

An Examination of the Authenticity of “Chairman Mao’s Talk on Two Matters”

Xiang Guanqi

Whether or not Chairman Mao actually made the talk about two things he accomplished in his life, which was first officially quoted by Ye Jianying in his speech at the Central Work Conference on March 22, 1977, is no small matter. The reason is simple: it involves, at least one aspect, Chairman Mao’s evaluation of his own life, and secondly, his evaluation of the Cultural Revolution. Therefore, from any perspective, this is a major issue. We have a responsibility to clarify this issue as soon as possible, while conditions still permit.

Originally, this shouldn’t have been a problem. Because for a long time, the listeners of this so-called “talk” have all been alive. If the Party Central Committee were concerned about this matter, it would be easy to find out by sending people to conduct an investigation among them. However, the central leadership has consistently failed to do so, especially those few intellectuals who know what to do. This is unbelievable, and it at least reflects their attitude towards Chairman Mao, his instructions, and his thoughts.

Back then, deciding whether to “follow the old policy” or “follow the established policy” could be considered a major “crime” of “tampering with the instructions of the great leader Chairman Mao.” Now, when it comes to such an important “talk” by Chairman Mao, the fact that it is not being clearly implemented leaves us with a considerable problem. Why is this? It is something that deserves our deep reflection.

I have been very concerned about this matter and have been working to verify whether such a conversation actually occurred. Recently, Comrade Mao Yuanxin gave a very convincing answer to my inquiry about this matter over the phone, which broadened my thinking. I have re-examined and researched this issue, reviewing the beneficial explorations that everyone has done in the past, and finally, I have a new perspective on this issue.

Simply put, Chairman Mao did have the idea that he had mainly done two things in his life, and he mentioned this to different comrades at different times and places. However, the so-called specific “conversation” by Chairman Mao about doing two things in his life, which was officially disseminated by Ye Jianying on March 22, 1977, and which had already circulated in 1976, is fabricated.

My understanding of this issue in the past was limited, mainly because I did not distinguish between these two points.

It is not difficult to understand, and is plausible, that Chairman Mao primarily accomplished two things in his life; the evidence is reliable.

The most reliable evidence is the recollection of Wu Xujun and Zhang Yufeng, quoted in

Biography of Mao Zedong (1949-1976).

The book records it as follows:

“He (referring to Chairman Mao) consistently maintained that launching the Cultural Revolution was entirely necessary and correct, essential for opposing revisionism and consolidating the socialist system, and related to the future and destiny of the country. Therefore, he regarded it as one of the two major achievements of his life.

He expressed this view many times.

His head nurse, Wu Xujun, recalled:

‘After meeting Nixon, one day he said to me: I’ve only done two things in my life. One was driving Chiang Kai-shek to that small island, and the other was launching the Cultural Revolution. I said: You’ve done so many things, how can you only say two? He said: These are the two things worth mentioning.’” (Record of interview with Wu Xujun, January 18, 2002.)

His confidential secretary, Zhang Yufeng, also recalled: ‘In 1973, a Politburo meeting was held at the swimming pool (referring to Mao Zedong’s residence in Zhongnanhai at the time). He said he had done two things in his life. I was there.’ According to the postscript of *Biography of Mao Zedong (1949-1976)*, Professor Jin Chongji was the chief editor and compiler of this section. Professor Jin was my professor of modern Chinese history when I was studying in the History Department of Fudan University. For decades after graduation, I continued to learn from Professor Jin. On February 3, 2013, I specifically consulted Professor Jin about this matter and immediately made a record. The record is as follows:

Today, I wished Professor Jin a Happy New Year. Besides exchanging greetings and chatting about everyday matters, I also reported to him on the recent discussion about whether Chairman Mao had made a “two-fold achievement in his life.” I told him that the discussion was sparked by an article by Li Haiwen, and that I had posted a copy of this conversation that I obtained in 1976 online. I also explained that my version differs slightly from Ye Jianying’s version in a few words and phrases. And so on.

My teacher told me that he and Li Haiwen were very familiar with each other. Regarding this matter, the teacher’s opinions were as follows: 1. The teacher believed that Chairman Mao definitely had this idea and made this statement. The teacher emphasized this point twice. 2. The teacher emphasized that he personally heard Wu Xujun and Zhang Yufeng say that Chairman Mao had this idea and made this statement. Moreover, these two people heard Chairman Mao speak separately. He just couldn’t remember the exact time, month, or day. 3. The teacher believed that these two people were close to Chairman Mao, and it was precisely because of this that Chairman Mao would have been able to say such things to them. And it’s reliable. 4. The teacher believes that although Wu and Zhang didn’t record it, it’s still reliable. The absence of a record doesn’t mean everything is unreliable. For example, Mao Yuanxin recorded Chairman Mao’s important instructions in 1976; there are records of

his conversations with Deng Xiaoping after meeting foreign guests—these are all very reliable. Chairman Mao's conversations with those close to him were generally not recorded, but that doesn't mean they are unreliable. It requires specific analysis. Regarding these two conversations, they are reliable. The teacher reiterated that he has no doubt that the Chairman had this idea or made this statement, and he believes it to be true.

Xiang Guanqi, February 3, 2013, 13:37. Organized immediately after the phone call.

