

Chairman Mao's Talk with Members of the Politburo who Were in Beijing¹

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Chairman Mao convened a meeting with members of the Politburo who were in Beijing. Attendees shook hands with Chairman Mao one by one.

(When Chairman Mao shook hands with Zhou Enlai) Zhou said: “[I] haven’t seen the Chairman for almost one year, I miss the Chairman.”

Chairman Mao asked Zhou: “How is it going? Have you been ok?”

(Zhou said that he had three surgeries, and that his digestion was still alright, and that he had sent his regards to Chairman Mao two days prior.)

(When shaking hands with Ye Jianying) [Chairman Mao] said: “Oh, the old marshal.”

(When shaking hands with Deng Xiaoping) [Chairman Mao] said: “Oh, Xiaoping.”

(When shaking hands with Chen Xilian) Chairman Mao said: “You are to be the marshal in command?”²

(Chairman Mao shook hands with Ji Dengkui.) Ji said: “I recently met once with the Chairman.”

(When shaking hands with Wu De) Chairman Mao said: “Wu De has virtue.”³

(When shaking hands with Chen Yonggui) Chairman Mao said: “Your letter is good. One third [of the time] at Dazhai, one third across the whole nation, and one third at the central committee. Don’t live at the Diaoyutai,⁴ there are no fish there. You and Wu Guixian should both move out. Don’t live at Diaoyutai”⁵

1 Translation, July, 2021. For comments, questions, suggestions, or criticisms, contact us at Wengetranslators@protonmail.com. For further context on this document, see the translators’ note in Appendix A below.

2 Meaning Chen was to replace Ye Jianyan and assume leadership of the armed forces.

3 Chairman Mao was making a pun. In Chinese, the surname Wu (吴) shares the same pronunciation with the word for without (无). When *wu* (无) is combined with the second character of the name, *de* (德) meaning virtue, it has the combined meaning of “having no virtue.”

4 Diaoyutai’s (钓鱼台) which literally means “a platform for fishing,” refers to the state guesthouse in Beijing completed in 1959. It served as the office of the Central Cultural Revolution Group during the GPCR.

5 Chen had proposed in a letter to Chairman Mao that he leave Diaoyutai. Chen Yonggui, a peasant,

(When Chairman Mao was shaking hands with Wu Guixian) Wu said: “Greetings to Chairman Mao, I am Wu Guixian.”

Chairman Mao: “Oh, I don’t know you.”

Wu: “I met with Chairman Mao in 1964, during National Day when attending the ceremony.”

Chairman Mao: “I don’t know.”

Wu: “The sons and daughters of Yanan greet you.”

Chairman Mao asked: “Are you from Yanan?”

Zhou Enlai: “She is from Henan, and she was a female weaver at Xi’an, in Shaanxi Province. She visited Yanan.”⁶

(When shaking hands with Su Zhenhua) Chairman Mao said: “So handling the navy rests with you, the navy needs to be strengthened—make the enemy afraid. [Now] our navy is just this big.”(Chairman Mao showed his little finger)

Su: “Now it has grown a bit, now it is this big” (Su showed his ring finger).

(When shaking hands with Xie Jingyi) [Chairman Mao] said, “You are about to become a high-ranking officer, you must be careful.”

Xie answered: “I do not want to become a high-ranking official, but my official duties are continually increasing.”

Chairman Mao said: “Give it a try, if things go wrong, (Chairman Mao made hand gestures) then roll up the quilt.”⁷

Chairman Mao said: “It’s been a while since we’ve met. There is a problem I want to discuss with you. Some people’s thoughts are at odds with one another—several individuals. I made a mistake myself. [Zhang] Chunqiao’s article, I didn’t see it in that

formerly illiterate, under whose leadership Dazhai of Shanxi (山西) Province made tremendous achievements in constructing socialist agriculture, was elected to the Politburo in 1973 and was appointed vice-premier of the State Council in January 1975. He wrote a letter to Chairman Mao in April 1975 stating his intention to leave Beijing’s Diaoyutai office. In Chen’s letter, he proposed that he would spend one third of his time at Dazhai to study agricultural knowledge through working in the fields, spend one third of the time visiting villages across the country to obtain practical experience in socialist agricultural work, and spend another one third of the time in Beijing to study from and work for the Central Committee. Chairman Mao thought highly of Chen’s letter. To encourage more people to follow Chen’s proposal, Chairman Mao states that there are no fish at Diaoyutai, meaning that office work is less important than working in the fields together with the masses, less important than doing political work in the countryside. Unfortunately, in the October of 1976 Chen Xilian, Su Zhenhua, Chen Yonggui, Wu De, and Wu Guixian all supported Hua Guofeng. They did not object to the coup against the leftist leadership and against the revolutionary line.

6 Chairman Mao and Zhou Enlai differed over their evaluation of Wu Guixian, previously a female worker who was then elected as the Vice Premier of the State Council in 1975. Wu was favored by Zhou Enlai, who disliked alternative women candidates who were affiliated with the left headquarters in Shanghai. This exchange possibly reflects friction between Chairman Mao and Zhou over this issue.

