

October 14, 1959

**From the Journal of Ambassador S.F. Antonov,
Summary of a Conversation with the Chairman of
the CC CPC Mao Zedong**

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Summary:

October 1959 conversation between Mao Zedong and the Soviet diplomat and sinologist S.F. Antonov, in which Mao attempted to reassure the Soviets that China would not provoke war with the United States or with its Asian neighbors. In his conversation with Antonov, Mao attempts to lessen the impact of China's displeasure with Soviet policies. He tries hard to show his agreement with Moscow on every issue—the United States, Taiwan, India, Tibet, disarmament.

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"21 October 1959"

Summary of a conversation
with the Chairman of the CC CPC
[Central Committee Communist Party of China] Mao Zedong
on 14 October 1959

In accordance with instructions I visited Mao Zedong and gave him confidential information about Comrade N.S. Khrushchev's visit to the USA. Handing Mao Zedong the text of the information, I told him that according to the Chinese press and to comments of Chinese comrades, the conviction had developed at the Embassy that our Chinese friends approve of the results of Comrade N.S. Khrushchev's visit to the USA. Comrade Mao Zedong, in reply, said that they fully approve of this foreign policy step of the CPSU, and that they have no differences in evaluation of the significance of this trip. In a half-joking tone, I asked Mao Zedong whether one could consider that on this question we are united on all ten fingers. Mao Zedong said, that it is so, and added, that in general, whenever we have some sort of disagreements, they consist of just one finger out of ten, or more precisely, just half a finger. Regarding that, he continued, if there are some disagreements between us, then they are not of permanent character, but are partial and temporary. On most questions we are united on all ten fingers. Sometimes, it may appear that our disagreements are on many fingers, rather than just one, but that is incorrect. In fact, on all important and fundamental matters there is always unity between us.

In response to the interest which Mao Zedong expressed, I briefly imparted to him the main points of the information conveyed to him. Mao Zedong listened to this report with great interest, and in a number of places added his own commentaries on certain questions. He agreed with the CC CPSU's conclusion, as contained in the information, that as a result of Comrade N.S. Khrushchev's visit to the USA there had been carried out a real relaxation of tensions in the international situation. Mao Zedong expressed extreme approval of the Soviet government proposal for general and complete disarmament which N.S. Khrushchev made during his voyage to the USA, and which was submitted for review to the United Nations. The proposal of the Soviet government for full disarmament, said Mao Zedong, really is the best means of resolving the entire problem of disarmament. Precisely general and complete disarmament is necessary, he underlined. At the present time, he said further, the Peoples Liberation Army of China counts in its ranks approximately 2 million people. The internal needs of the Chinese People's Republic [CPR] do not require an army of such size. Control over the internal situation in the country can be entirely realized by the people's militia, which consists not of military personnel but of people working in industry. In the event that the matter leads to the real achievement of general disarmament, the size of the army could definitely be reduced. If the Americans set out to reduce the size of their own army, continued Mao Zedong, then we definitely could take corresponding steps to reduce our own armed forces.

Mao Zedong said further that a session of the Permanent Committee of the All-China Council of People's Representatives was set for October 14, at which would be accepted a resolution of approval and support for the Soviet proposal for general and complete disarmament. In this way, he added, the Soviet proposal will be supported by our Chinese parliament.

I told Mao Zedong that the debate and approval of the Soviet proposals on disarmament by the Permanent Committee of the ACCP is a very important and

useful measure by our Chinese friends. Further, I briefly pointed out to Mao Zedong the place in the report on N.S. Khrushchev's trip where Chinese-American relations are discussed.

Regarding this, Mao Zedong noted that Comrade N.S. Khrushchev in his conversations with Eisenhower had spoken very firmly and correctly about the Taiwan question. Taiwan, continued Mao Zedong, is an inalienable part of China. Contrary to a number of countries, which after World War II had been divided in accordance with international agreements (Germany, Korea, Vietnam), on the Taiwan question there had not been and were not any sort of international acts in which the separation of Taiwan from China had been mentioned. To the contrary, even during the war, in the Cairo Declaration, it had been decided that after the completion of military operations Taiwan would be freed from its Japanese occupiers and returned to China.

At the same time, Mao Zedong announced further, the Chinese People's Republic does not intend to start a war with the United States of America over Taiwan. We can wait 10-20 and even 30 or 40 years, continued Mao Zedong. In this case we are taking into account the experience of the Soviet Union, which over 22 years [1918-1940--ed.] did not take military measures to return the Baltic states to the ranks of the USSR. However, while not starting a war over Taiwan, we will always say and pronounce, that Taiwan is an inalienable part of the Chinese People's Republic.

