

February 6, 1949

Memorandum of Conversation between Anastas Mikoyan and Mao Zedong

Citation:

"Memorandum of Conversation between Anastas Mikoyan and Mao Zedong", February 6, 1949, Wilson Center Digital Archive, APRF: F. 39, Op. 1, D. 39, Ll. 78-88. Reprinted in Andrei Ledovskii, Raisa Mirovitskaia and Vladimir Miasnikov, *Sovetsko-Kitaiskie Otnosheniia*, Vol. 5, Book 2, 1946-February 1950 (Moscow: Pamiatniki Istoricheskoi Mysli, 2005), pp. 81-87. Translated by Sergey Radchenko.
<https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/113352>

Summary:

Anastas Mikoyan and Mao Zedong discuss Outer Mongolia, the Sino-Soviet treaty, the situation of the national minorities in China, the economic policy of the CCP, the structure of state power, the head of the Chinese government, the "new situation" and the cadres, the Soviet loan to China, the CCP CC plans for February-March, and the youth movement.

Original Language:

Russian

Contents:

Translation - English

On 6 February 1949 another meeting took place with Mao Zedong and CCP CC Politburo members Zhou Enlai, Liu Shaoqi, Ren Bishi, Zhu De in the presence of the interpreter Shi Zhe and our comrades—I[van]. V. Kovalev and E.F Kovalev

ON OUTER MONGOLIA

I conveyed to Mao Zedong the content of the telegram on Outer Mongolia and the Sino-Soviet treaty.

I said that the leaders of Outer Mongolia stand for the unification of all Mongolian regions of China with Outer Mongolia, though the Soviet government speaks out against this plan, as it means cutting away from China a number of regions, though this plan does not threaten the interests of the USSR. Continuing, I said that we do not think that Outer Mongolia would go for renunciation of its independence in favor of autonomy as a part of the Chinese state.

Mao Zedong said that they respect the wish of Outer Mongolia to remain a sovereign state, and if it does not want to unite with Inner Mongolia, then one must take this into account, and we are not against this. We, of course, do not defend the Chinese great power policy, added Mao Zedong.

ON THE SINO-SOVIET TREATY

On the question of the Sino-Soviet treaty I said that we consider the Sino-Soviet treaty on Port Arthur an unequal treaty, concluded in order to prevent the Guomindang's collusion with Japan and the USA against the USSR and the liberation movement in China. This treaty, I said, gave a certain benefit for the liberation movement in China, but now, with the coming to power of the Chinese communists, the situation in the country cardinally changes. In connection with this, I continued, the Soviet government has made a decision to cancel this unequal treaty and withdraw its forces from Port Arthur as soon as the peace with Japan had been signed. But if the Chinese Com[munist] Party, I said, considers it expedient to have the forces withdrawn immediately, the USSR is prepared to do this. As far as the treaty on the Changchun Railroad, we do not consider it as unequal treaty, because this road was built, mainly, with Russia's funds. Perhaps, I said, the principle of equal rights has not been fully observed in that treaty but we are prepared to discuss this question and solve it with the Chinese comrades in a fraternal way.

The appraisal of this treaty as unequal was so unexpected for Mao Zedong and the members of the Politburo that it caused their frank astonishment. After this Mao Zedong and the members of the Politburo almost in unison spoke to the effect that now one should not withdraw Soviet forces from Liaodong and liquidate the base at Port Arthur because we would only help the USA this way. Mao Zedong stated that we will keep the question about withdrawal of forces from Liaodong in secret and that the treaty can be reviewed only when the political reaction[aries] had been destroyed in China, the people will be mobilized to attack the foreign capital with the aid of confiscating it, then with the help of the Soviet Union "we will put ourselves in order." The Chinese people, Mao Zedong said, are grateful to the Sov[iet] Union for this Treaty. When we become strong, then "you will leave China" and we will conclude a Sino-Soviet mutual help treaty along the lines of the Soviet-Polish treaty.

Further, Mao Zedong said that in determining the ownership over the property of the Changchun Railroad one can observe small glitches, which can be resolved locally. For example, the Guomindang took a part of the enterprises of the Changchun Railroad into their hands, and with the arrival of the PLA they were once again passed to the Changchun Railroad. The people say that the Guomindang-ists took these enterprises in accordance with the Sino-Soviet treaty, and the PLA, as if infringing the

treaty, is returning them to Changchun Railroad. Mao Zedong expressed himself in favor of Gao Gang and Kovalev I[van]. figuring out this question and reporting to the CCP and the VKP(b).

