

August 3, 1958

**Fourth Conversation between N.S. Khrushchev and
Mao Zedong, Hall of Qinjendiang [Beijing]**

Citation:

"Fourth Conversation between N.S. Khrushchev and Mao Zedong, Hall of Qinjendiang [Beijing]", August 3, 1958, Wilson Center Digital Archive, Archive of the President of the Russian Federation, f. 52, opis 1, delo 498, ll. 151-156, copy in Volkogonov Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. Translated by Vladislav M. Zubok. <https://digitalarchive.umd.edu/document/112083>

Summary:

Mao and Khrushchev discuss the building of American bases around the Soviet Union, nuclear weapons testing and President Eisenhower.

Original Language:

Russian

Contents:

Translation - English

Present at the meeting: cdes. Khrushchev, Malinovsky, Kuznetsov, Ponomarev, Antonov

Cdes: Mao Zedong, Liu Shaoqi, Zhou Enlai, Zhu De, Chen Yun, Lin Biao, Deng Xiaoping, Peng Dehuai, Peng Zhen, Chen Yi, Wang Jiaxiang, Huang Kecheng Sheng, Yang Shang, Hu Qiuomu.

[Mao Zedong]: I would like to clarify two small, but important issues.

First on the ban of testing of atomic weapons. You stopped testing unilaterally, but in the West they continue to test. Do you think it is necessary to resume testing?

N.S. Khrushchev: They liberated us from our pledge by not ceasing their tests. We conducted our tests. Now we continue to work on atomic and hydrogen bombs. When necessary, we will resume testing, of course, if by that time there is no general agreement on the cessation of testing.

Mao Zedong: It is clear to me.

You said that a transcontinental missile flies through space. Doesn't it burn up when it re-enters the atmosphere?

N.S. Khrushchev: No, this issue is resolved.

Mao Zedong: How do you assess the fact that the US located its military bases around the Soviet Union?

N.S. Khrushchev: This is unfavorable for us. The military bases are drawn up close to our borders. But their main bases are located far from us, in America. It is difficult for bombers to reach them. But now, with the availability of missile weapons, the correlation of forces has been equalized. We are currently going through difficulties in testing long-range missiles. For this our territory is insufficient.

Mao Zedong: Could you launch them in the direction of the North Pole?

N.S. Khrushchev: But this is exactly the short distance, and in case of war we will fire across the Pole. That is why the Americans offer inspections of the Arctic Zone, so they could detect our missile bases and secure themselves.

Mao Zedong: I read the reply by Eisenhower to your proposal on prevention of surprise attack. It seems to be a decent answer, he seems to be ready to convene a conference of experts on this issue. They are obviously afraid of a surprise attack.

N.S. Khrushchev: I have not seen this letter yet.

Mao Zedong: I would like to agree with you regarding the departure of the delegation. Perhaps we should change the farewell ceremony, to convene the public at the airport, line up the guard of honor, invite the diplomatic corps.

N.S. Khrushchev: Yesterday we seemed to have agreed to arrange the same kind of departure as the arrival. Let our agreement be firm. Thus we will give fewer pretexts for idle gossip [krivotolki]. Otherwise they will write in the West that the arrival was secret, because they did not expect the talks to be successful, that perhaps there were some contradictions between China and the Soviet Union, that then they met, reached agreement and decided to stage a pompous farewell ceremony. Let them

better try to solve the riddle, let the very fact of the meeting have an effect.

Mao Zedong: I thought it necessary that your arrival would be in secret so that the imperialists could not use your absence for delivering a surprise attack.

N.S. Khrushchev: I do not think they would have dared to do this; the correlation of forces is not in their favor. Now they had to swallow another bitter pill to recognize Iraq. But even if they had been prepared for war at 50 percent readiness, they would not have started it even then.

Mao Zedong: Yes, England, of course, would not have started it.

N.S. Khrushchev: Both France and Germany would not have dared it. They know that we can reduce them to dust. The British during the Second World War suffered from German "V-1" and "V-2", but now these would be toys in comparison with [our] missiles. Everyone knows it.

Mao Zedong: But they have bases everywhere. In Turkey alone more than 100 bases.

N.S. Khrushchev: No, there are fewer bases in Turkey, and even they all are now in our cross-hairs [u nas podpritselom]. They intend to build bases in Greece, but there it is even easier: one can push the boulder from the mountain in Bulgaria so much for the bases. Even America itself is now under threat of attack.

