

Chou En-lai

**REPORT ON
THE QUESTION OF
INTELLECTUALS**

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*Delivered on January 14, 1956,
at a meeting held under the auspices of the
Central Committee of the Communist Party of China
to discuss the question of intellectuals*

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Comrades!

To strengthen the Party's leadership of intellectuals, and of scientific and cultural work as a whole, the Central Committee decided to hold this meeting to discuss the question of intellectuals.

This decision is part of the efforts of the Central Committee to lead the whole Party in combating conservative ideas so as to carry out the fundamental tasks of the transition period.

In 1955, as everyone knows, acting upon the proposal of Comrade Mao Tse-tung, the Central Committee waged a series of battles against rightist conservative ideas within the Party. The most important results of these battles are as follows: A planned, thorough-going movement was set afoot to weed out counter-revolutionaries both in government organizations and society as a whole, and this, it is estimated, will be in the main completed throughout China within the next two years; the agricultural co-operative movement based on the rapidly increasing political consciousness of the masses has advanced swiftly: this year we shall virtually complete semi-socialist co-operation in agriculture throughout the country, while advancing towards completely socialist co-operation; entire trades of capitalist industry and commerce have been speedily brought under state and private joint operation — another transformation which may very well be in the main completed throughout the country this year; our First Five-Year Plan for developing the national economy is to be completed ahead of schedule and overfulfilled: it is estimated that certain productive departments will com-

plete their plans for 1957 during 1956, while it is possible for all others to fulfil the Five-Year Plan ahead of time or to overfulfil it.

These great and inspiring achievements were inconceivable a year ago. Indeed, had we not combated rightist conservative thinking, they would be beyond our grasp even now. From this we can see what a grave danger this rightist conservative thinking is to our Party.

The fundamental tasks of our struggle against rightist conservative ideas are to further strengthen and expand the people's democratic dictatorship in our country, hasten the completion of socialist transformation, overfulfil the state plan for the development of industry, and accelerate the technical transformation of our national economy. This struggle is of tremendous international significance. For if our vast country with its population of six hundred million can forge swiftly ahead and complete these tasks ahead of time, doing so on the largest possible scale — quickly, effectively and economically, the entire socialist camp will be more speedily and substantially strengthened, and this will help to prevent the outbreak of another war; or even if any aggressor is rash enough to unleash a new war, we shall be in a more powerful position to meet such an eventuality. Hence the Central Committee resolved to make the combating of rightist conservative thinking the central question of the Eighth National Party Congress, calling upon the whole Party to wage this struggle in all departments of work.

It is on this basis that the question of intellectuals has been raised.

What, in actual fact, is the connection between the question of intellectuals and our present task of hastening the building of socialism?

Our basic reason for building up a socialist economy is to provide the greatest possible satisfaction for the constantly increasing material and cultural demands of society as a whole. To reach this goal, we must never cease to develop the productive forces of society, raise the productivity of labour, and expand and improve socialist production on the basis of advanced technique. Hence the age of socialism, more than any previous age, requires a comprehensive raising of productive technique, as well as a comprehensive development of science and utilization of scientific knowledge. It follows from this that if we want to go ahead with our socialist construction on the largest possible scale, quickly, effectively and economically, we must rely on the energetic labour not only of the working class and the broad masses of the peasants, but also of the intellectuals. In other words, we must rely on close co-operation between manual work and brain work, on the fraternal alliance of workers, peasants and intellectuals. The different construction projects on which we are now engaged require the participation of intellectuals in ever growing numbers. For example, to find mines we need geologists who will take large groups of university and secondary school graduates to all the wild and mountainous regions of our country to survey, make general and detailed investigations, and drill. To set up mines, erect factories, railways and water conservancy projects, we need a number of engineers and an army of technicians to make surveys and designs, build, and install equipment. For a factory to produce, every process in production from the initial design to the inspection of the finished products requires a considerable number of technical personnel of a certain standard. To manage industry and commerce we need specialists of every type in ever increasing

numbers. To build up a modernized national defence, we need scientific experts in many different fields. Without teachers and doctors, we could have no schools and hospitals. Without workers in literature and art, we could have no cultural life. In the countryside, after agriculture has been mechanized and electrified, we shall certainly need a great number of engineers to make agricultural machinery and build electric power plants, as well as agronomists, accountants and so forth. Indeed, even today, to carry out many of the tasks which have to be undertaken immediately in the draft National Programme for Agricultural Development for 1956-1967, we require the active participation of scientists, technicians, botanists, medical workers and veterinary surgeons to produce improved farm implements drawn by animals, chemical fertilizers and pumps, to eradicate the chief plant diseases and insect pests, and to put an end to the most serious diseases which affect men and livestock. Thus intellectuals have become an important factor in every aspect of our national life. To find a correct solution for the question of intellectuals, to mobilize them more effectively and make fuller use of their abilities in our gigantic work of building socialism, has therefore become essential if we are to fulfil the fundamental tasks of the transition period. Every department of our Party and Party organizations at all levels should pay serious attention to this question.

