

March 1, 1954

**Report of Deng Xiaoping, Chen Yi, and Tan Zhenlin
concerning the Discussion Meeting of the Rao
Shushi Question**

Citation:

"Report of Deng Xiaoping, Chen Yi, and Tan Zhenlin concerning the Discussion Meeting of the Rao Shushi Question", March 1, 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), 245-252. <https://wilson-center-digital-archive.dvincitest.com/document/121328>

Summary:

Deng Xiaoping, Chen Yi, and Tan Zhenlin summarize the seven meetings held to discuss the purge of Rao Shushi.

Credits:

This document was made possible with support from MacArthur Foundation

Original Language:

Chinese

Contents:

Translation - English

To the Central Committee:

The following is a report on the results of the series of discussions on the question of Rao Shushi called by the decision of the Secretariat of the Central Committee.

A total of seven meetings were held. The first four meetings focused on the facts of the mistakes committed by Comrade Rao Shushi. At the fifth and sixth meetings, many comrades spoke and continued to expose his mistakes. Rao spoke at the seventh meeting, making a self-criticism. Comrades Deng Xiaoping and Chen Yi then made addresses to the meeting, thereby concluding the discussions.

The meetings were attended by twenty-six comrades including some from East China who were in Beijing or who had been transferred to Beijing, as well as comrades of central departments and ministries who had work relations with Rao. At the concluding meeting on the seventh day, sixty-six comrades from the large administrative regions and from central departments and ministries came to listen to Rao's self-criticism.

The discussions earnestly verified and exposed the concrete facts of the mistakes committed by Comrade Rao Shushi. Rao often dodged and hedged, hence the importance of verification. In the process of verification, Comrade Rao admitted some and denied some of his mistakes. After various comrades spoke on the fifth and sixth meetings, Rao was still quibbling on important issues.

The discussions drew the following conclusions on the question of Comrade Rao Shushi:

I. According to the facts as verified by the discussions, Comrade Rao Shushi has been shown to be an extremely individualistic bourgeois careerist. His personal ambitions were constantly on the ascendant. His most glaring crime was his and Gao Gang's activities in 1953 to split the Party.

1. The discussions examined the question of how Comrade Rao Shushi undermined the prestige of the central leadership and disrupted Party unity in 1953 from the time of the National Conference on Financial and Economic Work to the National Conference on Organization Work. During this period, Rao Shushi's activities completely exposed him as a sinister careerist and that, in fact, he had already formed an anti-Party alliance with Gao Gang.

After he was appointed director of the central organization department in February 1953, to achieve his infamous aim of climbing step by step to a higher position, Rao, starting out from his own ugly thoughts of sectarian power struggle, began to distort political life within the central leadership. He erroneously estimated that certain comrades were on their way out and certain others were on their way up. Based on these ridiculous speculations, he energetically stirred up dissension inside the Party. He and Gao Gang, making use of Comrade An Ziwen's erroneous proposal about candidates for central organizations which was An's personal opinion, fabricated and widely spread talk that certain comrades formed a faction, a "circle," and that a certain leading central comrade was a supporter of this faction or circle. He told people that the Financial and Economic Work Conference had already carried out struggle against so and so of the "circle," and that another person of the "circle" would be struggled against after the conference. This talk proves that he and Gao Gang were together trying to create chaos and split the Party. Subsequently, before the Financial and Economic Conference had even ended, without prior knowledge and consent from anyone in the central leadership, he baselessly made up all kinds of pretexts to instigate a struggle against Comrade An Ziwen inside the organization department, because he thought An was a member of what they called the "circle."

The struggle Rao instigated was, on the one hand, to achieve his aim, by the most ruthless means possible, of cowing or squeezing out Comrade An Ziwen and others, but more importantly, he was utilizing this struggle to demonstrate his utmost eagerness in support of and participation in Gao Gang's struggle to split the Party and seize the supreme power of the Party and state. Rao's struggle against Comrade An Ziwen not only was not reported to the Center beforehand and naturally did not get its approval, but after the Center discovered his mistake and put a halt to it, Rao was not at all present. He openly rejected the Center's intervention and continued with the struggle. In his struggle against Comrade An Ziwen, Rao alleged that one of An's mistakes was his resentment of the Financial and Economic Conference. But when Rao's ignominious activities and manipulations were exposed among the leading cadres at the National Organization Work Conference, Rao shamelessly told Comrade An Ziwen that he did not say it was An who resented the Financial and Economic Conference but some other leading comrade of the Center. That is to say, his struggle was not really targeted at Comrade An Ziwen, but at the other leading central comrade. These facts prove that it was no coincidence that Rao instigated the struggle, but that it was fully planned. He was determined, by hook or by crook, to damage the prestige of the Party Center, oppose central leading comrades, participate in Gao Gang's anti-Party activities, and engage in political speculation to achieve his futile ambition of climbing to a higher position after he succeeded and in an effort to consolidate and develop his despicable goal of personal power. In his actions, Rao has completely violated the Party's standpoint, principles, and discipline.

