

Talk at an Enlarged Working Conference Convened by the Central Committee of The Communist Party of China

January 30, 1962

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Chairman Mao addressing the Enlarged Working Conference (January 1962).

Comrades! I'm now going to put forward a few ideas. (*Warm applause*) Altogether I'll deal with six points, focusing on the question of democratic centralism while also touching on other questions.

The first point: The way the present conference is being held.

More than 7,000 people have come to this Enlarged Central Working Conference. At the outset, several comrades prepared a

draft report. Before the draft could be discussed by the Political Bureau of the Central Committee, I suggested to them that rather than first holding a meeting of the Political Bureau to discuss it, we should immediately issue it to the comrades attending the conference for their comments and opinions. Comrades, there are among you people from various fields and localities — from provincial, prefectural and county Party committees, from the Party committees of various enterprises and from central departments. Most of you are

closer to the lower levels and should know the situation and problems better than us comrades on the Standing Committee, the Political Bureau and the Secretariat of the Central Committee. Besides, since you occupy different posts, you can raise questions from different angles. That is why we should ask for your opinions. As expected, after the draft report was issued to you, it brought about lively discussion. While agreeing with the basic policy of the

Central Committee, you also put forward many ideas. Later, a drafting committee of 21 was set up, which included responsible members from regional bureaus of the Central Committee. After eight days of discussion it produced the second draft of the report. It should be said that this second draft is the Central Committee's concentration of a discussion by over 7,000 people. Without your ideas it could not have been written. Both the first and second parts have undergone very substantial revision in the second draft, and for this you should be given the credit. I hear that you have all commented on the second draft quite favourably and consider it to be fairly good. If we hadn't used this method but had run the conference in the usual manner — that is, hearing a report first, then discussing it and approving it with a show of hands — we wouldn't have done as well.

This is a question of how to hold meetings. Distribute the draft, invite comments from those present and make amendments accordingly before giving a report. When making a report, one shouldn't just read it out, but should offer some supplementary ideas and explanations. By following this method we can promote democracy more fully, pool wisdom from all quarters and compare different points of view, and our meetings will become more lively. It has been advisable to use this method for the present conference which is being held to sum up the working experience of 12 years, and particularly that of the past four years, for there are many questions and consequently many opinions. But can all conferences adopt this method? No, not all. To use this method we must have plenty of time. It may sometimes be used at sessions of our people's congress. Comrades from provincial, prefectural and county Party committees, when you call meetings in future, you too can adopt this method if conditions permit. Of course, you are busy and cannot usually spend a lot of time on conferences.

But there's no harm in having a try when you find the conditions right.

What sort of method is this? It's the method of democratic centralism, the method of the mass line: first democracy, then centralism; from the masses, to the masses; integration of the leadership with the masses. This is the first point I wanted to discuss.

The second point: The question of democratic centralism.

It seems that some of our comrades still don't understand democratic centralism as described by Marx and Lenin. Some of these comrades are already veteran revolutionaries, of the 1938 mould or some other mould — anyway, they've been members of the Communist Party for several decades and still don't understand this question. They are afraid of the masses, afraid of the masses speaking out, afraid of mass criticism. What possible reason is there for Marxist-Leninists to be afraid of the masses? While they avoid mentioning their own mistakes, these comrades are likewise afraid of having their mistakes mentioned by the masses. The more they're afraid, the more they're going to be haunted by ghosts. In my opinion, one shouldn't be afraid. What is there to be afraid of? Our attitude is, uphold the truth and readily correct mistakes. The question of what is right or wrong, what is correct or incorrect, in our work falls under contradictions among the people. Contradictions among the people can't be resolved by curses or fists, still less by knives or guns. They can be resolved only by discussion and reasoning, criticism and self-criticism. In a word, they can be resolved only by the democratic method, by letting the masses speak out.

There should be full democracy both inside and outside the Party, that is, democratic centralism should be practised in earnest in both spheres. Problems should be brought out into the open frankly and the masses allowed to speak out, speak out even if we are going to be abused. The worst

that can come out of this abuse is that we will be toppled and thus be unable to continue in our current jobs — demotion to lower organizations or transfer to other localities. What's so impossible about that? Why should a person go only up and not down? Why should one work only in one place and not be transferred to another? I think that, whether they are justified or not, both demotion and transfer have advantages. They help to temper people's revolutionary will, enable them to investigate and study many new situations, and acquire more useful knowledge. I myself had experience in this respect and benefited a great deal from it. If you don't believe my point, you might give it a try. Szuma Chien said: "When King Wen was detained, he produced the *Book of Changes*; when Confucius was in distress, he compiled the *Spring and Autumn Annals*. Chu Yuan was exiled and so composed the *Li Sao*. Tsochiu Ming lost his sight and the *Kuo Yu* followed. Sun Tzu was mutilated before he wrote his book on military science. Lu Pu-wei was transferred to the Shu region and so the world inherited his *Lu Lan*. Han Fei was imprisoned in the Kingdom of Chin and he wrote 'Shui Nan' and 'Ku Fen,' two chapters of his great work. Of the 300 poems in the *Book of Odes* most were written by sages to vent their pent-up indignation." In modern times, people have had doubts about whether in fact King Wen produced the *Book of Changes* or Confucius compiled the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, and we can leave these examples aside and let the specialists solve these problems. But Szuma Chien believed these things to be true. And it is a fact that King Wen was detained and that Confucius was in distress. Except for the one about Tsochiu Ming's going blind, the events related by Szuma Chien all refer to the incorrect handling of people by their superiors in ancient times. There were cases where we too handled some cadres incorrectly, and no matter whether their handling was completely incorrect or only partially so, after re-examination they should be rehabilitated

according to the merits of each case. But, generally speaking, such incorrect treatment — demotion or transfer — tempers their revolutionary will and enables them to absorb much new knowledge from the masses. Here I must make it clear that I am not advocating indiscriminate, incorrect treatment of our cadres, our comrades, or anybody else, in the way the ancients detained King Wen, harassed Confucius, exiled Chu Yuan and removed Sun Tzu's kneecaps. I am not advocating this way of doing things, I am opposed to it. What I mean is that at every stage of human history there have always been such cases of mishandling. In class societies such cases are numerous. In a socialist society such things cannot be entirely avoided either. They are unavoidable whether in periods of leadership with a correct or with an incorrect line. There is one distinction, however. Under a correct line, as soon as cases which have been mishandled are discovered, after re-examination the people concerned will be rehabilitated and apologies will be made to them, so that they will enjoy ease of mind and lift up their heads again. But under an incorrect line, this becomes impossible, and the mistakes can be corrected at a suitable occasion only by those who represent the correct line through the method of democratic centralism. As for those who have actually made mistakes and who, after criticism by comrades and review at a higher level, have been correctly demoted or transferred, it goes without saying that such demotion or transfer will help them correct their mistakes and acquire new knowledge.

