

# Strive to Learn From Each Other and Don't Stick to the Beaten Track and Be Complacent

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**Mao Tsetung**

**H**ERE is a report prepared by Comrades Li Jui-shan and Hua Kuo-feng of the Hunan provincial Party committee, on November 6, 1963, on their visit to Kwangtung to look at the progress of its agricultural production. Attached to the report are instructions written by the Hunan provincial Party committee dated December 7, 1963. You are requested to study them. The Central Committee considers that this attitude and method of learning modestly from the good experience of other provinces, municipalities and districts is fine and constitutes an important way of promoting our economic, political, ideological, cultural, military and Party work. Some comrades stick to the beaten track, are conceited and complacent; do not take an analytical approach towards the work in their own area in accordance with Marxist dialectics (i.e., one dividing into two, into shortcomings and mistakes as well as

achievements), but notice only achievements and not shortcomings and mistakes. They welcome praise but not criticism. They take little interest in arranging for competent high and middle-ranking cadres to study modestly and earnestly what is being done in other provinces, municipalities, districts or units in order to introduce improvements by applying the findings to their own province, municipality, district or unit. They confine their vision always to the small world of their own area or unit, but fail to see beyond it and to notice any world other than their own, which is sheer parochial arrogance. They show to foreign visitors, comrades from other parts of the country or comrades sent by the central authorities to their area only what is good and not what is bad. They tell these visitors only the achievements, and not the shortcomings and mistakes which, if taken up at all, will not be gone into at any great length but dismissed perfunctorily in a few words. The Central Committee has called our comrades' attention to this problem time

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An inner-Party directive drafted on behalf of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party.

and again, maintaining that a Communist must acquire the Marxist dialectical concept of one dividing into two with regard to achievements and shortcomings, truth and falsehood. Without exception everything (economy, politics, ideology, culture, military and Party work, etc.) develops as a process. And every process develops through the interconnection and mutual struggle of its two contradictory aspects. This should be A B C for a Marxist. However, many comrades at the central and local levels seldom think and work conscientiously in accordance with this viewpoint. They find it difficult to shake off their customary metaphysical way of thinking. By metaphysics is meant the denial of the unity of opposites and the struggle of opposites in things (the method of one dividing into two), the denial of the truth that under given conditions two contradictory things that stand in opposition transform themselves into each other and turn into their opposite. Metaphysics also finds expression in the following — to stick to the beaten track, to be conceited and complacent, to notice only achievements and not shortcomings, to welcome praise and not criticism; to be unwilling to criticize oneself (to apply the method of one dividing into two to oneself) and, worse still, to be afraid of being criticized by others. Among the dozens of ministries under the Central Government there are obviously several which have done better and have a better style of work, for instance, the Ministry of Petroleum Industry. Yet other ministries simply pay no attention and have never bothered to visit them, study their experience and learn from them. Of the various units under a ministry, there are obviously many factories and mines, enterprises, undertakings and scientific research institutions, together with their personnel, that have done well. Yet its leadership, through its ignorance, is in no position to encourage people to learn from them. Comrades, when the Central Committee here speaks about comrades committing errors

in succumbing to metaphysics, this refers only to some comrades, not to all. Nevertheless it must be pointed out that large numbers of fine comrades are frustrated by those comrades who are highly placed with fat emoluments and live-in style, who are conceited and complacent and are only too glad to stick to the beaten track, and who are addicted to bourgeois metaphysics; in other words, these fine comrades are frustrated by the bureaucrats. This situation must be changed right now. To any comrade who rejects the dialectical and analytical method of Marxism and doesn't modestly and conscientiously analyse either his own locality, his own unit and himself or other localities, other units and other people, we must give comradely advice and criticism, so as to bring about a change in this undesirable state of affairs. We must make it a practice to learn from the good experience, good style and good methods of other ministries, provinces, municipalities, districts and units. This is an important question and you are requested to discuss it. Later on, the Central Committee will also take it up at its working conferences and plenary sessions. For quite some time the Hunan provincial Party committee made no attempt at investigation and study and issued a spate of subjectivist directives to the lower levels, ramming many things down their throats while getting little factual information in return, and thus alienating itself from the masses and bringing tremendous difficulties upon itself. From 1961 onwards, a change came over its work and things rapidly looked up. Nevertheless it felt that it was still lagging far behind Kwangtung and Shanghai. Therefore, it organized two survey teams composed of large numbers of cadres at the provincial, prefectural and county levels, and cadres from the province and its cities, and sent them on study tours to Kwangtung and Shanghai. Please try and see if you can do the same. The Central Committee holds that it can and must be done. If you think otherwise, please transmit your views.