The section on Chairman Mao's later years in **Biography of Mao Zedong (1949-1976)** was edited by Professor Jin Chongji. The statement about "two things" appears in this section. Professor Jin said he has no doubt that Chairman Mao's statement about "doing two things in his life" is serious, earnest, and reasonable. Comrades Wu and Zhang are loyal Communists with deep feelings for Chairman Mao; they would not fabricate Chairman Mao's speeches arbitrarily, and their recollections are entirely credible. Especially Wu Xujun's recollection, which includes dialogues with Chairman Mao, naturally has a deep impression, and the questions he asked the Chairman are reasonable and thus even more credible.

Another point, which now seems very important, is the timing of the conversation. Both of them coincidentally recalled it as 1972 or 1973, not 1976, which is also significant. Considering the various political contexts of the time, both domestic and foreign, which involved evaluating Chairman Mao and the Cultural Revolution, it was natural for Chairman Mao to reflect on his own life and propose the idea of "doing two things." This was a targeted and heartfelt statement.

Chairman Mao evaluated his revolutionary career on more than one occasion, and even told his bodyguards that he wanted to write an autobiography. Therefore, his statement about Wu and Zhang's "two things" is also quite natural.

Comrade Pang Xianzhi, another chief editor of **Biography of Mao Zedong (1949-1976)**, who worked closely with Chairman Mao for a long time, shared similar views. I called Comrade Pang Xianzhi from Germany at 4 PM China time (10 AM German time, daylight saving time) on May 23, 2015, to inquire about this matter, and immediately recorded the conversation. The record is as follows:

"During the phone call, I asked Comrade Pang Xianzhi about whether Chairman Mao had ever said that I had accomplished two things in my life. Comrade Pang Xianzhi immediately replied that Chairman Mao definitely had this thought and made this statement. He said that we had interviewed comrades Wang Dongxing, Wu Xujun, Zhang Yufeng, and others, and they all said at different times and places that they had heard Chairman Mao say that he had accomplished two things in his life. The exact words are hard to recall, but the meaning is clear."

Furthermore, Li Haiwen, a researcher at the Central Party Literature Research Office, mentioned in his 2013 book, *Figures and Events at Turning Points in the History of the Communist Party of China*, that “According to Wang Dongxing’s recollection, Mao Zedong said this to him many times. Whether this is true or not remains to be verified and studied further.”

These staff members close to Chairman Mao unanimously stated that Chairman Mao had this idea and statement, which I think can only be interpreted in one way: Chairman Mao did have this idea and statement, and it was a mature idea and statement.

To verify whether he had this idea and statement, we must also see whether this statement aligns with Chairman Mao’s thinking. This is perhaps a more important issue, as it involves how we should understand Mao Zedong Thought.

Personally, I believe that this statement about “two things” aligns with Chairman Mao’s thinking. The first thing undoubtedly refers to the New Democratic Revolution, and the second thing undoubtedly refers to the Socialist Revolution and the continued Socialist Revolution. Chairman Mao’s life was mainly spent leading these two historical stages of revolution, which is an undeniable historical fact.

Chairman Mao never used clichés or official jargon; his speech was simple, easy to understand, lively, and yet profoundly meaningful, demonstrating a high level of understanding. The phrase “two things” is precisely this kind of statement.

What’s worth studying here is why Chairman Mao specifically highlighted the Cultural Revolution, regarding it as the second thing he did. Didn’t Chairman Mao have many other innovations after the founding of the People’s Republic? Could this really be Chairman Mao’s intention?

On the 50th anniversary of Chairman Mao launching the Cultural Revolution, and also the 40th anniversary of its failure, answering this question correctly is of great practical significance.

The biography of Mao Zedong (1949-1976) states that Chairman Mao “always insisted that launching this Cultural Revolution was entirely necessary and correct, essential for opposing revisionism and consolidating the socialist system, and related to the future and destiny of the country; therefore, he regarded it as one of the two major events of his life.” Indeed, Chairman Mao himself said in October 1968, “This Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution is entirely necessary and very timely for consolidating the dictatorship of the proletariat, preventing capitalist restoration, and building socialism.” Moreover, also in March 1968, he said, “The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution is, in essence, a great political revolution of the proletariat against the bourgeoisie and all exploiting classes under socialist conditions; it is a continuation of the protracted struggle between the Chinese Communist Party and the broad masses of revolutionary people under its leadership and the Kuomintang

reactionaries; it is a continuation of the struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie.” However, did Chairman Mao merely view the Cultural Revolution as one of the two major events of his life from the perspective of this specific problem occurring in China? I think this warrants further study.

Personally, I believe that Chairman Mao’s statement has even deeper practical and theoretical significance. This involves Chairman Mao’s second theoretical contribution, the second aspect of Mao Zedong Thought, specifically his theory of the continued revolution of socialism.

The historical reality of the development of the communist movement presented communists with a sharp practical and theoretical problem: In countries that have already established socialist regimes, revisionism may emerge; the Communist Party may become a revisionist party; and socialism may transform into a bureaucratic, autocratic, monopolistic, privileged capitalist society dominated by a revisionist line. Internationally, the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, under the leadership of capitalist roaders, had already become revisionist; domestically, capitalist roaders had emerged within the Party, and a struggle had arisen between the Marxist line and the revisionist line. China also faced the danger of capitalist restoration.

