

June 3, 1971

**Minutes of Conversation between Nicolae Ceausescu
and Mao Zedong in Beijing on 3 June 1971**

Citation:

"Minutes of Conversation between Nicolae Ceausescu and Mao Zedong in Beijing on 3 June 1971", June 3, 1971, Wilson Center Digital Archive, ANIC, CC RCP fond, Foreign Relations Section, file 39/1971, p. 3-29; published in *Relatiile Romano-Chineze, 1880-1974* [Sino-Romanian Relations, 1880-1974], ed. Ambassador Romulus Ioan Budura, (Bucharest, 2005), pp. 1064-71]. Translated by Mircea Munteanu.
<https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/117763>

Summary:

Mao Zedong and Nicolae Ceausescu discuss China's international reputation as a dogmatic dictatorship, especially among other Communist countries. They also discuss ping pong and scientific progress, specifically nuclear weapons and space exploration.

Credits:

This document was made possible with support from Leon Levy Foundation

Original Language:

Romanian

Contents:

Translation - English

Cde. Mao Zedong: Welcome comrades.

Cde. Nicolae Ceausescu: Thank you very much. We thank you for the very warm welcome we received.

We would like to express our satisfaction with the possibility we have to visit the People's Republic of China, to meet with you and the other leaders of the Chinese party and state.

Mao: When was the last time you were here?

Ceausescu: Seven years [ago].

Mao: In these seven years some things have changed; did you notice this?

Ceausescu: We saw the people, hundreds of thousands of people; we visited Tsinghua University. We were impressed by the positive attitude and the joy of living displayed by the people in the capital; also, especially, [we were impressed] by the preoccupation with perfect education, to tie it to production, to life, to the construction of socialism.

Mao: That is the way we think about it as well; now we are experimenting.

At the same time, we have to continue to use older teachers and professors, bourgeois; we still don't have other people. They, however, have to listen to us, to listen to workers and peasants. In their words, they listen; however, in their mind, they blame. There is need for more time, slowly, slowly; 21 years passed since [the success of the revolution.] It's true, even in the past there were some successes in education; we can't negate everything. But in what you mentioned just now, the revolutionizing of education, this only happened in the past years.

With you[r country] the activity went forth with a lot of progress.

Ceausescu: It's true, in the past years we had good results. We are also concerned with changing education, to tie it better to production. We are preoccupied with attracting the working class to the management of the institutions, and tying the party to the popular masses.

We can say that, generally, things go forth in good order. Of course, we have lots of deficiencies, but we are trying hard, together with the working class, with the people, to ensure the construction of socialism.

Mao: If we talk about deficiencies, then we too can say we have plenty.

Ceausescu: There is not one country that does not have deficiencies. The difference is that some work to resolve them, while others try to hide them.

Mao: Deficiencies cannot be hidden, because sooner or later-in a day, a year, or future centuries-these deficiencies will be revealed. It is better if we tell people what's what; people cannot be deceived. [Deceiving] can only go on for a short time. People cannot be deceived for decades.

Ceausescu: This is very true, especially today, with today's communication and information methods, reality cannot be hidden for very long.

Mao: It is very true. Even they know this.[1]

Ceausescu: After all, conflicts appear where they try to hide reality from people.

Mao: In some places, conflicts did not appear yet.

Ceausescu: But it is inevitable that conflicts would appear.

Mao: That is so.

Ceausescu: Of course, if they will take no action to straighten up things, and remove [deficits].

Mao: There are certain [communist] parties that insult other parties; they think that truth is on their side, that the other parties always make mistakes. We are called dogmatic, warmongers, that we have a dictatorship. That is what they say, that here we have a military bureaucratic dictatorship.

Ceausescu: Unfortunately, it is true, that there still exists this practice of name-calling, of insulting other parties.

Mao: There are certain parties, like yours, that do not say that. Recently, I read a speech of yours. In a very open way, there was the recognition that there have been mistakes in the past; other parties cannot come to terms with such things. Certain parties insulted us for over ten years, and we did not respond with even a word. They are forced to insult us. We can show understanding toward such occurrences. At the same time, we are happy that we have the quality of being insulted. This is very good. The meeting that took place in Bucharest in 1960, was that not imposed on you?[2] At that time, Cde. Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej had lots of difficulties. Can we impugn you for this?!

