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Memorandum of Conversation of Mao Zedong with Six Delegates of the Socialist Countries, China, 2 October 1958

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Summary:

To the other delegates, Mao discusses their shared goal of defeating imperialism, primarily through peaceful methods. He stresses widespread Marxist reeducation of the Chinese people and increased Chinese industrial and agricultural production as means for improvement. Mao also reminds them that socialist nations must be firmly united under the leadership of the Soviet Union to fight colonialism and imperialism, and while the communes are necessary to organize locally, the party remains the core administrative unite of communized peoples.

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2 October 1958

Beijing

Memorandum of conversation of comrade Mao Zedong, 2 October 1958,
at meeting with six delegates of the socialist countries, located in the PRC

(The conversation began at 21:30, and ended at 23:30.)

Comrade Mao Zedong greeted the gathering. Liu Shaoqi, Zhu De, Zhou Enlai, and Deng Xiaoping were with him. The Minister of Foreign Affairs, Chen Yi, greeted the guests, as well as the Minister of Defense, Zhu De, and others.

Mao Zedong: To the health of our guests!

To our common business!

To the further strengthening of our unity!

To the final victory of socialism!

We need to defeat imperialism, not tomorrow morning, of course; but perhaps tomorrow evening or the day after tomorrow; there will be a day when we will accomplish victory!

A delegation of Soviet scientists and physicists came into the hall. The leader of the group, comrade Efremov, apologized for being late. Comrade Zhou Enlai presented the delegation to Mao Zedong. He rose from the table and greeted each of them, saying:

Mao Zedong: Thank you for everything. Many thanks!

Mao Zedong continues: Sooner or later, we undoubtedly will accomplish victory over imperialism.

The battle can be carried on in different ways – by the method of war and via peaceful means. The principal method is the method of peace and culture. All of us are prepared to adopt the peaceful method.

Here among the delegates are present many military comrades. Are you prepared [to adopt] such a method? (Laughter). (All are silent).

We have, every state has, their army. And of course we must be prepared also to follow the military method. I myself return to your name – military comrades! (Laughter).

The method of war – that is the very last alternative. If the enemies begin a war, then we will answer with war.

Perhaps you will criticize me and my opinions? Perhaps you will begin to ask me – what are you shooting for? Such questions you pose to me in a difficult situation! It is necessary to think a bit in order to answer this question...

...So all of us at the current moment basically are adopting the peaceful method. Right now we're not going to fight anyone. As you know, in Warsaw talks are taking place in which the Americans are requiring from us the reduction of arms. But indeed aren't we fighting with the USA!? How is that arms control!?

The thing is that we have such a "president" by the name of Jiang Jieshi (Laughter). We are fighting him. And we have been fighting him for a long time – since 1927. I myself don't know and

cannot say how long we will continue to fight with him. If it ends up being seventy years, well let it be a century-long war. (Laughter). But we will be patient. All the same it's for the best to have Jiang Jieshi [around]. His existence helps us unite the entire Chinese people and educate the vast masses. Whether he wanted to or not, he accomplished more than the efforts of any single Marxist. (Laughter). That's why we invite people who are not Marxists as teachers for the reeducation of the masses. One can say that Jiang Jieshi not only did quite a bit in the past, but continues his historical mission at the current time. He still has time to fulfill this role of teacher. (Laughter). And even better, we're not paying him anything (Loud laughter). The Americans are paying him, and we make use of his teaching. Hitler in his time also fulfilled the function of a "teacher" and, thanks to that, re-educated the peoples of Europe. In the East it was the Japanese imperialists. One can say that right now, unfortunately, there is no Hitler, Mussolini or Japanese imperialists; now instead of those "teachers" Mr. Dulles has arrived! There you see, without Dulles we would be worse off. (Loud laughter). We always feel that he is a "comrade" to us. (Laughter). We are obligated to him for this. Among the bourgeoisie he turns out to be the an "expert" on Marxism-Leninism! That he is decisively carrying on class war is clear. Of course, it's difficult to agree with him and he admits nothing, and that is his error. But all the same like Hitler and Jiang Jieshi he plays this role of "teacher."

Our teachers are communists and Marxists. As teachers they are the most important, but second we have Dulles, and still a third teacher – Jiang Jieshi!

Now the people of the entire world better understand the international situation, which is changing in our favor, and in the future even more so. Already Dulles turns out to be in a defensive situation.

