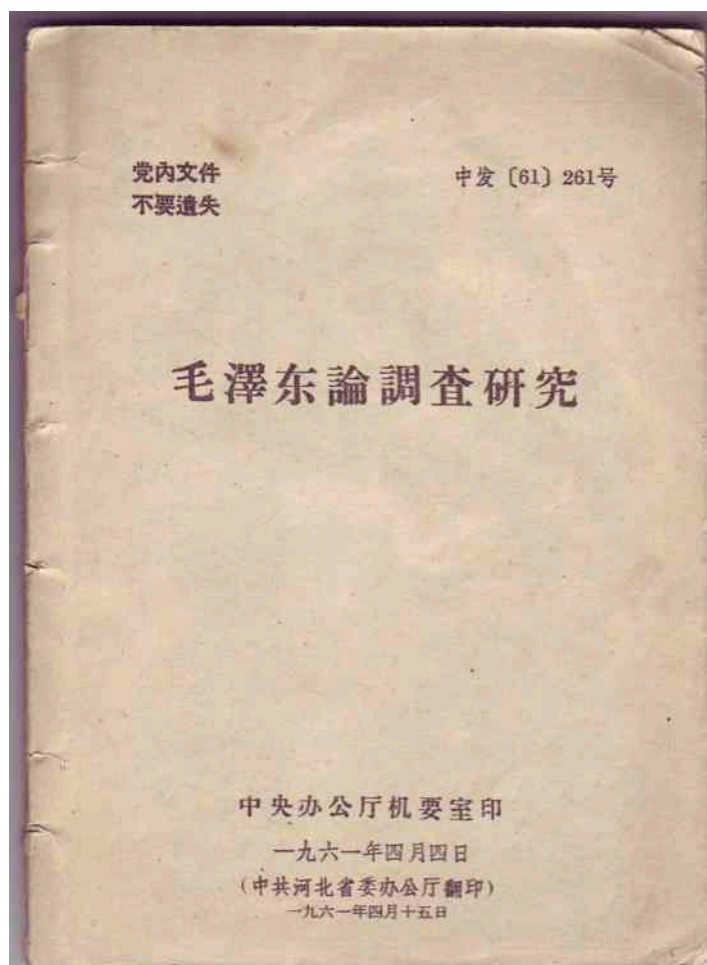


Intra-party document
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[A complete translation into English of]

Mao Zedong on Investigation and Research



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Notification

This collection of texts is an intra-Party document distributed to the county level in the civilian local sector, to the regiment level in the armed forces, and to the corresponding level in other sectors. It is meant to be read by cadres at or above the county/regiment level. For convenience's sake, we only print and forward sample copies. We expect the total number of copies needed by the cadres at the designated levels to be printed up and distributed by the Party committees of the provinces, municipalities, and autonomous regions, by the [PLA] General Political Department, by the Party committee of the organs immediately subordinate to the [Party] Centre, and by the Party committee of the central state organs.

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Central Committee General Office

4 April 1961

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On Investigation Work

(Spring of 1930)

Mao Zedong

This is an old article which was written to oppose dogmatism in the Red Army at the time. At that time we did not use the term *jiaotiaozhuyi* (dogmatism) but rather *benbenzhuyi* (book worship). The article was written approximately in the spring of 1930. It has already been thirty years since I have read it. In January 1961, I suddenly found it in the Central Revolutionary Museum. The Central Revolutionary Museum had found it in the Fujian Longyan prefecture committee. In reading it I find that it still has some use, so I am having a good many copies printed as reference for comrades.

Mao Zedong

March 11, 1961

I. WITHOUT INVESTIGATION, NO RIGHT TO SPEAK

Unless you have investigated a problem, you will be deprived of the right to speak on it. Too harsh? Not in the least. When you have not probed into the social and historical facts of a problem and know nothing of its essentials, whatever you say about it will undoubtedly be nonsense. Talking nonsense solves no problems, as everyone knows, so why is it unjust to deprive you of the right to speak? Many comrades merely keep their eyes shut and talk nonsense all the time, and for the Communist Party that is disgraceful. How can a communist keep his eyes shut and talk nonsense?

It won't do!

It won't do!

You must investigate!

You must not talk nonsense!

II. TO INVESTIGATE A PROBLEM IS TO SOLVE IT

You can't solve a problem? Well, get down and investigate its context and history! When you have investigated the problem thoroughly, you will have solved it. Conclusions invariably come after investigation, and not before. Only a blockhead cudgels his brains on his own, or together with a group, to "find a solution" or "evolve an idea" without making any investigation. It must be stressed that this cannot possibly lead to any effective solution or any good idea. In other words, he is bound to arrive at a wrong solution and a wrong idea.

There are not a few comrades doing inspection work, as well as guerrilla leaders and people newly in office, who like to make political pronouncements the moment they arrive at a place and who strut about, criticizing this and condemning that when they have only seen the surface of things or minor details. Such purely subjective nonsensical talk is indeed detestable. These people are bound to make a mess of things, lose the confidence of the masses and prove incapable of solving any problem at all.

When they come across difficult problems, quite a number of people serving as commanders in high-level organs simply heave a sigh without being able to solve them. They lose patience and ask to be transferred on the ground that they "have not the ability and cannot do the job"; These are cowards' words. Just get moving on your two legs, go the rounds of every section placed under your charge and "inquire into everything" as Confucius did, and then you will be able to solve the problems, however little is your ability; for although your head may be empty before you go out of doors, it will be empty no longer when you return but will contain all sorts of material necessary for the solution of the problems, and that is how problems are solved. Must you go out of doors? Not necessarily. You call a fact-finding meeting of people familiar with the situation in order to get at the source of what you call a difficult problem and come to know how it stands now, and then your difficult problem will have been solved.

Investigation may be likened to the long months of pregnancy, and solving a problem to the day of birth. To investigate a problem is, indeed, to solve it.

III. OPPOSE "BOOK WORSHIP"

Whatever is written in a book is right—such is still the mentality of culturally backward Chinese peasants. Strangely enough, within the Communist Party there are also those who always say in a discussion, "Show me where it's written in the book." When we say that a directive of a higher organ of leadership is correct, that is not just because it comes from "a higher organ of leadership" but because the "contents of the directive" conform with both the

objective and subjective circumstances of the struggle and meet its requirements. It is quite wrong to adopt a formalistic spirit and blindly carry out directives without discussing and examining them simply because they come from a higher organ. It is the mischief done by this formalism which explains why the line and tactics of the Party do not take deeper root among the masses. To carry out a directive of a higher organ blindly, and seemingly without any disagreement, is not to carry it out but is the most artful way of opposing or sabotaging it.

The method of studying the social sciences exclusively from the book is likewise extremely dangerous and may lead one onto the road of counter-revolution. Clear proof of this is provided by the fact that whole batches of Chinese communist social scientists who confined themselves to books in their study have become counter-revolutionaries. When we say Marxism is correct, it is certainly not because Marx was a “prophet” but because his theory has been proved correct in our practice and in our struggle. We need Marxism in our struggle. In our acceptance of his theory and rejection of other theories, no such formalisation of a mystical notion as that of “prophecy” ever enters our minds. Many of those who can read the books of Marx are renegades from the revolution, whereas illiterate workers are often excellent Marxists.

How can we overcome the spirit of book worship? The only way is by investigation.

IV. WITHOUT INVESTIGATING THE ACTUAL SITUATION, THERE IS BOUND TO BE AN IDEALIST APPRAISAL OF CLASS FORCES AND AN IDEALIST GUIDANCE IN WORK, RESULTING EITHER IN OPPORTUNISM OR IN PUTSCHISM

Do you doubt this conclusion? Facts will force you to accept it. Just try and appraise the political situation or guide the struggle without making any investigation, and you will see whether or not such appraisal or guidance is groundless and idealist and whether or not it will lead to opportunist or putschist errors. A moment’s carelessness, and it will. This is not because of failure to make careful plans but because of failure to study the specific social situation carefully before making the plans, as often happens in our Red Army guerrilla units. Officers of the Li Kui type do not discriminate when they punish the men for offences. As a result, the offenders feel they have been unfairly treated, many disputes ensue, and all prestige is lost. Does this not happen frequently in the Red Army?

We must wipe out idealism and guard against all opportunist and putschist errors before we manage to win over the masses and overcome the enemy. The only way to wipe out idealism is to make the effort and investigate the actual situation.

V. THE AIM OF SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC INVESTIGATION IS TO ARRIVE AT A CORRECT APPRAISAL OF CLASS FORCES AND THEN TO FORMULATE CORRECT TACTICS FOR THE STRUGGLE

This is our answer to the question: Why do we have to investigate social and economic conditions? Accordingly, the object of our investigation is all the social classes and not fragmentary social phenomena. Our chief method of investigation is the “traverse assessment method” rather than the “vertical assessment method.” Of late, the comrades in the Fourth Army of the Red Army have generally been mobilized to carry out work of investigation, but many of their methods of investigation are wrong. The results are therefore as trivial as a grocer’s accounts, or resemble the many strange tales a country bumpkin hears when he comes to town, or are like a distant view of a populous city from a mountain top. This kind of investigation produces no results of practical value. It represents the vertical assessment method of investigation. Such an investigation can assist us in attaining some lesser goals, but it is not our chief method of investigation, since it cannot achieve our main purpose. Our main purpose is to learn the political and economic situation of the various social classes. The outcome of each of our investigations should be a picture of the present situation of each class and the ups and downs of its development. For example, when we investigate the composition of the peasantry, not only must we know the number of owner-peasants, semi-owner peasants and tenant-peasants, as differentiated by occupation, but more especially we must know the number of rich peasants, middle peasants and poor peasants, who are differentiated according to class or stratum. When we investigate the composition of the merchants, not only must we know the population trading in grain, clothing, medicinal herbs, etc., but more especially we must know the number of small merchants, middle merchants and big merchants. We should investigate the relationships not only between the different trades but more especially between the different classes. The former is called the vertical assessment method, while the latter is called the traverse assessment method. We do not want to dispense entirely with the vertical assessment method: we need it, albeit only as a supplementary method. It is not our chief method of investigation, the one by we use to achieve our ultimate aim. Our chief method clearly must be the traverse one of dissecting classes, the ultimate purpose being to understand their interrelations, to arrive at a correct appraisal of forces and then to formulate the correct

tactics for the struggle: which classes are to be won over to become the main force in the struggle, which classes are to be won over to join in an alliance with us and which classes are to be overthrown. This is our sole purpose.

What are the social classes requiring investigation? They are:

The industrial proletariat and the agricultural workers

The lumpen-Proletariat

The urban poor and small handicraftsmen

The poor peasants

The middle peasants

The rich peasants

The landlords

The commercial bourgeoisie

The industrial bourgeoisie

Investigation is to pay attention to the above nine classes (or strata). Only the industrial proletariat and industrial bourgeoisie are absent in the areas where we are now working, and we constantly come across all the others. Our tactics of struggle are tactics in relation to all these classes and strata.

Another serious shortcoming in our past investigations has been the undue stress on the countryside to the neglect of the towns, so that many comrades have always been vague about our tactics towards the urban poor and the commercial bourgeoisie. The development of the struggle has enabled us to leave the mountains for the plains. We have descended physically, but we are still up in the mountains in spirit. We must understand the countryside, and in particular the towns, or we shall never become communists.

