

1949

Documents

Title: Memorandum of Conversation between Anastas Mikoyan and Mao Zedong

Author: Mikoyan

Date:
31 January 1949

Source: *APRF: F. 39, Op. 1, D. 39, Ll. 7-16. Reprinted in Andrei Ledovskii, Raisa Mirovitskaia and Vladimir Miasnikov, Sovetsko-Kitaiskie Otnosheniia, Vol. 5, Book 2, 1946-February 1950 (Moscow: Pamiatniki Istoricheskoi Mysli, 2005), p. 37-43. Translated for CWIHP from Russian by Sergey Radchenko. Published in Bulletin #16 by CWIHP.*

Description:

Mao discusses the formation of a coalition government and when best to form the government. Mao discusses his strategies against Bai Chongxi and the strength of the CCP forces. Mao also discusses the representative office of the VKP(b) CC with the CCP CC, running the military districts, Guomindang naval forces, the conditions of workers, the cadres, professional unions, working youth and women, talks with the Guomindang government, foreign trade, and the foreign policy of the CCP.

The second conversation with Mao Zedong took place on 31 January 1949 in the presence of CCP CC Politburo members Zhou Enlai, [Vice Chairman] Liu Shaoqi, [PLA Deputy Commander in Chief] Ren Bishi and [PLA Commander-in-Chief] Zhu De and interpreter Shi Zhe. Comrades I[van] Kovalev and E. Kovalev were present from our side.

Mao Zedong recounted the following:

ON THE PREPARATION FOR THE FORMATION OF A COALITION GOVERNMENT

Mao Zedong said that preparation for the formation of the government is connected with the cleansing of Beiping [Beijing] of the hostile elements, which requires about 3 weeks, after which in Beiping, as restored capital, one could organize a coalition government. To my question would it not be better to organize the coalition government in Nanjing after its liberation, Mao Zedong replied in the negative, motivating this by the fact that, firstly, what would be the benefit of this, and, secondly, 9/10th of the figures who cling to their camp consider Beiping [Beijing] to be a better capital, and not Nanjing; thirdly, in the exchange with Comrade Stalin he received advice to which he will hold fast: not to put off this business and to form the government in Beiping [Beijing] after its liberation. I stated that I am aware of this exchange and that Comrade Stalin holds the opinion that if Comrade Mao Zedong agrees that it is better to organize the coalition government after the liberation of Nanjing than he will also agree to that. Therefore I asked Mao Zedong to express his opinion to the point. On my part I stated that though the successes achieved and the liberation of Beiping [Beijing] give sufficient basis for not waiting with the formation of the coalition government before the liberation of Nanjing, the moral authority of the coalition government may still be higher, when it is formed after the liberation of two capitals. This does not rule out that Beiping, and not Nanjing, can be the permanent capital. Mao Zedong replied that personally [he] sides with the opinion that it is better to put off the formation of the coalition government until the liberation of Nanjing, and to form it in the month of June-July. I replied to him that if the formation of the government after the liberation of Nanjing increases its moral-political strength, then unnecessary delay of its formation weakens the force of the revolution and whatever great authority the Chinese Com[munist] Party has among the people. Its appeals cannot have the same force for (ne imeiut takoi zhe sily) non-party masses as the decision of state power, which can make laws, required for all. Mao Zedong agreed with these considerations and stated that Nanjing can be taken in April, and in the month of May or June the coalition government can be organized. Even if the Guomindang-ists tried to organize their own coalition government before that, this will not do harm to the communists and cannot obstruct the formation of a coalition government headed by the communists.

ON THE REPRESENTATIVE OFFICE OF THE VKP(b) CC WITH THE CCP CC

After a certain pause Mao Zedong raised the question about the creation of the representative office of the VKP(b) CC with the CCP CC. He asked to send a politically prepared comrade as a representative, with whom one could discuss questions, which interest them. He also spoke out in favor of this representative having a staff of 10 people, including persons who know the Chinese language, so that they study the materials, which the CCP CC will give to them. I replied that our CC already gave its agreement in principle to the creation of such a representative office and now the selection of the personnel is under way.

Then Mao Zedong said that the length of my stay here of 4-5 days is short and that they would ask me to stay with them for up to 10 days. To this I replied that I hope to finish the discussion of all questions with them in the course of 5 days. At the same time I told Mao Zedong that two Soviet specialists in dealing with time-delay bombs and bugging equipment arrived with me to help the CCP. Mao Zedong was very content with this statement of mine and thanked Comrade Stalin for the care which he shows toward the CCP.