What is the question of intellectuals at present? The fundamental question at present is that the forces of our intelligentsia are insufficient in number, professional skill and political consciousness, to meet the requirements of our ever expanding socialist construction. Certain irrational features in our present employment and treatment of intellectuals and, in par-

ticular, certain sectarian attitudes on the part of some of our comrades towards intellectuals outside the Party, have to some extent handicapped us in bringing the existing strength of the intelligentsia into full play. It is imperative that we give firmer leadership, overcome our shortcomings and take a series of effective measures to mobilize the intellectuals to the fullest possible extent and bring into full play their strength by ceaselessly raising their political consciousness, training new recruits on a large scale to add to their ranks, and raising their professional skill as far as possible to meet the ever growing demands made on them by the state. This is now the fundamental task for our Party on the question of intellectuals.

I

Before discussing our Party's task in relation to intellectuals, let us first examine the situation as regards the intellectuals today.

Our Party has always attached great importance to the question of intellectuals. As early as 1939, the decision drafted by Comrade Mao Tse-tung on drawing in large numbers of intellectuals was passed by our Central Committee and effectively carried out in all the anti-Japanese bases. Since the liberation of the mainland, the Party has applied on a nationwide scale the policy of uniting, educating and remoulding intellectuals. Our Central Committee considered that if during the revolution we needed intellectuals, for the work of construction we needed them even more. Indeed, owing to the fact that before the liberation our country was culturally and scientifically backward, it was all the more important for us to make the best use of the intellectuals carried over

from the old society in order that the intelligentsia might serve the socialist construction of our country. Moreover, the Central Committee affirmed that although the intellectuals from the old society had been influenced in a number of ways by imperialism and the reactionary classes, the great majority of them had also been oppressed by the imperialists and the Kuomintang; thus some of them had joined the revolution, others sympathized with it, and the majority adopted a neutral, wait-and-see attitude towards it, while the number of counter-revolutionaries among them was extremely small. Events are daily proving to Chinese intellectuals that unless they range themselves on the side of the working class and the Communist Party, there is no other way open to them. Hence it is essential, as well as entirely possible, to rally the intellectuals. With this understanding, the Central Committee of our Party adopted a policy of "the wholesale taking-over" of intellectuals from the old society at the time of the liberation. The vast majority of them were kept on in suitable posts, some even being given responsible positions. As for those who had been unemployed, efforts were made to find them work, or other suitable provision was made for them.

Politically, the Party gave many representative intellectuals appropriate positions. The Central Committee believes that it is essential to help intellectuals from the old society to remould themselves, so that they can repudiate the ideas of the landlord class and bourgeoisie, and accept the ideology of the working class. To this end, the Party has taken a series of measures. Intellectuals were given the opportunity of joining in land reform, the movement for the suppression of counter-revolutionaries, the campaign to resist American aggression and aid

Korea, the *san fan* ("against three evils"¹) and *wu fan* ("against five evils"²) movements. We have also made it possible for them to inspect factories and villages, visit the Soviet Union, and take part in international meetings and other activities. The Party has furthermore guided them in their study of the fundamentals of Marxism-Leninism, helped them to criticize the idealist outlook of the bourgeoisie, to carry through the struggle against Hu Feng's counter-revolutionary clique³ as well as other counter-revolutionaries, and on the basis of study to practise criticism and self-criticism.

As regards their professional life, the Party has taken many steps to help them to grasp the principle of integrating theory with practice, learn from advanced Soviet experience, improve their working methods, and raise their vocational levels. The overwhelming majority of the intellectuals have become government workers in the service of socialism and are already part of the working class. While uniting, educating and remoulding the intellectuals from the old society, the Party has made a great effort to foster the growth of large numbers of new intellectuals, of whom a considerable proportion already are of labouring class origin. Because of this, a fundamental

¹The three evils were corruption, waste and bureaucratism among personnel in government institutions and state enterprises.—Translator.

²The five evils were bribery of government employees, tax evasion, theft of state property, cheating on government contracts, and stealing economic information for private speculation.—Translator.