VI. VICTORY IN CHINA'S STRUGGLE WILL DEPEND ON THE CHINESE COMRADES' UNDERSTANDING OF CHINESE CONDITIONS

The aim of our struggle is to attain socialism via the stage of democracy. In this task, the first step is to complete the democratic revolution by winning the majority of the working class and arousing the peasant masses and the urban poor to carry out the overthrow of the landlord class, imperialism and the Guomindang regime. The next step in the development of

this struggle is to carry out the task of overthrowing the bourgeoisie for the sake of realizing the socialist revolution and thereby entering the revolutionary system of worldwide socialism and becoming a part of it. The fulfilment of this great revolutionary task is no simple or easy job and will be decided entirely by correct and firm tactics on the part of the proletarian party. If its tactics of struggle are wrong, or irresolute and wavering, the revolution will certainly suffer temporary defeat. It must be borne in mind that the bourgeois parties, too, constantly discuss their tactics of struggle. They are considering how to deepen reformist influences among the working class so as to mislead it and turn it away from Communist Party leadership, how to get the rich peasants to put down the uprisings of the poor peasants and how to organize gangsters to suppress the revolutionary struggles. In a situation when the class struggle grows increasingly acute and is waged at close quarters, the proletariat has to depend for its victory entirely on the correct and firm tactics of struggle of its own party, the Communist Party. A Communist Party's correct and resolute tactics can in no circumstance be created by a few people sitting in an office; they emerge in the course of mass struggle, that is, through actual experience. Only in the course of actual experience will we be able to make a correct appraisal of class forces, create correct and unswerving tactics of struggle, and be certain to achieve revolutionary victory. For this sake, we must at all times study social conditions and make practical investigations. Those comrades who are inflexible, conservative, formalistic and groundlessly optimistic think that the present tactics of struggle are perfect, that the "book of documents" of the Party's Sixth Congress guarantees lasting victory, and that one can always be victorious merely by adhering to the established methods. These ideas are absolutely wrong and have nothing in common with the idea that communists should create favourable new situations through struggle; they represent a purely conservative line. Unless this conservative line is completely discarded, those comrades will ultimately become irredeemable and depart from the revolutionary road. There are obviously some comrades in our Red Army who are content to leave things as they are, who do not seek to understand anything thoroughly and are groundlessly optimistic, and they spread the fallacy that "this is proletarian". They eat their fill and sit dozing in their offices all day long without ever moving a step and going out among the masses to investigate. Whenever they open their mouths, their platitudes make people sick. To awaken these comrades we raise our voices and cry out to them:

Change your conservative ideas without delay!

Replace them by progressive and militant communist ideas!

Get into the struggle!

Go among the masses and investigate the facts!

VII. THE TECHNIQUE OF INVESTIGATION

1. Hold fact-finding meetings and undertake investigation through discussions.

This is the only way to get near the truth, the only way to draw conclusions. It is easy to commit mistakes if you do not hold fact-finding meetings for investigation through discussions but simply rely on one individual relating his own experience. You cannot possibly draw more or less correct conclusions at such meetings if you put questions casually instead of raising key-questions for discussion.

2. What kind of people should attend the fact-finding meetings?

They should be people well acquainted with social and economic conditions. As far as age is concerned, older people are best, because they are rich in experience and not only know what is going on but understand the causes and effects. Young people with experience of struggle should also be included, because they have progressive ideas and sharp eyes. As far as occupation is concerned, there should be workers, peasants, merchants, intellectuals, and occasionally soldiers, and sometimes even vagrants. Naturally, when a particular subject is being looked into, those who have nothing to do with it need not be present. For example, workers, peasants and students need not attend when commerce is the subject of investigation.

3. Which is better, a large fact-finding meeting or a small one?

That depends on the investigator's capacity to conduct a meeting. If he is good at it, a meeting of as many as a dozen or even twenty or more people can be called. A large meeting has its advantages; from the answers you get fairly accurate statistics (e. g., in finding out the percentage of poor peasants) and fairly correct conclusions (e.g., in finding out whether equal or differentiated land redistribution is better). Of course, it has its disadvantages too; unless you are skilful in conducting meetings, you will find not be able to keep order. So the number of people attending a meeting depends on the competence of the investigator. However, the minimum is three, or otherwise there is the risk of falling into the trap of the so-called "self evident" where the information obtained is too limited to be able to illustrate what is typical.

4. Prepare a detailed outline for the investigation.

A detailed outline should be prepared beforehand, and the investigator should ask questions according to the outline, with those present at the meeting giving their answers. Any

points which are unclear or doubtful should be put up for discussion. The detailed outline should include main subjects and sub-headings and also detailed items. For instance, taking commerce as a main subject, it can have such sub-headings as cloth, grain, other necessities and medicinal herbs; again, under cloth, there can be such detailed items as calico, homespun and silk and satin.

5. Personal participation.

Everyone with responsibility for giving leadership—from the chairman of the township government to the chairman of the central government, from the detachment leader to the commander-in-chief, from the secretary of a Party branch to the general secretary—must personally undertake investigation into the specific social and economic conditions and not merely rely on reading reports. For investigation and reading reports are two entirely different things.

6. Probe deeply.

Anyone new to investigation work should make one or two thorough investigations in order to gain full knowledge of a particular place (village or a town) of a particular problem (the problem of grain or currency). Deep probing into a particular place or problem will make future investigation of other places or problems easier.

7. Make your own notes.

The investigator should not only preside at fact-finding meetings and give proper guidance to those present but should also make his own notes and record the results himself. To have others do it for him is no good.

Appendix: Letter from the CCP Centre to the Centre's Regional Bureaus and the Party Committees of the Provinces, Municipalities, and [Autonomous] Regions Concerning the Matter of Conscientiously Carrying out Investigations

(23 March 1961)

The recently discovered text “On Investigation Work” written by Comrade Mao Zedong in the spring of 1930 is an extremely important document, the theoretical significance and practical significance of which is immense. Now the Centre has decided to distribute this article to all high-level and intermediate-level Party cadres for study. All organs of leadership above the county level should relate it to the experiences and lessons accumulated in their work these recent years, and launch in-depth debates.

The Centre is of the opinion that the achievements in construction these recent years are great and prove that the direction of the General Line, the Great Leap Forward, and the People's Communes is correct. However, in the concrete work in the agricultural and industrial and other sectors, there were some flaws and mistakes that led to some losses. The reason for these flaws and mistakes was fundamentally because many leading personnel had slackened in the kind of investigation and research work which had been carried out during the War of Resistance against Japan and the War of Liberation with excellent results, and had become content with reading the reports that appear in the newspapers and listening to other people's oral reports. When they went out themselves, it was merely to look at flowers while riding on horseback—they were content with a superficial understanding, and for a period made some assessments and took some decisions based on data that did not correspond to the actual situation or that were of a biased nature. During this period, exaggeration was indulged in and the abominable work-style of making personal feelings a substitute for policy, reared its head once again. This is a major lesson, and leading comrades at all levels throughout the Party absolutely must not neglect or forget this lesson for which a price has been paid.

The Centre asks that from now on, the leading personnel of Party committees above the country level, and first of all their first Party secretaries, conscientiously study comrade Mao Zedong's ideological method and work method, go down to the lowest levels (including in the

rural as well as the urban areas) and squat there, engaging in person in systematic investigation of typical cases, at least a couple of times each year, and make this the main task of leadership work. It is to become the order of things and a regular habit. The reason investigation is a main task of leadership is because all work must proceed from the actual situation, and it is only once investigation work has been done properly that all other work can be done well; if investigation work is not done properly, other work cannot possibly be done well either. The reason why it is especially important for the first Party secretaries to personally carry out investigations is because the first Party secretaries shoulder a heavy responsibility, and whether or not their ideological method and work method is correct, and whether or not it proceeds from the actual situation, impacts most of all on the situation as a whole. If they stress investigation and research, other comrades will follow suit. All in all, everything proceeding from actual situations and no investigation no right to speak—these must become the foremost guiding principles of ideology and action of all Party cadres. Investigation is to be engaged in for the sake of resolving problems, and not for its own sake; when investigating, one should adopt an objective stance, and not one of firmly holding on to one's prejudices and merely going out to seek for the kind of proof that would support them; one should discover the true state of affairs and not let oneself be hoodwinked by all kinds of false appearances; one should embark on a comprehensive summary and analysis of the investigated data, and not be content with observations that occur in isolation, that are partial, and that do not allow one to see the law of the development of things. When carrying out investigations, one must not be afraid of listening to different opinions that have substance. Even more important is not to be afraid of finding one's own previous assessments and decisions overturned, as they are tested against the actual situation. The Centre believes that as long as this work-style of investigation and research and of seeking truth from facts is adhered to throughout the entire Party, we shall surely be able to fairly smoothly resolve the problems we face at present and make rapid progress in all our areas of work.

Preface to *Rural Surveys*

(17 March 1941)

Mao Zedong

The present rural policy of the Party is not one of Agrarian Revolution as during the ten years' civil war, but is a rural policy for the National United Front Against Japan. The whole Party should carry out the Centre's directives of 7 July and 25 December, 1940, and the directives of the forthcoming Seventh National Congress.¹ The following material is being published to help comrades find a method for studying problems. Many of our comrades still have a crude and careless style of work, do not seek to understand things thoroughly and may even be completely ignorant of conditions at the lower levels, and yet they are responsible for directing work. This is an extremely dangerous state of affairs. Without a really concrete knowledge of the actual conditions of the classes in Chinese society there can be no really good leadership.

The only way to know conditions is to make social investigations, to investigate the conditions of each social class in real life. For those charged with directing work, the basic method for knowing conditions is to concentrate on a few cities and villages according to a plan, use the fundamental viewpoint of Marxism, i.e., the method of class analysis, and make a number of thorough investigations. Only thus can we acquire even the most rudimentary knowledge of China's social problems.

To do this, first, direct your eyes downward, do not hold your head high and gaze at the sky. Unless a person is interested in turning his eyes downward and is determined to do so, he will never in his whole life really understand things in China.

Second, hold fact-finding meetings. Certainly, no all-round knowledge can be acquired merely by glancing this way and that and listening to hearsay. Of the data I obtained through fact-finding meetings, those on Hunan province and on Jinggangshan have been lost. The materials published here consist mainly of the "Survey of Xingguo," the "Survey of

¹ The Centre's directive of 7 July 1940 is the "Decision of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China on the Present Situation and the Party's Policy". The Centre's directive of 25 December 1940 is included in vol. 2 of the *Selected Works of Mao Zedong*, as the article "On Policy".

Changgang township” and the “Survey of Caixi township.” Holding fact-finding meetings is the simplest, most practicable and most reliable method, from which I have derived much benefit; it is a better school than any university. Those attending such meetings should be really experienced cadres of middle and lower ranks, or ordinary people. In my investigations of five counties in Hunan province and two counties in Jinggangshan, I approached responsible cadres of middle rank; in the Xunwu investigation I approached cadres of the middle and lower ranks, a poor *xiucai*, a bankrupt ex-president of the chamber of commerce and a petty official in charge of county revenue who had lost his job. All of these people gave me a great deal of information I had never even heard of. The man who for the first time gave me a complete picture of the rottenness of Chinese jails was a petty jailer I met during my investigation in Hengshan county, Hunan. In my investigations of Xingguo county and Changgang and Caixi townships, I approached comrades working at the township level and ordinary peasants. These cadres, the peasants, the *xiucai*, the jailer, the merchant and the revenue clerk were all my esteemed teachers, and as their pupil I had to be respectful and diligent and comradely in my attitude; otherwise they would have paid no attention to me, and, though they knew, would not have spoken or, if they spoke, would not have told all they knew. A fact-finding meeting need not be large; from three to five or seven or eight people are enough. Ample time must be allowed and an outline for the investigation must be prepared; furthermore, one must personally ask questions, take notes and have discussions with those at the meeting. Therefore one certainly cannot make an investigation, or do it well, without zeal, a determination to direct one’s eyes downward and a thirst for knowledge, and without shedding the ugly mantle of pretentiousness and becoming a willing pupil. It has to be understood that the masses are the real heroes, while we ourselves are often childish and ignorant, and without this understanding it is impossible to acquire even the most rudimentary knowledge.

