

# Sharp Weapon for Criticizing Idealism

— A study of "Preface and Postscript to *Rural Surveys*"

by the Writing Group of the Peking Municipal  
Committee of the Chinese Communist Party

IT is 30 years since our great leader Chairman Mao's brilliant work *Preface and Postscript to "Rural Surveys"* was published. This is a historical summing-up of the struggle between the two lines within the Party centring around the question of investigation and study, a dialectical materialist and historical materialist militant document, and a sharp weapon for us in criticizing bourgeois idealism. It has played a tremendous militant role over the past 30 years in strengthening the work of building our Party ideologically and fostering a good work-style, and in raising the consciousness of the Party members and cadres in implementing and defending Chairman Mao's proletarian revolutionary line.

It is of enormous practical significance for us to restudy this brilliant work of Chairman Mao's today in order to uphold the dialectical materialist theory of knowledge and to oppose bourgeois idealist apriorism, uphold historical materialism and oppose historical idealism, and persist in putting Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought in command of investigation and study and criticizing the theory of human nature of the capitalist class.

## No Investigation, No Right to Speak

The importance of investigation and study is fully embodied in this famous saying of great truth by Chairman Mao: "No investigation, no right to speak." As early as May 1930, Chairman Mao set forth this well-known thesis in his *Oppose Book Worship*. However, it was maliciously attacked by political charlatans in the guise of Marxists. Chairman Mao reaffirmed this great incontrovertible truth in *Preface and Postscript to "Rural Surveys,"* denounced the renegade Wang Ming's shameless calumnies, upheld and defended the basic Marxist-Leninist tenet of "uniting theory and practice," thereby making a great contribution to the Marxist-Leninist world outlook and methodology.

Chairman Mao pointed out in this work: "Although my assertion, 'No investigation, no right to speak', has

been ridiculed as 'narrow empiricism', to this day I do not regret having made it; what is more, I still insist that without investigation there cannot possibly be any right to speak." "Stalin rightly says that 'theory becomes purposeless if it is not connected with revolutionary practice'. And he rightly adds that 'practice gropes in the dark if its path is not illumined by revolutionary theory'. Nobody should be labelled a 'narrow empiricist' except the 'practical man' who gropes in the dark and lacks perspective and foresight."

Dialectical materialism holds that while correct understanding of conditions and knowledge of the world form the objective basis for the proletariat to formulate the line, principles and policies, and are the basic premises for transforming the world, investigation and study are the scientific method for understanding the conditions and knowing the world. Just as Chairman Mao has taught us: "The only way to know conditions is to make social investigations, to investigate the conditions of each social class in real life." That is to say, we must use the Marxist-Leninist stand, viewpoint and method to carry out social investigation and study without fail, starting from perceptual knowledge and, through reconstructing the rich data of perception obtained from investigation, discarding the dross and selecting the essential, eliminating the false and retaining the true, proceeding from the one to the other and from the outside to the inside, i.e., through scientific analysis and synthesis, raising perceptual knowledge to theory, whereby the correct line, principles and policies are formulated; then the theory, line, principles and policies are put into practice, turning consciousness into matter. Repetition in endless cycles in this manner and continual development transform not only the objective world but the subjective world as well. The process of understanding the conditions and knowing the world, therefore, is one of conscientious investigation and study on the basis of social practice. Investigation and study are the basic condition for realizing the two active leaps — from matter to consciousness and then back to matter — and form the basic link in the dialectical materialist process of cognition. If we

should negate investigation and study, which amounts to negating the basic standpoint of dialectical materialism, we will not be able to correctly know and transform the world.