Undoubtedly, these factors formed the basis for Chairman Mao’s launch of the Cultural Revolution, which was an attempt to address this problem.

However, in its deeper practical and theoretical significance, this perspective cannot be limited to a single viewpoint.

This was essentially a question posed to communists worldwide: after the proletariat seizes power and establishes the dictatorship of the proletariat, its aim is to transform ownership, establish public ownership, develop a socialist economy, and improve people’s living standards. However, there is a prerequisite, a primary political issue: all of this must be socialist, and a capitalist restoration cannot occur. This is an unavoidable historical issue inherent in our current historical era, present worldwide. It applies not only to China, not only to the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, but to the entire world, and it is acute and severe.

This historical issue requires a Marxist answer.

Chairman Mao understood this more profoundly than anyone else. This is clearly evident from his repeated discussions on this issue with Party leaders and leaders of fraternal parties around 1965.

His personal initiation and leadership of the Cultural Revolution was also an attempt to answer this question through “this serious exercise.”

Based on the practice of the Cultural Revolution, his theoretical summary and complete formulation of the theory of the continued revolution of socialism were further attempts to provide a scientific theoretical answer to this question.

Chairman Mao essentially completed this great historical task. It can be said that the theory of New Democracy and the theory of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (or the theory of continuing the socialist revolution, or the theory of continuing the revolution under the dictatorship of the proletariat) are Chairman Mao's two great contributions. These two great contributions reflected the needs of the times and developed Marxism to a brand-new stage—the stage of Mao Zedong Thought.

It is from this perspective that we can say that the Cultural Revolution was the second thing Chairman Mao did in his life; this is accurate, both in line with reality and with Chairman Mao's own ideas.

I expressed this opinion in my article, "A Transcript of Chairman Mao's Talk on 'Doing Two Things in His Life,' which I Preserved."

"This is no small matter. Chairman Mao's own self-evaluation is of paramount importance. Moreover, once it involves the fundamental questions of what exactly Mao Zedong Thought (or Mao Zedong Thought), how to view the theory of continuing the revolution under the socialist system (including the Cultural Revolution's exercises), and whether Chairman Mao made one or two contributions, these questions become even more serious and significant. Since Chairman Mao's death, we have struggled against Deng Xiaoping's revisionism for decades; the central, focal, and crucial issue is this very issue, this second matter.

From the recollections of Comrades Wu Xujun and Zhang Yufeng, it is clear that Chairman Mao highly valued the Cultural Revolution—the exercise of revolution under the dictatorship of the proletariat—its place in his life. This is reasonable. History after Chairman Mao's death proves this point.

Chairman Mao felt a sense of urgency, mission, and responsibility regarding the theory he summarized and discovered. Faced with the sweeping, comprehensive class struggle that swept the nation in 1966 and 1967, Chairman Mao's first thought was to summarize the theory of continuing the revolution under the dictatorship of the proletariat, that is, the theory of continuing the revolution under the socialist system." Chairman Mao told the writers of the Central Cultural Revolution Group more than once that they should write theoretical articles on the revolution under the dictatorship of the proletariat, and even said, "I have written on democracy, and you should write on the Cultural Revolution," which is to say, the theory of revolution under the dictatorship of the proletariat and the theory of the continued revolution of socialism.

As a serious participant in the Cultural Revolution, I strongly agreed with Chairman Mao's idea at the time and followed his thought until I wrote "An Outline of Bourgeois Rights and

Capitalist Roaders" in 1975. We should see that Chairman Mao, not without reason, considered his second task even more important than his first. This was because it was a completely new socialist theoretical creation with global significance. Although Chairman Mao himself did not write large articles, he generated the ideas, and he was always at the forefront. From ordering the Central Cultural Revolution Group to write articles in 1967, to issuing "theoretical instructions" in 1975, to issuing "important instructions" in the name of a central document in 1976, all were theoretical explorations centered on the theme of continuing the revolution under the dictatorship of the proletariat. Anyone who understands this historical process and the development of Chairman Mao's thought will naturally recognize that conversation.

Even without that conversation, the recollections of Comrades Wu Xujun and Zhang Yufeng are undeniably true. My teacher, Comrade Jin Chongji, is a serious and renowned historian. I personally asked him about the writing of this book, and he said that its greatest value lies in preserving a wealth of precious historical materials that are generally unknown to most people. My teacher is right. For example, the memoirs of Comrades Wu Xujun and Zhang Yufeng are extremely valuable, providing the most direct evidence of Chairman Mao's thought.

There is even more corroborating evidence proving Chairman Mao's emphasis on the theory of the Cultural Revolution. For instance, Wu Faxian testifies in his memoirs that in 1967, Chairman Mao told Comrade Qi Benyu, "I wrote the Theory of New Democracy; the Theory of the Proletarian Cultural Revolution is for you to write." To verify this, I called Comrade Qi Benyu on June 10, 2010, to confirm this. Comrade Qi Benyu's exact words were: "Chairman Mao certainly said that. And he told us more than once that we should write articles about the Cultural Revolution, 'On the Cultural Revolution,' and 'On Continuing the Revolution.' He said this more than once." To further verify this matter, I visited Comrade Qi Benyu in Shanghai on November 8, 2010, accompanied by Comrade Xia Chengde to testify. Comrade Qi Benyu reaffirmed that Chairman Mao did indeed make this statement, and that he had said it more than once.

