

SPEECH AT THE SHENYANG WORKERS' CONGRESS

January 5, 1949

This congress has been a successful one. The factory representatives have informed us of many facts and many opinions of the workers. We are very happy to learn that our workers are not thinking only about their own benefits, about their wages and other problems of daily life, but are more concerned with production and development. This shows that the workers have become true masters of the nation. Under the puppet Manzhouguo regime²⁶⁸ or the Kuomintang they would not have offered opinions on such matters; indeed the authorities would not have allowed them to do so. Only now, under the leadership of the People's Government, can they express their views freely and become involved in the great issues of production and national development. This shows that the Communist Party and the People's Government under its leadership truly represent and serve the workers, peasants and other people and act in accordance with their ideas. The workers are the masters of their factories and of the nation as well. At this congress all of you have displayed your sense of responsibility as masters of the country and the high level of political awareness of the working class. That is particularly inspiring. I hope that when you return to your factories you will tell your workmates that the government will do everything possible to help improve their lives and to solve as many problems as can be solved at present. On the other hand, they should shoulder the burden too and do all they can to make a success of production and to help overthrow the reactionaries as soon as possible. Only thus will it be possible for all of us to improve our lives.

Congresses of this sort will be held regularly in future, so that we can keep informed of the situation in the factories and of the opinions of the workers and thus improve our work. What magic weapon has enabled the Communist Party to lead the revolution over the last 20 years to the point

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where the revolutionary forces have grown so strong and nationwide victory is so near at hand? It is the wisdom of the people, nothing else. As the saying goes, "Three cobblers with their wits combined match Zhuge Liang, the master mind." When a problem arises, we hold a meeting to consult the people and we find a solution. I suggest that leading members of the departments concerned attend the congresses in future.

As for the problems that have been raised today, we will do our best to solve those that can be solved. But that doesn't mean we can solve each and every one right now. Since we are not familiar with specific conditions in the factories, it will be hard for us to give specific answers. Take the complaints about an unfair wage for a particular worker, for example. That is something that can only be resolved through consultations in the factory. The workers will understand my failure to solve every problem immediately. But you can be sure that I will relay your questions to the appropriate departments and leave it to their discretion to settle them.

PUT UP WITH TEMPORARY HARDSHIPS AND SUPPORT THE FRONT

Your suggestions fall into several categories, which I shall now discuss briefly. Some of the suggestions relating to wages, living conditions and benefits should be adopted, since they are feasible at present. For instance, wages can be paid twice a month, a small library can be set up in each factory and families can be brought back from Shanhaiguan, Tangshan and other places. You can ask the trade unions for the necessary passes.

There are many other suggestions that ought to be adopted but cannot be, because of the many difficulties. I hope you can understand that.

The first one concerns coal. The coal³⁶⁹ we are now supplying for daily use doesn't burn well. That makes it hard to prepare breakfast and so delays the start of work. Why are we supplying you with anthracite? Let me explain. When Shenyang was liberated, most of the coal we found here came from Huazigou,³⁷⁰ with only about 20,000 tons from Fushun. Now that our Northeast Army has moved to places south of the Great Wall, many trains are needed to transport its supplies. But the locomotives can only burn coal from Fushun. Please consider which alternative you would prefer: we can supply you with coal from Fushun for cooking, while starving the People's Liberation Army south of the Great Wall and undermining its effort to capture Beiping and Tianjin. Or we workers and other people in the rear

areas can put up with some hardships for the time being and use anthracite for cooking. Of course you would prefer the latter. Why can't some coal be sent here too, since Fushun is so near by? The Fushun Coal Mine was wrecked by the Kuomintang. In the open-cut mine the miners are extracting coal, but they are not digging to expose new veins. All the vertical shafts are flooded. The more than 30,000 miners are producing only about 3,000 tons of coal a day. It will take quite a while to repair the mine. In the Fuxin Mine the shafts are also flooded, and it will not be possible to produce coal there for some time. There is coal in northern Manchuria,²⁵³ but the trains are too busy to transport much of it for the time being. It all boils down to the following question: shall we support the PLA at the front and help liberate the people of Beiping and Tianjin, or shall we use the coal for cooking in the rear areas? Which is more important? Of course it is the former. If we do not finish the job of overthrowing the reactionaries, the victory of the working class cannot be consolidated. We have to put up with the difficulties of using anthracite for the sake of the long-term interests of the whole working class. I hope that when you go back you will explain clearly to the workers that the government is deeply concerned about their living conditions and is trying every possible means to provide them with good-quality coal as soon as it can be transported here.