Ceausescu: It is true that the meeting took place there, and in a way, we too are at fault, since we could have refused to hold that meeting. Today such a meeting could not, and does not, take place in Romania.

Mao: At that time it was hard to refuse to host the conference. On the occasion of the Chinese Communist Party's 8th Congress, which took place in 1956, I had an interesting conversation with Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej. He told me some things straight from the heart. It was, of course, difficult to put up with such things. The Cominform was disbanded then, and that gave rise to debates. Criticism was necessary for this to happen.

Ceausescu: It is true that there were some hard times; even today there are some hard times. There are new designs to create different leadership formats that would take away the independence of other states and parties.

Mao: It would be good if the whole planet would be the domain of one single country!

Ceausescu: It's hard; even what is available now it's too much.

Mao: Is it really too much?!

Ceausescu: We feel that the best way is to have relations based on equality among all nations in the world.

Mao: Irrespective of their size, even [countries] as small as San Marino, which has a population of 16,000 people; we were sincerely glad to be able to establish diplomatic contacts with such a country.

Ceausescu: Of course, on this globe there are countries that are very large, large, medium countries, small and very small [countries], but all nations desire to build their lives freely; of course, in close cooperation with other states, with other nations, but without subordinating one to the other.

Mao: There is another issue, and that is that, on the occasion of the [Party] congresses, there are other parties invited; during the congress, for example during the Czechoslovak congress, insults and blaming takes place. Would it not be better to change this practice? Better not to invite any foreign delegations to the congresses. We did not invite anyone to the 9th Congress. It is true that the sky did not fall.

Ceausescu: It is true that such a tactic could be adopted, as long as the congresses are being used for insults, to hurl insults at other parties.

Mao: Recently, the Korean Workers' Party did not invite foreign guests to their congress. Cde. Kim Il Sung visited our country last year; he asked us: "are you inviting anyone?" We told him: no, we are not inviting anyone; it is difficult to invite other people. The more they insult and judge other people, the worse things will go for them.

There are more guests present, and they do not have identical opinions; it is better to have bilateral relations, like, for example, the fight against imperialism; then we fight. They want to have united action; it is hard because there are different opinions. A few years back, we talked with a few comrades, we told them that we cannot reach such accords; even then the sky did not fall, and the planet continues to revolve.

Ceausescu: Of course, it would be good if we reached an end to the insults and labeling. I have to tell you that many parties are calling for this, that even at the [Moscow] congress of the [fraternal] parties in 1969, and at the CPSU congress, a lot of parties-even big parties-refused to ally with the condemnation of the Chinese Communist Party, and are trying to find ways to establish relations with the CCP.

Mao: It is better to do these things bilaterally, like for example the relationship between the two of us.

Ceausescu: This is exactly what these parties want, for example the Italian, Spanish, [and] others. When we left to come here, they asked us to transmit their desire to reestablish contacts.

Mao: We can reestablish them, but the question remains what we do with their debt to us, because they have cursed and insulted us a lot in the past.

Cde. Zhou Enlai: And there is the issue of interest on their debt.

Mao: We have such calculations. If they no longer insult us, at least they should say something about the debt they owe us, the same way you did. There is no need for much, just a few words.

Ceausescu: Some have already said it, and we talked to them: they are ready to recognize that the past way was not good.

Mao: Not just that they were not good, they were wrong.

Ceausescu: Yes, wrong.

Mao: They were wrong. Things developed in an unbelievable fashion. What can we say of the great family, of the internationalist proletariat, of unity, when in reality there was a schism. It's not a big deal, if they want a schism, a separation in many parts. Even if the entire Italian party wants to come to China, they are welcome here. They are allowed to curse us in their newspapers and magazines, but they must allow others freedom of expression as well. We will respond to any who shit on our head (isi fac scaun in capul nostru), irrespective of the size of the country, irrespective of the number of bombs they have. You can visit our modern shelters. We have built them in case of a war.

Will you visit the North-West of China? We have to be prepared for any possibility.

Ceausescu: It is true that the schism has caused much damage. Of course, there have been many mistakes made, but we have to put right the mistakes and I believe that we all have to work in this direction.