ON THE SITUATION ON THE CIVIL WAR FRONTS AND THE MILITARY FORCES OF THE CCP

Speaking of the forces of Bai Chongxi, located in the Hankou theater, he said that Bai Chongxi is the most crafty general and it is more difficult to fight with him than with Fu Zuoyi. However, we are preparing to overpower him as well, especially since Bai Chongxi is carrying out a policy of duplicity with respect to Jiang Jieshi. In order to save face he wants to leave Hankou in such a way that we would not think of him that he retreated or surrendered. Therefore before we encircle him he will vacate the Hankou area and retreat to Guangxi province. His representative is in touch with us and we know something about Bai Chongxi's thinking.

Further, showing the map, Mao Zedong told about the situation with the military operations at separate fronts, repeating the facts which he recounted in yesterday's conversation. He said that at the present time their military forces count more than 3 million men, and if one adds to this politically indoctrinated units from Fu Zuoyi's captured forces, then the total number of their military forces will reach 3 million 100 thousand people. From this number 2 million 200 thousand are regular units. [Beijing-Tianjin Front Commander] Lin Biao's forces, located in the Beijing-Tianjin area, count 900 thousand people and about 1 million 300 thousand are located at the Nanjing theater. To my question of when they plan to take Taiyuan, Mao Zedong replied that they will attack [GMD General] Yan Xishan's forces at the end of February this year.

To my question of when they plan to force [the attack] on Xi'an, Mao Zedong replied that they intend to begin an attack on this point after taking Taiyuan. He added that they could force attacks on separate sections of the front and take cities faster but this is complicated by the fact that they have a sharp shortfall of politically prepared cadres, with the help of which they could take over the new territories. Mao Zedong said that they are preparing to cross the Yangzi River. They intend to move 900 thousand people to the Shanghai-Nanjing line of advance, the same to the Hankou line of advance and about 350 thousand people to Xi'an.

To my question of how they think to organize the military administration, Mao Zedong replied that they are carrying out preparation for the creation of a war ministry.

Continuing, Mao Zedong stated that prior to now, they have had three fronts: north China, where Lin Biao's forces are active, Nanjing-Shanghai, headed by Chen Yi, and Xi'an, headed by Chen Geng.

To my question of which organization coordinates the fronts, Mao Zedong replied that they are coordinated by the military committee. The chairman of the military committee is Mao Zedong, and his deputies are Zhou Enlai, Liu Shaoqi and Zhu De.

Returning to the question of the fronts Mao Zedong said that [each of] the three fronts have four army units, which are comprised of 14 army groups or 56 armies. Each army group on average consists of 3 armies, each army has 3 divisions, with the exception of the Manchurian armies, which contain 4 divisions. There are a total of 181 divisions. Political work in the army is headed by the military committee. Each army has a party committee, the same in divisions and in companies. Approximately about 30% of our forces are members of the CCP. The political morale of the People's Liberation Army is healthy. Desertions to the Guomindang-ists' side have not been noted. Of course, there are shortcomings in the units as well, manifested in a lack of discipline and elements of anarchy. This is a reflection of the Guomindang influence. We energetically struggle against this. [We] call party meetings and subject to sharp criticism uncovered shortcomings, without respect for authority.

RUNNING THE MILITARY DISTRICTS

Mao Zedong said that they have 5 bureaus of the CCP CC:

1. Manchurian Bureau of the CCP CC
2. North China Bureau of the CCP CC
3. East China Bureau of the CCP CC
4. Central China Bureau of the CCP CC
5. Northwestern China Bureau of the CCP CC

In accordance with this separation of the party organization, 5 military districts have been created so that it is easier for the party to manage military affairs. Management of military affairs is included as a rule in the relevant bureau of the CCP CC.

GUOMINDANG NAVAL FORCES

To my question on the situation in Formosa [Taiwan] Mao Zedong replied that Jiang Jieshi, with the help of the USA, is creating a naval base there. However, this intention of Jiang Jieshi's is meeting with resistance on the part of the 6 million population of the island. In order to strengthen his influence Jiang Jieshi sent trusted people to the island, headed by the governor Chen Cheng. Mao Zedong expressed confidence that sooner or later the Guomindang fleet and air forces will take the side of the People's Liberation Army. He said that the Guomindang's Navy is already sending their delegates to them, in particular from the fleet on the Yangzi River. 8 Guomindang planes flew over to us, of them one heavy B-34 bomber which landed in the area of Shijiazhuang. There were three communists among the bomber's crew.

To my question of whether there are Guomindang naval forces in Huludao, Mao Zedong replied in the negative and said that now the Guomindang naval forces are based out of Qingdao, Shanghai, Canton [Guangzhou], Formosa and Fuzhou.

CONDITIONS OF THE WORKERS AND THEIR ROLE

To my question whether they have covert cadres, Mao Zedong said that there are such cadres in Shanghai and Canton, but they are few.

