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**More Edited Records: Liu Shaoqi on Peng Dehuai at the  
7000 Cadres Conference**

by

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In an earlier research note on the CCP's Seven Thousand Cadres Conference, one of us dealt with two textually different records of Deng Xiaoping's speech of 6 February 1962.<sup>1</sup> In the present note, we will look at two different versions of Liu Shaoqi's speech of 27 January 1962. This time, rather than discuss in general terms the many differences between the official record as constituted in Beijing's *Selected Works of Liu Shaoqi* and Cultural Revolutionary transcripts, we will focus on one particular passage in Liu's speech. The passage - not part of the official record - deals with Liu's post-Leap assessment of the Peng Dehuai affair.

It has long been known outside China that Liu touched upon Peng's criticism of the Leap in his speech on 27 January. A very brief quote from Liu's speech mentioning Peng was translated into English in *Selections From China Mainland Magazines* in 1967.<sup>2</sup> On the basis of that quote, Fredrick C. Tiewes argued in *Politics & Purges in China* that:

*At the 7000 cadres conference Liu was more explicit in admitting that many of P'eng's views had been proven correct, and he stipulated that people who had shared those views could have their "verdicts reversed" provided they had not joined P'eng's "clique" or conspired with foreign countries.*<sup>3</sup>

Yang Xianzhen has made a point similar to the one Tiewes makes here. Yang, who from years of experience in working directly under Liu must have known quite well how to interpret his words, told office staff at the Central Party School sometime after the conference that:

*Comrade Shaoqi said that for Peng Dehuai to say those things was not O.K.. When coming from his mouth, they constituted attacks on the Three Red Banners and anti-Party [statements], because he had illicit relations with foreign countries. But if it was not Peng Dehuai who said them, but someone else, then they could not be regarded as*

*constituting attacks on the Three Red Banners, or anti-Party, anti-Center [statements].*<sup>4</sup>

In the official record, the quote on which Tiewes based his argument is nowhere to be found. The claim Yang makes about what Liu had said cannot be substantiated either. The official record, then, as in the case of Deng Xiaoping's 6 February speech, is once again incomplete. This time, however, the CCP Central Committee's Documentary Research Office openly admits that it has subjected the record to "certain textual cuts".<sup>5</sup> One of these cuts - there are a number of additional significant ones - is of two long paragraphs about Peng Dehuai.

A better version of Liu's speech than the one included in the *Selected Works of Liu Shaoqi* is to be found in *Poisonous Weeds*, a slim volume published by the Jinggangshan "Criticize and Struggle Liu-Deng Battle Regiment" at Qinghua University in July 1967.<sup>6</sup> In this particular case the reader is fortunate in being able to trace a source from where these rebel publishers may have obtained their text. At one point in either March or April 1967, Zhang Xiting - who together with her husband Liu Jieting controlled the Revolutionary Committee of Sichuan up to the end of 1969 - told her secretary Ding Zuhan that:

*[The Red Guards at] Qinghua [University] were working on a booklet about striking down Liu Shaoqi, but had to interrupt it at 1962. It was I who passed on the materials about Liu Shaoqi at the 7000 Persons Conference to Qinghua, making it possible for them to tie things together.*<sup>7</sup>

In 1967, the Jinggangshan rebels at Beijing Teacher's University also included a version of Liu's speech in one of their internal packages of loose-leaf "criticism materials".<sup>8</sup> It is possible - given the factional connections that existed between different Jinggangshan groupings in Beijing at the time - that their version also was based on the materials passed on to Qinghua by Zhang Xiting. The only difference between it and the version in *Poisonous Weeds* is the absence, in the former, of numerous interjections by Mao.

Here follows a translation of the full text of Liu Shaoqi's post-Leap assessment of the Peng Dehuai affair, made at the Seven Thousand Cadres Conference on 27 January 1962:

*Here I must, in passing, explain something. During the Lushan Conference, in 1959, Comrade Peng Dehuai wrote a letter to Chairman Mao. At the Lushan Conference, we engaged in a struggle against Comrade Peng Dehuai's right opportunist anti-Party*