In 1958, continued Mao Zedong, the Chinese People's Republic, as is well known, shelled the coastal islands in the Straits of Taiwan. This was after the Americans fell into a difficult situation in the Middle East. In last year's situation, added Mao Zedong, this step proved useful by adding to the American difficulties. Mao Zedong said further, that the Jiang Jieshi-ists [Nationalist Chinese] themselves wanted and had requested that such a shelling be conducted. It is true, that during the first days after the shelling had begun Jiang Jieshi experienced some doubts regarding the fact that the CPR might intend to occupy the islands of Quemoy and Matsu as a result of the shelling, however, Jiang Jieshi soon, in the words of Mao Zedong, became convinced that the government of the CPR had no such intentions. The same was true regarding the Americans, continued Mao Zedong; for two weeks they thought that the PLAC (People's Liberation Army of China) intended to conquer the islands, but then they understood that this was not included in the plans of the government of the CPR.

Mao Zedong further emphasized, that the Chinese friends began from the fact the USA would not begin a war over the coastal islands. Besides that, he added, last year's shelling of the islands was undertaken when certain concrete conditions prevailed. At the present time, noted Mao Zedong, the situation was already different.

Having further on his own initiative broached the question of the border conflict between India and the Chinese People's Republic, Mao Zedong underlined: "We never, under any circumstances, will move beyond the Himalayas. That is completely ruled out. This is an argument over inconsequential pieces of territory."

Nehru is now trying to use the armed incident which took place on the border, Mao Zedong said further. He is pursuing a three-part goal: First, he is trying to deliver a blow to the Communist Party of India; second, to ease for India the conditions for the receipt of economic aid from the Western powers, in particular from the USA; and third, to obstruct the spread of influence of the CPR and the socialist camp on the Indian people.

Further, Mao Zedong touched on the situation in Tibet, pointing out that at the present time Tibet had set out toward democratic reformation, and precisely that more than anything frightens Nehru. It is necessary to note, continued Mao Zedong,

that the popular masses of Tibet had met these reforms with great enthusiasm. During the Tibetan events approximately 12 thousand people had left for India, of whom reactionary elements, large landowners-serfholders, reactionary lamas, stewards of landed estates and so on made up around 6-7 thousand. Around 5 thousand people ran off to India under compulsion, deception, or threat. These refugees at the present time are manifesting a desire to return to China. Of all the serfholders-landowners of Tibet, around 80 percent took part in the revolt, and many of them ran off to India. However, some of the landowners remained in Tibet. Regarding those landowners who remained, remarked Mao Zedong, certain measures had been taken aimed at giving them, after reforms, the possibility of maintaining their long-term existence.

Characterizing the situation in Tibet, Mao Zedong tried hard to emphasize that it is to a great degree unique. "The Dalai Lama is a god, not a man," said Mao Zedong — "in any case he is seen that way by the majority of the Tibetan population." Mao Zedong said further that it is even better that the Dalai Lama left for India, insofar as if he had remained in Tibet the masses of Tibetan peasants could not raise themselves to the realization of democratic reform. If, continued Mao Zedong, we had arrested the Dalai Lama, that would have called the population of Tibet forth into rebellion. This is difficult even for Chinese from other parts of our country to understand, added Mao Zedong; only in Tibet do we have a situation like this. Not in inner Mongolia, nor in Sinkiang, nor in other regions of the CPR where national minorities live, do similar situations exist. Nonetheless, hate and ill-feeling toward serfowners had been building up for a long time among the Tibetan peasantry, and now, when the majority of landowners had left, and land is being given to the peasants, they raised themselves up and heatedly approve of the democratic reforms which are now under way.

Mao Zedong said that really, the situation in Tibet, evidently, is complicated, there are present various social and economic structures. Mao Zedong said that overall in China up until the present time there are even colonies of foreign states, like Macao. A small country, like Portugal, 400 years ago grabbed from China this chunk of land. How should we proceed in this case? The CC CPC considered this question, and worked out a course, which for now consists of not touching Macao.