Mao: We will not put anything right, and will continue in our dogmatism; even [for] ten thousand years.[3] One time, when [Soviet Premier Alexei] Kosygin visited, we reduced that time by 1000 years; one time, during the visit of the Romanian delegation, we reduced it again by 1000 years; at once we reduced 2000 years from this period. It is very dangerous, there are only 8000 years left.

Ceausescu: We can reduce some more!

Mao: Not even one year can be taken off. They can sit on our heads, but we must answer back. We do not do this when it comes to small countries. We cannot say a word toward them, but with regard to the big countries, we do not take anything into consideration. We will not be moved by any messengers [purtatori de cuvânt], who give advice; the more advice they give us, the worse things will go, since we here, all of us, are bureaucrats and militarists, we betrayed Marxist-Leninism, we do not have the qualities necessary to be part of the great family. You do, we do not.

Ceausescu: Now we are nationalists.

Mao: You too are being labeled.

Cde. Ion Gheroghe Maurer: Fewer [labels], but there are some, Cde. Mao Zedong.

Mao: You have so been labeled because you are resisting the pressure. For us, the labels are not too many, and not too few-8000 years. Everybody should listen up. Now militarism has taken center stage-it is certain that we will no longer reduce [any years]; he (points to Lin Biao) is the head of the militarists. But I too, am part of the militarists and the bureaucrats. They are very smart. Khrushchev developed Marxism-Leninism in a very creative way. I asked [Kosygin], a man as good as Khrushchev, who developed Marxism-Leninism, why have you marginalized him? It was difficult for him to give me any motives. Then I told him: if you no longer need him, give him to us; we invite Khrushchev to come to Beijing University, to hold classes on Marxism-Leninism. Kosygin could not answer then. I have to conclude that such a country is not a good one. I will tell you one thing: we publish [their] articles in our press, but they do not publish our replies in their press. Here there must be a reason. Articles published by dogmatists, by countries where there is a military-bureaucratic dictatorship, have to be repudiated. The entire Soviet people

should know them, so they can repudiate them. But they did not publish them. In this instance, they are even behind some imperialist countries; American newspapers have dared publish our articles about them. Especially, I speak of the New York Times.

You have been in the United States of America, but all of us here, we have not been. We sent a ping-pong ball over there.

Ceausescu: It seems it was well placed.

Mao: Do you agree with this ball?

Ceausescu: We agree.

Mao: I read an article published in Budapest; even there they are showing their agreement with this ball. What is so great in the game of ping-pong? The US Vice President-[Spiro] Agnew-said that he is not for it. The leader of the ping-pong delegation that was here said that we do not play ping-pong, rather table tennis. He was trying a play on words.

Ceausescu: Yes, ping-pong is a very interesting game, especially since you have very good players.

Mao:[4] But the leader of the delegation was stupid; we criticized him. They have done this thing chasing only prizes, thinking only to win; they did not want to lose; they took four of the seven medals, and they were not satisfied. How is that possible, to chase only prizes[?] The leaders from the Committee for Physical Education and Sport are, indeed, bureaucrats and great power chauvinists. Our country has such instances of great power chauvinism, quite widespread; they are always trying to defeat other countries. At the same time, they were incapable, since aside from the fact that we won, they boasted everywhere. One of them was here, and I had a fight with him. He said only good things about China. I told him that there is not truth in what he's saying. He gave the example of China's launch of a satellite. I told him that presently there are 2000 satellites revolving around the Earth, and we only placed one of them in orbit at that time, while you, the French, launched one, and Japan, another one, a total of three, and over 2000 satellites are launched by other countries. It is not good to gloat; how can we gloat?

Ceausescu: It is true, it's only a beginning, but it is a good beginning, because the other countries started with one as well.

Mao: That is very true. I agree, this corresponds to reality.

They even went to the moon; presently, we do not have such possibilities. At the same time, however, we do not have an interest in doing so, and we do not admire those who got to the moon. In this instance, we are equal in right; neither us, nor you, have reached the moon.

Ceausescu: We do not think of doing this in the future either, it is very expensive.

Zhou Enlai: Especially since there is no water or air there!

Ceausescu: And without any results, aside from scientific ends, and out of curiosity.

Zhou Enlai: Not all issues here on Earth have been resolved, and they have already gotten to the Moon.

Ceausescu: But this race to the Moon is very expensive.

