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Deng Xiaoping's Rectification in Various Fields

Deng Xiaoping was aware that Mao Zedong was aging and knew, in the turmoil of the Cultural Revolution, that Mao needed his help to stabilize the situation and rectify the economy. Therefore, Deng ignored Jiang Qing's challenge. Deng began his rectification program for the national economy with the industry and communications systems, giving priority to rail transportation.

From February 25 to March 8, 1974, the Party Central held a nationwide meeting of Party secretaries of industry. The main subject was how to solve the problems of rail transportation. On March 5, the Party Central issued a "Resolution to Fortify Railway Management." It called for fortifying a centralized leadership, amplifying rules and regulations, rectifying the order of the railway, fighting against sabotage, and ensuring safety and punctuality. Deng Xiaoping pointed out, "Some comrades grasp revolution only and dare not grasp production. They claim that 'it is safe to grasp revolution and dangerous to grasp production.' They are absolutely wrong."¹³ In talking about the measures to improve the national economy, Deng said, "The railway is a weak point at present. If the problem of rail transportation remains, the production plan will be disrupted, resulting in the failure of the entire program. Therefore, the Party Central is determined to solve this problem."¹⁴ The specific measures included strengthening the centralized leadership, establishing rules and regulations, intensifying discipline, and criticizing the factionalism of the Cultural Revolution.

Wan Li, minister of railways, was in charge of reforming rail transportation. He began this work from Xuzhou Railway Bureau. The bureau adjusted and strengthened the leading units on various levels; arrested those who had destroyed rail transportation; attacked criminals who had created traffic accidents, stolen railway equipment, and incited looting; redressed mishandled cases; and restored and amplified the rules and regulations. Transportation improved markedly after a month or so. The bureau had failed to fulfill the State plan for the previous twenty-one months, but in April it completed the task three days ahead of schedule. Thanks to the rectification of the railway system, by April the heavy traffic tieups in several railway bureaus had been eliminated; more than twenty railway bureaus exceeded the plan; daily rail cargo reached an all-time high; and train security and punctuality improved as well. The achievement was widely acclaimed.

On April 22, 1975, with Mao Zedong's approval, the Party Central produced a "Report on the Draft of National Economic Development for 1974." In it the Party Central suggested formulating a ten-year plan and further study of the economic management system. Although in some of its parts the report was strongly colored by the Criticize Lin Biao and Confucius campaign, in general it reflected an improved Chinese economy. Reluctant to credit Zhou Enlai and Deng Xiaoping with the achievement, Jiang Qing and others began to criticize "empiricism."

If this criticism movement had succeeded, it would have threatened the State Council led by Zhou Enlai and Deng Xiaoping. As the Cultural Revolution revealed that a "bombarded" populace could form a great impulsive force, Jiang Qing and others were obviously attempting to attain their goal by "bombarding" the masses once again with the slogan "Criticize empiricism." Mao Zedong understood that, after more than eight years of the Cultural Revolution, China wanted and needed stability. He could not allow the campaign to criticize empiricism to expand. Therefore, on April 23, 1975, Mao Zedong commented on Yao Wenyuan's "Requesting Instruction about Reporting the Study of Proletarian Dictatorship":¹⁵

The way to accomplish it is to criticize revisionism, including the criticism of both empiricism and dogmatism. It is not correct to criticize one and leave out the other. Conditions vary from place to place, but the basic problem is the low level of Marxism-Leninism. All those who have committed such errors are educable. We should spend several years raising the Marxist-Leninist level of everyone.

Few of our Party members truly understand Marxism-Leninism. Some think they do, but actually they do not. They regard themselves as always in the right and are apt to reprimand others. This shows that they do not understand Marxism-Leninism. This issue should be submitted to the Politburo for discussion.