I should like to repeat that the main purpose of publishing this reference material is to indicate a method for finding out the conditions prevailing at the lower levels; it is not to have comrades memorize the specific material and the conclusions drawn from it. Speaking generally, the infant bourgeoisie of China has not been able, and never will be able, to provide relatively comprehensive or even rudimentary material on social conditions, as the bourgeoisie in Europe, America and Japan has done; we have therefore no alternative but to collect it ourselves. Speaking specifically, people engaged in practical work must at all times keep abreast of changing conditions, and this is something for which no Communist Party in any country can depend on others. Therefore, everyone engaged in practical work must

investigate conditions at the lower levels. Such investigation is especially necessary for those who know theory but do not know the actual conditions, for otherwise they will not be able to link theory with practice. Although my assertion, “No investigation, no right to speak,” has been ridiculed as “narrow empiricism,” to this day I do not regret having made it; what is more, I still insist that without investigation there cannot possibly be any right to speak. There are many people who “the moment they alight from the official carriage” make a hullabaloo, spout opinions, criticize this and condemn that; but, in fact, ten out of ten of them will meet with failure. For such views or criticisms, which are not based on thorough investigation, are nothing but ignorant twaddle. Countless times our Party suffered at the hands of these “imperial envoys,” who rushed here, there and everywhere. Stalin rightly says that “theory becomes purposeless if it is not connected with revolutionary practice.” And he rightly adds that “practice gropes in the dark if its path is not illumined by revolutionary theory.”² Nobody should be labelled a “narrow empiricist” except the “practical man” who gropes in the dark and lacks perspective and foresight.

Today I still feel keenly the necessity for thorough research into Chinese and world affairs; this is related to the scantiness of my own knowledge of Chinese and world affairs and does not imply that I know everything and that others are ignorant. It is my wish to go on being a pupil, learning from the masses, together with all other Party comrades.

(SOURCE: *Selected Works of Mao Zedong*, Vol. 3, People’s Publishing House, 1952, 2nd ed., pp. 789–791)

² See Stalin, *The Foundations of Leninism*, part 3.

Reform Our Study³

(May 1941)

Mao Zedong

I propose that we should reform the method and the system of study throughout the Party. The reasons are as follows:

I

The twenty years of the Communist Party of China have been twenty years in which the universal truth of Marxism-Leninism has become more and more integrated with the concrete practice of the Chinese revolution. If we recall how superficial meagre our understanding of Marxism-Leninism and of the Chinese revolution was during our Party's infancy, we can see how much deeper and richer it is now. For a hundred years, the finest sons and daughters of the disaster-ridden Chinese nation fought and sacrificed their lives, one stepping into the breach as another fell, in quest of the truth that would save the country and the people. This moves us to song and tears. But it was only after World War I and the October Revolution in Russia that we found Marxism-Leninism, the best of truths, the best of weapons for liberating our nation. And the Communist Party of China has been the initiator, propagandist and organizer in the wielding of this weapon. As soon as it was linked with the concrete practice of the Chinese revolution, the universal truth of Marxism Leninism gave an entirely new complexion to the Chinese revolution. Since the outbreak of the War of Resistance Against Japan, our Party, basing itself on the universal truth of Marxism-Leninism, has taken a further step in its study of the concrete practice of this war and in its study of China and the world

³ Comrade Mao Zedong made this report to a cadres' meeting in Yan'an. The report and the two articles, "Rectify the Party's Style of Work" and "Oppose Stereotyped Party Writing", are Comrade Mao Zedong's basic works on the rectification movement. In these he summed up, on the ideological plane, past differences in the Party over the Party line and analysed the petty-bourgeois ideology and style which, masquerading as Marxism-Leninism, were prevalent in the Party, and which chiefly manifested themselves in subjectivist and sectarian tendencies, their form of expression being stereotyped Party writing. Comrade Mao Zedong called for a Party-wide movement of Marxist-Leninist education to rectify style of work in accordance with the ideological principles of Marxism-Leninism. His call very quickly led to a great debate between proletarian and petty-bourgeois ideology inside and outside the Party. This consolidated the position of proletarian ideology inside and outside the Party, enabled the broad ranks of cadres to take a great step forward ideologically and the Party to achieve unprecedented unity.

today, and has also made a beginning in the study of Chinese history. These are all very good signs.

II

However, we still have shortcomings, and very big ones too. Unless we correct these shortcomings, we shall not, in my opinion, be able to take another step forward in our work and in our great cause of integrating the universal truth of Marxism-Leninism with the concrete practice of the Chinese revolution.

First, take the study of current conditions. We have achieved some success in our study of present domestic and international conditions, but for such a large political party as ours, the material we have collected is fragmentary and our research work unsystematic on each and every aspect of these subjects, whether it be the political, military, economic or cultural aspect. Generally speaking, in the last twenty years we have not done systematic and thorough work in collecting and studying material on these aspects, and we are lacking in a climate of investigation and study of objective reality. To behave like “a blindfolded man catching sparrows,” or “a blind man groping for fish,” to be crude and careless, to indulge in verbiage, to rest content with a smattering of knowledge—such is the extremely bad style of work that still exists among many comrades in our Party, a style utterly opposed to the fundamental spirit of Marxism-Leninism. Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin have taught us that it is necessary to study conditions conscientiously and to proceed from objective reality and not from subjective wishes; but many of our comrades act in direct violation of this truth.

Second, take the study of history. Although a few Party members and sympathizers have undertaken this work, it has not been done in an organized way. Many Party members are still in a fog about Chinese history, whether of the last hundred years or of ancient times. There are many Marxist-Leninist scholars who cannot open their mouths without citing ancient Greece; but as for their own ancestors—sorry, they have been forgotten. There is no climate of serious study either of current conditions or of past history.

Third, take the study of international revolutionary experience, the study of the universal truth of Marxism-Leninism. Many comrades seem to study Marxism-Leninism not to meet the needs of revolutionary practice, but purely for the sake of study. Consequently, though they read, they cannot digest. They can only cite odd quotations from Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin in a one-sided manner, but are unable to apply the stand, viewpoint and method of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin to the concrete study of China’s present conditions and her

history or to the concrete analysis and solution of the problems of the Chinese revolution. Such an attitude towards Marxism-Leninism does a great deal of harm, particularly among cadres of the middle and higher ranks.

The three aspects I have just mentioned, neglect of the study of current conditions, neglect of the study of history and neglect of the application of Marxism-Leninism, all constitute an extremely bad style of work. Its spread has harmed many of our comrades.

There are indeed many comrades in our ranks who have been led astray by this style of work. Unwilling to carry on systematic and thorough investigation and study of the specific conditions inside and outside the country, the province, county or district, they issue orders on no other basis than their scanty knowledge and “It must be so because it seems so to me.” Does not this subjectivist style still exist among a great many comrades?

There are some who are proud, instead of ashamed, of knowing nothing or very little of our own history. What is particularly significant is that very few really know the history of the Communist Party of China and the history of China in the hundred years since the Opium War. Hardly anyone has seriously taken up the study of the economic, political, military and cultural history of the last hundred years. Ignorant of their own country, some people can only relate tales of ancient Greece and other foreign lands, and even this knowledge is quite pathetic, consisting of odds and ends from old foreign books.

For several decades, many of the returned students from abroad have suffered from this malady. Coming home from Europe, America or Japan, they can only parrot things foreign. They become gramophones and forget their duty to understand and create new things. This malady has also infected the Communist Party.

Although we are studying Marxism, the way many of our people study it runs directly counter to Marxism. That is to say, they violate the fundamental principle earnestly enjoined on us by Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin, the unity of theory and practice. Having violated this principle, they invent an opposite principle of their own, the separation of theory from practice. In the schools and in the education of cadres at work, teachers of philosophy do not guide students to study the logic of the Chinese revolution; teachers of economics do not guide them to study the characteristics of the Chinese economy; teachers of political science do not guide them to study the tactics of the Chinese revolution; teachers of military science do not guide them to study the strategy and tactics adapted to China’s special features; and so on and so forth. Consequently, error is disseminated, doing people great harm. A person does not

know how to apply in Fuxian what he has learned in Yan'an.⁴ Professors of economics cannot explain the relationship between the Border Region currency and the Guomintang currency, so naturally the students cannot explain it either.⁵ Thus a perverse mentality has been created among many students; instead of showing an interest in China's problems and taking the Party's directives seriously, they give all their hearts to the supposedly eternal and immutable dogmas learned from their teachers.

Of course, what I have just said refers to the worst type in our Party, and I am not saying that it is the general case. However, people of this type do exist; what is more, there are quite a few of them and they cause a great deal of harm. This matter should not be treated lightly.

III

In order to explain this idea further, I should like to contrast two opposite attitudes.

First, there is the subjectivist attitude.

With this attitude, a person does not make a systematic and thorough study of the environment, but works by sheer subjective enthusiasm and has a blurred picture of the face of China today. With this attitude, he chops up history, knows only ancient Greece but not China and is in a fog about the China of yesterday and the day before yesterday. With this attitude, a person studies Marxist-Leninist theory in the abstract and without any aim. He goes to Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin not to seek the stand, viewpoint and method with which to solve the theoretical and tactical problems of the Chinese revolution but to study theory purely for theory's sake. He does not shoot the arrow at the target but shoots at random. Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin have taught us that we should proceed from objective realities and that we should derive laws from them to serve as our guide to action. For this purpose, we should, as Marx has said, appropriate the material in detail and subject it to scientific analysis and synthesis.⁶ Many of our people do not act in this way but do the opposite. A good number of them are doing research work but have no interest in studying either the China of today or the China of yesterday and confine their interest to the study of empty "theories" divorced from reality. Many others are doing practical work, but they too

⁴ Fuxian County is about seventy kilometres south of Yan'an.

⁵ The Border Region currency consisted of the currency notes issued by the Bank of the Shaan-Gan-Ning Border Region Government. The Guomintang currency was the paper currency issued by the four big Guomintang bureaucrat-capitalist banks from 1935 onwards with British and U.S. imperialist support. Comrade Mao Zedong was referring to the fluctuations in the rates of exchange between these two currencies.

⁶ See Karl Marx, "Afterword to the Second German Edition" of *Capital* in which he wrote: "The latter [the method of inquiry] has to appropriate the material in detail, to analyse its different forms of development, to trace out their inner connexion. Only after this work is done, can the actual movement be adequately described."

pay no attention to the study of objective conditions, often rely on sheer enthusiasm and substitute their personal feelings for policy. Both kinds of people, relying on the subjective, ignore the existence of objective realities. When making speeches, they indulge in a long string of headings, A, B, C, D, 1, 2, 3, 4, and when writing articles, they turn out a lot of verbiage. They have no intention of seeking truth from facts, but only a desire to curry favour by claptrap. They are flashy without substance, brittle without solidity. They are always right, they are the Number One authority under Heaven, “imperial envoys” who rush everywhere. Such is the style of work of some comrades in our ranks. To govern one’s own conduct by this style is to harm oneself, to teach it to others is to harm others, and to use it to direct the revolution is to harm the revolution. To sum up, this subjectivist method which is contrary to science and Marxism-Leninism is a formidable enemy of the Communist Party, the working class, the people and the nation; it is a manifestation of impurity in Party spirit. A formidable enemy stands before us, and we must overthrow him. Only when subjectivism is overthrown can the truth of Marxism-Leninism prevail, can Party spirit be strengthened, can the revolution be victorious. We must assert that the absence of a scientific attitude, that is, the absence of the Marxist-Leninist approach of uniting theory and practice, means that Party spirit is either absent or deficient.

There is a couplet which portrays this type of person. It runs:

The reed growing on the wall—top-heavy, thin-stemmed and shallow of root;
The bamboo shoot in the hills—sharp-tongued, thick-skinned and hollow inside.