³Hu Feng was a counter-revolutionary who for more than twenty years disguising himself as a Marxist-Leninist writer carried on subversive activities in the realm of progressive literature in China. In 1955, the criminal activities of Hu Feng and his clique were exposed.—Translator.

change has taken place among Chinese intellectuals in the past six years.

Many organizations have compiled figures on the present political stand of the intellectuals working there. These statistics reveal that about 40 per cent of the higher intellectuals are progressives who actively support the Communist Party, the People's Government and socialism, and are working wholeheartedly for the people. Another 40 per cent or so form an intermediate section who support the Communist Party and the People's Government and generally complete the tasks assigned to them, but are not sufficiently active politically. These two sections combined make up about 80 per cent of the intelligentsia. Of the rest, over 10 per cent are backward intellectuals who lack political consciousness or ideologically oppose socialism, while less than 10 per cent are counter-revolutionaries or other bad elements.

If we compare this with the situation in the early days of the liberation, we can see that the change has been very rapid indeed. For instance, according to a survey of 141 teachers of four higher educational institutions in Peking, Tientsin and Tsingtao, during the last six years the progressives have increased from 18 per cent to 41 per cent, while the backward have decreased from 28 per cent to 15 per cent. It is only natural that a large proportion of the intellectuals are daily being more strongly influenced by the great socialist transformation and construction taking place in our country, and from the resurgence of China are seeing that their destinies are bound up with those of the nation as a whole.

Here it should be noted that the changes in the intellectuals' ways of thinking are not entirely in step with those in their political and social status. A great many progressive intellectuals still display a

greater or lesser degree of bourgeois idealism and individualism in their outlook and behaviour. This is even more true, of course, of the middle group. And the progress of intellectuals—in particular of the relatively backward among them—in quite a few organizations is slow, a fact which shows that we have done very little to help them.

The past six years have seen a very rapid growth in the number of intellectuals. According to estimates, there are roughly 100,000 higher intellectuals in China engaged in scientific research, education, engineering and technology, public health, cultural work, the arts and other occupations. Of these, according to partial data, about one third have been recruited since the liberation. The number of intellectuals in some fields has increased particularly rapidly. Geologists, for example, numbered fewer than 200 in the early days of the liberation; but in 1955, according to figures compiled by the ministries of geology, heavy industry, petroleum industry, and coal industry, the number of geological engineers alone had increased to 497, while there were 3,440 technicians who had graduated from institutes of higher learning.

During the six years since the liberation, 217,900 students already have graduated from universities and colleges. Although not all of these qualify as higher intellectuals, they constitute a rising force among the intelligentsia, and are a reserve of experts and specialists. It should also be pointed out that, while many of these young people have not yet been accorded the status of experts, they are in fact doing the jobs of experts, and in most cases doing them not badly at all. Of the 42,000 teaching in our institutes of higher education, only 17.8 per cent are professors or associate professors; 24 per cent are lecturers and 58.2

per cent assistants; but some of these assistants are already teaching certain courses. The same applies to engineers. Though there are little more than 31,000 engineers of different grades in China, many of the 63,600 technicians who have graduated from the universities and colleges are now doing the work of engineers, and some of them should have been promoted to the position of engineer long ago. In addition to this, as an auxiliary force for higher intellectuals, we have the great army of the rank and file of the intelligentsia, who are ceaselessly improving their knowledge in actual work and in spare-time study.

There is no strict dividing line between what we call higher intellectuals and ordinary intellectuals. According to available statistics, there are now, in all, 3,840,000 intellectuals engaged in scientific research, education, engineering, public health, cultural work and the arts. They represent a great force in our socialist construction. It is extremely important for our Party and the state to appraise and employ them correctly, and to give them systematic help to enable them to go ahead steadily, both politically and professionally. In this report, although emphasis is laid on higher intellectuals, most of the principles discussed here can be equally well applied to intellectuals in general.

From what has been said above, we can see that the intellectuals of our country already constitute a great force. However, in view of the size of our country, the rapid pace of our construction, and the fact that the pace is becoming still faster, we must extend the ranks of our intellectuals more rapidly, in particular the ranks of the higher intellectuals, so as to meet the urgent needs of socialist construction. And we should admit that there have been many defects in our training and promotion of new recruits, defects

which are holding up the more rapid expansion of the ranks of the intelligentsia.

