it is necessary to be good at making compromises as well as at waging struggles. Now let us return to the relations between comrades. I would suggest that talks be held by comrades where there has been some misunderstanding between them. Some seem to think that, once in the Communist Party, people all become saints with no differences or misunderstandings, and that the Party is not subject to analysis, that is to say, it is monolithic and uniform, hence there is no need for talks. It seems as if people have to be 100 percent Marxists once they are in the Party. Actually there are Marxists of all degrees, those who are 100 percent, 90, 80, 70, 60, or 50 percent Marxist, and some who are only 10 or 20 percent Marxist. Can't two or more of us have talks together in a small room? Can't we proceed from the desire for unity and hold talks in the spirit of helping each other? Of course I'm referring to talks within the Communist ranks, and not to talks with the imperialists (though we do hold talks with them as well). Let me give an example. Aren't our twelve countries holding talks on the present occasion? Aren't the more than sixty Parties holding talks too? As a matter of fact they are. In other words, provided that no damage is done to the principles of Marxism-Leninism, we accept from others certain views that are acceptable and give up certain of our own views that can be given up. Thus we have two

hands to deal with a comrade who has made mistakes, one hand to struggle with him and the other to unite with him. The aim of struggle is to uphold the principles of Marxism, which means being principled; that is one hand. The other hand is to unite with him. The aim of unity is to provide him with a way out, to compromise with him, which means being flexible. The integration of principle with flexibility is a Marxist-Leninist principle, and it is a unity of opposites.

Any kind of world, and of course class society in particular, teems with contradictions. Some say that there are contradictions to be “found” in socialist society, but I think this is a wrong way of putting it. The point is not that there are contradictions to be found, but that it teems with contradictions. There is no place where contradictions do not exist, nor is there any person who cannot be analyzed. To think that he cannot is being metaphysical. You see, an atom is a complex of unities of opposites. There is a unity of the two opposites, the nucleus and the electrons. In a nucleus there is again a unity of opposites, the protons and the neutrons. Speaking of the proton, there are protons and anti-protons, and as for the neutron, there are neutrons and anti-neutrons. In short, the unity of opposites is present everywhere. The concept of the unity of opposites, dialectics, must be widely propagated. I say dialectics should move from the small circle of philosophers to the broad masses of the people. I suggest that this question be discussed at meetings of the political bureaus and at the ple-

nary sessions of the central committees of the various Parties and also at meetings of their Party committees at all levels. As a matter of fact, the secretaries of our Party branches understand dialectics, for when they prepare reports to branch meetings, they usually write down two items in their notebooks, first, the achievements and, second, the shortcomings. One divides into two—this is a universal phenomenon, and this is dialectics.

OPPOSE BOOK WORSHIP⁵⁶

May 1930

I. NO INVESTIGATION, NO RIGHT TO SPEAK

Unless you have investigated a problem, you will be deprived of the right to speak on it. Isn't that too harsh? Not in the least. When you have not probed into a problem, into the present facts and its past history, and know nothing of its essentials, whatever you say about it will undoubtedly be nonsense. Talking nonsense solves no problems, as everyone knows, so why is it unjust to deprive you of the right to speak? Quite a few comrades always keep their eyes shut and talk nonsense, and for a Communist that is disgraceful. How can a Communist keep his eyes shut and talk nonsense?

It won't do!

It won't do!

You must investigate!

You must not talk nonsense!

II. TO INVESTIGATE A PROBLEM IS TO SOLVE IT

You can't solve a problem? Well, get down and investigate the present facts and its past history! When you have investigated the problem thoroughly, you will know how to solve it. Conclusions invariably come after investigation and not before. Only a block-

⁵⁶ Mao Zedong, *Selected Readings from the Works of Mao Tse-tung* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1971), 40–50.

head cudgels his brains on his own or together with a group to “find a solution” or “evolve an idea” without making any investigation. It must be stressed that this cannot possibly lead to any effective solution or any good idea. In other words, he is bound to arrive at a wrong solution and a wrong idea.

There are not a few comrades doing inspection work, as well as guerilla leaders and cadres newly in office, who like to make political pronouncements the moment they arrive at a place and who strut about criticizing this and condemning that when they have only seen the surface of things or minor details. Such purely subjective nonsensical talk is indeed detestable. These people are bound to make a mess of things, lose the confidence of the masses, and prove incapable of solving any problem at all.

