

August 23, 1958

Memoir by Wu Lengxi, 'Inside Story of the Decision Making during the Shelling of Jinmen'

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Summary:

Wu Lengxi, a member of the CCP Central Committee, recalls events in August 1958 when Chinese Communist forces along the Fujian coast began an intensive artillery bombardment of the Nationalist-controlled Jinmen Island. He recalls a Politburo Standing Committee meeting in which Mao states that the bombardment was in part motivated by events in the Middle East.

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In August 1958, the members of the Standing Committee of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) Central Committee Politburo met at Beidaihe for a regular top leaders' working conference. The meeting originally planned to focus on the nation's industrial problems, and later the issue of the people's commune was added to the discussion.

The Politburo convened its summit meeting on 17 August. Being very busy in Beijing at the time, I thought I could attend the meeting several days later. On the 20th, however, the General Office of the Central Committee called, urging me to go to Beidaihe immediately. I left Beijing on 21 August on a scheduled flight arranged by the Central Committee. After arriving, I stayed with Hu Qiaomu in a villa in Beidaihe's central district. This seaside resort area was used only for the leading members of the Central Committee during summers. All of the villas in the resort area were built before the liberation for high officials, noble lords, and foreign millionaires. Only Chairman Mao's large, one-story house was newly constructed.

At noon on 23 August, the third day after I arrived at Beidaihe, the People's Liberation Army's artillery forces in Fujian employed more than 10,000 artillery pieces and heavily bombed Jinmen [Quemoy], Mazu [Matsu], and other surrounding offshore islands occupied by the Nationalist army.

In the evening of the 23rd, I attended the Politburo's Standing Committee meeting chaired by Chairman Mao. At the meeting I learned the reason [for the bombardment]. In mid-July, American troops invaded Lebanon and British troops invaded Jordan in order to put down the Iraqi people's armed rebellion. Thereafter, the Central Committee decided to conduct certain military operations in the Taiwan Straits to support the Arabs' anti-imperialist struggle as well as to crack down on the Nationalist army's frequent and reckless harassment along the Fujian coast across from Jinmen and Mazu. Jiang Jieshi [Chiang Kai-shek] announced on 17 July that Taiwan, Penghu [Pescadores], Jinmen, and Mazu were all "to be on emergency alert." It showed that Jiang's army was going to make some moves soon. We therefore deployed our air force in Fujian Province at the end of July. Our fighters had been fighting the Nationalist air force and had already taken over control of the air space along the Fujian coast. Meanwhile, our artillery reinforcement units arrived at the front one after another. And mass rallies and parades were organized all over the country to support the Iraqi and Arab peoples and to protest against the American and British imperialists' invasions of the Middle East.

Chairman Mao talked first at the meeting of August 23. He said that the day's bombardment was perfectly scheduled. Three days earlier, the UN General Assembly had passed a resolution requesting American and British troops to withdraw from both Lebanon and Jordan. Thus, American occupation of Taiwan became even more unjust, Mao continued. Our demand was that American armed forces should withdraw from Taiwan, and Jiang's army should withdraw from Jinmen and Mazu. If they did not, we would attack. Taiwan was too far away to be bombed, so we shelled Jinmen and Mazu. Mao emphasized that the bombardment would certainly shock the international community, not only the Americans, but also Europeans and Asians. The Arab world would be delighted, and African and Asian peoples would take our side.

Then Chairman Mao turned to me and said that [the reason for] rushing me to attend the meeting was to let me know about this sudden event. He directed me to instruct the New China News Agency (NCNA) to collect international responses to the bombardment. Important responses should be immediately reported to Beidaihe by telephone. Mao asked me not to publish our own reports and articles on the bombardment at present. We needed to wait and see for a couple of days. This was the rule. Mao also asked me to instruct editorial departments of the NCNA, the People's Daily, and national radio stations that they must obey these orders and instructions in all their reports. Our military troops must follow the orders, as well as

our media and propaganda units, Mao emphasized.

Chairman Mao continued his talk. Several days earlier, at the beginning of the summit meeting, he addressed eight international issues. He had been thinking of these issues for many years. His thinking had gradually formulated some points and opinions, and his mind thereby became clear. Those viewpoints, however, could not be all brought forth without considering time, place, and circumstance in our public propaganda, Mao said to me. We had to use a different tone in our media work. What he used as the first example was that at the meeting a couple days earlier he predicted that world war would not break out. But our military should still be prepared for a total war. And our media should still talk about the danger of world war and call for opposing the imperialists' aggressive and war-provoking policies to maintain world peace. The next example in his explanations was which side feared the other a bit more. Although Mao believed that the imperialists were more afraid of us, he told me that our media and propaganda should state that first we were not afraid of war, and second we opposed war. Another point he made was that international tension had a favorable aspect for the people of the world. Our propaganda, however, should declare that we must prevent the imperialists from making any international tension, and work on relaxing such tension. These were only some examples, he continued. There were so many bad things happening in our world. If we were too distracted with worries by everyday anxieties, we would soon collapse psychologically under pressure. We should learn how to use a dichotomous method to analyze the dual nature of bad things. Though international tension was certainly a bad thing, we should see the good side of it. The tension had made many people awaken and decide to fight the imperialists to the end. Employing such an analytical method could help us achieve a liberation in our mind and get rid of a heavy millstone round our necks.

