

September 12, 1959

Record of Conversation between Comrade Liao Chengzhi and Ishibashi Tanzan

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Summary:

During a conversation with Ishibashi Tanzan, Liao Chengzhi claims that the Japanese Prime Minister "did many things that hurt the feelings of the Chinese people," perhaps the first use of this now famous phrase in Chinese foreign policy discourse.

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Chinese

Contents:

Translation - English

Secret

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(Not yet approved by Chairman Liao)

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Time: □□□ □□□ □□□

12 September 1959, 7:30 a.m. □□□ □□

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Translator: □□□ □□□ □□□

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Lin Meizu □□□ □□

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Note-taker: □□□ □□

Liao: Premier Zhou [Enlai] called me here to extend his greetings to Mr. Ishibashi, and ask for your precious opinions. Mr. Ishibashi is very familiar with the opinions and proposals of our side. More importantly, we want to know Mr. Ishibashi's opinions. Premier Zhou asked me to thoroughly consult Mr. Ishibashi and report to him later.

Ishibashi: I myself don't really have any opinions. What I solely want is to negotiate with China, to see whether there is any way to initiate a breakthrough between China and Japan. I myself have no special thoughts.

Liao: We know that Mr. Ishibashi had very friendly thoughts towards us before setting out. We want to know the impressions which Mr. Ishibashi gained from all sectors of the Japanese political circles you met before departing. We can reach specific topics step by step. I think that Premier Zhou wants to know Mr. Ishibashi's opinions on big issues first. Although they are complicated, we should treat each other with sincerity as Premier Zhou said. Opinions being exchanged is the initial step, deeper discussions can come later. Premier Zhou is at the meeting of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, but he might be with you in one or two days.

Ishibashi: What is the crux of the issue? What do you want from Japan?

Liao: In recent years, we have been willing to develop a friendly relationship with Japan, and we've actually done so too. During Hatayama [Ichirō's] term as the Prime Minister, as well as yours, we've improved our relations. Some of this can be dated back to the Yoshida [Shigeru] administration. China has made many efforts in terms of developing a friendly Sino-Japanese relationship. We've even done some things which are improper for two countries that haven't yet normalized their relations, such as the repatriation of Japanese nationals, followed by the issues of fisheries and trade. Though we were willing to do it then, the Japanese side had concerns about us. For example, our people are not welcomed in Japan. Even though, we welcome our friends from Japan to come to China. Every word and sentence we said during the Hatayama and Ishibashi administrations still count, and we have no intentions to take them back. However, Mr. Ishibashi may also have known that after Mr. Kishi Nobusuke came to office, our concerns have been piling up. Mr. Kishi also verbally promised to do trade with China and establish some relations. But in fact, he did many things that hurt the feelings of the Chinese people. First, he went to Taiwan and declared that "taking back the mainland would be fantastic!" In the past we've told our friends from Japan that China understands Japan's situation, but the Japanese side completely failed us. Second, Mr. Kishi spoke ill of China in front of the Southeast Asian countries. I myself attended the Asian-African Conference [in Bandung in 1955] with Premier Zhou, and during the meeting, the Premier suggested that our friends

from the Southeast Asian countries build good relations with Japan. In terms of this point, Japan failed us as well. Third, Mr. Kishi denounced us in the United States. Most importantly, he said that since China is a communist country, it cannot be trusted, and Japan would not develop further relations with China. Upholding the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, we believe that the type of political system which other countries have is a domestic issue for them, and we do not want to interfere. Mr. Kishi said that China should not be trusted because it is a communist country. Did he mean that we can only be trusted if our country goes backwards from communism to so-called liberalism? The problem is quite serious then. It is not China that is interfering in other country's politics; quite the contrary, it is Kishi. Fourth, Mr. Kishi made malicious remarks against us at United Nations. Frankly speaking, we have no interest in the United Nations. Kishi said that China is an aggressor and thus should not be granted a seat at the UN. We know that the rate of Japan's recovery was quite fast during the Korean War. In other words, it was at a time when the Chinese people were bleeding quite heavily. The son of our chairman [Mao Anying] died during the war, and almost every Chinese family has a relative or a friend that was wounded or killed in this war. However, the United States has accused China of being the aggressor. The Chinese people hate this to the core and they will never forget about it. And Kishi Nobusuke echoed this view of the Americans at the United Nations, saying that China is the aggressor. Judging from all of the above-mentioned situations, we have to believe that Kishi is hostile toward China. The Nagasaki National Flag Incident [of 1958] was merely a breaking point. Therefore, we had no other choice but to adopt a sharp attitude towards Kishi Nobusuke. Just as an old Chinese saying goes, "take an eye for eye." However, Chairman Mao [Zedong] once said that intense relations are only temporary; 60 years is also a blink compared to a history of intercourse which has lasted for 2,000 years. If Kishi does not change his hostile attitude, however, we will not change ours. The question is, though it is kind of inconvenient for us to do so, we have to take the feelings of Chinese people into consideration, and that is our major concern. The Chinese people and Chinese government view Kishi in the same way.