People often ask him – why are your hands tied regarding the Chinese islands of Jinmen and Mazu? The response is always the "Lessons of the Korean War." But Korea is Korea, while an island remains an island and the entire world recognizes it as Chinese territory. In fact all the activities of America in this matter are an open intrusion into the internal affairs of China. That's why things are difficult for Dulles! (Laughter).

We're going to make things even more difficult for Dulles. We can't let him get away with anything. I don't think Dulles will leave this region so easily.

Above all, I don't want him to leave here quickly. If he simply leaves from here, again the Americans will start yelling to the entire world – look how peaceful we are!

This time we caught the wolf in Taiwan and powerfully. You, of course, remember that in 1956 we caught England and France in Egypt, and then the Americans behaved in a polite way, and now in the Levant they act like thieves. My view on this matter was to detain them there further. We talked about this with comrade N.S. Khrushchev. He approved of my point of view.

The question arises, for how long do we keep them occupied? Perhaps for three years...Probably the Arab friends will not agree with this and the Americans will have their way, and perhaps even soon. In any event my opinion in this case turns out to be incorrect. But indeed, besides the Levant, there are other places, for example on the island of Taiwan where we can restrain them further. And this can become the means for the education of all peoples of the world and above all the Chinese people.

Perhaps you don't agree with this? We are a quite peace-loving people. It's true. It means that we must come to terms with our "teacher": at first we need to kill Jiang Jieshi, and then thank him for his instruction. Students can sometimes criticize their teachers, but in this case criticism is necessary with guns in our hands.

I'm talking a lot here. Now there's a line behind you! (Laughter). Why haven't you opened fire? You don't want [to speak]? Well there's nothing to be done. It so happens that I'll have to continue my monopoly [of this conversation].

Now, perhaps, we should talk about our mutual relations?

Our side—the side of socialism—is united. After the Moscow meeting [November 1957] we created a common program. With the help of this common program it became easier for us to work. We will unite together further only under one general condition—under the leadership of the Soviet Union.

Here I should tell you, that we have yet still one “teacher”—Tito! (Laughter). And again, if he did not exist, things would be more difficult for us.

Tito does not want to a member of our family, and does not want to sign that Declaration because he and his supporters published their anti-Marxist program. Tito opposes all of us because we recognize Marxism-Leninism and are united under the leadership of the Soviet Union.

Evidently, the comrades from Bulgaria and Albania have had enough of this “teacher”. You cannot say that about Poland and Czechoslovakia.

Tito has been very useful to China in the matter of the education of our party and the entire people. And also without pay from our side. It's just like the way the Americans pay Jiang Jieshi, and pay him, it must be said, very well. Such pay can accomplish useful things.

Seriously speaking, when a typical revisionist like Tito appears, it is necessary to establish his actual price and draw him over to the role of first “teacher.” It is necessary to confess, that in the past we did not properly evaluate the role of Tito in revisionism.

If you consider the matter that the first of the “teachers” is Dulles, and then the second is Tito, and then our candidate Jiang Jieshi again falls to third place. (Laughter).

The Soviet comrades have helped us enormously, and have given great help to all the socialist countries. The help to China on the part of the Soviet Union is very big. You can see that for yourself as you travel about the country.

Let's drink to the health of our Soviet comrades.

Shall I continue my monopoly [of this conversation]? You can direct a dazibao (big-character poster) in my direction, to criticize me for talking so much all by myself.

Several words on the Great Leap. Are we indeed having a Great Leap? I should confess that at first I wasn't sure. In April of this year we had a meeting on the question of the harvest. All the secretaries of provincial party committees participated in this meeting. I put the question before them—indeed are we having a Great Leap? At that time in China we were completing a large irrigation construction program. Then they answered me, that the Great Leap they saw with their own eyes. Then a discussion developed about the slogan about the painstaking work to change our way of life. I was doubtful and suggested we add the word “basically,” that is, “in the course of three years basically change the way of life.” No one supported me in this. In defense of their opinion they pointed to factual data and statistical information and so on. They, members of the CC and secretaries of provincial party organizations, then insisted we write: “fundamentally change the appearance of the countryside.”

Only after this meeting my doubts fell away, but not completely. You can call me opportunistic or a rightist element, because I still had doubts after this meeting.

