

# Learn from the Liberation Army in Political Work

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*Source:* This unusual record of an almost stream-of-consciousness-like approach to political work comes from a booklet (*Xuexi jiefangjun zhengzhi gongzuo jingyan*) put out by the Industry and Transport Political Department of the Beijing East City District Temporary Party Committee in January 1967. We have attempted as far as possible to preserve the layout of the original (e.g., its extensive use of arrows, boxes, borders, etc.) in order to give the reader of the translation a “feel” for how the intended readership might have been expected to read it.

**Giving prominence to politics**

**What is politics?**

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Be it revolutionary or counter-revolutionary, politics is always a struggle of one class against another and not merely the activity of a few individuals.

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## What is meant by giving prominence to politics?



When we give prominence to politics, we give prominence to proletarian politics and firmly grasp the class struggle of the proletariat against the bourgeoisie; which is to say we give prominence to Mao Zedong Thought and put Mao Zedong Thought in command; which is also to say that top priority is put on political work in everything we do.

## The Five Principles of giving prominence to politics



**First:** Practice the living study and living application of the works of Chairman Mao and in particular stress their “application,” hereby turning Chairman Mao’s books into the supreme instructions guiding everything we do within the armed forces.

**Second:** Persist in the Four Firsts and pay particular attention to grasping Living Thought in a major and intense way.<sup>1</sup>

**Third:** Leading cadres must enter deeply into the basic levels and intensely grasp the Four Good Company movement, see to it that the basic levels are in good shape, and at the same time make sure that the cadre style of leadership is up to scratch.<sup>2</sup>

**Fourth:** Daringly promote truly outstanding fighters to crucial positions of responsibility.

**Fifth:** [Reward] technical skills mastered to perfection through strenuous practice and close-up and night-time combat skills.

## The great strategic significances of giving prominence to politics



1. Giving prominence to politics has been put forward according to the laws of development of socialist society and the economic foundation

<sup>1</sup>As enunciated by Lin Biao in the early 1960s, the “Four Firsts” are: the human factor, political work, ideological work, and living thought.

<sup>2</sup>A “Four Good Company” is good in political and ideological work, in the “Three-Eight Work Style” (see Document 5, note 1, p. 46), in military training, and in its arrangement of daily life.

of socialist society. It has been put forward on the basis of the fact that classes and class struggle still exist in socialist society.

2. Giving prominence to politics is at the root of our attempts to further revolutionize and modernize our armed forces.

3. Giving prominence to politics is at the root of our preparations to crush the U.S. imperialists engaged in a war of aggression.

4. Giving prominence to politics is at the root of our opposition to and prevention of modern revisionism and our guarantee that our armed forces will never deteriorate.

5. Giving prominence to politics is a glorious tradition of our armed forces.

## How to give prominence to politics



1. To hold even higher the great red banner of Mao Zedong Thought and to even more successfully promote a high tide of the living study and living application of Chairman Mao’s works throughout the armed forces.

2. To strengthen class education and at all times and in all situations not forget class struggle.

3. To carry out and implement the long-term policy of involving the entire Party in military work and strengthening the absolute leadership of the Party over the armed forces.

4. To persist in the mass line and carry forward the Three Great Democracies.<sup>3</sup>

5. To realize the Five Principles [of giving prominence to politics] in the movement to build Four Good Companies and to grasp Living Thought in a major and intense way.

6. To strengthen our cadre corps in order to guarantee, from an organizational standpoint, the implementation of the Five Principles; to promote modesty and prudence and to oppose conceit and arrogance.

<sup>3</sup>As applied in the PLA during the civil war, the “Three Great Democracies” are: politically, officers and men help each other to understand goals; economically, soldiers take part in running their own mess; and militarily, all share knowledge and express their own views.

**Hold high the great red banner of Mao Zedong Thought and practice the living study and living application of the works of Chairman Mao**



**Turn Chairman Mao's books into the supreme instructions guiding everything we do within the armed forces**



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### **What is Mao Zedong Thought?**



Mao Zedong Thought is the ideology of class struggle. Mao Zedong Thought is the pinnacle of Marxism-Leninism in the present era. It is the ultimate and most living Marxism-Leninism, the compass guiding the Chinese people's revolution and socialist construction, a powerful ideological weapon in opposing imperialism and modern revisionism, and a powerful ideological weapon in the revolutionary struggle of all the peoples of the world.