Chairman Mao said that the bombardment of Jinmen, frankly speaking, was our turn to create international tension for a purpose. We intended to teach the Americans a lesson. America had bullied us for many years, so now that we had a chance, why not give it a hard time? For the present we should first wait and see what international responses, especially American responses, there were to our shelling, and then we could decide on our next move. Americans started a fire in the Middle East, and we started another in the Far East. We would see what they would do with it. In our propaganda, however, we still need to condemn the Americans for causing tension in the Taiwan Straits. We did not put them in the wrong. The United States has several thousand troops stationed on Taiwan, plus two air force bases there. Their largest fleet, the Seventh Fleet, often cruises in the Taiwan Straits. They also have a large naval base in Manila. The chief of staff of the American navy had stated not long ago (around 6 August) that the American armed forces were ready anytime for a landing campaign in the Taiwan Straits just as they did in Lebanon. That was eloquent proof [of America's ambition], Mao said.

Two days later, during the afternoon of 25 August, Chairman Mao held another Politburo Standing Committee meeting in the lounge hall of the swimming area at Beidaihe's beach. Mao chaired the meeting in his bathrobe right after swimming in the ocean. Among the participants were Liu Shaoqi, Zhou Enlai, Deng Xiaoping, and Peng Dehuai. Wang Shangrong, Ye Fei, Hu Qiaomu, and I also attended the meeting.

Chairman Mao started the meeting by saying that while we had had a good time at this summer resort, the Americans had extremely hectic and nervous days. According to their responses during the past days, Mao said that Americans were worried not only by our possible landing at Jinmen and Mazu, but also our preparation to liberate Taiwan. In fact, our bombardment of Jinmen with 30,000-50,000 shells was a probe. We did not say if we were or were not going to land. We were acting as circumstances dictated. We had to be doubly cautious, Mao emphasized. Landing on Jinmen was not a small matter because it had a bearing on much more important international issues. The problem was not the 95,000 Nationalist troops stationed

there—this was easy to handle. The problem was how to assess the attitude of the American government. Washington had signed a mutual defense treaty with Taiwan. The treaty, however, did not clearly indicate whether the U.S. defense perimeter included Jinmen and Mazu. Thus, we needed to see if the Americans wanted to carry these two burdens on their backs. The main purpose of our bombardment was not to reconnoiter Jiang's defenses on these islands, but to probe the attitude of the Americans in Washington, testing their determination. The Chinese people had never been afraid of provoking someone far superior in power and strength, and they certainly had the courage to challenge [the Americans] on such offshore islands as Taiwan, Jinmen, and Mazu, which had always been China's territories.

Mao said that we needed to grasp an opportunity. The bombardment of Jinmen was an opportunity we seized when American armed forces landed in Lebanon [on 15 July 1958]. Our action therefore not only allowed us to test the Americans, but also to support the Arab people. On the horns of a dilemma, the Americans seemed unable to cope with both the East and the West at the same time. For our propaganda, however, we should not directly connect the bombardment of Jinmen [to the America's landing in Lebanon]. Our major propaganda target was America's aggressions all over the world, condemning its invasion of the Middle East and its occupation of our territory, Taiwan, Mao said. The People's Daily could begin our propaganda campaign by criticizing an anti-China memorandum recently published by the U.S. State Department, enumerating the crimes of America's invasion of China in the past and refuting the memorandum's calumny and slander against us. We could also organize articles and commentaries on the resolution passed by the UN General Assembly, requesting American and British troops to withdraw from Lebanon and Jordan. Then we could request the withdrawal of American armed forces from their military bases in many countries across the world, including Taiwan. Our media should now conduct an outer-ring propaganda campaign. After we learned the responses and moves of America, of Jiang Jieshi, and of other countries, we could then issue announcements and publish commentaries on the bombardment of Jinmen-Mazu. Mao said that at the present our media should build up strength and store up energy—draw the bow but not discharge the arrow.

Peng Dehuai suggested that the media should write some reports and articles about the heroic fighting of our commanders and soldiers on the Jinmen-Mazu front. The participants at the meeting agreed that our reporters on the front could prepare articles, and we would decide later when they could publish their reports.

That evening I informed the editors of the People's Daily in Beijing, through a secured telephone line, of the Politburo's instructions on how to organize our propaganda campaign. But I did not say anything about the Politburo's decisions, intentions, and purpose for bombing Jinmen-Mazu, which were a top military secret at that time.

