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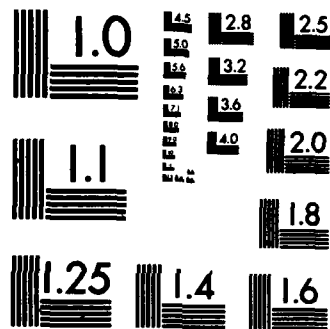
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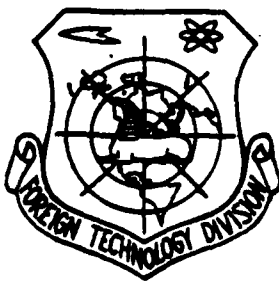


FOR THE SACRED AIR SPACE OF OUR HOMELAND

by

Z. Liangjin and G. Jingbo

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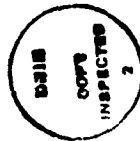
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--- An Interview With Our Famous Aircraft Designer Lu Xiaopeng
Zhang Liangjin and Guo Jingbo

On the eve of the Sixth National People's Congress, we visited Comrade Lu Xiaopeng who is the chief designer of a certain aircraft plant, a deputy to the Sixth National People's Congress, and the designer-in-charge of the first supersonic jet fighter designed in our country.

Chief Lu is over sixty years old. He has personally experienced the earth-shaking changes in the aeronautic industry in China. He has fought for over forty years for the development of the aeronautic industry in our country.

He said that "the aeronautic industry in the old China was almost a piece of blank paper." In 1937, Italy signed an agreement with the Nationalist Government. Italy was building an aircraft plant for China. The so-called "Sino-Italian Aircraft Manufacturing Plant" not only brought in fuselages built in Italy, but also imported nuts and bolts. The amount of work done in our country was less than twenty percent. Soon after the war against Japan broke up, the "Sino-Italian Aircraft Manufacturing Plant" was almost completely leveled to the ground.

"When I was young, I saw that the country was so much behind in its times. I then decided to study aeronautics. I wished that China would also build its own aircraft to defeat its enemies."

With this kind of idea in mind, Chief Lu took the entrance examination to the Aeronautic Engineering Department of Central University. In 1941, after he graduated from college, he joined the design of the aircraft "Zhongyun." Afterwards, he went to the United States and England to study aeronautic design.

The Nationalist Government was incompetent and corrupt. It was not capable of designing and manufacturing aircraft independently. Chief Lu could not carry forward his high aspirations. The news that the new China was going to materialize made Chief Lu look forward to his homeland even more while he was in

a foreign country. He recollected that "we were very excited after reading ((Discussion on a Coalition Government)) and ((Discussion on the New Democracy)) by Chairman Mao, and were determined to contribute the knowledge we learned to the aeronautical industry in our country."

Photograph: Comrade Lu Xiaopeng, our Famous Aircraft Designer -- (photographed by Zhu Changsheng).



Just like that, Chief Lu, together with two classmates and dear friends, Yu Guangyu (the Chief Designer of a certain Research Institute who was persecuted to death during the "cultural revolution" and has been exonerated) and Guo Yongshou (Professor at Nanjing Aeronautic and Astronautic Institute), determinedly gave up the good research opportunities and comfortable personal life abroad. They broke through the tailing and blockage by Nationalist Party agents and returned to their own country in

August of 1949, after traveling through Hong Kong and South Korea for three months.

The Party and the Government have paid alot of attention to patriotic intellectuals. Shortly after returning to his country, Chief Lu was in charge of aircraft repair work in a factory. It was the initial period in the Campaign against the United States in support of Korea. American airplanes frequently bombed our border. In order to provide more aircraft to join the war, Chief Lu taught technical lessons to the workers, as well as repaired aircraft himself at the same time. He was able to quickly repair a number of aircraft. When they repaired the first aircraft, a foreign pilot did not dare to fly it. Chief Lu accompanied one of our pilots in the test flight. The education by way of action by Chief Lu inspired everyone. The pilot also accomplished the test flight mission smoothly. As soon as he got off the aircraft, he excitedly said, "Great, we Chinese can also repair aircraft."

Not only can we repair them, we can also design and manufacture them in our country. In 1956, Chief Lu was the designer-in-Chief of the first jet training plane model in our country. Two years later, this airplane was flying in the blue sky. Marshal Ye Jianying participated in the ten thousand people celebration of joy.

Afterward, Chief Lu accepted the assignment of designing our first supersonic jet fighter in our country. When talking about this past event, Chief Lu was not so calm in his mind. He said that, "This jet was the result of a completely independent, self-reliant, and hard struggle. Back then, many people in and out of our country doubted about our capability in design and manufacturing. The condition was indeed very difficult. However, the Party was supporting us, and the people were supporting us. Everybody believed that no matter how difficult it was, we could build our own fighter aircraft."