Rao Shushi, in following the anti-Party activities of Gao Gang, is actually demonstrating the attempt of the bourgeoisie to corrupt, subvert, and split our Party.

2. The discussions examined the behavior of Comrade Rao Shushi over many years in the past and proved that his and Gao Gang's 1953 activities to split the Party were the outcome of the development of their unbridled personal ambitions, which they had harbored for a long time. They were not random acts of Rao's but were rooted in his personal history. The following three incidents can be cited.

a. Comrade Rao Shushi's autumn 1943 struggle against Comrade Chen Yi at Huanghuatang, the site of the New Fourth Army headquarters. According to exposes by comrades Zeng Shan, Lai Bozhu, Zhang Yunyi, Liu Xiao, Liu Changsheng, and Chen Yi, and the facts admitted to by Rao himself during the discussions, particularly in view of the cable Rao sent to the Center at the time regarding the struggle against Comrade Chen Yi and Comrade Mao Zedong's return cable, the incident can be characterized as an out-and-out sectarian activity by Rao Shushi to squeeze out Comrade Chen Yi by utilizing certain isolated defects and mistakes of Chen's. Rao neither consulted Comrade Chen Yi before he started the struggle nor asked the Center for permission, but took the action arbitrarily. He organized a struggle among the leading officers of the units directly under the New Fourth Army's command and charged Comrade Chen Yi, entirely erroneously, with so-called opposition to Comrade Mao Zedong, opposition to the system of political commissars in the army, as well as with the crime of trying to drive out Rao. He thus hoodwinked a part of the officers in order to hit at and squeeze out Comrade Chen Yi. In his cable to the Center, Rao invented lies about Chen Yi being irresponsible in work. At the same time, he also lied that he had given well-intentioned help to Chen Yi but got no results, and hence he had to ask the Center to send a replacement who was strong in both ethics and capability for Chen Yi. Rao did all this to reach his aim of kicking out Comrade Chen Yi.

In 1944, Comrade Chen Yi, in accordance with a cable from the Center, was transferred to Yan'an. In a cable to the Central China Bureau, Comrade Chen Yi made a self-criticism of certain mistakes of liberalism that he had committed on the question of unity in the Central China Bureau. Comrade Mao Zedong also sent a cable

to the Central China Bureau pointing out that the nature of Comrade Chen Yi's past mistake in chairing a debate at the Seventh Congress of the Red Fourth Army in western Fujian [in 1929] was not that of the general line, and that it had been resolved long since, and therefore should not be brought up again. Comrade Mao Zedong also pointed out that Comrade Chen Yi had performed many meritorious deeds in the periods of the civil war and the Anti-Japanese war. The conflict between Chen and Rao at Huanghuatang, Comrade Mao Zedong further stated, was of the nature of work relations. He finally instructed the Central China Bureau to end the debate and restore unity. In a return cable, Comrade Rao Shushi continued to maintain an attitude of opposition to Comrade Mao Zedong's cable and Comrade Chen Yi's self-criticism. He again incited several leading cadres to send a joint telegram to the Center maintaining the same hostile stand.

From the struggle against Comrade Chen Yi at Huanghuatang, it can be seen that Rao Shushi, in complete violation of the instructions of the Center, resorted to methods employed by the exploiting classes of the old society in organizing inner-Party struggles. He also invented lies to dupe the Center, so as to reach his shameful aim of achieving personal power.