For the next two days, the Politburo's Standing Committee meeting at Beidaihe focused its discussions upon how to double steel and iron production and upon issues of establishing the people's commune. Chairman Mao, however, still paid close attention to the responses from all directions to our bombardment of Jinmen, especially to America's response. Mao's secretary called me several times checking on follow-up information after the NCNA's Cangao ziliao [Restricted Reference Material] printed America's responses. During these days, I asked NCNA to report to me every morning by telephone about headline news from foreign news agencies. I reported the important news to Chairman Mao and Premier Zhou.

The Central Committee's working conference at Beidaihe ended on 30 August. Then Chairman Mao returned to Beijing to chair the Supreme State Conference. On 4 September, one day before the conference, Mao called for another Politburo Standing Committee meeting, which mainly discussed the international situation after the bombardment of Jinmen. The meeting analyzed the American responses. Both [Dwight] Eisenhower and [John Foster] Dulles made public speeches. They ordered

half of their warships in the Mediterranean to the Pacific. Meanwhile, the American government also suggested resuming Chinese-American ambassadorial talks at Warsaw. Seemingly, the American leaders believed that we were going to attack Taiwan. They wanted to keep Taiwan. However, they seemed not to have made up their mind whether or not to defend Jinmen and Mazu. Both Eisenhower and Dulles slurred over this matter without giving a straight answer. The participants at the meeting agreed that the Americans feared a war with us. They might not dare to fight us over Jinmen and Mazu. The bombardment of Jinmen-Mazu had already accomplished our goal. We made the Americans very nervous and mobilized the people of the world to join our struggle.

At the Politburo's Standing Committee meeting, however, the participants decided that our next plan was not an immediate landing on Jinmen, but pulling the noose [around America's neck] tighter and tighter—putting more pressure on America—and then looking for an opportunity to act. All participants agreed with Premier Zhou's suggestion of announcing a twelve-mile zone as our territorial waters so as to prevent America's warships from reaching Jinmen and Mazu. Chairman Mao considered it righteous for us to defend our territory if American ships entered our territorial water. Our batteries, however, might not fire on them immediately. Our troops could send a warning signal first, and then act accordingly.

Chairman Mao also said that we were preparing another approach as well. Through the Chinese-American ambassadorial talks, which would be resumed soon in Warsaw, we would employ diplomatic means to coordinate our fighting on the Fujian front. We now had both an action arena and a talk arena. There was yet another useful means—the propaganda campaign. Then Chairman Mao turned to Hu Qiaomu and me and said that at present our media should give wide publicity to a condemnation of America for causing tension in the Taiwan Straits. We should request America to withdraw its armed forces from Taiwan and the Taiwan Straits. Our propaganda should emphasize that Taiwan and the offshore islands were Chinese territory, that our bombardment of Jinmen-Mazu was aimed at punishing Jiang's army and was purely China's internal affair, and that no foreign country would be allowed to interfere with what happened there. Our propaganda organs, the People's Daily, NCNA, and radio stations should use a fiery rhetorical tone in their articles and commentaries. Their wording, however, must be measured, and should not go beyond a certain limit, Mao emphasized.

From 5 to 8 September, Chairman Mao chaired the Supreme State Conference. He made two speeches on the 5th and the 8th. Besides domestic issues, his speeches focused on international issues similar to the eight issues which he had explained at the Beidaihe meeting. When Chairman Mao talked about pulling the noose, he said that our bombardment of Jinmen-Mazu made the Americans very nervous. Dulles seemingly intended to put his neck into the noose of Jinmen-Mazu by defending all of Taiwan, Penghu, Jinmen, and Mazu. It was good for us to get the Americans there. Whenever we wanted to kick them, we could do so. Thus we had the initiative, and the Americans did not. In the past, Jiang Jieshi made troubles for us mainly through the breach at Fujian. It was indeed troublesome to let Jiang's army occupy Jinmen and Mazu. How could an enemy be allowed to sleep beside my bed? We, however, did not intend to launch an immediate landing on Jinmen-Mazu. [Our bombardment] was merely aimed at testing and scaring the Americans, but we would land if circumstances allowed. Why should we not take over Jinmen-Mazu if there came an opportunity? The Americans in fact were afraid of having a war with us at the bottom of their hearts so that Eisenhower never talked publicly about an absolutely "mutual defense" of Jinmen-Mazu. The Americans seemingly intended to shy away [from Jinmen-Mazu]. Although their policy of escape was acceptable, the Americans also needed to withdraw 110,000 of Jiang's troops from Jinmen and Mazu. If the Americans continued to stay and kept Jiang's troops there, the situation would not be affected as a whole but they would put the noose around their necks.