To my question as to the conditions of the Shanghai workers and what their role was, Mao Zedong replied that the com[munist] party has boundless influence in the countryside; it has no competitors there. But cities are another thing: here, whereas among the students the com[munist] party has a strong influence, in the working class the Guomindang is stronger than the com[munist] party. For example, after the capitulation of Japan in Shanghai, when the com[munist] party started to work legally, its influence on the Shanghai workers was spread out as follows: from 500 thousand Shanghai workers 200 thousand people were under the influence of the com[munist] party and the remaining 300 thousand—under the Guomindang.

CADRES

Now the main question is the cadres. We are selecting about 53 thousand people, whom [we] plan to throw into the recently liberated areas. Because of the lack of cadres we cannot run the city economy, therefore one should not hurry to take Shanghai.

To my remark that he sees the difficulties in running Shanghai but does not see the huge profits from taking Shanghai when the communists will have working for them a half a million army of workers of a powerful industrial center of China, that he does not see that the working class of such a center will put forward from their midst many valuable workers committed to the party, strengthen the social base of the party and the revolution, [and] exert strong influence on the rest of China, Mao Zedong found nothing to reply.

PROFESSIONAL UNIONS

To my question as to who is running the professional unions, Mao Zedong replied that the chairman of the All-China Federation of the Professional Unions is Chen Yun, and his deputy—Li Lisan. Mao Zedong said that in the past Li Lisan was a Trotskyist and had his own fraction, but now he is behaving well. Trotskyists, said Mao Zedong, now have no influence among us.

I remarked that one must keep in the leadership of the professional unions personnel absolutely loyal to the party and firmly connected with the workers, that one must not allow a single Trotskyist to run professional unions. The fact that some of them are presently behaving themselves well, I said, proves nothing, for the revolution in China is now on the rise and with the first difficulties from which no one is insured, Trotskyists can use the wavering of the backward elements among the workers and direct them against the com[munist] party. If the com[munist] party was able to win almost a monopoly position in the countryside, all the more must it achieve undivided influence on the workers, expelling from their midst Trotskyists and Guomindang thugs. My statement made a strong impression on Mao Zedong and members of the Politburo of the CCP CC.

WORK AMONG YOUTH AND WOMEN

I asked how the situation stands with the work among youth and women. Mao Zedong replied that these are the most backward sections of their work. Using this and referring to the experience of the

Sov[iet] Union, I stressed what a great significance for the revolution carries the work among the youth and women. To this Mao Zedong and the members of the Politburo declared that they will take all measures to strengthen work among youth and women.

TALKS WITH THE GUOMINDANG GOVERNMENT

Then Mao Zedong touched upon the question of the forthcoming peace talks with the Nanjingers. As Mao Zedong said, they are not in a hurry with this business. The delegation has not been appointed yet and its composition has not been made known the Guomindang. Inasmuch as the place of talks was set at Beijing, therefore as the latter has not yet been cleaned of the capitulated forces of Fu Zuoyi, 2 weeks more will be needed to put the city in order. In fact talks with the Guomindang government may begin at the end of the month of February. The delegation will consist only of the communists but they intend to consult with parties, which will participate in the coalition government, regarding which there is a previous agreement. By approximately 20 February the CCP CC will move to Beijing.

Mao Zedong said that in November of last year they informed the VKP(b) CC that in the course of 2 ½ years the People's Liberation Army will finish off the Guomindang. But already in the course of the last six months, stated Mao Zedong, if we have not fully destroyed the Guomindang, then in any case it is on the brink of destruction. The Guomindang has completely broken off from the masses and its authority has been undermined. Its peace proposal is a forced breather, a maneuver to gather its forces against us. We, however, speak out with eight sincere conditions for peace. They will not accept these conditions, the proof of which is the fact that Jiang Jieshi left for Fenghua, and Li Zongren remained in his stead. The Guomindang government exists nominally. All the leading members of the government have left, for example, Sun Fo, who is in Shanghai. The Guomindang public opinion is forcefully indoctrinated by the CC clique. As far as the Americans are concerned, one feels that they are not inclined to support Jiang Jieshi, and place their bets on Li Zongren, [GMD politician] Shao Lizi and [GMD military and political figure] Zhang Zhizhong. The fact that the Guomindang government has run off in different directions made England, USA and France declare their non-intervention and, moreover, the English and the Americans say that they are waiting for the People's Liberation Army. The leaders of the democratic parties are on our side.