At present, there are some comrades who are very afraid of the masses initiating discussion and putting forward ideas which differ from those of the leading organs or the leaders. Whenever a problem is being discussed, they suppress the initiative of the masses and don't allow them to speak out. This attitude is abominable. Democratic centralism is written into our Party Constitution and state Constitution, but they

don't apply it. Comrades, we are revolutionaries. If we have really made mistakes, mistakes which are harmful to the cause of the Party and the people, we should seek the opinions of the masses and of comrades and criticize ourselves. Such self-criticism should sometimes be repeated several times over. If once is not enough and people are not satisfied, it should be done a second time; if they are still not satisfied, then it should be done a third time; it should go on until nobody has any more criticisms. Some provincial Party committees have done just this. A few provinces have shown some initiative and let people speak out. The early ones started self-criticism in 1959, the late starters began in 1961. Some provinces, such as Honan, Kansu and Chinghai, were forced to carry out self-criticism. Some people say there are other provinces which seem to be starting self-criticism only now. But no matter whether they carry out self-criticism on their own initiative or are forced to do so, no matter whether they do so early or late, provided they look squarely at their mistakes and are willing to admit and correct them and let the masses criticize them — provided they adopt this attitude, we should always welcome it.

Criticism and self-criticism is a method; it is the method of resolving contradictions among the people and indeed the only method. There is no other method. But if we don't have full democracy and don't truly practise democratic centralism, this method of criticism and self-criticism cannot be applied.

Don't we have many difficulties right now? It is impossible to overcome these difficulties unless we rely on the masses and arouse the enthusiasm of the masses and the cadres. But if you don't explain the situation to the masses and the cadres, open your hearts to them and let them voice their opinions, if they are still afraid of you and don't dare speak, it will be impossible to arouse their enthusiasm. I said in 1957 that we should create "a political situation in

which we have both centralism and democracy, both discipline and freedom, both unity of will and personal ease of mind and liveliness." We should create such a political situation both inside and outside the Party. Otherwise it will be impossible to arouse the enthusiasm of the masses. We cannot overcome difficulties without democracy. Of course, it's even more impossible to do so without centralism. But if there's no democracy there won't be any centralism.

Without democracy there can't be correct centralism because centralism can't be established when people have divergent views and don't have unity of understanding. What is meant by centralism? First, there must be concentration of correct ideas. Unity of understanding, of policy, plan, command and action is attained on the basis of concentrating correct ideas. This is unity through centralism. But if all those concerned are still not clear about the problems, if their opinions are still unexpressed or their anger is still not vented, how can you achieve this unity through centralism? Without democracy, it is impossible to sum up experience correctly. Without democracy, without ideas coming from the masses, it is impossible to formulate good lines, principles, policies or methods. As far as the formulation of lines, principles, policies and methods is concerned, our leading organs merely play the role of a processing plant. Everyone knows that a factory cannot do any processing without raw material. It cannot produce good finished products unless the raw material is sufficient in quantity and suitable in quality. If there is no democracy, if there is no knowledge of what is going on down below and no clear idea about it, if there is no adequate canvassing of the opinions of all concerned and no communication between higher and lower levels, and if instead issues are decided solely by the leading organs of the higher levels on the strength of one-sided or inaccurate material, then such decisions can hardly

avoid being subjective and it will be impossible to achieve unity in understanding and action or achieve true centralism. Isn't the main topic of our present conference opposition to decentralism and the strengthening of centralism and unity? If we fail to promote democracy in full measure, then will this centralism, this unity, be genuine or sham? Will it be real or empty? Will it be correct or incorrect? Of course it will only be sham, empty and incorrect.

Our centralism is centralism built on the foundation of democracy. Proletarian centralism is centralism with a broad democratic base. The Party committees at all levels are the organs which exercise centralized leadership. But leadership by the Party committee means collective leadership, not arbitrary decision by the first secretary alone. Within Party committees, democratic centralism alone should be practised. The relationship between the first secretary and the other secretaries and committee members is one of the minority being subordinate to the majority. Take the Standing Committee or the Political Bureau of the Central Committee by way of example. It often happens that when I say something, regardless of whether it is correct or incorrect, if the others don't agree, I must accede to their opinion because they are the majority. I am told that that there are now some provincial, prefectural and county Party committees where all matters are decided by the first secretary alone. This is quite wrong. How can we justify the idea that what one person says goes? I am referring to important matters here, not to the routine work coming after decisions. If a matter is important, it must be discussed collectively, different opinions must be heeded, and the complexities of the situation and the dissenting opinions must be analysed seriously. Thought must be given to the various possibilities and estimates made of the various aspects of a situation, what is good and what bad, what is easy and what difficult, what is possible and what impos-