7 *Juan pugaijuan* (卷铺盖卷), “roll up the quilt” is an expression meaning “to quit.” Unsurprisingly, Liu Bing later wrote a letter according to Deng Xiaoping’s instructions falsely accusing Xie of wrongdoing, and misrepresenting the exchange here as an attack by Mao on Xie.

way.⁸ I only heard it read once, I did not read it. I could not read, so I gave up on talking about the problem of empiricism.⁹ [Yao] Wenyuan showed me the document from New China News Agency (Xinhuashe 新华社)—Chunqiao, sorry. Also, Shanghai Machine Tools Plant’s “Ten Experiences”¹⁰ all talked about empiricism, and did not mention [the word] “Marxism” one single time, and also did not talk about dogmatism.¹¹

[Shanghai Machine Tools Plant] established a university. A lot of intellectuals think the moon in foreign countries is better than that in China.¹²

There is a need for stability, there is a need for unity. Regardless of what question, regardless of whether it is empiricism or dogmatism, both are revising Marxism-Leninism, and all need to be treated with educational methods. Now some of our

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- 8 This refers to the accusation by Zhou Enlai and Deng Xiaoping that Zhang Chunqiao’s article was an attack against their own empiricist tendencies, and an attack against all the old cadres, a false accusation further described in footnote . Deng and Zhou desperately attacked Zhang Chunqiao, Yao Wenyuan, and Jiang Qing on this point, and attempted to put Zhang in grave danger. For instance, Deng Xiaoping characterized Zhang’s errors as analogous to Lin Biao’s coup attempt, attempting to thus put Zhang in the camp of the enemy. Previously in 1972, Zhou raised the idea of “Lin Biao’s Ultra-left Anarchism” in the People’s Daily and other publications, suggesting that the whole party was exercising an ultra-left line (in contrast, according to Chairman Mao, Lin Biao represented an ultra-right line). But Zhou in fact used this argument to attack the leftists in the party, an act criticized by Chairman Mao. In 1975, Chairman Mao took the responsibility to protect Zhang Chunqiao by apologizing to Zhang here for not refuting Zhou and Deng’s criticism against Zhang Chunqiao earlier, due to his health ailments.
 - 9 Chairman Mao Suffered from hypoxia at this time. His remark here suggests that even though Zhang’s article did not talk about empiricism, Mao had wanted himself to address the question, but his health problems prevented him from doing so. In the *Autobiography of Zhang Chunqiao* 《张春桥传》 prepared by Zheng Chong, Zhang’s daughter and Yao Wenyuan’s daughter state that Mao did provide suggested revisions to Zhang’s articles. In addition, the undertaking of the articles accorded to Mao’s instructions in 1974, “Instructions Regarding Theoretical Problems” 《关于理论问题的指示》 that stated “Why did Lenin speak of exercising dictatorship over the bourgeoisie? Essays must be written. Tell Chunqiao and Wenyuan to find several places where Lenin discusses this problem and send them to me printed in large-sized characters. Everyone first read and then write essays. Chunqiao should write this sort of essay. It is essential to get this question clear. Lack of clarity on this question will lead to revisionism. This should be made known to the whole nation.”
 - 10 This refers to Shanghai No.1 Machine Tools Plant’s critical article “Ten Expressions of Empiricism.”
 - 11 The article only paid attention to criticizing empiricist revisionism and did not criticize dogmatist revisionism. Chairman Mao was making a criticism over this point here.
 - 12 The Shanghai Machine Tools Plant established a university that is often referred to as the “July 21st University,” named after Chairman Mao’s July 21st Directive. The directive pinpointed the importance of combining education and revolution as well as promoted the leading role of proletarian politics in educational affairs. It also advocated the line adopted by the Shanghai Machine Tools Plant that insisted that the new university should recruit students among workers and peasants who had practical experience. The purpose was to combine education with practice in production. See the *People’s Daily* article “See the Path for Training Engineering Technology Personnel from Shanghai Machine Tools Plant,” July 22nd 1968: <https://www.laoziliao.net/rmrb/1968-07-22-1#378161>. Mao’s remarks here praise the example of the Shanghai Machine Tools Plant in breaking from the general pattern of study divorced from practice and from the people.

comrades should be criticized for making mistakes. Three arrows are shot together: Criticize Lin Biao, Criticize Confucius, and Criticize Pulling Strings.¹³ [But] the Criticize-Lin Biao and Criticize-Confucius campaign needs actions from these people [who have made mistakes]; without these people, the Criticize-Lin Biao Criticize-Confucius campaign will not work. There are millions of these people who pull-strings—including you (referring to Wang Hairong and Tang Wensheng).¹⁴ I am one of them too, I sent several girls to go to study at Peking University, I had no choice. I asked them to go to school. They had been workers for five years, and now [I] sent them to the university. I sent them there, this is also [a form of] pulling strings. I also have bourgeois right. I sent them, and Xie Jingyi had to receive them, these people are not bad people.¹⁵

I had one conversation here¹⁶ with comrade Xiaoping.

You all only hate empiricism and do not hate dogmatism. The “28-and-a-half Bolsheviks” ruled for four years’ time.¹⁷ They flew the flag of the Comintern to intimidate the Chinese (Communist) Party, attacking whoever disagreed with them and holding a bunch of empiricists captive. You [Zhou Enlai] were one, Zhu De was one, and other people, mainly Lin Biao and Peng Dehuai. It is not enough for me to only speak of Enlai and Peng Dehuai—without Lin Biao and Peng Dehui they would not have power.¹⁸ Lin Biao wrote *On Short and Swift Assault*, an article that praised

13 This refers to one speech Xie Jingyi 谢静宜 and Chi Qun 迟群 made during the Anti-Lin Biao and Anti-Confucius campaigns, in which Chi and Xie issued an excessively urgent call to declare war on all types of pulling-strings phenomena in state and party apparatus. *Zou houmen* (走后门) in Chinese literally means “getting in by the back door,” and it means “pulling strings” in English. Xie and Chi’s call upset Ye Jianying. Chairman Mao here is critical of Xie Jingyi and Chi Qun’s attack on these three targets at once (the “three arrows shot together”), which risked losing the opportunity to win over those cadres who had made mistakes but could correct their ways. Instead, he suggests unity can be achieved by opposing Lin Biao’s line, while the pulling-strings phenomenon can be dealt with later.