Recently, I saw on the *Red Flag* website a speech given by Comrade Zhang Chunqiao on March 4, 1967 (I've checked, it might be February 24, which can be found online). If my memory serves me right (I've verified it), this was a televised speech. I heard it myself. According to the excerpt provided by *Red Flag*, it included the following passage: "Recently, Chairman Mao again asked the Central Cultural Revolution Group to consider writing an article entitled 'Revolution under the Dictatorship of the Proletariat,' which is a very important theoretical issue." This aligns with the recollections of Comrades Wu Faxian and Qi Benyu, and is a written record from that time, making it absolutely reliable.

It is evident that Chairman Mao's emphasis on the Cultural Revolution and its theory was consistent. Chairman Mao clearly understood the theoretical significance and value of the

Cultural Revolution exercises, especially its principles. Therefore, the saying about “two things” is quite natural and entirely reflects the Chairman’s thinking.

I still maintain this opinion. On this issue, our hearts are in sync with the Chairman’s.

2

Since Chairman Mao believed he accomplished two things in his life, is the “Chairman Mao’s Talk on Two Things” published by Ye Jianying genuine?

No. It’s not genuine; it’s fake.

However, without sufficient research, people can easily be misled into believing it’s true. I myself have fallen into this trap.

Now it seems that this so-called “talk” is fake, deliberately fabricated.

The strongest evidence is the explanation Comrade Mao Yuanxin gave me over the phone on September 15, 2015.

The story is as follows:

On September 12, 2015, I handed a photocopy of this so-called “talk,” which I had obtained in June or July of 1976 and then copied into my notebook, to Comrade Yuanxin in Shanghai. I also attached a short message.

“Comrade Yuanxin: Hello! This is material I copied into my notebook in 1976. Whether this conversation actually happened is debated. I recently called Comrade Pang Xianzhi, who said Wang Dongxing said it did. However, Hua told another person (whose name I can’t recall) that it didn’t. This same comrade wrote an article questioning this conversation. I asked my teacher, Comrade Jin Chongji (who, along with Pang, was the chief editor of Mao Zedong’s biography), and Teacher Jin said that this idea definitely existed because the biography of Mao quoted the recollections of Comrades Zhang Yufeng and Wu Xujun, and that Teacher Jin personally interviewed them at different times. This conversation was first formally made by Ye Jianying at a Central Committee meeting. Generally, as he said, it was on June 23rd. I think you were with the Chairman during that time. You should know whether it happened or not. If convenient, please check. This is, after all, a significant matter. Happy Mid-Autumn Festival. Please take care and stay healthy. Guanqi, September 12, 2015, Shanghai. On September 15, 1966, I was received by Chairman Mao in Tiananmen Square. Thirty-nine years have passed, and I have never forgotten the Chairman’s teachings and hopes. Guanqi again.” The attached transcript of the “conversation” is as follows:

Chairman Mao’s Talk with Comrades Hua Guofeng, Wang Hongwen, Zhang Chunqiao, Yao Wenyan, Wu De, and Wang Hairong on January 13, 1976 (transcribed)

“It is rare for a person to live past seventy. I am over eighty. People always think about what will happen after death. There is a Chinese saying, ‘The final verdict is given after the coffin is closed.’ I am not yet dead, but I will soon be, so perhaps the final verdict can be given.”

I accomplished two things in my life. One was fighting Chiang Kai-shek for decades, driving him to an island; and during the eight-year War of Resistance against Japan, forcing the Japanese to retreat to their homeland, finally entering Beijing, finally entering the Forbidden City. Few questioned this, though a few whispered in my ear, mainly just urging me to reclaim that island as soon as possible. The other thing, as you all know, was launching the Cultural Revolution. Few supported it, many opposed it. Neither of these matters is settled. This legacy is being passed on to the next generation. How to transfer it? A peaceful transfer won't work; it seems a transfer amidst turmoil is necessary, potentially leading to bloodshed. What will you do? What will the next generation do? Only Heaven knows.

After receiving this, Comrade Yuanxin called me on the evening of September 15, 2015, answering my questions. I immediately took notes.

“Record of Mao Yuanxin’s Telephone Call

At 11:22 PM on September 15th, Comrade Li Shi (as Yuanxin referred to himself) called.

Regarding my inquiry in my September letter about whether Chairman Mao had indeed made the so-called remark about accomplishing two things in his life, Comrade Mao Yuanxin gave a highly convincing and reliable answer.

Comrade Mao Yuanxin explicitly stated more than once, ‘I have never heard the Chairman say such a thing.’”

Comrade Mao Yuanxin offered his opinion on the circulated manuscript attached to my letter. He said that Chairman Mao never said what “I” did, but rather what the Party did. From what Comrade Mao Yuanxin had heard, one statement was that our Party completed the tasks of the democratic revolution for the Kuomintang leadership. Another statement was that our Party led the exploration of the socialist revolution. Comrade Yuanxin explained that driving Chiang Kai-shek to Taiwan was only one part of the democratic revolution. Similarly, the exploration of the socialist revolution, from collectivization to socialist transformation, was also done step by step, from economic transformation to superstructure transformation, culminating in the Cultural Revolution—all steps of the socialist revolution, with the Cultural Revolution being only one part.

