

REPORT DELIVERED AT A CONFERENCE ON
THE PRESS IN SOUTHWEST CHINA

May 16, 1950

The pen is a major tool for exercising leadership, so leading comrades should learn to write. Holding meetings is essential to leadership, but it is always a small number of people who can attend meetings; even when you make an important report, the audience will number no more than a few hundred. Private conversation is also a way to exercise leadership, but it is confined only to individuals. The pen provides the tool for exercising the most extensive leadership. Through writing people can spread their views far and wide and refine and systematize their thoughts. That is why Chairman Mao told us that writing is a major way to exercise leadership. Anyone who cannot write should learn to write and those whose writing is poor should gradually improve it.

Writing takes on many forms. It is important for the Party and government to write resolutions, directives, plans and telegrams, but the directives and telegrams can be communicated only to a limited range of cadres. None of our policies, however, can take effect unless they are made known to the masses, not just to the cadres. The most extensive uses of writing are in publishing articles in the newspapers, issuing pamphlets and broadcasting them over the radio. Moreover, if the work of the press and broadcasting is closely integrated with practical and central tasks, it will be more effective on a broader scale than other means and will play a greater role in the carrying out of the leaders' intentions.

What if some local leaders say that "the pen is too heavy" and they do not know how to write? We should drive home to them the importance of the pen and the press, so as to help them understand that he who does not know how to wield the pen cannot make a competent leader. Writing is not so difficult; the most important thing is that what you write should be sound in content. Leading comrades are already in the right position -- they are well informed, and they view things in a correct and relatively comprehensive manner. The technical aspect of writing is of secondary importance. So long as they try hard and receive help from others, they can gradually increase their ability to write. If they are reluctant to write articles, journalists should go and encourage them to do it. When a leading comrade refuses to write, he always has a good reason to offer, "I cannot

write" or "I have no time to write." Then you should go to him and suggest, "You do the speaking; I will do the writing." Or, you can ask someone who has a close contact with the leader and can write to do the writing. The best way, however, is for leading comrades themselves to write; journalists can then volunteer to help, and they should make plans for people to contribute articles to their newspapers. In this way we can progressively make it possible for leading organs and leading comrades to wield and exercise leadership over the newspapers. A well-run newspaper meets three requirements: it deals with practical matters, maintains close ties with the masses and makes criticism of others and itself. The fulfilment of these requirements depends on our leadership; otherwise, the newspaper will turn into a "recorder" and its news will carry no weight. Therefore, running a newspaper successfully presupposes leadership.

Local newspapers should be made a success, too. The Xinhua Daily has been making progress lately. Newspapers should carry the general news released by the central news agency, but local papers do not necessarily have to use all the material released by the head office of the Xinhua News Agency. Instead, they should select, rewrite, condense or improve it, as appropriate. They should also consider whether readers have enough time to read so much news and whether they can understand the views contained in their newspapers. Compared to the leading newspapers, some local newspapers are more practical and suited to the needs of the people, their style is livelier and their language is easier to understand. Of course, leading newspapers must be published in the places where they are needed, such as in big cities, but this is not necessary in every locality. Newspapers should cover the practical matters of life and the central task at a given time and place. Dispatches from the head office of Xinhua News Agency should get primary consideration, and they may be easily edited. Leading comrades and those working on the newspapers should concentrate on local news and give wide coverage to the local people's work and life. Local newspaper offices should keep in constant touch with leaders so as to keep their guidelines in conformity with the current local tasks. Not long ago Xinhua Daily carried a special commentary on the suppression of bandits. Its main theme was a criticism. Was it correct? Yes. Was it appropriate at that time? No. To judge correctness, we should take into account time, place, circumstances, and other factors. When our troops had achieved some success in suppressing bandits through their arduous

and bitter struggle, it was an inappropriate time to be critical. A month earlier it would have been appropriate. This shows that our comrades lacked adequate understanding of the actual suppression of bandits. Today the newspapers are more influential than in the past, so the result would be unthinkable if they publish something incorrect. Over the past few years only a few cadres were reading newspapers, but this has changed. People trust the newspapers and try to follow what they say. After a newspaper criticizes mistakes in one place, the same mistakes will quietly be corrected in many others. That is the function of the newspapers. Many people look to the newspapers to find out the attitude of the Communist Party and the policies of the People's Government. They seek from the newspapers solutions to their own problems. Precisely because cadres and the masses all value our newspapers, we must exercise discretion.

