

May 23, 1958

**From the Journal of S.F. Antonov, 'Record of a
Conversation with Cde. Mao Zedong'**

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Summary:

On May 23, 1958, Mao Zedong met in Beijing with Soviet official N.I. Bobrovnikov to discuss China's political and economic developments. Mao emphasized the successes of socialism in the PRC, the ongoing struggle against rightists, and the importance of fighting revisionism, particularly criticizing Yugoslavia's policies. He praised Soviet support, expressed optimism about China's agricultural and industrial progress, and dismissed concerns over a lack of US. recognition.

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[Handwritten in the lower left-hand corner of the first page:

To the archive

The substance of the conversation
was sent by the Embassy by telegraph.
Chief of a sector of a CPSU CC Department
I. Shcherbakov 1 July 1958]

from the journal of

S. F. ANTONOV

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[handwritten: China]

23 May 1958

RECORD OF A CONVERSATION

with Cde. MAO ZEDONG

Today I visited Mao Zedong at his invitation together with a delegation of the Moscow Soviet headed by Cde. N. M. Bobrovnikov.

Mao Zedong, Liu Shaoqi, Zhou Enlai, Chen Yi, and other PRC leaders met us at the entrance to the building where the conversation was to be held and warmly greeted [us], after which Mao Zedong suggested [we] be photographed together.

At the start of the conversation Mao Zedong said that the Great October Revolution began revolutions in all the world. Leningrad was the cradle of this revolution: the decisive revolutionary class struggle of the popular masses against the dictatorship of the ruling bourgeois classes began there. Noting that in the class struggle Communist Parties should rely not only on the working class, but also on the poor peasants, Mao Zedong stressed that Tito was out of step with this most important position of Marxism-Leninism. Tito, he continued, is pursuing a policy of denying the role of the popular masses, denying the necessity of a dictatorship of the proletariat, denying the class struggle, but this is the line of the Second International, the line of right-wing socialist parties.

Touching in this connection on the Japanese Socialist Party, Mao Zedong noted that although it also denies the class struggle, in general its position is somewhat better than the position of the Yugoslav revisionists.

Then an exchange of opinions occurred between Cde. Mao Zedong and Cde. Bobrovnikov about the construction of the cities of Peking and Moscow.

Cde. Mao Zedong said that "Peking is still a poor medieval city".

Cde Bobrovnikov replied to this that Peking is quickly being built and developing, and that the delegation has already had the opportunity to see fully-modern housing, new industrial enterprises, the great work for the city's amenities, etc. Of course, continued Cde. Bobrovnikov, there are dilapidated old buildings both in Peking as well as in Moscow which have outlived their usefulness.

Delegation members Cdes. Orlov, Leonov, and others who were present at the conversation stated their opinion as confirmation of the great successes in the development of the PRC.

Switching to the question of the struggle against rightists in the PRC Mao Zedong said that the Communist Party has given them (the rightists) the opportunity to freely express themselves for almost an entire year without being subjected to criticism. He continued, we afforded the rightists such an opportunity so as not to give them a

pretext to accuse the PRC of limiting their freedom of expression. Right now 300,000 rightists have already been exposed in the PRC, declared Mao Zedong. We have not resorted to repression in the fight against the rightists, he stressed especially, no one has been arrested, and no one has been deprived of voting rights, of course with the exclusion of those cases when the rightists committed crimes. Mao Zedong continued, we mean that about seven of every 10 rightists, that is, a majority, might be reeducated, but apparently about five years will be needed for this. And only three of every 10, that is, a minority, "a leopard cannot change his spots". In the process he stressed: "Clearly there are such people who do not change even up to death". In addition, Mao Zedong pointed out that we also took into consideration that repression against the rightists might cause feelings of anxiety and dejection among vacillating elements.