b. The incident in 1949 when Comrade Rao Shushi did his best to get the position of chairman of the East China Military and Administrative Committee. After the conclusion of the People's Political Consultative Committee in 1949, the Center had called responsible comrades of the large administrative regions together to discuss the list of candidates for corresponding Military and Administrative Committees. It was decided that the commanders of each field army would concurrently be the chairmen of the Military and Administrative Committees. When the Center dealt with the question, all administrative regions except the East China region offered no obstruction. The East China region, because Comrade Rao Shushi was not in Beijing, could not reach a final decision. At the time, Comrade Mao Zedong had personally told Comrade Chen Yi that he wanted Chen to be the chairman of the East China Military and Administrative Committee. Comrade Chen Yi declined on the grounds that he was too busy in Shanghai and proposed Comrade Rao Shushi for the post. Comrade Mao Zedong insisted, however, that Chen was more suitable, but indicated that the matter could be given to the East China Bureau for discussion, and its decision reported to the Center for approval. Chen relayed Comrade Mao Zedong's instructions to Rao after returning to Shanghai, whereupon Rao immediately decided that he would assume the post. He gave no consideration at all to the Center's opinion and did not formally put the question to the East China Bureau for decision. Later, when Rao came to the Center, Comrade Mao Zedong again explained to Rao that in all large administrative regions the field army commanders were concurrently made chairmen of the Military and Administrative Committees. At this, Rao made the excuse that several comrades in the East China Bureau disagreed with Chen Yi becoming chairman of its Military and Administrative Committee, with the aim of getting himself appointed by the Center. On this question, Rao admitted that he "started out entirely from bourgeois individualism, not from the requirements of the Party and the interests of the people." He further admitted that he "did not respect and was dishonest to Chairman Mao and the Party Center."

c. The rest cure taken by Comrade Rao Shushi in Beijing in February 1952. During the "Three-Anti" and "Five-Anti" movements, Comrade Rao Shushi, due to convulsions of his eye nerves, was unable to work. Comrade Su Yu suggested to the Center that Rao should take a rest cure. The Center agreed and, out of solicitude for Rao, appointed Comrade Su Yu to accompany him to Beijing for his treatment and recuperation. Rao was suspicious upon receiving the cable asking him to go to Beijing. After arriving in Beijing, when he heard that the Center planned to send such and such comrade to Shanghai to help in leading the "Three-Anti" and "Five-Anti" [movements], he became even more suspicious. In Beijing, when he was under treatment in hospital, he indicated his dissatisfaction, based upon his suspicions, to comrades who were in the same hospital. After leaving hospital, his dissatisfaction with the Center had grown to such uncontrollable proportions to the point where, one night about 3 A.M.,

he made a big scene and repeatedly asked to talk to Comrade Mao Zedong. In three hours of talk, he expressed doubt about the Center's trust in him. He demanded Comrade Mao Zedong answers to the three questions: (1) Was he brave in fighting the enemy. (2) Did he commit any mistakes of line while working in East China? 3) Why was he transferred to Beijing under the escort of Comrade Su. Yu? Despite Comrade Mao Zedong's explanations on the three points, Rao was still not satisfied. Finally, Comrade Mao Zedong answered that if you (Rao) yourself feel well enough, you can return immediately to East China to resume work. Only then did Rao realize how unreasonable his suspicions were. Reassured that the Center had no other intention, he took leave. Thereafter, Rao went into long-term recuperation. While recuperating in Dalian, he heard that the Secretariat of the Central Committee had decided to transfer him to Beijing, and this rekindled his dissatisfaction.

At the discussions, Rao confessed to his suspicions and the fact that he had probed the question and found that the Center had no other intention than his welfare. The discussions also verified that, although Rao professed to have got rid of his suspicions of the Center, he did not really understand his own problems or make a self-examination of it, but tried his best to mend his slip and cover up his dissatisfaction with the Center.

The discussions uncovered many other instances, major and minor, demonstrating Comrade Rao Shushi's mistakes, which we will not go into here.

II. The unanimous opinion of the meetings was that the extreme bourgeois individualism revealed in the person of Comrade Rao Shushi was not of an ordinary nature but had its special features. Rao was adept at camouflaging his essential character. For many years he had shown himself to the world as a person of discipline and self-control. In his schemes inside the Party for power, he never showed his hand until the crucial moment. Even when he did show his hand, he still covered up his true intentions and used others to achieve his aim. Rao Shushi is a hypocrite rarely found in the Party.

The discussions pointed out that although Comrade Rao Shushi did not advance any new theories, his basic thinking consisted of a denial of the Communist Party as a unified, revolutionary, Marxist-Leninist party. He regarded the Party as a clique made up of many factions. He thought that opportunist maneuvers could make his star rise. When he was working in one region, he never wanted central departments to examine his work, never made a self-criticism, but always covered up his defects. He often adopted an attitude of attack and resistance to central departments and even leading central comrades. He regarded the area under his leadership as his "independent kingdom." After coming to work at the Center, in line with his speculative nature he threw his lot in with Gao Gang, who was scheming to seize the supreme power of the Party and the government, to wage a struggle to seize power and position. This was the political essence of the bourgeois individualist speculator Rao.