Regarding the circulated manuscript stating January, but with Hua Guofeng present, this is incorrect; he wasn't in that position then. The presence of Wang Hairong is also incorrect, because by then Chairman Mao had already dismissed them (and Tang Wensheng) and summoned me. If it were June, that's impossible either, because by then Chairman Mao's speech was already quite unclear. Such conversations, using phrases like “rare since ancient

times,” are impossible to hear clearly and require a handwritten transcript. However, this is not a handwritten transcript.

Therefore, Comrade Mao Yuanxin emphasized that he had not heard the Chairman say this; if he did, there must be a manuscript. Otherwise, it cannot be used as evidence.

Comrade Yuanxin repeatedly asked me if I understood what he meant. I indicated that I did. The conversation ended at 11:48 AM. I immediately typed up this conversation for filing.
September 16, 2016, 0:30 AM.

Comrade Mao Yuanxin’s viewpoint is very important; it is crucial testimony and very persuasive.

To verify the “conversation,” I also interviewed several other comrades.

For example:

Comrade Xiao Mu, Wang Hongwen’s secretary, is still alive. In September 2015, I visited Comrade Xiao Mu in Shanghai. I asked him if he had heard Wang Hongwen mention this “conversation” back then. Comrade Xiao Mu affirmed that he had not heard Wang Hongwen mention it. Of course, Comrade Xiao Mu also said that this cannot be simply equated to Wang Hongwen not having heard of this “conversation,” because Wang Hongwen did not tell him the content of the conversation every time he met the Chairman.

I also asked my teacher, Comrade Zhu Yongjia, in person in Shanghai in September 2015 if he had heard of the Chairman’s “conversation” at that time. He clearly said no, he only heard about it much later. Given his important position at the time and his close relationship with the top leadership in Beijing, this can also be considered.

Based mainly on Comrade Mao Yuanxin’s explanation, combined with other materials we already have, I think there are several points that are clear regarding the question of whether there was a so-called “conversation about two things” in 1976.

1. Regardless of whether the “conversation” took place in January or June, Wang Hairong could not have participated. Because at this point, this “little mouse who jumped ship” could no longer get close to the Chairman (Mao Yuanxin reiterated this point in a phone call on February 7, 2016), and she would not have been specially invited to participate in such an important conversation. As some comrades have pointed out, listing Wang Hairong’s participation is a glaring flaw in the fabrication.

2. The claim that Hua Guofeng participated on January 13th, and was listed first, is historically inaccurate; Hua was not yet in that position at the time. Regarding the claim that in June, several comrades close to Chairman Mao, such as Mao Yuanxin, Zhang Yufeng, and Pang Xianzhi, unanimously stated that the Chairman’s health condition at that time made it impossible for him to deliver such a lengthy speech. Therefore, Hua Guofeng’s particularly serious statement to Comrade Li Haiwen regarding the TV series’ use of this so-called

“conversation”—that he had never heard the Chairman say such a thing, and that such a quotation was “wrong”—is likely credible.

3. According to Guo Jianbo’s article, “A Self-Summary That Adds the Finishing Touch: A Textual Research on Mao Zedong’s Talk Before His Death Recalling Two Major Events in His Life—Commemorating the 120th Anniversary of Chairman Mao’s Birth,” it is said that Hua Guofeng and Mao Yuanxin both wrote materials to the Central Committee, indicating that this talk did not exist. The article quotes:

“To commemorate the 90th anniversary of the founding of the Communist Party of China, Li Shenming wrote an article, ‘Worried about the People, Worried about the Party—An Exploration of Mao Zedong’s Thought on Never Changing the Nature of the Party.’ In this article, Li Shenming quoted Mao Zedong’s talk before his death recalling two major events in his life.

This article was later published as a booklet. After the booklet was published, Zhou Xincheng, a professor at Renmin University of China, sent Li Shenming the following email on September 6, 2012: ‘Comrade Shenming: I have read your article, ‘Worried about the People, Worried about the Party.’ There is something I want to discuss. On page 17, it says that Mao Zedong said he did two things in his life. This material, in the ‘Draft History of the People’s Republic of China’ (i.e., the ‘Draft History of the Communist Party of China’)...” I also encountered this when writing *A Draft History of the People’s Republic of China* (author’s note). Comrades at the Institute of Contemporary Studies said this material couldn’t be verified. Hua Guofeng wrote to the Central Committee that he hadn’t heard Chairman Mao say it; Mao Yuanxin also wrote to the Central Committee that Chairman Mao hadn’t said this. We eventually deleted this passage.

After receiving Zhou Xincheng’s email, Li Shenming took it very seriously. To verify the relevant issues regarding Mao Zedong’s conversation before his death, reviewing two major events in his life, he consulted Pang Xianzhi, the former director of the Central Party Literature Research Office, on October 17, 2012. Pang Xianzhi said: “As early as the first and second half of 1976, Chairman Mao had already lost his normal oral expression ability. Necessary communication with others was often conducted by Comrade Zhang Yufeng based on his lip movements or by him using pen and paper. On June 13, 1976, it was impossible for him to have such a long oral conversation with anyone.”