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### **Why study Mao Zedong Thought?**



To study Mao Zedong Thought is an important safeguard to continuously raise one's class consciousness, to resist the corrosive influence of bourgeois thinking, to further the revolutionization of one's thinking, and to do one's work well. It is a major fundamental undertaking allowing us to carry our country's socialist revolution and socialist construction through to the end and guarantee that our Party and our state will never deteriorate or change their color. It is the key sign of having realized the "Four Firsts," the ideological foundation of the fostering of a Three-Eight Work Style, and the basic guarantee for building Four Good Companies.<sup>4</sup>

All in all, Mao Zedong Thought is our "grain, arms, and steering wheel."

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<sup>4</sup>For an explanation of "Three-Eight Work Style," refer to Document 5, note 1 (p. 46).

### **The basic contents of the study of Mao Zedong Thought**



To study Comrade Mao Zedong's most unswerving proletarian stand and most thorough revolutionary spirit; to employ the viewpoint and method of dialectical materialism and historical materialism to investigate, analyze, and resolve matters; to employ the most living and most clever combat techniques in the revolutionary struggle; and to have a frugal work style of going deep into the realities of life and staying in close touch with the masses.

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### **What are the ways of studying Mao Zedong Thought?**



1. Study Chairman Mao's works;
2. Study the Party's policies and resolutions and Chairman Mao's instructions;
3. Study Comrade Mao Zedong's great practice of integrating theory and practice;
4. Study the glorious tradition of our armed forces.

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### **The basic method of studying Chairman Mao's works**



Study them with problems in mind.

Living study and living application and integration of study and application.

When instant results are needed, first set up a pole and see its shadow.



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1. Study what is relevant to the ongoing movement and political education;

Lei Feng's study formula:  
"Problem—study—practice—summary."

2. Study what is relevant to the kind of work you are doing;
3. Study what is relevant to present or emerging ideological problems.

The experience of the Good Eighth Company:<sup>5</sup>

“One: read; Two: discuss; Three: compare; Four: Act.”

Formula: Apply—study—apply.

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**Eight relationships that must be resolved well in the course of study**



1. The relationship between work and study;
2. The relationship between collective study and individual study;
3. The relationship between cadres’ own studies and organizing soldiers’ studies;
4. The relationship between transforming one’s ideology and improving one’s work;
5. The relationship between living study and living application on the one hand and reading the *Selected Works of Mao Zedong* from cover to cover on the other;
6. The relationship between studying Chairman Mao’s works and the long- and short-term policies of the Party;
7. The relationship between studying Chairman Mao’s works and vocational studies;
8. The relationship between long-time planning and short-time arrangements.

**Hold high the great red banner of Mao Zedong Thought and persist in the Four Firsts**




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<sup>5</sup>The “Good Eighth Company” refers to a PLA company stationed on Nanjing Road in Shanghai that was hailed as an exemplary unit “successfully withstanding the quintessence of bourgeois corruption and decadence” from the old world-renowned cosmopolitan city in China.

**What is meant by the “Four Firsts”?**




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The “Four Firsts” are four principles for correctly solving four relationships in the area of political work. They are:

**The human factor comes first in the arms (matter)/men relationship**

|| Arms are an important factor in war but not the decisive factor. The human factor and not that of matter is decisive

**Political work comes first in the all-kinds-of-work/political work relationship**

|| There is all kinds of work to be done in the armed forces, but leading it all should be political work. Political work is the lifeline and the basic guarantee of all work

**Ideological work comes first in the practical work/ideological work relationship**

|| Both these kinds of work must be done, but the stress should be on ideological work. Ideological work is the most fundamental and most essential aspect of political work

**Living Thought comes first in the book learning/Living Thought relationship**

|| Books must be read, but the important thing is to have a command of Living Thought and to integrate book learning and practice

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**Why must one persist in the “Four Firsts”?**




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To persist in the “Four Firsts” is the way to build a modern revolutionary armed force.

