

February 25, 1954

Outline of Comrade Zhou Enlai's Speech at the Discussion Meeting on the Gao Gang Question

Citation:

"Outline of Comrade Zhou Enlai's Speech at the Discussion Meeting on the Gao Gang Question", February 25, 1954, Wilson Center Digital Archive, Hubei Provincial Archives, SZAA-3371. Translation from Frederick C. Teiwes, *Politics at Mao's Court: Gao Gang and Party Factionalism in the Early 1950s* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1990), 240-245.
<https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/121329>

Summary:

Zhou Enlai outlines his criticisms of Gao Gang and the reasons for his purge from the Chinese Communist Party.

Credits:

This document was made possible with support from MacArthur Foundation

Original Language:

Chinese

Contents:

Translation - English

At this discussion meeting on the question of Gao Gang, in accordance with Gao Gang's own address to the meeting and with his unsuccessful suicide attempt and summing up the addresses and exposes made by forty-three comrades, we can arrive at the following understanding, that is, Gao Gang's mistake of extreme individualism has already progressed to the stage of engaging in schemes to split the Party so as to achieve his unbridled personal ambition of seizing leadership in the Party and state. Upon exposure of his personal ambitions and the failure of his schemes, he embarked, in despair, on the road of suicide, thereby cutting himself off from the Party and the people.

The following are the facts about Gao Gang's schemes to split the Party and seize power in the Party and state:

1. He disseminated in the Party such absurdities as "the Communist Party grew out of the barrel of a gun" and "the Party was created by the army" in order to support his fallacy that the Party was a "party of the military," which he used as his weapon to split the Party and seize leadership. Gao Gang insisted that within the CCP there exists a dualist outlook on Party history: that Comrade Mao Zedong represented the red areas, while Comrade Liu Shaoqi represented the white areas. He alleged that the mainstays of the Chinese Party were trained in the army, and that the cadres of the white areas were now attempting to seize Party power. Therefore, (1) he declared that in compiling Party history, revision should be made of the "Resolution on Certain Questions in the History of the Party" and new conclusions drawn, and (2) he tried to incite and influence high-ranking cadres in the army with his fallacies while preparing to form a group of deputies to the Eighth Party Congress in order to seize Party leadership.

2. He engaged in sectarian activities and opposed comrades of the central leadership. Since 1949, Gao Gang has been deliberately spreading talk among many people about isolated defects and mistakes of certain central leading comrades. Later on, he further spread the talk that these isolated and temporary defects and mistakes, which had already been rectified, were systematic mistakes. Some of this he even had copied onto files as material to support his attacks. At the same time, he actually resorted to lying. Gao Gang vilified central leading comrades for being sectarian to cover up his own sectarian activities. He did so to attack leading central comrades concerned so as to gain leadership over the Party and the state.

3. He resorted to lies and fomented discord at every opportunity in order to sow dissension in the Party. Gao Gang spread lies about such and such people being on, or left out of, the "list" of candidates suggested by leading central comrades for membership in the Politburo or Secretariat. He alleged that leading central comrades disagreed with the choice of a certain comrade to head the work of a certain department at the central level, or did not support a certain comrade's correct leadership in a certain province, and so forth, so as to sow discord. He utilized the erroneous personal opinion of one comrade that a list of candidates be drawn up for the Politburo and various central ministries and departments to spread rumors everywhere. Using his own position of power, he searched for contradictions and talked to A about B, C about D, seeking either to create bad blood or to win support for himself, or sometimes using both tactics at the same time.

4. He implemented a factional cadre policy, thereby undermining unity inside the Party. He was especially free in making promises of promotion and other favors to certain cadres in an effort to widen his influence and win personal support. Gao Gang's cadre policy is unprincipled and factionalist. He frequently tried to draw a group around him in order to attack another group, thus creating factions within the Party and disrupting unity. His promises included promoting so and so to be an alternate member of the Central Committee, so and so to be Politburo member, so and so to be minister of a certain central ministry, and so on. This is definitely not permitted by the Party Constitution and Party discipline.