14 Wang Hairong 王海容 and Tang Wensheng 唐闻生 were previously Chairman Mao’s political secretaries. Because of Wang and Tang’s collusion with Deng Xiaoping et al. Chairman Mao later assigned comrade Mao Yuanxin 毛远新 as his liaison.

15 For background on these personnel, and a repudiation of libels against Chairman Mao and these individuals promoted by jokers like Li Zhisui, consult the memoirs of Qi Benyu and Lin Ke, the latter two of whom had far greater contact and access to Chairman Mao than Li Zhisui. These memoirs offer first-hand materials about the female personnel Chairman Mao sent to school and the motivation behind doing so. These accounts thoroughly repudiate the groundless claim that Chairman Mao was a womanizer, a lie promoted by revisionists. These workers were female comrades who worked as political secretaries and doctors of Chairman Mao and other Politburo members. They were sent to schools to learn about history and culture.

16 This likely refers to Chairman Mao’s study in Zhongnanhai where he met with people.

17 The 28-and-a-half Bolsheviks were a dogmatist group founded by Wang Ming and his followers that dogmatically obeyed the instructions of the Comintern in the early 1930s, which put the Chinese Communist Party in mortal danger during the Fifth Encirclement against the Jiangxi Soviet initiated by Kuomintang reactionaries in 1933.

18 For more details, please see the remarks about Chairman Mao’s article *Arguing against the Third “Left-leaning” Line* in the Appendix below. This article by Chairman Mao puts forward the critique that Zhou Enlai’s empiricism abetted Wang Ming’s dogmatism. Because of this historical argument, the revisionists blocked the publication of the complete version of the article following

Hua Fu¹⁹ and opposed Deng, Mao, Xie, and Gu. Deng is you (meaning Deng Xiaoping), Mao is Mao Zedong,²⁰ Xie is Xie Weijun, and Gu is Gu Bo, all other people (except Deng Xiaoping) were martyred, I had just met you once [Deng Xiaoping], you were in fact a representative of the Maoists.²¹

In the fields of education, science, news, culture and art, and many other fields, and in the field of medicine, as long as a foreigner made a fart it would be perceived as fragrant.

I have suffered for two years without eggs just because the Soviets published an article stating they contained cholesterol. And, later another article said that cholesterol was not a big problem, and said that eating eggs were allowed again. [For these people] even the moon is better in foreign countries. Do not underestimate dogmatism.

Many people hold empiricist views, they are just somewhat illiterate, unable to read Marx and Lenin, they can only act according to their experiences. There is no way to deal with empiricism; I have no way to deal with it, it takes time, and it may improve after ten years, eight years, twenty years, or thirty years. Being too rushed is not good, don't be in a rush [otherwise] some concepts cannot come together.

What I have said is stability and unity, dogmatism, empiricism, revisionism, and also the need to criticize bourgeois right. Don't rush, anyone of you who rushes will fall [Chairman Mao makes a hand gesture]. Don't split—unite. Practice Marxism-Leninism, not revisionism. Unite, and don't split. Be open and above-board, and don't intrigue and conspire.²²

Don't function as a gang of four, don't do it any more, why do you still do it?"²³ Why

the coup in 1976. Jiang Qing wanted to read the article after Chairman Mao passed away. Hua Guofeng cited Jiang Qing's request as one of her "crimes." For this, see *One of the Materials on the Criminal Deeds of Wang, Zhang, Jiang, and Yao* edited by Hua Guofeng: <http://bannedthought.net/China/MaoEra/GPCR/Chinese/RegardingProofOfTheCrimesOfG4-CCP-CC-1976-12-10.pdf>.

19 Comintern representative Otto Braun, who went by the Chinese names Li De 李德 and Hua Fu 华夫.

20 Mao Zedong's younger brother who was martyred in 1935.

21 This comment was initially made by Wang Ming and Bo Gu.

22 This sentence was directed at all members of the Politburo. Unsurprisingly, the Hua Guofeng-Deng Xiaoping clique initiated a coup to carry out revisionism, instill divisions, and instigate conspiracies.

23 Chairman Mao's mention of "gang of four" here became the so-called source of Hua Guofeng's accusation against the gang of four. The remark here has nearly universally been understood as directed against Jiang Qing, Zhang Chunqiao, Yao Wenyuan and Wang Hongwen. While there is no clarifying note in the transcript to whom this remark replies, we can conclude that it refers to these four revolutionaries based on Zhang Chunqiao's note found in the "Third Materials on the Criminal Deeds of Wang, Zhang, Jiang, and Yao edited by Hua Guofeng" 《材料之三》: "Regarding the Chairman's instructions to not form a gang of four, this certainly was resolutely followed, as this

not unite with the more than two hundred members of the Central Committee)? Functioning as a minority²⁴ is no good, it is bad at all times. This time there is a mistake, self-criticism is needed still. This time is different from the Lushan Conference. It was correct to oppose Lin Biao during the Lushan Conference. This time, there are still three lines: Practice Marxism-Leninism, not revisionism. Unite, and don't split. Be above-board and open, don't intrigue and conspire. And this means do not exercise factionalism. I will repeat these three lines: Practice Marxism-Leninism, not revisionism. Unite, and don't split. Be above-board and open, don't intrigue and conspire. Go ahead and discuss other affairs, cure the disease and save the patient, don't persecute anyone, it cannot be resolved in one meeting. [This is] my opinion and my view. There are comrades who do not believe these three lines, don't listen to me, and forget the three lines. The Ninth National Congress and the Tenth National Congress both addressed these three lines. Everyone needs to discuss these three lines again.

