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Speeches/Documents

Title: CONCEIT AND COMPLACENCY ARE THE ARCHENEMY OF UNITY

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Description:

[I fully agree with Comrade Liu Shaoqi's report](#), which appropriately appraised the work done by the Political Bureau of the Central Committee since the Third Plenary Session of the Seventh Central Committee,¹⁵⁶ I also fully agree with the "Resolution on Strengthening Party Unity",¹⁵⁷ drafted at the suggestion of Comrade Mao Zedong and submitted to the session for discussion, and with the clear and elaborate explanations of the draft resolution made by Comrade Liu Shaoqi.

I think that adopting such a resolution for the entire Party is absolutely necessary and comes at just the right moment when the Central Committee and Comrade Mao Zedong have explicitly defined [the Party's general line](#) or general task for the transition period. This is because, throughout the transition period, the revolution will involve struggles that are more acute and profound, extensive and complicated than those in the new-democratic revolution. In addition, imperialists abroad and classes at home that have been overthrown or will soon be eliminated will use every possible means to carry out sabotage activities. Under such a situation, the Party must become more united and acquire greater fighting capacity to ensure the implementation of the general line of the fulfillment of the general task for the transition period. More important, this is also because after victory in the new-democratic revolution we have been immensely successful in all fields of endeavor and conceit and complacency began to show themselves in our Party, especially among our Party's high-ranking cadres. If we do not become aware of this problem in time, it will certainly cause us to relax our vigilance against the enemy, undermine the unity of our Party and rob us of our fighting spirit, rendering us unable to withstand any attack from the enemy and bringing defeat to our great cause.

As Comrade Liu Shaoqi has said in his report, this draft resolution is not a shot in the dark but is based on concrete facts and directed at specific targets. Can we say that the concrete facts and specific targets have to do with only a few individuals? No, we cannot. As I see it, this resolution focuses on an important problem which the Party needs to address at this stage, a tendency we need to guard against and overcome. Do not think you and I need not examine ourselves or be on guard because it is meant for only a few people and has nothing to do with us.

This draft is comprehensive in that it analyses the situation both inside and outside the Party and offers effective ways to overcome conceit and complacency. Now I am going to add my views on one of the problems raised in the draft resolution, namely, the problem of conceit and complacency I mentioned above.

I believe that conceit is growing in the Party, primarily among a large number of high-ranking cadres. If they do not try to overcome this, it could get seriously out of hand. The draft resolution puts it this way, "After victory in the revolution, a number of Party cadres have developed extremely dangerous conceit and complacency. They have let the achievements in

their work go to their heads, forgetting about the modest attitude and the spirit of self-criticism that all Communists should possess. They consider themselves number one in the world, being ready to accept flattery and praise but not criticism and supervision. They suppress criticism and retaliate against those who criticize them and even go so far as to intentionally or unintentionally regard the areas and departments under their leadership as their personal property and independent kingdom." The resolution also tells us clearly that conceit can definitely harm Party unity and the cause of revolution. Conceit exerts a corruptive influence on Party members, leading to the development of individualism and causing Party members who once had the noble quality of serving the people enthusiastically and wholeheartedly to degenerate into the most despicable of individualists.

Generally speaking, all of us should understand that a conceited person is prone to exaggerate his role and contribution to the revolution. Everyone, no matter what his responsibility, is serving as no more than a cog in the wheel of the revolutionary cause. Nobody should regard any achievements as his own, instead he should regard them as the result of the efforts made by many comrades—from the Central Committee and his superiors to the vast numbers of cadres and the people, as well as his colleagues and the comrades of neighboring departments. We can absolutely not give ourselves credit for achievements scored owing to correct leadership at higher levels and the efforts of other comrades and people in other fields of endeavor. Conceited people always think of themselves as terrific, and they often complain that the Party and other people do not value them highly enough and are not warm-hearted to them. Instead they feel that those who flatter them and do favors for them are kind and warm-hearted to them. But this kind of thing has a corruptive influence. Conceited people tend to get their priorities wrong when it comes to work or locality under their leadership. For instance, they many mishandle the relationship between the central and the local authorities. If they work in a central department, they may tend to ignore the conditions in the localities, paying not heed to opinions offered by local comrades and even trying to intimidate those comrades in the name of the central department. If they work in locality, they may be prone to give scant consideration to the interests of the whole or to central departments. When a problem crops up, they always believe that their locality is in the right and may even feel uncomfortable with the restraints placed on them by the higher authorities, hating people from higher levels examining their work or criticizing them. As a matter of fact, people like us can hardly avoid mistakes and shortcomings no matter what kind of work we do. Therefore, it is unrealistic for anyone to have an unreasonably high opinion of himself, or be unwilling to be examined or criticized, or feel uncomfortable when being examined and criticized. It also goes against the Party's principles. A conceited person see only his own achievements and practically shuts his eyes to those of other people, departments and localities. When he is praised a bit more often than others are, he gets carried away. In handling relations with other departments and localities, he sees only the difficulties of his own department, ignoring the difficulties of others, seldom takes the interests of others into consideration and is never willing to get anything less than others. He only sees his own strong points, not the strong points of other comrades, and sees only others' weak points, few or none of his own. He engages in endless arguments with others on issues that are not matters of principle but of a purely technical nature, categorically refusing to compromise or be patient with others.

