

December 24, 1959

**Draft, Report to the CC CPSU Plenum, 'About the
Visit of the Soviet Party-Governmental Delegation
to the PRC'**

Citation:

"Draft, Report to the CC CPSU Plenum, 'About the Visit of the Soviet Party-Governmental Delegation to the PRC'", December 24, 1959, Wilson Center Digital Archive, TsKhSD f. 2 (Plenums), op. 1, d. 495, ll. 5-55; translation from Russian by David Wolff and Vladislav Zubok. Published in CWIHP Working Paper No. 30.

<https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/118890>

Summary:

Soviet record of conversation between delegations from the Communist Parties of the Soviet Union and China. They argue over China's policy toward India and toward Taiwan, and assert that China is pursuing a path that will hurt its Communist allies and risk war. Also notes the extent of Mao's personality cult in China.

Credits:

This document was made possible with support from Leon Levy Foundation

Original Language:

Russian

Contents:

Translation - English

TO THE CC CPSU PRESIDUM

I present the draft report for the upcoming CC CPSU Plenum "About the Visit of the Soviet Party-Governmental Delegation to the PRC."

I request members and candidate members of the Presidium to send comments, if they have [any].

18 December 1959

[Signed] M. Suslov

TO MEMBERS OF THE CC CPSU PRESIDUM
TO CANDIDATE MEMBERS OF THE CC CPSU PRESIDUM

Please substitute the attached pages, which have been modified and made more exact on the basis of comments received, to your copy of the draft report "About the Visit of the Soviet Party-Governmental Delegation to the People's Republic of China."

24 December 1959

[Signed] M. Suslov

From our side in the discussion of foreign policy issues took part comrades Khrushchev, Suslov and Gromyko. From the Chinese side participated comrades Mao Zedong, Liu Shaoqi, Zhu De, Zhou Enlai, Lin Biao, Peng Zhen, Chen Yi, Wang Jiaxiang.

The discussion took place on 2 October in the residence of the Politburo of the CC Communist Party of China. Comrade Khrushchev informed the Chinese friends about his trip to the USA and his talks with President D. Eisenhower. He stressed that among American political figures there is growing sentiment in favor of peaceful settlement of unresolved, disputed questions and that at the present time there is a very real possibility for further resolute steps toward a more durable peace. In this regard he brought the attention of the Chinese friends to the necessity for the socialist camp to avoid anything that could be exploited by the reactionaries to drive the world back into the cold war "rut".

Comrade Khrushchev told the Chinese comrades that we do not completely understand their foreign policy, particularly with regard to India and Taiwan. [Our position is for the peaceful resolution of disagreements. The just demands of the PRC regarding the Taiwan question are clear to us and we support them. But we are unable to agree that a world war [should be] ignited because of Taiwan.] [1]

Comrade Khrushchev raised the question regarding the necessity of improving mutual information between the leadership of our parties on the issues of foreign policy. One cannot regard as normal the situation, when we, China's ally, do not know what the Chinese comrades may undertake tomorrow in the area of foreign policy. Indeed, all countries of the socialist camp are linked not only by the common ideas

and goals, but also by the alliance commitments. Incorrect actions of one country may hurt the international situation of the whole socialist camp. One should keep in mind that imperialist propaganda directly links activity of Chinese comrades to the policy of the USSR and other socialist countries. Indeed, communist parties always emphasize that the socialist camp has one line in foreign policy.

As far as the CC CPSU is concerned, we systematically inform the leadership of fraternal parties of socialist countries about most important foreign policy steps of the USSR and, in special cases, we seek their advice.

One must admit that the Chinese comrades reacted to the remarks of comrade Khrushchev painfully [boleznenno]. They claimed that their policy with regard to Taiwan and the off-shore straits is fully justified and is being carried out skillfully, that their line toward the Nehru government is correct. At times the tone of our discussion became quite sharp. It came to the point when a member of the Politburo CC Communist Party of China, minister of foreign affairs Chen Yi, claimed that our line on Nehru is allegedly opportunistic [prisposoblencheskaia], and the policy of China is more firm and correct. Naturally, we gave a resolute rebuff to these pronouncements.

In connection with the remarks of the Chinese leaders one cannot help wondering how they understand the Leninist principle of peaceful coexistence, whether they see it as a general line of foreign policy of the socialist camp, whether they think it is necessary to struggle for the relaxation of international tension and for securing general peace.[2]

We are getting the impression that, while recognizing formally the principle of peaceful coexistence between the two global systems, the Chinese comrades tend to regard this principle just as a temporary tactical maneuver. [The Chinese, it appears, consider that since the forces of peace and socialism outweigh the forces of war, and since in the next 15-20 years this superiority will become decisive, a frontal [lobovoe] attack on capitalism by direct pressure and all means is necessary. Several times the Chinese comrades have expressed the conviction that the USA and other imperialist countries are not ready for a big war at the present time and the socialist camp must make use of this in its foreign policy.]

The Chinese comrades incorrectly explain the motives that have led many leaders in the USA and other imperialist states to recognize the idea of negotiating with the socialist camp ...

[Suslov expatiates on the Chinese misperception of capitalist perceptions and policies, noting in particular that the film of Khrushchev's US visit did not receive sufficient airtime.]

When we speak of the principle of peaceful coexistence and of our struggle for the relaxation of international tension, we clearly admit that success in this matter depends not only on us, but also on the other side - on the ruling circles of the Western powers. We understand that in these circles there are quite a few passionate supporters of "cold" and hot war. Not a few influential individuals have interests linked to the arms race. Finally, there are simply crazy[3] maniacs [man'iaki], hating the new socialist system and ready in their blind passion to rush into any adventure. Of course, it's impossible to count on the actions of such people. [If such adventurous moods predominated in the ruling circles of the Western powers even temporarily, if the smell of [gun] powder was in the air again, it's possible that some people in China would start to say: you see, we warned you that you can't trust the imperialists.]