In the fields of education, science, literature and art, and medicine, where intellectuals are concentrated, there are some good [people], and there are a few Marxist-Leninists. You [at the] Ministry of Foreign Affairs [are at] a place where intellectuals are concentrated, am I wrong? You two²⁵ are stinking intellectuals, you should admit this, being the stinking old ninth category, the old ninth category cannot [just] walk away.²⁶

I need to take responsibility, I made a mistake. I did not see Chunqiao's article in that way. Chunqiao wrote the article with reason, was it not because he had written [such] articles in 1958?²⁷ I did not know him during that period, it seems I didn't, (Zhang Chunqiao said: "We met once") did not, I don't have a recollection [of meeting]. I wrote a note on that article,²⁸ and the People's Daily published it—was Deng Tuo [邓拓]

most likely could lead to the successful task of achieving unity. ~~Although not~~ [Zhang Chunqiao crossed out this phrase, indicating he did not believe that the four were the factional clique Deng Xiaoping accused them of being]. In the least [we] did not add to the burden on the Chairman." <http://bannedthought.net/China/MaoEra/GPCR/Chinese/RegardingProofOfTheCrimesOfG4-CCP-CC-1976-12-10.pdf>. Chairman Mao elsewhere also criticized Zhou Enlai, Ye Jianying, and Li Xian'nian as a "gang of three." Hua never dared mention this point. Chairman Mao also criticized Hua's Hunan gang (including Zhang Huaping and others) and Ye Jianying's Guangdong gang later in this talk.

24 *Shaoshuren* 少数人, meaning a minority faction, not a minority ethnic group.

25 This may refer to Wang Hairong (王海容) and Tang Wensheng (唐闻生).

26 The old ninth category (*laojiu* 老九) is slang for those old, un-remolded intellectuals, who ranked below eight other negative categories, including landlords (*dizhu* 地主), rich peasants (*funong* 富农), counter-revolutionaries (*fan geming* 反革命), negative elements (*huai fenzi* 坏分子), rightist elements (*youpai fenzi* 右派分子), traitors (*pantu* 叛徒), special agents (*tewu* 特务), and capitalist roaders (*zou zipai* 走资派).

27 See Zhang's article "Eradicate the Thought of Bourgeois Right," 《破除资产阶级的法权思想》 <https://www.laoziliao.net/rmrb/1958-10-13-7#207114>. This article was praised by Chairman Mao who also wrote an editorial note on it.

28 Mao's editorial note stated, "These words of Comrade Zhang Chunqiao were seen in the sixth issue of Shanghai's "Liberation," and now are transferred here, and provided to comrades for discussion. This problem requires discussion, because it faces an important problem. We believe that Zhang's article basically is correct, but it is a bit one-sided. This is to say that its explanation of historical

拓] in charge of the People's Daily at that time? (Zhang Chunqiao said: "It was Wu Lengxi [吴冷西].") Only two articles were supportive [of Zhang's article], the rest were opposed, so he was angry.²⁹

I think as for the problems that are not big, don't make minor issues major, but if there is a problem, one must be clear. If it cannot be solved in the first half of the year, let it be solved in the second half of the year; if it cannot be solved this year, let it be solved next year; if it cannot be solved next year, let it be solved in the year after next.³⁰ As I see it, those who criticize empiricism are themselves empiricists, they do not have much Marxism-Leninism, they may have some but not so much, about the same as me.³¹ Refusing to self-criticize is not good. Asking other people to do it [self-criticism] but to not do it oneself. Empirio-criticism in China and Russia, [as] Lenin pointed out: these people were all big intellectuals, completely [adhering to] the theory of Berkeley.³² Berkeley was a bishop in England. You should go read Lenin's book.

Jiang Qing asked: "Is the Chairman speaking of reading *Materialism and Empirio-criticism*?" Chairman Mao answered: "Yes."

Chairman Mao asked: "Who is that? (Zhang Yufeng answered: "Comrade Jiang Qing.")

[Chairman Mao said:] Comrade Jiang Qing did not participate in more than half of [the history of] the Party. Chen Duxiu, Qu Qiubai, Li Lisan, Luo Zhanglong, Wang Ming and Zhang Guotao, they all did not participate in struggles, and the Long March, so no wonder. As I see it, Jiang Qing is a small empiricist, and is far from being a dogmatist. She is not like Wang Ming who wrote an article called "Further Bolshevization,"³³ and she will not act like Zhang Wentian, writing an article about opportunist vacillation.³⁴ Do not be unplanned, be disciplined, be careful, do not act all on one's own, have discussions with the Politburo. If there is an opinion, discuss it

processes is not comprehensive. But it distinctly raises this problem, and attracts attention. This essay is also very easy to understand, it is very easy to read.

29 Chairman Mao was trying to protect Zhang Chunqiao here.

30 As for making minor issues major, Hua Guofeng and Deng Xiaoping thought that Zhang Chunqiao's article was a big problem, one that needed to be solved in the same way as Lin Biao's problem.

31 Chairman Mao mainly refers here to Jiang Qing.

32 George Berkeley (1685-1753) was a British empiricist philosopher.

33 Chairman Mao is referring to Wang Ming's article "Struggling for the Further Bolshevization of the Chinese Communist Party" written in 1931. The version published during the Yanan era was circulated under Wang Ming's true name, Chen Shaoyu (陈绍禹), the early version of the article was published under Wang Ming (王明), his *nom de guerre*.