III. The discussions pointed out that Comrade Rao Shushi adopted a series of measures that were entirely contrary to the working style of the Party in his struggle to gain Party power-that of 'power play.' Comrade Rao Shushi had an unsavory personal style, which can be summed up as follows: (1) Rumormongering, hookwinking superiors and subordinates alike; (2) making promises of promotion to gain support alternating with attacks against those who would not toe his line, or using a combination of both-attacking first then giving favors later; (3) grasping the "pigtailed" of comrades-finding others' weaknesses and faults to use as a handle for attack or blackmail; (4) deliberately planting "nails" to be used when necessary to launch sudden attacks against others; (5) when arriving at a new position, employing a series of stratagems to pressure and cow others, to establish "who's boss"; (6) fabricating excuses to attack people he did not like-he admitted that he often used different occasions to launch his own attacks; (7) lying and denying what he had just

said; (8) presenting a modest and respectful demeanor while actually boosting his own image.

The major incidents enumerated above-[Rao] and Gao Gang's anti-Party activities in 1953, the struggle Rao instigated against Chen Yi at Huanghuatang in 1943, his efforts to gain the post of chairman of the East China Military and Administrative Committee in 1949, and his rest cure in Beijing in 1952-represent Rao's devious manipulations and unscrupulous personal style. His underhanded behavior cannot be easily detected and proved without examination and verification. Sometimes, he gave people the impression that he was a man of honesty and integrity. But after verifying the facts, he was completely exposed. Some of the comrades said during the meetings that [their attitude] toward Rao changed from respect to suspicion, then to rage. This is a natural reflection of the exposure of a hypocrite.

In short, Comrade Rao Shushi is a past master at the sort of power play that is typical among the exploiting classes in the old society. He had brought these abilities into the Party. This was a common conclusion arrived at in the discussions.

IV. Up to the present, Comrade Rao Shushi has not entirely admitted his mistakes. In his self-criticism, he admitted that he had never experienced the tempering of a rectification campaign, that he was arrogant and complacent, that he was wont to exaggerate his contributions, that he was dishonest, had an unscrupulous style, used some tactics in political speculative activities inside the Party that should only have been employed against the enemy, that the nature of his mistakes was bourgeois individualism, that in certain specific instances his bourgeois individualism had already grown to the proportions of careerism, etc. The above illustrates that he had admitted to some mistakes superficially, but is still not sincere or thoroughgoing. He is unwilling to probe at the roots of his mistakes. On the questions of Huanghuatang and the position of chairman of the East China Military and Administrative Committee, although he admitted to a little more of the facts, he still had some reservations. On the question of his rest cure in Beijing, although he admitted to part of the problem, he also put up a lot of arguments and refused to probe the roots. On the crucial question of his direct opposition to leading central comrades and his participation in the splittist activities of Gao Gang from the period of the Financial and Economic Work Conference to the Organization Work Conference, he admitted only to the lighter charges and tried to deny the heart of the problem. This shows that Rao is still maintaining a dishonest attitude toward his own mistakes.

During the discussions, some comrades raised the question as to why Gao Gang and Rao Shushi carried out such major anti-Party activities at the same time and what the relationship between the two was. On this question, Rao alleged that [he and Gao] "agreed without prior consultation and happened to have the same view." Due to lack of time, this question was not pursued, but Rao owes it to the Center to make an honest confession in the future. The discussions also demanded that Comrade Rao Shushi reflect deeply and honestly confess to the Central leadership the ideological and social roots of his serious mistakes. Whether Rao can thoroughly admit and rectify his mistakes rests with Rao himself.

The discussions also pointed out that, in long years of work in the past, Comrade Rao Shushi had followed normal procedure. He usually did not reveal his schemes to gain power until the crucial moments. Although he had made some accomplishments in his work, in the past ten years or more he had always committed serious mistakes at critical junctures. This reveals a most ugly side of his nature, and it in effect cancels out his good side. Rao, if he wishes to continue to be a Communist Party member, must probe into his problems and confess them, he must temper himself in future tests and completely discard his extreme individualistic thoughts and behavior which have existed in his person for a long time.

V. The discussions finally pointed out that the Party, in exposing the mistakes of Comrade Rao Shushi, should at the same time learn a lesson. This is that the unified leadership of the Party and the Party 's principle of collective leadership must be firmly adhered to; inner-Party democracy must be advocated and developed; criticism and self-criticism inside the Party, especially among high-ranking cadres, must be enhanced; the Party must hone its proletarian senses and be on guard; Party unity must be strengthened so as not to give the enemy the opportunity to disrupt it; every cadre must establish a communist outlook on life; [and] Marxist-Leninist education of the whole Party must be reinforced. Only so can the Party make progress and lead the people in completing the great historical tasks in the period of transition.

Deng Xiaoping, Chen Yi, Tan Zhenlin

March 1, 1954

(Approved by the Politburo of the Central Committee on March 15, 1954)