This shows that Hua Guofeng and Mao Yuanxin had long ago denied the existence of this “conversation,” and this is verifiable; further verification is still possible.

4. If such a “conversation” existed, it would represent Chairman Mao’s very important opinion, akin to a political testament. However, it was neither conveyed nor publicized at the time. Furthermore, no written evidence has been found to date. In particular, Chairman

Mao's "Important Instructions" issued under the name of the CCP Central Committee Document No. 4 during this period did not include this "conversation." If such a "conversation" truly existed, it would be inconceivable and highly abnormal. This can only prove one possibility: that this "conversation" did not exist.

5. The most important point is naturally Comrade Mao Yuanxin's denial of the existence of this "conversation." Comrade Mao Yuanxin emphasized that during his time working alongside Chairman Mao, he never heard of Chairman Mao making this conversation. Comrade Yuanxin began working alongside Chairman Mao in October 1975 and continued until Chairman Mao's death. This means that if such a conversation had occurred, whether in January or June, Mao Yuanxin was then by Chairman Mao's side, bearing the important task of conveying Chairman Mao's instructions. It would have been impossible for Mao Yuanxin to have been absent from such an important conversation, nor would he have been unaware of it. However, Mao Yuanxin confirmed that during his time with Chairman Mao, nothing of the sort happened, and Chairman Mao did not make such a conversation. With these falsifying materials, especially Mao Yuanxin's opinion denying the existence of the conversation, we can further expose the loopholes in the fabrication of this "conversation" by examining whether it conforms to other speeches by the Chairman during this period, particularly whether it conforms to Chairman Mao's "Important Instructions" officially promulgated in Central Document No. 4 of 1976, just as some comrades have already done.

In 1976, Chairman Mao, with unparalleled revolutionary courage and determination, personally launched and led the struggle against Deng Xiaoping and the right-leaning reversal of verdicts before his death. Judging from the "important instructions" given by Chairman Mao during this period, as published in the Central Committee Document No. 4 (which he personally approved), his views on the Cultural Revolution were fundamentally different from those expressed in his so-called "talks." Chairman Mao held no negative or pessimistic views; instead, he further put forward many famous important theoretical viewpoints on continuing the revolution under socialist conditions. Furthermore, on a series of major principled issues, he unequivocally adhered to Marxist-Leninist-Maoist viewpoints, criticized Deng Xiaoping's revisionist views, upheld the "philosophy of struggle" that "revolution will continue even after ten thousand years," and insisted that the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution was "fundamentally correct." He did not show the slightest sign of what Hu Qiaomu and Hu Sheng claimed—a "loss of confidence" and pessimism. These thoughts and tendencies are completely different from the language used in his "talks" regarding the Cultural Revolution. Forgers can fabricate the language, but limited by their stance, thinking, and level, they cannot fabricate the spiritual essence.

Regarding linguistic form, it should be noted that to accurately interpret the Chairman's state of mind in his later years—particularly concerning the classical poetry he read from large-print editions, such as the Ode to the Withered Tree—one must contextualise it within the 1976 Important Instructions. Though the Chairman lamented that 'alas, there is no Sun

Quan of our time,' this reflects not so much pessimism as a resolve to make one final stand. The campaign against Deng was that final stand, akin to the 'three assaults on Zhu Jiazhuang.' This is my humble opinion.

Furthermore, I would like to reiterate the noteworthy timing of the release of this so-called "conversation." I obtained the mimeographed copy at the time, and I copied it into my notebook. I have already posted a photograph of the notebook copy online, which was published on the website "Red China." The mimeographed copy was borrowed by a middle school student and was never returned to me. With the help of many comrades recalling the events, I obtained this circulated copy around June or July of 1976 (see my supplementary notes to the article "My Preserved Copy of Chairman Mao's Talk on 'Doing Two Things in His Life'"). The timing of this circulation is noteworthy. This was precisely when rumours were rampant after the April Fifth Movement, and subsequently, the Central Committee ordered an investigation into political rumours. This background is important; it tells us that fabricating the "talk" was a politically motivated action. Why there were multiple versions of the "talk" is also worth studying. I remember the big-character poster "Bombard the Headquarters," which circulated nationwide around August 25, 1966. There were no different versions; I remember only one extra word—the word "first"—"my first big-character poster." The rest of the content was identical to the later officially published version. At that time, everyone regarded Chairman Mao's instructions as sacred and wouldn't copy them incorrectly. Why were there multiple versions of the talk? Was it written by one person or multiple people? Clarifying these questions will help in understanding some of the language used in the "talk."

More compelling evidence may emerge later to prove that the so-called "conversation" about the two events in 1976 was fabricated. However, based solely on the materials we currently possess, we can already draw a conclusion: the "conversation" was fake. The forgers were likely preparing public opinion for their planned "bloodshed" by distorting Chairman Mao's thoughts and image. This may explain why Marshal Ye, who subsequently launched the coup, was so eager to disseminate this "conversation" from August 15, 1976. Considering the 1935 "secret telegram" whose existence remains unclear to this day, and the audacious and reckless princess, what they might have done is certainly thought-provoking.