During Chairman Mao's speech on the 8th, he asked suddenly whether Wu Lengxi was attending the meeting. I answered. Chairman Mao told me that his speech needed to be included in that day's news, and asked me to prepare it immediately. I discussed this with Hu Qiaomu. Since both of us found it difficult to decide which part of Mao's speech should be published, we agreed eventually to write the part about the noose first. I drafted the news and then let Hu read it. When the conference adjourned, Chairman Mao and other members of the Politburo's Standing Committee gathered in the lobby of Qingzheng Hall for a break. I handed over the news draft to Mao for his checking and approval. While talking to the others, he went over the draft and made some changes. Mao told me that only publishing the noose issue was all right. It was not appropriate at that moment to publish all the issues discussed because it was merely an exchange of opinion among the top leaders. Moreover, Mao did not want to relate the noose issue directly to Jinmen-Mazu. This was different from writing articles or editorials for newspapers. In our articles, Mao continued, we should not write about our policy toward Jinmen-Mazu, which was a top military secret. Our writing, however, could clarify our position toward the Chinese-American ambassadorial talks which would resume soon, expressing that whatever the outcome would be, we placed hopes on the talks. We were now shelling on the one hand and talking on the other—military operations combined with diplomatic efforts. Our bombardment was a test. Mao said that we had fired 30,000 shells that day in coordination with the mass rally at Tiananmen Square to make a great show of strength and impetus. Our talks were a test through diplomacy in order to get to the bottom of American reaction. Two approaches were better than a single one. It was necessary to keep the negotiation channel open, Mao emphasized. After checking and polishing my manuscripts, Chairman Mao asked me to instruct NCNA to transmit the news that evening and to publish it in the People's Daily the next day (9 September).

There was another interesting episode. Khrushchev did not have any idea about our intentions in shelling Jinmen. Afraid of being involved in a world war, he sent Gromyko to Beijing to find out our plans on 6 September. During the Supreme State Conference, Chairman Mao and Premier Zhou met with Gromyko, informing him of our decisions and explaining that we did not intend to have a major war. In case a major war broke out between China and America, China did not intend to involve the Soviet Union in the war. After receiving our message, Khrushchev wrote to Eisenhower, asking the American government to be very cautious in the Taiwan Straits and warning that the Soviet Union was ready to assist China anytime if China was invaded.

Right after the Supreme State Conference, Chairman Mao left Beijing on an inspection trip of the southern provinces. From 10 to 28 September, he visited Hubei, Anhui, Jiangsu, and Shanghai, and other places. On 30 September, one day after Mao returned to Beijing, his secretary called to tell me that Chairman Mao wanted to see me. I immediately went to Fengzeyuan in Zhongnanhai. When I walked into the eastern wing of the Juixiang Study, Chairman Mao was reading a book. He asked me to sit down and said that during his trip he was impressed by the boundless energy of the people across the country, especially in their great efforts to develop a steel and iron industry and to mobilize massive militias. Mao had drafted a news story for NCNA, which was being typed and would be ready soon. Chairman Mao also told me that he particularly invited General Zhang Zhizhong to join in the trip. Besides his interests in a rapid growth of industry and agriculture, Zhang showed special concerns during the trip about the situation in the Taiwan Straits. Zhang did not understand why we took so long to land on Jinmen. His advice was that even though we were unable to liberate Taiwan at that time, we must take over Jinmen and Mazu by all possible means. Zhang suggested not letting slip an opportunity which might never come again.

Chairman Mao told me that in fact we were not unwilling to take over Jinmen and Mazu. Our decision [on the landing], however, not only concerned Jiang Jieshi, but also had to give special consideration to America's position. The Americans feared a

war with us. After we announced a twelve-mile zone of territorial waters, American warships at first refused to accept it. They invaded the boundary line of our territorial waters many times, though they did not sail into the eight-mile territorial waters which they recognized. Later, after our warnings, American ships did not dare to invade our twelve-mile territorial waters. Once some American gunships escorted a Nationalist transportation flotilla shipping munitions and supplies to Jinmen. When this joint flotilla reached Jinmen's harbor, I ordered heavy shelling. As soon as our batteries opened fire, the American ships turned around and quickly escaped. The Nationalist ships suffered heavy losses. Apparently, America was a paper tiger.

America, however, was also a real tiger, Mao continued. At present, America concentrated a large force in the Taiwan Straits, including six out of its twelve aircraft carriers, three heavy cruisers, forty destroyers, and two air force divisions. Its strength was so strong that one could not underestimate it, but must consider it seriously. Thus, our current policy [toward Jinmen] was shelling without landing, and cutting-off without killing (meaning that without a landing, we would continue bombing Jinmen to blockade its communication and transportation and to cut off its rear support and supplies, but not to bottle up the enemy [on the island]).

Chairman Mao also told me that the Chinese-American ambassadorial talks had resumed at Warsaw. After several rounds of talks, we could tell that the Americans were certain about defending Taiwan but not sure about Jinmen. Some indications suggested that the Americans intended to exchange their abstaining from defending Jinmen-Mazu for our recognition of their forcible occupation of Taiwan, Mao said. We needed to work out a policy concerning this situation. It was not adequate for us to accept General Zhang Zhizhong's advice at that point. Mao asked the People's Daily and NCNA to suspend the ongoing propaganda campaign and wait for the Central Committee's further decision.