We should be grateful to our scientists for the creation of the transcontinental missile [trans. note-- Inter-continental ballistic missile, or ICBM, first tested by the USSR in 1957].

Mao Zedong: And German scientists, too?

N.S. Khrushchev: No, they participated only in the very beginning. We could not entrust such an important matter to the Germans. Now they all returned to Germany and told their stories about what they had worked on. The Americans believed their stories and decided that we had no transcontinental rockets. When we announced that we tested it, they could not believe. But then we launched sputniks [trans. note--artificial satellites, first launched by the USSR in October 1957]. Now Americans already say that Russians themselves built the transcontinental rocket. The newspapers wrote that there are Germans working in America as well, but America did not launch the first sputnik.

Mao Zedong: I still think that your trip abroad for the summit of heads of the states is dangerous. I would advise you to declare that you nominate a deputy in your absence. We all are concerned when you leave the country.

N.S. Khrushchev: Yes, there is a certain risk there, particularly if the summit takes place in New York: there are many embittered Hungarians there, and other enemies. Conditions are better in Geneva. I recall an interesting story during the Geneva conference in [July] 1955.

According to the American Constitution, the President's bodyguards should run ahead of him during his movement in the streets. But the Constitution was developed when people still moved in horse-drawn carriages. Therefore, when Eisenhower came to Geneva and sat in a car, and his bodyguards ran ahead, this made everyone who met him laugh. Then everyone guessed how Khrushchev and Bulganin would behave. And we came to Geneva, sat into an open car and drove across the city. This surprised

everyone, because they believed we would be afraid and would move around only in the armor-plated car. True, then we drove in the armor-plated car [bronirovannaia mashina], because, as the Swiss police informed us, there was some kind of a terrorist group, which plotted an attack.

Americans also wrote that Khrushchev would not dare to show himself to people in Hungary. But it is well known what happened during our trip in Hungary. We had to lay a wreath to the monument near the American embassy. I then suggested to Kádár to go to the monument through the crowd, so that Americans could see how people would "tear Khrushchev to pieces." After this they stopped writing that Hungarians were against the Soviet Union.

Mao Zedong: Stalin refused to go even to Geneva, but I had a different kind of danger in mind.

N.S. Khrushchev: It was a senile defect of mind.

We now do not consider possible the outbreak of war. From time to time we instruct our military to prepare, according to their data, an outline of the situation. Recently they reported that there were no grounds to believe in an imminent threat of war.

Mao Zedong: Do you think [US Secretary of State John Foster] Dulles will remain in his position?

N.S. Khrushchev: No, he will probably go, although it is better for us if he stays. It is easier to deal with a fool than with a bright person.

Mao Zedong: In your opinion, will [Democratic presidential candidate Adlai] Stevenson become president?

N.S. Khrushchev: He is a more positive personality.

Mao Zedong: Most probably, if the Republican Party stays in power, then [Vice President Richard] Nixon will become President.

N.S. Khrushchev: Yes, most probably so. He would be worse than Eisenhower. Eisenhower entered the national [political] arena as a national hero, as a result of the war. As a politician he is not among the best; he lacks political experience. And even as a military officer, he does not shine brightly. At the end of the war the Germans almost defeated him in the Ardennes. Then [Winston] Churchill asked Stalin to come to the assistance of the Western allies.

Mao Zedong: You should not have assisted them then. Maybe as a result there would not have been a West Berlin, and perhaps not even a Western Germany.

N.S. Khrushchev: Yes, perhaps today we would have been guests of [French Communist Party leader Maurice] Thorez. But at that moment the situation was different. The Germans surrendered to the Americans without fighting, and offered strong resistance against us. The situation could have turned out in such a way that we would not have captured Berlin. Stalin then reached understanding with Eisenhower and he gave us an opportunity to capture Berlin. During the battle of Vienna, the Germans also ran away from us towards Eisenhower, but he did not accept them as prisoners. So, as you can see, Eisenhower was not devoid of a certain decency. But now he does everything that American monopolists recommend to him. Mao Zedong says that everything is ready for signing of the communiqué.

N.S. Khrushchev: Good. Let's sign it.

This was the end of the meeting.

The conversation was recorded by N. Fedorenko, A. Filev.