Analyzing the domestic political situation in the PRC Mao Zedong said that about five percent of the population, that is, 30 million people, in the country are inclined against socialism, but only two percent among these 30 million are strongly against socialism. These 30 million include former landowners, rich peasants, Kuomintang bureaucrats and officers, representatives of the comprador bourgeoisie, and also a considerable part of the prosperous and middle peasantry. These people rejoice at our shortcomings and blunders, and support Tito in every way. They were not happy that an artificial Earth satellite was launched by the Soviet Union and other achievements of the Soviet Union. Mao Zedong said, we have set ourselves the task of reeducating a considerable number of these people in the meantime, and we will do this.

Mao Zedong continued, among the 300,000 rightists exposed the majority are representatives of the old intelligentsia and the bourgeoisie, including members of the democratic parties, and only an insignificant part are CPC members. The rightists in our country, stressed Mao Zedong, represent a nucleus among those who oppose socialism. "We have mainly defeated the right-wing bourgeois elements", said Mao Zedong, "but they are still active in some places".

Enormous changes have occurred in a historically short period, Mao Zedong noted further: as a result of the First World War the Great October Revolution and the USSR appeared; as a result of the Second World War the PRC appeared; a Third World War, if the imperialists unleash it, will surely bring imperialism to its final destruction.

Mao Zedong said, we have achieved considerable successes in the years which have passed since the formation of the PRC. Things are going very well with us on the whole, although outwardly this does not always seem so. We have achieved great successes thanks to the enormous aid of the Soviet Union, which has helped us build 167 large enterprises. Mao Zedong said, we are very grateful to the USSR for the great aid to us. We need about another 10 years in order to create a foundation for socialism. Industrial construction demands one or two million highly-skilled workers to be trained in the near future, and we have already begun this work, giving it the proper scope. Conditions for the development of socialism in our country are quite favorable right now, and we Chinese should make use of them in every way.

It was more difficult for the Soviet Union to begin the construction of socialism than for us, said Mao Zedong: "the capitalists did not help build socialism". The Soviet Union, he continued, had to make great sacrifices and [endure] hardships to ensure the industrialization of its country.

Then Mao Zedong especially noted that "Lenin and Stalin taught that a socialist revolution begins with the seizure of power by the proletariat, but a bourgeois revolution concludes with a seizure of power". In all probability, this famous position of Marxism-Leninism was stated by Mao Zedong to stress the role of Stalin in the building of socialism.

Switching to the question of agriculture, Mao Zedong said that the face of the Chinese countryside is changing rapidly. The peasantry has become considerably more active. Mao Zedong continued, in response to the offer of the peasants "to change the face of the countryside in three years" we initially advised conducting only appropriate preparatory work in these three years. However, the enormous labor enthusiasm of the peasantry convinced us that the slogan "change the face of Chinese agriculture in three years" was realistic, and such a long period would not be required as we had previously imagined. Therefore we supported this slogan. The facts of the reality in

the development of agriculture, stressed Mao Zedong, have surpassed all our boldest assumptions. One of the decisive factors of these successes, besides the Party leadership, is the 600-million population.

At this time I said that irrigation work was developing especially widely, and that 100 million people were taking part in this work; irrigated land has increased in China by 24 million hectares.

Cdes. Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai, confirming this, reported that in the future irrigation work will be continued on a wide scale, and they see favorable conditions in this to increase the harvesting of crops per unit of land.

Touching on the work of the second session of the 7th CPC Congress, Mao Zedong said that the session had successfully concluded its work.

One of the main questions of the session, said Mao Zedong, was the question of CPC policy during the transitional period. "The general line of the Party in the development of socialism in the PRC was discussed at the session. We Chinese Communists, he continued, already have some experience of a revolutionary struggle and the development of socialism; however, our experience is still far from sufficient. Therefore we should determine the general line of the Party proceeding from the specific conditions of the PRC, relying on the experience of the development of socialism in the Soviet Union.

Then Mao Zedong noted further that the session was held with great activity of its participants. One hundred and seventeen people spoke during the 19 days of its work, and 145 people submitted their statements in written form. The session entirely approved the Declaration of the Moscow Conference of Communist and Worker's Parties and subjected the Yugoslavs to severe criticism. In addition, Mao Zedong reported, the session elected several candidate members to the CPC CC.