In August we had an enlarged session of the Politburo CC of the CCP in Beidaihe, with the participation of the all the secretaries of the provincial party organizations. But as in August the basic harvest in the country had already been collected, my doubts fell to 99%. Why? Because still at this time the fall harvest wasn't collected and I still had 1% of doubt. Well, and suddenly did God

help us? But basically at this time the production of agricultural goods reached 155 million tons, that is, two times more than the previous year, when only 75-80 million tons were collected. About such a harvest now we can speak with full precision and confidently, although in the press we still have not informed [people]....In the newspapers we write that our task is to gather this year 60-70% more than last year. Still we will not publish this information, because the whole harvest is not in our hands. I beg you not to publish this information. You can talk about a 60-90% increase in harvest in comparison with last year, but not more than 100%. That's because I still have a 1% level of doubt and the harvest is still not in our hands.

Until this time there have been unintelligent people, including me, that [have argued] that we have not properly evaluated the significance of steel. As if you only need to increase the production of steel and all other production will start to rise. It is sufficient to take only one example from machine-construction. If there is not enough steel, machine-construction cannot develop. It's the same with other areas of contemporary industry. For the production of steel you need to have coal and electricity. And yet until this time we have not devoted serious attention to the production of steel. We also need to develop transport and ship-building.

If we don't do this, chaos will arise. Why chaos? Because everyone will start to scream: we don't have this; we need more of that; the mechanization of production is falling behind and the transportation is insufficient, and so on. In the first place we need to construct warehouses, coal equipment enterprises, and also factories with agricultural equipment.

Take as an example the question of the production of steel.

Last year we produced 5.35 million tons.

This year:

-according to the initial plan: 6.2 million tons

-then we raised it to: 7.5 million tons

-and again we raised it to: 9.0 million tons

At a meeting 16 July of the Politburo CC of the CCP together with directors of metallurgical factories, we decided—and then to stretch, that is, raise it again two times? And we decided to take the production of steel in 1958 to 10.7 million tons.

But here began the events in the Near East, and then came Cde. N.S. Khrushchev, and then [Indonesian Prince Norodom] Sihanouk. Everyone was busy, and I myself could not engage with these problems. As a result we verified that in the production of steel we were significantly behind. We began to discuss the question at the meeting in Beidaihe in August.

How do you think that from that time the party began fully to become engaged with metallurgy? When the marshals in this area became the first secretaries of party committees at all levels? That happened in August of this past year!

Comrades, as you see, we have become divorced from life. You might have the impression that everything is going well in China. But I must tell you that we have numerous problems. Above all these are my problems, as the First Secretary of the CC...and the whole world is spinning about. And we are spinning.... (Laughter). Soon we came to the conclusion, that we need to devote all our efforts to industry. You can't say that previously we ignored this. We pursued industry, but not strongly. Only in August we began to get busy and began to seriously produce metal. We powerfully grasped this matter...

In this area I also have doubts. It's been some three months or a few days shy of that. It's a very

dangerous situation. Perhaps we are waiting for a fire? Now we have seriously taken on the production of metal, but while it is still not in our hands I have some doubts...

We Chinese only gradually came to understand the importance of the production of steel. This still proves that the knowledge of the objective world in practice takes place only gradually.

In a word, this we indeed have gone through a great leap. And all the same I want to preserve for myself a percent of doubt in agriculture until the fall harvest has indeed been gathered, and for the production of steel until next year.

We are completely sure that this year the production of steel will reach 10 million tons.

Next year, undoubtedly, it will be easier to reach 20 million tons.

Our program of agricultural construction, as you know, was calculated for 12 years, but it will be fulfilled this year. A 12-year plan we'll fulfill in 3 years!

For next year in agriculture we'll have to compose a new plan.

Earlier we said that we would catch up and surpass England in 12-15 years. But now we precisely know that in practice it doesn't take 12 years, but for several important areas it requires only 2-3 years, for others – five, seven and nine years. Personally it seems to me that in ship-building we won't catch up to England in this time period. But indeed comrades Zhou Enlai and Deng Xiaoping maintain, that in 12-15 years we can catch up to England in ship-building. But indeed England has a relatively powerful ship-building industry...

Such a boost in the agricultural and industrial production of China, it seems to me, will be beneficial for all the countries of the socialist camp, for all of global communism, for everyone, who fights against colonialism and imperialism, for everyone who supports peace.

We're looking into the question of where our support comes from. Above all, [our strengths are a product] of the power of the Soviet Union, second, the entire fraternal socialist camp, and third, China also needs [the support of] all the peace-loving peoples of the world. All of this together composes an important factor of global significance. Because there will not be a new global war. But we must perpetually strive to stand together for peace, for our shared goals.

I said here that the Soviet Union has helped us and I didn't mention the other socialist countries.