34 This refers to Zhang Wentian's article "The Opportunist Vacillation within the Chinese Communist Party during the Fight for the First Victory in One Province or Multiple Provinces" published in *Red Flag Weekly* in 1932. The article criticized Mao's line of consolidating the Yanan Liberated Zone.

within the Politburo, have it printed into documents and distributed with the name of the Central Committee, do not use individual authorship, for example, and also do not use my name, I never send out any material. I was on leave for ten months this time, and I did not make speeches, I did not publish any opinion, for the Central Committee did not request me to do so. I was outside recuperating, part of the time I recuperated, and during the other part I listened to [people reading] documents, everyday an airplane sent in documents. Now God still hasn't taken me away, I can still think, listen, speak, and even write if I cannot speak. I can still eat and sleep.³⁵

Be disciplined, the army needs to be cautious, members of the Central Committee need to be even more cautious.³⁶ I had a talk with Jiang Qing once, and I had a talk with Xiaoping once. Wang Hongwen wanted to meet me, and Jiang Qing called me to request a meeting. I said no, if there is meeting, everybody should be invited, that is it. Sorry, I just am like that, I do not have more to say, only three sentences, and the Ninth National Congress and Tenth National Congress were all about the three sentences, "Practice Marxism, and not revisionism; unite, and don't split; be open and aboveboard, and don't intrigue and conspire." Don't organize some sort of gang, some sort of Guangdong gang or Hu'nan Gang.³⁷ The Changsha repair shop on the Guangzhou-Hankou railway does not recruit people from Hunan, it only recruits people from Guangdong, [this is] a Guangdong gang. During the strike, this railway was not yet constructed. In the three years of 1920, 1921, and 1922, I was organizing the workers' movement in Hunan, from Guangzhou-Hankou, in the Anyuan coal mine, in factories in Hunan, in Zhuzhou, Pingxiang, along the Guangzhou-Hankou railroad, the Zhuzhou-Pingxiang railroad, in the Anyuan coal mine, the Shuikoushan tin mine, called a tin mine, but in fact it had no tin.

"Wuxi's [a place name, literally "without tin"] tin mountain is without tin,
Pinghu's [place name, literally "level lake"] lake water on a level lake
Changde's [place name, literally, "everlasting virtue"] virtue mountain is a mountain
with virtue
Changsha's [place name, literally, "long desert"] sandy water has no sand."³⁸

I said "I have just drunk the waters of Changsha," this is in fact the water of Baisha well.³⁹ "The fish of Wuchang" is not today's Wuchang, it was the ancient Wuchang,⁴⁰ located between today's Wuchang and Daye, I forgot the name of that county, that

35 This is a criticism of Jiang Qing. The "sending out of material" refers to Jiang Qing attributing authorship to herself of the Criticize-Lin Biao Criticize-Confucius documents sent to each work unit.

36 This is a warning against revisionist warlords.

37 This refers to Hua Guofeng's "Hunan Gang" (including Zhang Pinghua 张平化 and others) and Ye Jianying's "Guangdong Gang."

38 Chairman Mao is citing a couplet here.

39 Baishajing 白沙井, White Sand Well.

40 Likely present day Ezhou (鄂州).

place used to produce bream fish. Sun Quan (孙权)⁴¹ wanted to move his home, and the common people said, better drink the waters of Yangzhou than eat the fish of Wuchang. So I said “I have just drunk the waters of Changsha; and come to eat the fish of Wuchang.”⁴² Sun Quan later moved to Nanjing, and transported Wuchang’s logs down to Nanjing. Sun Quan was a competent person.

Among all the heroes under heaven who can match him? Maybe only Cao and Liu.⁴³ It is a pity that there is no Sun Zhongmou today.⁴⁴ He [Ye Jianying] looked down upon Wu Faxian. Liu is Liu Zhen (刘震), Cao is Cao Lihuai (曹里怀), that is to say that Wu Faxian is not competent.⁴⁵

(Chairman Mao asked Ye Jianying to read a poem from Xin Qiji. Ye Jianying read Xin Qiji’s *Nan Xiang Zi: Airing My Feelings upon Climbing Beigu Pavilion of Jingkou* :) “From where could I see the land of central region? From Beigu Pavilion the scenery fills the eye. How many times has history witnessed rise and decline? But over time, the immortal Yangtze River keeps flowing and tumbling. Sun Quan commanded an army of ten-thousand soldiers in his youth. He rules the Southeastern land during the endless war. Among all the heroes under heaven who can match him? Maybe only Cao and Liu. To have a child like Sun Zhongmou.”⁴⁶

Chairman Mao said: “This person [Ye Jianying] has some culture. ‘Among all the heroes under heaven who can match him? Maybe only Cao and Liu, it is a pity that there is no Sun Zhongmou today.’ [Ye] looked down upon Wu Faxian. Huang [Yongsheng], Wu [Faxian], Li [Zuopeng], and Qiu [Huizuo] are not Cao and Liu, Liu is Liu Zhen, and Cao is Cao Lihuai, it is just Wu Faxian who is not competent.”

Zhou Enlai said: “How about ending today at this point? Chairman, rest a bit.”
(The attendees shake hands and say farewell to Chairman Mao respectively.)
(When shaking hands with Zhou Enlai) Chairman Mao said: “It’s still the three sentences.”⁴⁷

41 The founder of Eastern Wu during the Three Kingdoms period.

42 This line comes from the Song Dynasty text *Nan Xiang Zi: Airing My Feelings upon Climbing Beigu Pavilion of Jingkou* 《南乡子·登京口北固亭有怀》 by poet Xin Qiji (辛弃疾 1140-1207). Mao’s response “I have just drunk the waters of Changsha; and come to eat the fish of Wuchang” is stated in his 1956 poem “Swimming—To the Tune of Shui Diao Ge Tou” 《水调歌头·游泳》.

