

September 24, 1956

**Memorandum of Conversation between Mao Zedong
and the Delegation of the Mongolian People's
Revolutionary Party and Comments on the
Distribution of the Memorandum of Conversation**

Citation:

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Summary:

Mao Zedong meets with a delegation from the Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party, and Mao encourages the Mongolians to pursue industrialization and the building of public works. It is also suggested that the two countries increase their diplomatic relations through the building of a Mongolian consulate.

Credits:

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Chinese

Contents:

Translation - English

One. Memorandum of Conversation.

Date: 24 September 1956

Participants:

Mongolian side: [MPR First Secretary Dashiin] Damba (head of the delegation), [MPR Foreign Minister Luvsantserengiin] Tsend, [MPR Head of State Bayanbaataryn] Ochirbat (Ambassador), Hashengangbai, Tserevsamba;

Chinese side: Chairman Mao Zedong, [CCP CC Secretariat] Wang Jiaxiang.

Chairman Mao [Chairman]: You got tired over these few days, didn't you?

Damba [Da]: No, we are not tired, we are very comfortable.

Chairman: Mongolian comrades are good comrades, good friends. You are a friendly nation, a friendly party!

(Chairman sends regards to Comrade Tsedenbal)

Da: He is very well, he and Comrade [Jamtsarangiyin] Sambuu send their regards to you.

Chairman: Thank you. Please give them regards on my behalf.

Da: Thank you. We appreciate your aid to us.

Chairman: No, you should not say so! China is a big country, it is our duty, and it is your right. I always hear you talk this way, and at the same time I see documents worded this way, and my heart feels uneasy. We should do our duty, because our ancestors exploited you for three hundred years, oppressed you, they ran up quite a debt; therefore, today we want to repay these debts. In the past our national minorities were also oppressed this way, and we also want to repay our debts to them-this is our duty. One million two hundred thousand of our Tibetan population are actually in Lhasa, another million are scattered across Qinghai, Yunnan, Sichuan, Gansu, and other places. How is the religious situation in Mongolia? Are there many lamas? What is the general population?

Da: There used to be many, but there are extremely few now. In the early period of the revolution some lamas did bad things, and they were dealt with. Some have engaged in labor and other work. There are still a small number of lamas. Our country's general population is 800,000.

Chairman: How is the development of industry and agriculture in Mongolia?

Da: Before the revolution we were a very backward nation, but during the revolutionary era, owing to enthusiastic help from the Soviet Union, our people have attained good development in the spheres of industry, animal husbandry, culture, and education.

Chairman: And Mongolian agriculture developed as well?

Da: We only began to develop agriculture this year.

Chairman: Is there enough water?

Da: In our country water is scarce.

Chairman: How about rainfall?

Da: In an average year, we have 120 to 300 millimeters of rain (of these, 300 millimeters fall in the forest belt, and the desert belt has 120 millimeters).

Chairman: What about drilling wells?

Da: In the desert belt, it is difficult to drill wells.

Chairman: In this case, create some reservoirs, store up water, and use it when needed-why don't you try it this way?

Da: This would be difficult in the desert region-water does not stay and quickly seeps into the ground.

Chairman: What big rivers do you have on your territory?

Da: Selenge, Onon, Herlen, etc.

Chairman: Which ones flow in the northwestern direction?

Da: Onon and Herlen.

Chairman: Where did Mongolian history and culture develop?

Da: In the region of the Onon and Herlen rivers.

Chairman: Can't you construct dams, reservoirs, drainage, etc. on these rivers?

Da: The people and all of us urgently demand to have it done so, but we do not have enough strength.

Chairman: We also have some difficulties now. But in a few years we will help you in this regard.

Da: Thank you.

Chairman: This year Hebei suffered from flooding, thirty million mu[1] of agricultural land were devastated by water. In China, hydraulic engineering work did not develop greatly until now; another ten years will pass before [this problem] can be resolved. But in this regard we will help you; you need not wait ten years.

Da: Last year you gave us a lot of aid, [you] sent thirteen thousand workers and technicians, and this gave an impetus to industrial and other construction. In addition, this year [you] gave [us] a grant of one hundred and sixty million rubles.

Therefore, the Mongolian people feel elated.

Chairman: No, no. I already said it before: it is our duty. These numbers are too small. When you raise this I feel ashamed.

Da: Connecting the two [railroad] lines had a great effect on our country's development.