sible. This should be done as carefully and thoroughly as possible. To act otherwise is just one-man tyranny. Those first secretaries should be called tyrants and not "squad leaders" practising democratic centralism. Once upon a time there was a certain Hsiang Yu, who was called the tyrant of Western Chu. He hated listening to opinions which differed from his own. One Fan Tseng offered him advice, but Hsiang Yu didn't listen to what he had to say. There was another man named Liu Pang, the founder of the Han Dynasty, who was better at accepting ideas different from his own. An intellectual called Li Yi-chi went to see Liu Pang. When he was first announced, it was as a scholar of the Confucian school. Liu Pang said there was a war on and he couldn't see scholars. Li Yi-chi flared up and said to the gatekeeper: "You get in there again and say that I'm a drinking man from Kaoyang, not a scholar." The gatekeeper did as he was told. "All right, ask him in." When Li Yi-chi entered, Liu Pang was washing his feet but he quickly got up to welcome him. Still angry because Liu Pang had refused to see a scholar, Li Yi-chi gave him a dressing down. He said, "Look here, do you want to conquer the world or don't you? Why do you take an elder so lightly?" Li Yi-chi was then over 60 and Liu Pang was younger, so Li called himself an "elder." At this, Liu Pang apologized and promptly accepted Li Yi-chi's plan of seizing the county of Chenliu. This incident can be found in the biographies of Li Yi-chi and Lu Chia in the *Historical Records*. In the feudal period, Liu Pang was described by historians as a hero "who was generous and open-minded and who readily listened to advice." Liu Pang and Hsiang Yu fought for many years. In the end Liu Pang won and Hsiang Yu was defeated. This was no accident. Today some of our first secretaries can't even match the feudal Liu Pang but have a bit of Hsiang Yu in them. If these comrades don't change, they'll ultimately be overthrown. Isn't there an opera called *The Tyrant Bids His Lady Farewell*? If these

comrades remain unchanged, the day will come when they too will be "bidding their ladies farewell." (*Laughter*) why do I have to put the matter so strongly? It's because I hope that by speaking a bit sarcastically, I can prick some comrades and get them to give this some hard thought. It will be best if they can't sleep for a night or two. If they can sleep, then I'll be the unhappy one because they still haven't felt any pain.

Some of our comrades can't bear to hear any opinion contrary to their own and can't tolerate any criticism. That is very wrong. During this conference, the group meeting of one province started off in a very lively manner, but as soon as the secretary of the provincial Party committee went to sit in, a hush fell and nobody said a word. Comrade provincial Party secretary, why do you go and sit there? Why don't you stay in your own room and think things over and let the others talk freely? Since such an atmosphere has been brought about and people don't dare speak in your presence, then you should absent yourself. Whoever makes mistakes must criticize himself, and we must let others speak up, let others criticize. On June 12 last year, the last day of the working conference in Peking convened by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, I discussed my own shortcomings and mistakes. I asked the comrades to convey what I said to the provinces and localities. I found out later that many localities were not informed. It's as if my mistakes could or should be kept hidden. Comrades, they mustn't be kept hidden! Of all the mistakes made by the Central Committee I am responsible for those directly related to me and I have a share of the responsibility for those not directly related to me, because I am its Chairman. It's not that I want other people to slough off their responsibility — there are some other comrades who also bear responsibility — but I am the person who ought to be primarily responsible. The secretaries of our provincial, prefectural and county Party committees, right down to the

secretaries of Party committees of districts, enterprises and communes, being first secretaries, should bear responsibility for shortcomings and mistakes in work. Shirking responsibility, fearing to shoulder it and forbidding people to speak out as if one were a tiger whose backside no one dares touch — ten out of ten who adopt this attitude will fail. People will always speak out sooner or later. You think that people really won't dare to touch the backsides of tigers like you? They bloody well will!

Unless we fully promote people's democracy and inner-Party democracy and unless we fully implement proletarian democracy, it will be impossible for China to have true proletarian centralism. Without a high degree of democracy it is impossible to have a high degree of centralism, and without a high degree of centralism it is impossible to establish a socialist economy. And what will happen to our country if we fail to establish a socialist economy? It will turn into a revisionist state, indeed a bourgeois state, and the dictatorship of the proletariat will turn into a dictatorship of the bourgeoisie, and a reactionary, fascist dictatorship at that. This is a question which very much deserves our vigilance and I hope our comrades will give it a good deal of thought.

Without democratic centralism, the dictatorship of the proletariat cannot be consolidated. To practise democracy among the people and to exercise dictatorship over the enemies of the people — these two aspects are not to be separated. When they are combined, we have proletarian dictatorship, or what may be called people's democratic dictatorship. Our slogan is: "A people's democratic dictatorship led by the proletariat and based on the alliance of the workers and peasants." How does the proletariat exercise leadership? It leads through the Communist Party. The Communist Party is the vanguard of the proletariat. The proletariat unites with all classes and strata who favour, support and participate in

socialist revolution and socialist construction, and exercises dictatorship over the reactionary classes or rather their remnants. In our country where the system of exploitation of man by man has already been destroyed and the economic base of the landlord class and the bourgeoisie done away with, the reactionary classes are no longer as formidable as in the past. For example, they are no longer as formidable as in 1949 when the People's Republic was founded, or as in 1957 when the bourgeois Rightists frenziedly attacked us. Therefore, we speak of them as the remnants of the reactionary classes. But in no case should we underestimate these remnants. We must carry on our struggle against them. The reactionary classes which have been overthrown still seek a comeback. And in socialist society new bourgeois elements continue to emerge. Classes and class struggle exist throughout the socialist stage. This struggle is long and complex and at times even very acute. Our instruments of dictatorship must be strengthened, not weakened. Our public security system is in the hands of comrades who follow the correct line. But it is possible that security departments in one place or another are in the hands of bad people. And there are also a few comrades doing public security work who don't rely on the masses or on the Party. In ferreting out counter-revolutionaries, they don't follow the line of working through the masses under the leadership of the Party committees, but rely solely on secret work, on so-called professional work. Professional work is necessary; investigation and interrogation are absolutely necessary in dealing with counter-revolutionaries. But the most important thing is to follow the mass line under the leadership of the Party committee. It is especially necessary to rely on the masses and the Party in exercising dictatorship over the reactionary classes as a whole. Dictatorship over the reactionary classes does not mean the physical elimination of all reactionary class elements; the aim is to remould them, to remould them by suitable

methods, to make them into new men. Without broad democracy for the people, it is impossible for the dictatorship of the proletariat to be consolidated or for political power to be stable. Without democracy, without arousing the masses and without supervision by the masses, it is impossible to exercise effective dictatorship over the reactionaries and bad elements or to remould them effectively; they will continue to make trouble and may stage a comeback. We must be vigilant on this question, and I hope comrades will give it a good deal of thought too.