Our great teacher Chairman Mao has always attached great importance to and frequently carried out investigation and study in person. He wrote his celebrated work *Report on an Investigation of the Peasant Movement in Hunan* after making an on-the-spot investigation in Hunan for 32 days. During the tense marches or intervals between battles in the Second Revolutionary Civil War period, Chairman Mao always seized every opportunity to go deep among the masses and hold fact-finding meetings which often continued until the small hours. *Rural Surveys* is a splendid record of Chairman Mao's investigation of rural conditions at that time. In the period of socialist revolution and socialist construction, Chairman Mao still goes to every part of the country to grasp typical examples and make investigations. During the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, Chairman Mao has personally grasped the typical examples of the "six plants and two schools" (that is, the Peking General Knitwear Mill, the Peking Hsinhua Printing House, the Peking No. 3 Chemical Plant, the Peking Peichiao Timber Mill, the Peking February 7 Locomotive and Rolling Stock Plant, the Peking Nankou Locomotive, Rolling Stock and Machinery Plant and Tsinghua and Peking Universities); in addition, he has approved a series of investigation reports and experiences, thereby pointing out a clear-cut orientation for the deepening of the struggle-criticism-transformation movement. Chairman Mao's line, principles, policies and tactics concerning the Chinese revolution and national construction have all been formulated on the basis of investigation and study of objective reality, and are the concrete, historical unity of the universal truth of Marxism-Leninism and the practice in the Chinese revolution.

The renegade, hidden traitor and scab Liu Shao-chi consistently hated and opposed Chairman Mao's brilliant thinking regarding the investigation and study of social conditions. In 1961, Liu Shao-chi openly attacked Chairman Mao's *Preface and Postscript to "Rural Surveys,"* raving that "advocating investigation and study" "still can't help anyone to know the world." In the socialist education movement, Liu Shao-chi became more rabid than ever in his attack by saying that the scientific method of investigation and study was "out of date." It was by no means a mere controversy concerning the method of work that Liu Shao-chi attacked investigation and study so ferociously; it was his wild attempt to use bourgeois idealist apriorism to oppose the dialectical materialist theory of knowledge as the reflection of reality.

In *Where Do Correct Ideas Come From?*, Chairman Mao pointed out: "Where do correct ideas come from? Do they drop from the skies? No. Are they innate in the mind? No. They come from social practice, and from it alone; they come from three kinds of social

practice, the struggle for production, the class struggle and scientific experiment." The dialectical materialist theory of reflection expounded by Chairman Mao here is diametrically opposed to the idealist apriorism trumpeted by Liu Shao-chi and other political charlatans. According to the materialist theory of reflection, all true knowledge originates in direct experience and conclusions invariably come after investigation. To persevere in the three great revolutionary movements—the struggle for production, class struggle and scientific experiment—and to uphold investigation and study are, in fact, adherence to the materialist theory of reflection, and are a sure guarantee that we will be free from bureaucracy and immune to revisionism and dogmatism, that we will be able to consolidate the dictatorship of the proletariat and will for ever remain invincible.

Chairman Mao pointed out: "Idealism and mechanical materialism, opportunism and adventurism, are all characterized by the breach between the subjective and the objective, by the separation of knowledge from practice." Adherence to the materialist theory of reflection enables one to resist the influence of idealist apriorism. When Liu Shao-chi and company spread the fallacy that investigation and study were "out of date," they were advocating the breach between the subjective and the objective and the separation of knowledge from practice, and preaching that knowledge precedes experience and conclusions come before investigation and study. It was entirely because of their reactionary class stand and their world outlook of idealist apriorism that they pushed the counter-revolutionary revisionist line which was sometimes ultra-Right and sometimes ultra-"Left." They talked as much nonsense as they liked without basing it on objective reality or having it tested against reality, and opposed Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought and the proletarian revolutionary line, principles and policies formulated by Chairman Mao for our Party on the basis of investigation and study.

Liu Shao-chi feared that the cadres and masses would, in line with the materialist theory of reflection, have a correct understanding of contradictions, classes and class struggle in socialist society, and so see through his gang's counter-revolutionary features in trying to subvert the dictatorship of the proletariat and restore capitalism. In their attempt to save themselves from destruction as other reactionary ruling classes did in history, they sought help from idealist apriorism, using it as a dope to beguile and deaden the senses of the masses. In criticizing idealist apriorism, we will be able to eliminate in a still more thorough way the remaining pernicious influence of Liu Shao-chi's counter-revolutionary revisionist line.