When they come across difficult problems, quite a number of people in leading positions simply heave a sigh without being able to solve them. They lose patience and ask to be transferred on the grounds that they “have not the ability and cannot do the job.” These are cowards’ words.

Just get moving on your two legs, go the rounds of every sector placed under your charge, and “inquire into everything”⁵⁷ as Confucius did, and then you will be able to solve the problems, however little your ability—for although your head may be empty before you go outdoors, it will be empty no longer

⁵⁷ See *Confucian Analects*, Book III, Pa Yi: “When Confucius entered the Ancestral Temple, he inquired into everything.”

when you return but will contain all sorts of material necessary for the solution of the problems, and that is how problems are solved. Must you go outdoors? Not necessarily. You can call a fact-finding meeting of people familiar with the situation in order to get at the source of what you call a difficult problem and come to know how it stands now, and then it will be easy to solve your difficult problem.

Investigation may be likened to the long months of pregnancy and solving a problem to the day of birth. To investigate a problem is, indeed, to solve it.

III. OPPOSE BOOK WORSHIP

Whatever is written in a book is right—such is still the mentality of culturally backward Chinese peasants. Strangely enough, within the Communist Party there are also people who always say in a discussion, “Show me where it’s written in the book.” When we say that a directive of a higher organ of leadership is correct, it is not just because it comes from “a higher organ of leadership” but because its contents conform with both the objective and subjective circumstances of the struggle and meet its requirements. It is quite wrong to take a formalistic attitude and blindly carry out directives without discussing and examining them in the light of actual conditions, simply because they come from a higher organ. It is the mischief done by this formalism that explains why the line and tactics of the Party do not take deeper root among the masses. To carry out a directive of a higher organ blindly, and seemingly without any disagreement, is not really to

carry it out but is the most artful way of opposing or sabotaging it.

The method of studying the social sciences exclusively from books is likewise extremely dangerous and may even lead one onto the road of counterrevolution. Clear proof of this is provided by the fact that whole batches of Chinese Communists who confined themselves to books in their study of the social sciences have turned into counterrevolutionaries. When we say Marxism is correct, it is certainly not because Marx was a “prophet,” but because his theory has been proved correct in our practice and in our struggle. We need Marxism in our struggle. In our acceptance of his theory, no such formalization of mystical notion as that of “prophecy” ever enters our minds. Many who have read Marxist books have become renegades from the revolution, whereas illiterate workers often grasp Marxism very well. Of course we should study Marxist books, but this study must be integrated with our country’s actual conditions. We need books, but we must overcome book worship, which is divorced from the actual situation.

How can we overcome book worship? The only way is to investigate the actual situation.

IV. WITHOUT INVESTIGATING THE ACTUAL SITUATION, THERE IS BOUND TO BE AN IDEALIST APPRAISAL OF CLASS FORCES AND AN IDEALIST GUIDANCE IN WORK, RESULTING EITHER IN OPPORTUNISM OR IN PUTSCHISM

Do you doubt this conclusion? Facts will force you to accept it. Just try and appraise the political

situation or guide the struggle without making any investigation, and you will see whether or not such appraisal or guidance is groundless and idealist and whether or not it will lead to opportunist or putschist errors. Certainly it will. This is not because of failure to make careful plans before taking action but because of the failure to study the specific social situation carefully before making the plans, as often happens in our Red Army guerrilla units. Officers of the Li Kui⁵⁸ type do not discriminate when they punish the men for offenses. As a result, the offenders feel they have been unfairly treated, many disputes ensue, and the leaders lose all prestige. Does this not happen frequently in the Red Army?

We must wipe out idealism and guard against all opportunist and putschist errors before we can succeed in winning over the masses and defeating the enemy. The only way to wipe out idealism is to make the effort and investigate the actual situation.