Guomindang-ists are going for talks with us, but they are scared by the first condition of these talks, i.e. the question of war criminals, the list of which contains more than 100 people, and the list is not limited to these people. If they accept our 8 conditions, and Li Zongren said that he accepts them, then we will ask them to carry out these conditions. If they do not accept the point about the war criminals we will not talk to them. In order to create an appearance of democracy and ingratiate himself with us, Li Zongren declared the freedom of press, but we cannot be fooled by this. It is clear to us that the struggle continues, and Jiang Jieshi, behind Li Zongren's back, continues to lead the war against us through Chief of Staff Gu Zhutong. Jiang Jieshi's forces headed by Tang Enbo are still located at the Shanghai-Nanjing theater, and Cheng Chen is equipping a base on the island of Formosa, the forces of [GMD General] Hu Zhongnan are located in the Xi'an area, and the forces of Bai Chongxi—at the Hankou theater. We understand that the Guomindang-ists will not be able to organize a strong front, but we cannot but take the situation into account and be prepared for any contingencies.

ON FOREIGN TRADE

Mao Zedong said that the question of trade stands before the future coalition government. We intend, he said, to conclude treaties with the Sov[iet] Union and the countries of new democracy [i.e. socialist countries].

I said that this intention is correct and added that it is necessary for us to provide mutual economic aid to each other. This question had not been raised before because we did not want for it to be interpreted as our intervention in the affairs of democratic countries. As a result democratic countries obstructed each other on the market until we approached them with a request to normalize trade relations by means of concluding mutual treaties. I briefly told about the results of the meeting of 6 powers in Moscow.¹

Returning to the question of trade Mao Zedong stressed that though the Chinese bourgeoisie does not desire a monopoly on foreign trade, it will be introduced. Trade will first and foremost be conducted with the USSR and the countries of people's democracy and only those things, which these countries do not need, will be exported to capitalist countries.

QUESTIONS OF FOREIGN POLICY OF THE CCP

Then Mao Zedong turned to recounting some questions of foreign policy of the CCP. He said that its basic principle is the building of relations with other states on the basis of mutual equality and mutual help.

Talking about foreign connections of the party in the period of Japanese-Chinese war Mao Zedong said that at that time they were limited to forced communication with foreign, mainly American, journalists in Yan'an. But now the situation had changed, since the People's Liberation Army took such cities as Mukden, Tianjin and Beijing, where in practice the question was raised as to how to build one's relations with the foreign consulates located there [and] recognized by the Guomindang government. Up to now we have not considered them as representative organizations of states, which have certain diplomatic relations with us. Therefore we merely guarantee the safety of lives of the consulate workers, considering that they have the status of emigrants.

Then Mao Zedong turned to the intended limitations of the rights of foreign telegraph agencies and publications in China. Independent work by the agencies will be forbidden, the same with regard to free publication of foreign newspapers and journals. Currently existing foreign publications are subjected to mandatory government registration.

Mao Zedong remarked that these limitations touch upon the interests of Soviet publications in China and in this connection he would like to agree with us that our publications would be nominally headed by the Chinese, while the factual work would be carried out by Soviet citizens.

Talking of foreign enterprises, Mao Zedong stressed that one must apply a careful position toward them since their capital is closely intertwined with the capital of the Chinese. He reminded that the 6th Congress of the CCP took the decision about the confiscation of foreign capital and property. In principle this decision remains in force now as well, but its implementation must be carried out in more flexible forms.

Mao Zedong said that foreigners, unquestionably, will be forbidden from using radios, but there may be exceptions in certain cases. As an example he pointed to the radio of the American consulate in Tianjin, the codes of which are known to them and the banning of which would be unprofitable to them.

Mao Zedong said that with the taking of Nanjing the question of the recognition of the new government by foreign powers will emerge. The question stands as follows: whether one should accept the recognition immediately, or to put it off for a term of no less than a year. Both paths have their pluses and minuses. Time delay is profitable to us in that it unties our hands in relations with states, gives us an opportunity to take a firmer grasp, and recognition eases subversive activities against us by the USA and England. It is acceptable for us to put off recognition of us on the part of the USA and England, so as to win time.

Continuing the thought about the possible recognition of the new government by foreign powers, Mao Zedong said that this question will also stand before the USSR and the countries of people's democracy. There is information, he added, that the USA is about to recognize us, and England will necessarily follow them. For these countries recognizing us is necessary to work against us and to trade with us. What is the benefit of this recognition? It will open for us the road to other countries and to the UN. In spite of this we are leaning toward the first way, that is—not to hurry to establish diplomatic relations, but, delaying them, to strengthen ourselves.

In conclusion Mao Zedong asked me, on the premise of the interests of the common cause, to shed light on the position of the USSR regarding the substance of the aforementioned questions of the foreign policy of the CCP.

The conversation ended at this.

1. Editor's Note: This is a reference to the founding of COMECON in Moscow at the beginning of January 1949.