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Speeches/Documents

Title: Some questions concerning urban work

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Description:

Chairman Mao has delivered a very good report, and many comrades have made fine speeches too. I agree with them all. During the agrarian reform, mistakes were made in various places, for which the Central Committee is in part responsible because most are my fault. The focus at the Land Conference was on repudiating Right deviations, and although at the same time "Left" deviations were criticized and combated, not enough was done to prevent them. Although to a certain extent anarchy and a lack of discipline were noted and reprobated, these deviations were not set right until Chairman Mao developed a systematic criticism and laid correction.

From now on urban work will be the focus of our work throughout the Party. I would now like to discuss a few relevant questions.

1. *The cities and villages* We should regard the cities and villages as an integral whole. So far, we have been dealing with rural problems only but the addition of urban problems means we now must attend to the difficulties related to large industries, state-owned enterprises which are socialist in character, state capitalism, the relationship between the cities and the countryside, and so on. In guiding the work of our Party as a whole, we must focus on urban work by keeping these problems in mind and giving them due consideration. We must change the practice of concentrating on just one area at a time or we will make mistakes.

2. *The take-over of the cities* This problem has by and large been solved. Although there are some shortcomings, the people are pleased with the results to date. Two problems remain to be solved, however.

One concerns the resumption of work in private enterprises. Many private enterprises in Beijing have not yet resumed operations. It is true that some capitalists find it difficult to do so, but there are certainly others who are causing trouble and going slow in an attempt to promote their own influence with the workers by weakening the Party's. Therefore, I propose that we adopt the principle of sending cadres or military representatives to such big cities as Nanjing and Shanghai to supervise private enterprises that have a vital bearing on the national economy and people's livelihood and whose owners cause trouble or move slowly. While it is not yet advisable to issue a general decree on the supervision of private

enterprises, detailed instructions should be given both to those who are sent as supervisors and to the enterprises concerned. Full preparations must be made in advance. The situation in the enterprises must be sized up (we can have talks with the capitalists) and relevant problems clarified before the supervisors are dispatched. The powers and functions of the military representatives should be specifically defined in instructions which should lay down, among other things, that the owner must submit a detailed report to the military representative without withholding anything, that trade unions should be organized to conduct education among the workers and that the capitalists should be prevented from moving slowly or engaging in sabotage. In principle, the Party has no right to ban strikes by workers. But it must suppress the disruptive activities of capitalists and reactionaries in order to safeguard production. Naturally, where necessary and feasible, it is proper to assist capitalists overcome their difficulties in resuming work and maintaining production by helping them do such things as procure raw materials and establish markets.

The second problem concerns making prompt arrangements for handing the enterprises over to the proper institutions to run so that normal production may be carried on. Of course some enterprises, such as the Shanghai textile mills, don't fit anywhere and cannot resume normal production if they are handed over to local institutions. But since the Central Government has not yet been established and there is no one available to take charge of them, the Shanghai Municipality should try to do it. Once established, the Central Government should make preparations for taking over the large enterprises in big cities like Shanghai and Hankou.

The basic problems of administration of the cities after their takeover has not yet been solved. We should study the matter earnestly and find a solution after the current session is concluded. Our successful take-over of the cities must be followed up by their successful administration and transformation. We must get rid of some of the old things -- but not too many all at once -- and we should let new things grow. Successful administration of the cities means building them up and increasing production, thus bringing the workers and peasants closer to each other.

3. *Rely on the workers and increase production* With regard to administration of the cities, Chairman Mao raised two questions: On whom should we rely and to what purpose? His answer is to rely on the workers in order to increase production.

We must rely on the workers. But are they reliable? Marxism holds that the working class is most reliable. Generally speaking, this is correct, but we still have some specific problems. So we must strive to enable our working class to become completely reliable. If we ignore these problems and rely on the workers without doing any work among them, they won't necessarily be reliable.

Our Party used to have close ties with the workers, but later we were compelled to move to the countryside. The Kuomintang has been operating among the workers for so many years that, through its influence, it has made the ranks of workers more complicated. Moreover, our ties with the workers have been weakened and our cadres (including members of the Central Committee) do not know them very well and are no longer good at working among them. Hence, we must study assiduously, always bear in mind Chairman Mao's instruction to rely on the workers, strengthen our work among them and turn them into a completely reliable force. There are three principal measures we must take: do all we can to maintain the workers' living standard and prevent it from falling too low; conduct intensive education among the workers on a broad scale; and get them organized.

