

November 25, 1978

Hua Guofeng's Second Speech at the CCP Central Work Conference

Citation:

"Hua Guofeng's Second Speech at the CCP Central Work Conference", November 25, 1978, Wilson Center Digital Archive, Hubei Provincial Archives SZ1-4-791. Translated by Caixia Lu. <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/121689>

Summary:

Hua Guofeng discusses the 1976 Tiananmen Incident following Zhou Enlai's death, the Gang of Four, and purges within the Chinese Communist Party (including Peng Dehuai, Tao Zhu, and Yang Shangkun).

Credits:

This document was made possible with support from MacArthur Foundation

Original Language:

Chinese

Contents:

Translation - English

Second Speech at the Central Committee Work Conference
(25 November 1978)

Hua Guofeng

Comrades:

Our conference has been in session for more than 10 days. We have discussed the shifting of the Party's work emphasis to socialist modernization as well as issues on agriculture, and we will next talk about the arrangements for the national economic plans over the next two years and Comrade Xiannian's remarks during the State Council's theoretical work conference.

We have upheld the spirit of democracy during this conference and made it a lively one. Everyone spoke freely and aired their views. This sort of open thinking and discussion is commendable.

From next January, we will shift the emphasis of the Party's work to socialist modernization. We have unanimously agreed that the Central Committee's decision to do so is right and timely. After discussions in this conference, the large-scale nationwide mass movement to expose and criticize the Gang of Four will conclude by the end of the year. This matter is thus decided. We will of course avoid adopting a sweeping approach; some regions and work units can end their movement slightly later. With the closure of the mass movement to expose and criticize the Gang of Four, there would be some lingering issues, which we must strive to resolve properly, so that we can end well what we had started well. But all these would not affect the shift in the Party's work emphasis.

We had robust discussions on the two documents on agricultural issues, and there were many good suggestions raised. The purpose of holding this work conference is to hear everyone's views and tap on wisdom from various spheres, so that we can do the best possible job with these documents. The new "60 articles" have been amended and everyone can take a copy home to solicit views. On the decision to accelerate agricultural development, some comrades have advocated making minor reforms, while others favor greater reforms, and some comrades have proposed rewriting the whole thing altogether. The Central Committee thinks that it is best to put together a draft. Even if it is an unpolished draft, we can take it back with us to solicit views and turn it into a document in the future. In short, doing a good job with these two documents will help us reach a common understanding and help our agricultural sector take off as soon as possible, and in turn drive agricultural modernization.

When talking about the issue of shifting the Party's work emphasis, our comrades highlighted several more important lingering questions affecting the central and local governments concerning the Tiananmen Incident and the Cultural Revolution. The Politburo Standing Committee, after numerous meetings, is prepared to resolve them. The Central Committee has also studied everyone's views over the past few days.

I will now talk about the following issues on behalf of the Central Committee Politburo:

1) On the issue of the Tiananmen Incident, shortly after the Gang of Four was smashed, the Central Committee took action to address the issue of people who were persecuted in the Tiananmen Incident and other similar events. As the movement to expose and criticize the Gang of Four gathered momentum, this issue was largely resolved bit by bit, but the resolution was less than thorough, and it did not reevaluate the nature of the Tiananmen Incident. The Central Committee is of the

view that the Tiananmen Incident was entirely a revolutionary mass movement and that it is necessary to reevaluate it openly and thoroughly. On 4 November this year, the Politburo Standing Committee gave its permission to the Beijing Municipal Party Committee to declare that it was a pure act of revolution for the masses to assemble at Tiananmen Square to mourn the death of beloved Premier Zhou and angrily condemn the Gang of Four on the day of the Qingming Festival in 1976. Comrades who were persecuted for mourning Premier Zhou and opposing the Gang of Four should all be rehabilitated, and their reputations restored. Provincial Party Committees in provinces such as Jiangsu, Zhejiang and Henan also took similar actions to address incidents of a comparable nature.

2) Practice has proven that the move to “counterattack the rightist movement to reverse the verdict” was wrong. The Central Politburo has decided to completely repeal documents no. 23, 24, 26 and 27 issued by the Central Committee in 1975 and documents no. 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 10 and 11 issued in 1976 as well as discharge Party Committee members and persons charged with implementing and carrying out the stipulations of these documents of any personal responsibility, with the responsibility to be shouldered by the Central Committee itself.