The third point: Which classes should we unite with and which classes should we repress? This is a question of basic stand.

The working class should unite with the peasantry, the urban petty-bourgeoisie and the patriotic national bourgeoisie, and first and foremost, with the peasantry. Intellectuals such as scientists, engineers and technicians, professors, teachers, writers, artists, actors, medical workers and journalists do not constitute a class; they are attached either to the bourgeoisie or to the proletariat. Are we to unite only with those intellectuals who are revolutionary? No. So long as intellectuals are patriotic, we shall unite with them and help them do their work well. Workers, peasants, urban petty-bourgeois elements, patriotic intellectuals, patriotic capitalists and other patriotic democrats together comprise more than 95 per cent of the population. Under our people's democratic dictatorship, they all belong to the category of the people. And among the people we must practise democracy.

Those whom the people's democratic dictatorship should repress are landlords, rich peasants, counter-revolutionaries, bad elements and anti-Communist Rightists. The counter-revolutionaries, bad elements and anti-Communist Rightists represent the landlord class and the reactionary bourgeoisie. These classes and bad people comprise about 4 or 5 per cent of the population. It

is they whom we must compel to undergo remoulding. It is they who are the object of the people's democratic dictatorship.

With whom do we stand? With the masses who comprise over 95 per cent of the population? Or with the landlords, rich peasants, counter-revolutionaries, bad elements and Rightists who comprise 4 or 5 per cent of the population? We must side with the people and never with their enemies. For a Marxist-Leninist this is a question of basic stand.

Just as this holds true within our country, it also holds true internationally. Sooner or later, the people of all countries, the masses comprising more than 90 per cent of the world's population, will want revolution and support Marxism-Leninism. They won't support revisionism; though some people may support it for a while, they will eventually cast it aside. They are bound to awaken gradually, they are bound to oppose imperialism and reaction, and they are bound to oppose revisionism. A true Marxist-Leninist must stand firmly on the side of the masses who comprise over 90 per cent of the world's population.

The fourth point: Understanding the objective world.

Man's understanding of the objective world, his leap from the realm of necessity to the realm of freedom, involves a process. Take, for instance, the question of how to carry out the democratic revolution in China. From its founding in 1921 to its Seventh Congress in 1945, 24 years elapsed before our Party reached complete unity of understanding on this question. During this period we underwent a Party-wide rectification movement which lasted three and a half years, from the spring of 1942 to the summer of 1945. It was a thoroughgoing movement and the method of democracy was adopted, that is to say, no matter who had made mistakes, it was all right provided he acknowledged and corrected them. What is more, everybody helped him to acknowledge and

correct them. This was called "learning from past mistakes to avoid future ones and curing the sickness to save the patient" or "starting from the desire for unity, distinguishing right from wrong through criticism or struggle, and arriving at a new unity on a new basis." It was at that time that the formula "unity — criticism — unity" came into being. The rectification movement helped the comrades of the whole Party to reach unity of understanding. It was in that period, and especially after the rectification movement, that the problems of how the democratic revolution ought to be conducted and how the general line of the Party and its specific policies ought to be formulated were completely solved.

In the period between the founding of the Party and the War of Resistance Against Japan, we had the Northern Expedition and the ten years of the Agrarian Revolutionary War. We won two victories and met with two defeats. The Northern Expedition was victorious, but in 1927 the revolution suffered a defeat. Spectacular successes were achieved in the Agrarian Revolutionary War and the Red Army grew to a strength of 300,000. But later we again suffered reverses and our army of 300,000 was reduced to only some 20,000 in the Long March. After it reached northern Shensi, it took in some recruits but still fell short of 30,000, that is, less than one-tenth of the original 300,000. After all, which was stronger, the army of 300,000 or the army of less than 30,000? The army of less than 30,000, because having sustained those heavy reverses and gone through those extreme hardships, we had become tempered and experienced and had rectified the erroneous line and restored the correct line. In the report to this conference, it is said that we have become stronger, not weaker, because our line was correct and our achievements were primary in the past four years and because we have become experienced through making mistakes in our practical work and suffering from them. This is exactly how things stand. In the period of

the democratic revolution, we came to understand this objective world of China only after we had experienced victory, then defeat, victory again, then defeat again, only after we had twice drawn comparisons. On the eve and in the course of the War of Resistance Against Japan, I wrote a number of essays, such as *Problems of Strategy in China's Revolutionary War*, *On Protracted War*, *On New Democracy* and *Introducing "The Communist,"* and I drafted a number of documents on policy and strategy for the Central Committee. All of them sum up revolutionary experience. These essays and documents could only be written at that time and not before, because until then we hadn't been through storm and stress and couldn't compare our two victories and two defeats, and therefore we weren't adequately experienced and couldn't fully understand the laws governing the Chinese revolution.

Generally speaking, it was the Chinese, and not the comrades of the Communist International handling Chinese problems, who succeeded in gaining an understanding of this objective world of China. These comrades in the Communist International didn't understand Chinese society, the Chinese nation, and the Chinese revolution — or we can say that they didn't understand them well. For a long time we ourselves failed to have a clear understanding of China as an objective world, not to mention the foreign comrades!

