

March 9, 1961

Information Memorandum, Zhou Enlai's Comments

Citation:

"Information Memorandum, Zhou Enlai's Comments", March 9, 1961, Wilson Center Digital Archive, Central State Archive, Tirana, AQPPSH-MPKK-V. 1961, L. 13, D. 21.
<https://wilson-center.drivingcreative.com/document/111721>

Summary:

Zhou Enlai informed the titulars and charges d'affaires of the socialist countries about Chinese internal situation and the state of affairs created after the 9th Plenum. He appealed that socialist countries should have faith in the socialist structure and not allow the temporary difficulties to give rise to misunderstandings.

Original Language:

Albanian

Contents:

Translation - English

INFORMATION

ON THE MEETING WITH THE HEAD OF THE STATE COUNCIL OF THE PEOPLE'S
REPUBLIC OF CHINA, COMRADE ZHOU ENLAI ON 8 MARCH 1961

On the above date comrade Chen Yi, minister of foreign affairs of the People's Republic of China (PRC), summoned the titulars and chargés d'affaires of the socialist countries. In this meeting comrade Zhou Enlai informed us as follows:

Comrade Ambassadors and Chargés d'Affaires, we often meet but have never had the opportunity to speak in detail. This meeting was organized by comrade Chen Yi for the purpose of discussing our situation. You are aware of this matter through our 9th Plenum press communiqué. Other topics of the communiqué concern the friendship within our socialist countries, the strengthening of unity between the CCP, the CP of the USSR and all the other countries of the socialist and international communist movement, the Moscow Conference of the 81 communist and workers' sister parties and the call extended to all the peoples of the world from this conference. I will not speak of these matters to you. I will only speak in detail about our internal situation and the state of affairs created after the 9th Plenum. You all know well that our country has gone through very difficult and unparalleled times due to the natural disasters of the past two years - especially last year's. These disasters befell us gradually and not all at once. The plentiful harvest of 1958, the most favorable year for agriculture, helped immensely to overcome the difficulties of 1959. But last year, our agriculture underwent unheard of damages in many areas of the country. I am now 63 and do not remember such natural disasters. While a century ago such disasters also befell our country producing millions of victims, this time, thanks to the measures taken by our party and government in the past two years, a normal life for our people has been ensured despite the great disasters. The natural disasters of the past two years have been varied [in nature]. Some areas have been hit by droughts, some by flooding, others by hurricanes, and yet others by waves of destructive insects. These disasters created serious difficulties and only five areas escaped with less suffering. Those areas that achieved good harvests are far and mainly in border regions, hence, we had difficulties in transporting their produce into the damaged areas. In the northern area of China where the farmed area is large and the population density is high, such as in the provinces of Shandong, Liaoning, Shanxi, Hebei, etc., they have had great droughts and other disasters, while in southwestern China such as in Hunan province and others, last year the disasters have been even more serious.

As a result of the facts I mentioned above, the agricultural production of the past year has been much lower than that of 1959. In a previous meeting we have had, I remember saying to you that for the year 1960 we expected to equal the harvests of 1957, but the opposite happened. Due to the reasons I mentioned before, the production of 1960 was only 60% of the amount forecasted by that year's planning. This figure concerns grain production. The second matter is cotton production. This area is of great importance too, because grains and cotton are the bread and cloth of our people. This area suffered great disaster too in the past year. In the fields of Hunan, Anhui and others, known as cotton producing areas, production has been far lower than our forecast. While in 1958 we harvested 2 million tons of cotton, last year we only reached 1 million tons, or only half. The same situation exists in the areas known for cultivating mainly tobacco. These are limited areas as a result of feudalism and colonialism, which developed this plant only in limited areas, such as Shandong, Anhui, Guizhou, etc. The same situation has befallen meat production. As a result of the decrease in fodder production, the numbers of livestock fell considerably, especially the number of horses used as workforce in rural areas. The slim harvests of the fall, in particular, caused great difficulties and negatively influenced the development of the light industry and partly the development of the heavy industry since it is also partly dependent on agricultural production. Nonetheless, as you well know, due to the great leap of development jumpstarted by 1958, the planning for

industrial production has been achieved and it has even been exceeded in the [area of] heavy industry.

If we would not have had the disasters mentioned above, our five-year plan would have been surpassed in all areas. As you well know, our motorized capacity in agriculture is smaller compared to the other socialist countries. We are undertaking rapid measures to increase our agricultural motorized capacity based on the great industrial leap, though we still need a few years to fully achieve this. Our party and government have explained the situation caused by these disasters to the people and the people have mobilized with faith in their strength to overcome these difficulties, because they know that their economic standards during the years of liberation have been steadily increasing. We are confident that we will overcome all obstacles.

In order to have a good harvest this year, our party and government have undertaken numerous measures in order to achieve a satisfactory summer harvest during the first half of the year and fall harvests at the same levels. This year some areas have seen rains and snows and we expect better weather later. Nonetheless, we expect new difficulties and new droughts in some other areas. The question that arises is: What shall we do if we face new natural disasters this year? Thanks to the mobilization of popular masses we are taking all measures needed to overcome the difficulties. This is the third year of great difficulties in agriculture and during the last two years we gained considerable experience in our struggle against natural disasters. Hence, this year, thanks to the three red banners, we are better prepared. This year we have built big and small reservoirs, are opening many wells, are cleaning canals, are increasing agricultural mechanization and are improving our transport infrastructure. Despite all this, even if we still do not achieve good harvests this year, we are well-prepared to face all difficulties.