1) We must maintain the workers' livelihood. Whenever feasible and necessary, the People's Government should give the workers preferential treatment. For example, when we are short of goods and materials, we must ensure supplies for the workers (who come second only to the armed forces in this matter), and we should see to it that their living standard is higher than that of the staff members of our own institutions in the rear areas. Of course, it would be wrong for the workers to make unduly high demands and pursue nothing but material benefits, and we have already criticized this. Failure to protect the workers' livelihood or lack of concern for it would, however, be an even more serious mistake. If we lead an even harder life than the workers when times are most difficult, we will be in a better position to influence the workers and gain their understanding and support. Comrade Chen Yun⁽²⁾ told the workers in Shenyang that we were using coal tailings just as they were and that the best quality coals were being saved to run the trains which take our troops to the front. Then he posed the question, "Should good coal be used on trains or for cooking?" Once things were clarified, the workers had no complaints. That was the proper way to explain things.

There is no doubt that the Communist Party fights for the improvement of the life of the working class; this principle has not If we don't give the working class anything to look forward to, they will say that things remain the same and that we are no different from the Kuomintang. We must disseminate the idea that the living standards of the workers will surely be improved in the days to and that it is in the interest of the war effort, of construction and of the future that we are leading this hard life today. At present, many peasants complain that the workers, being exempt from obligatory labour and grain taxes, are better off than they and that this is unfair. The complaint is not entirely groundless, but we cannot accept it as it stands. The workers, for their part, say that the peasants have obtained land, and ask what they have received. Their wages have not been raised, nor their work-hours reduced and everything remains about the same as in the past. This is not entirely groundless either, but they should direct their attention to the future. Naturally, things are different with the workers in that handing the "factories to the individual workers" cannot be allowed. However, efforts should be made to explain to them that their living standards will be improved as soon as possible.

The wage problem has not yet been solved. We plan to either convene a special national conference after we move to Beijing, or perhaps to begin by studying one trade and trying to solve the problem there. It will involve a great deal of work, and I hope that everyone will give it their attention.

2) We must educate the workers. Once we enter the cities, we should immediately begin educational work, and we should spend a few months or half a year conducting extensive education among the workers and staff members, beginning with the workers. Old guilds and societies should be reorganized. As for the former staff members, a distinction should be made between those working in enterprises and those in government institutions. Those in enterprises should mainly be kept where they are. In the old government institutions, however, things will be thoroughly reorganized, so those who can be kept on will generally be transferred to other institutions (excepting those who are needed for their special skills). It would be wrong to leave the old government institutions intact.

To sum up, both staff members and workers should receive education, especially political education. This can be done through short term training classes lasting one or two, or perhaps three to four months by giving general lectures or running night schools. General lectures should be the main form at first. According to Comrade Li Lisan⁽³⁾, three thousand staff members and workers have attended training classes and thirty thousand have attended lectures since the liberation of Shenyang. It goes without saying that former staff members who are retained should receive retraining.

Most of our training classes have largely focused on teaching our policies. Politics have to be discussed, but the neglect of instruction in historical materialism and the failure to conduct adequate propaganda on the proletarian world outlook are major shortcomings. In the movement for pouring out grievances, the POW's changed sides within a week, courageously turning their guns against the enemy. The same was true of the peasants during agrarian reform. That is Marxist class education. Persons who have adopted the class viewpoint and stand as well as the theories of class struggle and historical materialism can stand firm; those who have not, even though they may be well aware of the policies, will become unsteady and vacillate when confronted with grave difficulties. This has happened again and again. In educating the workers, we should pay special attention to this point. We must intensify class education among them so as to enhance their class consciousness. The liberation of Beijing and Tianjin has provided favourable conditions for such education, and the workers have shown their warm enthusiasm for it by asking us to give lectures which they attend even after a day's hard work. The workers' enthusiasm will cool if, after we have been in the city for six months, we haven't undertaken this task. Therefore, we must strike while the iron is hot, that is, go all out in conducting workers' training classes and short term training courses and in selecting fine comrades to attend workers' political colleges. The colleges should be run in the same way as colleges are run in the Northeast. At the schools there, priority is given to

teaching the basic concepts of Marxism-Leninism (historical materialism, the concept that labour creates the world and the theories of surplus value and class struggle) and the basic questions of the Chinese revolution. Following instruction in those two subjects, the schools focus on our various policies and the concrete problems of organizational work. In general, these are taught.