It was not until the period of the War of Resistance Against Japan that we formulated a general line for the Party and a whole set of specific policies that suited the prevailing conditions. It was only then that we came to understand the Chinese democratic revolution, this realm of necessity, and that we gained freedom. By that time, we had already been making revolution for some 20 years. Through all those years there was a considerable degree of blindness in our revolutionary work. If anyone claims that any comrade — for instance, any comrade of the Central Committee, or for that matter I myself — completely understood the laws

governing the Chinese revolution right from the start, then he is a braggart and you must on no account believe him. It just wasn't so. In the past, and especially in the early years, all we had was a passion for revolution, but when it came to how to make revolution, what the targets were, which targets should come first and which later, and which had to wait until the next stage, we didn't have clear or at least wholly clear ideas for a fairly long time. In giving a historical account of how we Chinese Communists got to know, with much difficulty yet successfully, the laws governing the Chinese revolution in the period of democratic revolution, I hope to guide comrades to understand one thing: that getting to know the laws governing the building of socialism necessarily involves a process. We must take practice as the starting-point and move from having no experience to having some experience, from having little experience to having more experience, from the building of socialism, this still unknown realm of necessity, to the realm of freedom, a leap in cognition — the attainment of freedom through the gradual overcoming of our blindness and the gradual understanding of the objective laws.

We still lack experience in the building of socialism. I've discussed this problem with delegations of fraternal Parties from several countries. I told them that we had no experience in building a socialist economy.

I have also discussed this problem with some journalists from capitalist countries, among them an American called Edgar Snow. He had long wanted to come to China, and in 1960 we let him. I had a talk with him. I said, "As you know, we have a set of experiences, a set of principles, policies and measures with regard to politics, military affairs and class struggle; but when it comes to socialist construction, we hadn't done any in the past, and we still don't have experience. You may say, 'Haven't you been at it for 11 years?' Well yes, we have, but we still lack knowledge and experience. Even if we are beginning to acquire a little,

it doesn't amount to much." Snow wanted me to say something about China's long-term construction plans. I said, "I don't know," and he said, "You're being too cautious." I replied, "It's not a question of being cautious. I really don't know; we just don't have the experience." Comrades, it's true that we don't know, we still lack experience and really don't have such long-term plans yet. Nineteen-sixty was the very year we ran into a lot of difficulties. In 1961 I spoke of these things again during a discussion with Montgomery. He said, "In another 50 years you'll be terrific." What he meant was that after 50 years we would become powerful and would be "aggressive" towards others, but not before that. He had already expressed this view to me when in China in 1960. I said, "We are Marxist-Leninists, ours is a socialist state, not a capitalist state, and therefore we won't perpetrate aggression against others whether in 100 years or 10,000 years. As for the construction of a powerful socialist economy in China, 50 years won't be enough, it will take 100 years or even more. In your own country the development of capitalism has taken several hundred years. We won't count the 16th century, since the Middle Ages weren't over yet. But from the 17th century to the present is already more than 360 years. In our country, the building of a powerful socialist economy will take more than 100 years, I reckon." What period was the 17th century? It was the end of the Ming and the beginning of the Ching Dynasty. Another century was to elapse before we came to the first half of the 18th century, or the Chien Lung period of the Ching Dynasty, the period when the author of *The Dream of the Red Chamber*, Tsao Hsueh-chin, lived, a period which gave birth to fictional characters like Chia Pao-yu, who was dissatisfied with the feudal system. In the Chien Lung period, the buds of capitalist relations of production already existed in China, but it remained a feudal society. Such is the social background of the emergence of the multitude of fictional characters in the Ta-

kuan Garden. Before this, in the 17th century, capitalism was already developing in a number of European countries. It has taken over 300 years for the capitalist productive forces to develop to their present state. Socialism is vastly superior to capitalism and our economy will develop faster than those of the capitalist countries. But China has a large population, had little to start with and is economically backward, so that in my opinion it will be impossible for her to effect a tremendous expansion of the productive forces to catch up with and overtake the world's most advanced capitalist countries in less than 100 years. Perhaps it will actually take only a few decades—say, 50 years—as some people envisage. If it does turn out that way, we'll thank heaven and earth and it will be wonderful! But I would advise comrades to anticipate more difficulties and so to envisage a somewhat longer period. It took more than 300 years to build up a powerful capitalist economy; what would be wrong with building a powerful socialist economy in our country in about 50 to 100 years? The next 50 to 100 years or so, beginning from now, will be a great era of radical change in the social system throughout the world, an earth-shaking era without equal in any previous historical period. Living in such an era, we must be prepared to engage in tremendous struggles which in form will have many features different from those of struggles in the past. In this undertaking, we must integrate in the best possible way the universal truth of Marxism-Leninism with the concrete realities of China's socialist construction and with those of the world revolution now and in the future and, through practice, gradually get to know the objective laws of struggle. We must be prepared to suffer many failures and setbacks resulting from our blindness, and thereby gain experience and win final victory. When we see things in this light, there are many advantages in envisaging a longer period of time, whereas harm might result from envisaging a shorter period.

In socialist construction, we are still acting blindly to a very large extent. For us the socialist economy is in many respects a still unknown realm of necessity. Take me by way of example. There are many problems in the work of economic construction which I still don't understand. I know very little about industry and commerce for instance. I know something about agriculture, but this is only relatively speaking — I still don't know much. To know more about agriculture one should understand soils, botany, crop cultivation, agro-chemistry, farm machinery and so on. One should also understand the different branches of agriculture, such as grain, cotton, edible oil, hemp, silk, tea, sugar, vegetables, tobacco, fruit, medicinal herbs and miscellaneous products. There are animal husbandry and forestry too. I myself am a believer in the theory of the Soviet soil scientist V.R. Williams. In his work on soil Williams advocated combining farming, forestry and animal husbandry. I think we must have this three-way combination, or agriculture will suffer. I would advise comrades to make a serious study of all these problems of agricultural production when you have some respite from work. I too would like to study them a little more. Up to now, however, my knowledge of these matters has been very scanty. I have paid rather more attention to problems relating to the relations of production, to the system. When it comes to the productive forces, I know very little. As for our Party as a whole, our knowledge of socialist construction is very inadequate. In the forthcoming period we should accumulate experience and study hard, and in the course of practice gradually deepen our understanding and become clearer on the laws of socialist construction. We must put in a lot of hard work and investigate and study it in earnest. We must go down to selected spots at the grass roots, to the production brigades and production teams, and to the factories and shops. We used to do rather well in making investigation and study, but after we entered the cities we didn't do it seriously. In 1961 we

pushed it once again, and now the situation has changed somewhat. But it has not yet become common practice among the leading cadres — especially senior leading cadres — in some places, departments and enterprises. Some provincial Party secretaries have still not gone down to stay at selected spots. If the provincial Party secretaries don't go, how can they ask prefectural Party secretaries and county Party secretaries to do so? This is bad and must be changed.

