

September 5, 1958

**Speech, Mao Zedong at the Fifteenth Meeting of the
Supreme State Council (excerpt)**

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Summary:

Mao Zedong speaks about American foreign policy and the tense international situation following the Chinese decision to begin shelling Jinmen Island in the Taiwan Strait.

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As far as the international situation is concerned, our view has always been optimistic, which can be summarized as "the East Wind prevails over the West Wind."

At present, America commits itself to an "all-round contract" policy along our coast. It seems to me that the Americans will only feel comfortable if they take complete responsibility for Jinmen and Mazu, or even for such small islands as Dadan, Erdan, and Dongding. America gets into our noose. Thereby, America's neck is hanging in China's iron noose. Although Taiwan is [for the Americans] another noose, it is a bit farther from [the mainland]. America now moves its head closer to us, since it wants to take responsibility for Jinmen and other islands. Someday we will kick America, and it cannot run away, because it is tied up by our noose.

I would like to present some viewpoints, offering some ideas for the participants at this meeting. Do not treat them as a decision, or some kind of law. As law, they might not be changed; as opinions, they are alive and flexible. Let us use these points to review and analyze the current international situation.

The first question is who fears whom a bit more. I believe that the Americans are afraid of fighting a war. So are we. But the question is which side actually fears the other a bit more. This is my point, as well as my observation. I would like to invite everybody here to apply this point to your observation from now on. You can observe the situation for one, two, three, or four years by using this point. You will eventually find out whether the West fears the East a bit more, or the East fears the West a bit more. According to my opinion, it is Dulles who fears us more. Britain, America, Germany, France, and other western countries fear us a lot more. Why do they have more fears? This is an issue of strength, and an issue of popularity. Public attitude is indeed strength. There are more people on our side, and fewer on their side. Among the three doctrines [in today's world]-communism, nationalism, and imperialism, communism and nationalism are relatively closer. Nationalism dominates a large part of the world, including the three continents: Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Even though the ruling groups of some countries in these continents are pro-West, such as those in Thailand, Pakistan, the Philippines, Japan, Turkey, and Iran, among the people in these countries many, probably quite a few, are pro-East. Only the monopoly-capitalists and a few people who have been totally poisoned by the monopoly-capitalists want a war. Except for them, the rest of the people, or the majority of the people (not all of them) do not want a war. In northern European countries, for example, the ruling classes, though belonging to the capitalists, do not want a war. The balance of strength is like this. The truth is in the hands of the majority of the people, not in the hands of Dulles. As a result, while they feel rather diffident, we are solid and dependable inside. We depend on the people, while they support those reactionary rulers. This is what Dulles is doing right now. He specializes in such people as "Generalissimo Jiang," [South Korean leader] Syngman Rhee, and [South Vietnam leader] Ngo Dinh Diem. My viewpoint is that both sides are afraid [of each other], but they fear us a bit more. Thus, it is impossible for a war to break out.

The second question is what is the nature of the international military alliances organized by the Americans and the other imperialists, such as the North Atlantic [Treaty Organization], the Baghdad [Treaty Organization], and the Manila [Treaty Organization].³⁰ We say that they are of an aggressive nature. It is absolutely true that these military organizations are of an aggressive nature. However, against which side do these organizations direct their spearhead? Are they attacking socialism, or nationalism? It seems to me that they are currently attacking the nationalist countries, such as Egypt, Lebanon, and the other weak countries in the Middle East. But they will attack the socialist countries until, say, when Hungary completely has failed, Poland has collapsed, Czechoslovakia and East Germany have fallen down, and even the Soviet Union and us have encountered troubles. They will attack us when we are shaking and crumbling. Why should they fail to attack you when you are falling down? Stable and strong, we are not falling down now, and they

are unable to bite the hard bone. So they turn to those more bitable countries, gnawing at Indonesia, India, Burma, and Ceylon. They have attempted to overthrow [Gamal Abdul] Nasser,³¹ undermine Iraq, and subjugate Algeria. By now Latin America has made a significant progress. As [U.S.] vice president, [Richard] Nixon was not welcomed in eight countries, where people spat and stoned him. When the political representative of America was treated with saliva and rocks there, it means contempt for America's "dignity," and an unwillingness to treat it "politely." Because you are our enemy, we therefore treat you with saliva and rocks. Thus, we should not take the three military organizations too seriously. [We] need to analyze them. Even though aggressive, they are not steady.

