

## **TOP LEADERS MUST RAISE THEIR REVOLUTIONARY CONSCIOUSNESS**

*February 10, 1954*

To safeguard Party solidarity and keep the Party from splitting is primarily the responsibility of the top leaders. As a matter of fact, our Party has split on several occasions. Zhang Guotao and others once split the Party, causing great harm to the revolutionary cause, although in the end we were able to restore unity.<sup>147</sup>

Now at this Fourth Plenary Session of the Seventh Party Central Committee we again have before us a draft resolution that calls for the strengthening of Party unity.<sup>148</sup> What does this resolution mean? It can be interpreted as a warning that ambitious people like Zhang Guotao can be expected to emerge again, and that unless we are vigilant, there may be unfortunate occurrences that weaken our solidarity or even split the Party. Of course, it is discouraging to talk about such dangers, but we have to face reality.

Many of our comrades used to believe that careerists like Zhang Guotao could no longer exist in our Party. They argued that, first, our Party has a history of more than 30 years, and the revolution has been victorious; our cadres have been through many trials, and they do not want ambitious men like Zhang Guotao in the Party. Second, they said, so long as we strengthen Marxist-Leninist education in the Party, it will be impossible for careerists to find a place in it. Third, now that we have Chairman Mao, it is not likely that such men can come to the fore—an argument based on the hope that Chairman Mao will live forever.

Even today these reasons sound very convincing, but in my opinion the three safeguards alone are not enough to ensure that careerists like Zhang Guotao will never again emerge. Our Party exists in a class society. We haven't yet abolished classes, and even after they have disappeared, class

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ideologies will linger for a long time. Under these social conditions, such ideologies will surely find expression in the Party. Quite a few of our senior cadres have individualistic ideas, to varying degrees. If ever the atmosphere were favourable or the opportunity presented itself, those individualistic ideas could grow to enormous proportions.

We used to assume that once we had made the revolution it would be impossible for another Zhang Guotao to come forward. We now believe just the opposite—it is easier for such persons to rise in a country where the revolution has triumphed than elsewhere. And it is also easier for them now than in the years when we were doing underground work in the cities or waging guerrilla war in mountain valleys. After all, for what purpose did we join together—to make a revolution or to become officials? The question is easy to answer. Originally we came together to work for the revolution. Later on we also held official posts, working for the revolution in the capacity of government functionaries. But the higher some people rose, the more they became puffed up with their own importance. [*Laughter.*] They only wanted to be officials, not revolutionaries, and completely forgot about the revolution.

In a country where the revolution has triumphed, there are films and photographs celebrating the leaders. When we attend meetings, we are greeted with warm applause; when we review troops, we feel powerful and important; when we arrive in railway stations, people give us flowers and line the streets cheering. Moreover, we have abundant opportunities to enjoy material benefits, which could have a corrupting effect. It was hard for us to lead a corrupt life in the days when we were in Ruijin and Yan'an, but now it is easy. Now that we have come to power, we must not be complacent about the situation in the Party.

So I think those well-meaning people who hope that careerists will never again emerge in our Party are likely to be disappointed. It is risky to cherish that hope.

Comrades who are being criticized at this session may adopt one of two attitudes: they may either correct their mistakes or refuse to do so. Right now they are engaging in self-criticism. That is good, though some of their self-criticisms may not be thorough enough. As Comrade Qu Qiubai once said, it is hard to make a water buffalo change direction.<sup>149</sup> Many cases bear out his remark. Nevertheless, I still sincerely hope these comrades will mend their ways.

But I want to raise a question: Even if these comrades correct their mistakes, can we rest assured that no one else will make the same mistakes in future? Zhang Guotao is a man of the past, but can we be sure there will

never be a Li Guotao or a Wang Guotao? We should never rule out that possibility; otherwise we shall be making a mistake ourselves. It would be better to expect the worst. Whether future troubles will be, like those caused by Zhang Guotao, serious enough to split the Party and the army, depends on the circumstances. Troubles will surely arise, but whether they have grave consequences depends on the particular conditions at the time. We must not be lulled into a false sense of security or take it for granted that the unthinkable will never happen in the Party.