Twelve years have passed since the founding of the People's Republic of China. These 12 years can be divided into a first period of eight years and a second of four years. Nineteen-fifty to the end of 1957 constitute the first eight years, 1958 to the present is the second four years. In this conference of ours, we have made a first attempt at summing up the experience of our past work, mainly that of the last four years. This summing-up is reflected in the report to the conference. We have already formulated, or are formulating, or shall formulate, specific policies in various fields. Already formulated are such draft regulations as the 60 articles on rural people's communes, the 70 articles on industrial enterprises, the 60 articles on higher education and the 14 articles on scientific research, all of which have already come into force or are being carried out on a trial basis. They will be revised in future, some perhaps drastically. Among those which are already in the process of formulation are the regulations on commercial work. Among those which will be formulated in future are the regulations on middle-school and primary-school education. We should also formulate some regulations on the work of our Party and government organs and mass organizations. The army has already formulated some regulations. In short, we should do a good job in summing up our experience in industry, agriculture, commerce and culture and education, and in the army, the government and the Party, and work out a complete set of principles, policies and

measures so that our work in these seven sectors will progress along the correct path.

It is not enough to have a general line. In addition, under its guidance we must have a complete set of specific principles, policies and measures which are suited to our conditions in industry, agriculture, commerce, culture and education, the army, the government and the Party. Only then can we persuade the masses and the cadres, using these as teaching materials to educate them so that they can have unity of understanding and of action. And only then can we achieve victory in revolution and construction. Otherwise it is impossible. On this point, we had a deep understanding even as far back as the War of Resistance Against Japan. At that time we did function in this way, so that the cadres and the masses achieved unity in their understanding of the complete set of specific principles, policies and measures for the period of democratic revolution and therefore achieved unity in action, which led to victory in that revolution. This is something we all know. During the period of socialist revolution and socialist construction, our revolutionary tasks in the first eight years were: in the countryside, to complete the reform of the feudal land system and then to achieve the co-operative transformation of agriculture, and in the cities, to achieve the socialist transformation of capitalist industry and commerce. In economic construction, our tasks were to rehabilitate the economy and carry out the First Five-Year Plan. Both in revolution and in construction we had a general line which was suited to the objective conditions and which was wholly convincing, as well as a complete set of principles, policies and measures under the guidance of the general line. Hence we could educate the cadres and the masses and unify their understanding, and the tasks were performed fairly well. This is also something we all know. But as things stood in those days, we had to copy the Soviet Union since we had no experience of our own in economic construction. In the field

of heavy industry especially, we copied almost everything from the Soviet Union with very little creativeness on our part. It was absolutely necessary to do so at that time, and yet it was also a weakness — a lack of creativeness and of ability to stand on our own feet. Certainly this could not be our long-term policy. Beginning from 1958 we established the clear-cut policy of relying mainly on our own efforts while seeking foreign aid by way of support. At the Second Session of the Party's Eighth National Congress in 1958, we adopted the general line of "going all out, aiming high and achieving greater, faster, better and more economical results in building socialism." In the same year the people's communes were established and the slogan of a "great leap forward" was raised. For a certain period after the general line for socialist construction was proclaimed, we hadn't the time to work out a complete set of specific principles, policies and measures suited to our conditions, nor did the possibility exist for us to do so because our experience was still insufficient. Under these circumstances, a complete set of teaching materials wasn't available to the cadres and the masses, who couldn't get any systematic education on policy and therefore couldn't conceivably have genuine unity in understanding and action. This possibility came into being only after a period of time, after we had suffered some setbacks and acquired both positive and negative experience. Now matters are better. We do have these things or are working them out. Thus we can better carry on socialist revolution and socialist construction. In order to work out a complete set of specific principles, policies and measures under the guidance of the general line, we must employ the methods of drawing on the masses and of making systematic, thorough investigation and study. And we must examine the successful and unsuccessful experience in our work historically. Only thus can we discover laws which are inherent in objective things and which are not subjectively concocted out of people's imaginations, and only

thus can we formulate regulations which are suited to our conditions. This is a very important matter and I ask the comrades here to please pay attention to it.

Of the seven sectors — industry, agriculture, commerce, culture and education, the army, the government and the Party — it is the Party that exercises overall leadership. The Party must give leadership to industry, agriculture, commerce, culture and education, the army and the government. Generally speaking, our Party is good. Our Party is mainly composed of workers and poor peasants. The great majority of our cadres are good, and they are all working hard. But we must also realize that there are still some problems and we mustn't imagine that everything is just fine with our Party. At present we have over 17 million Party members, nearly 80 per cent of whom joined the Party after the founding of the People's Republic, that is, in the 50s. Those who joined the Party before our People's Republic was founded constitute only 20 per cent. Of this 20 per cent, those who joined before 1930, that is, in the 20s, totalled 800-odd people according to an estimate several years ago. Some have died in the last couple of years, so perhaps there are only 700-odd left. Among both old and new Party members — especially among the new members — there are some who are impure in character or work style. They are individualists, bureaucrats, subjectivists, or even degenerate elements. There are also some people who are Communists in name but do not represent the working class, on the contrary, they represent the bourgeoisie. All is not pure inside the Party. We must be aware of this fact, or we shall suffer.