Accordingly, at the Party Central meeting on April 27, 1975, Jiang Qing made a self-criticism. On May 3, at another Politburo meeting, Mao Zedong criticized the practice of fighting against only empiricism and not dogmatism. He said, "You hate only empiricism but not dogmatism.... Don't neglect the harmfulness of dogmatism." He also stressed the necessity "to practice Marxism, not revisionism; unite, and do not split; be open and aboveboard, and do not foment intrigue and conspire. Do not form a Gang of Four.... It is not good at

any time to form small groups." After explaining many times the "Three Dos and the Three Don'ts," Mao said, "It seems to me that some comrades don't believe the Three Dos and the Three Don'ts; they don't listen to me either.... I think those who criticize empiricism are empiricists themselves. ... I think Jiang Qing is a petty empiricist, for she does not have much experience." As to the problem of Jiang Qing and others, Mao said, "If it cannot be solved in the first half of this year, then the second half; if not this year, then next year; if not next year, then the year after next."¹⁶

Deng Xiaoping presided over Politburo meetings on May 27 and June 3 to help Jiang Qing and her clique realize their mistakes in factional activities, cliquish practices, and hasty recruitment of new Party members.

On June 28, Jiang Qing wrote to Mao Zedong and all Politburo members:

I was shocked by the criticism that the comrades gave to me in several Politburo meetings.... I think those meetings are helpful to me. I made a self-criticism in a meeting on April 27, but it was not thorough enough. Not until I was aware that we are forming a Gang of Four did I realize its possibility of developing into factionalism, which would threaten the unity of the Party Central and is the reason why Chairman Mao has talked about it four times since last year. It is actually a matter of major principle, and Chairman Mao made no concession to such matters.

Wang Hongwen, Zhang Chunqiao, and Yao Wenyuan also admitted their mistakes, but only superficially. Zhang once wrote, "We will resolutely follow Chairman Mao's instruction about not forming a Gang of Four, and we will do our best to unite more comrades, at least not to make any trouble for Chairman Mao."

Kang Sheng, closely associated with the Gang of Four, was now seriously ill. When he learned from Wang Hairong and Tang Wensheng about Mao Zedong's criticism of Jiang Qing ... he made a decision to report to Mao, through Wang and Tang, that Jiang Qing and Zhang Chunqiao had betrayed the Party in their early days. He also provided the name of a witness.¹⁷ Kang Sheng was known for his opportunism and speculative schemes of entrapping others. He was bold enough to expose Jiang's and Zhang's past records because he wished to cater to Mao once again, especially as Mao proposed to solve the problem of the Gang of Four. This much about Kang Sheng is mentioned here only to indicate Jiang's and Zhang's situation in the upper echelons of power at that time. Jiang Qing and others restrained themselves for a while, but only ever so slightly.

Deng Xiaoping carried out his rectification work in various fields. On the one hand; he wanted China to recover soon from the tragedy of the Cultural Revolution; on the other, he wished to regain his lost power.

Deng gave speeches on May 21, 1975, at a State Council working meeting and on May 29 at a meeting with iron and steel industry delegations. Deng Xiaoping stressed in both speeches that a strong, brave, and capable leadership was to be formed by those who were not afraid to be overthrown and were courageous enough to stick to principles, take responsibilities, and struggle against unhealthy tendencies. The Party Central and the