In his *Preface and Postscript to "Rural Surveys,"* Chairman Mao criticized in particular those "imperial envoys" who rushed here, there and everywhere. Chairman Mao said: "There are many people who 'the

moment they alight from the official carriage' make a hullabaloo, spout opinions, criticize this and condemn that; but, in fact, ten out of ten of them will meet with failure. For such views or criticisms, which are not based on thorough investigation, are nothing but ignorant twaddle." Aren't those sham Marxists — such as Wang Ming, Liu Shao-chi and their like who, without investigation or study, talk as much nonsense as they like, deceive the masses with lies, and bring misfortune to the country and people — the very types criticized by Chairman Mao? These villains always pretend to be Marxists to deceive and frighten the worker and peasant cadres and innocent young people. But, in fact, the counter-revolutionary nature of the trash they peddle will be fully exposed if we hold it under the magnifying glass of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought, and test it in revolutionary practice. This is the dialectics of history. Haven't those sham Marxists — who refuse to act in accordance with Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought, are against the investigation and study of society and oppose the great practice of millions of revolutionary people — met with ignominious defeat one after another?

Historical experience proves that to do revolutionary work really well, it is necessary to adhere to Chairman Mao's teachings "You must investigate!" and "You must not talk nonsense!" It is essential to make a thorough and systematic investigation and study of the conditions in the three great revolutionary movements — the struggle for production, class struggle and scientific experiment — in one's own unit, department or district, and derive laws from them to serve as our guide to action. Only in this way can we have the right to speak and the initiative in the revolutionary work entrusted to us, and only in this way can we correctly implement Chairman Mao's revolutionary line and consolidate the dictatorship of the proletariat.

### **The Masses Are the Real Heroes**

In this work Chairman Mao pointed out: "It has to be understood that the masses are the real heroes, while we ourselves are often childish and ignorant, and without this understanding it is impossible to acquire even the most rudimentary knowledge." Only by acquiring a profound understanding of this very important teaching of Chairman Mao's is it possible to do a really good job of investigation and study.

The masses are the mainstay in the practice of transforming nature and society as well as the mainstay in knowing them. The practice of the masses' struggle plays a decisive role in the generation and development of man's knowledge. Their practical experience is the only source of all knowledge of the struggle for production and of class struggle. Therefore, to do a good job of investigation and study, it is necessary to learn from the masses and to "direct your eyes downward, do not hold your head high and gaze at the sky. Unless a

person is interested in turning his eyes downward and is determined to do so, he will never in his whole life really understand things in China."

The method of holding fact-finding meetings consistently advocated by Chairman Mao is "the simplest, most practicable and most reliable" method for doing investigation and study well. Chairman Mao said, holding fact-finding meetings "is a better school than any university." Those attending such meetings should be really experienced masses or cadres at the root level who are our best teachers in making social investigations. Chairman Mao also said, to be the masses' pupil, one "had to be respectful and diligent and comradely in . . . [his] attitude," otherwise they would pay no attention to him, and, "though they knew, would not speak or, if they spoke, would not tell all they knew."

As far back as more than 100 years ago, Marx and Engels set forth the great idea "with the thoroughness of the historical action the size of the mass whose action it is will therefore increase." Lenin also pointed out: "Living, creative socialism is the product of the masses themselves." Chairman Mao has further explained the great role of the people in making history by his famous thesis that "the people, and the people alone, are the motive force in the making of world history." Wang Ming, Liu Shao-chi and company completely reversed history. In their eyes, history was not created by the people but by the "big shots" of "foresight and vision" like themselves; they were the "saviours" and the masses were only "a cluster of ignorant and incapable mobs." Proceeding from such a reactionary world outlook, they pushed the bourgeois reactionary line, whose basic characteristics were suppression of the masses, during the socialist education movement and the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. Putting themselves against the masses, they naturally would not go among the masses to make investigation and study and were unwilling to do so. The masses on the other hand would not report to them about the real facts. They sometimes mouthed a few words about "the need to stress supervision from the masses," and that it was essential to be the "ordinary, common people," but they said one thing and did quite another. In truth, what they mouthed was all false, their real purpose was to oppose communism and the people and restore the dictatorship of the landlords and the bourgeoisie.

We must thoroughly criticize the historical idealism advocated by Liu Shao-chi and company, eliminate the remaining pernicious influence of their fallacy that "the masses are backward," carry forward the Party's "style of work . . . integrating theory with practice, forging close links with the masses and practising self-criticism." We must not be affected by the bureaucratic dust of alienating ourselves from the masses and reality. We must modestly and sincerely take the masses as our teachers and be their willing pupils. We must be good at summing up and concentrating the masses' ex-

perience, raise it to the plane of correct theory, principles and policies and then bring these back to the masses to guide them forward.