Is this not an apt description of those who do not have a scientific attitude, who can only recite words and phrases from the works of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin and who enjoy a reputation unwarranted by any real learning? If anyone really wishes to cure himself of his malady, I advise him to commit this couplet to memory or to show still more courage and paste it on the wall of his room. Marxism-Leninism is a science, and science means honest, solid knowledge; there is no room for playing tricks. Let us, then, be honest.

Secondly, there is the Marxist-Leninist attitude.

With this attitude, a person applies the theory and method of Marxism-Leninism to the systematic and thorough investigation and study of the environment. He does not work by enthusiasm alone but, as Stalin says, combines revolutionary sweep with practicalness.⁷ With this attitude he will not chop up history. It is not enough for him to know ancient Greece, he

⁷ See Stalin, *The Foundations of Leninism*, part 9, “Style in Work.”

must know China; he must know the revolutionary history not only of foreign countries but also of China, not only the China of today but also the China of yesterday and of the day before yesterday. With this attitude, one studies the theory of Marxism-Leninism with a purpose, that is, to integrate Marxist-Leninist theory with the actual movement of the Chinese revolution and to seek from this theory the stand, viewpoint and method with which to solve the theoretical and tactical problems of the Chinese revolution. Such an attitude is one of shooting the arrow at the target. The “target” is the Chinese revolution, the “arrow” is Marxism-Leninism. We Chinese communists have been seeking this arrow because we want to hit the target of the Chinese revolution and of the revolution of the East. To take such an attitude is to seek truth from facts. “Facts” are all the things that exist objectively, “truth” means their internal relations, that is, the laws governing them, and “to seek” means to study. We should proceed from the actual conditions inside and outside the country, the province, county or district, and derive from them, as our guide to action, laws which are inherent in them and not imaginary, that is, we should find the internal relations of the events occurring around us. And in order to do that we must rely not on subjective imagination, not on momentary enthusiasm, not on lifeless books, but on facts that exist objectively; we must appropriate the material in detail and, guided by the general principles of Marxism-Leninism, draw correct conclusions from it. Such conclusions are not mere lists of phenomena in A, B, C, D order or writings full of platitudes, but are scientific conclusions. Such an attitude is one of seeking truth from facts and not of currying favour by claptrap. It is the manifestation of Party spirit, the Marxist-Leninist style of uniting theory and practice. It is the attitude every Communist Party member should have at the very least. He who adopts this attitude will be neither “top-heavy, thin-stemmed and shallow of root” nor “sharp-tongued, thick-skinned and hollow inside.”

IV

In accordance with the above views, I would like to make the following proposals:

1. We should place before the whole Party the task of making a systematic and thorough study of the situation around us. On the basis of the theory and method of Marxism-Leninism, we should make a detailed investigation and study of developments in the economic, financial, political, military, cultural and party activities of our enemies, our friends and ourselves, and then draw the proper and necessary conclusions. To this end, we should direct our comrades’ attention to the investigation and study of these practical matters. We should get our comrades to understand that the twofold basic task of the leading bodies of the

Communist Party is to know conditions and to master policy; the former means knowing the world and the latter changing the world. We should get our comrades to understand that without investigation there is no right to speak, and that bombastic twaddle and a mere list of phenomena in 1, 2, 3, 4 order are of no use. Take propaganda work, for instance; if we do not know the situation with regard to the propaganda of our enemies, our friends and ourselves, we shall be unable to decide on a correct propaganda policy. In the work of any department, it is necessary to know the situation first and only then can the work be well handled. The fundamental link in changing the Party's style of work is to carry out plans for investigation and study throughout the Party.

2. As for China's history in the last hundred years, we should assemble qualified persons to study it, in co-operation and with a proper division of labour, and so overcome the present disorganized state of affairs. First it is necessary to make analytical studies in the several fields of economic history, political history, military history and cultural history, and only then will it be possible to make synthetical studies.

3. As for education for cadres whether at work or in schools for cadres, a policy should be established of focusing such education on the study of the practical problems of the Chinese revolution and using the basic principles of Marxism-Leninism as the guide, and the method of studying Marxism-Leninism statically and in isolation should be discarded. Moreover, in studying Marxism-Leninism, we should use the *History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks), Short Course* as the principal material. It is the best synthesis and summing-up of the world communist movement of the past hundred years, a model of the integration of theory and practice, and so far the only comprehensive model in the whole world. When we see how Lenin and Stalin integrated the universal truth of Marxism with the concrete practice of the Soviet revolution and thereby developed Marxism, we shall know how we should work in China.

We have made many detours. But error is often the precursor of what is correct. I am confident that in the context of the Chinese revolution and the world revolution, which is so intensely alive and so richly varied, this reform of our study will certainly yield good results.

(SOURCE: *Selected Works of Mao Zedong*, Vol. 3, People's Publishing House, 1952, 2nd ed., pp. 795–803)

Appendix: CCP Centre Resolution on Investigation and Research

(1 August 1941)

Although our Party's research on Chinese history, Chinese society, and international affairs has gradually advanced in the last twenty years and brought an increase in our knowledge, it still remains extremely inadequate; subjectivistic and formalistic tendencies—roughly finished work, failure to seek a detailed understanding, self-satisfaction—are still seriously prevalent in the Party. Since the beginning of the War of Resistance, our Party has taken great strides forward in understanding Japan, the Guomindang, and all aspects of social conditions, while subjectivistic and formalistic tendencies have decreased. But most of our understanding is still roughly finished, a caricature, lacking system and thoroughness. Subjectivistic and formalistic tendencies have not yet been completely eliminated. The seriousness of the loss suffered by revolutionary work in the last twenty years, through subjectivism, formalism, and immature lack of knowledge, is still not completely recognized by leading organs of the entire Party and all comrades. A majority of the comrades who come to Yan'an to report lack systematic and thorough understanding of the internal and external conditions of the region where they do their own work, no matter whether the aspect is class relations, the enemy and puppets, allied parties and troops, or their own tasks. A great many comrades in the Party still do not understand that “no investigation, no right to speak.” They still do not understand that systematic, thorough social research is the basis for policy decisions. They still do not know that the basic mission of leading organs is to understand conditions and to direct policy, and that, if conditions are not understood, policy is necessarily mistaken. They still do not know that not only imperialistic Japan's investigations and research on China are complete in every detail but that the Guomindang's understanding of domestic and foreign conditions is a great deal richer than ours. They still do not know that the subjectivistic tendencies of self-righteousness and roughly finished work are the principal manifestations of an impure Party spirit, and that seeking the truth from facts and closely relating theory and practice constitute a minimum attitude for comrades in strengthening the Party spirit. Our Party, already a Party with a vast revolutionary mission, must abstain from empty speculation and superficiality, divest itself of subjectivistic tendencies, adopt concrete methods, and emphasize investigation and research on history, our environment, and concrete conditions in and outside of the

country, province, and county. Then only can it effectively organize revolutionary forces and overthrow the rule of Japanese imperialism and its running dogs. For the attainment of this objective, a special decision has been made on the following methods:

1. For direct assistance in its work, the Centre is to establish investigation and research organs which will collect and carry out research on all types of materials on domestic and international politics, military, economic, and cultural affairs, and class relations.

2. For direct assistance in their work, all central bureaus, sub-bureaus, district and provincial Party committees of the independent regions, higher organs of the Eighth Route and New Fourth Armies, and all higher levels of administration in the War Bases must establish investigation and research organs, which will collect and carry out research in their respective regions on pertinent materials pertaining to political, military economic, and cultural affairs and to class relations in respect to the enemy, our allies, and ourselves. At the same time they will supply the Centre with materials.

3. The following is an example of the method for collecting materials: First, gather, select, edit, and study newspapers, magazines, and books printed by (a) the enemy, (b) our allies, and (c) ourselves on political, military, economic, and cultural affairs, and class relations. Second, gather together men of experience and hold investigation meetings—from three to five men for each session—to investigate a sample locality, district, county, town, market town, army, division, factory, shop, school, or problem (e.g. the agrarian problem, the labour problem, the problem of vagrancy, the problem of societies). The most effective method is to start with case studies, proceeding from one case study to another. Third, in the villages there should be emphasis on detailed investigation of the living conditions and interrelations of the landlord, rich peasant, merchant, middle peasant, poor peasant, tenant, artisan, and vagrant classes. In cities there should be emphasis on detailed investigation of the living conditions and interrelations of the comprador capitalists, the national capitalists, the petty bourgeoisie, the poor masses, the vagrants, and the proletariat. Fourth, utilize all materials collected by cadre and representative assemblies. Fifth, write biographical sketches of well-known persons. Write biographies of from several hundred to several thousand characters of all landlord capitalists with property valued at more than 50,000 yuan; officers above the rank of regimental commander in enemy, puppet, and allied districts; officials of enemy, puppet, or allied parties in charge of a county or larger area; famous scholars, literary men, and newspapermen known both inside and outside a county, leaders of societies, leaders of sects, leaders of vagabond groups, leaders of local bandits, well-known actors, well-known prostitutes, and men who have

lived abroad. Responsibility for these biographies is to be divided between comrades of the local and county committees. The contents of the biographies must agree with the actual facts about the men. At the same time, attention must be paid to the collection of photographs of each man. Sixth is individual oral interview. Either delegate men or have men sent in to interview cadres, workers, farmers, literary men, merchants, officials, vagabonds, prisoners of war, and sympathizers. Seventh, collect and study county, prefecture, and provincial gazetteers and family records.

4. Aside from the investigation and research organs of the Centre and each locality, organs at all levels of the entire Party, army, and government, and all comrades, must be mobilized to concentrate on the investigation and study of conditions in enemy, allied, and our own areas, and must supply the higher investigation and research organs with materials.

5. Carry out a program of education in the understanding of objective conditions (in enemy, allied, and our own areas) for active cadres and cadre training schools at all levels. Encourage those comrades whose understanding of objective conditions is comparatively broad and satisfactory. Criticize those who are inclined to make empty speeches. Encourage comrades who understand conditions and pay attention to policy. Criticize comrades who do not understand conditions and ignore policy. See that the understanding of conditions and attention to policy are closely tied in with the study of Marxist-Leninist theory. In study, oppose the tendency to disregard reality and merely memorize texts. Oppose the evil of separating the study of Marxist-Leninist theory and principles from the understanding of the conditions of Chinese society and the resolution of the problems of the Chinese Revolution. Promote the reading of newspapers among cadres and students, give guidance in methods of newspaper reading and in analysis of each change in the current situation. Supply cadres and students with factual materials on conditions inside and outside the country, province, and county; let the teaching and studying of these materials and the conclusions drawn serve as a formal curriculum; give whatever time period is necessary, then hold an examination.

6. Party offices at all levels are charged with the responsibility of relating this resolution to the 1 July resolution issued by the Centre on "Strengthening the Party Spirit," reporting to Party committees and cadre meetings, and, in addition, discussing methods of enforcement.

Excerpts from Comrade Mao Zedong's Statements on Investigation and Research

—1—

Real policy decisions must definitely be based on the actual situation

Real policy decisions must definitely be based on the actual situation. Things imagined sitting in a room and things reported and written down in rough outline in a book are certainly not the actual situation, and to determine policy according to what you “think ought to be” or from reports that do not reflect reality is dangerous. A great many mistakes that the Red areas made in the past were the result of Party directives’ not being in accord with the real situation. Therefore, detailed, scientific, real investigations are extremely necessary.