What are the central tasks of Southwest China today? For the area as a whole, the central tasks are: one, to suppress bandits; two, to fulfil the quotas for public grain, taxes and bonds; three, to exercise leadership in production (mainly agricultural production); and four, to regulate industry and commerce and give relief to the unemployed. To accomplish these tasks, both people's and peasant conferences should be convened. The next step is to reduce land rent this winter and next spring, also a task which applies to the whole area.

What has been accomplished so far towards fulfilling these tasks? Regarding the suppression of bandits, Sichuan Province has a wealth of valuable experience that should be reported in the newspapers, provided we do not give away our tactics. The newspapers should publicize our policy of combining this suppression with leniency towards the bandits, that is, the main criminals shall be punished without fail, those who are accomplices under duress shall not be punished, and those who render meritorious service shall be rewarded. What do we mean when we say that those who are accomplices under duress shall not be punished? It means they should be exempted from punishment, but some accomplices have been released without interrogation, and this is a mistake. They should at least be educated and confess their crimes before they are released on bail. Generally speaking, the suppression of bandits in Sichuan has been successful. Things are different in Guizhou and Yunnan provinces. The newspapers must grasp the special characteristics of each area. This is in the nature of the guiding function

of newspapers.

Collecting public grain always starts off with a fanfare and ends up in failure. Wanxian County has found a fairly appropriate solution to this problem. We should praise their methods and introduce them to other areas. This is the way we exercise leadership. The newspapers should guide the collection of public grain by means of commentaries, editorials and a series of news reports.

The guidance of production on the whole is not bad. Chairman Mao stressed that production in new areas should be kept at the same level as before and should not drop, while in the old liberated areas it should increase. This is no easy job. At present, the peasants are more enthusiastic about production, but they should not be encouraged to reclaim wasteland, because they will have to fell trees for the purpose, and the major problem in Sichuan now is the scarcity of wooded areas. It was reported that in some localities some rich tenant-peasants had redistributed their land to poor peasants, and allegedly, voluntarily. This should not be commended in editorials or publicized through news reports. Discretion is one of the main policies for dealing with matters of production. Therefore, we should be careful when dealing with matters about which we are uncertain -- examining them first or writing something in their favour, while, at the same time, pointing out what dangers may be involved, so that people can consider them from a different angle. This is also a way to exercise leadership.

The regulation of industry and commerce chiefly involves the cities. Our policy is to regulate the relations between the workers and their employers to benefit both of them; otherwise it will harm the entire national economy. We should support private industry and commerce beneficial to the national economy and the people's livelihood, encouraging private enterprises' enthusiasm for production. Capitalists, on their part, should improve management and reduce costs. Recently the newspapers reported on some privately run cotton mills that have managed to solve their difficulties. This is the correct thing to do, since holding up exemplary private enterprises is a way to exercise leadership over private enterprises. We should give assistance to progressive and promising private enterprises and encourage those that have no future to manufacture other products. The regulation of industry and commerce involves three aspects: the capitalists, the work force and the state, and it must facilitate the development of the

