



April 19, 1961

Memorandum of Chairman Mao Zedong and Cuban Cultural Delegation

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Summary:

A diplomatic meeting between China's Chairman Mao Zedong and Cuba's Cultural Delegation Education Minister. They discuss educational and cultural affairs of both Cuba and China.

Credits:

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Chinese

Contents:

- English Translation

(Not Reviewed by Chairman Mao)

19 April 1961

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Date: 19 April 1961

Venue: Nanchang [Capital of Jiangxi Province]

Companions: Shao Shiping [first governor of Jiangxi Province], Chu Tunan [President of the Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries], Chen Zhongjing [senior official from Foreign Cultural Liaison Department of State Council]

Interpreter: Wang Huaizu

Recorder: Zhang Aizhu

Head of the Cuban Cultural Delegation, Education Minister, Armando Hart Dávalos: It's been our great pleasure to meet you in person.

Chairman Mao: How are you?

Hart: Very good.

Chairman Mao: We are two friendly countries. We help each other, and support each other. We share the same goal of struggle: opposing imperialism and constructing socialism. There is only one imperialism, US imperialism. It oppresses not only us, but it oppresses you as well. It's the largest one among imperialist [countries]. It oppresses people of the world. It also controls second-tier and third-tier imperialist [countries] to oppress people of the world [with it]. Among countries that are not imperialist, there are ones that support and minister to imperialism, such as Batista and Jiang Jieshi [Chiang Kai-shek]. It has their running dogs in all countries, which is why we also oppose their running dogs. Imperialism could not survive without their running dogs. There are big running dogs and small running dogs. Batista is a big running dog, while there also exist small running dogs. Not only are big plantation owners running dogs, some capitalists are also running dogs. In the cultural realm, imperialism also has running dogs. We should strive for [the support of] intellectuals of the old society. If we don't strive for them, we could no longer continue our enterprise. [Without them,] there will be no teachers in schools, no professors in colleges, no technological experts, no artists, no people singing, no painters, no football players, no bands, and no engineers. Therefore we must strive for these old intellectuals. But old intellectuals have old world perspectives. As a result, we should reform them. We should not adopt the same way as how we deal with Batista'ists and Jiang Jieshi'ists to treat old intellectuals. We should not reform them by forced labor. [Rather,] we should talk to them. On one hand, [we] talk to them, and on the other hand, [we] let them work. We'd better not rush. [Because] if we rush, they will defy us.

How long have you been here?

Hart: I have arrived quite a few days ago.

Chairman Mao: How's your health?

Hart: Very good.

Chairman Mao: You're all people who deal with cultural and educational affairs?

Hart: We are all dealing with cultural and educational affairs. Some [of us] are university professors.

Chairman Mao: (Counting the number of people.) You have ten people. Are you all coming to China for the first time?

Hart: Yes, it's been our first time to visit China.

Chairman Mao: I've seen many Cuban friends.

Hart: Your reception impressed many Cubans. A lot of people know you. You're quite famous among us.

Chairman Mao: Many people recognize me, but very few are familiar with me. We were co-workers.

Hart: Co-workers in a philosophical sense. We're happy and proud of this. We're genuinely happy to have been able to learn from the experiences you have accumulated.

Chairman Mao: I said we were co-workers, because I was a teacher, too.

Hart: We know well that you are a great Chinese educator.

Chairman Mao: I just taught for four or five years, then imperialism refused to let me teach and forced us, educated people, to march on the road of revolution. I also studied in the capitalist class' school, before which I even taught in sishu [old-style private schools popular in rural areas]! [In sishu,] I studied feudalist philosophies, virtues and principles such as those of Confucius. Later [I] went to a capitalist normal [teachers] school, studying capitalist philosophies, at which time, [I] had no idea of the existence of Marxist-Leninist thought, [and was] also not prepared to conduct revolution, or to organize the communist party. Later the general situation of society oppressed us, feudalism and capitalism pushed us, [we] then rose to the stage of the revolution and started the drama of the revolution.

I think you also came to touch revolution in the same way: first, eradicated the feudalist and capitalist world perspective; [later] in the course of revolution, you achieved self-remolding.

You know China's revolution took a long time. From 1921 when the Chinese Communist Party was founded to 1949, it took 28 years. Out of 28 years, 22 years were in war. It is not easy to re-mold intellectuals. It is not easy to transform the old world perspective into the proletarian world perspective. [Friedrich] Engels said that to be an educator one has to receive education first. If there are no old intellectuals, there would be no intellectuals, no professors, no teachers, no journalists, most importantly, no engineers. So we must go and unite with them. China, the Soviet Union, and your country's experiences all prove this point. But fraternity is just one part of policy. The other part is to re-mold them. Because they are old intellectuals, [they] have to be re-molded. Speaking of re-molding, it's mainly about transforming old world perspective into workers' world perspective. This task should not be rushed. [It] should be done by persuasion, instead of coercive means. Only by making them observe by themselves in the course of struggle and letting them become uncomfortable with the old [world perspective] and feel that it's useless, will [re-molding succeed]. In our country, we accept Marxism and Leninism. But relying on Marxism-Leninism is not enough. Reading Marxist-Leninist books alone does not mean accepting Marxism-Leninism. It has to be married to one country's own peculiar circumstances.