Chairman: How is Mongolian agriculture now?

Da: Now, compared with the past, it has developed somewhat; but due to the lack of manpower, large tracts of land have not yet been opened up for cultivation.

Chairman: This is not good. Uncultivated land should be opened up. Have you settled down?

Da: Settling down would be very advantageous for our agriculture and animal husbandry, but [we] have not yet settled.

Chairman: This cannot be accomplished at once, but has to be done gradually, because grass is limited in any one place. In our country there are provinces with a similar situation. With settling down, one can grow vegetables and cultivate crops. This way the population can increase.

Da: Right! (Pointing to Tsend) He is responsible for the National Planning Committee. These suggestions of yours are of great help to our future planning work.

Chairman: Develop agriculture and animal husbandry; first of all one should develop hydraulic engineering work, and this includes dams, reservoirs, drainage, etc. On the other hand, pastures are very important; for your future, "grass is oil." You should cultivate pastures, using the deep plough method; this way the grass will grow tall and there will be much more of it. This will create conditions for you to settle down.

Da: That's right! We attach importance to your words.

Chairman: You can start some hydraulic engineering work early. This aspect includes geological prospecting work, physical resources, etc. Financial resources are not that important. Manpower is the most important, most critical. You should first do the most pressing, most needed work. For example, you fixed up a modern highway from Ulaanbaatar to the country's western border, but you use it very rarely. This is unnecessary.

Da: Only seven years have passed since the establishment of the People's Republic of China. Before that time the people of our two countries did not have much contact. Thirty-five years have passed since our revolution, but because our country was very backward, we have not been able to develop well in these thirty-five years (although we have had successes). Therefore, one can say that industry and agriculture in our country have not developed well.

Chairman: You should be self-sufficient.

Da: Currently we cannot manufacture many everyday products.

Chairman: This is not good. [You] should expand this aspect of industry.

Da: Japanese imperialism's invasion of our country also influenced development in this regard.

Chairman: How many troops do you still have?

Da: About one division.

Chairman: That's enough. Now you do not have enemies around you.

Da: We are right now training demobilized soldiers from these troops to become drivers, construction workers, etc.

Chairman: This is good. This is a production army! Then, how is the written language?

Da: Now we are using new (Russian) letters; all adults are literate.

Chairman: Very good. Inner Mongolia is now doing the same thing.

Da: That is what they say. With regard to the written language, we can help Inner Mongolia.

Chairman: Right. It must be done this way. Do you have direct links with Inner Mongolia?

Da: We do not have direct links now. We only have links through the Central [Committee].

Chairman: Shouldn't there be direct relations?

Da: There must be direct relations, but we did not go through formalities.

Chairman: You can do so. You can establish your consulate in Inner Mongolia. If you do so, you will not have any costs! You can take several people from your embassy and send them there, this would do. The Soviet Union does this. They have consulates at Tianjin, Shanghai, Shenyang, Guangzhou, etc. However, I am only speaking about the aforementioned things as a private individual, perhaps [I am] incorrect, because I have not consulted with the government and responsible people at the Foreign Ministry. By the same token, you also have not consulted with your government. But I think these things can be achieved.

Da: Thank you! We never even gave a thought to the historical "debt." We only want to thank you.

Chairman: No! One must pay debts-we repay debts incurred by our ancestors. You, the Mongolian nation, are the third nation. The first nation were the Xiongnu. They settled in Xinjiang and the northern part of Huanghe, and some had crossed the Huanghe. The second nationality was the Tujue. They seized Armenia, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, Egypt, Greece, and some other nations, and founded a big empire. But that nation was subsequently defeated by the Mongolian nation. Therefore Mongolia is the third nation. Until now we have not clarified the origin of your ancestors. Is it in Siberia?

Ochirbat: Ah! That is what they say!

Chairman: Siberia used to have the Gaoche [Tall Cart] nationality, it is said that they all sat upon great tall carts. Are the Gaoche nationality your ancestors?

Da: Old people say that when ancestors moved their homes, they used tall carts to move all their things.

Chairman: Do you have records of this?

Da: As for the records prior to the 12th century, we have none now; we have records after the 13th century. The Soviet Union is helping us with work in this regard. Mongolia's pre-13th century history is intimately related to Chinese history; therefore, in the future we will possibly need to conduct joint research with you in this regard.