V. THE AIM OF SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC INVESTIGATION IS TO ARRIVE AT A CORRECT APPRAISAL OF CLASS FORCES AND THEN TO FORMULATE CORRECT TACTICS FOR THE STRUGGLE

This is our answer to the question: Why do we have to investigate social and economic conditions? Accordingly, the object of our investigation is all the

⁵⁸ Li Kui was a hero in the well-known Chinese novel *Water Margin* [*Shuihu Zhuan*], which describes the peasant war that occurred towards the end of the Northern Song Dynasty (960–1127). He was simple, outspoken, and very loyal to the revolutionary cause of the peasants, but crude and tactless.

social classes and not fragmentary social phenomena. Of late, the comrades in the Fourth Army of the Red Army have generally given attention to the work of investigation,⁵⁹ but the method many of them employ is wrong. The results of their investigation are therefore as trivial as a grocer's accounts; or resemble the many strange tales a country bumpkin hears when he comes to town; or are like a distant view of a populous city from a mountaintop. This kind of investigation is of little use and cannot achieve our main purpose. Our main purpose is to learn the political and economic situation of the various social classes. The outcome of our investigation should be a picture of the present situation of each class and the ups and downs of its development. For example, when we investigate the composition of the peasantry, not only must we know the number of owner-peasants, semi-owner peasants, and tenant-peasants, who are differentiated according to tenancy relationships, but more especially we must know the number of rich peasants, middle peasants, and poor peasants,

⁵⁹ Mao Zedong has always laid great stress on investigation, regarding social investigation as the most important task and the basis for defining policy in the work of leadership. The work of investigation was gradually developed in the Fourth Army of the Red Army on Mao Zedong's initiative. He stipulated that social investigation should be a regular part of the work, and the Political Department of the Red Army prepared detailed forms covering such items as the state of the mass struggle, the condition of the reactionaries, the economic life of the people, and the amount of land owned by each class in the rural areas. Wherever the Red Army went, it first made itself familiar with the class situation in the locality and then formulated slogans suited to the needs of the masses.

who are differentiated according to class or stratum. When we investigate the composition of the merchants, not only must we know the number in each trade, such as grain, clothing, medicinal herbs, etc., but more especially we must know the number of small merchants, middle merchants, and big merchants. We should investigate not only the state of each trade, but more especially the class relations within it. We should investigate the relationships not only between the different trades but more especially between the different classes. Our chief method of investigation must be to dissect the different social classes, the ultimate purpose being to understand their interrelations, to arrive at a correct appraisal of class forces, and then to formulate the correct tactics for the struggle, defining which classes constitute the main force in the revolutionary struggle, which classes are to be won over as allies, and which classes are to be overthrown. This is our sole purpose.

What are the social classes requiring investigation?

They are:

The industrial proletariat

The handicraft workers

The farm laborers

The poor peasants

The urban poor

The lumpen-proletariat

The master handicraftsmen

The small merchants

The middle peasants

The rich peasants

The landlords

The commercial bourgeoisie

The industrial bourgeoisie

In our investigation we should give attention to the state of all these classes or strata. Only the industrial proletariat and industrial bourgeoisie are absent in the areas where we are now working, and we constantly come across all the others. Our tactics of struggle are tactics in relation to all these classes and strata.

Another serious shortcoming in our past investigations has been the undue stress on the countryside to the neglect of the towns, so that many comrades have always been vague about our tactics towards the urban poor and the commercial bourgeoisie. The development of the struggle has enabled us to leave the mountains for the plains.⁶⁰ We have descended physically, but we are still up in the mountains mentally. We must understand the towns as well as the countryside, or we shall be unable to meet the needs of the revolutionary struggle.

⁶⁰ Here “the mountains” are the Jinggang mountain area along the borders of Jiangxi and Hunan Provinces; the “plains” are those in southern Jiangxi and western Fujian. In January 1929, Mao Zedong led the main force of the Fourth Army of the Red Army down from the Jinggang Mountains to southern Jiangxi and western Fujian in order to set up two large revolutionary base areas.

VI. VICTORY IN CHINA'S REVOLUTIONARY STRUGGLE WILL DEPEND ON THE CHINESE COMRADES' UNDER- STANDING OF CHINESE CONDITIONS

The aim of our struggle is to attain socialism via the stage of democracy. In this task, the first step is to complete the democratic revolution by winning the majority of the working class and arousing the peasant masses and the urban poor for the overthrow of the landlord class, imperialism, and the Kuomintang regime. The next step is to carry out the socialist revolution, which will follow on the development of this struggle. The fulfillment of this great revolutionary task is no simple or easy job and will depend entirely on correct and firm tactics on the part of the proletarian party. If its tactics of struggle are wrong, or irresolute and wavering, the revolution will certainly suffer temporary defeat. It must be borne in mind that the bourgeois parties, too, constantly discuss their tactics of struggle. They are considering how to spread reformist influences among the working class so as to mislead it and turn it away from Communist Party leadership, how to get the rich peasants to put down the uprisings of the poor peasants, and how to organize gangsters to suppress the revolutionary struggles. In a situation when the class struggle grows increasingly acute and is waged at close quarters, the proletariat has to depend for its victory entirely on the correct and firm tactics of struggle of its own party, the Communist Party. A communist party's correct and unswerving tactics of struggle can in no circumstance be created by a few people sitting in