Excerpt from “Xingguo Survey” (26 January 1931). SOURCE: *Rural Surveys*, Jin-Cha-Ji New China Bookshops, February 1948, reprint, pp. 7–8

In discussing a problem, we should start from reality and not from definitions. We would be following a wrong method if we first looked up definitions of literature and art in textbooks and then used them to determine the guiding principles for the present-day literary and artistic movement and to judge the different opinions and controversies that arise today. We are Marxists, and Marxism teaches that in our approach to a problem we should start from objective facts, not from abstract definitions, and that we should derive our guiding principles, policies and measures from an analysis of these facts. We should do the same in our present discussion of literary and artistic work.

Excerpt from “Talks at the Yan’an Forum on Literature and Art” (May 1942). SOURCE: *Selected Works of Mao Zedong*, Vol. 3, People’s Publishing House, May 1953, 2nd ed., pp. 854–855

The most fundamental method of work which all communists must firmly bear in mind is to determine our working policies according to actual conditions. When we study the causes of the mistakes we have made, we find that they all arose because we departed from the actual situation at a given time and place and were subjective in our working policies. This should be a lesson for all comrades.

Excerpt from “Speech at a Conference of Cadres in the Shanxi-Suiyuan Liberated Area” (1 April 1948). SOURCE: *Selected Works of Mao Zedong*, Vol. 4, People’s Publishing House, September 1960, 1st ed., p. 1306

We must carry out deep, factual investigation, and solve problems in terms of concrete times, places, and conditions

Act according to the conditions of the area and the season. Agricultural regions and seasons are different and methods of development are also different. For example, there is no uncultivated land in the special military area (apart from a small amount in Qingjian). The cultivated land area cannot be enlarged. Sheep-herding is limited by the pasture lands available. There is also a lack of pack-animals for the transport of salt. The policy of rent reduction has not yet been thoroughly implemented. Because of these things, grain production has not increased in those areas, and with the exception of spinning and weaving, subsidiary undertakings have not developed. Although improved techniques such as more frequent hoeing of weeds, greater use of manure, and more deep ploughing were introduced there long ago, we should still carry out more investigation of the situation, and at the right time do our utmost to increase production. However, if we were to employ these improved techniques in areas where land is plentiful population sparse, and working methods primitive, they would not be very effective because they all need an increase in labour power. From the point of view of the peasants of the latter kind of area, deep ploughing is not as good as planting more land. Applying more manure is not as good as opening up more uncultivated land. Planting more land is especially good in areas with low rainfall. Therefore, in these areas the call to improve agricultural methods is in general ineffective at the present time. To really increase production in these regions the most important thing for the moment is to rely on opening up unused land. If in the six years from 1937 to 1942 the increase in ploughed land was roughly 3 million *mu* then the amount harvested in 1942 was at least 500,000 *dan* more than in 1936, which is equivalent to 250,000 *dan* of hulled grain (each *dan* is 300 *jin*). If we estimate the grain production of the Border Region in 1942 to be 1,500,000 *dan* of hulled grain, then over six years, the increase in grain production through the increase of ploughed land is approximately one-sixth of the total. Some of this increase in cultivated land is new land opened up by immigrants, and some is expansion of land farmed by the original households. All this shows us that in directing agriculture, we must adopt different methods in different regions. In one region we should make deep ploughing the key, and in another enlarging the area ploughed.

We must also make distinctions with respect to timing. At a time when there is unused land that can be cultivated, we should mainly encourage the opening up of new land. When uncultivated land has been exhausted, then we must turn to encouraging deep ploughing. We must not only make these distinctions between large regions, we must also make them within a county, a district and sometimes even within a township. For example, if certain villages in a township have rather a lot of unused land, we should encourage the opening up of unused land there. If in other villages there is little or no unused land, we should encourage deep ploughing. While there is still uncultivated land in a township, we should encourage the opening up of land. When all the lands have been opened up, we should encourage deep ploughing. Although we have had some successes in the past few years in our work, much has been too empty and generalized. Many of our comrades still do not know how to investigate objective circumstances minutely, nor do they know how to put forward concrete proposals to provide the conditions for increasing production in different regions, and, at different times. Slogans put forward in the past for deep ploughing, opening new lands, water conservancy, and increasing production by 400,000 *dan* or 200,000 *dan*, in reality contained much subjectivism. Many peasants were not interested or influenced by them. From this we may conclude that in future we must carry out deep, factual investigation, and solve problems in terms of concrete times, places, and conditions.

Excerpt from *Economic and Financial Problems* (December 1942).
SOURCE: Liberation Publishers, January 1944, corrected
reprint, pp. 18–19

Developing the economy is the correct line, but development does not mean reckless or ill-founded expansion. Some comrades who disregard the specific conditions here and now are setting up an empty clamour for development; for example, they are demanding the establishment of heavy industry and putting forward plans for huge salt and armament industries, all of which are unrealistic and unacceptable. The Party's line is the correct line for development; it opposes outmoded and conservative notions on the one hand and grandiose, empty and unrealistic plans on the other. This is the Party's struggle on two fronts in financial and economic work.

Excerpt from "Economic and Financial Problems in the Anti-Japanese War" (December 1942). SOURCE: *Selected Works of Mao Zedong*, Vol. 3, People's Publishing House, May 1953, 2nd ed., p. 895

There is one point I must again bring to everybody's attention, namely, that our ideas should be adapted to our immediate environment. Our immediate environment is rural; it

would seem that nobody has any doubt on that score, for who does not know that we are living in the countryside? Yet actually, that is not the case. Many comrades do not understand the countryside at all, or at any rate not profoundly, although they live there and imagine they understand it. They do not proceed from the fact that our environment is the countryside, which is based on individual economy, cut up by the enemy and involved in guerrilla warfare, and the result is that their handling of political, military, economic and cultural problems, or of Party matters and the workers', peasants', youth and women's movements is often incorrect or only partially correct. They approach rural affairs from an urban viewpoint and often run their heads against a brick wall because they draw up many inappropriate plans subjectively and enforce them arbitrarily. In recent years our comrades have made much progress, thanks both to the rectification campaign and to the failures they have met with in their work. But we must still take care to adapt our ideas fully to our environment before we can obtain results in every field of work and do so quickly. If we truly understand the fact that the rural base areas in which we find ourselves are founded on individual economy, cut up by the enemy and involved in guerrilla warfare and make it the starting point in everything we do, then the pertinent question is, how do our results, which may seem slow and unspectacular, compare with the results of taking some other starting point, for instance, the urban viewpoint? Far from being slow, they are actually quite fast. For if we were to start from the urban viewpoint and depart from our present-day realities, the question would be not of getting fast or slow results, but of running into endless snags and getting no results at all.

Excerpt from "We Must Learn to do Economic Work" (10 January 1945). SOURCE: *Selected Works of Mao Zedong*, Vol. 3, People's Publishing House, May 1953, 2nd ed., pp. 1014–1015

At cadres' conferences as well as in their work, cadres must be taught how to analyse concrete situations and how, proceeding from the concrete situations in different areas with different historical conditions, to decide on their tasks and methods of work in a given place and time. Distinctions must be drawn between the cities and the rural areas and among the old Liberated Areas, semi-old Liberated Areas, areas bordering on enemy territory and new Liberated Areas; otherwise mistakes will be made.

Excerpt from "The Work of Land Reform and of Party Consolidation in 1948" (25 May 1948). SOURCE: *Selected Works of Mao Zedong*, Vol. 4, People's Publishing House, September 1960, 1st ed., p. 1332

Without investigation of actual conditions they will fall into the pit of fantasy and putschism

Subjectivism exists to a serious degree among some Party members, causing great harm to the analysis of the political situation and the guidance of the work. The reason is that subjective analysis of a political situation and subjective guidance of work inevitably result either in opportunism or in putschism. As for subjective criticism, loose and groundless talk or suspiciousness, such practices inside the Party often breed unprincipled disputes and undermine the Party organization.....

The main method of correction is to educate Party members so that a political and scientific spirit pervades their thinking and their Party life. To this end we must: (1) teach Party members to apply the Marxist-Leninist method in analysing a political situation and appraising the class forces, instead of making a subjective analysis and appraisal; (2) direct the attention of Party members to social and economic investigation and study, so as to determine the tactics of struggle and methods of work, and help comrades to understand that without investigation of actual conditions they will fall into the pit of fantasy and putschism; and (3) in inner-Party criticism, guard against subjectivism, arbitrariness and the vulgarization of criticism; statements should be based on facts and criticism should centre on politics.

Excerpt from “On Correcting Mistaken Ideas in the Party”
(December 1929). SOURCE: *Selected Works of Mao Zedong*, Vol. 1,
People’s Publishing House, July 1952, 2nd ed., pp. 94–95

“I am not sure I can handle it.” We often hear this remark when a comrade hesitates to accept an assignment. Why is he unsure of himself? Because he has no systematic understanding of the content and circumstances of the assignment, or because he has had little or no contact with such work, and so the laws governing it are beyond him. After a detailed analysis of the nature and circumstances of the assignment, he will feel more sure of himself and do it willingly. If he spends some time at the job and gains experience and if he is a person who is willing to look into matters with an open mind and not one who approaches problems subjectively, one-sidedly and superficially, then he can draw conclusions for himself as to how to go about the job and do it with much more courage. Only those who are subjective, one-sided and superficial in their approach to problems will smugly issue orders or directives the moment they arrive on the scene, without considering the circumstances, without viewing things in their totality (their history and their present state as a whole) and without getting to the essence of things (their nature and the internal relations between one thing and another). Such people are bound to trip and fall.

Excerpt from “On Practice” (July 1937). SOURCE: *Selected Works of Mao Zedong*, Vol. 1, People’s Publishing House, July 1952, 2nd ed., pp. 278–279

When we say we are opposed to a subjective approach to problems, we mean that we must oppose ideas which are not based upon or do not correspond to objective facts, because such ideas are fanciful and fallacious and will lead to failure if acted on. But whatever is done has to be done by human beings; protracted war and final victory will not come about without human action. For such action to be effective there must be people who derive ideas, principles or views from the objective facts, and put forward plans, directives, policies, strategies and tactics. Ideas, etc. are subjective, while deeds or actions are the subjective translated into the objective, but both represent the dynamic role peculiar to human beings. We term this kind of dynamic role “man’s conscious dynamic role”, and it is a characteristic that distinguishes man from all other beings. All ideas based upon and corresponding to objective facts are correct ideas, and all deeds or actions based upon correct ideas are correct actions. We must give full scope to these ideas and actions, to this dynamic role.

Excerpt from “On Protracted War” (May 1938). SOURCE: *Selected Works of Mao Zedong*, Vol. 2, People’s Publishing House, August 1952, 2nd ed., p. 467

—2—

In order to solve the problem it is necessary to make a systematic and thorough investigation and study

In real life, we cannot ask for “ever-victorious generals”, who are few and far between in history. What we can ask for is generals who are brave and sagacious and who normally win their battles in the course of a war, generals who combine wisdom with courage. To become both wise and courageous one must acquire a method, a method to be employed in learning as well as in applying what has been learned.

What method? The method is to familiarize ourselves with all aspects of the enemy situation and our own, to discover the laws governing the actions of both sides and to make use of these laws in our own operations.

The military manuals issued in many countries point both to the necessity of a “flexible application of principles according to circumstances” and to the measures to be taken in case of defeat. They point to the former in order to warn a commander against subjectively

committing mistakes through too rigid an application of principles, and to the latter in order to enable him to cope with the situation after he has committed subjective mistakes or after unexpected and irresistible changes have occurred in the objective circumstances.

Why are subjective mistakes made? Because the way the forces in a war or a battle are disposed or directed does not fit the conditions of the given time and place, because subjective direction does not correspond to, or is at variance with, the objective conditions, in other words, because the contradiction between the subjective and the objective has not been resolved. People can hardly avoid such situations whatever they are doing, but some people prove themselves more competent than others. As in any job we demand a comparatively high degree of competence, so in war we demand more victories or, conversely, fewer defeats. Here the crux is to bring the subjective and the objective into proper correspondence with each other.....