This is my fourth point. In short, our understanding of the objective world necessarily involves a process. In the beginning

we do not understand, or do not completely understand, and it is only through repeated practice which leads to achievements and victories, tumbles and setbacks, and through the comparison of successes and failures that it is possible to have gradually developed complete or relatively complete understanding. When that point is reached, we shall have more initiative, enjoy greater freedom and become somewhat wiser. Freedom is the recognition of necessity and the transformation of the objective world. Only on the basis of the recognition of necessity can people have freedom of action. This is the dialectics of freedom and necessity. Necessity as such is objectively existing law. Before we recognize it our action can never be conscious, it partakes of blindness. Under these conditions we are foolish people. Haven't we done many foolish things during the last few years?

The fifth point: The international communist movement. On this question I am only going to say a few words.

Whether in China or in other countries of the world, when all is said and done, over 90 per cent of the population will eventually support Marxism-Leninism. There are still many people in the world who have not awakened because of the deceptions of the social-democrats, revisionists, imperialists and reactionaries. But sooner or later they will gradually awaken and support Marxism-Leninism. The truth of Marxism-Leninism is irresistible. Sooner or later the masses of the people will rise in revolution. Sooner or later the world revolution will triumph. Sooner or later those who forbid others to make revolution, such as the characters in Lu Hsun's book — Squire Chao, Squire Chien and the bogus foreign devil who bar Ah Q from revolution — will be defeated.

The Soviet Union was the first socialist state and the Communist Party of the Soviet Union was created by Lenin. Although the leadership of the Soviet Party and state has now been usurped by revisionists, I would advise comrades to remain firm in the conviction that the masses of the Soviet people and of Soviet Party members and cadres are good, that they desire revolution and that revisionist rule will not last long. Whatever the time — now or in the future, in our generation or in the generations to come — we should learn from the Soviet Union and study its experience. If we don't learn from the Soviet Union, we'll make mistakes. People may ask, since the Soviet Union is under the rule of the revisionists, should we still learn from it? What we should study is the good people and good things of the Soviet Union, the good experience of the Soviet Party, the good experience of Soviet workers and peasants and of those intellectuals who have close ties with the labouring people. As for the bad people and bad things of the Soviet Union and the Soviet revisionists, we should treat them as teachers by negative example and draw lessons from them.

We should always uphold the principle of proletarian internationalist unity. We always maintain that the socialist countries and the world communist movement must unite firmly on the basis of Marxism-Leninism.

The revisionists of the world never stop abusing us. Our attitude is, let them do as they wish. We will duly reply when necessary. Our Party has become accustomed to being abused. Leaving aside those who attacked us in the past, what about the present? Abroad, the imperialists abuse us, the reactionary nationalists abuse us, the reactionaries of various countries abuse us,

and the revisionists abuse us; at home, Chiang Kai-shek abuses us, and likewise the landlords, rich peasants, counter-revolutionaries, bad elements and Rightists. This has been the case for a long time and we're already used to it. But are we isolated? I for one don't feel isolated. Over 7,000 people are present here. How can more than 7,000 people be isolated? (*Laughter*) Our country has over 600 million people. Our people are united. How can more than 600 million people be isolated? The masses of the people of all countries are already standing, or are going to stand, together with us. Is it possible for us to be isolated?

The sixth and last point: We must unite the whole Party and the whole people.

We must unite the advanced elements and the activists inside and outside the Party, and unite the middle elements in order to bring along those who lag behind. In this way, we can unite the whole Party and the whole people. Only by relying on such unity can we do our work well, overcome difficulties and build up China. To unite the whole Party and the whole people does not mean that we do not have our own position. Some people say that the Communist Party is a "party of the whole people," but we do not view things in this way. Our Party is the political party of the proletariat, its vanguard, a fighting force armed with Marxism-Leninism. We are on the side of the masses who comprise over 95 per cent of the total population. In no case do we stand on the side of the landlords, rich peasants, counter-revolutionaries, bad elements and Rightists who make up 4 to 5 per cent of the population. The same is true in the international sphere; we advocate unity with all Marxist-Leninists, with all revolutionary people, with the people in general. In no case do we want unity with the anti-

Communist and anti-popular imperialists and reactionaries. Whenever possible we'll establish diplomatic relations with them too and strive for peaceful coexistence with them on the basis of the Five Principles. But this is in a category different from our unity with the people of all countries.

If unity is to prevail throughout the Party and the nation, we must give full play to democracy and let people speak up. This holds both inside and outside the Party. Comrades from the provincial, prefectural and county Party committees, when you return, you must let people speak out. All comrades, absent or present, must act in this way. All leading members of the Party must promote inner-Party democracy and let people speak out. What are the limits? One is that Party discipline must be observed, the minority being subordinate to the majority and the entire membership to the Central Committee. Another limit is that no secret faction must be organized. We are not afraid of open opponents, we are only afraid of secret opponents. Such people do not speak the truth to your face, what they say is only lies and deceit. They don't express their real intention. As long as a person doesn't violate discipline and doesn't engage in secret factional activities, we should allow him to speak out and shouldn't punish him if he says wrong things. If people say wrong things, they can be criticized, but we should convince them with reason. What if they are still not convinced? They can be allowed to reserve their opinions. As long as they abide by the resolutions and the decisions taken by the majority, the minority can reserve their opinions. It is advantageous to allow the minority both inside and outside the Party to do so. If they are allowed to reserve their incorrect opinions for the time being, they can correct them in future. Quite often the ideas of the minority

turn out to be correct. Such cases are common in history. In the beginning, truth is not in the hands of the majority of people, but in those of a minority. Marx and Engels held the truth in their hands, but in the beginning they were in the minority. For a long period Lenin was also in the minority. We've had similar experience in our own Party. When our Party was ruled by Chen Tu-hsiu and also when the "Left" opportunist lines prevailed, truth was not in the hands of the majority in the leading organs but on the contrary in the hands of the minority. Historically, the doctrines of natural scientists such as Copernicus, Galileo and Darwin were not recognized by the majority of people for a very long time, but on the contrary were considered incorrect. In their time they were in the minority. When our Party was founded in 1921, we only had a few dozen members; we were also in the minority, but those few dozen people represented the truth and represented China's destiny.