an office; they emerge in the course of mass struggle, that is, through actual experience. Therefore, we must at all times study social conditions and make practical investigations. Those comrades who are inflexible, conservative, formalistic, and groundlessly optimistic think that the present tactics of struggle are perfect, that the *Book of Documents*⁶¹ of the Party's Sixth National Congress guarantees lasting victory, and that one can always be victorious merely by adhering to the established methods. These ideas are absolutely wrong and have nothing in common with the idea that Communists should create favorable new situations through struggle; they represent a purely conservative line. Unless it is completely discarded, this line will cause great losses to the revolution and do harm to these comrades themselves. There are obviously some comrades in our Red Army who are content to leave things as they are, who do not seek to understand anything thoroughly, and are groundlessly optimistic, and they spread the fallacy that "this is proletarian." They eat their fill and sit dozing in their offices all day long without ever moving a step and going out among the masses to investigate. Whenever they open their mouths, their plat-

⁶¹ The *Book of Documents* consisted of the resolutions adopted at the Sixth National Congress of the Communist Party of China in July 1928, including the political resolution and the resolutions on the peasant question, the land question, the organization of political power, etc. Early in 1929 the Front Committee of the Fourth Army of the Red Army published these resolutions in book form for distribution to the Party organizations in the Red Army and to the local Party organizations.

itudes make people sick. To awaken these comrades we must raise our voices and cry out to them:

Change your conservative ideas without delay!

Replace them with progressive and militant Communist ideas!

Get into the struggle!

Go among the masses and investigate the facts!

VII. THE TECHNIQUE OF INVESTIGATION

1. Hold fact-finding meetings and undertake investigation through discussions.

This is the only way to get near the truth, the only way to draw conclusions. It is easy to commit mistakes if you do not hold fact-finding meetings for investigation through discussions but simply rely on one individual relating his own experience. You cannot possibly draw more or less correct conclusions at such meetings if you put questions casually instead of raising key questions for discussion.

2. What kind of people should attend the fact-finding meetings?

They should be people well acquainted with social and economic conditions. As far as age is concerned, older people are best, because they are rich in experience and not only know what is going on but understand the causes and effects. Young people with experience of struggle should also be included, because

they have progressive ideas and sharp eyes. As far as occupation is concerned, there should be workers, peasants, merchants, intellectuals, and occasionally soldiers, and sometimes even vagrants. Naturally, when a particular subject is being looked into, those who have nothing to do with it need not be present. For example, workers, peasants, and students need not attend when commerce is the subject of investigation.

3. Which is better, a large fact-finding meeting or a small one?

That depends on the investigator's ability to conduct a meeting. If he is good at it, a meeting of as many as a dozen or even twenty or more people can be called. A large meeting has its advantages: from the answers you get fairly accurate statistics (e.g., in finding out the percentage of poor peasants in the total peasant population) and fairly correct conclusions (e.g., in finding out whether equal or differentiated land redistribution is better). Of course, it has its disadvantages too: unless you are skillful in conducting meetings, you will find it difficult to keep order. So the number of people attending a meeting depends on the competence of the investigator. However, the minimum is three, or otherwise the information obtained will be too limited to correspond to the real situation.

4. Prepare a detailed outline for the investigation.

A detailed outline should be prepared beforehand, and the investigator should ask questions according to the outline, with those present at the meeting giving their answers. Any points that are unclear or doubtful should be put up for discussion. The detailed outline should include main subjects and sub-headings and also detailed items. For instance, taking commerce as a main subject, it can have such sub-headings such as cloth, grain, other necessities, and medicinal herbs. Again, under cloth, there can be such detailed items as calico, homespun and silk, and satin.