Hart: As to this point, it has been universal around the world. We, Cuba, are the same. We knew that Cuba is under the feet of imperialism, and understand how to struggle under these circumstances. This is why our revolution came to success. Our revolution implemented this theory [of marrying Marxism-Leninism to a country's peculiar circumstances].

Chairman Mao: It's dogmatism if one is not marrying Marxism-Leninism into one's own country's

peculiar circumstances.

Hart: That violates dialectics.

Chairman Mao: But if [one] stresses only one's country's own circumstances and experience and does not accept Marxism-Leninism, [that becomes] right-leaning opportunism. We had right-leaning opportunism, Chen Duxiu [first party secretary of the Chinese Communist Party], and also left-leaning dogmatism. Our party has committed both kinds of mistakes in the course of the revolution. Making mistakes such as these is unavoidable for countries like ours. The failure of the grand revolution of 1927 derived from Chen Duxiu's right-leaning opportunist mistake. Do you know the Long March of 1935? It was of 25,000 li [12,500 km].

Hart: (and all other people on the scene) all of us on the scene all know about this Long March.

Chairman Mao: We made a 25,000-li Long March. Why did [we] take such a long route? This is the result of Jiang Jieshi who made us do so. Why did Jiang Jieshi have us walk? It's because we committed a right-leaning opportunist mistake. We had to go. We should not blame Jiang Jieshi; on the contrary, we should blame ourselves. Prior to 1927, we cooperated with Jiang Jieshi. Due to [our] lack of experience, we didn't expect that Jiang Jieshi would betray us. They [the Guomindang] knocked us down with a sudden strike. After that, we obtained experience and came to know why [they] could knock us down. It's because they had guns in their hands. We also had two hands, so we also looked for guns. But we didn't have [guns back then]. As a result, we began to try capturing guns. You have experience in this regard.

Hart: The Cuban insurgents' weapons were mostly captured [from Batista's forces].

Chairman Mao: The US gave [them] to Batista, and Batista handed [them] to you.

Hart: This was also the case recently. Out of the rifles that the US dropped by parachute to counter-revolutionaries, many have been captured by us. No doubt, most weapons that the US imperialists will drop by parachute to Cuban counter-revolutionaries are also going to find their way into our hands.

Chairman Mao: Do you have recent news of [the US attempt to] bomb Cuba? ^[1]

Hart: Yes. Rumors go that enemies would take the Isle of Pines [renamed the Isle of Youth ("Isle de la Juventud") in 1978]. The fact that the US imperialists want to occupy the Isle of Pines is because [the US] wants to establish a puppet government and separate it from Cuba, which is a common practice of [the US] dealing with other countries. It's just like [what the US did to] China's Taiwan. Its policies in [other parts of] the world are the same.

Chairman Mao: How large is the Isle of Pines?

Hart: The entire Cuban Island is over 114,000 square km. The Isle of Pines is 3,500 square km.

Chairman Mao: Are there residents?

Hart: There are [residents], especially because it has an important prison.

Chairman Mao: Can you swap? Move [the prison] to the homeland, and convert [the island] into a base.

Hart: We are doing this. Our military presence in the Isle of Pines is strong. Enemies wanted to capture [it], but failed.

Chairman Mao: That is a relief. This is different from our Taiwan. Your Isle of Pines still has time for fortification, [the success of which] will depend on your preparation.

Hart: We believe in the solidarity of the Cuban people, and are also moved by the aid offered by each [socialist] country. Our people very much appreciate Prime Minister Zhou Enlai's statement.

Chairman Mao: Yes, I knew that, although I haven't seen it (referring to the telegram sent by Prime Minister Zhou Enlai to Castro).

Hart: We understand that in major Chinese cities, such as Beijing, there were grand demonstrations [in support of Cuba].

Chairman Mao: There should be. We hope that places in which a revolutionary party is present should all support Cuba. I only came to know yesterday, when I just arrived here from Changsha [the capital of Hunan Province], that your departure has been put ahead of schedule. This is why I invited you to come and have a meeting. Do you still plan to visit the Soviet Union?

Hart: We are very interested in the visit to China, whereas Cuba wants us to go back earlier, and to visit the Soviet Union on our way back. Projects left in the Soviet Union also need to be accelerated. But before we leave, we are determined to sign the cultural implementation plan of 1961.