43 This refers to Cao Cao (曹操) and Liu Bei (刘备) of the Han Dynasty.

44 Sun Zhongmou is Sun Quan’s courtesy name.

45 Chairman Mao is warning Ye Jianying here. It seems Chairman Mao is using the figure of Sun Quan as a metonymy for a successor that could be accepted by the left, the center, and the right.

46 Huang [Yongsheng 黄永胜], Wu [Faxian 吴法宪], Li [Zuopeng 李作鹏], and Qiu [Huizuo 邱会作] were diehard followers of Lin Biao. Wu Faxian was an active supporter of Lin Biao’s line. He participated in planning Lin’s failed counter-revolutionary coup. Chairman Mao was attempting to warn Ye Jianying not to follow the path of Wu Faxian. In Xin Qiji’s original poem, Cao is Cao Cao and Liu is Liu Bei of the Three Kingdoms period.

47 This was a warning to Zhou Enlai, referring to the three sentences, “Practice Marxism, not revisionism; unite, don’t split; be open and aboveboard, don’t intrigue and conspire.”

(When Wang Hongwen shook hands with Chairman Mao) Wang said: “Carry out work according to the Chairman’s instructions.”

Chairman Mao said: “Do not: (Chairman Mao makes a hand gesture, turning his palms up and down).”⁴⁸

Jiang Qing said: “Listen to the Chairman.”

Zhang Chunqiao said: “Carry out work according to the Chairman’s instructions.”

Yao Wenyan said: “Carry out work in accordance with Chairman Mao’s instructions.”

(When shaking hand with Chen Xilian) Chairman Mao said: “The commander.”⁴⁹

Wu Guixian: “Chairman please take care.”

Appendix A: Translators’ Note

This document provides a transcript and commentary of Chairman Mao’s talk with members of the Politburo on May 3rd 1975 (hereafter referred to as the 1975 Talk). The 1975 Talk addresses the essential struggle to maintain unity within the party while at the same time fighting against revisionist tendencies that threatened the proletarian revolutionary line. The conversation highlights various aspects of the complex struggle against the headquarters of the inner-party bourgeoisie. It focuses on the need to counter the attacks of Deng Xiaoping and Zhou Enlai on Zhang Chunqiao in a way that does not leave the left isolated and exposed. To map a way forward, Chairman Mao stresses the particular dangers of both empiricism and dogmatism which had served to abet all forms of revisionist tendencies in the Party’s history, and which contributed to many setbacks in China’s modern revolutionary history.

The 1975 Talk is best understood in the broader historical context of the two-line struggle between the revolutionary line and all sorts of revisionist deviations. The nine-essay compilation *Arguing Against the “Third Left-leaning” Line* by Chairman Mao offers a window into such history. From 1921 to 1976, there were many moments when all forms of revisionist tendencies imperiled the revolutionary unity of the party. In the late 1920s and 1930s, multiple revisionist lines threatened splitting the party. These included Chen Duxiu’s Trotskyism, Qu Qiubai’s adventurism, Li Lisan’s line, Luo Zhanglong’s rightist factionalism, and later Wang Ming’s dogmatism.⁵⁰ Zhou Enlai, Peng Dehuai, and Zhang Wentian maintained a conciliatory

48 This refers to Wang’s frequent wavering.

49 This meant that Chairman Mao still wanted Chen Xilian to replace Ye Jianying to administer the military commission.

50 On the history of splitting and uniting, Chairman Mao stated in his 1971 “Talks With Responsible Comrades At Various Places During [a] Provincial Tour” (*Selected Works of Chairman Mao*, Volume 9): “You should study the article written by Lenin on the twenty-fifth anniversary of the

and empiricist attitude towards these deviations, not grasping the danger they represented and the need to address these problems. In view of the political situation of the time, Chairman Mao wrote nine essays to expose the dogmatism and empiricism that went hand in hand in exerting a detrimental effect on the party. This critique was timely as dogmatist rule had contributed to multiple failures of the Chinese Workers' and Peasants' Red Army and almost risked the party's elimination. These nine essays later constituted the long article *Arguing Against the "Third Left-leaning" Line* (Hereafter, the *Third Left-Leaning Article*).

Chairman Mao withheld these documents after writing them because of the disunity they would cause. The logic behind the decision to withhold the documents in the 30s and then release them during the GPCR should be understood. Since the CCP was under constant military attack by reactionary forces in the 1930s, a relatively strong unity was essential to the party's survival during this time. The matter was complicated by the fact that these documents themselves were critical of the tendency to tolerate destructive lines that risked the party's very survival. Chairman Mao saw that there was a need to struggle against all such destructive lines, be they left adventurist or right opportunist, while also uniting party members who committed empiricist errors. Chairman Mao believed that the empiricist errors could be considered a problem belonging to the category of contradictions among the people. According to the proletarian policy of "curing the disease to save the patient," there was thus an attempt to rectify such conciliatory and empiricist mistakes through political education. Consequently, Zhou, Peng and Zhang later admitted their mistakes and joined the struggle against the Wang Ming dogmatist line. Based on this willingness to rectify such mistakes by those in the empiricist camp, Chairman Mao did not subsequently publish these documents.