5. He regarded the region under his leadership as personal capital and, in fact, his independent kingdom. As secretary of the Northeast Bureau, Gao Gang reported only good news while suppressing the bad. He never made self-criticisms and would not take criticism from others. When he was transferred to the central level, he said that it was like "luring the tiger out of the mountains." This worry was put to rest only when he found out that he concurrently retained the post of secretary of the Northeast Bureau. Gao Gang never wanted the central leadership and central departments and ministries to inspect the work of the Northeast Bureau. Whenever inspectors came, he would viciously attack certain weaknesses he found in them as a warning for them to lay off.

6. He falsely used the name of the Center [which] did great damage to its prestige. Gao Gang distorted many things in the political life of the Center and spread many lies and rumors, attacking others and glorifying himself. This resulted in some comrades forming a mistaken impression of him, and undermined the prestige of leading central comrades.

7. He plagiarized others' work to elevate himself and impress and cheat the Center. To seize power, he spent much thought on showing off, not by studying hard but through talking over others' viewpoints. In discussing Malenkov's report, Gao Gang's address to the meeting on the question of commerce was not his own viewpoint at all but stolen entirely from others in order to hoodwink the Center. Many of his addresses to central meetings not only were written by others but were not even based upon his suggestions. He seldom read them carefully before presenting them. However, Gao used them time and again to win the trust of the Center. Gao knows next to nothing of Marxism-Leninism, and in action, has actually gone to reverse of Marxism-Leninism, but he often bragged about how hard he studied Marxism-Leninism in order to gain influence.

8. On the question of Sino-Soviet relations, he sowed discord and behaved in a way detrimental to Sino-Soviet unity. While in the Northeast, Gao Gang, without reporting his intentions to the Center and getting its approval, talked indiscreetly to certain comrades of the Soviet Union about problems inside the Chinese Party. Upon returning to China after a visit to the Soviet Union, he also made many provocative remarks and again used the occasion to brag about himself. He also made many remarks that were obviously disruptive to Sino-Soviet unity.

9. He engaged in schemes to seize Party and state power. Before and after the Conference on Financial and Economic Work and since the central leadership raised the question of whether China, too, should adopt the state structure of the Council of Ministers [as instituted in the Soviet Union] and whether the Party's Central Committee should add a vice-chairman or a general secretary, Gao Gang had urgently and actively engaged in activities to get a position of power in the Party and state. Pretending to wave the banner of Comrade Mao Zedong, he fabricated words that Comrade Mao Zedong was supposed to have used and actively opposed two leading central comrades while pretending to support two other leading central comrades. At the same time, he demanded to be made vice-chairman of the Central Committee. Actually, he did not really support the comrades he feigned he did, but was trying to get their patronage and use them as his springboard to power. It is precisely on this question that the essence of Gao Gang's conspiracy was most clearly revealed.

In addition to the above activities to split the Party and seize power, according to the latest revelations made by comrades, Gao Gang led a dissolute life completely contrary to the moral standard of a Communist. We must point out that the decadence of his personal life is one manifestation of the corrosive influence of bourgeois thought on our Party, and that we must oppose and resolutely resist such corrosion. From Gao Gang's major activities cited above, we can see that Gao Gang, a

Party member with two decades of revolutionary history, has hopelessly sunk into the quagmire of bourgeois individualist careerism and has shamefully attempted to remold the Party and the country in his own bourgeois individualist image.

The Politburo of the Central Committee of the Party, to preserve unification and unity in the Party and in accordance with Comrade Mao Zedong's suggestion, called the Fourth Plenum to warn the entire Party and to point out to Gao Gang the gravity of his mistakes, to demand that he make a thorough examination of his mistakes and stop harboring bad thoughts and engaging in bad actions, so that he would not continue to make mistakes and alienate himself further from the Party.