Chairman Mao asked for my comments on his news draft after it was typed out. I noted that the article particularly mentioned at its end that General Zhang had joined Mao's inspection trip. I agreed with Mao's manuscript except the last paragraph about Zhang Zhizhong, which might mislead public thinking about relations with the Nationalists. According to Chairman Mao's instruction, the article was published as the headline news on the front page of the People's Daily on that National Day (1 October 1958).

After the National Day, Chairman Mao held continuous meetings of the Politburo's Standing Committee to discuss the situation in the Taiwan Straits. From 3 to 13 October, the committee members met almost everyday. The meetings of the 3rd and 4th focused on an analysis of Dulles's speech on 30 September. In his speech, Dulles blatantly proposed a "two Chinas" policy, requesting that the Chinese Communists and the Taiwan government "both should renounce the employment of force" in the straits. Meanwhile, he criticized Taiwan's deployment of large numbers of troops on Jinmen and Mazu as unnecessary, "unwise and not cautious" actions. A reporter asked him if America's Taiwan policy would change if the Chinese Communists made some compromises. Dulles said that "our policy in these respects is flexible. . . . If the situation we have to meet changes, our policies change with it."

Premier Zhou pointed out at the meeting that Dulles's speech indicated America's intention to seize this opportunity to create two Chinas, and Dulles wanted us to commit to a non-military unification of Taiwan. Using this as a condition, America might ask Taiwan to give up its so-called "returning to the mainland" plan and withdraw its troops from Jinmen and Mazu. In one word, Dulles's policy was designed to exchange Jinmen and Mazu for Taiwan and Penghu. This was the same hand of cards we had recently discovered during the Chinese-American ambassadorial talks in Warsaw. Zhou emphasized that the American delegates even spoke more undisguisedly at the talks than had been suggested in Dulles's speech.

Comrades [Liu] Shaoqi and [Deng] Xiaoping believed that both China and America were trying to find out the other's real intention. The two sides did the same thing at both Warsaw and Jinmen. By now both had some ideas about the other's bottom line, they said. Americans knew that we neither intended to liberate Taiwan in the near future nor wanted to have a head-to-head clash with America. Fairly speaking, both sides adopted a similar cautious policy toward their confrontation in the Taiwan Straits. Our test by artillery fire in August and September was appropriate because the Americans were forced to reconsider what they could do in the area. At the same time, we restricted our shelling to Jiang's ships, not American ships. Our naval and air forces all strictly observed the order not to fire on American ships and airplanes. We acted with caution and exercised proper restraint. Comrades [Liu] Shaoqi and [Deng] Xiaoping also said that we put up quite a pageant in our propaganda campaign to condemn America's occupation of our Taiwan territory and to protest American ships and aircraft invading our territorial waters and air space. Our propaganda had mobilized not only the Chinese masses but also the international community to support the Arab peoples and put very heavy pressure on the American government. They both emphasized that this was the right thing to do.

Chairman Mao said at the meeting that our task of probing [the American response] had been accomplished. The question now was what we were going to do next. He pointed out that regarding Dulles's policy we shared some common viewpoints with Jiang Jieshi—both opposed the two-China policy. Certainly Jiang insisted that he should be the only legal government, and we the bandits. Both, therefore, could not renounce the use of force. Jiang was always preoccupied with recovering the mainland; and we could never agree to abandon Taiwan. The current situation, however, was that we were unable to liberate Taiwan within a certain period; Jiang's "returning to the mainland" also included "a very large measure of illusion" as even Dulles recognized. The remaining question now was how to handle Jinmen and Mazu. Jiang was unwilling to withdraw from Jinmen-Mazu, and we did not need to land on Jinmen-Mazu. Mao asked us about the proposal of leaving Jinmen and Mazu in the hands of Jiang Jieshi. The advantage of this policy was that we could maintain contact with the Nationalists through this channel since these islands were very close to the mainland. Whenever necessary, we could shell the Nationalists. Whenever we needed tension, we could pull the noose tighter. Whenever we wanted a relaxation, we could give the noose more slack. [The policy of] leaving these islands hanging there neither dead nor alive could be employed as one means to deal with the Americans. Every time we bombed, Jiang Jieshi would ask for American help; it would make Americans anxious, worrying that Jiang might bring them into trouble. For us, not taking Jinmen-Mazu would have little impact on our construction of a socialist country. Jiang's troops on Jinmen-Mazu alone could not cause too much damage. On the contrary, if we took over Jinmen-Mazu, or if we allow the Americans to force Jiang to withdraw from Jinmen-Mazu, we would lose a reliable means by which we can deal with the Americans and Jiang.

All the participants at the meeting agreed with Chairman Mao's proposal to allow Jiang's troops to stay at Jinmen-Mazu and force the American government to continue with this burden. The latter would be always on tenterhooks since we could kick it from time to time.