provincial Party committees would give support to those people, and they were allowed to correct as well as to make mistakes. Deng Xiaoping also said humorously, "I'm like a Uighur girl with many braids, and anyone can grab one if they wish." He used this figure of speech to encourage the cadres to stick to principles and in implementing rectification work to be free from fear of being caught about mistakes and to work with boldness. Deng hoped to reverse the current trend, or in other words, to promote production as soon as possible with the help of a vigorous leading group. The precondition of accomplishing his objective was to resolutely oppose bourgeois factionalism. Deng pointed out that the focal point was to promote production and science and technology. To expedite the work, he said, "we must implement Party policies to bring into play the enthusiasm of the masses who had been hurt during the Cultural Revolution. The masses must be aroused to set up necessary strict rules and regulations." Deng then conveyed Mao Zedong's recent important instructions on theory, stability, unity, and promotion of the national economy. Deng termed these three instructions as "the guiding principles of all work in the period hereafter."¹⁸ On June 4, the Party Central issued a directive on fulfilling the iron and steel production plan of 1975. After about a month of hard work, iron and steel production had improved. The output of four major iron and steel plants in Anshan, Wuhan, Baotou, and Taiyuan increased gradually. The daily steel output exceeded the average daily production quota.¹⁹ In July 1975, the State Council stated in its report on industrial production during the first half of the year that "the recent three months saw a steady improvement of industrial production and transportation; in May and June, the monthly output of the following products was at an all-time high: crude oil, raw coal, electricity generated, chemical fertilizer, cement, internal combustion engines, paper, paper products, and rail transportation volume; the war production was not bad either." To further improve the national economy, the State Council called a conference for July 20 to August 4, 1975, at which the key enterprises of the national defense industry would discuss related issues. On August 3, Deng Xiaoping, Ye Jianying, and Li Xiannian attended the conference and made speeches. Deng once again emphasized the implementation of policies, establishment of rules and regulations, and setting up resolute leadership. He severely criticized "the practice of factionalism." He insisted on the importance of arousing the enthusiasm of scientific and technological personnel, of uniting these personnel with workers and cadres, of not feeling depressed, and of not addressing intellectuals as the "stinking ninth."²⁰ He also cited Mao Zedong's words "The 'ninth' cannot be dispensed with; we need them." He criticized those who compared guaranteeing product quality and establishing rules and regulations to "restricting, blockading, and pressuring." Deng also said, "People complain a lot about their living conditions. Do not think that their complaints are all cynical remarks. Our Party and our government must be concerned with the well-being of the people. Now it is time to put forward this issue."²¹ On August 18, 1975, Deng Xiaoping made several suggestions concerning the development of industry:

1. realize that agriculture is the foundation, that industry should serve agricultural production;
2. introduce new technology and new equipment to increase imports and exports;
3. intensify scientific study in enterprises;
4. rectify the management of enterprises;
5. pay special attention to quality control;

6. restore and amplify rules and regulations;

7. adhere to the principle of distribution according to work.

Based on Deng Xiaoping's speech, the State Planning Committee drew up and then revised the "few clauses to increase the development of industry," later formulated as the "Twenty Guidelines of Industry" (*gongye ershitiao*). The purpose of drawing up these clauses was to take further steps to rectify the management of enterprises. But Jiang Qing and others prevented the guidelines from being passed onto the grass-roots level as an official document. However, as many concerned individuals had been involved in the formulation of this document, some contribution was made toward rectifying the industrial sector.

In January 1975, Deng Xiaoping suggested that the armed forces needed to be rectified. In response, the Central Military Commission held an enlarged meeting from June 24 to July 15 to discuss military reorganization and reform. On July 14, Deng Xiaoping addressed the meeting and pointed out that the main problems of the military could be described in five words: "overstaffed," "disorganized," "arrogant," "extravagant," and "indolent." The "weakness," "laziness," and "laxity" of the leading groups at various levels should be resolved.²² Ye Jianying summed up in his concluding speech that a high degree of centralism and unification was required in the military, no factionalism was to be permitted, the sense of discipline should be intensified, the leading groups should be adjusted from top to bottom, and no careerists should be allowed.

During the Cultural Revolution, Jiang Qing controlled the world of literature and the arts. She caused a spiritual thirst among people. In July 1975, Deng Xiaoping talked to Mao Zedong about the necessity of rectifying literature and the arts in China. Mao Zedong said with deep feeling, "Only a couple of model dramas are available. Literary and art personnel are criticized whenever they make even minor mistakes. The 'blooming of a hundred flowers' is already something of the past. People are not allowed to offer their differing opinions; it is not good.... The writers dare not write essays or dramas. There are no novels or poetry to speak of."²³ Mao's remarks described quite accurately the prevailing scene of Chinese literature and art. On July 14, 1975, Mao Zedong ruled on this point, saying,

Our Party's policy of literature and the arts needs to be rectified. The theatrical performance needs to be gradually enlarged in scope over one year, two years, or maybe three years. Poetry, novels, prose, and literary criticism are lacking. As for writers, we should implement the policy of "learning from past mistakes to avoid future ones, and curing the sickness to save the patient." We should help everyone, except for those who hide and engage in serious counterrevolutionary activities.²⁴

Zhang Tianmin, playwright of the film *The Pioneers*, was encouraged by Mao Zedong's directive; on July 18, 1975, he wrote a letter to Mao, which he asked Deng Xiaoping to pass on to Mao. In his letter, Zhang Tianmin first gave a briefing on the production of this film, then expressed perplexity about why the Ministry of Culture obtained Wang Hongwen's permission to release this film for the spring festival of 1975, and yet on the following day, a set of ten restrictions was imposed on it, confounding Zhang.