Conceit, especially the conceit of high-ranking cadres, will unavoidably harm Party unity and work. Since achieving victory in the revolution, we have seen some phenomena which I believe are very damaging. For instance, on the one hand, people seldom stress the Party principles formulated by Comrade Mao Zedong that have proved effective over the years and enabled our Party to attain victory. These principles are: taking a serious attitude towards

mistakes and shortcomings and making criticism and self-criticism; proceeding from the desire for unity and achieving unity through criticism and struggle; helping others and "curing the sickness to save patient"; and giving consideration to other people, departments, localities and the minority. On the other hand, violations of these principles are increasing.

We are often hearing about people who praise other people or themselves to the skies, who are unwilling to be examined or criticized and who always consider themselves in the right, turning a deaf ear to others' opinions. They seldom make criticism or self-criticism, show no respect for collective leadership, do not try to co-operate with others, do not work to "cure the sickness to save the patient" in dealing with those comrades who have made mistakes, and give little consideration to the interests of other localities or departments. Even worse, instead of preserving the prestige of the Central Committee, some comrades have exceeded the limits permitted by the Party organization in their criticism of leading comrades on the Central Committee. Comrade Mao Zedong encourages criticism of any leading comrade (he often says he is no exception). However, such criticism should be conducted on appropriate occasions and according to Party principles, or be made to the person's face. Criticism made in this way is justified and indispensable. The chief leading comrades on the Central Committee have time and again said they welcome criticism, but this criticism cannot exceed the limits permitted by the Party organization.

It often happened that some comrades expressed erroneous opinions about the chief leading comrades on the Central Committee in disregard of prescribed procedures and the Party's organizational principles. Since the National Financial and Economic Conference there have been many remarks made about Comrade Shaoqi, some of which are totally inappropriate. I think Comrade Shaoqi's self-criticism at this session was factual and appropriate, yet I have been hearing reports which bear little resemblance to criticism. Some criticisms are not true to fact or are exaggerated; other are little more than rumors and completely groundless.

For instance, what Comrade Shaoqi said today in his self-criticism about the question of the bourgeoisie is different from what some are saying. I have not read the original text of Comrade Shaoqi's speeches delivered in Tianjin in the early days of 1949, 158 but from what I have heard, I can tell those speeches were based on the principles of the Central Committee at the time and greatly helped our comrades to avoid mistakes when crossing the Yangtze River and advancing down south to liberate all of China. There may have been a few defects in wording in these speeches, but on the whole the speeches exerted favorable effect. What was the situation when he made those speeches? At that time the overall situation in China was unsettled, since half of the country had not yet been liberated. When we entered the cities the worst mistakes we were trying to avoid were "Left" mistakes, which, in fact, had already been made. Under these circumstances, it was absolutely correct for the Central Committee to adopt drastic measures to overcome and check "Left" tendencies. After crossing the Yangtze, we took over cities, keeping in mind the principles of the Central Committee, preferring to lean Right rather than "Left". In this way we lost a few months' time at worst; otherwise, we would have suffered heavy losses and it would have been very difficult for us to correct "Left" mistakes. Therefore, I think the speeches delivered by Comrade Shaoqi served a good purpose, though I have heard rumors which imply the opposite.

