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Memorandum of Conversation between Anastas Mikoyan and Mao Zedong

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Summary:

Anastas Mikoyan and Mao Zedong converse about the mediation talks between the CCP and the Guomindang, Yugoslavia, coordination between the communist parties of the Asian countries, and the history of the CCP.

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On the evening of 3 February 1949 another conversation took place with Mao Zedong, in which CCP CC Politburo members Zhou Enlai, Liu Shaoqi, Ren Bishi and Zhu De, as well as the interpreter Shi Zhe, took part. I[van] V. Kovalev. and [Soviet China specialist] E.F. Kovalev were present from our side.

ON THE FOREIGN MEDIATION IN THE TALKS BETWEEN THE GUOMINDANG AND THE CCP

After mutual greetings the conversation began with me stating that we know that England, America and France stood for taking up for themselves the functions of mediation between the Guomindang and the CCP. Later, having learned somehow that the USSR and the CCP are against foreign mediation, these powers, not wishing to shame themselves, changed their position and declined mediation. In this connection it is necessary to take up seriously the questions of conspiracy and take an interest in whether there are any babbling people around the CCP, through whom this information could reach the Americans. Mao Zedong absolutely ruled out this possibility for, as he stated, such serious questions and, in particular, communications with Moscow, are known only to the 5 present members of the CC, to one interpreter Shi Zhe and to Cde. Terebin. The aforementioned persons are completely reliable and he does not have any doubt in them. As for this case, he stated that the Anglo-Americans, even before our position had become known, openly wrote that the USSR and the CCP would be against mediation. I replied that then it could only be their speculation, however, the Western powers hurried to refuse mediation after they had received reliable information about our position. Mao Zedong reiterated that one cannot [sic, probably "can"] rule out the possibility of the leaking of information from the CCP circle.

THE YUGOSLAVIA QUESTION

Then, on Mao Zedong's request, I shed light on the question of Yugoslavia. Mao Zedong asked whether the Yugoslavs are obstructing the conduct of communist work in Europe. I replied that they cannot, for they are in complete isolation, and all communist parties without exception spoke out against the Yugoslav nationalist anti-Sovietists. To this Mao Zedong said that Tito is [like] Zhang Guotao, a former CCP CC member, traitor, defector, and renegade.

ON THE COORDINATION OF ACTIVITIES AMONG THE COMMUNIST PARTIES OF THE ASIAN COUNTRIES

Further, to my question about the coordination of activities among the communist parties of the Asian countries, Mao Zedong said that on this account they still do not have a definite opinion. They maintain contacts with the parties of Indochina, Siam, Philippines, Indonesia, Burma, India, Malaya and Korea. The closest ties are with the com[munist] parties of Indochina and Korea, with the rest considerably weaker. There are no relations whatsoever with the Japanese Com[munist] Party. All work of liaison with com[munist] parties is carried out through a special comrade, located in Hong Kong, but it is conducted poorly. Therefore, as Mao Zedong stated, under these circumstances it is too early to create a bureau of com[munist] parties of Asian countries, like the bureau of com[munist] parties in Europe. One may return to this question when our forces take the south of the country and our position strengthens.

Continuing, Mao Zedong pointed out that the strongest com[munist] parties are the North Korean, Indian and Chinese ones, after which one could also count among the strong the Japanese Com[munist] Party. Speaking of the Japanese Com[munist] Party Mao Zedong said that they know that in 1946 a member of the Japanese Com[munist] Party Okano (Nozako Sanzo) [sic, should be Nosaka Sanzo] held the erroneous point of view that power may be captured through parliamentary struggle. The majority of the Politburo of the Japanese Com[munist] Party was against this point of view.

Recently the situation of the Japanese Com[munist] Party is improving. In Japan, anti-American sentiments are growing among the people, though the Japanese bourgeoisie are supporting the USA.

Returning to the question of creation of a bureau of com[munist] parties of Asian countries, Mao Zedong informed that they know that the com[munist] parties of Siam and Indochina spoke out in favor of creation of such a bureau. It would be expedient to create at first a bureau from the representatives of com[munist] parties of not all but several Asian countries, for example, from the representatives of the Chinese, Korean, Indochinese and Philippine com[munist] parties. As far as the Japanese Com[munist] Party is concerned, its weight ratio in the communist movement is still not high and besides, we still do not have contacts with the Japanese communists. Regarding the participation of the Japanese com[munist] party in the bureau, Mao Zedong said that one should exchange opinions with it beforehand and receive its agreement.