Chairman: Very good. Today we talked about many things related to history.

Da: Our prospects are very bright, because we have fraternal aid from the Soviet Union and China. From now on, we will work even harder and more diligently.

Chairman: You should develop well.

Da: I again express our sincere gratitude. Your aid to us is great fraternal aid. We cannot look upon it as a "debt."

Chairman: But we think this way. We have equal coexistence with all countries. In the past, we oppressed you, therefore now we want to admit our mistake. We not only do it so with you but with all national minorities inside the country. In the past, we oppressed them; therefore, if we now do not admit our mistakes, we cannot root out Great Han nationalist thinking and implement [principles of] equality of nationalities. This is [our] basis, not pretty words. Isn't that so? In the past we oppressed you, but now you do not even have a word of complaint. The aid we are giving you is small. It is repayment of debt and not aid. Only this way can we attain mutual trust. You say "aid"-this is also good; when you say so, you also express equality.

Da: We express gratitude for your aid, which you have given and will give to us. The Chinese and Mongolian working people have always been friends; things done by the reactionary classes are a different matter.

Chairman: Some Chinese workers have gone to Mongolia. You should carry out propaganda work with them so that they do not commit the error of Great Han nationalist thinking, so that they do not ride roughshod over you [chengwang chengba]. If the Chinese workers or laborers there commit mistakes, you should make this known to us.

Da: The majority of the people are very good, though a small number of people sometimes make mistakes, but not intentionally. At the same time, everybody might have some shortcomings.

Chairman: You should educate them; if anyone commits grave mistakes, they should be punished in accordance with the law. You should take the attitude of hosts and educate them.

Da: Among Chinese workers there, there are two hundred party members, and they lead the others to do good work.

Chairman: Good! How many workers are there altogether?

Da: 13,000 people, counting the family members. Of the former overseas Chinese, a part returned to the homeland, now only 45,000 people remain; but these people are all old.

Chairman: Are the Mongolian people directing them?

Tsend: Yes! The Mongolian people direct them with the attitude of hosts in their own country.

Chairman: Are there any carpenters among the Chinese workers?

Da: Yes. There are also brickmakers and all other professions.

Chairman: Do you let them train Mongolian apprentices?

Da: They certainly train apprentices!

Chairman: Later, with regard to agriculture, we may use our manpower to aid you. The number may be one hundred thousand, or it can be two hundred thousand; it can even reach three hundred thousand. Of these, some people could also help you with animal husbandry.

Da: Right, but beforehand we should fully complete preparatory work and planning work. Otherwise, after we receive these people, we will have difficulties in housing and other aspects.

Chairman: Right! You should gradually carry out this work. You have 800,000 people, therefore you can develop agriculture and begin hydraulic engineering.

Da: We have more than 52,000 workers.

Chairman: 52,000 workers out of a population of eight hundred thousand-this number cannot be considered small. Do they use machines?

Da: They use semi-automatic machinery.

Chairman: Do they have automation?

Da: They do not.

Chairman: Then you can install some in the future. On this question, we can have a talk in the future.

Da: Owing to your aid, we now have a match factory and a porcelain factory, but boxes for matches, etc. are still made by hand.

Chairman: What is the scale of the production of matches?

Da: The country requires 20 million boxes of matches, next year production can reach that number. But they do not sell very well inside the country.

Chairman: How is your market?

Da: As for the market, we have it, but it is very small.

Chairman: We talked well today.

Da: We thank you for your attention to us, thank you for taking some time out of your busy schedule to meet with us, thank you for giving us very important suggestions, thank you for giving us very useful ideas. When we return home, we will now be guided in our work by the words you spoke tonight. As we part, I once again extend our heartfelt respect to you on behalf of my party's Central Committee and the entire people.

[...]

Two. Comments on the distribution of the memorandum of conversation.

Foreign Ministry:

This conversation should be sent to our embassy in Mongolia, to the Party Committee of the Inner Mongolian Autonomous Region, and to each province, city and district party committee, because all provinces, cities and districts have issues relating to the minority question. Also, [it should be sent] to the United Front Department and the party group of the National Committee. Please handle jointly with [CCP CC Member] Comrade [Yang] Shangkun.

Mao Zedong. 16 December.

[1] Editor's Note: A mu is a Chinese unit of land measure equivalent to approximately 0.1647 acres (0.0667 hectares).