A commander's correct dispositions stem from his correct decisions, his correct decisions stem from his correct judgements, and his correct judgements stem from a thorough and necessary reconnaissance and from pondering on and piecing together the data of various kinds gathered through reconnaissance. He applies all possible and necessary methods of reconnaissance, and ponders on the information gathered about the enemy's situation, discarding the dross and selecting the essential, eliminating the false and retaining the true, proceeding from the one to the other and from the outside to the inside; then, he takes the conditions on his own side into account, and makes a study of both sides and their interrelations, thereby forming his judgements, making up his mind and working out his plans. Such is the complete process of knowing a situation which a military man goes through before he formulates a strategic plan, a campaign plan or a battle plan. But instead of doing this, a careless military man bases his military plans on his own wishful thinking, and hence his plans are fanciful and do not correspond with reality. A rash military man relying solely upon enthusiasm is bound to be tricked by the enemy, or lured on by some superficial or partial aspect of the enemy's situation, or swayed by irresponsible suggestions from subordinates that are not based on real knowledge or deep insight, and so he runs his head against a brick wall, because he does not know or does not want to know that every military plan must be based on the necessary reconnaissance and on careful consideration of the enemy's situation, his own situation, and their interrelations.

The process of knowing a situation goes on not only before the formulation of a military plan but also after. In carrying out the plan from the moment it is put into effect to the end of the operation, there is another process of knowing the situation, namely, the process of

practice. In the course of this process, it is necessary to examine anew whether the plan worked out in the preceding process corresponds with reality. If it does not correspond with reality, or if it does not fully do so, then in the light of our new knowledge, it becomes necessary to form new judgements, make new decisions and change the original plan so as to meet the new situation. The plan is partially changed in almost every operation, and sometimes it is even changed completely. A rash man who does not understand the need for such alterations or is unwilling to make them, but who acts blindly, will inevitably run his head against a brick wall.....

The laws of war, like the laws governing all other things, are reflections in our minds of objective realities;⁸ everything outside of the mind is objective reality. Consequently what has to be learned and known includes the state of affairs on the enemy side and that on our side, both of which should be regarded as the object of study, while the mind (the capacity to think) alone is the subject performing the study. Some people are good at knowing themselves and poor at knowing their enemy, and some are the other way round, neither can solve the problem of learning and applying the laws of war. There is a saying in the book of Sun Wu Zi, the great military scientist of ancient China, “Know the enemy and know yourself, and you can fight a hundred battles with no danger of defeat,”⁹ which refers both to the stage of learning and to the stage of application, both to knowing the laws of the development of objective reality and to deciding on our own action in accordance with these laws in order to overcome the enemy facing us. We should not take this saying lightly.

Excerpt from “Problems of Strategy in China’s Revolutionary War” (December 1936). SOURCE: *Selected Works of Mao Zedong*, Vol. 1, People’s Publishing House, July 1952, 2nd ed., pp. 171–175

What is a problem? A problem is the contradiction in a thing. Where one has an unresolved contradiction, there one has a problem. Since there is a problem, you have to be for one side and against the other, and you have to pose the problem. To pose the problem, you must first make a preliminary investigation and study of the two basic aspects of the problem or contradiction before you can understand the nature of the contradiction. This is the process of discovering the problem. Preliminary investigation and study can discover the problem, can pose the problem, but cannot as yet solve it. In order to solve the problem it is

⁸ The Chinese characters used to designate the concept “realities” have two meanings: one is that of the true situation, the other that of human activities (i.e. what people normally speak of as practice). When applying the concept in his works, comrade Mao Zedong often gives it a double meaning.

⁹ Sun Wu Zi, or Sun Wu, was a famous Chinese military scientist in the fifth century B.C., who wrote *Sunzi*, a treatise on war containing thirteen chapters. This quotation is from ch. 3, “The Strategy of Attack”.

necessary to make a systematic and thorough investigation and study. This is the process of analysis. In posing the problem too, analysis is needed; otherwise, faced with a chaotic and bewildering mass of phenomena, you will not be able to discern where the problem or contradiction lies. But here, by the process of analysis we mean a process of systematic and thorough analysis. It often happens that although a problem has been posed it cannot be solved because the internal relations of things have not yet been revealed, because this process of systematic and thorough analysis has not yet been carried out; consequently we still cannot see the contours of the problem clearly, cannot make a synthesis and so cannot solve the problem well. If an article or speech is important and meant to give guidance, it ought to pose a particular problem, then analyse it and then make a synthesis pointing to the nature of the problem and providing the method for solving it; in all this, formalist methods are useless. Since infantile, crude, philistine and lazy-minded formalist methods are prevalent in our Party, we must expose them; only thus can everybody learn to use the Marxist method to observe, pose, analyse and solve problems; only thus can we do our work well and only thus can our revolutionary cause triumph.

Excerpt from "Oppose Stereotyped Party Writing" (8 February 1942). SOURCE: *Selected Works of Mao Zedong*, Vol. 3, People's Publishing House, May 1953, 2nd ed., p. 840

Select two or three units and make a thorough study

.....This investigation, generally speaking, does not probe very deeply, but is rather more thorough than my previous investigations. First, I have never before investigated eight households, and actually, with this kind of investigation, you do not have a basic concept of the village. Second, investigating the reactions of the various classes in the land struggle is something I did in the Xunwu survey, but it was not done fully. The weakness of this investigation is that it did not investigate the conditions of children and women, that it did not investigate trade conditions or make price comparisons, and that it did not investigate the conditions of agricultural production after land redistribution had been carried out, nor did it investigate the cultural situation. Originally these were supposed to be investigated but, because of the enemy attack on Luofang, the Red Army decided to use the tactic of luring the enemy deep, so we had no choice but to terminate our investigation meeting. This is how the materials that appear below were obtained: From the investigation outline that I suggested, questions were asked and discussed, and all the conclusions were obtained from suggestions

that I made on which the eight comrades agreed, which were then written down. There were some things about which no conclusions were made, but which are recorded as their responses. Our investigation meetings were lively and interesting. We met two or even three times every day, sometimes late into the night, yet they never felt tired. I would like to express my deep thanks to these comrades. A few of them were Party members, but most were not.

Excerpt from “Xingguo Survey” (26 January 1931). SOURCE:
Rural Surveys, Jin-Cha-Ji New China Bookshops, February 1948,
reprint, p. 8

.....[W]e must actively prepare to implement the unified progressive agricultural tax. How should our preparatory work be done? (1) Under the leadership of the Finance Department set up a specialist research team consisting of five to seven cadres selected for their experience in political work and their good understanding of land and financial problems. This team should gather, study and arrange materials concerning progressive taxation, and plan the work for introducing it. In addition, directed by the Border Region Government, responsible comrades from the relevant official organizations led by the head of the Finance Department should organize a planning committee to take charge of policy, to solve problems and to regularly lead the work of the research team. (2) Carry out survey work. A detailed summary of grain collection work in 1942 should be supplied to the progressive taxation research team as concrete source material. The research team should first study some counties with different situations, whose collection in 1941 and 1942 was comparatively good. They should draw up an initial survey plan, and first carry out trial surveys. Afterwards they should revise the plan, draw up a format and carry out a general survey. In the light of the materials from the survey they should determine the regulations and methods. Counties with good successes who complete the work early can carry out a trial run during 1943. (3) Carry out land registration at the same time as the surveys. (4) Strengthen the government organization at township level, build up sound clerical records and survey thoroughly.

Excerpt from *Economic and Financial Problems* (December 1942).
SOURCE: Liberation Publishers, January 1944, corrected
reprint, pp. 234–235

.....In the rectification movement of 1943, each bureau and sub-bureau of the Central Committee and each area and prefectural Party committee, in addition to making a general call (a rectification plan for the whole year), must do the following things, gaining experience in the process. Select two or three units (but not too many) from the organization itself and from other organizations, schools or army units in the vicinity. Make a thorough study of

those units, acquire a detailed knowledge of the development of the rectification movement in them and a detailed knowledge of the political history, the ideological characteristics, the zeal in study and the strong and weak points in the work of some (again not too many) representative members of their personnel. Furthermore, give personal guidance to those in charge to find concrete solutions for the practical problems facing those units. The leaders in every organization, school or army unit must do likewise, as each of these has a number of subordinate units. Moreover, this is the method by which the leaders combine leading and learning. No one in a leading position is competent to give general guidance to all the units unless he derives concrete experience from particular individuals and events in particular subordinate units. This method must be promoted everywhere so that leading cadres at all levels learn to apply it.

Excerpt from “Some Questions Concerning Methods of Leadership” (1 June 1943). SOURCE: *Selected Works of Mao Zedong*, Vol. 3, People’s Publishing House, May 1953, 2nd ed., pp. 899–900

Seize both ends and drag the middle along with them. This is an excellent method of leadership. Every situation has two ends—the advanced and backward extremes. Once you seize them, the middle can be dragged along with them. This is a dialectical method, too, because to seize the two ends, the advanced and backward extremes, is to seize a pair of opposites.

Excerpt from “Sixty Points on Working Methods” (Draft, January 1958)

In studying a problem, we must shun subjectivity, one-sidedness and superficiality

In studying a problem, we must shun subjectivity, one-sidedness and superficiality. To be subjective means not to look at problems objectively, that is, not to use the materialist viewpoint in looking at problems. I have discussed this in my essay “On Practice.” To be one-sided means not to look at problems all-sidedly, for example, to understand only China but not Japan, only the Communist Party but not the Guomindang, only the proletariat but not the bourgeoisie, only the peasants but not the landlords, only the favourable conditions but not the difficult ones, only the past but not the future, only individual parts but not the whole, only the defects but not the achievements, only the plaintiff’s case but not the defendant’s, only underground revolutionary work but not open revolutionary work, and so on. In a word,

it means not to understand the characteristics of both aspects of a contradiction. This is what we mean by looking at a problem one-sidedly. Or it may be called seeing the part but not the whole, seeing the trees but not the forest. That way it is impossible to find the method for resolving a contradiction, it is impossible to accomplish the tasks of the revolution, to carry out assignments well or to develop inner-Party ideological struggle correctly. When Sun Wu Zi said in discussing military science, “Know the enemy and know yourself, and you can fight a hundred battles with no danger of defeat”, he was referring to the two sides in a battle.¹⁰ Wei Zheng of the Tang Dynasty also understood the error of one-sidedness when he said, “Listen to both sides and you will be enlightened, heed only one side and you will be benighted.”¹¹ But our comrades often look at problems one-sidedly, and so they often run into snags. In the novel *Water Margin*, Song Jiang thrice attacked Zhu Village.¹² Twice he was defeated because he was ignorant of the local conditions and used the wrong method. Later he changed his method; first he investigated the situation, and he familiarized himself with the maze of roads, then he broke up the alliance between the Li, Hu and Zhu Villages and sent his men in disguise into the enemy camp to lie in wait, using a stratagem similar to that of the Trojan Horse in the foreign story. And on the third occasion he won. There are many examples of materialist dialectics in *Water Margin*, of which the episode of the three attacks on Zhu Village is one of the best. Lenin said: “[I]n order really to know an object we must embrace, study, all its sides, all connections and ‘mediations.’ We shall never achieve this completely, but the demand for all-sidedness is a safeguard against mistakes and rigidity.”¹³ We should remember his words. To be superficial means to consider neither the characteristics of a contradiction in its totality nor the characteristics of each of its aspects; it means to deny the necessity for probing deeply into a thing and minutely studying the characteristics of its contradiction, but instead merely to look from afar and, after glimpsing the rough outline, immediately to try to resolve the contradiction (to answer a question, settle a dispute, handle work, or direct a military operation). This way of doing things is bound to lead to trouble. The reason the dogmatist and empiricist comrades in China have made mistakes lies precisely in their subjectivist, one-sided and superficial way of looking at things. To be one-sided and superficial is at the same time to be subjective. For all objective things are actually interconnected and

¹⁰ See *Sunzi*, ch. 3, “The Strategy of Attack”.