3

If the "conversation" is fabricated, then people naturally ask whether the idea of "doing two things in one's life" expressed in it is Chairman Mao's thought. If so, how can the "conversation" be said to be fabricated?

The complexity and mystery of the matter may lie here.

To clarify this issue, we must first understand that the absence of this 1976 conversation does not simply negate the idea that Chairman Mao did two things in his life. To put it

positively, Chairman Mao did have the idea of doing two things in his life, but the 1976 "conversation" that is currently circulating does not exist. This is plausible.

People will ask, since Chairman Mao's thoughts and statements about "doing two things in his life" were never published, how could a fabricated "conversation" accurately reproduce the Chairman's genuine thoughts and statements about "two things"? Moreover, its statements coincidentally match the recollections of Wu Xujun and Zhang Yufeng.

There is only one possibility: the person who fabricated the "conversation" had heard this statement, and, under the strict discipline at the high level, generally speaking, it could only have been heard from Chairman Mao himself, not from a disseminated version. This means the fabricator was someone who had met Chairman Mao, and not just casually, but someone who could have spoken with him.

Such people are few and far between.

Who was it? We'll leave that aside for now. Let's first examine when Chairman Mao was most likely to have said that he "did two things in his life."

According to Wu Xujun and Zhang Yufeng's recollections, this occurred around 1972 or 1973, after their meeting with Nixon. As mentioned earlier, the domestic and international political context at this time likely prompted Chairman Mao to evaluate his life's work. With the world focused on the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and the United States, and Americans and other foreigners commenting on Chairman Mao, how could he not have his own thoughts and opinions? Furthermore, after the Lin Biao incident, the extreme right-wing tendencies opposing the Cultural Revolution resurfaced within the domestic leadership, making the struggle exceptionally sharp and complex. How could Chairman Mao not have considered this and offered his perspective?

According to **Biography of Mao Zedong (1949-1976)**, it was precisely during this period that Chairman Mao rejected and criticized Premier Zhou Enlai and others' opinions that criticizing Lin Biao required criticizing the extreme left. The book states: "In mid-December, after the Central Political Bureau meeting, Mao Zedong convened a small meeting at his residence, attended by Zhou Enlai, Zhang Chunqiao, Yao Wenyan, and others. At the meeting, Mao Zedong said: 'I don't think that letter is right (referring to Wang Ruoshui's letter). Let's criticize the ultra-leftist ideology less.' Regarding the essence of the Lin Biao line, he believed: 'It is ultra-right. Revisionism, division, conspiracies, betrayal of the Party and the country.'" The biography of Mao Zedong (1949-1976) comments on this: "The internal divisions within the Party Central Committee on the issue of criticizing ultra-leftist ideology came to an end due to Mao Zedong's ruling. Its direct result was that the struggle against ultra-leftist ideology led by Zhou Enlai in 1972 suffered a significant setback. Facts once again proved that Mao Zedong, who launched and led the 'Cultural Revolution,' could correct errors that had already caused serious consequences on certain specific issues, including adjusting several important policies; but he would not allow criticism and

correction of the guiding ideology of the Cultural Revolution."... "In the following years, many major changes in China's political situation were closely related to this state of mind of Mao Zedong."

Yes. Chairman Mao disagreed with negating the Cultural Revolution. According to *Biography of Mao Zedong (1949-1976)*, "In response to the widespread claim that the Cultural Revolution had failed, Mao Zedong refuted this at the Politburo meeting on March 25th (1973): 'How can you say that? The Cultural Revolution exposed the Liu Shaoqi clique and the Lin Biao clique; this was a great victory. If it weren't for this great revolution, how could Liu and Lin have been discovered? How could they have been overthrown?'" (See the record of Zhou Enlai conveying Mao Zedong's speech at the Central Work Conference, May 26, 1973). There is archival evidence to prove this; this is the true thought of Chairman Mao during this period, and it is consistent with his thinking in his final "Important Instructions" of 1976, where he defended the Cultural Revolution and affirmed that it was "basically correct, but had some shortcomings." The fabricated "talk" precisely distorts this point.

The biography of Mao Zedong (1949-1976) also tells us that under this ideological guidance, Chairman Mao at this time also arranged for the reshuffling of eight commanders, and on the afternoon of December 21, 1973, he "met with 43 (or 46, according to another account) people attending the Central Military Commission meeting at Zhongnanhai, which lasted one hour and twenty minutes." In this speech, Chairman Mao emphasized that comrades in the army should study literature, citing the historical anecdote of "Sui and Lu lacking martial skills, Jiang and Guan lacking literary talent," and urging Xu Shiyu to learn from Zhou Bo; he also mentioned that "Water Margin doesn't oppose the emperor, but specifically targets corrupt officials, and later accepted amnesty"; and he said, "If revisionism emerges in China, everyone should be careful."

Also at this time, on November 17, 1973, Mao Zedong convened a meeting with Zhou Enlai and some members of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, criticizing Premier Zhou and others for their mistakes in diplomacy with the United States, and instructed the Politburo to hold a meeting to criticize Premier Zhou. Afterwards, the Chairman said to the Premier, "The young generals are not easy to deal with now." "If you bring them up, you'll get yourself into trouble, and you'll get me into trouble too." (See page 1663 of "Biography of Mao Zedong")

Studying the complex political background around 1973 and Chairman Mao's strategic thinking at that time is a key to understanding the ideas and statements regarding the "two events." This also allows us to find the source material for the fabricated "talk" of 1976 in Chairman Mao's speeches at that time.