It is good to strengthen Marxist-Leninist education within the Party, but I don't think education is enough to ensure that a Li Guotao or a Wang Guotao will never emerge. There is no doubt that Marxist-Leninist education will play an important role. It is because we believed in Marxism-Leninism that we joined together to make the revolution. So of course, we must strengthen Marxist-Leninist education in the Party. But I don't think that alone will keep us from every danger. Was not Zhang Guotao a veteran Party member? Did he not receive at least as much Marxist-Leninist education as the rank-and-file cadres? Nevertheless, he betrayed our Party. What does this prove? It proves that Marxist-Leninist education alone is no guarantee that careerists will never appear in the Party.

Some comrades say that with Chairman Mao as our leader, careerists will never emerge in the Party. I'm afraid that argument doesn't stand up either. Certainly, Chairman Mao is a great leader whom the Party rallies around, but can this ensure that another Zhang Guotao will never come forward? In my opinion, it can only ensure that there will be fewer men of that sort and that they will rise more slowly.

With Chairman Mao at the helm, when activities intended to split the Party are discovered, the problem can be easily and quickly solved. Chairman Mao himself, however, cannot ensure that no one will ever undertake such activities. "Long live Chairman Mao" is a political slogan—physiologically, Chairman Mao is not immortal. It might seem inappropriate at this Fourth Plenary Session to say that Chairman Mao cannot live forever, but we are materialists and we know that it is true.

As we think it over, then, can we find a way to prevent ambitious men from rising in the Party leadership? Is there any way to ward off the danger of the Party's being split? In my opinion, the only reliable way, the only one that can be passed on to the next generation, is to raise the revolutionary consciousness and vigilance of top leaders. We, the top leaders sitting here today, are in our forties, fifties, sixties or seventies and shall pass away one by one, but at the same time others will come along to replace us. We cannot be sure that none of them will be ambitious men interested only in their own

advancement, but we can find a way to minimize any trouble they may cause.

When such people appear, what will determine the extent of the trouble? I think that depends on the several hundred top leaders, that is, the cadres at and above the level of secretary of a provincial or municipal Party Committee and senior cadres in the army. Provided these people have a high revolutionary consciousness and vigilance, even if another Zhang Guotao appears, he will easily be exposed. Otherwise, when careerists appear, they may succeed in stirring up dissension and even splitting the Party. Where will the serious trouble arise? Precisely among these several hundred people, especially among those sitting here today in your civilian or military uniforms—leaders of the Party, the government and the army. If careerists appear, shall we be able to expose them promptly and avoid serious trouble? That also depends on these same people. So long as we keep our wits about us, our victory in the revolution will be safeguarded.

Senior cadres should heighten their revolutionary vigilance and keep their eyes and ears open. I think that is the only reliable safeguard for Party unity. To that must be added one more point: we should strictly observe the Party's rules and regulations and maintain its excellent work style. That will ensure the unity of the Party. I think we can rely only on ourselves.

Senior cadres should not let themselves be carried away by success. Let's think back: Since the Seventh National Party Congress in 1945, the few leaders who made serious mistakes were conceited and bore a heavy burden, the belief that they were always correct.<sup>150</sup> People who bear this burden are bound to make mistakes. So we must be on guard against that attitude.

I do not mean it is good to make mistakes, but comrades who have not made any and whose work has been going smoothly should be very careful. And those who have made mistakes may work correctly for a time, but they must be very careful too, lest they become conceited again and make more mistakes. Comrades, you should be on your guard when people applaud your performance. A person can respond to applause in two ways: by being modest or by becoming conceited. Those who become conceited will get into trouble.