The third point is about the tension in the international situation. We are calling every day for relaxing international tensions because it will benefit the people of the world. So, can we say that it must be harmful for us whenever there is a tense situation? I do not think it necessarily so. A tense situation is not necessarily harmful for us in every circumstance; it has an advantageous side. Why do I think this way? It is because besides its disadvantageous side, a tense situation can mobilize the population, can particularly mobilize the backward people, can mobilize the people in the middle, and can therefore promote the Great Leap Forward in economic construction. Afraid of fighting a nuclear war? You have to think it over. Look, we have fired a few shells on Jinmen and Mazu, and I did not expect that the entire world would be so deeply shocked, and the smoke and mist is shading the sky. This is because people are afraid of war. They are afraid that the Americans will make trouble everywhere in the world. Except for Syngman Rhee, no second country supports America among so many countries in the world. Probably the Philippines can be added to the list, but it offers only "conditional support." It is a tense situation, for example, that caused the Iraqi revolution, is it not? The current tense situation is caused by the imperialists themselves, not by us. In the final analysis, however, the tense situation is more harmful for the imperialists. Lenin once introduced this point in his discussions about war. Lenin said that a war could motivate people's spiritual condition, making it tense. Although there is no war right now, a tense situation caused by the current military confrontation can also bring every positive factor into play, while at the same time stimulating groups of backward people to think.

The fourth point is about the issue of withdrawing armed forces from the Middle East. American and British troops of aggression must withdraw. The imperialists now refuse to withdraw and intend to stay there. This is disadvantageous for the people, but it will at the same time educate the people. In order to fight against aggressors, you need to have a target; without a target, it is difficult for you to fight against the aggressors. The imperialists now come up there themselves to become the target, and refuse to leave. This arouses the people of the entire world to fight against the American aggressors. After all, it seems to me that it is not so harmful for the people when the aggressors put off their withdrawal. Thereby the people will yell at the aggressors everyday: why do you not leave [our country]?

The fifth question is whether it is a good thing or bad thing to have [Charles] de Gaulle in power. At present, the French Communist Party and the French people should firmly oppose de Gaulle coming to power, and veto his constitution. Meanwhile, they should also be prepared for the struggle after he takes office in case they cannot stop him. Once in power, de Gaulle will oppress the French Communist Party and the French people. His taking office, however, may also have advantageous effects in both domestic and foreign affairs. Internationally, this person likes to make trouble for Britain and America. He likes to argue. He had some miserable experiences in the past. In his memoirs, de Gaulle blamed Britain and America all the time, but said some nice words about the Soviet Union. It seems to me that he will make trouble again. It is advantageous when France has trouble with Britain and America. Domestically, he would become a necessary teacher who can educate the French proletarians, just like "Generalissimo Jiang" in China. Without "Generalissimo Jiang," it would not be enough for the Chinese Communist Party's

positive education alone to educate [China's] 600 million people. Currently, de Gaulle is still enjoying his reputation. If you defeat him now, people are still missing him as he is still alive. Let him come to power, he will run no more than five, six, seven, eight, or ten years. He will be finished sooner or later. After he is finished, no second de Gaulle will be there and his poison will be completely released. You must allow his poison to be released, just like that we did to our Rightists.³² You have to let him release the poison. If not, he always has the poison. You can eliminate the poison only after he releases it.