Premier Zhou expected the Americans to propose three resolutions during the Chinese-American talks. Their first proposition might ask us to stop shelling; in return, Jiang would reduce his troops on Jinmen-Mazu and America would announce that Jinmen-Mazu was included in the American-Jiang mutual defense perimeter. The second proposal might suggest our cease-fire if Jiang reduced troops on Jinmen-Mazu, while America would declare that their mutual defense did not include Jinmen-Mazu. The last plan might ask for our cease-fire, Jiang's withdrawal from Jinmen-Mazu, and a commitment by both sides not to use force against each other. All three propositions were unacceptable, Zhou emphasized, because they were essentially aimed at creating two Chinas and legalizing America's forcible occupation of Taiwan. Zhou, however, considered it favorable for us to continue the Chinese-American talks, which

could occupy the Americans and prevent America and the European countries from bringing the question of the Taiwan Straits to the UN. We also needed to explain clearly the situation to our friends in Asia and Africa so as to give them the truth and prevent [the crisis] from doing us a disservice. All the participants agreed with Premier Zhou's suggestions.

Chairman Mao concluded at the meeting that our decision had been made—continuation of shelling but not landing, blockading without bottling up and allowing Jiang's forces to stay at Jinmen-Mazu. Our shelling would no longer be daily, with no more 30,000 or 50,000 shells each time. Later on, our shelling could be at some intervals; sometimes heavy shelling, sometimes light; and several hundred shells fired randomly in one day. However, Mao said that we should continue to give wide publicity to our propaganda campaign. We insisted in our propaganda that the question of Taiwan was China's internal affair, that bombing Jinmen-Mazu was a continuation of the Chinese civil war, and that no foreign country or international organization should be allowed to interfere in China's affairs. America's stationing of its land and air forces on Taiwan was an invasion of China's territory and sovereignty; concentrating a large number of naval ships in the Taiwan Straits revealed American attempts to cause tensions. All U.S. vessels must be withdrawn from that area. We must oppose America's attempts to create two Chinas and to legalize its forcible occupation of Taiwan. We would solve the problem of Jinmen-Mazu, or even the problem of Taiwan and Penghu, with Jiang Jieshi through negotiations. Chairman Mao emphasized that our media propaganda should explicitly address the above principles. Our delegation at the Warsaw talks should also follow these principles while using some diplomatic rhetoric. All these points would not be publicly propagated until we had issued a formal government statement. At the present, the People's Daily could have a "cease-fire" for a couple of days to prepare and replenish munitions. Then, Mao said, ten thousand cannons would boom after our orders.

After the meeting of the 4th, Chairman Mao issued an order to the frontal forces on 5 September to suspend their bombardment for two days. The same day Mao himself drafted the "Message to the Compatriots in Taiwan," which was published on the 6th in the name of Defense Minister Peng Dehuai. The message began with "We are all Chinese. Out of the thirty-six stratagems, the best is making peace." It pointed out that both sides considered Taiwan, Penghu, Jinmen, and Mazu as Chinese territories, and all agreed on one China, not two Chinas. The message then suggested that Taiwan leaders should abolish the mutual defense treaty signed with Americans. The Americans would abandon the Taiwanese sooner or later; and one could discern certain clues about this in Dulles's speech of 30 September. After all, the American imperialists were our common enemy. The message formally suggested that both sides hold negotiations to search for peaceful resolutions to the Chinese civil war which had been fought for the past 30 years. It also announced that our forces on the Fujian front would suspend their shelling for seven days in order to allow the [Nationalist] troops and residents on Jinmen to receive supplies. Our suspension of bombardment, however, would be with the precondition of no American ships providing escort.

This statement drafted by Chairman Mao was a very important turning point in our policy toward Jinmen. That is, our focus shifted from military operations to political (including diplomatic) efforts.

After watching the situation for two days, Chairman Mao called for another Politburo Standing Committee meeting at his quarters in the afternoon of 8 September. All the committee members noticed that the world had made magnificent and strong responses to the "Message to the Compatriots in Taiwan." Some Western newspapers and magazines even saw the message as a straw in the wind that augured dramatic change in the relations between both Chinese sides and between China and America. Meanwhile, American ships stopped their escorts and no longer invaded our territorial waters around Jinmen. Only Jiang's Defense Department

believed the message to be a Chinese Communist “plot.”

Chairman Mao then asked me about how the People’s Daily prepared its editorial. I answered that the paper had already finished one article to attack Americans in particular. Mao told me to work on the Guomindang (GMD) first by writing an article which focused on a dialogue with Jiang Jieshi, while at the same time posing some difficult questions for the Americans. This article should explain that our message was not a crafty plot, but part of our consistent policy toward Taiwan. The message showed our stretching out both our arms once again, Mao said. The article might try to alienate Jiang from America, saying that Taiwan suffered from depending on other people for a living, and that getting a lift on an American ship was unreliable. Then the article could criticize Dulles’s so-called cease-fire and ask the Americans to meet five requirements for a cease-fire (stopping naval escorts, stopping the invasion of China’s territorial waters and air space, ending military provocation and war threats, ending intervention in China’s internal affairs, and withdrawing all American armed forces from Taiwan and Penghu). Chairman Mao asked me to finish my writing that evening. He was going to wait to read and check the article that night. Mao told me that I could leave right now to write the article without waiting for the end of the meeting.