There is also the question of arrests and executions on which I want to say something. At present, only a dozen or so years after victory in the revolution, as long as elements of the overthrown reactionary classes have not been reformed and, what is more, as long as some of them are still plotting restoration, a few must be arrested and executed; otherwise the people's anger cannot be placated and the people's dictatorship consolidated. But we must not arrest people lightly, and especially we must not execute people lightly. Some bad people, some bad elements and degenerate elements who have infiltrated into our ranks, ride on the backs of the people, piss and shit on them, behaving in a vicious and unrestrained way, and seriously violate laws and discipline. They are petty Chiang Kai-sheks. We must have a way of dealing with this type of people. The worst among them who

have committed heinous crimes have to be arrested and some executed. For if we don't arrest or execute any of them, we won't be able to placate the people's anger. This is what we mean when we say, "We can't avoid arrests, and we can't avoid executions." But we absolutely must not arrest too many or execute too many. As for those whose arrest is optional or whose execution is optional, we must definitely not arrest or execute them. There was a fellow called Pan Han-nien who once served as vice-mayor of Shanghai. Previously he had secretly capitulated to the Kuomintang and had become a member of the C.C. Clique. He is now in jail, and we haven't executed him. If we kill one fellow like Pan Han-nien, thereby relaxing the restraints on execution, then all those like him would have to be executed. There was another fellow called Wang Shih-wei who was a secret Kuomintang agent. While in Yen-an, he wrote an article entitled "The Wild Lily," in which he attacked the revolution and vilified the Communist Party. He was later arrested and killed. The execution was carried out by the security organs themselves while they were on the march; the decision was not made by the Central Committee. We have often made criticisms on this incident and we hold that he shouldn't have been killed. True, he was a secret agent, he wrote articles to attack us and simply refused to mend his ways. Still we could have just spared him and let him do labour. It wasn't good to kill him. We should arrest and execute as few people as possible. If we arrest and execute people at will, everybody will fear for himself and nobody will dare to speak. In such an atmosphere there can't be much democracy.

Neither should we put hats on people indiscriminately. Some comrades are addicted to using hats to put pressure on

people. The moment they start speaking, hats start flying around everywhere and people are so frightened they daren't speak. Of course hats there will always be. Aren't there many hats in the report to the conference? Isn't "decentralism" a hat? But we mustn't put hats on people at will, calling this one a decentralist and that one a decentralist, until everybody is a decentralist. It would be better for the people concerned to put on the hats themselves — and moreover — the right hats — rather than have them put on by others. If people put on hats themselves and wear them for a while, they should be removed when everybody agrees that they no longer fit. This will create a good democratic atmosphere. We advocate not seizing on other's faults, not putting hats on people and not wielding the big stick, so that people will be free from fear and will dare to speak out.

Good will and a helpful attitude should be shown towards those who have made mistakes and those who do not allow people to speak out. We mustn't create the kind of atmosphere in which people feel that they can't afford to make any mistakes or that once they have made mistakes, the consequences will be terrible and they will never be able to raise their heads again. As long as a person who has made mistakes really wants to mend his ways and has made a genuine self-criticism, we should express our welcome. We must not make too high demands on a person when he makes a self-criticism the first or second time. It doesn't matter if his self-criticism is not thorough yet. We should let him think again and give him well-intentioned help. A man needs help from others. We must help an erring comrade to realize his mistakes. If people sincerely make self-criticism and are willing to correct mistakes, we should forgive them

and adopt a lenient policy towards them. As long as their achievements are still primary and they are reasonably competent, let them continue in their posts.

In my speech I have criticized certain phenomena and criticized certain comrades, but I haven't named them, I haven't pointed out who this one or that one actually is. You know what I mean. (*Laughter*) For shortcomings and mistakes in our work in the last few years, the responsibility rests first with the Central Committee and, in the Central Committee, primarily with me; second, the responsibility rests with the Party committees of the provinces, municipalities and autonomous regions; third, with the prefectural Party committees; fourth, with the county Party committees; and fifth, with the Party committees of enterprises and people's communes. In short, everyone has his share of responsibility.

Comrades, when you return, you must revitalize democratic centralism. The comrades of the county Party committees should lead the commune Party committees in revitalizing democratic centralism. First of all, collective leadership must be built or strengthened. You must no longer practise the method of leadership which prolongs the fixed "division of spheres of work and exclusive responsibility." Under that method the secretaries and members of Party committees each work on their own, and there can be no real collective discussion or real collective leadership. It is necessary to promote democracy, encourage others to make criticisms and listen to their criticisms. We must be able to face criticism. We must take the initiative and carry out self-criticism first. We must examine whatever needs examining for one or at most two hours, getting it all out lock, stock and barrel — that'll be the lot. If others consider

it insufficient, let them go on. And if what they say is right, we'll accept their criticism. In the matter of letting people speak out, should we be active or passive? Of course it's better to be active. But what if we're already in a passive position? If we were undemocratic in the past and so find ourselves in this passive position now, it doesn't matter. Let everybody criticize us. Let them pour out their grievances all day, and instead of going to the theatre in the evening too. Please come and criticize me day and night. (*Laughter*) Then I'll sit down and think about it coolly, forgoing sleep for two or three nights. After thinking it through and understanding it, I'll write a sincere self-criticism. Isn't that the way? In short, if you let others speak out, the heavens won't fall and you won't be toppled. And if you don't? Then the day will inevitably come when you are toppled.

So much for my speech today. The central point I have discussed is the question of how to realize democratic centralism and how to promote democracy inside and outside the Party. I recommend that comrades consider this question carefully. Some comrades still lack the democratic centralist way of thinking. Now is the time they should begin to acquire this way of thinking and begin to understand this question. If we give full play to democracy, we can mobilize the enthusiasm of the broad masses inside and outside the Party and unite the broad masses who comprise more than 95 per cent of the whole population. When we have achieved this, we will be able to do our work better and better and overcome the difficulties we meet all the more quickly. Our cause will then develop much more smoothly.

(Enthusiastic applause)