Chairman Mao: Good. We approve this plan. Come back again in the future when you have opportunities.

Hart: I wish to present you these friends present.

Chairman Mao: Please.

(The head of the delegation presented people one by one.)

Chairman Mao asked Aerdeluosi [sic]: Will [you] go back to Spain? You should definitely knock down the Falange.

Aerdeluosi: I'm not prepared to go back yet. The Falange will be toppled. I'll go back when it's down.

Chairman Mao asked Kaerbendiai [sic]: Your job is to supervise cultural activities.

Kaerbendiai: Yes. I have always wanted to buy your works, and always fail to find them in France. [But now] I find them in China.

Chairman Mao: For your reference.

Kaerbendiai: These are this century's greatest reference [works].

Hart pointed at Aerqiulaier [sic] and said: He is on the Intellectuals' Committee and the University Reform Committee. Cuba is having a discussion about the tasks with regard to intellectuals. Aerqiulaier is very much one of those who defend your opinion.

Chairman Mao: In this venue of ours, the Cubans are in advantage where the Chinese are in disadvantage.

Hart: In terms of quality [of interlocutors], you are far ahead of us.

Chairman Mao: That's not entirely correct. Among us there is a big intellectual, that is, Governor Shao [Shiping], who has gone to college [attending Beijing Normal University in 1923]. (Then [Mao turned to and] asked Comrade Chu Tunan and Comrade Chen Zhongjing, after which he continued.) They are all big intellectuals. They [are people] who [could have] taught me. They began to teach in middle school after finishing college studies. They could teach me. I could teach

in primary school. Our country also has intellectuals, several million intellectuals.

Hart: We're also trying to enlarge the group of intellectuals. One good way is to expand primary education, to raise intellectuals of the future. Based on a series of educational reforms, [they] will be well raised and grow.

Chairman Mao: There is one thing you should bear in mind to which we paid not enough attention. Out of people graduating from primary school, [you] should not let an excessive part go to middle school; [similarly,] out of those graduating from middle school, [you] should not let an excessive part go to college. If all go to middle school and college, instead of into farming, there will be a shortage in the supply of labor. As our machines are few, we badly need labor now. This is a point you may be unable to feel now, but will in the future.

Hart: Cuba has begun to feel a shortage of labor in the sugarcane harvest season. [But] this problem will [genuinely] arrive only several years later, for we still have unemployment. We're prepared to eliminate unemployment, which relies on industrial development. In Czechoslovakia and Poland, we saw that industrial development hinges on educational development.

Chairman Mao: [Education] should develop proportionally. Primary education is education of the foundation. In its popularization process, [you] should also look into the problem of labor distribution. How many universities do you have?

Hart: Three. Our university organizations are different from those here. Our every university includes various colleges, such as industries and humanities. We are reforming our universities. Because the present teaching system is only ministering to imperialism and therefore, should have a thorough reform. This is our combat with intellectuals. In Cuba, had intellectuals openly adopted positions the same as the enemies', we would do what you said.

Chairman Mao: Among Chinese intellectuals, there are also people who disagree with the Chinese revolution, or are counter-revolutionary. They are not friends, but enemies. To them the policy I just mentioned becomes inapplicable. They should be treated the same as enemies. As to those openly opposing revolution, put them in jail. This is what you did, isn't it?

Hart: Yes. [Some] Cuban intellectuals created obstacles to revolution. Some fled from Cuba. Some have now come back. There people are not working in the realm of education. They're freelancers.

Chairman Mao: Are they agents?

Hart: Some are [agents].

Chairman Mao: What did they come back for? To work [for socialism] or to sabotage?

Hart: Some came back because [they] have a difficult time abroad. As to [people] who are doing harmless jobs such as being doctors, we let them live on.

Chairman Mao: Correct management.

Hart: There are a couple of gifts [we] would like to offer you, as our souvenirs to you. The gifts are not at all glamorous, but they embody our best wishes. (Among the gifts there were copper figurine and national flags.)

Chairman Mao: Thank you. Thank you very much.

Hart: This painting [portrays] a significant event in our history: the proclamation of the Havana Statement by our people.

Chairman Mao: Were there one million people?

Hart: Yes. In that assembly, Prime Minister Castro asked the mass if they were willing to establish diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China. People demonstrated their approval by all raising their hands and hailing. Now our relationship becomes closer.

Chairman Mao: True.

([All] took photographs.)

Hart: Thanks very much for receiving us and [your] treatment.

Chairman Mao: [I] wish Cuba success in the struggle. Greet the Cuban leader, Prime Minister Castro [for me].

Hart: Thanks.

(Chairman Mao walked down the steps, saw foreign guests into their cars, and waved farewell.)

[1] Ed note: Mao here evidently alludes to aerial attacks on 15 April that were precursors to the Bay of Pigs invasion which began two days later.