productive forces. The Communist Party works for the development of the productive forces; to do otherwise would run counter to Marxist theory. In Shanghai a bale of cotton yarn sells for five million yuan, and here it costs nine million. Who will buy it at such a high price? We cannot allow the erection of tariff barriers in the Three Gorges area, which would lead to the setting up of a feudal separatist regime there again. It is said that some industrialists and businessmen don't like our policies and yet, at the same time, they are truly trying to remould themselves. That is fine; they will see that our policies are beneficial to them in due course. Since we are in the midst of great reform, some destruction is unavoidable. Enterprises that are managed in a very irrational manner will go bankrupt and so will those engaged in speculation and profiteering. There is no future for the manufacture of joss sticks, candles and paper money burned as offerings to the dead and other articles of superstition. The production of some articles, such as cosmetics, should be reduced for the present, but may be increased ten years from now. We should properly guide the development of industry and commerce. Stable prices are beneficial to them; recently loans have been made on this basis. We should provide guidance to and specify the use of loans. For instance, the two billion yuan plus lent to the Minsheng Company was specified for buying coal and repairing ships, thus helping solve some production problems in the coal and machine-building industries. Supervision is necessary to make sure that loans are all used appropriately, otherwise anarchy would arise. Some enterprises have turned out products in excess of demand, finding no market for them, so they should stop to manufacture other products under guidance.

Unemployment is mainly a problem in the big cities. It is said there are 50,000 unemployed people in Chongqing (out of a total of 250,000 workers), 10,000 in Guiyang (out of 30,000) and 20,000 in Chengdu. Proper arrangements should be made for these unemployed workers and they should receive relief from the government.

Solving these problems chiefly depends on the convening of conferences of people from all circles, which provide the best and principal means of maintaining links with the masses. It is necessary to conduct rectification among cadres, with emphasis on combatting bureaucratism and authoritarianism. This includes both "busy work bureaucratism" and "push comes to shove authoritarianism".

The Central Committee will soon promulgate a land law and people of all social strata

should be encouraged to study it, because it involves everybody. Careful study will prepare people for this year's reduction of land rent rates and next year's agrarian reform. The newspapers should organize study and discussion of the law to enable people inside and outside the Party to understand it. "With many eyes watching and many fingers pointing" and with everybody studying and coming to understand the law, cadres will not dare to act irresponsibly. This is a good thing for the leadership as a whole.

All the tasks mentioned above require leadership exercised by way of the newspapers. We should concentrate on the outstanding issues, sometimes devoting a whole page to one issue or spending a month to explain the tasks and help bring about their fulfilment by publishing a series of commentaries and editorials. That way people will take note of them. The effect of newspapers depends on quantity as well as quality of the articles they carry. By quality we mean accuracy, to which must be added greater quantity. When everyone follows this principle, our newspapers will carry weight.

Lately, Xinhua Daily has improved when it comes to criticizing others and itself. In the past it reported only the good news and not the bad. Now it also reports bad news, which is good for counteracting conceit and apathy. A newspaper's power lies mainly in its criticism of others and in self-criticism. Some newspapers have been praised by the Central Committee chiefly because they were successful in this respect and in making a clear distinction between what is right and what is wrong and between what should be done and what should not. When criticizing a mistake, the newspapers should make use of typical cases throughout, while pointing out the positive orientation, sometimes purposely contrasting the good with the bad. Only in this way can criticism or self-criticism be effective, showing that it is intended for the purpose of improving work, rather than just for the sake of criticism. What is meant by "liveliness"? This has nothing to do with the length of an article, but means that the account is written in a lively style and with a conclusion. Some newspapers only expose the problems and fail to follow up on their solution. Of course, a lot of descriptive details are unnecessary. Since we have seriously fallen short in criticism and self-criticism, we should make a greater effort in this area. Leaders of Party committees and governments should fully support reporters in writing critical articles. Nowadays, few people dare to say what they think, so we should encourage people to speak. When necessary, we should also point out and refute false

criticism.

The leaders view the publishing of newspapers as concerning everyone, and the journalists feel the same way. When the newspapers are really involved with practical matters and the masses, and are well run, they will be the greatest help to leaders. It often happens that the newspapers are better informed than the Party and government. They can feel the pulse of our society. They can discover the most outstanding issues of the day simply by making a comprehensive study of readers' letters.

None of the tasks can be accomplished by just one newspaper. Different newspapers are concerned with different aspects of life. Therefore, it requires a joint effort for the voice of the Party and government to be communicated to people of all strata.