As you see, again I have made a mistake. It would be more correct to say: all the countries of the socialist camp have helped us. Thank you!

I consider, that in the course of seven to eight years we will complete the tasks before us. Within another seven-eight years, and the imperialists will not have the strength to hoist upon us another global war.

Imperialism is going to collapse, and we are moving forward!

Perhaps someone here does not agree with me? (Laughter).

Cde. Efremov: Time works in our favor!

Cde. Mao Zedong: Does this mean you are the representative of all those present?

Cde. Efremov: I think everyone here supports me in this. It's unlikely you'll find anyone here that does not support you.

Cde. Mao Zedong: I categorically have decided not to talk anymore.

Chervenkov: Let's raise a toast to Comrade Mao Zedong!

The secretary of the Sophia [Bulgaria] City Party Committee asks Cde. Mao Zedong to say something about the people's communes.

Cde. Mao Zedong: After the creation of the people's communes the party administration of the masses will be strengthened. This is very important. The organization of the people's communes is historically the best means to the creation of local authority, but the people's communes will not be confused with party organizations. The party is the leading organization, the strong administrative nucleus dedicated to the communization of the people.

The fundamental characteristic of the people's commune is its strong form of organization and more significant level of socialization. From 700,000 agricultural collectives we have created 20,000 people's communes, an average of 7,000 households in each. There are communes of 10,000 households and even some of tens of thousands. So it is above all the unification of people from different areas of agriculture and industry. If you have many people, and a lot of land, opportunities arise for combining different forms of agriculture.

Besides the vast scale of the [process of] consolidation, the people's communes signify a high level of socialization. Conditions have been created where it will be easier to battle against the remnants of bourgeois legality. All of this you will see for yourselves in the localities, when you travel around the country...

Fundamentally the people's communes are socialist organizations and not communist, although within them you already have several elements of a communist society.

In 1871 the French created the Paris Commune. At first K. Marx did not recognize it, but then he gave a speech in its favor and even wrote his famous work about it. And who were the Paris Communards? Artisanal workers—only a portion of them were industrial workers and oppressed simple citizens. If at that time the French could create the commune, that is, the power of the dictatorship of the proletariat, then why can't we in the current circumstances create the people's communes? It wasn't us who thought of this name, it came from the masses themselves and above all the people in Henan. They were the first ones who thought up the name – the people's communes, and wrote it down.

In August of this year I was in Henan, Shanxi, and Shandong. We discussed the best name with the peasants. After conversations and arguments I decided: if the people want to call it the people's commune, well then let it be that. At the August meeting of the CCP CC the name was accepted, chosen by the people themselves.

What are the prospects of the people's communes? Will they have success or will they suffer defeat? Let's wait several years and see.

Basically one can say, that they will develop successfully. The people themselves want them. Otherwise, in the small cooperatives it is impossible to create the necessary quantity of goods for the people. To think that only hundreds of thousands, millions of our people are involved in the production of food. It is necessary to liberate women from the kitchen, it is necessary to create communal eating. The masses themselves have come to this understanding. When the women are liberated from the kitchen, they can devote their enormous strength to the development of production. To achieve this, we have much work before us—we need kitchens, kindergartens, master craftspeople and much else.

In my view, with several reservations, in this matter we will not suffer defeat.

Of course, the people's communes are still not communism, as in them are still preserved several categories. It's true, this year everything is provided for free – wheat, as it will be next year, but if

there will be a big harvest, then the unlimited supply to the commune members will be still greater. It's more difficult with clothes. Several examples of bourgeois legality will be preserved for some time, in particular the preservation at present of 8 levels of pay for workers. But we don't expect such a situation to last long and gradually it will be destroyed.

Thank you very much for your visit to our country. It is a great support.

Our unity will be strengthened. If someone deceives us, it will be unconscionable from his side, it will be treason.

Cde. Efremov: Then a new "teacher" will appear. (Laughter).

Cde. Mao Zedong: You are a man of science, but you understand politics well.

Cde. Efremov: We studied from Lenin.

Cde. Mao Zedong: We also studied Lenin. We received from him not only the general line, but a practical direction...Is this your first time in China? We haven't met you before?

Cde. Efremov: No, we haven't met.

Cde. Mao Zedong: You see what a bureaucrat I am, I forgot. We, probably, met in Moscow? How will you receive me, if we again meet in Moscow?

Cde. Efremov: Very cordially!

Cde. Mao Zedong: Well then, we'll see each other again! Goodbye!

At this point the conversation concluded.

Recorded by VI. Rogov.