Only through such education can the workers, or at least the advanced ones, acquire a higher political consciousness. The next thing to do is set up trade unions and expand Party organizations among the workers. In principle, the Party should admit a large number of members from among their ranks. In this way we can get a grip on the industries and the cities. When the workers have raised their political consciousness and organized themselves into trade unions and when there is a large number of Party members among them, they will be the most reliable force, and we shall understand each other better.

Mutual understanding is very important. We have been cut off from the workers for a long time and have lost touch with them. Just as many of our leading cadres know very little about them, they know very little about us. They are, however, eager to get to know us. So, after entering the cities, our leading comrades should go among the workers, talk with them and get close to them in order to build genuine mutual understanding.

3) We must organize trade unions. The National Federation of Trade Unions should adopt a resolution concerning the organization of trade unions. There are several million industrial workers throughout the country, and the number may amount to ten million when the handicraft workers are included. It should be stipulated that only those who live by selling their labour power are qualified for membership and that this excludes small handicraftsmen. Trade union federations of a national character, such as a federation of railway trade unions, can be organized to represent several large trades. In principle, all the workers should be organized into trade unions. The workers' representative conference is a very good form of organization. Such conferences can be convened in any factory or government institution which has over three hundred workers and staff members. When linked together, these conferences will constitute the basis of a municipal workers' representative conference. A municipal workers' representative conference can be convened prior to the establishment of trade unions. To begin with, it can discuss problems concerning the workers' daily life and then gradually the four subjects to be move to questions of production and municipal administration. Such a conference can serve as the first step in the establishment of a municipal people's representative conference. A municipal government can then report its work plans to the municipal workers' representative conference, put forward proposals, give explanations and ask the representatives to discuss them. When enough experience has been gained with the workers' representative conference, we can proceed to organize student and neighborhood representative conferences and, after several months or a year, go further to organize a municipal people's representative conference.

The people's representative conference constitutes the principal system and form of organization for the people's political power, because it is a whole chain of conferences at different levels that will elect corresponding government councils. As a democratic form, it is the main form, and it will be in constant and general use as the link between higher and lower levels and between administrative orders and mass movements. A factory director's orders will be more readily carried out if they are discussed and approved by the workers' representative conference before being passed down to the grass roots. All localities should adopt this form and go about instituting it on a broad scale. We did not do anything like this during the Great Revolution, nor did we do much during the civil war years and the War of Resistance Against Japan, but we cannot put it off any longer. If we do, it will be detrimental to our effort to combat bureaucratism and to effectively overcome all the maladies attendant on administrative orders. It is time for all localities to convene people's representative conferences.

To recapitulate, a guaranteed livelihood will help enhance the workers' morale, intensive education will raise their political awareness, and organization will unite them and add to their strength. This is the way to win the support of the working class and to get the workers to back us up by striving to increase production. It will lead to a mutual reliance and close ties between the Communist Party and the workers.

Notes

[A] In the original transcription of this work, the Editorial Committee on Party Literature (Central Committee of the Communist Party of China) opted to separate editorial and explanatory notes into two separate categories, independently numbered relative to (1) the type of note and (2) chronological appearance in the text.

Both editorial and explanatory notes are presented in the present transcription in chronological order based solely on the current order of relevance to the selected text.

Additionally, the Pinyin (Chinese phonetic alphabet) spellings of Chinese proper names are used exclusively throughout the present transcription to preserve the continuity of the original transcription.

1. A speech made at the Second Plenary Session of the Seventh Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party, held from March 5 to 13, 1949 in Xibaipo Village, Pingshan County, Hebei Province.

2. Chen Yun (1904-), a native of Qingpu County, Shanghai, was a member of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the CPC, deputy secretary of its Northeast Bureau, deputy political commissar of the Northeast Military Area and Chairman of the Northeast Commission of Financial and Economic Affairs.

3. Li Lisan was the Vice-Chairman of the All-China Federation of Trade Unions and secretary of the party fraction in the federation.