Leaving Zhongnanhai, I rushed back to the People’s Daily’s building. After ordering a dish of fried noodles as my dinner from a restaurant across the street, I began to draft the editorial hurriedly in my office. With Chairman Mao’s instruction, my writing was very smooth and fast. A little bit after the midnight, I finished my draft. It was two or three o’clock in the early morning of the 9th when the final proof of the article was sent to Chairman Mao for checking and approval. Mao read the editorial early the same morning and made important changes in its last paragraph. He re-wrote the paragraph as follows: “Seemingly, the problem still needs to have more tests and observations. We are still very far away from the time of solving the problem. After all, the imperialists are the imperialists, and the reactionaries are the reactionaries. Let us wait and see how they will make their moves!” Chairman Mao noted his approval on the final proof: “Not very good, barely publishable.” The time written down below his signature was six o’clock of 9 October.

I received my manuscript sent back by Chairman Mao on the morning of 9 October. Meanwhile, I received a telephone call from Mao’s secretary, Lin Ke. Lin told me that Chairman Mao wanted to include Dulles’s 8 October announcement of American ships stopping their escorts in the editorial. Mao also suggested postponing its publication for one day. After reading Mao’s revision and corrections, I felt that the editorial’s title was not a very bold headline. So, according to the changes he made in the last paragraph, I changed the title to “Let’s See How They Make Their Moves.” After the editorial was published on 11 October, it was thought to be Chairman Mao’s writing because of its striking title and special style close to that of the “Message to the Compatriots in Taiwan.”

Two days later, the People’s Daily published another editorial, “Stop Talking about Cease-fire; To Leave Is the Best,” on 13 October. This editorial was based upon Premier Zhou’s opinion at the Politburo Standing Committee meeting on 4 October. Zhou gave the editorial his final check and approval. Its main content was our critiques and refusal of an American request for a cease-fire on the Jinmen-Mazu front. The editorial clearly stated that there was no war between China and America, so where did the cease-fire come from? It asked America to withdraw all of its naval and air forces from Taiwan and surrounding areas around the Taiwan Straits. It was a perfect timing for this editorial, corresponding to the “Defense Ministry’s Order,” which was issued on 13 October and drafted by Chairman Mao. In that order, the Defense Ministry announced a continuation of the suspension of our bombardment for two more weeks. The suspension, however, still contained the precondition that no American ships could be escorts. We would resume shelling immediately if there were any American escort vessels.

Two days later, Eisenhower ordered all the warships from the Sixth Fleet which had been sent as reinforcements to the Pacific to return to the Mediterranean. He also sent Dulles to Taiwan to confer with Jiang Jieshi. The Editorial Department of the People's Daily, without really knowing what was going on, wrote an editorial entitled "Having Only Themselves to Blame," saying that Dulles and Jiang played a "two-man show." After the editorial was published on 21 October, Premier Zhou called us during the same morning and gave a pungent criticism that we were neither consistent with the facts nor with the policy made by the Central Committee. When Chairman Mao chaired a Politburo Standing Committee meeting that afternoon, he also criticized our editorial as bookish and naive, reeling and swaggering, which had a one-sided understanding of the Central Committee's policy and gave an inappropriate emphasis to the American-Jiang solidarity. Chairman Mao believed that Dulles's mission to Taiwan was to persuade Jiang Jieshi to withdraw his troops from Jinmen-Mazu in exchange for our commitment not to liberate Taiwan so that America could gain a total control of Taiwan's future. Disagreeing with Dulles, however, Jiang demanded that America commit to a "mutual defense" of Jinmen-Mazu. Jiang and Dulles had a big argument in which nobody gave in to the other. As a result, the meeting ended in discord and was not a "two-men show" of solidarity. After the Politburo meeting, Chairman Mao asked Premier Zhou to talk to me one more time about this particular matter. Then we wrote another editorial to re-criticize the Dulles-Jiang meeting.