"And so, when they say that the Chinese are war-like," noted Mao Zedong, "one cannot accept this as true, but sometimes in a certain case it is expedient to show an opponent one's own firmness. Last year, for example, during the Middle Eastern crisis the U.S. State Department published a memorandum in which it made against the CPR various accusations of aggression in Korea, in Vietnam, and so on. However, the USA ended up in isolation. After our shelling of the coastal islands the Americans did not assume the obligation of defending Quemoy and Matsu, they took a passive position." It might seem, continued Mao Zedong, that here there is a sort of very tricky and unclear matter, but in fact everything is clear enough. Of course, he added, all this is said relevant to the situation which obtained in the autumn of last year. Now, already, there is no sense in continuing these measures. Overall, it is possible to consider the measures we took last year, continued Mao Zedong, as one of the links in a chain of those troubles, which were created for the Americans. Another link in this chain was the advancement of the Berlin question by the Soviet Union.

In the Middle-Eastern crisis, and the shelling of the islands, and the broaching of the Berlin question—these are all events which have caused trouble for the Americans. These events made possible the achievement of several goals which you posit in Europe, noted Mao Zedong. "And in fact," he continued, "the CPR will not begin a war with the USA, nor with Jiang Jieshi over the Taiwan question."

As far as Chinese-American relations are concerned, said Mao Zedong, we, the Chinese, have so far done what we can. The Americans do not want to recognize us

and every day conduct anti-Chinese propaganda, cursing us in all sorts of ways in the newspapers and in official pronouncements. Meanwhile, there is a single serious question in Chinese-American relations — the Taiwan question. We, continued Mao Zedong, showed on this issue a certain readiness to compromise, on the question of the terms of cessation of the American occupation of Taiwan. We proposed that the Americans stay for a time on Taiwan, on the condition, however, that they would accept the obligation to leave the island over a certain period of time, say over 5-10 or 15 years. We, said Mao Zedong, sort of traded with them: Which do you, Americans, prefer — permanent tension in the region of Taiwan or a calm situation in exchange for the obligation to quit Taiwan over a period of time? This method of solving the question, observed Mao Zedong, was proposed by the Chinese side during negotiations with the Americans in Warsaw. And if the USA would agree with this, then the question of tension in the region of Taiwan could be settled. However, the Americans had turned out to be too thick-skulled; they placed their hopes on the use of force and on the creation of high pressure. The CPR, continued Mao Zedong, does not send its airplanes to Taiwan, even reconnaissance flights of the CPR air defense forces do not fly there. At the same time, American-made planes all the time fly from Taiwan to the mainland, in fact not so long ago one airplane was shot down in the region of Peking with the help of arms which were received from the USSR. I said to Mao Zedong that this weapon at the present time had already been transferred to the CPR and our Chinese comrades had already used it, and mastered it well, as the results of this operation showed. Therefore, the credit for the shooting down of the plane belongs to the Chinese anti-aircraft gunners. It is also pleasant for us to hear, I added, your evaluation of our weapons, and that you associate this victory with our aid.

“Yes, we associate them,” said Mao Zedong. After the presentation of the conclusions of the CC CPSU, as contained in the concluding part of the report regarding the journey of Comrade N.S. Khrushchev to the USA, Mao Zedong again announced: “Your evaluation is correct. We agree with it. We have no disagreements on those questions.” Further Mao Zedong said that the Cold War had already begun to be an unfavorable factor for the American imperialists themselves. And the imperialists will bring an end to the Cold War only when it turns into an unfavorable factor for them. Mao Zedong emphasized that he had already spoken about this with Comrade N.S. Khrushchev during their meeting in July-August 1958. If the Americans want to end the Cold War now, it means that it has become disadvantageous for them. “And for us,” continued Mao Zedong, “what do we need it for? It is another matter if the Americans, as before, are inclined to take a hard line, in that case we can be more than tough enough.”

Mao Zedong right after that said that during his meetings with Comrade N.S. Khrushchev in Moscow in November 1957 and in Peking in July-August 1958 he had exchanged views on the questions of turning the Cold War into a factor which would be unfavorable for the Americans, about which side fears war more, and about the character of aggressive blocs (NATO, SEATO, and the Baghdad Pact). These blocs cannot be characterized only as offensive. They act aggressively when we in the Socialist camp undergo something disadvantageous, when something happens like the events in Hungary. If we are strong internally, then the members of these blocs will be required to sit on the defensive. They build bases like dams against a flood. One can liken the above-mentioned blocs precisely to these sorts of dams. The imperialists fear the infiltration of communist bacillae into the capitalist world.