### Putting Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought In Command

Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought is the theoretical basis guiding our thinking. To do a good job of investigation and study, it is imperative to put Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought in command. In his *Preface and Postscript to "Rural Surveys,"* Chairman Mao stressed: **"The basic method for knowing conditions is to . . . , using the fundamental viewpoint of Marxism, i.e., the method of class analysis, make a number of thorough investigations."**

In class society, classes and class struggle are the root cause of all social phenomena and play a decisive role in all aspects of social life. For example, since people's class stand differs, their views on the same objective thing vary: some favour, others oppose; some say "it's fine!" others say "it's terrible!" There cannot be a scientific interpretation of history or a profound understanding of social life if one departs from the viewpoint of classes and the method of class analysis. Only by adhering to the Marxist class viewpoint and the method of class analysis, is it possible for us to grasp, from the numerous and complicated social phenomena, the essence of the objective things, to **"understand their [various classes] 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."** Throughout the historical period of socialist society, there exist classes, class contradictions and class struggle. The method of class analysis remains our basic method for knowing conditions. Denying this scientific method means betrayal of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought and betrayal of the proletarian revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Proceeding from their landlord and bourgeois theory of human nature, Wang Ming, Liu Shao-chi and their cronies frenziedly opposed the Marxist theory of classes and class struggle and opposed the use of the method of class analysis to make investigation and study. Liu Shao-chi babbled that "'people' means numerous persons, Changs, Lius and Lis, men and women," who "gathered together," and "have a human nature in common." According to this logic, the workers and the capitalists, the poor and lower-middle peasants and the landlords have a "human nature in common" and belong to "the same family." How reactionary he is!

Chairman Mao long ago sharply criticized the theory of "class-transcending" human nature. Hitting the nail on the head, he pointed out: **"There is only human nature in the concrete, no human nature in the abstract."**

**In class society there is only human nature of a class character; there is no human nature above classes."** Human nature "above classes" is nothing but human nature of the landlords and the bourgeoisie. Taking the reactionary class stand of the landlords and the bourgeoisie, Liu Shao-chi and company advocated the theory of human nature "above classes," a reactionary preaching which they used to deceive the people, blur class nature of man, deny class contradictions and conciliate class struggle.

The proletariat never conceals its own viewpoint. To make social investigation and study means using the Marxist stand, viewpoint and method to observe and analyse everything. Only by using this scientific method which has been verified by countless practice, can we acquire a real understanding of the objective conditions, determine which views and statements are correct and conform to the objective reality and which are wrong and at variance with the objective reality, thereby achieving a concrete and historical unity of the universal truth of Marxism with the revolutionary practice and actively knowing and changing the world. It seems to be "true" and "objective" when one does not make any class analysis of the objective conditions and adopts the method of "recording everything one hears," but actually this means confusing what is true and what is false and making no distinction between right and wrong. This is by no means a Marxist investigation and study, it is the so-called "objective report" which the bourgeoisie has always used to fool the masses, and that is what we firmly oppose. Liu Shao-chi and company advocated "Don't look at things through rose-coloured spectacles," "Don't be prejudiced when going to the countryside," otherwise the finding would not be "true" or "objective." To put it bluntly, they wanted people not to side with the proletariat, but to take the stand of the landlords, rich peasants, counter-revolutionaries, bad elements and Rightists and reflect the opinions and demands of these scoundrels.

In the course of investigation and study, one should listen to opinions from various quarters, be they positive or negative. The point here is that one **"should take a sniff at everything and distinguish the good from the bad before they decide whether to welcome it or boycott it."** There may be different views on the same thing among the people and one must distinguish between them after having heard them. One must absorb and act according to the correct opinions, and criticize and help to rectify the mistaken ones. It is necessary to resolutely expose and denounce the attack from the class enemy and transform poisonous weeds into fertilizer. So long as we stick to the Marxist method of class analysis, we can in our investigation and study truly reflect the actual features of the objective things and avoid committing "Left" or Right mistakes.

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