[Suslov insists that the correct focus is not on the imperialists ability to “unleash war,” but on the mobilization of world public opinion against the would-be aggressors.]

One should say that at the end of the conversation on 2 October Mao Zedong and other Chinese comrades declared that they did not want war; that they would resolve the Taiwan issue by peaceful means and would settle the conflict with India through negotiations. They confirmed again that the Communist party of China has a common line and common goals with us. We expressed our satisfaction in this regard.

[Common policy towards Laos was mentioned and Khrushchev, noting the oversensitive behavior of the Chinese, called for “equality and comradely relations in the fraternal family of Communist parties.”]

“Our road is one with that of the Chinese Communists. We consider them our friends,” said comrade Khrushchev. “However, we cannot live with even our friends talking down [svysoka] to us.”

Toward the end of our meeting the Chinese comrades became calmer and explained to us in greater detail their position on the indicated matters. We were of the impression that they too were disturbed by our differences of opinion and were trying to smooth them over [sgladit’].

Although the conversation was not completely pleasant at times, we consider that it was necessary and extremely useful. As a result of our conversation, at the end of our stay in Beijing and after the delegation’s departure, the Chinese comrades made all kinds of efforts to emphasize the basic unity between our parties.

On October 4, the Soviet party- governmental delegation left Beijing for the Motherland. Before leaving Beijing comrade Khrushchev told Mao Zedong that the Soviet party- governmental delegation was leaving with an open heart, that our friendship should not be darkened by differences on concrete questions. The Chinese comrades responded that they fully shared our opinion. Several days later, comrades Mao Zedong, Liu Shaoqi, Zhu De, and Zhou Enlai sent a telegram in which they expressed their support for the peace- loving foreign policy of the Soviet Union and stated their conviction that Soviet-Chinese friendship will strengthen and develop in the future.

One should not omit the fact that the aforementioned mistakes and shortcomings in the field of domestic and foreign policy of the Communist Party of China are largely explained by the atmosphere of the cult of personality of com. Mao Zedong. Formally the CC of the Communist Party of China observes the norms of collective leadership, but in effect the most important decisions are made single- handedly, and thus are often touched by subjectivism, and in some instances are simply not well thought through. Glorification of com. Mao Zedong is visibly and unrestrainedly on the rise in China. In the party press one can increasingly find such statements as “we, the Chinese, live in the great epoch of Mao Zedong,” comrade Mao Zedong is portrayed as a great genius. They call him the beacon illuminating the path to communism, the embodiment of communist ideas. The name of com. Mao Zedong is equated with the party, etc. One presents the works of com. Mao Zedong in China as the last word of creative Marxism, of the same rank as the works of the classics [klassiki] of Marxism-Leninism. In effect, the works of com. Mao Zedong are at the foundation of all educational work in the party and in the country. Even in the PRC’s colleges and universities the teaching of social sciences during the last two-three years has been reduced to the study of Mao’s works. All this, unfortunately, pleases [imponiruet] com. Mao Zedong, who, by all accounts, himself has come to believe in his own infallibility. This is reminiscent of the atmosphere that existed in our country during the last years of I.V. Stalin. Of course, we could not talk with the Chinese comrades

about it, but the Plenum should also know of this aspect of life of the Communist Party of China ...

In recent years, the CC Presidium has been firmly guided [by the idea] that in relations with the Chinese comrades there should be nothing unclear or unsettled and has done everything necessary to that end. The CC CPSU removed several negative aspects linked to violations of China's sovereign rights during Stalin's life and strictly checks that our relations are built on a healthy basis.

CC CPSU Presidium members also met earlier with the leaders of the Chinese Communist Party for discussion of a broad array of matters regarding Soviet-Chinese relations and the international situation. The meeting of comrade Khrushchev with Mao Zedong in Beijing in 1958 was important in this respect. This meeting took place as the international situation became tense because of the American-English intervention in the Near East. At that time we discussed several matters related to measures of mutual defense in case of broader imperialist aggression and worked out a common line on avoiding conflict in the Near East. At that time Mao Zedong more than once emphasized that the Chinese Communist Party and the CPSU were always basically and mainly united [ediny v osnovnom, glavnom]. "If our relations are like ten fingers, Mao Zedong said to us, then nine of them are full of unity and only in one, the little finger, are their differences of opinion." We consider it necessary to remove these differences, too.

[Suslov finishes his report with assurances that both Soviet and Chinese comrades will make efforts to remain united, despite "various forces" who would like to sow quarrels. To this end, the Soviet Union will continue its "all-around aid" to China both in the domestic and international arenas.]

[1] [Bold brackets indicate text eliminated from the second draft of Suslov's report after 24 December 1959.] At the October 2 meeting, Khrushchev stated that: "Between us, confidentially, we say that we will not fight because of Taiwan, but outside [vo vne], so to speak, we say that should the situation worsen because of Taiwan, the USSR will defend China." This appears to be a substantial reversal of Khrushchev's "nuclear promise" to Mao made public in his 7 September 1958 letter to US President Eisenhower. On this, see Vladislav Zubok, "Khrushchev's Nuclear Promise to Beijing during the 1958 Crisis" CWIHP Bulletin 6 -7 (Winter 1995/1996), pp. 219, 226-227.

[2] In the original text, the phrase after "struggle" reads "for avoiding war."

[3] This is sumasshedshie in the first draft and bezumnye in the second.