Our most dangerous enemies, said Mao Zedong further, are West Germany and Japan. At the present time these countries do not have colonies, while the USA, England and France have multiple spheres of influence. Take, for instance, the USA, said Mao Zedong; everything, beginning with Taiwan and ending with Turkey, this in its essence is the “American world.” The Americans grabbed a lot, they try everywhere to hold on to everything, not wishing to let anything escape their grasp, not even our Chinese island Quemoy. We take, for example, continued Mao Zedong, West Berlin; its territory is not big, its population also not large, however, the

Americans fear losing it very much, clutching it in all sorts of ways, evidently fearing that their exit from West Berlin will lead to a decrease in their international authority, and that as a result of losing West Berlin they can lose everything else.

Regarding an evaluation of the perspectives for settling the problem of West Berlin, said Mao Zedong further, he, Mao Zedong, thinks that Western powers will begin, evidently, to decrease their occupation forces in Western Berlin. It is possible, that in the longterm, in about 10 years, or over a slightly longer term, the Westerners will be obligated to relinquish West Berlin entirely.

Mao Zedong repeated that the Americans fear very much giving anything up. Therefore, he continued, also in the Far East we for now will not touch them, even in places where they are weak, like Macao or Quemoy. Generally, the Americans don't want us to touch them anywhere, even to the slightest degree, don't want us to touch any territory which is under the influence of capitalism. And why should we harass them, continued Mao Zedong. We ourselves have a large territory, and we can take 20 or 30 years, or even more, to live and develop, and ultimately achieve a full victory over capitalism.

Overall, the international situation is favorable for the socialist camp, underlined Mao Zedong. He said: "Comrade Khrushchev and the CC CPSU undertook good measures in relation to the United States of America." The imperialists, Mao Zedong added, have many weaknesses. They have serious internal contradictions. A rapid swell in the anti-imperialist liberation movement is occurring in Africa and Latin America. As far as Asia is concerned, continued Mao Zedong, here on the surface there is a certain decline [in the movement], explainable by the fact that in many countries of Asia the national bourgeoisie has already taken power. This has not taken place in Africa and Latin America. These two continents present for the USA, England, and France a source of trouble and tasks which are difficult to solve.

Right then, Mao Zedong again said that during the meetings with Comrade Khrushchev in Peking he had already articulated the thought (on the way from the airport to the residence), that at the present time West Germany and Japan represent the main danger to us and to the matter of peace. America, England, and France, it can be said, support the maintenance of the status quo. Therefore, a relaxation of relations with the USA, England, and France is possible. And in certain cases the possibility even of joint efforts with these capitalist powers against West Germany and Japan is not excluded. West Germany, said Mao Zedong, represents a danger not only for us, but also for the capitalist countries of the West.

The Americans at the present time are the richest country, and therefore they support to some extent the maintenance of the status quo. However, the Americans at the same time create tension even in those regions where they occupy an advantageous or even dominant position. For instance, the USA systematically hurts Cambodia, and incites neighboring states to act against it. The Americans even wanted to overthrow Jiang Jieshi, and to replace him with more obedient people.

Regarding this, Mao Zedong recounted how, on 24 May 1957, when the American embassy building on Taiwan was destroyed (and this deed was organized by people close to Jiang Jieshi's son, Jiang Jingguo [Chiang Ching-kuo]), in the hands of the Kuomintang turned up secret American documents, in which were discussed American plans to overthrow Jiang Jieshi. Mao Zedong said that these documents were taken from the safes in the Embassy, which during the destruction of the Embassy building were taken by participants in the demonstration with the help of heavy iron hammers. And so, the USA as an imperialist power in fact has not the slightest sympathy for Jiang Jieshi, or for [Indonesian leader] Sukarno, or for [Iraqi prime minister 'Abd al-Karim] Qassem, or for [Egyptian president Gamal Abdel] Nasser. So sharp, said Mao Zedong, are the conflicts inside the capitalist world.

Comrade Mao Zedong expressed thanks for the confidential report given to him. He requested that we convey a big greeting to Comrade N.S. Khrushchev, and to all members of the Soviet party-government delegation, who had taken part in the celebration of the 10-year anniversary of the founding of the CPR.

For my own part I thanked Comrade Mao Zedong for the conversation and in conclusion briefly told him about the progress toward fulfillment of the economic plan of the USSR for 1959, and also about the preparations which had begun in our country for the Plenum of the CC CPSU. Mao Zedong listened to this with interest.

Comrade B.N. Vereshagin, Counselor of the Embassy, and Yan Min-Fu [sic], translator of the Secretariat of the CC CPC, were present at the conversation.

(Signed) S. Antonov, Temporary Charge d'Affair of the USSR in the CPR