

This commentary was written on the works compiled by Chen Boda¹ in *A Few Passages of Sayings of Engels, Lenin, and Chairman Mao Regarding Genius and Directives of Vice Chairman Lin*. The title “A few Opinions of Mine” was added by Mao Zedong when reviewing the proofs.

A Few Opinions of Mine²

August 31, 1970
Mao Zedong

This material is compiled by Comrade Chen Boda. It has deceived not a few comrades.

1. There are no words from Marx.
2. There is only one line from Engels,³ and *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* is not a major work by Marx.
3. I have only found five quotes from Lenin.⁴ Of these, the fifth states that leaders must be tried and tested, professionally trained, schooled by long experience, and work in perfect harmony⁵—these four conditions are brought up.

Not even speaking of others, from the perspective of us on the Central Committee, those who adequately meet these criteria are few. For example, Chen Boda—this ingenious theorist and I have worked together for 30 years, and there have been several important matters on which we have never been in accord. Even less can it be said that we have worked very well together. As an example, in the

1 Chen Boda at the time served on the Politburo of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China. In 1970, after the Second Plenary of the Ninth Central Committee of the Party, a resolution passed for Chen to be isolated and put under investigation. In August, 1973 at the first plenary of the Tenth Central Committee of the Party, a resolution passed to revoke Chen Boda’s party membership, and to absolve him of all tasks inside and outside the party.

2 Translation, July, 2021. For comments, questions, suggestions, or criticisms, contact us at Wengetranslators@protonmail.com.

3 This refers to the sentence in the preface written by Engels for the Third German Edition of Marx’s *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* which states, “It was in truth a work of genius.”

4 These five lines compiled by Chen Boda are listed in Appendix A.

5 The statement by Lenin is “Political thinking is sufficiently developed among the Germans, and they have accumulated sufficient political experience to understand that without the ‘dozen’ tried and talented leaders (and talented men are not born by the hundreds), professionally trained, schooled by long experience, and working in perfect harmony, no class in modern society can wage a determined struggle,” <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1901/witbd/iv.htm>.
талантливых (а таланты не рождаются сотнями), испытанных, профессионально подготовленных и долгой школой обученных вождей, превосходно спевшихся друг с другом

course of the three Lushan Conferences,⁶ in the first one, he ran over to where Peng Dehuai was.⁷ The second time, upon discussing the 70 items of industrialization,⁸ according to his own words, he went up the mountain for a few days and then went down the mountain, and didn't know for what reason he went down the mountain, or where it was he ran off to after going down. This time [the second plenary of the ninth Party Congress, held at Lushan from August 23 to September 6, 1970], he was quite easy to work with, deploying a surprise attack, showing a tendency for fanning the flames, hoping for disorder under heavens, the detonation of Lushan Mountain, and the stopping of the earth's rotation. These words of mine do not describe the vast mind of our ingenious theorist (what sort of mind this is I do not know, it's probably one with a conscience, and not one of ambition). As for whether there will be chaos in the world of the proletariat, the detonation of Lushan Mountain, and the stopping of the earth's rotation, I think probably not. A historical figure who climbed Lushan Mountain remarked:⁹ A man of the Qi Nation has no affairs, [spare] worry about the collapse of heaven. We should not follow the example of that man of Qi. Lastly about my remarks,¹⁰ certainly there is not much that can help him. What I was saying was that the primary thing doesn't come from people's genius but through people's

6 The three Lushan Conferences refer to (1)—the Enlarged Conference of the Politburo and the Eighth plenary session of the Eighth Central Committee of the Communist Party of China held sequentially from July 2 to August 16, 1959; (2)—A Working Conference Convened by The Central Committee of the Communist Party from August 23 to September 16, 1961; (3) the Second Plenary Session of the Ninth Central Committee of the Communist Party held from August 23 to September 6, 1970.