ON THE SITUATION OF THE NATIONAL MINORITIES IN CHINA

We recognize the Muslims, Mao Zedong said, as a nation. We never approved the Guomindang policy of oppressing the Chinese Muslims and therefore believe that we must provide them with autonomy in the framework of China. There are up to 30 million Muslims in China in total. They live mainly in the provinces of Ningxia, Qinghai, Gansu and Tibet. Their language is Chinese but their writing is different. Their religious books are written in the Arabic language.

Some national minorities live in the province of Xikang where they suffer from slave-like exploitation on the part of the local feudal lords.

We intend to give the autonomy rights to the Thais living in Southwestern China.

In the provinces of Guizhou and Yunnan live the Miao national minority, with which the Chinese authorities have tense relations. In 1934-1935, when our army passed through these provinces, the Miao supported us. We believe that the Miao have a right to be represented in the provincial governments.

The Yao tribes are spread across the Guangxi and Hunan provinces. They constantly pose resistance to the Chinese.

Among the more than 50 million of the population in the Sichuan province there are small national groups, from which one can create separate national counties. The Li tribes counting from 3 to 4 million people populate the Hainan Island. A part of them are in the stage of barbarism.

On Formosa Island, from the 6 million population several hundred thousand are from the local nations.

About 2 million Koreans live in Manchuria.

The Tibet question is very complicated. In essence, it is a British colony, and only formally counts as China's. Recently the Americans have been flirting with the Tibetans by various means.

Xinjiang has about 14 nationalities, counting about 3 million. Xinjiang has a great strategic significance and economically connects us to the USSR. In accordance with our plan we will be there in 1951.

Returning to the question of Tibet, Mao Zedong said that once we finish the Civil War and resolve internal political questions inside the country and when the Tibetans feel that we do not threaten them with aggression and treat them equally, then we will solve the subsequent fate of this region. With regard to Tibet we must be careful and patient, taking into account the complex regional mix there and the power of Lamaism.

In resolving the national question in China, Mao Zedong said, we learn from the Russian Bolsheviks.

THE QUESTION OF ECONOMIC POLICY OF THE CCP

Further, Mao Zedong turned to relating the question of economic policy of the CCP. He said that the industry takes up 10% in the economy of China. Industry means that there is national proletariat and national bourgeoisie. If we do not take this into account we may commit mistakes. The remaining 90% of the economy of China comes under individual peasant households, which are under imperialist and feudal oppression. That is why this peasantry is a reliable ally of the proletariat. In all of China it amounts to 360 million population, or 90 million households, of which 67% is taken by poor households. In the liberated regions the peasants obtained land, they are led by the working class. But if we do not develop our industry, do not give industrial goods to the peasants, then we will not provide for the leadership of the working class over the peasantry. The experience of Russia teaches us that one must give the countryside not only the land, but also city goods. In this respect we have had changes in the last three months: we began to work in the cities and develop their industry. We have no doubts that the USSR will help us in developing the industry, and then we will be able to give help to our countryside.

Returning to the question of the weight ratio of industry in the economy of China, Mao Zedong said that the 10% includes state monopolies and private capital. The bureaucratic capital takes up the largest part of this 10%. Roads, mines, shipping companies, etc.—all are in the hands of the bureaucratic capital.

Private capital takes a small portion of the 10%. Our policy with regard to private industrial enterprises must not repeat former mistakes, so as not to scare away the national bourgeoisie, therefore now we will not carry out the confiscation of private industrial capital and its enterprises. We explain that in Russia there was a socialist revolution, and our revolution is new democratic. But even in Russia after the October revolution NEP [New Economic Policy] was introduced and only after 12 years liquidation of the kulaks was begun. We have a different situation, and we must treat our bourgeoisie with more caution. We are not afraid of the capitalists and do not adjust to them, and in this case only Sun Yatsen's mottos about the limitation of capital and equalized land use are employed.

What should be limited?

Loan shark banks, jewelry and silk-producing enterprises, as not manufacturing goods of wide consumption.

Ore mining enterprises should be given the opportunity to export their products, but under the condition that export will be in the hands of the state. Free competition is allowed on the market, but the state control over it is also not allowed to slip. For example, if the state has a lot of grain it will always be able to regulate the market in the interests of workers and peasants. This control may also limit the growth of capitalism.

In the cities and in the countryside one should encourage the development of cooperative production and not allow excessive exploitation of workers and laborers on the part of the private capital and land lords. At private enterprises capitalists may obtain legal profits, but at the same time one should protect the rights of workers. In contrast with the former times to allow the capitalists and workers to have their own organizations. For example, we organize prof[essional] unions on the scale of all of China.