China has begun her construction and has made a leap forward. We are going to continue the momentum in the future. Figures are not as important as the speed of construction. The Chinese people's needs are a matter of multiplication. We have a population of 670 million, though what we've achieved is huge, if divided by our population, what everyone can get is minimal. To meet the needs of our people in the whole country, we must accelerate the pace of construction. We might encounter problems during the process, but we do not need to rely on foreign countries to solve them, and we have the experiences and the determination to rely on our own power to overcome these obstacles. Even so, it would be convenient for both China and Japan to build a cooperative relationship based on friendship if both of them make some progress in construction. Last year, when Mr. Ikeda Masanosuke visited China, he claimed that "for [Japan] to have contacts with China, China should put Japan at ease on certain issues." For our side, we ask Japan to put us at ease on more issues. The first is about Taiwan. Mr. Ishibashi knows this pretty well. There are many overseas military bases of other countries in Japan, and if Mr. Ishibashi takes a tour around China, you will find that China has none, and there is not a single place that is targeted at Japan. However, many American military bases are located in Japan and all of them are targeted at China. For example, the base of the US Seventh Fleet is in Japan, and the American fighters bombing us during the Korean War also took off from there. We would like to carry out our construction, and we may still not be able to meet the requirements of our people in 20 years, 30 years, or even 50 years. But if we feel threatened by our neighbor, it is no longer a domestic political issue, but a security issue for our country, thus we have to show great concern. On the one hand, we do not want to stir things up in Japanese domestic politics, and we cannot, since it is none of our business; on the other hand, we are also aware that with the exception of some people in the minority, the great majority of Japanese people want China and Japan to normalize their relations. So do the Chinese people. We also know that this wish is shared by many of our friends within the Liberal Democratic Party. We believe that we have not misjudged Kishi Nobusuke.

Ishibashi: Mr. Kishi Nobusuke is not the kind of person you've imagined; at least he also hopes to improve Sino-Japanese relations. What you've just said is news to most people in Japan. Kishi Nobusuke just has a liking for flattering people. When he is in the United States, he flatters America. When he is in Taiwan, he flatters Taiwan, and that is all. He did not say anything hostile to China in Japan. Therefore, there is no good to think that he is being antagonistic to China.

Liao: If it's flattering other countries, there are many other things he could say. Why did he have to say all of these things?

Ishibashi: Just for the sake of flattering others.

Liao: We view it from a more realistic perspective.

Ishibashi: When Kishi visited the UK this time, he also said something flattering to the British and pandered to them. The Japanese people want to develop a friendly relationship with China. What do you think about it?

Liao: We are aware of that as well. But there are also situations like such. Last year we signed the fourth trade treaty and steel contract with Japan. Frankly speaking, it is a touchstone [shijinshi] we offer for Kishi Nobusuke. It is not bad if these treaties can be realized, but if Kishi Nobusuke does not want it to happen, it is no loss to us. The very night which the treaties were signed, the government of our country issued a statement of support, and before that we had shown the draft of this statement to Mr. Ikeda Masanosuke. The United States and Taiwan later interfered. At the beginning, Foreign Minister Fujiyama Aichiro said something different, but in the end, the government of Japan gave in. Later, Aichi treated our national flag as an object [ba wo guo de guoqi dangzuo wupin kandai]. Mr. Kishi also wants to establish some kind of relationship with us. When this kind of relationship is built, however, we will bear the brunt whenever there is an external interference. Therefore, as long as Kishi does not change his hostile policy to us, we have no other choice but to maintain our current policy toward Japan. The Japanese people want to develop friendly relations with China, and so do the Chinese people. But if this kind of relationship between China and Japan is built upon a beach and crumbles under every huge wave, we should move it to a more solid foundation. It might be impolite for us to speak ill of the Prime Minister of your country in front of you, but you are our friend, and we need not to hold back when talking with you. We've told you everything that is in our hearts.

Ishibashi: It is quite surprising to hear what you think about Mr. Kishi. There is no way I can help it.

Liao: You are our friend. We welcome you wholeheartedly. Could you find a way out of "no way"?

Ishibashi: Yes, I should try.

Liao: What does Mr. Matsumura think?

Ishibashi: Similar to me in general. Regarding the issue of Kishi, who is like a wall between our two countries, we suggest that you ignore him. Otherwise there is no way to work it out.

Liao: It is Kishi who should be making efforts to tear down the wall he built himself, otherwise it would be useless, even if we have the intention to help him.

Ishibashi: But he himself is not aware of it.

Liao: Does he know that he hurt the feelings of Chinese people? Or does he know it already but pretends not to?

Ishibashi: No pretense here I assume.

Liao: We hope Mr. Ishibashi could reconsider it.

Ishibashi: The Taiwan side is indeed being overly sensitive.

Liao: The US is using Taiwan, it is complicated.

Ishibashi: Do you intend to solve the Taiwan issue by force?

Liao: If we have to. Taiwan is a domestic political issue. Chairman Mao and Premier Zhou once said that the GMD and the CCP cooperated three times previously, but a fourth time is not impossible.

Ishibashi: This is an ideal solution.

Liao: This is an internal issue of China. If Kishi Nobusuke handles it completely from the standpoint of Japan, expecting us to acknowledge the relationship between Japan and Taiwan, that is impossible.

Ishibashi: The best scenario is that you get the Taiwan issue solved as soon as possible, and it would best if done so through negotiations.

Liao: This is our established policy, and we are working according to it. But Kishi said in Taiwan that "taking back the mainland would be fantastic." Does he want to solve this problem?

Ishibashi: He might have said it verbally just to flatter Taiwan. In Japan, most people want to solve the Taiwan issue through negotiations. The United States also finds that it's tricky business.

Liao: Did you know that the Americans have plans to abandon Jiang Jieshi [Chiang Kai-shek] and replace him with another of their agents?

Ishibashi: It might be true.

Liao: We hope that Mr. Ishibashi will think about what else you want me to convey to Premier Zhou.

Ishibashi: Let me think about it first, and then I will tell you.

Liao: What I've said today are my personal opinions, and I will not release them to the press. (Ishibashi nodded to show approval)