¹¹ Wei Zheng (A.D. 580-643) was a statesman and historian of the Tang Dynasty. The quote is from ch. 192 of the *Comprehensive Mirror to Aid in Government*.

¹² *Water Margin*, a famous 14th century Chinese novel, describes a peasant war towards the end of the Northern Song Dynasty. Zhu Village was in the vicinity of Liangshanbo, where Song Jiang, leader of the peasant uprising and hero of the novel, established his base. Zhu Zhaofeng, the head of this village, was a despotic landlord.

¹³ Quote from Lenin, “Once Again on the Trade Unions, the Present Situation and the Mistakes of Trotsky and Bukharin.”

are governed by inner laws, but instead of undertaking the task of reflecting things as they really are some people only look at things one-sidedly or superficially and who know neither their interconnections nor their inner laws, and so their method is subjectivist.

Excerpt from “On Contradiction” (August 1937). SOURCE: *Selected Works of Mao Zedong*, Vol. 1, People’s Publishing House, July 1952, 2nd ed., pp. 300–302

Treat all questions analytically; do not negate everything

Treat all questions analytically; do not negate everything. The question concerning the line of the central leadership during the period from the Fourth Plenary Session¹⁴ to the Zunyi Meeting,¹⁵ for example, should be analysed from two aspects. It should be pointed out on the one hand that the political tactics, the military tactics and the cadres policy which the central leading body adopted during that period were wrong in their main aspects, but on the other hand that on such fundamental issues as opposing Chiang Kai-shek and carrying on the Agrarian Revolution and the struggle of the Red Army there was no dispute between ourselves and the comrades who committed errors. And even the tactical side needs to be analysed. On the land question, for instance, their error consisted in the ultra-Left policy of allotting no land to the landlords and poor land to the rich peasants, but these comrades were at one with us on confiscating the land of the landlords for distribution among peasants who had little or no land. Concrete analysis of concrete conditions, Lenin said, is “the most essential thing in Marxism, the living soul of Marxism”.¹⁶ Lacking an analytical approach, many of our comrades do not want to go deeply into complex matters, to analyse and study them over and over again, but like to draw simple conclusions which are either absolutely affirmative or absolutely negative. The fact that our newspapers are lacking in analytical articles and that the habit of analysis is not yet fully cultivated in the Party shows that there are such shortcomings. From now on we should remedy this state of affairs.

Excerpt from “Our Study and the Current Situation” (12 April 1944). SOURCE: *Selected Works of Mao Zedong*, Vol. 3, People’s Publishing House, May 1953, 2nd ed., pp. 942–943

¹⁴ The Fourth Plenary Session of the Sixth Central Committee of the Communist Party of China was held in January 1931. See part three of the “Resolution on Certain Questions in the History of Our Party,” attached to “Our Study and the Current Situation” in Vol. 3 of *Selected Works of Mao Zedong*.

¹⁵ See part three of the “Resolution on Certain Questions in the History of Our Party,” attached to “Our Study and the Current Situation” in Vol. 3 of *Selected Works of Mao Zedong*.

¹⁶ See Lenin’s article, “Communism.” For reference, see note 10 to “Problems of Strategy in China’s Revolutionary War,” in *Selected Works of Mao Zedong*, Vol. 1.

Draw two lines of distinction. First, between revolution and counter-revolution, between Yan'an and Xi'an.¹⁷ Some do not understand that they must draw this line of distinction. For example, when they combat bureaucracy, they speak of Yan'an as though "nothing is right" there and fail to make a comparison and distinguish between the bureaucracy in Yan'an and the bureaucracy in Xi'an. This is fundamentally wrong. Secondly, within the revolutionary ranks, it is necessary to make a clear distinction between right and wrong, between achievements and shortcomings and to make clear which of the two is primary and which secondary. For instance, do the achievements amount to 30 per cent or to 70 per cent of the whole? It will not do either to understate or to overstate. We must have a fundamental evaluation of a person's work and establish whether his achievements amount to 30 per cent and his mistakes to 70 per cent, or vice versa. If his achievements amount to 70 per cent of the whole, then his work should in the main be approved. It would be entirely wrong to describe work in which the achievements are primary as work in which the mistakes are primary. In our approach to problems we must not forget to draw these two lines of distinction, between revolution and counter-revolution and between achievements and shortcomings. We shall be able to handle things well if we bear these two distinctions in mind; otherwise we shall confuse the nature of the problems. To draw these distinctions well, careful study and analysis are of course necessary. Our attitude towards every person and every matter should be one of analysis and study.

Excerpt from "Methods of Work of Party Committees" (13 March 1949). SOURCE: *Selected Works of Mao Zedong*, Vol. 4, People's Publishing House, September 1960, 1st ed., pp. 1444–1445

34. The question of ten fingers. A man has ten fingers and a cadre must learn to see the differences between nine fingers and one, or the difference between a majority and minority of fingers. Nine fingers are not the same as one finger. This seems an elementary matter, but not many people understand it. Therefore we must publicize this point of view—the differences between the larger and smaller situations, general and specific situations and main and subsidiary trends of development. We must seize upon the main trend unless we want to tumble down. This is a question of understanding, of logic. It is more vivid and more suitable to our work to put it in the form of nine fingers and one finger. Unless there is a mistake in its basic line, our work depends mainly on its achievements. This view, however, does not apply

¹⁷ Yan'an was the headquarters of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China from January 1937 to March 1947; Xi'an was the centre of the reactionary rule of the Guomindang in northwestern China. Comrade Mao Zedong cited the two cities as symbols of revolution and counter-revolution.

to some people, e.g. the Rightists. All the fingers of many extreme Rightists are diseased. That is why they may remain at school.

35. “Attack one or a few points, exaggerate them and ignore the rest.” This is an unpractical, metaphysical method. In 1957 the bourgeois Rightists virulently attacked socialism in precisely this way. Our party had been harmed grievously by this method in its history, i.e. when it was dominated by dogmatism. The Li Lisan line, revisionism, or rightist opportunism, the Chen Duxiu line and Wang Ming line during the anti-Japanese war period, all employed this method. In 1935 Zhang Guotao used it and in 1953 the Gao Gang-Rao Shushi anti-party alliance used it too. We must sum up our experience in the past and criticize this method from the point of the theory of knowledge and methodology in an attempt to awaken our cadres so that they may not be harmed by it any more. Even good people when they are wrong may unconsciously adopt this method; therefore it is necessary for them to study methodology.

Excerpt from “Sixty Points on Working Methods” (Draft.
January 1958)

We must attend to the quantitative aspect of a situation or problem and make a basic quantitative analysis

“Have a head for figures.” That is to say, we must attend to the quantitative aspect of a situation or problem and make a basic quantitative analysis. Every quality manifests itself in a certain quantity, and without quantity there can be no quality. To this day many of our comrades still do not understand that they must attend to the quantitative aspect of things—the basic statistics, the main percentages and the quantitative limits that determine the qualities of things. They have no “figures” in their heads and as a result cannot help making mistakes. For instance, in carrying out the land reform it is essential to have such figures as the percentages of landlords, rich peasants, middle peasants and poor peasants among the population and the amount of land owned by each group, because only on this basis can we formulate correct policies. Whom to call a rich peasant, whom a well-to-do middle peasant, and how much income derived from exploitation makes a person a rich peasant as distinct from a well-to-do middle peasant—in all these cases too, the quantitative limits must be ascertained. In all mass movements we must make a basic investigation and analysis of the number of active supporters, opponents and neutrals and must not decide problems subjectively and without basis.

Excerpt from “Methods of Work of Party Committees” (13 March 1949). SOURCE: *Selected Works of Mao Zedong*, Vol. 4, People’s Publishing House, September 1960, 1st ed., pp. 1443–1444

Analyse every problem concretely on the basis of detailed material and then draw theoretical conclusions

The Central Committee of our Party has now made a decision calling upon our comrades to learn how to apply the Marxist-Leninist stand, viewpoint and method in the serious study of China’s history, and of China’s economics, politics, military affairs and culture, and to analyse every problem concretely on the basis of detailed material and then draw theoretical conclusions. This is the responsibility we must shoulder.

Our comrades in the Party School should not regard Marxist theory as lifeless dogma. It is necessary to master Marxist theory and apply it, master it for the sole purpose of applying it. If you can apply the Marxist-Leninist viewpoint in elucidating one or two practical problems, you should be commended and credited with some achievement. The more problems you elucidate and the more comprehensively and profoundly you do so, the greater will be your achievement. Our Party School should also lay down the rule to grade students good or poor according to how they look at China’s problems after they have studied Marxism-Leninism, according to whether or not they see the problems clearly and whether or not they see them at all.

Excerpt from “Rectify the Party’s Style of Work” (1 February 1942). SOURCE: *Selected Works of Mao Zedong*, Vol. 3, People’s Publishing House, May 1953, 2nd ed., pp. 816–817

Marx took part in the practice of the revolutionary movement and also created revolutionary theory. Beginning with the commodity, the simplest element of capitalism, he made a thorough study of the economic structure of capitalist society. Millions of people saw and handled commodities every day but were so used to them that they took no notice. Marx alone studied commodities scientifically. He carried out a tremendous work of research into their actual development and derived a thoroughly scientific theory from what existed universally. He studied nature, history and proletarian revolution and created dialectical materialism, historical materialism and the theory of proletarian revolution. Thus Marx became a most completely developed intellectual, representing the acme of human wisdom; he was fundamentally different from those who have only book-learning. Marx undertook

detailed investigations and studies in the course of practical struggles, formed generalizations and then verified his conclusions by testing them in practical struggles—this is what we call theoretical work. Our Party needs a large number of comrades who will learn how to do such work. In our Party there are many comrades who can learn to do this kind of theoretical research; most of them are intelligent and promising and we should value them. But they must follow correct principles and not repeat the mistake of the past. They must discard dogmatism and not confine themselves to ready-made phrases in books.

Excerpt from “Rectify the Party’s Style of Work” (1 February 1942). SOURCE: *Selected Works of Mao Zedong*, Vol. 3, People’s Publishing House, May 1953, 2nd ed., p. 819

The method of meeting must be the unification of factual materials and views. It is a very bad method if it fails to link up material with views, to review material without any view, or to expound views without material to substantiate them. The worst is to present a great pile of material without either a favourable or an unfavourable view. We must learn to use material to explain our views. We must have material but we must also have a clear and definite view on how to control it. There must not be too much material, just enough to make clear our views. We need anatomize only one or two sparrows, not too many. Although we must have a great deal of material at our disposal, we present only the representative pieces. We must understand that to hold a meeting is not to write a magnum opus.

Excerpt from “Sixty Points on Working Methods” (Draft, January 1958)

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In all the practical work of our Party, all correct leadership is necessarily “from the masses, to the masses”

4. In all the practical work of our Party, all correct leadership is necessarily “from the masses, to the masses.” This means: take the ideas of the masses (scattered and unsystematic ideas) and concentrate them (through study turn them into concentrated and systematic ideas), then go to the masses and propagate and explain these ideas until the masses embrace them as their own, hold fast to them and translate them into action, and test the correctness of these ideas in such action. Then once again concentrate ideas from the masses and once again go to the masses so that the ideas are persevered in and carried through. And so on, over and

over again in an endless spiral, with the ideas becoming more correct, more vital and richer each time. Such is the Marxist theory of knowledge.