Despite this policy adopted by the Fourth Plenum of "curing the sickness to save the patient" and waiting for Gao Gang to realize his mistakes, despite the two superficial self-examinations he made at the session and at the subsequent discussion, Gao Gang in truth resisted self-examination. He hated the Party and the help of comrades in exposing his mistakes and refused to reveal his most ugly, most essential things. Finally, in disregard of repeated warnings from the Party and comrades, he shamefully attempted to commit suicide and thus completely alienated himself from the Party and the people. Although his suicide attempt failed due to the obstruction of comrades, it constituted a flagrant betrayal of the Party, a fact that he cannot deny.□

There are ideological, social, and historical roots for Gao Gang's schemes to split the Party and seize Party and state power. Throughout the long years of revolutionary struggles, Gao Gang did show a side that was correct and did make contributions to the revolution. That was why he had won the trust of the Party. However, his individualist ideas (demonstrated by his arrogance and unbridled ambition when things were going smoothly and his passivity and worry over personal loss when things were not going well) and the decadence of his lifestyle continued unchecked for a long time. They actually got worse after nationwide victory. This was his dark side. The progressive worsening of his dark side turned him, step by step, into a de facto agent of the bourgeoisie within our Party. Gao Gang's recent anti-Party activities are the inevitable culmination of the development of his dark side; they are at the same time a reflection of the bourgeoisie's attempts to split, undermine, and corrupt our Party in the period of the transition to socialism. His serious criminal activities, if they had not met with the resolute and forceful check of the Center, would have brought serious damage to the cause of the Party and the people. His crimes have canceled out the partial contributions he had made to the revolution; they prove that his motives in taking part in the revolution were impure. For Gao Gang, bourgeois personal ambition has completely overruled loyalty to serving the people that Communist Party members must preserve.

Up to the present time, Gao Gang is still trying to gloss over his mistakes. In his self-examination of February 24, 1954, he confessed only to opposing individual comrades of the central leadership that led to sectarian and illicit activities, and that this mistake, if it continued to develop, would split the Party. His confession was an attempt to cover up his total scheme of splitting the Party and seizing Party and state power. He also tried to cover up the seriousness of his attempted suicide as a momentary impulse for self-destruction while in actual fact it reflected his intense hatred for the Party and its comrades after his schemes had been exposed. Therefore, we must not lightly believe Gao Gang's somewhat penitent remarks at the present time. We must put him under supervised education for a long time to come. If Gao Gang is really repentant, then he should submit to the Party's supervised education, genuinely confess and admit to his crimes. Without long-term testing, we will never believe that he is ready to reform his extremely individualistic thoughts and actions, which have developed for a long time.

Developments in the Gao Gang case show that it was entirely necessary and correct for the Party's Central Committee to have called the Fourth Plenum and passed a resolution to enhance the unity of the Party, and to have patiently reasoned with Gao

Gang so that he could realize and correct his mistakes, up until the time he attempted suicide. The Central Committee hereby resolves to make public his crimes to high-ranking Party cadres throughout the nation, make public the resolution on strengthening Party unity to the whole Party, and publish in the press the major contents of the resolution. This is necessary to enable the Party's high-ranking cadres, comrades of the entire Party, and people of the whole nation to understand what they should respectively know about the true situation so that they are mentally prepared to strengthen their struggle to safeguard the interests of the Party and the people.

From Gao Gang's case, we should draw the following lesson: all conceit, liberalism, individualism, sectarianism, cliquism, decentralism, localism, and departmentalism must be criticized. The fallacy of the "Party of the military" must be criticized. Individualistic careerists must be guarded against. Illicit activities in the Party must be prohibited. Factionalist cadre policy must be opposed. The idea of establishing independent kingdoms must be eliminated. Unified leadership of the Party and collective leadership must be upheld. Inner-Party democracy and criticism and self-criticism must be practiced. All cadres of the Party, without exception, must be subject to the supervision of the Party organization and the masses of the people. A communist outlook on life must be established. Education in Marxism-Leninism must be reinforced.

(Adopted by the Politburo of the Central Committee on March 1, 1954)