The other problem you raise is that there are not nearly enough food distribution points, which makes the process too slow. It is true that in a factory with thousands or tens of thousands of workers, one or two food distribution points are not enough. Compare this with a county town. How many stores selling grain, oil, salt and coal do you have in a town with a population of 50,000 to 60,000! A factory with 10,000 workers plus their families is almost the equivalent of a county town, but it is not easy to open as many stores there. It's an enormous job. Of the payment in kind that was made to employees of government-owned enterprises in Shenyang in December, grain and coal alone amounted to 35,000 tons, which it took 1,166 freight cars to transport. It was another hard job just to distribute those supplies to the factories within a few days. To get them quickly and correctly from the factories to each individual worker proved even harder. When you go back, you should all call on the workers for suggestions, talk it over and devise better methods of distribution. You can ask them to lend a helping hand and set up consumers' co-ops in the factories.

There is another problem, one that you have not raised today: the grain we are supplying now is poor, and we can't guarantee to provide better in future. That is a hard job too. The grain at the government's disposal is public grain turned over to it by the peasants. Most of the emancipated

peasants send good grain, but a few who have a lower level of political awareness send inferior grain. Moreover, it is hard to take proper care of so much grain. Corn, in particular, is likely to mildew unless it is kept cool and is aerated frequently. That is why grain stored by the government is not so good as grain sold on the private market. If we had paid wages in cash and asked you to buy grain in the market, the money would have depreciated and you would have lost out in the end. The government will make every effort to provide you with good grain. But we hope you will understand our difficulties when the grain is not so good.

Another problem is that the windows in the factories were shattered in Kuomintang air raids, and that makes the workshops very cold. Since the plate-glass factory hasn't resumed production, we have to use sheets of iron and wooden boards instead of glass. It is still cold, of course, and the light is shut out. But I hope you can put up with this hardship too for the time being; things should improve once the glass factory goes into production again.

There are some other problems that you must solve through consultation, such as how to differentiate between light and heavy labour in some enterprises and how to make the wage rates more rational in consequence. You should solve all these problems when you return by calling on the workers to consult with the managers.

OVERTHROW THE REACTIONARIES AND BUILD A HAPPY FUTURE

Many representatives have said today that life is better now than it was under the rule of the Kuomintang. That is true. But measured against the goal of the revolution of the working class, our present life still leaves a great deal to be desired. The goal of the revolution is to ensure that all working people have food and clothing in adequate amounts and of better quality. Our present standard of living is still very low, and we have a long way to go to attain a relatively high one. The obstacle on the road is the Kuomintang reactionaries. So long as they are around, there will be no possibility of achieving our goal. The Chinese working class has been oppressed by capitalist imperialism and bureaucrat-capital for more than 100 years. Seeing that their power in China is on the verge of collapse, Chiang Kai-shek cries, "Let's stop fighting! I want peace!" He is trying to lull our people so that he can have a chance to catch his breath and stage a comeback. Are we going

to let him do that? (*Shouts of "No!"*) Right! We will not relax in the least but will work with determination to overthrow the reactionaries. Only when we have done that will we be able to devote ourselves wholeheartedly to developing production and building a happy future. After the victory of the Russian revolution the people didn't become prosperous until three five-year plans had been completed. Once we have overthrown the Kuomintang reactionaries across the country, we too will work hard and engage in large-scale construction. Older workers may be dejected: "How many years will construction take? I may not be able to wait that long." But even if you can't wait that long, won't you have sons and grandsons? Our working class works not for itself alone but for the whole people and for the enduring happiness of future generations. In its pursuit of a better life, the working class has struggled for so many years to end the hardships caused by oppression and exploitation! One hundred and one years ago Marx and Engels wrote the *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, calling on the working class to free itself by making the revolution. It was 32 years ago that the revolution of the Russian working class triumphed. The Chinese working class has been struggling for 20 to 30 years and victory is now in sight. The working class in Shenyang suffered for decades, from the time of the reactionary regime of old China through the period of oppression by the Manzhouguo puppet regime and Japanese imperialism, up to and including the rule of the Kuomintang, or the "Second Manzhouguo."³⁷¹ Everything changed in Shenyang on the second of November last year. On the first of November Shenyang was under the rule of the Kuomintang reactionaries, but on the day after, the working class and the people became masters of the city. That was emancipation. It seemed to have happened overnight. But in reality, it was the result of 20 to 30 years of hard struggle. Even when nationwide liberation is achieved, we will have to rely on our own effort to provide ourselves with enough good food and clothing. We should anticipate that that is going to take quite some time.