By the 1960s and 1970s, the situation was different. The establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat following 1949 was met with constant attacks from an inner-party bourgeoisie. The counter-revolutionary tendency of the bourgeoisie made this problem no longer one belonging to the contradictions among the people, and

death of Eugene Pottier. Learn to sing 'The Internationale' and 'The Three Great Rules of Discipline and the Eight Points for Attention'. Let them not only be sung but also explained and acted upon. 'The Internationale' and Lenin's article express throughout a Marxist standpoint and outlook. What they say is that slaves should arise and struggle for truth. There never has been any supreme saviour, nor can we rely on gods or emperors. We rely entirely on ourselves for our salvation. Who has created the world of men? We the labouring masses. During the Lushan Conference I wrote a 700-word article which raised the question of who created history, the heroes or the slaves. 'The Internationale' says we must unite until the day comes when Communism will certainly be realized. If you study Marxism you will see that it teaches unity and not splitting. We have been singing 'The Internationale' for fifty years but people have tried to split our Party ten times. I think it possible that they will do it another ten times, or twenty times, or thirty times. You don't believe it? Maybe you don't but I do. When we reach Communism will there be no struggles? I don't believe that either. When we reach Communism there will still be struggles, but they will be between the new and the old, the correct and the incorrect, that is all. After tens of millennia have passed by, the incorrect will still be no good and will fail."

defined the two-line struggle within the party. Some empiricists within the party joined the headquarters of the inner-party bourgeoisie organized by those such as Lin Biao and Peng Dehuai. When the revolutionary line within the party was imperiled by this resurgence of revisionists, capitalist roaders, and rightists, Chairman Mao thought it necessary to reiterate the empiricist-dogmatist problem. In the 1960s when Chairman Mao rediscovered this manuscript (thought to have been lost after the 1940s), he decided to edit it, and distribute it to the Politburo for the purpose of political education. The central point of how to correctly handle the relationship between dogmatism and empiricism mentioned in the *Third Left-leaning Article* became a key question throughout the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution.⁵¹ The correct way to handle the dogmatist-empiricist problem, as seen by Chairman Mao, was also connected to how to undertake the task to limit bourgeois right under the dictatorship of the proletariat. To unite people and advance the anti-revisionist revolutionary line, in the 1975 Talk, Chairman Mao criticizes dogmatism to stop excessive criticism directed against Ye Jianying, Deng Xiaoping. At the same time, he argues against excessive criticism against old cadres who supported the revolution, while also warning the rightists against their empiricism. The overall principle was still to help comrades who made dogmatist and empiricist mistakes through political education.

Unfortunately, the revisionists blocked the publication of the complete document of the *Third Left-leaning Article* after the 1976 counterrevolutionary coup. This was likely because of the clarity in which the article outlines how empiricism and dogmatism are two aspects of revisionism, and because of the clarity with which it

51 Zhang Chunqiao's article Exercising All-around Dictatorship Over the Bourgeoisie (April 1st 1975 <https://www.bannedthought.net/China/MaoEra/G4/ZhangChunqiao/OnExercisingAll-aroundDictatorshipOverBourgeoisie-1975.pdf>) did not mention the issues of empiricism. But Deng Xiaoping and Zhou Enlai used it as the so-called evidence of Zhang Chunqiao's hostility towards empiricism and therefore towards all the old cadres. Critiques against empiricism were mentioned in Zhang Chunqiao's Speech at the Symposium of Directors of Political Departments of Major Units in the Army from March 1, 1975 <http://bannedthought.net/China/Individuals/ZhangChunqiao/SpeechAtSymposiumOfDirectorsOfPoliticalDepartments-1975-03-01-Chinese.pdf> and Yao Wenyuan's On the Social Basis of the Lin Piao Anti-Party Clique <https://www.bannedthought.net/China/MaoEra/G4/YaoWenyuan/OnSocialBasisOfLinPiaoAnti-PartyClique-YaoWen-yuan-1975.pdf>. In Zhang's speech, he pointed out that after liberation in 1949 there was much criticism against dogmatism but not enough serious criticism against empiricism. The lack of criticism towards empiricism, as Zhang stated, led to Lin Biao's revisionism, for empiricism went hand in hand with Lin Biao's revisionism. Chairman Mao's pre-1949 critique of Zhou's empiricism contributed to Zhou's anxiety about this anti-empiricist critique during the late GPCR. Zhou and Deng's false allegations against Zhang's April 1st article reflects such anxiety. In fact, in response to Zhang's speech and Yao's article, Deng complained to Chairman Mao on April 20th 1975 that he (Deng) did not consider empiricism as the main danger at the time. Deng and Zhou desperately attacked Zhang Chunqiao, Yao Wenyuan, and Jiang Qing, and attempted to put Zhang in grave danger through such accusations, before and after the Politburo meeting on May 3rd, 1975 (this document). In the context of May 3rd meeting, through his apology to Zhang Chunqiao, Chairman Mao signaled that he would shoulder the responsibility of protecting Zhang.

reveals the disgraceful history of the revisionists since 1921. Only some excerpts from the document are accessible to the general public. Since the *Third Left-leaning Article* provides much historical context to the 1975 Talk, the translators of the document thought it necessary to present several key points made in the *Third Left-leaning Article* from the available excerpts as well as from other documents published by the CCP. The text in quotation marks hereinafter are original words by Chairman Mao taken from the excerpts unless otherwise noted.

During the 4th Plenary of the 6th Chinese Communist Party Central Committee (January 7th 1931), the Central Committee decided to renounce Li Lisan's left-leaning line within the party, under the instruction from the Comintern. Wang Ming used this decision as an opportunity to promote his version of an anti-Li Lisan line and anti-right-opportunist line, only to disguise his seizure of power within the party and to later "formulate a line that is even more an extreme repudiation of Marxism-Leninism ... Compared with Li Lisan's left-leaning line, Wang Ming's dogmatist line was "more 'left-leaning,' and the result was even worse than that of the Li Lisan period." On his road to power, Wang Ming borrowed the authority of Pavel Mif (Chinese name: 米夫/ Russian name: Миф), the Comintern representative in China, to carry out his "personal line" as if it was the direct order of the Comintern. But in fact the Comintern had supported Chairman Mao's line and criticized Wang Ming's line several times during Wang Ming and Bo Gu's rule within the CCP (1931-1935) and, later, during the Yanan Rectification Movement (1942-1945).