For example, along with the "talk," there was also the passage about "Emperor Gaozu's impending death and Empress Lü's inquiry into governance."

"Then Empress Lü asked: 'After Your Majesty's hundredth birthday, Prime Minister Xiao will die. Who should succeed him?' The Emperor said: 'Cao Can is suitable.' She asked about the

next best option, and the Emperor said: 'Wang Ling is suitable. However, Ling is somewhat impulsive; Chen Ping can assist him. Chen Ping is intelligent, but not capable of handling things alone. Zhou Bo is honest and straightforward but lacks literary talent; however, it is Bo who will secure the Liu family's rule. He can be made Grand Commandant.' Empress Lü asked about the next best option, and the Emperor said: 'This is also beyond your knowledge.'"

Clearly, all of this was fabricated based on Chairman Mao's speeches at that time.

In short, the fabricated "conversation" about two events in 1976 implies that Chairman Mao did indeed have the idea of "two events," and it was not a mere coincidence. It only proves that the person who fabricated the "conversation" knew that Chairman Mao had said such things during this period, and also had a general understanding of some of Chairman Mao's speeches at Central Committee meetings during this period, specifically in 1972 and, particularly, 1973.

So, who might the fabricator be? Without firsthand information, we can only speculate.

One source is Wang Hairong, mentioned in the "conversation." She was a frequent attendant of Chairman Mao and likely overheard his remarks on two matters. For example, during Chairman Mao's important speech to the Military Commission comrades on December 21, 1973, as mentioned earlier, according to comrades who attended the meeting, she stood to the Chairman's left, acting as an "interpreter" translating his dialect into Mandarin. It was at this meeting that the phrase "whoever secures the Liu family will surely be Bo" was discussed. (See Li Lin and Yi Jun, "Mao Zedong's Reassignment of Commanders of the Eight Military Regions: 'Never Allow the Gun to Command the Party'"). This young lady had been extremely disrespectful to Premier Zhou, recklessly criticizing him. Chairman Mao said she was "not to be trifled with," a fact known to all. Later, Chairman Mao described her as a "little mouse that jumps ship," referring to her opportunism, which wouldn't be an exaggeration, revealing her character and stance. What she might have done in the unfortunate year of 1976 is easily imaginable.

Another person is Tang Wensheng. Recently, I came across an article online from 2012 titled "Tang Wensheng Recorded Some Speeches by Mao Zedong at the Final Moments of His Life" (I'm not sure if there are earlier versions). This made me wonder if this "little mouse" (Tang Wensheng's nickname) might also be fabricating something.

At that time, the two young ladies frequently had contact with Chairman Mao. The biography of Mao Zedong records: "Mao Zedong's head nurse, Wu Xujun, also said: During this period, Premier Zhou often brought Wang Hairong and Tang Wensheng to and from Chairman Mao's residence at the Zhongnanhai swimming pool. Besides reporting the day's events to Mao, they also discussed strategies for the next round of negotiations." (See Lin Ke, Xu Tao, and Wu Xujun, **The Truth of History**, Central Literature Publishing House, December 1998, pp. 254-255.) In fact, it wasn't just foreign affairs; they could even attend

the aforementioned meetings of the Military Commission, and given their important roles, hearing Chairman Mao's speeches was perfectly normal.

I dare not wrong these two once-famous ladies, but I hope they will speak out themselves. My teacher, Jin Chongji, told me that Wang Hairong refused to answer questions from comrades who came to investigate her. I also tried to inquire with her through comrades in the State Council about the existence of the "two conversations," asking only for a "yes or no" answer, but to this day, there has been no response. Why? Only she knows.

Now it seems that the inclusion of the so-called criticisms of Jiang Qing and others by Chairman Mao provided by these two women when they denounced Comrade Jiang Qing in the *Manuscripts of Mao Zedong* is completely wrong. It not only violates the book's own editorial regulations but also fails to consider the disgraceful political conduct of these two women at the time.

Finally, I must say that it is certain that the so-called "conversations" by Chairman Mao about the two matters circulating in 1976 are forged. Even if they are not forged, without any form of official record as evidence, they should not be considered as Chairman Mao's works or manuscripts. The *Manuscripts of Mao Zedong* should strictly adhere to its editorial regulations and delete this "conversation." Similarly, those inappropriate "exposés" should also be deleted; we must not distort or vilify Chairman Mao because of them.

March 23, 2016, Bonn

Recently, I saw Comrade Mao Yuanxin's speech in Shaoshan last year. Comrade Mao Yuanxin's speech and his "conversation" with me on the phone regarding those two matters are completely consistent. I fully agree with Comrade Mao Yuanxin's opinion.

In addition, Comrade Mao Yuanxin also wrote an article on this issue, which was recently republished by Comrade Yu Nie. The article contains Chairman Mao's very important opinions regarding Wang Hairong at that time. I believe that Comrade Mao Yuanxin's article is of great significance and deserves everyone's serious study.

Xiang Guanqi, July 1, 2024