You have made suggestions regarding study, and that shows the strong enterprising spirit of the working class. Insofar as possible, we should satisfy those who want to attend classes in political affairs and general subjects. It is also very good that the workers want to learn technical skills and that they ask us to provide them with technical books translated from foreign languages and with pamphlets on general subjects and various industrial technologies. We should meet their wishes as and when we can. Some workers want to attend specialized technical schools for further study. That is also very good. We should not just have university graduates as our engineers. We should select from among the workers those who have a high level of political

consciousness and are hard-working, enterprising and eager to learn. We should send them to school to raise their educational and scientific level, so that they can integrate the practical experience they have gained in production with scientific theory. If we do that, we can surely turn many workers into excellent engineers. This approach has been followed in Russia for many years and has turned out many engineers from among the workers for socialist construction. We are not in a position to set up these specialized schools right now. But we can start with some training classes, part-time schools and night schools.

ALL EMPLOYEES SHOULD UNITE AND MAKE A SUCCESS OF PRODUCTION

Some representatives have said that in their factories workers have complaints against a few individual members of the office staff. Our approach should be that the workers, who are directly engaged in production and make up the majority in the factories, should be considered the most important employees. Many administrative staff used to despise manual labour and look down on the workers. They thought they were a cut above the others just because they wore long gowns and worked in offices. Some of them offended the workers. Nevertheless, we should understand that the administrative staff are just as indispensable to production as workers. We need them to draw designs, keep accounts and use the abacus. The engineers and managers are even more indispensable. Moreover, many workers will eventually become office staff, technicians and managers.

But for now, since the workers have complaints against the administrative staff, we should try to solve this problem, we should use appropriate methods and deal with each case on its merits, bearing in mind the Decision Concerning Employees in Publicly Owned Enterprises³⁶² issued by the Northeast Bureau of the Central Committee on August 1, 1948. With the exception of a few managers who have been particularly oppressive and should be dismissed, the employees in each factory should unite to increase production. Workers who have been offended by administrative personnel should be forgiving, once the persons in question have made self-criticisms and apologized. The workers should strive resolutely to overthrow the reactionaries, and they should co-operate with the administrative staff, regarding any friction with them as a trivial matter. The working class should concentrate on matters of importance. It is our task to liberate the 470

million people of China, or in broader terms, to liberate the two billion people of the world, and to replace the unreasonable social systems that have lasted for thousands of years with a new, reasonable one. That is a great and glorious task. The working class should stand aloof from trivial matters and devote all its energies to the one great cause. When the conflicts between them and the office staff are properly resolved, both should unite to develop production, support the front and overthrow the reactionaries, so as to create a world of freedom for the working class and the rest of the people.

The suggestions about production that have been offered today are excellent. But the workers should anticipate at least two difficulties in this connection. First, our veteran cadres are laymen when it comes to managing production, and they lack experience. Second, we don't have enough raw materials or equipment, and it is hard to get more while the war is going on. This means that the workers must offer suggestions and show the true spirit of the working class by finding ways to overcome all difficulties. They should make full use of all available equipment, try every means to conserve raw materials, even using what is now regarded as waste, and make further efforts to devise substitutes. As soon as you go back to your factories, you representatives should consult with the directors or managers and pool the wisdom of the workers to draw up a production plan for three months or a year. You should make it clear to the workers that we all have to share the burden. They should work hard not only as producers but also as true masters of the enterprise, attending to managerial tasks under the leadership of the directors and uniting with the office staff in the interests of production. In particular, you should ask the workers to volunteer their ideas for improving production. Any helpful suggestion can be put into practice after consultation between the managers and workers. Now the leaders of factories welcome workers' suggestions, and workers should raise their ideas on production and other aspects of the work with a sense of responsibility. Everything should be settled through consultation in the interest of increased production.