In the area of military exercise, the dogmatist line, under the influence of Otto Braun (Chinese name: 李德/华夫), one of the Comintern representatives in China at the time, upheld a theory of decisive battles that imposed the Russian experience on the Chinese Revolution, endorsing a general offensive against the Kuomintang's aggression and a swift takeover of several major cities. In handling the affairs of land reform in the base areas, the dogmatist line attempted to "further develop the internal class struggles," and promote an ultra-left policy indistinctly punishing landlords and rich peasants, which hampered social production and therefore imperiled the consolidation of base areas. In dealing with organizing work in urban areas, dogmatists agitated in order to make every struggle militant without any consideration of the concrete context, expecting that such individualist and heroic-like actions could win an immediate total victory.

At a broader level, the dogmatists' absolutist reading of the primary contradictions in Chinese society contributed to these policies, especially after the Manchurian Incident (September 18th 1931). The dogmatists ignored the objective development of class formations in China, idealistically promoting an absolutist view that denied the need to win over intermediate forces like the left-wing of the Kuomintang to form a united front to advance the New Democratic Revolution in the face of Japan's imperialist aggression. The absolutist view also falsely asserted that the current activities of the

CCP were geared towards a decisive battle between revolutionary forces and counter-revolutionary forces and an armed struggle to defend the Soviet Union. Chairman Mao summarized the features of the dogmatist tendency as “First portraying the enemy as one hunk of iron; knocking down the big enemy and small enemy together; then exerting the major force to beat the small enemy specifically—because it is said that these small enemies are the most dangerous ones. Struggling for ‘clarifying the class lines’ in the Soviet Areas; exercising the so-called ‘no land for landlords, bad land for rich peasants’ to force them to take up weapons to attack the Soviet Union to death...; the so-called ‘Overthrow All’ theory is precisely a brilliant ‘creation’ by these old masters.”

Chairman Mao also concluded that “In the Chinese Communist Party, there were obviously two types of ‘Marxism and Leninism,’ one being the fake Marxism and fake Leninism, of which the features were bragging, acting arbitrarily, shooting arrows without a target, and being unconcerned with reality—this is the nonsense of subjectivism. Another type is the real Marxism, real Leninism, and the features are seeking truths from the facts, no empty talk, considering the time, place, and condition, this is the materialist, dialectical view of revolution.” In general, the history of the Chinese Communist movement during the Agrarian Revolution (1927-1937) proved the falseness of such dogmatist lines. In July 1931, the First Front of the Chinese Workers and Peasants’ Red Army led by Mao Zedong successfully broke through the Third Encirclement initiated by Chiang Kai-shek. This military exercise did not follow the theory of decisive battles. However, the total implementation of the Wang Ming dogmatist line that called for a conventional, decisive war against the Kuomintang’s Fifth Encirclement after 1933 almost led to the elimination of the Red Army. In view of this history, Chairman Mao did not only criticize dogmatism but also dialectically identified empiricism as the accessory to dogmatism. Two essays in the volume of the *Third Left-leaning Article* criticizing the empiricism of the 1930s mentioned Zhou Enlai, a fact that contributed to the censorship of the publication of the complete document by the revisionists after 1976. It also contributed to Zhou and Deng’s anxiety about the leftist criticism against empiricism during the GPCR, to which they responded with false accusations (see footnotes and).

Another document from the Party, *Resolutions on Certain Historical Questions* (1945), further elaborated the relationship between dogmatism and empiricism. In general, both dogmatism and empiricism are aspects of revisionism, reflecting the bourgeoisie’s world view. Empiricism often presents itself as the accessory of dogmatism: “What differentiates empiricism from dogmatism is that empiricism is not based on books but on narrow experience. It is worth noting that among all comrades who have practical work experience, their positive experiences are very precious. Summarizing and comprehending these experiences scientifically as a guide to future action is not empiricism but Marxism-Leninism; Just like treating Marxist-Leninist theories and principles as a guide for revolutionary action, without treating them as

dogma, is in no way empiricism but Marxism-Leninism. However, among all comrades who have experience with practical work, if some people are content with or even only content with their partial experience, and treat these experiences as universal dogma ... and are obsessed with a narrow-minded, and non-principled so-called “realism” and a mindless and hopeless pragmatism ... not willing to listen to comrades’ criticisms or developing self-criticism, in this way, they become empiricists.

Therefore, even though the points of departures of empiricism and dogmatism are different, they share unity in the essence of their method of thought. They all separate the universal truth of Marxism-Leninism from the concrete practice of the Chinese Revolution; they all go against dialectical materialism and historical materialism, exaggerating partial, relative truths as universal, absolute truths; their thoughts do not match the real situation. Because of this, they have many common erroneous understandings of Chinese society and Chinese Revolution (for instance, the erroneous city-centric view, the view that work in the white-areas is primary, the view of “conventional” warfare detached from real situations, etc). This is the ideological root which allows these two groups of comrades to work along together. As the experiences of the empiricists are partial and narrow, the majority of empiricists often lack independent, clear, and complete opinions on comprehensive matters. Therefore, when they are connected with dogmatists, they often present themselves as the accessory of the latter; But the history of the party proves that dogmatists find it difficult to “disseminate poisons” among the whole party without collaboration from empiricists. After dogmatism is overcome, empiricism then becomes the major obstacle to the development of Marxism-Leninism within the party. Thus, we should not only overcome subjectivist dogmatism but also subjectivist empiricism.” The historical mutual-development of empiricism and dogmatism—a problem still not resolved at present—adds to the significance of the struggle against revisionism by the revolutionaries in the party forms the backdrop to the 1975 Talk.