I will now go to another political matter. You know that our 9th Plenum communiqué points out that the number of those opposed to our party's line is quite small. This is the active number, but there are many more that only wait and see. Only 11 years have passed since our country's liberation, but two thousand years of feudalism, colonialism, etc. have influenced the people's conscience, both in the rural and urban areas. As a result, 40 million people in rural areas and 10 million in urban areas make up the numbers of those I mentioned above. Our party has always undertaken measures for their re-education and the results have been very positive. A good number of them have a desire to be re-educated. In the future our party will continue to undertake such measures. It should be said that such elements with such views exist also within our party, but, naturally, their numbers are very limited. The class enemy elements are happy with our temporary difficulties and rise up and act. The same goes for the reactionary elements abroad and imperialists who have been energized in their work against us, sending their elements into our country. They have even sent different agents to work with the communists and the youth, but we have eliminated them. This is the reason that our party forcibly stresses the issue of strengthening our vigilance and this has also been mentioned in our 9th Plenum's communiqué. As always, our party is working at full strength to enlighten our masses so that they may understand the situation and overcome the difficulties. This has helped us immensely.

We made plans with the socialist countries expecting good harvests for 1959 and especially for the second half of 1960. For example, in the first half of the past year our side fulfilled satisfactorily its obligations, while for the reasons explained above those obligations remained unfulfilled, especially for grains, oil, canned foods, fruit, etc. As a result of the situation, the size of our export deficit with the SU is up to 1.5 billion old rubles. The same is happening with other fraternal countries. As it is apparent, the export to the SU and other fraternal countries of Eastern Europe of agricultural commodities will be decreasing this year and not only are we unable to make up last year's deficits, but this year's export plan will have to be reduced. Our delegation to Moscow has discussed this fact and I have also mentioned this to the

Soviet trade delegation that visited here. So, as a result of the situation our imports from fraternal countries will not be what we have asked for. Hence, the great natural disasters that befell us have made things more difficult for other fraternal countries as well, by decreasing our exports to these countries and our imports from them. But we are fraternal countries and know and understand each other's difficulties. Limiting our exports, especially on food items, to the SU, Bulgaria, Romania, Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Germany would be of immense help to us to overcome our difficulties. Despite these great difficulties we have not asked the fraternal countries for grains. Trade talks continue on these matters in Moscow between us and the SU, while with Bulgaria a trade agreement was signed, though it is about half as large as before. Once more, comrades, I would like to reiterate that this is enormously helpful for us to remedy our internal situation. For this we thank our fraternal countries not only in our name, but also in the name of our party and our people. Last year agriculture was not favorable in other countries too, such as in the SU, but PR [the People's Republic] of Albania has had particularly great difficulties. Still, the SU has helped other countries too. In relation to the matters I discussed above, we are trying to remedy the situation and have taken measures to import grains. For example, we have signed agreements with Canada and Australia to import 2.6 million tons of grains for our internal needs. We have also signed an agreement with Burma for a half million tons of rice and others with other countries for different items, though those are not for our internal needs. We are trying to ensure even more grain sources and for this we are continuing talks with capitalist countries. But to procure the grains we need foreign currency and we will export our products in order to support grain imports. In the past ten years we have never imported grains, on the contrary, we have exported. We will try to make sure, if we can, that we import 4-5 million tons of grain. This allows us to only fulfill our needs for two weeks or a bit more - it is only 5-6 kg per person - but we do not rely on imports to overcome our difficulties. We rely on our internal strength.

I want to reiterate that the capitalist countries try to exploit our temporary difficulties at every chance and spread all kinds of gossip as if we are not steadfast, are not strong, etc. so as to decrease our country's influence in the eyes of the world. They are also trying to impede the purchase of the grain and its delivery here. But we know this very well and all the difficulties will be overcome and we cannot accept their "help." If they get in the way of the deliveries of grain here, I declare to you that this is not dangerous for us. Spring is coming and in our southern and other areas we will replace food items with surrogates. Hence we are calm and resolute in facing every difficulty. In front of the unity of our camp the imperialists will fail. They try to exploit our temporary difficulties, while their own difficulties are insurmountable; the unity between our countries gets stronger everyday and the anti-imperialist and the anti-colonialist struggle in Latin America, Africa, etc. gets tougher.

Please notify the governments and parties of your countries about all I have said. We have difficulties, but we will overcome them. We inform you of the situation so that the Parties and Governments of our fraternal countries know the difficulties with our exports during the past year and this one. The outlook for our agriculture's future is bright and our economy will also get stronger in all areas, as will the cooperation and unity between our fraternal countries. Hence, the temporary difficulties that have befallen us should not give rise to misunderstandings. Otherwise, the faith in our structure may be lost.

(This is what comrade Zhou Enlai said and then he asked us whether there were any questions on the issues he discussed. At this moment, the Bulgarian ambassador, Panchevski, rose and said, "We thank comrade Zhou Enlai, the Chinese party and government very much not only for informing us in detail on their internal situation, but also for the measures they have undertaken to overcome these difficulties. We are mindful and understand your difficulties and have full trust that you will successfully overcome them."

Beijing, 9 March 1961

Halil Zeneli