3) On the issue of the so-called “February Countercurrent”, it was entirely a malicious attempt by Lin Biao and his gang to distort the truth and make false accusations. Their aim was to topple several veteran generals and the Vice Premier who were opposed to them at the time and in turn bring down Premier Zhou and Chairman Zhu. With the complete collapse of Lin Biao’s September 13 counter-revolutionary coup d’état, Chairman Mao met the participants of the Chengdu regional seminar on 14 November 1971 along with Premier Zhou and Marshal Ye. When Marshal Ye entered the conference venue, Chairman Mao said, “There is no need to discuss the “February Countercurrent” anymore. What is the nature of the “February Countercurrent”? It was aimed at dealing with Lin Biao and Chen Boda.” Chairman Mao repeatedly said that once this was clear, there was no more need to discuss the “February Countercurrent”. This is to say that Chairman Mao had already reversed the verdict for the “February Countercurrent” at the time. Now the Central Committee has decided that comrades who had suffered injustice in relation to this incident would all get redress and that past references to the “February Countercurrent” in various documents and materials that were untrue should all be repealed.

4) On the case involving 61 people including Comrade Bo Yibo, investigations have now made it clear that this was a major case of misjudgment. When Comrade Deng Xiaoping presided over the work of the Central Committee in 1975, he once said at a Politburo meeting that the issue of the 61 people must be resolved and that it was unfair to place the blame for the publication of the “Public Notice to Renounce Communism” on them. This issue was not resolved at the time due to the disturbance and damage caused by the Gang of Four. In January this year, the Politburo Standing Committee discussed the issue of redressing the grievances caused by this incident.

In June and July, the Central Committee ordered the Organization Department to reopen the case for investigation and write a report to the Central Committee to resolve this issue. The Organization Department submitted a report to the Central Committee on 3 November this year, in which it stated that a vast number of facts proved that Comrade Bo Yibo and others showed good behavior while in the Self-Examination Compound. They had complied with the procedures stipulated by the enemy to leave the Self-Examination Compound by publishing a public notice to renounce Communism at the direction of the leading Party Members’ Group. It would be wrong to brand these 61 people a group of traitors based on the publication of notices to renounce Communism as a condition for getting out of the Self-Examination Compound. The Central Committee has discussed this issue and decided to redress this major case of misjudgment. It will also issue an official document on the matter.

5) On the issue concerning Comrade Peng Dehuai. Comrade Peng was a veteran member of our Party who had served in important leadership positions in the Party, government and military organs and made great contributions to the Party and the people. He had also made mistakes in the past, some of which were serious. But after investigation, we find the accusation that he had consorted with foreign countries to be baseless, and this should be refuted. Comrade Peng Dehuai died of illness on 29 November 1974 and his ashes should be interred at Room Number One of the Babaoshan Revolutionary Cemetery in Beijing.

6) On the issue concerning Comrade Tao Zhu. Comrade Tao was also a veteran member of our Party, and he had contributed to the Party and the people in his decades of service. After review, we deem that it was wrong to brand him a traitor in the past, and this should be redressed accordingly. Comrade Tao Zhu died of illness on 30 November 1969 and his ashes should be interred at Room Number One of the Babaoshan Revolutionary Cemetery in Beijing.

7) On the issue concerning Comrade Yang Shangkun. Comrade Yang Shangkun had violated Party discipline and disregarded Chairman Mao's directives and criticisms. He had also made a mistake on the issue of secretly recording Chairman Mao's conversations. But after review, we deem that it was wrong to brand him a traitor who conspired to topple the party and consorted with foreign countries, and this should be redressed accordingly. The Central Committee has decided to reinstate Comrade Yang Shangkun into the Party's organizational life and assign work to him.

What I have said above relates to how the Central Committee dealt with a few major cases. As for the rehabilitation of some others who had held important positions in the Party, cases that our comrades have brought to our attention, it is impossible to resolve all of them in this meeting. The Central Committee has decided that the First and Third Offices (including the former Second Office) of the Central Case Examination Group as well as the joint office set up to examine the "May 16th" case would all have to conclude their work and transfer all cases to the Organization Department. Unresolved cases will be closely reexamined by the Organization Department, which will adhere to the spirit of the Central Committee in dealing with the cases outlined above and make the relevant conclusions. The case examination groups established by Party Committees at all levels should also progressively conclude their work. For cases under their review, those pertaining to intra-Party issues should be transferred to the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection and the Organization Department, while those pertaining to contradictions between the enemy and ourselves should be referred to the political-legal department. From now on, we will no longer adopt the practice of setting up case examination groups to investigate our cadres.