During the past six years there has also been a marked rise in the professional skill of Chinese intellectuals. Reforms have been carried out in the curricula of all our universities and colleges, many new departments and specialized courses have been set up, a great number of text-books have been newly compiled or translated, and the quality of teaching has been raised. Scientists and technicians engaged in geological survey work, in designing and building for capital construction, in designing and making new products, have done much work and achieved notable results. As a result of an intensive study of Soviet methods, our engineers have now learned how to design and build many types of modern factories, mines, bridges and water conservancy projects, and have greatly improved their skills in designing large machinery, railway locomotives and steamships. About 3,500 new items of products of engineering industry were successfully manufactured between 1952 and 1955, a few of which have reached international standards. In the field of metallurgy, we can manufacture more than 240 types of high quality steel and steel alloys, while the coefficient of utilization of useful capacity of our blast furnaces and open-hearth furnaces has reached the 1952 level of the Soviet Union. In theoretical science, the achievements made in certain fields of mathematics, physics, organic chemistry and biology in our country have also attracted attention from scientists abroad, and some of them have already made a practical contribution to production.

Taken as a whole, however, the state of China's science and technology is still very backward. Not only are we still unable to acquire and utilize many of the latest achievements of world science, we cannot

as yet solve many of the complex technical problems arising in our work of construction without the assistance of Soviet experts. Till very recently, we failed to draw up comprehensive plans for raising our scientific and technical levels. We even failed to make the fullest and most effective use of our existing forces. Our backwardness in technical sciences is inseparable from our weak foundations in theoretical sciences; yet it is precisely to scientific research that we devoted least efforts.

From this brief account we can see that while our achievements are considerable, we have still many shortcomings.

What policy, then, should we adopt on the question of intellectuals? What tendencies must we forestall and correct?

The chief tendency at present is sectarianism in the treatment of intellectuals; but at the same time there is also a tendency to undue compromise without due regard to principle. The first tendency means underestimating the great progress intellectuals have made politically and professionally, underestimating their outstanding contribution to our socialist cause, failing to recognize them as a part of the working class, and imagining that in production we can rely on the workers, while where technique is concerned we can rely on the Soviet experts. Thus the Party's policy towards intellectuals has not been properly carried out, nor has a serious study of the problems of intellectuals been made in order to solve them. Little attention has been paid to such pressing questions as how to mobilize the intellectuals to the fullest possible extent and bring their strength into full play, how to remould them further, how to expand their ranks and raise their professional levels. The second tendency means seeing only the intellectuals' progress but not

their shortcomings, hence overestimating them, trusting them indiscriminately, and even lowering our vigilance where bad elements are concerned. The result is that nothing has been done to educate and remould them; or, though their shortcomings have been noted, little has been done to educate and remould them on account of various unnecessary scruples. Though these two tendencies appear the reverse of each other, they both result in a type of rightist conservative thinking. In both cases we abandon our leadership, and display no fighting spirit. Thus both deviations prevent us from arriving at a correct solution of the question of intellectuals and the problems relating to science and culture. Both impede us in our advance towards socialism.

We must oppose both these deviations. We should neither ignore the existing strength of our intelligentsia, nor remain satisfied with it. We can neither rely indefinitely on Soviet experts, nor slacken our efforts to make a more effective study of the advanced science and techniques of the Soviet Union and other countries. The only correct policy for us to pursue is to do everything possible to mobilize the intellectuals and bring into full play their existing strength, and at the same time to spare no effort to help them remould themselves still further, expand their ranks and raise their level as rapidly as possible. This must be done if we are to carry out our socialist construction on a large scale, quickly, effectively and economically; hence the speed and scope of our work among intellectuals must keep pace with the giant strides of development in all fields of our country's life.

II

To mobilize our intellectuals to the fullest possible extent and bring into full play their existing strength is imperative for China's rapid construction at present, and is also the prerequisite for the further remoulding of intellectuals, as well as for expanding their ranks and raising their level.

Generally speaking, our intellectuals have been mobilized on a great scale under the leadership of our Party. If this were not the case, it would be impossible to explain the notable progress made by intellectuals and their tremendous contributions to the state referred to earlier. We must first affirm this point. This is the main aspect of the question.

But in our work there certainly exist many shortcomings, including some serious ones. In the present high tide of socialist construction and transformation we must strengthen our leadership and rapidly overcome these defects; for only so can we better mobilize our intellectuals and bring their strength into full play.

For this purpose, the first thing to do is to improve the manner of employing and placing them, so that they can make full use of their specialized skills for the benefit of the state.

In most cases, we have not employed and placed intellectuals badly. Many intellectuals are shouldering important tasks in national construction, and are continuously improving their ability through practice.

Still, we cannot claim that all intellectuals are suitably employed and placed, and that we have not left any strength unused. For instance, in many organizations, because the work is not suitably assigned or well organized, there are still cases of a few intellectuals who feel very uneasy because they have nothing to do, although often they were assigned to