I said that in the opinion of our party, the CCP CC should not join the Cominform, but should create a bureau of com[munist] parties of East Asia headed by the Chinese Com[munist] Party. In the beginning, composed of 3 parties—Chinese, Japanese, and Korean. Subsequently one may gradually involve other com[munist] parties. Mao Zedong asked then whether contacts between the CCP and the com[munist] party of the USSR should be direct, to which I replied in the affirmative. Then I warned him that in the membership of the politburo of such com[munist] parties as those of the Philippines, Indonesia, Siam and Burma there are many American and English spies, therefore the CCP must be careful in relations with them. Mao Zedong agreed with this opinion and asked whether they could contact the com[munist] parties of Japan and Korea regarding the question of forming a bureau, to which I replied in the affirmative.

THE MAIN QUESTIONS OF HISTORY OF THE CCP

Then Mao Zedong turned to recounting the main questions of history of the com[munist] party of China. He separated the party history into 4 periods:

- 1) The Northern Expedition
- 2) The Soviet Movement
- 3) The Sino-Japanese War
- 4) Post-war Civil War

Speaking of the first period of party history Mao Zedong said that the CCP appeared in 1921 under the direct influence of the October revolution in the USSR and with the help of the VKP(b). Whereas the Russian Bolsheviks organized themselves at the London Congress in 1903, we were formed as Bolsheviks considerably later, i.e. only in 1921. We immediately took up the program of the Bolsheviks and of the democratic centralism. From 1921 to 1927 we cooperated with the Guomindang and conducted the Northern Expedition together with it. At this time the Sov[iet] Union helped us, until 1924 with Lenin's participation, and after his death—with the participation of Comrade Stalin. Comrade Stalin wrote a lot about China during this period. I knew very little then but I studied Marxism carefully. The CCP did not yet have a firm foundation though it struggled heroically enjoying the support of the Chinese workers and peasants. At that time there were opportunist elements in the leadership of the CCP, headed by [cofounder of the CCP] Chen Duxiu. This led to the defeat of the Chinese Revolution of that period. Only with the help of the Comintern was the opportunist leadership of the CCP removed in August 1927.

The second period of our history falls on years 1927-1936. During this period we took into account the lessons stemming from the defeat of the revolution of 1925-1927. Whereas during the first period (1921-1927) the ranks of the com[munist] party

counted up to 50,000 people, then in 1928 the number of members of the party decreased to 10,000 people. An unstable part of the party membership jumped into the opponent's camp, others died in battles or simply abandoned party work. Nevertheless the party became stronger politically though during that time some mistakes were made. First and foremost one should note the left opportunist mistakes in the questions of economic, political and cultural construction. Then the mistakes of the leftists were that they considered that everything was incorrect both inside and outside the party. Li Lisan followed this in 1930. It is known that the left opportunist line of Li Lisan was censured by the Comintern. The members of the CCP believed the Comintern and joined its decision on Li Lisan. Ren Bishi, Liu Shaoqi and Zhou Enlai spoke out against Li Lisan. After 1928 Zhou Enlai and Strakhov [Li Lisan] visited Moscow, learned a little there, and began to organize work in the CCP. Having come to China they called the 3rd plenum of CCP CC, which censured Li Lisan's line. The leftists did not agree with this and demanded to call the 4th plenum of the CCP CC. With this step they undermined their authority in the party, all the more so since they had no practical experience of revolutionary struggle and construction. To reach their aims they did not shun from the services of the right opportunist Chen Duxiu. They struggled against each and everyone, considering only themselves to be orthodox Bolsheviks. They called Liu Shaoqi an opportunist because he, as the leader of the professional unions movement, in the conditions of the then brutal Guomindang terror, with the aim of preserving the strength of the working class, demanded an organized retreat. In 1931-34 the leadership of the party was in the hands of these leftists. They even took into their hands the underground party organizations, blaming me, Mao Zedong said, for opportunism, considering me a representative of the rightist line of the party.

From the time of the 6th Congress of the CCP (1928) until the 7th Congress (1945) 17 years passed. Among the members of the CCP CC, elected at the 6th Congress at the present time only 3 persons remain, the rest were co-opted into the membership of the CCP CC at the 3rd and 4th plenums of the CCP CC. Among those co-opted were [former CCP CC Politburo member] Bo Gu and [former General Secretary of CCP CC] Luo Fu [Zhang Wentian] who sided with the Wang Ming group and sneaked into the CC illegally. In 1930-31 this group published a brochure, in which it claimed that Bolshevism in China begins with them. Subsequently, under the pressure of our criticism, this group corrected its mistakes, but not entirely. This did not prevent us, however, from electing them into the membership of the CCP CC at the 7th Party Congress.