The sixth point is the embargo, that is, no trade with us. Is this advantageous or disadvantageous to us? I believe that the embargo benefits us a lot. We do not feel it [to be] disadvantageous at all. It will have tremendous beneficial impact on our [handling of] clothing, food, housing, and transportation, as well as on our reconstruction (including the production of steel and iron). The embargo forces us to work out all the solutions ourselves. My appreciation goes to He Yingqin³³ all the time. In 1937 when our Red Army was re-organized into the Eighth Route Army under the Nationalist Revolution Army, we received 400,000 yuan of fabi every month. After we were paid the money, we became dependent on it. In 1940, however, the anti-Communist movement reached its peak, and the payment stopped. No more money was paid [to us]. We had to find out our own means [to support ourselves] from then on. What did we find out? We issued an order that as there was no more fabi, each regiment had to find out its own way of self-support. Thereafter, all [of our] base areas launched a production movement. The value yielded from the production reached not 400,000, not 4 million, even not 40 million yuan, but about 100 or possibly 200 million yuan, if we combined the production of all the base areas together. We have since relied on our own efforts. Who is today's He Yingqin? It is Dulles, a different name. Currently, they are carrying out an embargo. We are going our own way. We have initiated the Great Leap Forward, throwing away dependence and breaking down blind faith. The result is good.

The seventh is the non-recognition issue. Is [imperialist countries'] recognition [of the PRC] or non-recognition relatively more advantageous to us? Same as on the embargo issue, imperialist countries' non-recognition of us is more advantageous to us than their recognition of us. So far there are about forty some countries which refuse to recognize us. The main reason lies in America. For instance, France intends to recognize China, but it does not dare to do it because of America's opposition. Many other countries in Central and South America, Asia, Africa, and Europe, and Canada, dare not to recognize us because of America. There are only nineteen capitalist countries which recognize us now, plus another eleven countries in the socialist camp, plus Yugoslavia, totaling thirty-one countries. It seems to me that we can live with this small number. Non-recognition [of us], in my opinion, is not a bad thing. Rather, it is relatively good. Let us produce more steel. When we can produce 600 or 700 million tons of steel, they will recognize us at last. They may still refuse to recognize us by then, but who cares?

The last issue is about preparations for an anti-aggression war. I said in my first point that as both sides are afraid of war, war should not break out. Everything in the world, however, needs a safety factor. Since there exists a monopoly-capitalist class in the world, I am afraid that it will make trouble recklessly and abruptly. We must therefore be prepared to fight a war. This point needs to be explained clearly to our cadres. First, we do not want a war, and we oppose any war. So does the Soviet Union. If war comes, it will be started by the other side and we will be forced to enter the fighting. Second, however, we do not fear fighting a war. We must fight it if we have to. We have only grenades and potatoes in our hands right now. A war of atomic and hydrogen bombs is of course terrible since many people will die. That is why we oppose a war. Unfortunately, the decision will not be made by us. If the imperialists decide to fight a war, we have to be prepared for everything. We must fight a war if we have to. I am saying that it is not so terrifying even if half of our population perishes. This is certainly talk in extreme terms. Thinking about the history of the entire universe, I do not see any reason to be pessimistic about the

future. I had a debate with Premier [Jawaharlal] Nehru³⁴ over this issue. He said that [as the result of a nuclear war] no government could remain and everything would be destroyed. Even though someone might want to seek peace, no government would be there. I told him that it would never be like that. If your government would be eliminated by atomic bombs, the people would form another one which could work out a peace. If you fail to think about things in such extreme terms, how can you ever sleep? This is no more than a matter of people being killed, and [what is reflected here] is the fear of fighting a war. But if the imperialists definitely want to fight a war and attack us first, using atomic bombs, it does not matter whether you fear fighting a war or not; in any case they will attack you. If that were the case, what should be our attitude? Is it better to fear or not to fear? It is extremely dangerous [for us] to fear this and fear that every day, which will make our cadres and people feel discouraged. So I believe that [we] should be case-hardened toward fighting a war. We will fight it if we have to. We will rebuild our country after the war. Therefore, we are now mobilizing the militias. All people's communes should organize their militias. Everyone in our country is a soldier. We should arm the people. We can distribute several million guns at the beginning. Later on we will distribute several dozen million guns among the people. All provinces should be able to construct light weapons, including rifles, machine guns, hand grenades, small mortars, and light mortars. Each people's commune should have a military office to supervise [combat] training. Some of our participants here today are intellectuals. You need to make a call for holding a pen in one hand and gripping a gun in the other. You cannot only have pens in your hands. You should be culturalized as well as militarized.

These eight points are my opinions. I offer them to you for your observation of the international situation.