

**January 12, 1959**

**Cable from the Chinese Foreign Ministry, 'Summary  
of Conversation between Chairman Mao and  
Governor Sampaio of Brazil'**

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**Summary:**

President Mao Zedong exchanged views with Governor Sampaio on Chinese development, the role of Asia, Africa, and Latin America vis-a-vis the West, and Brazilian foreign policy. Mao also describes his personal studies of the English language.

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Chinese

**Contents:**

Translation - English

## Summary of Conversation between Chairman Mao and Governor Sampaio of Brazil

To [Chinese] embassies and consulates abroad, offices of charges d'affaires, and the Kaesong Liaison Office:

Diplomatic Bulletin No. 1 and 5

At the suggestion of the Brazilian Communist Party, the Foreign Cultural Liaison Bureau of the People's Republic of China invited the Brazilian Governor Sampaio to visit China in January this year. Sampaio, a member of the opposition National Democratic Alliance of Brazil, is somewhat nationalist. Chairman Mao met him on January 12.

A summary of their conversation follows:

1. The Chairman said China is a poor country. China is so poor and weak that in making our development plans, we allow for 10 to 20 years to change that. China is relatively strong politically. China has a large population and the people are well-organized. They are motivated and not afraid of anything. They are not scared of the posturing of the imperialists. China is a strong country in that respect. China is economically weak. Our country of 650 million people produces only 175 million tons of steel. On average, each person has only one finger-sized piece of steel. [John Foster] Dulles fear us politically but does not fear us militarily. He fears what we may become in the future but he doesn't care about us for now. I expect he thinks the same thing about Brazil.

2. While discussing the accumulation of capital and the development of industry, the Chairman said that China's does not depend on loans from any country to fund its national construction. During our first few years, we borrowed a small amount of capital from the Soviet Union. Much of it as not used for national construction but for military purposes such as buying aircraft and artillery. Every year we repay that debt. We borrowed six billion yuan in all. Half we have already paid back; the rest will be all paid back in four years. In the future we will never have to borrow money from foreigners because the people have stood up. You Brazilians too, with such a big country and rich national resources and a population of 60 million, are certainly capable of doing the same.

3. The Chairman said that Asia, Africa, and Latin America are the most important forces in the world. Other than those three continents, there is just Europe (referring to Western Europe), Australia and North America -- so-called Western world. Not many people live in the West, no more than 400 million. If I say 400 million people, Dulles too would have to admit that it is 400 million. There are only that many. The world population is 2.7 billion people in the world. If we subtract out that 400 million then 2.3 billion are left. This 2.3 billion people live in Asia, Africa, and Latin America (as well as Eastern Europe). Who is the majority and who is the minority? The West is in the minority. Do you people in Latin America belong to the East or the West? I do not agree that Latin America is part of the West. Sampaio said that there are many people and vast territories in Asia, Africa and Latin America. The Western world should provide technical assistance and loans to those three continents. The Chairman said, perhaps, but you don't want political conditions to be attached to those loans.

4. The Chairman said that Brazil is in charge of its own affairs but Brazil should help Venezuelan and Cuban with their problems. Brazil still had to help. Venezuelan oil and Cuban sugar are in the hands of the Americans. In a country of just six million people, the US has invested one billion dollars. You are a big country and should be paying attention to these things. Brazil can play a role. You are a big country, you wouldn't

invade other countries.

5. The Chairman asked whether it would be useful for the Latin American countries to form one united nations. Some countries only have one or two million people so the imperialists can easily gobble them up with one bite. Sampaio said perhaps a united nation could be established, but each country is different. Europe, too, has many small countries but they don't want to join together into one big country. The Chairman said, you need to get some glue and make those countries stick together. You shouldn't be squabbling with one another. There should be true equality. You should not hurt each other. Instead you should help one another. The countries of Latin America, and first of all Brazil, have never harmed China. You also feel that China has never harmed you.

6. When Sampaio asked the Chairman whether he had ever studied English, the Chairman said: "I learn it one word at a time. If you ask me a question, I can barely just get a few words out of my mouth. I need to set a Five Year Plan for myself and study English for another five years. Then I'll be able to read some articles about politics, economics and philosophy. Now I am halfway there. Reading is hard. It is like if you were walking along but were running into rocks everywhere. It is very troublesome. It would be good to learn a foreign language. It would be a good leisure time activity and help me see things from a different perspective. Within fifteen to twenty years, everybody should study a foreign language like English, Russian, French, German and Japanese. Those are the main languages that we should be studying.

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