Permitting that the capitalists have profits from their enterprises we at the same time must regulate the development of these enterprises in such a way that it benefits the state. One should develop those branches of the industry, which

strengthen the country.

Therefore, Mao Zedong said, with our economic policy our economy is different from the Soviet economy, but we are also against taking the capitalist economies of England and the USA as the example. We stand for the strengthening of the elements of state and cooperative economy. The state economy will be socialist in character but we are not shouting about this so as not to scare someone away. The state economy will be strengthened because the communists have the power and the army is in their hands. This is why the state economy will be leading in the economy of new China.

Cooperative economy by character is semi-socialist. It is created on the basis of unification of private interests. Now we cannot take the road of kolkhozes, though many would like them. Conditions have not been created for them yet.

THE STRUCTURE OF STATE POWER

Turning to the question of the structure of state power Mao Zedong said that we do not intend to use the parliamentary form. The CCP is leading in the entire country, it has its own military forces. The Guomindang has been destroyed, and the small parties have no influence in the country. Therefore the question of the structure of power comes up differently. It will be different from the Soviets. We are calling a congress of people's representatives on the basis of a union between workers and peasants under the leadership of the proletariat. The government is elected at this congress. Governments of villages, regions, counties [and] provinces are elected at congresses, and the people's government of the Chinese Democratic Republic is elected at the All-China Congress of People's Representatives.

Departments will be created in the provincial governments. Ministries will be created in Manchuria, inasmuch as it unites 9 provinces. China will have 9 administrative regions or lines, that is:

1. The Northeastern, with the center in Mukden
2. North China—Beiping
3. Central China—Hankou
4. South—Canton
5. Southwestern—Kunming
6. Sichuan-Xikang—Chengdu
7. Northwestern—Xi'an
8. Xinjiang—Urumqi

The lines will not have ministries (with the exception of Manchuria).

We need such a structure, Mao Zedong said, in order to give the initiative to the localities and not concentrate everything in the Central government. This system is also beneficial in that it raises the role of the communists at the localities in comparison with the democrats.

The North Chinese government has already been created and on its base will be prepared the central government with the capital—the city of Beiping [Beijing].

In the future government communists and leftist democrats will take probably 2/3 of all seats. Formally communists will not have that many seats, but in fact the majority of seats in the government will belong to them because a number of seats will be taken by covert communists. The rightist parties will also take part in the

government, but in the minority.

ON THE HEAD OF GOVERNMENT

The structure of the central government is similar to the government of the USSR. It is headed by a presidium with a Chairman, the premier has not been confirmed yet but probably, Mao Zedong said, it will be Zhou Enlai.

As to himself Mao Zedong said that he will leave to himself the chairmanship of the CCP CC and will join the government with the rights of a member of the presidium.

Sun Yatsen's widow Song Qingling is intended as the chairman of the presidium. She, Mao Zedong said, is fully subordinate to us, and has a huge authority among the people.

Ren Bishi who participated in the conversation said that, in his opinion, it is better for Mao Zedong to be the chairman of the presidium; he was supported by Zhou Enlai who stated that Sun Yatsen's widow still makes them uncomfortable, though she is close to the communists and never revealed secret information, which came to her from them, in particular that at one time she passed to the CCP money from the Comintern. Zhou Enlai said that if Mao Zedong does not take up the post of the chairman of the presidium, this will not be understood by the people. Then, he continued, strict surveillance has been established over Sun Yatsen's widow and there are concerns that the Guomindang-ists will take her away by force. In any case, Zhou Enlai said, if Sun Yatsen's widow becomes the chairman of the presidium, Mao Zedong should take the premier's post.

Continuing, Mao Zedong said that there are three more candidates for the post of the chairman of the presidium: Zhu De, Dong Biwu and Liu Bochong. The question of the chairman should be solved taking into account the internal and the international situation.