5. Personal participation.

Everyone with responsibility for giving leadership—from the chairman of the township government to the chairman of the central government, from the detachment leader to the commander in chief, from the secretary of a Party branch to the general secretary—must personally undertake investigation into the specific social and economic conditions and not merely rely on reading reports, for investigation and reading reports are two entirely different things.

6. Probe deeply.

Anyone new to investigation work should make one or two thorough investigations in order to gain full knowledge of a particular place (say, a village or a town) of a particular problem (say, the problem of

grain or currency). Deep probing into a particular place or problem will make future investigation of other places or problems easier.

7. Make your own notes.

The investigator should not only preside at fact-finding meetings and give proper guidance to those present but should also make his own notes and record the results himself. To have others do it for him is no good.

ON OPPOSING BUREAUCRACY⁶²

1963

With our administrative offices so out of touch with reality, bureaucratism is an easy illness to catch. Bureaucratism inevitably lead to separatism. We discovered a clear example of this with the “Yuejin” incident.⁶³ There is also regionalism below. The roots are all in bureaucratism. The year before last, many cadres were sent down [into production]. I drafted the document that resulted in them being sent down. Some people say they want to oppose it—that they can’t stand it. The problem is bureaucratism.

Bureaucratism is a legacy left over by the exploiting class. We and the minister for foreign affairs hope we can rely on you for advice.

Bureaucratism as a way of thinking manifests as a combination of individualism, decentralism, self-

⁶² There is much confusion around this document: some sources say that it was written by Zhou Enlai, others say by Mao. It is also oftentimes incorrectly dated as February 1970, the date on which the Joint Publications Research Services released its translation, or 1967, the date it was released in the *Mao Zedong Sixiang Wansui* [Long Live Mao Zedong Thought]. However, the original document in the *Wansui* is dated 1963 and cites Mao as the author. Mao Zedong, *Mao Zedong Sixiang Wansui* (Long Live Mao Zedong Thought), vol. 5 (Wuhan, 1968), 76–77. (Translation: Foreign Languages Press, Paris, 2020).

⁶³ The Yuejin was a freighter that sank in May 1963 after hitting rocks. Investigations led by Zhou Enlai showed that three reports on the danger of the route of the Yuejin were filed and ignored because of the complicated bureaucracy of the Ministry of Transport.

ish departmentalism, liberalism, commandism, routinism, and organizational sectarianism. Therefore, bureaucratism is bound to be linked to these “isms.” In short, we must concentrate on opposing the ideological style of the exploiting class. On March 1st, the Five-Antis directives of the Central Committee said: “Bureaucratism is on the rise.” I think this has a universal quality.

I’ll try to summarize twenty manifestations of bureaucracy:

1. They are aloof and ignorant. They do not understand the underlying situation and do not conduct investigations and studies, so they are divorced from reality and leadership. They fail to do political and ideological work, fail to grasp specific policies; they are separated from leadership above and from reality below. Once their orders are issued, they will inevitably bring disaster to the country and the people. This is bureaucracy that is divorced from leadership and the masses.

2. They are arrogant, self-satisfied, complacent, and they aimlessly discuss politics and do not grasp their work. They are subjective and one-sided; they don’t listen to others; they are arbitrary and impose orders; they disregard reality and blindly give orders. This is dictatorial bureaucratism.

3. They are very busy from morning until evening, they work hard the whole year round. But they work without investigation, they don’t study people, they don’t prepare speeches, and they work without plans. This is a mindless, disoriented bureaucratism.

4. They are full of official airs and act as if they are the only ones who matter. They are unapproachable and intimidating and boss cadres around; they have a rough manner, often cursing at people. This is officialdom bureaucratism.

5. They are ignorant and incompetent and ashamed to ask questions; they exaggerate and tell pompous lies, making fools of themselves; they deceive those above and conceal things from those below; they cover up their faults and take all the credit and blame others for mistakes. This is dishonest bureaucratism.

6. They don't study politics, don't engage deeply with their work, blame others when things go wrong, and fear responsibility; they procrastinate and have prolonged indecision; they engage in quibbling in their work and are politically apathetic. This is irresponsible bureaucratism.

7. They work in a perfunctory manner just to get by, muddling along, stirring up discord with others and making many mistakes; they flatter those above and put down those below, are two-faced and smooth and slick. This is the bureaucratism of working just to make a living.