When the country was in a difficult period, Chief Lu did not hesitate. He personally put the rivets together with workers and technicians. He was involved in assembling. He worked very enthusiastically and finally built the first prototype aircraft.

When the prototype was pushed out of the shop, all the staff and workers came over to look at it. They automatically formed a long line to welcome it.

However, the road to progress was not smooth sailing all the way. The static test of the prototype proceeded very smoothly during the initial period. In the final test stage, a steel cable snapped unexpectedly and the test was forced to be terminated. Chief Lu was very sorry. He could not eat and sleep well. During this time period, the leading comrades in the Air Force and related departments gave Chief Lu a lot of support and encouragement. Vice Commander Cao Lihuai and Minister Sun Zhiyuan both confirmed the design by Chief Lu. They also decided to dispatch finished parts to continue manufacturing. Chief Lu led all the comrades to devote to this struggle with twice the enthusiasm. Through continuous improvements, the aircraft design was preliminarily finalized. Moreover, an exhibition flight was performed in Beijing. During the exhibition, Marshal Ye personally inquired the opinions of all of the representatives in an expanded meeting of the Military Committee, and decided to produce in small batches right on the spot. Since then, Chairman Mao also personally approved the production of these aircraft in batches. From then on, the history of self-design and batch production of supersonic jet fighter planes in our country began. /3

In order to develop the aeronautic industry in our country and to build a strong air force, Chief Lu had always been considering ways to surpass the world leading standards in airplane design for our country. During the ten year period of chaos, he had been locked up in a "cowshed." Owing to the personal intervention of Premier Chou, his working privilege was restored. Since the first day he walked out of the "cowshed," Chief Lu was totally dedicated to the design work. He excitedly said, "I believe that the Party and the People understand themselves. My grief is that we do not have the right to waste any time. Our nation cannot allow us to waste all that time!"

Chief Lu was thinking that way and also acting that way. He worked overtime everyday until one or two o'clock in the morning. Very quickly, a new product was designed.

After the "Gang of Four" was crushed, this elder aircraft designer was welcoming the spring of scientific development in our country with pride and enthusiasm. He was full of vigor and vitality. He was very energetic. He participated in the national scientific meeting, and was elected to the presidium. Soon afterwards, he went on an inspection tour to Europe and the United States in order to absorb the most leading technology to be applied to the aeronautic industry in our country.

The aeronautic industry involves the knowledge from many scientific disciplines. With continuous development in science and technology, the older aeronautic technical workers are facing the problem of renewing their knowledge. Although Chief Lu is already sixty-three years old this year, yet he still studies new techniques very hard without feeling tired. He continues to apply pioneering technologies to the area of product design. He is the Chief Design Engineer, and has unique understanding and research on many disciplines. His profound knowledge frequently surprises many comrades doing special project research. Chief Lu always grasps every minute and second to work. Even when he was sick at the hospital, he also invited some comrades to study problems in his room. Moreover, each discussion lasted three to four hours. This caused the "protest" from the doctor to his organization. In April this year, a new aeronautic technology discussion meeting was held in Beijing. During the beginning, Chief Lu was unable to attend because he was busy. But, he was invited to attend by the conference with insistence. When Chief Lu arrived at Beijing after arranging his work, it was already past nine o'clock in the evening. The comrades advised him to rest due to his trip. He said that, "Work comes first." He stayed up until past two o'clock in the morning. Furthermore, he presented a technical report in the meeting on the second day. The experts and colleagues at the meeting praised him.

Chief Lu climbed peak after peak in the design of aeronautic products based on the working spirit of selflessness. This old intellectual, who has an intensely patriotic heart and a vigorously enterprising mind, unselfishly contributed his own wisdom and

sweat to the development of the aeronautic industry in China in order to defend the sacred air space of our country. In February of this year, he joined the Chinese Communist Party with honor, and materialized his wish for many years. In March, he once again was elected to be a council member of the Chinese Society of Aeronautics and Astronautics. In May, he continued to be elected as the Vice Chairman of the Provincial Political Consultative Conference. In early June, he also attended the Sixth National People's Congress.

With regard to success and honor, Chief Lu humbly said that, "I only did what I should have done. The practice over several decades proved that only the Communist Party can save China, and only Socialism can save China. Without the Communist Party, there is no today's aeronautic industry in our country. There is no today's Lu Xiapeng either, Being backward will be defeated. The nation handed me the burden of technology. I must accomplish it regardless of what happens. This is a belief that cannot be shaken. It is also the source of my strength."

We wish to sincerely congratulate the accomplishments made by Chief Lu politically as well as career wise. We want to thank him for his valuable contribution to our own country and to our own people.

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