On July 25, 1975, Mao Zedong commented on Zhang Tianmin's letter as follows: "There's no great error in this film. I suggest that it be released. Don't nitpick. It is overdone to lay ten accusations on this film. It won't help the rectification of the Party's literary policy."²⁵

At that time, all who had seen the film were inspired by the "spirit of pioneering" it advocated and were moved by the message that the Chinese must possess the heroic spirit. The public was silently infuriated when they heard about the ten accusations against the film. Under such circumstances, the news of Mao Zedong's directive on *The Pioneers* spread quickly among the people; they hoped that rectifying literature and the arts would bring in new vitality after the stifling atmosphere of the Cultural Revolution.

As for science and technology Deng Xiaoping saw in them a high value and importance for modernization as did the bureaucrats in the Westernization movement in the latter half of the Qing dynasty. In early July 1975, Deng Xiaoping assigned Hu Yaobang, former first secretary of the Central Youth League, to take charge of the rectification of the Chinese Academy of Sciences. Deng hoped the academy could rid itself of its current factional struggles and take the lead in the development of science and technology.

Based on an extensive investigation and study of the academy, Hu Yaobang drafted a report about "a few problems in the work of science and technology" on August 11, 1975, hoping this report could serve as the basis of a general understanding for conducting an overall rectification. This draft laid special emphasis on analyzing the relations between politics and vocational work, pointing out that in scientific and technical institutions, "there must be a strong political leadership and also a specific professional leadership," that one must "try to be both 'red and expert,' " that "science and technology are also productive forces," and that "to promote production, science and technology should be developed first." It criticized the practice in some units by which "many professional scientific research structures were removed, and the scientific research personnel were transferred to do manual labor in factories on a long-term basis or worked regular shifts in production positions." It said, "It was incorrect to require all scientific and research work without exception to 'combine with the work in factories and countryside'; it was improper to propose slogans like 'conducting scientific research with an open door.' " The draft stressed the need to "work in a friendly manner with scientific organizations of foreign countries" and "to stick to the principle of self-reliance, while not closing our country to international intercourse and not becoming xenophobic." This report emphasized Mao Zedong's words "We propose to learn from foreign countries; we will learn from them all that is advanced and excellent, and we will do so forever." Therefore, "in order to race against time and to accelerate the process, we need to introduce advanced technology and sophisticated equipment." As to the many prevailing incorrect opinions on theoretical research, the report stated that "in doing well a great amount of practical research, we must at the same time pay attention to and strengthen theoretical study." On accelerating the development of science and technology, the report recommended "intensifying academic activities in the world of science and technology, developing academic exchanges extensively, encouraging academic debates, altering the unscholarly atmosphere, and suspending the practice of using administrative methods to resolve academic issues."²⁶

Hu Yaobang repeatedly revised his draft of the report as he continued his investigation and study. On September 26, 1975, Hu reported to Deng Xiaoping on issues of the Academy of Sciences, explaining that morale was low among the scientific and technical personnel because they dared not do their professional work. Deng Xiaoping said, "Ninety-five percent of the people wish to change the present situation; only a few people do not. Believe me, the majority will eventually increase to over 99 percent." He continued, however, "The world of science and technology needs rectification. In the final analysis, it is the problem of the leading group.... It should be made clear that scientific research is also a kind of productive force." Deng Xiaoping expressed his indignation at the practice of despising professional work. He said, "So long as one is of benefit to the People's Republic of China, even if one is a 'white' expert (*baizhuan*), one is much better than those who hold positions but don't work, who practice factionalism, and who hold others back." Deng Xiaoping also paid great attention to the matter of freeing scientific research personnel from domestic problems and creating conditions favorable to scientific research work. Some of these specific problems were "shelter, transportation, day care, food, spouse's working place." Deng Xiaoping particularly emphasized the importance of education. He pointed out that schools should "give priority to study"; "if one knows nothing about foreign languages, mathematics, physics, and chemistry, how can one expect to climb up to the peak of science? One cannot even reach to the middle level; even the lowest level is problematical.... There is a potential crisis; if it occurs in the educational departments, the entire modernization process will be held up." For this reason, advanced education in its true sense must be developed.²⁷