THE NEW SITUATION AND THE QUESTION OF CADRES

Speaking of the fact that in the nearest future the CCP will convene the political consultative council Mao Zedong stressed it will take place in conditions under which the Civil War has not ended yet, the offensive must not be slackened, and Jiang Jieshi still has 1 million forces. Now, the situation is different and though it has not become entirely clear, it already requires an appraisal. The novelty is that whereas up to the present time we have had the territory north of the Yangzi, the countryside was at the first place for us, and then the cities, and usually we resorted to the tactic of encirclement, now with the move beyond the Yangzi we will have to take large cities, the scale of the military operations widens considerably, and before us rise to full height the questions of the industry, i.e. the city economies of Shanghai, Nanjing, Wuhu, Hankou, and other cities. In this connection the problem of the cadres is becoming more acute than ever. We are now preparing 53 thousand people. Our army is the source for the cadres. The demobilized will be directed to leadership work in the cities and villages. Kang Sheng has been entrusted with the work to prepare the cadres. If one took account of the fact that on the Shanghai-Nanjing line of advance we have employed 900 thousand people and on the Xi'an line of advance 300 thousand people, this mass of battle-trying and politically prepared people will give us the supply of the necessary cadres.

ON THE SOVIET LOAN TO CHINA

Then Mao Zedong turned to the financial questions and asked whether they could

receive a loan and paper for printing banknotes. He said that they have no more than 5 million American dollars worth of silver. In the course of 3 years they would like to obtain a loan in silver (for possible emission of hard currency), oil, raw materials, equipment etc. to the amount of 300 million Am[erican] dollars. They would like to receive this amount by equal parts beginning in 1949.

Talking about the loan Mao Zedong said that the 300 million is our need, we do not know whether you can give us such an amount, less or more of it, but even if you do not give, we will not hold it against you. We are not asking for gratis aid, because this would be exploitation of the Soviet Union on the part of China. We are asking for a returnable loan with the payment of relevant interest, which China will be able to pay in the future. The latter is important for the Chinese workers who will know that the loan should be repaid to the Sov[iet] Union.

Until now, continued Mao Zedong, we received arms free of charge. But we know that the labor of the Soviet workers goes into the production of the Soviet arms, which should be paid for.

We will not widen for now the list of the arms needed by us. We have enough arms for the current operations. At the same time one should say that we need 3000 vehicles and gasoline. We have put together requests for these and other needed machines and materials, but we do not know how much it all will cost and whether their full cost fits into the loan. We are not also clear about the question as to how we should pay for this loan. If the question of the loan is resolved positively, we will send our delegation to Moscow for signing a relevant agreement. In connection with the loan we would like to send a group of our cadres to the USSR for getting to know the work of the Soviet banks.

As for the paper for printing banknotes, our need of it amounts to 10 thousand tons.

CCP CC PLAN FOR THE MONTHS OF FEBRUARY - MARCH 1949

Further, Mao Zedong turned to recounting the CCP plans for February-March 1949. During this period control will be taken administratively over Tianjin and Beiping, Fu Zuoyi's army will be reorganized, movement of the leading organs to Beiping [Beijing] will be carried out, a plenum of the CCP CC will be called (first half of March), the preparatory commission for the calling of the political consultative council will begin work and possible negotiations with the Guomindang will begin, though [they] know ahead of time that our conditions are absolutely unacceptable to it, especially the question of war criminals. The latter list also includes Japanese war criminals.

The plan also stipulates that in April the 900 thousand strong army on the Shanghai-Nanjing line of advance will launch an offensive and take a number of cities near Nanjing. The capture of Nanjing is planned for April. It is possible that Lin Biao's forces will at the same time reach Hankou and capture it. At the same time Chen Yi's forces must capture Xi'an.

In March the women's congress will open, and in April—the congress of the new democratic union of the youth.

ON THE YOUTH MOVEMENT

As Mao Zedong said, the organization of the youth movement stipulates two stages: first, a congress of the union of the new democratic youth is called, then the All-China youth federation is created, which will be joined by youth organizations (student union, peasant union of the young people, etc.).

I raised a question that in the previous conversation they agreed with Cde. Filippov on the question of work among the youth, in particular, about the organization of a wide youth union like the union of the young patriots of China, and now from the plan recounted by them it transpires that such a union will not materialize, but there will be a federation of several youth unions—new democratic (like the Komsomol), Marxist, Christian, student and other youth unions.

With such organization it may turn out that the progressive youth in the new democratic youth union will be isolated, and other unions will remain in the hands of the bourgeois parties and may become its reserves.

I asked whether they think about the membership of the youth in many unions. In reply to this, Mao Zedong, supported by Zhou Enlai and Ren Bishi, said that in the future they intend to liquidate the Christian federation of young people, and on the basis of the new democratic union of the youth to create a federation of a unified youth organization. The Student Union will be kept independent.

I told them that they, of course, know better how to go about the organization of the youth, but still [I] asked them to think it through well and discuss this question from all sides so as to correctly implement the advice of Comrade Stalin. Mao Zedong and his comrades agreed with that.

The conversation ended at this.