

China's Leaders Explain Views on Science

*China's new commitment to science, after a period of deliberate neglect under the Gang of Four, was emphasized by vice-chairman Teng Hsiao-Ping in a noteworthy address to the National Science Conference held in Peking in March 1978. The following are excerpts of his remarks:**

The Gang of Four made the absurd statement, "The more knowledgeable, the more reactionary." They said they "preferred laborers with no culture" and they boosted as being "Red and expert" an ignorant counter-revolutionary clown who handed in a blank examination paper. On the other hand, they vilified as being "White and expert" good comrades who studied diligently and contributed to the motherland's cause of science and technology. This reversal of right and wrong and of ourselves and the enemy seriously muddled people's minds for a time. . . .

To catch up and surpass advanced world levels within the century means that we should cover the distance in the next 22 years that took others 40 or 50 years or more. Scientists and technicians should concentrate their energy on scientific and technical work. When we say that at least five-sixths of their work time should be left free for their scientific and technical work, this is meant to be the minimum demand. It is still better if even more time is available for this purpose. If some persons work seven days and seven evenings on end to meet the needs of science or production, that shows their lofty spirit of selfless devotion to the cause of socialism. We should learn from them, commend them and encourage them.

Innumerable facts prove that only he can mount the pinnacles of science who devotes himself heart and soul, constantly strives for perfection, fears neither hardship nor disappointment. We cannot demand that scientists and technicians, or at any rate, the overwhelming majority of them, study a lot of political and theoretical books, participate in numerous social activities and attend many meetings not related to their work. Lin Piao and the Gang of Four frequently attacked scientists and technicians, accusing them of "being divorced from politics" and labeling people "White and expert" when they studied diligently to improve their knowledge and skills.

"White" is a political concept. Only political reactionaries who are against the party and against socialism can be called "White." How can you label as "White" a man who studies hard to improve his knowledge and skills? Scientists and technicians who have flaws of one kind or another in their ideology or their style of work should not be called "White" if they are not against the party and against socialism. How can our scientists and technicians be accused of being divorced from politics when they work diligently for socialist science? . . .

On the question of talented people, we must particularly stress the need to break with convention in the discovery, selection, and training of those with outstanding talent. This was one of the basic issues muddled by the Gang of Four.

They vilified scientists, professors, and engineers distin-

guished for their contributions as bourgeois academic authorities, and all outstanding young and middle-aged scientists and technicians trained by our party and state as revisionist sprouts. We must thoroughly eliminate the pernicious influence of the gang and take up the important task of training in the shortest possible time a group of experts in science and technology who are first rate. . . .

The basic task of scientific research institutes is to produce scientific results and train competent people. They must show more scientific and technical achievements of high quality and train scientific and technical personnel who are both Red and expert. The main criterion for judging the work of the party committee of a scientific research institute should be the successful fulfillment of this basic task. Only when this is well done has the party committee really done its duty to consolidate the dictatorship of the proletariat and build socialism. Otherwise, putting politics in command will remain mere empty talk. . . .



Teng Hsiao-Ping

We must give full scope to democracy and follow the mass line, heeding opinions from scientific and technical personnel in such things as evaluating scientific papers, examining the competency of scientific and technical personnel, working out plans for scientific research, and appraising research findings. As to divergent views on academic questions, we must follow the principle of letting a hundred schools of thought contend. . . .

Also speaking at the conference was Chairman Hua Kuo-feng, who gave this synopsis of recent Chinese science policy:

Our country has a long history of thousands of years. Our nation once created a splendid science and culture. In the last few hundred years, owing to the corruption of the feudal system and aggression by colonialists and imperialists, science and culture fell behind in our country. Since the founding of the People's Republic of China, with its advanced socialist system and under the leadership of the Communist Party, there has been rapid progress of science and culture in our country. The economic and technical blockade enforced by imperialism failed to strangle us; the tearing up of contracts and withdrawal of specialists by Soviet revisionism failed to subdue us. We have developed our science and technology independently through our own efforts. Have we not made our own atom bombs, hydrogen bombs, and man-made satellites? Have we not trained a contingent of outstanding scientific and technological workers who are both Red and expert?

Our people have deep respect for the many scientists who have made important contributions to science and technology in China, including the late Comrades Li Ssu-kuang and Chu Ko-chen. Facts past and present show that we Chinese have a head and two hands just like others and are no stupider than they. . . .

*Taken from a full text translation of the speech which appears in *Science and Government Report International Almanac 1978-1979*. Science and Government Report Inc., 3736 Kanawha St., NW, Washington, D.C. 20015.