7 Peng Dehuai, formerly a member of the Politburo and a Vice Chair of the CPC's Central Military Commission, Vice Premier of the State Council, as well as Minister of Defense. In August, 1959 at the Eight Plenary of the Eighth Committee of the Communist Party held at Lushan, Peng Dehuai was labeled as the leading member of an anti-party clique, also consisting of Huang Kecheng, Zhang Wentian, and Zhou Xiaodan. Peng Dehuai had led an attack against Mao and the party center at the Lushan Conference, advocating reversion of agricultural land to family control, and to have families take full responsibility for profits or losses, promoting a full retreat from the entire objective of the collectivization of agriculture that had advanced from mutual aid teams in the early 50s. Peng Dehuai also promoted a normalization of the then highly strained relations with the Soviet Union. At the same time, another reactionary camp revolved around Deng Xiaoping, Liu Shaoqi and associates such as Chen Yun, and Wu Zhipu which advocated that "profit be put in command." When the trend of commune formation accelerated during this time, the Liu and Deng group tried to use the communalization trend as a pretext to demand adherence to commandist policies geared towards the accumulation of agricultural grain for profit, a policy "left in form, right in essence." Because the party center was mobilized to deal with Peng's attack first (Peng supported by Huang Kecheng, Zhang Wentian, Zhou Xiaodan and others) Liu and Deng had space to maneuver, contributing to the suffering and famine during this period. On Peng's alignment to Soviet aims, see Maurice Meisner's *Mao's China and After*, The Free Press, 1999, 266: "The prelude to the drama enacted at Lushan began when Peng, in his capacity as Minister of Defense, led a Chinese military delegation on a visit to the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe in the spring of 1959. During the course of his travels, Peng expressed to Khrushchev and other foreign Communist leaders his displeasure (which coincided with Soviet displeasure) over the policies of the Great Leap and the leadership of Mao. In Peng's view, a view shared by other military leaders, China's domestic socioeconomic policies were intimately related to its military policies and its relations with the Soviet Union. China's military security required a rational plan of economic development (to modernize the professional army that Peng headed) as well as the sophisticated weapons and the nuclear shield provided by the Soviet Union. The Great Leap Forward campaign threatened both, for it was undermining industrial and technological development within China [according to Peng Dehuai that is, though in actuality this long-term effort to promote self-reliance in industry and technology was essential to such development—translators] and undermining the Sino-Soviet alliance. And even more directly threatening to the professional army was Maoist talk about reviving the popular militia."

8 The "Regulations on Work in Industrial National Enterprises" (Draft), which included 70 regulations in total and was referred to as the "70 Regulations on Industry" for short.

9 Tang Dynasty poet Li Bai.

10 In Mao Zedong's notes, there was the additional bracketed sentence "Chen Boda quotes as many as seven or eight lines from Lin Biao, as if he had found his treasure." The eight lines are listed in Appendix B to this translation.

social practice.¹¹ I exchanged opinions with Comrade Lin Biao,¹² The two of us both felt the same way about that unceasing debate among historians and philosophers that is commonly spoken of, if history is created by heroes, or if history is created by slaves, whether people's knowledge (talent can also be categorized as the accumulation of knowledge) is innate,¹³ or if it nourished,¹⁴ whether [we accept] idealist apriorism or the reflection theory of materialism, we can only but stand on the side of Marxism-Leninism, and absolutely must not stand together on the side of Chen Boda's rumors and sophistry. At the same time, the two of us believe, this question of Marxist epistemology must be researched more by ourselves, and truly don't believe that the matter has been researched to a conclusion. I hope comrades will all adopt this sort of attitude, unite to win still greater victories, and not be duped by those who superficially claim an understanding of Marxism, while in reality completely misunderstanding Marxism.

11 Refers to the paragraph excerpted by Chen Boda from Mao Zedong's "On Practice:" "Leaving aside their genius, the reason why Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin could work out their theories was mainly that they personally took part in the practice of the class struggle and the scientific experimentation of their time," https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-1/mswv1_16.htm.

12 Lin Biao at the time served as the vice chairman of the Central Committee, and Vice Chairman of the Central Military Commission.

13 i.e. *a priori*. For an example of this term, see Engels criticizing Dühring: "This is only giving a new twist to the old favorite ideological method, also known as the *a priori* method, which consists in ascertaining the properties of an object, by logical deduction from the concept of the object, instead of from the object itself. First the concept of the object is fabricated from the object; then the spit is turned around, and the object is measured by its reflection, the concept. The object is then to conform to the concept, not the concept to the object." —Engels, *Anti-Dühring* (1878), MECW 25:89.

14 i.e. *a posteriori*.