*clique. The written report mentions that the struggle was entirely necessary. Did we then launch it only because Comrade Peng Dehuai had written this letter? No we did not, and if one looks only superficially at what is in Comrade Peng Dehuai's letter, quite a few of the concrete things mentioned in it are actually factually correct. Even if there are some mistaken views in it, for a member of the Politburo to write a letter to the Chairman of the [Party] Center cannot be regarded as having committed an error. The issue at stake is not whether Comrade Peng Dehuai's letter was in error or not. That is not the issue. The reason why we had to launch a struggle against Comrade Peng Dehuai's anti-Party clique at the Lushan Conference was because for a long time Comrade Peng Dehuai had had this little clique inside the Party. He was a member of Gao Gang and Rao Shushi's anti-Party clique. When we countered the Gao-Rao anti-Party clique, we did not bring his name up. He is a leftover evil of the Gao-Rao clique. (Chairman Mao and Comrade Zhou Enlai interject: Its foremost member.) The foremost member of that clique. That was why Chairman Mao said at the Lushan Conference: Was it really the Gao-Rao alliance then? Or was it perhaps the Gao-Peng alliance? I'm afraid it should have been the Peng-Gao alliance. (Chairman Mao interjects: Peng and Gao; the real leader being Peng.) What is more important is not how Gao Gang used Peng Dehuai, but how Peng Dehuai used Gao Gang. Both of them had foreign connections. Their anti-Party activities were related to the subversive activities carried out in China by certain foreigners. Aside from writing that letter at the Lushan Conference, Peng Dehuai did a lot of other shady things. Inside the Party, he engaged in factional activities which he concealed from the Party Center. He also plotted to usurp the Party. Therefore, the struggle carried out against Peng Dehuai's anti-Party clique at the Lushan Conference was entirely necessary and entirely correct. We exposed and got rid of the snake in the grass that had been hiding inside the Party for decades. That, from a long term perspective, was of great historical significance to our Party.*

*What Comrade Peng Dehuai found fault with in his letter were things the Party Center had already discussed way before then. Comrade Peng Dehuai had, on the other hand, never discussed them prior to the Lushan Conference. He attended both of the Zhengzhou Conferences, the Wuchang Conference and the Shanghai Conference without saying anything. All the way up to the beginning of the Lushan Conference, he never said anything. It was only in the middle of the Lushan Conference that he pulled out this letter. Why? Because by then we were already discussing how to carry on the work begun at the Zhengzhou Conferences and further*

*rectify the shortcomings and mistakes in our work. In the eyes of Comrade Peng Dehuai, if he did not speak up now, he would never again have an opportunity. Therefore, he pulled out this letter in a great hurry, and tried to exploit shortcomings and mistakes in our work and make a major attack against the Party with the aim of usurping it for himself and that little clique of his. Comrade Peng Dehuai intended to usurp the Party, and that was the fundamental reason for why a struggle had to be launched at the Lushan Conference. Today, this has to be made clear. Our aim is to make a distinction between certain comrades and Comrade Peng Dehuai. Some comrades also said things similar to those said by Comrade Peng Dehuai, such as the "losses being greater than the gains" in the steel drive, the communal mess halls are no good, the supply system is no good, the People's Communes were established too early, etc. But these comrades were different from Comrade Peng Dehuai. They had a right to say these things, because they did not organize an anti-Party clique or attempt to usurp the Party. (Chairman Mao interjects: They had no foreign connections.) Comrade Peng Dehuai lead a military delegation and was abroad for a few months, and when he came back he wrote that letter in a hurry. That was a plot. Of course, the Comrades who do not know the facts may not fully realize it. During the Lushan Conference, some comrades did not fully realize it, and for this they must not be blamed.<sup>9</sup>*

Liu's remarks provide a full sense of his perceptions of Peng Dehuai's activities in the 1950s. The gist of his larger argument is of course that although much of the content of Peng's "Letter of Opinion" was correct, Peng was not in fact primarily concerned with the Leap per se as much as with using the opportunity made available by policy disagreements to rally his faction and "usurp the Party". This interpretation provides the basis for Liu's argument that while the harsh treatment of Peng was justified, others who had criticized Leap policies at Lushan should be treated leniently so long as they were not part of Peng's cabal. Liu points specifically at two of Peng's activities to justify differential treatment of Peng and his cohorts as opposed to other Leap critics: his role in the Gao-Rao affair and his "foreign connections". Liu thus attacked Peng with two of China's most evocative pejoratives: factionalism and national betrayal.

The primary reason for why this passage was left out of the *Selected Works of Liu Shaoqi* is probably that Liu's indictment of Peng runs sharply counter to the current official CCP judgement on Peng. In the introduction to Peng's *Memoirs of a Chinese Marshal*, (first

published in December 1981) the volume's editors note the "outstanding contributions" Peng had made to China, and go on to criticize earlier attacks on the Marshal:

*At the time [Peng Dehuai] wrote about his life [in the 1960s], history had been turned upside down... Such incredible charges were levelled at him such as "usurping the Party and the army," "recruiting deserters and traitors" and "forming a clique to pursue selfish interests."<sup>10</sup>*

The post-1978 official assessment of Peng's career thus virtually "turns upside down" Liu Shaoqi's 1962 critique.