Speaking of the significance of the second session of the 7th CPC Congress Mao Zedong said that it was very useful in many respects and promoted a deepening and clarification of a number of pressing questions.

Noting that the Moscow Conference of Communist and Worker's Parties was a powerful demonstration of the unity and proletarian solidarity of the socialist countries and fraternal Parties, Mao Zedong said that although the Yugoslavs had refused to sign the Declaration of the Moscow Conference, but this did not have great importance since Yugoslavia does not represent anything special outside the socialist camp. On the other hand, he continued, the divisive activity of the Yugoslavs, their revisionist "theorizing", represent specific phenomena, against which we need to fight vigorously and in a specific form. But the requirements of this fight have forced us to think and act more vigorously than at another time. Mao Zedong said, it seems to me that the Yugoslavs are much more like imperialists than Communists, and this creates favorable fighting conditions for us, for otherwise it would be harder to fight with them. Right now, he stressed, the course of events has already entered such a stage when the Yugoslavs cannot deceiving anyone.

I said that some local Yugoslav diplomats have spoken in the sense that the representatives of Parties loyal to Marxism-Leninism are, they said, dogmatists, and that they (the Yugoslavs) have become tired of fighting against "dogmatism". This statement of mine provoked general laughter.

Dogmatism, noted Mao Zedong, is a movement inside the working class and its Parties, and it is the result of the influence of the petit bourgeoisie on the working class. Revisionism is the result of the influence of international imperialism on the working class and is a manifestation of the class struggle. Therefore we should devote more attention to the fight against revisionism than, for example, the fight against dogmatism, stressed Mao Zedong,

Touching on the question of the political situation in Poland, Mao Zedong said that revisionism represents a definite danger there. The Poles will have to take more vigorous measures in the fight against revisionist tendencies. We are confident that the time will come when the Poles will basically put an end to revisionism in their country.

Touching on the international position of the PRC, Mao Zedong said that the imperialists, especially the US, do not want to recognize the New China, just as for a long time they did not want to recognize the Soviet Union. However, we Chinese are

not concerned at this. In some respects, Mao Zedong pointed out, this is even favorable to us, for we still have not brought complete order to our house and have not finished the construction of the building we are erecting. And if the imperialists send their representatives to China in these conditions then probably in a certain sense this would even be harmful to us. It will be entirely another matter, of course, in 10-15 years.

After this Mao Zedong turned to me with a question: "What do you think, can we live without the US recognizing us?" I replied that the PRC is already living and developing without this recognition, and that if the Soviet Union, which was the only socialist country, successfully built socialism for 16 years without the recognition of America, then the People's Republic of China, in the fraternal family of the socialist camp, can completely do without the US recognizing it. However, the time is coming to [the point] where you (China) will soon be recognized by all countries. Mao Zedong shared this opinion.

The conversation lasted more than an hour and ended with mutual warm wishes.

Gratitude was expressed by our side to Cdes. Mao Zedong, Zhou Enlai, Liu Shaoqi, and Chen Yi for the reception given [us].

Showing us out, Mao Zedong told me that he had read the CPSU CC letter to the SKYu [[[Yugoslav]] League of Communists] and was very satisfied with this letter. He noted that this document was reproduced and distributed to all delegates of the 2nd session of the CPC 7th Congress.

Bidding us farewell, Mao Zedong asked me to pass greetings and best wishes to Cde. N. S. Khrushchev. I promised to do this.

In turn, at Cde. N. S. Khrushchev's requested during my departure from Moscow, I passed greetings from him to Mao Zedong.

Present at the conversation were Zeng Yongquan, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and Fang Zuan, an official of the PRC MFA, and all members of the Moscow Soviet delegation.

USSR CHARGE IN THE PRC [signature] (S. ANTONOV)

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1 - Cde. A. A. Gromyko

2 - Cde. Yu. V. Andropov

3 - UVI [Directorate of Foreign Policy Information]

4 - to file

drafted by Antonov

6 July 1958

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