Appendix A: Chen Boda's Quotations from Lenin

- (1) "When you read these opinions, you will think you are—you will feel as if you are—listening in person to the words of this ingenuous theorist." (The Russian text was translated into English as "When you read these opinions of Marx—vividly written, full of passion and revealing a profound interest in all the great ideological trends and in an analysis of them—you realise that you are listening to the words of a great thinker," (*Lenin Collected Works*, Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1962, Moscow, Volume 12, pages 104-112);
- (2) "the genius of Marx consists precisely in his having furnished answers to questions already raised by the foremost minds of mankind," "The Three Sources and Three Component Parts of Marxism" from The 1907 edition of *Letters to Dr. Ludwig Kugelmann*," Lenin's *Collected Works*, Progress Publishers, 1977, Moscow, Volume 19, pages 21-28;
- (3) "The genius of Marx lies in his having been the first to deduce from this the lesson world history teaches and to apply that lesson consistently. The deduction he made is the doctrine of the *class struggle*," Lenin's *Collected Works*, Progress Publishers, 1977, Moscow, Volume 19, pages 21-28;
- (4) "What genius is displayed in this prophecy!" [on Engels' passage discussing a future world war] from "Prophetic Words" Lenin's *Collected Works*, 4th English Edition, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1972 Volume 27, pages 494-499;
- (5) "...without the 'dozen' tried and talented leaders (and talented men are not born by the hundreds), professionally trained, schooled by long experience, and working in perfect harmony, no class in modern society can wage a determined struggle," Lenin, *What is to be Done*.

Appendix B: Chen Boda's Quotations from Lin Biao

- (1) This person Chairman Mao is endowed with astounding abilities. His powers of comprehensive are very strong, and his abilities of recollection are very strong. His powers of comprehensive are very strong regardless of if it is his powers of comprehension when reading, powers of comprehension of material objects, or the ability to see the essence from appearance, all are very strong. His mind is extremely clear, he is extremely gifted. (Speech at the the All-Military Conference for High-Level Cadre, September, 1959).
- (2) The geniuses of the 19th Century were Marx and Engels. The geniuses of the 20th Century were Lenin and Comrade Mao Zedong. ...if we don't admit this, then we will commit errors. If we don't see this, then we will not know to select the proletariat's greatest genius helmsman as our leader (Expanded Session of the Politburo, May 18, 1966).
- (3) Chairman Mao has experienced far more than Marx, Engels, and Lenin. Of course, Marx, Engels, and Lenin are persons of greatness. Marx lived for 64 years, and Engels for 75 years. They had great foresight, and they transmitted down the most advanced ideas of humanity, and foresaw the social development of humanity. But they did not personally lead the proletarian revolution, and were not like Chairman Mao, personally overseeing the front line commands of so many momentous political operations, especially military operations. Lenin only lived to 54. Six years after the victory of the October Revolution he passed away. He did not experience the sort of long term, complex, fervent and

multiple-aspected struggle like Chairman Mao. China's population is eleven times larger than Germany's, four times larger than Russia's, its revolutionary experience is rich, there is none that can surpass it. Chairman Mao is the highest authority in the country and world, he is the most outstanding, and greatest character. Chairman Mao's commentaries, essays and revolutionary practice all reveal his great proletarian genius (Expanded Session of the Politburo, May 18, 1966).

(4) Chairman Mao is the present era's most spectacular proletarian leader, the greatest genius, the one with the greatest sense of revolutionary responsibility, and with the most practical revolutionary spirit (speech on receiving the Cultural Revolution Small Group of the Central Committee, August 8, 1966).

(5) Chairman Mao is much wiser than Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Stalin. Right now there is no person in the world that can rise to the level of Chairman Mao (Speech on Raising the Study of Chairman Mao's Works to a New Stage, September 18, 1966).

(6) Such a genius as Chairman Mao will only emerge after hundreds of years in the world, and after thousands of years in China. Chairman Mao is the the world's greatest genius (Speech on Raising the Study of Chairman Mao's Works to a New Stage, September 18, 1966).

(7) Mao Zedong is the greatest Marxist-Leninist of our era. He has inherited, defended and developed Marxism-Leninism with genius, creatively and comprehensively, and has brought it to a higher and completely new stage (*Sayings of Chairman Mao*, Introduction to the Reprint, December 16, 1966).

(8) One cannot leave the center. The center is the sun. The nine great constellations surround and revolve around the sun, all work surrounds and revolves around the sun. Chairman Mao himself is the sun. Mao Zedong Thought itself is the sun (Talk at the Time of Receiving the General Political Department's Vice Department Head and other Cadre, May, 19, 1970).