Zhou Enlai: The monopolists are making nice profits from this, because they receive orders; even the land of the Moon has been divided up.

Ceausescu: Even so, the people are paying a lot for this race.

Mao: All the people?

Ceausescu: Those who undertake it.

Mao: Two people. What are the superpowers?

Ceausescu: It's hard to give a definition.

Mao: Those that have more nuclear weapons and have taken over many territories; they can control other countries, while other countries cannot.

Until now we have only said unlucky words at the expense of others. We have begun by cursing the superpowers.

Zhou Enlai: In my speech tomorrow I will make a reference to this. They will not leave if we speak of the superpowers.

Mao: That's fine; they will not leave if we speak of socialist-imperialism. We gave it a name-socialist-imperialism. We did not say this, it was Lenin; in words they are socialists, in deeds they are imperialists.

Zhou Enlai: We began using this term with the occasion of the reception hosted by [Romanian] Ambassador [Aurelian] Duma on 23 August 1968. It was brought forth by the events in Czechoslovakia.

Mao: On the occasion of Cde. [Emil] Bodnarus visit here, he told us that what Cde. Zhou Enlai said with regard to these events was useful; we did not notice, we did not feel that; he told us it was useful.

Ceausescu: We appreciated the speech of Cde. Zhou Enlai, and looked at them as aid to our country and to the communist movement. After all, many, many parties have condemned the invasion.

Mao: I wonder what the reasons were for their invasion, to send troops there and to occupy places under cover of darkness; troops were parachuted in.

Ceausescu: We were in Czechoslovakia a few days before the invasion, and we met with the party leadership, with the working class, there was no danger to socialism.

Mao: But they said that there was a grave danger, that they have to defend socialism.

Ceausescu: There was only one danger, and that was that there were serious criticisms against the [Soviet] policy of domination.

Mao: Yes, that was it, and only this. At that time they had great plans, not only against Czechoslovakia, but also against you and Yugoslavia.

Ceausescu: Maybe they thought about it, but then, and now, we were, and continue to be, set not to accept any such actions.

Mao: Because you are prepared, especially in the military field. If they shall come, you will fight first and foremost.

Ceausescu: We are a small country, but we do not want to live under [foreign] domination. Of course, we have friendly relations with everyone, we greatly appreciate friends and friendly relations, but we consider that Romania's problems are first and foremost to be solved by the party, the working class, the Romanian people.

Mao: In my opinion, that is good.

Ceausescu: If we work poorly, our working class, our people, will judge us.

Mao: If you are prepared, they will fear you.

Vietnam is also a small country; Cambodia is an even smaller country, and Laos is smaller still. They carried out a ten-year war, not including the war against the French. There are conclusions that we should be considered warmongers. We will respond to anyone who comes here. We are helping those who fight against the invasion. You are helping the fight of the Indochinese countries to save their motherland.

Ceausescu: From the very beginning we have helped Vietnam, Laos, and now Cambodia. We also offer aid to the fight of African people who fight against colonialism.

Mao: That is very good. We have identical positions.

Maybe we should stop here. Cde. Zhou Enlai said that you will speak this afternoon. Do fight with him!

Ceausescu: I don't think we will fight with him.

Mao: The third world war will start. The two of you will fight, I will not take part, since I am a bureaucrat.

Ceausescu: Well, that's good, then there will be someone to make peace between us.

Mao: With Cde. Maurer, we have similar names. My name begins with Mao as well.

Ceausescu: Then, it is even more important to have good relations, to collaborate well. We appreciate very much the relations between our two countries and parties.

Mao: Don't give it too much appreciation. Just so, it is well. We do not fight. Of course,

sometimes we fight a little, like we'll fight this afternoon. There have to be discussions.

Ceausescu: I hope we'll have discussions, but I don't believe we'll fight.

[1] It is unclear who "they" are. Given the context of discussions, it is possible that Mao is referring to the Soviet leadership.

[2] Mao refers to the Congress of the Fraternal Parties that took place in Bucharest, 26 June 1960. During the congress, the Soviet delegation attacked the Chinese delegation for deviationism and factionalism.

[3] 10,000 years in Chinese has an idiomatic meaning of eternity.

[4] The paragraph is somewhat confused, making it unclear which person or delegation Mao is talking about. The historic visit of the US team to China took place on 12 April 1971.