In October 1975, shortly after Deng Xiaoping assigned Hu Yaobang to work in the Chinese Academy of Sciences, Zhou Enlai and Deng suggested that Zhao Ziyang go to work in Sichuan, the largest province in China. Mao Zedong approved their suggestion. Zhao Ziyang was then appointed first secretary of the Sichuan Provincial Party Committee, director of the provincial Revolutionary Committee, and political commissar of the PLA Chengdu Military Region. Zhao was to pursue economic reform.

On September 15, 1975, the national conference "Learning from Dazhai in Agriculture" convened by the State Council opened in Xiyang County, Shanxi Province. Deng Xiaoping delivered a speech at the opening ceremony. He proposed to implement the cadre policy in the countryside and to develop agricultural production conscientiously. Deng Xiaoping gave specific instructions to all trades and professions in points of rectification. In September and October, as a follow-up, he gave several important speeches on the same subject. He emphasized repeatedly that "the leading group is the heart of rectification," that it must be bold enough, especially the first and second in command. While members of the group carried out an overall rectification in all trades and professions and bent all their efforts to developing productive forces and the economy, they must take the risk of being overthrown and of being charged with practicing "restoration."

On October 7, 1975, inspired by Deng Xiaoping's speech, the Political Study Office of the State Council issued "The General Program for All Work in the Party and State."²⁸ In light of Mao Zedong's Three Instructions of "studying theory," "promoting stability and unity," and "developing the national economy," it was proposed for this program "to quicken the pace of socialist construction, to achieve the lofty goal in the next twenty-five years, and to strengthen the socialist material base." The program seriously criticized "heads who stubbornly

practice bourgeois factionalism," stating that it was "high time to call a halt to the long-entangled factionalism and to the struggles of the so-called rebels and conservatives, the so-called junior and senior cadres, the so-called Confucians and Legalists." It continued: "There are only two alternatives.... One is to correct their mistakes and be good Party members; the other is to degenerate further and fall into the counterrevolutionary pit. The second alternative does not exist." The program also analyzed the nature of the spirit of "going against the tide." It pointed out that the State and the Party "must penetrate the disguise of sham Marxist-Leninist political swindlers." The program exposed tricks used in the Cultural Revolution, such as

revolting against those who made revolution; attacking the vast numbers of cadres and masses; inciting the masses to struggle among themselves by using their diverse opinions on certain issues; supporting and plotting violent struggles ; and turning the nature of many contradictions among the people into contradictions between ourselves and the enemy. "Ruthless struggle and merciless blows" were heaped on the revolutionary cadres when such tactics should have been used on the enemy, and at times they should not even have been used against the enemy.

The program then called on people to cherish unity as they would treasure their own eyes.

The program stressed "all trades, professions, and working units must establish and develop essential and strict rules and regulations.... The system of job responsibility is the core of rules and regulations of enterprises." It required "the leaders of various levels take care of both production and the daily life of the masses."

At the end of 1975, the rectification was suspended because of the disruption caused by the campaign of Counterattacking Right-Deviationist Reversal of Verdicts (*fanji youqing fan'anfeng*). Nevertheless, the Chinese economy improved markedly through rectification. In 1975, the total output value of industry and agriculture increased 11.9 percent compared to the previous year; the increase of the total value in industry was 15.1 percent; in agriculture, 4.6 percent. There were significant increases in production of grain, crude oil, steel, raw coal, and generated energy, in volume of rail transportation, and in total volume of commodity retail sales.²⁹

When Deng Xiaoping was in charge of the State Council, he took great effort to restore the national economy, enabling the Chinese situation to turn for the better. But the shadow of the Cultural Revolution still influenced the people's evaluation of Jiang Qing and Deng Xiaoping, with the comparison of the two of them taking some unusual forms. This in turn resulted in a period of "rumors arising everywhere" in July, August, and September.