In 1946 Bo Gu participated in the talks with the Guomindang in Chongqing, and in April of the same year he died in an air crash together with [former Communist military leader] Ye Ting and [former CCP representative in Chongqing] Wang Ruofei. Luo Fu is in Manchuria at the present time. His main shortcoming is the absence of practical experience and besides he is fairly loquacious.

As far as Wang Ming is concerned, Mao Zedong said, he still has not recognized his former mistakes. In his regard we conducted a soft policy, trying to influence him by methods of persuasion. He, Mao Zedong said, has bourgeois habits. During the Sino-Japanese war Wang Ming proposed to reduce the CCP to the position of the Guomindang. He insisted on the joint management by the CCP and the Guomindang of the most imperative political tasks and therefore trusted the Guomindang and de facto liquidated the CCP's independent political line. Having arrived in China from Moscow in December 1937 he called a meeting in Wuhan without the permission of the CCP CC and wrote a brochure, published in March 1938, calling on the party to abandon the CC leadership. It is characteristic that, when in 1937 [now CCP CC member, future Ambassador to the USSR] Wang Jiaxiang returned to China from Moscow, he brought us the program guidelines of the Comintern, and when Wang Ming came from Moscow, he did not bring us anything, whereas what Wang Jiaxiang brought, turned out to be very valuable and useful. These program guidelines helped us in developing our own concrete tasks.

Continuing to characterize the second period of the party history, Mao Zedong said that during that time they had to struggle against renegade Zhang Guotao, as well as with other opportunistic tendencies. In this struggle, as well as subsequently, the Soviet party thinking helped us. For example, in 1946 Comrade Stalin wrote a letter to Colonel Razin on the questions of military history, which pointed out that retreat is a rational form of struggle.¹ But during the second period of our party's history, in the opinion of the leftists, retreat was considered an opportunistic undertaking. Now, one can see that they were deeply mistaken.

In January 1935 in Zunyi (Guizhou province) the CCP CC called a meeting to struggle against the leftist mistakes. The conditions of the meeting were most unfavorable since Zhang Guotao was attacking us with an army of 60,000 people. But we were not at a loss and destroyed more than 30,000 of his forces. At the same time it transpired that Zhang Guotao was a good friend of Wang Ming and when the latter was requested in Moscow to provide an explanation on this question, he delayed his answer.

By the beginning of the Sino-Japanese war we had suffered great losses in the military forces. We remained with only about 30,000 fighters and in this connection Wang Ming claimed that these forces are not sufficient for the struggle against Japan, insisting on having them diluted in the Guomindang forces. Now it is clear that this was a mistaken line, because 30,000 people made for the skeleton, upon which grew the current 3 million strong People's Liberation Army.

All of these mistakes by Wang Ming were known to the delegates of the 7th CCP Congress and they caused their sincere discontent. The delegates also knew about the mistakes of Li Lisan, Bo Gu and Luo Fu and they demanded not to elect them to the CC. However, by the time of the Congress the situation in China had changed. Many from those who had been mistaken understood their mistakes and went backstage. Marxist-Leninist study, criticism and self-criticism unfolded in the party. And though there were many arguments at the Congress—whether or not to elect Wang Ming, Li Lisan, and Bo Gu, and Luo Fu into the CC, they were elected anyhow with the aim of consolidation of party forces.

Now Li Lisan works in the professional unions, he has great experience in this area and he is more deserving before the revolution than Wang Ming is. He, together with Liu Shaoqi, led the workers' movement in Shanghai. Having arrived from the Soviet Union in China he did not speak a single bad word about the Sov[iet] Union and now is trying to pay back the trust shown in him, while there is still a wedge hammered between the CCP CC and Wang Ming.

Further, Mao Zedong said that in 1936 the CCP counted up to 40,000 members, who mainly joined the party in the period of the Soviet movement. At the present time the party has more than 3 million members. There are 44 members of the CC, 33 candidate members.

To my question whether there is any wavering in the ranks of the party at the present time Mao Zedong replied that there were manifestations of this, but to a lesser extent, in the leadership of the party [sic].

The conversation ended at this.