Chairman Mao also said at the Politburo Standing Committee meeting that there were many problems in the relationship between America and Jiang. The Americans wanted to make Jiang's "Republic of China" one of their dependencies or even a mandated territory. But Jiang desperately sought to maintain his semi-independence. Thus came conflicts between Jiang and America. Jiang Jieshi and his son Jiang Jinguo [Chiang Ching-kuo] still had a little bit of anti-American initiative. They would resist America if it drove them too hard. Among such cases in the past were Jiang's condemnation of Hu Shi [Hu Shih] and his dismissal of General Sun Liren—actions taken because Jiang believed that the troublemakers against him were supported by the Americans. Another good example of Jiang's independence was the recent smashing and looting of the American Embassy in Taipei by Taiwanese masses. Jiang permitted American armed forces stationed in Taiwan only at the regimental level, while rejecting larger units at the divisional level which America had planned to send to Taiwan. After our shelling of Jinmen began, Jiang allowed only 3,000 more American marines to reinforce Taiwan and they were stationed in Tainan [a city in southern Taiwan]. As Chairman Mao had pointed out two days earlier, we and Jiang Jieshi had some common points. The conflict at the Dulles-Jiang meeting suggested that we might be able to ally with Jiang to resist America in a certain way. Our policy of not liberating Taiwan in the near future might help Jiang relax and concentrate on his fight against America's control. We neither landed on Jinmen nor agreed with the American proposal for a "cease-fire." This clearly caused problems between Americans and Jiang. In the past months, our policy had been one of shelling without landing and blockading without driving Jiang's troops to the wall. While continuing the same policy, we should from now on implement it more flexibly in favor of supporting Jiang Jieshi to resist America's control.

All the participants at the meeting agreed with Chairman Mao's ideas. Premier Zhou added that "shelling" was coordinated with "blockading." Since we relaxed our "blockading," we might also need to relax our "shelling." Mao agreed with him by suggesting that we should announce an odd-numbered-day shelling, with no shelling on even-numbered days. For the odd-numbered-day shelling, our targets might be limited only to the harbors and airport, not the defense works and residential buildings on the island. From now on, our shelling would be limited in scope, and, moreover, the light shelling might not be on a regular basis. Militarily it sounded like a joke, since such policy was unknown in the history of Chinese or world warfare. However, we were engaged in a political battle, which was supposed to be fought this way. Chairman Mao said that we only had "hand grenades" right now, but no atomic

bombs. "Hand grenades" could be successful for us to use in beating Jiang's troops on Jin[men]-Ma[zu], but not a good idea to use in fighting against Americans, who had nuclear weapons. Later, when everybody had nuclear weapons, very likely nobody would use them.

Comrades [Liu] Shaoqi and [Deng] Xiaoping wondered at the end of the meeting whether we should issue a formal statement announcing future shelling on odd days only but not on even days. Chairman Mao believed it necessary. He also required me to understand that the editorial mentioned early in the meeting should not be published until our formal statement was issued.

On 25 October, the "Second Message to the Compatriots in Taiwan" drafted by Chairman Mao was issued in the name of Defense Minister Peng Dehuai. A result of the analysis of Dulles's speech published by the U.S. State Department on 23 October, the message pointed out that on the one hand Dulles finally saw a "Communist China" and was willing to make contact with it. On the other hand, however, this American bureaucrat still considered the so-called "Republic of China" in Taiwan as a "political unit which was factually existing." The American plan was first to separate Taiwan from the mainland, and second to mandate Taiwan's special status. The message read, "China's affairs must be handled by the Chinese themselves. For any problem unable to be solved at once, we can give it further thought and discuss it later between us. . . . We are not advising you to break up with Americans right now. These sort of ideas are not practical. We simply hope that you should not yield to the pressure from Americans. If you live under somebody's thumb and lose your sovereignty, you will eventually have no place to call your home and be thrown out into the sea." The message announced that we had already ordered PLA batteries on the Fujian front not to fire on the airport, harbors, ships, and beaches of Jinmen on even days. On odd days, we might not bomb either, as long as there were no ships or airplanes coming to Jinmen.

The same day the statement was issued, Chairman Mao sent for Tian Jiaying and me for a conversation. Besides asking us to make a survey of the current condition of people's communes in Henan Province, Mao talked about the bombardment of Jinmen and Mazu. He said that during this event both we and the Americans adopted a brinkmanship policy. America concentrated many warships which invaded our territorial waters and escorted Jiang's transportation fleets, but never fired on us. We fired 10,000 or 20,000 shells a day, or even more whenever there were American escort ships. Our shells, however, fell only on Jiang's ships not on American ships. Some shells fell near American ships, which frightened them and caused them to turn around. While confronting each other in the Taiwan Straits, both sides continued talks in Warsaw. Americans were on one side of the brink, and we on the other. Even though both were at the brink of war, no one ever crossed the line. We used our brinkmanship policy to deal with American brinkmanship. Mao continued that there were many stories written in Liaozhai Zhiyi (The Chinese Ghost Stories) about people without fear of ghosts. One of the stories was titled "Qing Feng," which talked about a bohemian scholar named Geng Qubing. One night, Geng was reading late in a remote village house. "A ghost walks into his house with long hair and black face, and stares at the scholar. Laughing, dipping his fingers into the black ink, and painting his face black himself, Geng looked directly at the ghost with keen, sparkling eyes. The ghost felt embarrassed and ran away." Chairman Mao told us that if we were not afraid of ghosts, ghosts would be unable to do anything to us. He said that our experience in shelling Jinmen-Mazu was the case in point.

I can say that what Chairman Mao told us here is his summary of our management of the Jinmen-Mazu crisis of 1958.