Research by Western scholars would also seem to indicate that several of Liu's assertions about Peng may be factually incorrect. Specifically, the claim that Peng had played a leading role in the Gao-Rao affair has been called into question by Fredrick C. Tiewes and others, who have long recognized that Gao's challenge was directed more at Liu than at Mao, with Gao hoping to win for himself the second position in the Party hierarchy. In a series of private conversations with Gao, Mao had been critical of both Liu Shaoqi and Zhou Enlai, which apparently led Gao to believe that he had the Chairman's support for his effort to supplant Liu. As both Peng and Lin Biao later argued, Gao had won their tacit support for his move only by persuading them that he did have Mao's backing.<sup>11</sup> Though much about the Gao-Rao affair remains obscure, the current scholarly consensus runs sharply counter to the view that Peng was the leading protagonist in this incident.

Evidence is also insufficient to evaluate Liu's charge - backed here by Mao - that the activities of Gao and Peng "were related to the subversive activities carried out in China by certain foreigners". There is considerable consensus that despite Peng's frequent contacts with top Soviet officials, including Khrushchev who he met with during his 1958 and 1959 trips to Moscow, "Peng was almost certainly blameless; collusion with a foreigner on a domestic policy matter seems totally out of character".<sup>12</sup>

Liu's statements about Peng, then, are interesting not for their accuracy but rather for the light they shed on Liu's animosity toward Peng, as well as on Liu's use of the Peng Dehuai affair to serve his immediate interests at the Seven Thousand Cadres Conference. That conference marked a turning point from the readjustment policies of the disastrous Leap years toward a fuller assertion of Liu's policies emphasizing individual incentives. Hence, his sharp critique of Peng can be seen in part as an effort to help maintain the support of Mao and his closest supporters, while his distinction between Peng et al. and others not part of his group who criticized the Leap can be interpreted as an effort to aid the reintegration and ensure the

support of those with more pragmatic views. His words are therefore highly political in intent, which may provide a further clue to why they have been omitted from his selected works.

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<sup>1</sup>. Michael Schoenhals, "Edited Records: Comparing Two Versions of Deng Xiaoping's 7000 Cadres Speech", *CCP Research Newsletter* no.1, pp.5-9

<sup>2</sup>. See "Extracts from Liu Shaoqi's Reactionary Speeches" in *Selections From China Mainland Magazines*, Supplement No.25, April 1967.

<sup>3</sup>. Fredrick C. Tiewes, *Politics & Purges in China* (New York: M. E. Sharpe, 1979), p.487.

<sup>4</sup>. Shoudu Pipan Zichanjieji Fandong Xueshu "Quanwei" Lianluo Weiyuanhui, ed. *Liu Shaoqi Yuyong Xueshu "Quanwei" Yang Xianzhen Fangeming Xiuzhengzhuyi Yanlun Zhaibian* (Edited extracts from the counter-revolutionary and revisionist utterances of Yang Xianzhen, Liu Shaoqi's philosophical court-"authority") (Beijing: Zhongguo Renmin Daxue, 1967), p.40.

<sup>5</sup>. See note in Zhonggong Zhongyang Wenxian Yanjiushi, ed., *Liu Shaoqi Xuanji* (Selected Works of Liu Shaoqi) Vol.2. (Beijing: Renmin Chubanshe, 1986), p.418.

<sup>6</sup>. "Liu Shaoqi Yu 1962 Nian 1 Yue 27 Ri Kuoda de Zhongyang Gongzuo Huiyi Shang de Jianghua" (Liu Shaoqi's speech on 27 January 1962 at an enlarged central work conference), in Hongdaihui Qinghua Jinggangshan Pipan Liu-Deng Zhandoutuan, ed. *Ducaoji* (Poisonous Weeds) (Beijing, 1967), pp.6-21.

<sup>7</sup>. Ding Zuhan, "Fenu Jiefa Pipan Geren Yexinjia Liu Jieting, Zhang Xiting Dagao Duli Wangguo de Taotian Zuixing" (Angrily expose and criticize the individualist careerists Liu Jieting and Zhang Xiting's heinous crimes of establishing an independent kingdom on a grand scale), in *Zhongyang Ban de Mao Zedong Sixiang Xuexiban Sichuan Ban Dahui Jiefa Pipan Cailiao* (Exposure and criticism materials from the Sichuan class of the Mao Zedong Thought study class organized by the Center) (N.p., 1970), p.3.

<sup>8</sup>. "Liu Shaoqi Yu 1962 Nian 1 Yue 27 Ri Kuoda de Zhongyang Gongzuo Huiyi Shang de Jianghua" (Liu Shaoqi's speech on 27 January 1962 at an enlarged central work conference), in *Pipan Cailiao* (Criticism materials), n.p., n.d.

<sup>9</sup>. *Ducaoji*, pp.9-10.

<sup>10</sup>. Peng Dehuai, *Memoirs of a Chinese Marshal* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1984), pp.8-9.

<sup>11</sup>. See Fredrick C. Tiewes, "Mao and his Lieutenants", *The Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs*, Summer 1988, pp.26-7.

<sup>12</sup>. Roderick MacFarquhar, *The Origins of the Cultural Revolution 2: the Great Leap Forward 1958-1960* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), p.228.