5. The concept of a correct relationship between the leading group and the masses in an organization or in a struggle, the concept that correct ideas on the part of the leadership can only be “from the masses, to the masses”, and the concept that the general call must be combined with particular guidance when the leadership’s ideas are being put into practice—these concepts must be propagated everywhere during the present rectification movement in order to correct the mistaken viewpoints among our cadres on these questions. Many comrades do not see the importance of, or are not good at, drawing together the activists to form a nucleus of leadership, and they do not see the importance of, or are not good at, linking this nucleus of leadership closely with the masses, and so their leadership becomes bureaucratic and divorced from the masses. Many comrades do not see the importance of, or are not good at, summing up the experience of mass struggles, but fancying themselves clever, are fond of voicing their subjectivist ideas, and so their ideas become empty and impractical. Many comrades rest content with making a general call with regard to a task and do not see the importance of, or are not good at, following it up immediately with particular and concrete guidance, and so their call remains on their lips, or on paper or in the conference room, and their leadership becomes bureaucratic. In the present rectification movement we must correct these defects and learn to use the methods of combining the leadership with the masses and the general with the particular in our study, in the check-up on work and in the examination of cadres’ histories; and we must also apply these methods in all our future work.

6. Take the ideas of the masses and concentrate them, then go to the masses, persevere in the ideas and carry them through, so as to form correct ideas of leadership—such is the basic method of leadership. In the process of concentrating ideas and persevering in them, it is necessary to use the method of combining the general call with particular guidance, and this is a component part of the basic method. Formulate general ideas (general calls) out of the particular guidance given in a number of cases, and put them to the test in many different units (not only doing so yourself, but by telling others to do the same); then concentrate the new experience (sum it up) and draw up new directives for the guidance of the masses generally. Comrades should do this in the present rectification movement, and also in, every other kind of work. Better leadership comes with greater skill in doing this.

Excerpt from “Some Questions Concerning Methods of Leadership” (1 June 1943). SOURCE: *Selected Works of Mao Zedong*, Vol. 3, People’s Publishing House, May 1953, 2nd ed., pp. 901–902

The process of conceptualization, judgment and reasoning, are the processes of investigation and study and thinking. The human brain can reflect the objective world, although it is not easy to do so correctly. Correct reflection or the reflection which is closest to reality can be arrived at only after thinking and rethinking. Having arrived at the correct point of view and correct thought, we must design an adequate way of expressing them[to make them intelligible to others. The processes of conceptualization, judgment, reasoning are the processes “from the people”; those of communicating one’s own points of view and thoughts to others are the processes “to the people.” This simple truth is perhaps not yet grasped by many of our cadres. However great a man may be, his thoughts, views, plans and methods are a mere reflection of the objective world and the raw materials and half-digested facts for this conceptualization come from the practice of the masses or his own scientific experiments. His mind is only a processing plant in which finished products are manufactured. Otherwise it is utterly useless. The usefulness and correctness of such finished products are tested by the popular masses. Unless our comrades understand this, they will bang their heads on a nail.

Excerpt from “Sixty Points on Working Methods” (Draft.
January 1958)

For a long period of time unreservedly and whole-heartedly go among the masses of workers, peasants and soldiers, go into the heat of the struggle

.....China’s revolutionary writers and artists, writers and artists of promise, must go among the masses; they must for a long period of time unreservedly and whole-heartedly go among the masses of workers, peasants and soldiers, go into the heat of the struggle, go to the only source, the broadest and richest source, in order to observe, experience, study and analyse all the different kinds of people, all the classes, all the masses, all the vivid patterns of life and struggle, all the raw materials of literature and art. Only then can they proceed to creative work. Otherwise, you will have nothing to work with and you will be nothing but a phoney writer or artist, the kind that Lu Xun in his will so earnestly cautioned his son never to become.¹⁸

Excerpt from “Talks at the Yan’an Forum on Literature and Art” (May 1942). SOURCE: *Selected Works of Mao Zedong*, Vol. 3, People’s Publishing House, May 1953, 2nd ed., pp. 862–863

¹⁸ See “Death”, in the “Addenda” to *The Last Collection of Essays Written in a Garret in the Quasi-Concession*, in Vol. 6 of the *Complete Works of Lu Xun*.

To teach the masses, newspaper workers should first of all learn from the masses. You comrades are all intellectuals. Intellectuals are often ignorant and often have little or no experience in practical matters. You can't quite understand the pamphlet "How to Analyse the Classes in the Rural Areas" issued in 1933; on this point, the peasants are more than a match for you, for they understand it fully as soon as they are told about it. Over 180 peasants in two districts of Guoxian county met for five days and settled many problems concerning the distribution of land. If your editorial department were to discuss those problems, I am afraid you would discuss them for two weeks without settling them. The reason is quite simple; you do not understand those problems. To change from lack of understanding to understanding, one must do things and see things; that is learning. Comrades working on the newspapers should go out by turns to take part in mass work, in land reform work for a time; that is very necessary. When not going out to participate in mass work, you should hear a great deal and read a great deal about the mass movements and devote time and effort to the study of such material. Our slogan in training troops is, "Officers teach soldiers, soldiers teach officers and soldiers teach each other". The fighters have a lot of practical combat experience. The officers should learn from the fighters, and when they have made other people's experience their own, they will become more capable. Comrades working on the newspapers, too, should constantly study the material coming from below, gradually enrich their practical knowledge and become experienced. Only thus will you be able to do your work well, will you be able to shoulder your task of educating the masses.

Excerpt from "A Talk to the Editorial Staff of the Shanxi-Suiyuan Daily" (2 April 1948). SOURCE: *Selected Works of Mao Zedong*, Vol. 4, People's Publishing House, September 1960, 1st ed., p. 1319

**If we want to carry out large-scale national construction we must overcome
bureaucratism and maintain close ties to the popular masses**

We communists must be able to integrate ourselves with the masses in all things. If our Party members spend their whole lives sitting indoors and never go out to face the world and brave the storm, what good will they be to the Chinese people? None at all, and we do not need such people as Party members. We communists ought to face the world and brave the storm, the great world of mass struggle and the mighty storm of mass struggle. "Three cobblers with their wits combined equal Zhuge Liang the master mind." In other words, the masses have great creative power. In fact there are thousands upon thousands of Zhuge Liangs among the Chinese people; every village, every town has its own. We should go to the

masses and learn from them, synthesize their experience into better, articulated principles and methods, then do propaganda among the masses, and call upon them to put these principles and methods into practice so as to solve their problems and help them achieve liberation and happiness. If our comrades doing local work are isolated from the masses, fail to understand their feelings and to help them organize their production and improve their livelihood, and if they confine themselves to collecting “public grain for national salvation” without realizing that 10 per cent of their energy is quite enough for this purpose provided they first devote 90 per cent to helping the masses solve the problem of “private grain for the people’s own salvation”, then these comrades are contaminated with the Guomintang style of work and covered with the dust of bureaucracy. The Guomintang only demands things from the people and gives them nothing in return. If a member of our Party acts in this way, his style of work is that of the Guomintang, and his face, caked with the dust of bureaucracy, needs a good wash in a basin of hot water. In my opinion, this bureaucratic style is to be found in local work in all our anti-Japanese base areas, and there are comrades who are isolated from the masses because they lack the mass viewpoint. We must firmly do away with this style of work before we can have close ties with the masses.

Excerpt from “Get Organized!” (29 November 1943). SOURCE:
Selected Works of Mao Zedong, Vol. 3, People’s Publishing House,
May 1953, 2nd ed., p. 939

Ask your subordinates about matters you don’t understand or don’t know, and do not lightly express your approval or disapproval. Some documents, after having been drafted, are withheld from circulation for a time because certain questions in them need to be clarified and it is necessary to consult the lower levels first. We should never pretend to know what we don’t know, we should “not feel ashamed to ask and learn from people below”¹⁹ and we should listen carefully to the views of the cadres at the lower levels. Be a pupil before you become a teacher; learn from the cadres at the lower levels before you issue orders. In handling problems, this should be the practice of all bureaus of the Central Committee and Party committees of the fronts, except in military emergencies or when the facts of the matter are already clear. To do this will not lower one’s prestige, but can only raise it. Since our decisions incorporate the correct views of the cadres at the lower levels, the latter will naturally support them. What the cadres at the lower levels say may or may not be correct; we must analyse it. We must heed the correct views and act upon them. The reason why the leadership of the

¹⁹ See *Analects*, book five “Gong Ye Chang.” The original reads: “He was of an active nature and yet fond of learning, and he did not feel ashamed to ask and learn from people below.”

Central Committee is correct is chiefly that it synthesizes the material, reports and correct views coming from different localities. It would be difficult for the Central Committee to issue correct orders if the localities did not provide material and put forward opinions. Listen also to the mistaken views from below; it is wrong not to listen to them at all. Such views, however, are not to be acted upon but to be criticized.

Excerpt from “Methods of Work of Party Committees” (13 March 1949). SOURCE: *Selected Works of Mao Zedong*, Vol. 4, People’s Publishing House, September 1960, 1st ed., pp. 1442–1443

24. The rectification must be carried through to the end. The party as a whole should summon up its energy to get rid of bureaucratism, to come to grips with reality, and to unite with the people. It must do its best to rectify the mistakes and weaknesses in its work, style and institutions.

25. Members of the party committees of the Centre, provinces, cities and autonomous regions, apart from the old and sick, should leave their offices for four months every year, to investigate and study at a lower level and to attend meetings at various places. They may adopt the methods of “looking at flowers while riding on horseback” and “getting off the horse to look at flowers.” It is of some use even if one pays a flying visit to a place for only three or four hours one must contact workers and peasants and enhance one’s real understanding. Some of the conferences of the Centre may be held away from Beijing; some of those of a provincial Party committee may be held away from the capital of the province.

26. We must adopt an attitude of genuine equality towards cadres and the masses and make people feel that relationships among men are truly equal. We must make others feel that there is full and openhearted communication. We must learn from Lu Xun, who communicated with his readers and evoked responses from them. People do different work and hold different Jobs. No matter how high one’s position is, one must appear among people as an ordinary worker. One must not assume airs; one must get rid of bureaucratism. One must patiently listen to the end of what others say and consider the divergent views expressed by the lower grades. One must not lose one’s temper as soon as one hears an opinion different from one’s own and take it as a personal insult. This is one way of treating people as one’s equal.

Excerpt from “Sixty Points on Working Methods” (Draft, January 1958)

We must combat bureaucratism in our leadership organs at all levels and among our leading cadres. At present among a good number of the basic-level organizations and basic-level cadres, serious commandism and breaches of law and discipline are occurring. The occurrence and breeding of such phenomena cannot be separated from the bureaucratism in our leadership organs and among our leading cadres. Take, for instance, the organs at the level of the Centre; a good number of leading cadres in a good number of ministries and departments are still satisfied with merely sitting in the government offices writing decisions and issuing directives, paying attention only to arranging and assigning work but not paying attention to going down to the lower levels to get an understanding of conditions and to inspect the work. They have often let their leadership become isolated from the masses and separated from reality and have caused many serious problems to come up in their work. If we want to carry out large-scale national construction we must overcome bureaucratism and maintain close ties to the popular masses. Leading cadres at the Centre and at all the local levels must all frequently go deep down to the lower levels to inspect the work. Once the leadership organs and leading cadres have overcome bureaucratism, the bad phenomena of commandism and breaches of law and discipline at the lower levels will definitely be overcome. Once these defects have been eliminated, our planned national construction will definitely be successful, the system of the people's democracy will definitely develop, the imperialist plots will definitely be defeated, and we will definitely be able to win total victory.

Excerpt from "Directive give at the 4th Session of the 1st National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference" (7 February 1953). SOURCE: *Documents of the 4th Session of the 1st National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference*, People's Publishing House, April 1953, 1st ed., p. 2.