Let us take another example: the question of Party members [who have become rich peasants](#). This is merely a question of when we should issue a directive; yet again I hear rumors implying otherwise. Still another example is the question of the working class and [semi-working class leading the revolution](#). the term is not proper, of course, but this is not a

question concerning the nature of the Party, though the rumors I heard were quite to the contrary. Some of the rumors I mentioned have gone beyond the limits of criticism and self-criticism and violated organizational principles of the Party, and others are completely groundless or wildly exaggerated. These phenomena deserve our close attention. Can we separate the prestige of the Central Committee from that of the chief leading comrades on the Committee? Or, can we say that protecting the prestige of the Central Committee has nothing to do with protecting that of chief leading comrades on the Committee—for example, Comrade Shaoqi? Being not keen enough politically, we have failed to effectively counter or end criticism of the chief leading comrades on the Central Committee, criticism which was not in keeping with the Party's organizational principles. Can we say that our failure to combat such criticism has nothing to do with our conceit and low ideological level? Is this not serious enough for us to heighten our vigilance? I believe it is and we should take it as a warning.

So far I have only discussed conceit in general terms. If we become conceited, we shall stop making progress and working diligently, and we are bound to make serious mistakes. If we do not try to get rid of it in time but let it grow, we shall be unable to withstand any attack by hostile classes and ideologies. It should also be noted that conceit may have another result, as Comrade Shaoqi has pointed out in his report. When Party members' conceit and individualism are not resolutely reined in by the Party, these members will eventually begin to argue over their position in the Party, fight for power and personal gain, trade flattery and favors, form small cliques and even go to the extent of treacherously helping the enemy undermine and split the Party. Should this not call for our redoubled vigilance?

I think [the Fourth Plenary Session of the Seventh](#) Central Committee and the resolution it produced are of great importance to comrades who have made grave mistakes, because they have given these comrades an opportunity to correct their mistakes, which is the most direct way to help them. In addition, I think that the resolution will provide the most effective guarantee for the implementation of the Party's general line or the fulfillment of its general task for the transition period, and will be most useful to all Party members, especially our high-ranking cadres. It is a disinfectant, arousing our class consciousness, heightening our vigilance, consolidating our Party and increasing its fighting capacity. All of us, first of all our high-ranking cadres, should examine ourselves ideologically to see if we have any of those tendencies mentioned in the draft resolution. In my own case, for example, although I experienced some frustrations in the past, these last twenty years have been smooth sailing. Precisely because of this, however, I need to maintain a sharp vigilance against those tendencies. We should soberly assess our contributions to the Party and people. Have we ever accomplished anything without the help of others? It is possible to believe that we are perfect in every way, without any shortcomings or mistakes? Again, in my own case, I have many shortcomings and make mistakes every now and then. Since I was transferred to work with the central authorities not many years ago, I have been involved in decentralism and, besides this, I am not always right in dealing with people or with certain matters. In the past, when I worked in north China, the Central Plains and the southwest, I also had shortcomings and made mistakes. It is inconceivable that people such as ourselves, whose Marxist-Leninist level is not so high, do not have any mistakes or shortcomings in work. We should inspect ourselves using this resolution as a mirror. Now that the Party has set forth the general line or general task for the transition period, it is vital for all of us high-ranking cadres in the Party to inspect ourselves in the mirror and wash our faces. Comrade Mao Zedong once asked: Why were we able to achieve nationwide victory in a very short period of time after the [Seventh National Congress](#) of the Chinese Communist Party? It was mainly thanks to the [rectification movement](#) conducted before the Congress, which made our Party highly unified ideologically,

politically and organizationally, thus forming a stronger unity and establishing centralized and unified leadership of the Central Committee. This then inspired all Party members and cadres to march to the front full of confidence and in high spirits. This was one of the fundamental reason why we attained nationwide victory. No doubt the resolution on strengthening Party unity adopted at the Fourth Plenary Session will play a role similar to that of the rectification movement. It will lead to greater Party unity, enable us to correct many erroneous tendencies and boost our confidence and morale in fulfilling the historic task of this phase of socialist revolution.

(Speech delivered at the Fourth Plenary Session of the Seventh Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party, held in Beijing from February 6 to 10, 1954. Comrade Liu Shaoqi, on behalf of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee and Comrade Mao Zedong, gave a report to the session. Zhu De, Zhou Enlai, Chen Yun, Deng Xiaoping and other comrades delivered speeches. The participants full agreed with the report given by Comrade Liu Shaoqi, affirmed the achievements made in various fields since the Third Plenary Session of the Seventh Central Committee, exposed and criticized the activities of [Gao Gang](#) and Rao Shushi, who plotted to split the Party and usurp the supreme power of the Party and the state, and unanimously adopted the "Resolution on Strengthening Party Unity", drawn up at the suggestion of Comrade Mao Zedong, which served to safeguard and cement the Party unity.)