8. They can't grasp politics, they can't master their work, they say what they think people want to hear and talk to everyone in the same manner; they take their pay without doing work; they make things up for the sake of appearances and are arbitrary in their leadership. This is bureaucratism that is satisfied with incompetence.

9. They are confused and chaotic and don't have a mind of their own; they muddle through; they are idle all day, wasting time. This is confused and useless bureaucracy.

10. They approve documents without reading them; if their approval is wrong, they don't admit it. They read by letting others do it for them, and when others are reading, they are asleep. They have countless thoughts but don't discuss things with others, handing everything off so that they don't have to take responsibility. They pretend to understand those below them, even if they don't, by criticizing and giving orders summarily; they go along to get along with those on the same level. This is lazy bureaucracy.

11. The government offices grow bigger and bigger, personnel is extremely complex, there's redundancy in the hierarchy, assets are wasted, there's a lot of people and everything is a mess, and they are running around in circles frantically while neglecting their proper duties. There are too many people for too little work and the level of efficiency is low. This is institutional bureaucracy.

12. They don't read instructions and don't approve reports; they don't circulate meetings or use reports that have been submitted, and they don't communicate or discuss. This is bureaucracy of formalism.

13. They want to enjoy themselves and engage in backdoor deals. They're afraid of hardships. If one person is promoted, then all his cronies will also ascend. If one person is made an official, his whole family will enjoy the benefits. Internally and exter-

nally everyone is treated to meals and given gifts. This is bureaucratism of special favors.

14. The bigger the official gets, the worse his temperament—the bigger his house, the better the furnishings, the higher his living requirements. The more supplies there are, the more the allocations and the lower the price. This is the bureaucratism of putting on official airs.

15. They are selfish, self-interested, self-serving; they act for their own benefit, knowingly breaking the law; they eat a lot and take a lot and don't give anything back. This is selfish, self-serving bureaucracy.

16. They compete for acclaim and power, ingratiating themselves to the Party; they haggle over every penny, find fault in all of the work; they fraternize with their comrades and are indifferent to the masses. This is the bureaucratism of power struggles.

17. These are leaders of many different minds who can't unite with each other; they have multiple political lines and their work is disorganized; the top and the bottom are divorced from each other, and they try to push each other out; there is no centralization, nor is there any democracy. This is disunited bureaucratism.

18. They don't heed any organization and appoint personal friends; they form cliques to further their own private interests and protect each other, individual and factional interests stand above all else; they harm the larger public for the sake of small individual interests. This is sectarian bureaucratism.

19. Their revolutionary will has deteriorated and their political life has degenerated. They rely on old accomplishments to “eat,” putting on official airs. They love leisure and hate work, taking scenic tours. They don’t use their brains nor their hands; they don’t care about the interests of the country or the people. This is degenerate bureaucracy.

20. They encourage harmful tendencies, indulge bad people and bad things, retaliate, suppress democracy, oppress the masses, protect bad people; they don’t differentiate between the enemy and ourselves and flout the law. This is bureaucracy that encourages harmful tendencies.

In short, bureaucracy divorces cadres from reality and the masses, and ignoring the interests of the masses will harm the party’s line and policy. Instead of sharing the joys and sorrows of the masses as ordinary workers, they talk empty politics, are dishonest, irresponsible, incompetent, and useless. They immerse themselves in transactionalism, special favors, selfishness, disunity, and sectarianism, and finally end in degeneration.

The ideological, social, historical, and ideological roots of bureaucracy are the ideological ways of the exploiting class, including bourgeois individualism and pragmatism, as well as feudal patriarchy. (The four major families in the *Dream of the Red Chamber* included forty serf owners, two-thirds of whom were bureaucrats.)

The roots of class society are the new bourgeoisie, the old bourgeoisie, and urban and rural feudal

forces. Internationally, we are surrounded by capitalism, and imperialism and revisionism are united.

Historical roots: Our revolution smashed the old state apparatus and established a new state apparatus, but the old ruling forces, traditional influences, and the old personnel were retained. The policy was correct, but it brought side effects. In 1951, the focus of the “Three Antis” was against corruption. In 1957, the focus was against Rightism. Last year, it was mainly criticizing decentralism, so bureaucratism has not been a focus in the past years. Now, the soil for breeding bureaucratism is fertile, which is also the soil for revisionism and dogmatism.

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