8) On the issue of Comrade Kang Sheng and Comrade Xie Fuzhi. Comrade Kang Sheng and Comrade Xie Fuzhi had sparked considerable public anger and the exposure and criticism by Party cadres and the masses was reasonable. Some comrades have proposed setting up case examination groups to investigate their problems, but the Central Committee's opinion is not to do so. Material disclosing their actions can be submitted to the Organization Department for hearing.

9) On the issue of some major incidents happening at the local level, some local governments have recently proposed the need to reevaluate some major cases, such as the "July 20th Incident" of Wuhan, the "July 25th Incident" of Henan and the problem of the Sichuan industrial army, etc. The Central Committee has decided that the Party Committees in the various provinces, municipalities and autonomous regions shall henceforth handle such major incidents at the local level in a realistic manner according to the circumstances. For incidents in which the Central Committee had issued documents, opinions on how to deal with them should be submitted to the Central Committee for approval (the Central Committee has already approved the request for instructions from the Hubei Provincial Party Committee on redressing the

"July 20th Incident"). When handling these issues, they can organize mass rallies or issue documents but not publish newspaper articles or do radio broadcasts. These issues involve the broad masses who were split into two factions during the Cultural Revolution, thus it is necessary to handle them with care and consideration so as to guard against the rekindling of factional struggles. Chairman Mao had long said that there was no fundamental conflict of interests within the working class and under the dictatorship of the proletariat, there was even less reason whatsoever for the working class to split into two irreconcilable major factions. We must embody the spirit taught by Chairman Mao and proactively lead the masses to look ahead, dispel the factional tendencies of the capitalist classes and do good work in fostering unity.

There are two more issues that I wish to touch on. One concerns the mistake that some comrades made in "supporting one faction and suppressing the other" during their participation in the "Three Supports and Two Militarizations". This issue should be seen in its historical context. The Central Committee decided to embark on the "Three Supports and Two Militarizations" and it played an important role in stabilizing the situation then, and results were key. Due to the interference of Lin Biao and the Gang of Four on top of the complex situation, some comrades had unavoidable made the mistake of "supporting one faction and suppressing the other." The overall responsibility lies with the Central Committee and we will not pursue individual responsibility. As for the minority who had grossly violated the law and Party discipline, engaged in corruption and theft, or committed serious offences, we can file a case against them. One such case concerns Premier Zhou's memorial service, in which the office of the funeral committee informed the various provinces, municipalities and autonomous regions by telephone not to send representatives to Beijing to participate in the memorial service, nor organize or conduct their own condolence meetings and memorial services or wear black armbands. This notice was approved by the Politburo at the time when the Gang of Four was in power. Party Committee members and individuals directed to carry it out do not have to bear any responsibility.

Comrades, as the emphasis of our Party's work shifts to socialist modernization, it is absolutely necessary that we solemnly deal with the above issues in this conference. The Central Committee's policy is to both resolve the issues and keep the situation stable. Handling these issues well in accordance with the policy will help us maintain stability and unity and it will also benefit the development of socialist modernization. This also has important implications for reinstating and promoting the fine traditions that Chairman Mao instilled in our Party to seek truth from facts, engage the masses, and practice "criticism-unity-criticism". In my previous address, I said that it is now an opportune moment for us to focus our energies on accelerating the pace of socialist modernization.

The domestic and external circumstances are very much in our favor. We may well recall how serious and perilous the situation was for our Party and country in the more than two years when the Gang of Four wielded unchecked power. With their elimination, there are now many things waiting to be done. For more than two years, under the leadership of the Central Committee, the whole party, military and people of all ethnicities have worked hard together to achieve a great victory. We are now in a propitious situation of nationwide stability and unity, which is an essential condition for achieving the four modernizations. This is a hard-won situation that should be highly valued. Historical experience since the founding of our nation has shown that whether we are fighting incursion and subversion by colonialism or social imperialism, or endeavoring to make socialism work, we need the whole country to remain stable and united. Presently, it is the strong desire of our whole Party, military and people of all ethnicities to reinforce and develop the propitious circumstances of stability and unity, and the international community is also paying close attention to whether we can keep our domestic situation stable. It is crucial to have stability and unity as we develop the economy, improve people's lives, prepare ourselves for war against aggression and accelerate the development of socialist modernization. Preserving the stability and unity of our whole Party and country matters to the big picture, and we

must do it well. In this aspect, senior cadres must become role models, be adept at leading the masses to look ahead, and earnestly conduct good ideological work among the masses both within and outside the Party. We must bring all positive factors into play and turn negative factors into positive ones, unite all forces that can be united to band together for the common goal to turn our country into a socialist modern power. Let our hearts beat as one in the Party and the country to raise Chairman Mao's great banner high and strive to achieve this great goal.