1. To persist in the “Four Firsts” is to persist in putting Mao Zedong Thought in command and to persist in Chairman Mao’s army building and political direction.
2. To persist in the “Four Firsts” is the foundation on which rests the reinforced revolutionization and rapid modernization of our armed forces.

3. To persist in the “Four Firsts” is an objective necessity in view of the intensity of domestic and international class struggle.

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**How does one persist in the “Four Firsts”?**



Whether or not one is able to persist in the “Four Firsts” is first of all a matter of understanding. With a different understanding comes a different zeal and a different way of organizing one’s task, as well as a different degree of efficiency.

1. An ability to persist in the “Four Firsts” is gained through the process of protracted struggle and many setbacks.
2. As far as cadres doing political work are concerned, the ability to successfully realize the “Four Firsts” depends on factors like understanding, work-style, and method, and, generally speaking, primarily understanding.
3. The main criteria for the successful realization of the “Four Firsts” at the grassroots level are:

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| 1. Has political ideological work been given priority over all other kinds of work? | 2. In work of every kind is Mao Zedong Thought the guiding principle and have all the long-term and short-term policies and instructions of the Party Center and the Central Military Commission been implemented? | 3. Is every single person indeed taking part in political ideological work? |
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**The aim of persisting in the “Four Firsts” is to:**



Fully mobilize man’s subjective initiative in order to make our armed forces extremely proletarian and extremely militant.

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**With Mao Zedong Thought as the guiding principle, with class education as the foundation, we should grasp on a grand scale the fostering of Living Thought**



**What is meant by Living Thought?**



It is as Comrade Mao Zedong has said ever so often, the integration of the universal principles of Marxism-Leninism with the practical realities of the Chinese revolution, “from the masses, to the masses,” and “concentration and perseverance.” In other words, it is “the need not to stop at the level of what is only in the books.”

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**Why must one grasp the fostering of Living Thought?**

1. To grasp Living Thought is the most central aspect of the “Four Firsts” and amounts to using Mao Zedong Thought to answer all kinds of practical ideological questions.
2. People’s thought develops and changes with the uninterrupted development and change of things.



**How to grasp the fostering of Living Thought?**



**Ten basic points for implementing and grasping the fostering of Living Thought**

The core of the ten points and the crucial element in grasping the fostering of Living Thought.

**Resolving actual ideological problems**



**Having a grip on three steps**

1. Living study and living application of Chairman Mao's works—taking Mao Zedong Thought as the guiding principle.

2. Starting out from class education—with class education as the basis.

3. Proceeding from the actual situation while taking a firm grasp of top and bottom.

4. Grabbing the buds and doing first work first.

5. Persisting in education and persuasion, convincing by argument.

6. Beginning at the level of the majority and gradually moving upwards.

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**Grasping top and bottom →**

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What is meant by grasping top and bottom?

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The top refers to the long-term and short-term policies of the Party Center and Central Military Commission and Chairman Mao's instructions.

The bottom refers to the actual ideological trends in the armed forces and existing actual problems.

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**Why grasp the top and bottom?**

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Grasping both top and bottom is a basic principle of leadership, as both top and bottom have an objective existence. The top is the leadership's direction, and unless it is grasped one will go astray.

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Timely discovery; true clarification; correct resolution.

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The step of tying things together.

Building up an ideological working team relying on core elements and the Party and youth league organization.

**The five interrelationships of ideological work**

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1. The difference and interconnection of ordinary solutions and concrete solutions.
2. The difference and interconnection of the piecemeal solution and total solution of ideological problems.
3. The difference and interconnection of ideological problems and activity problems.
4. The relationship between resolving ideological problems and resolving practical problems.

7. Integrating the political ideological movement and ordinary educational activities.

8. Each and every one takes part in ideological work.

9. Integrating ideology in the lead and attention to the resolution of practical problems.

10. Making use of living teaching and living methods.

The bottom is the foundation of leadership, and unless it is grasped there will be nothing to lead, and work will be in vain.

5. The relationship between grasping practical ideological problems that are part of carrying out a task and problems that are of an ordinary day-to-day nature.

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