

Telegrams Concerning the Meetings with Stalin to Mao Zedong and the Central Committee [1]

(October 26 and 30, 1952)

Part I

To Chairman Mao and the Central Committee:

Comrade Stalin received us on October 24. Chen [Yi], Rao [Shushi], [Wang] Jiaxiang, and Shi Zhe [2] attended; [Li] Fuchun [3] was unable to attend as his car did not arrive in time. From the Soviet side, Malenkov, Bulganin, and Beria [4] participated. Comrade Stalin noted that their committee's workload was heavy, which is why other comrades did not attend.

Stalin has read the letter I wrote to him [5], in which I raised questions regarding how China will gradually transition to socialism, the timing for convening the National People's Congress and the National Party Congress, and the drafting of a constitution. Based on the Chairman's views, I provided several explanations in the letter. I also raised issues regarding the Japanese, Vietnamese, and Indonesian Communist Parties. Stalin replied to each item point-by-point.

1. On the gradual transition to socialism in China

Stalin said: "I believe your ideas are correct. After seizing power, the transition to socialism should be gradual. Your attitude toward the Chinese bourgeoisie is correct."

Liu asked Stalin for instructions on the nationalization of land. Stalin said: "The issue of land nationalization was also raised in Eastern European countries. I believe nationalization cannot be implemented now. If it were, the peasants would not understand; they would think the state is taking back the land that was just given to them. Eastern Europe has not implemented it either. Poland and Czechoslovakia implemented a ban on the sale and purchase of land, a method peasants can accept, which is a major step forward. However, this must be handled cautiously."

Stalin continued: "In the USSR, we took drastic measures, relocating over three million rich peasants (kulaks) to Siberia, where they have now organized collective farms. We did this because we had vast land and the peasants were extremely dissatisfied with the rich peasants. China does not need to adopt such drastic measures. China's situation differs from both the USSR and Eastern Europe."

2. On convening the National People's Congress (NPC)

Stalin asked if the NPC was essentially a parliament. Liu replied: "It is a parliament, but closer in nature to the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, though with representatives from the bourgeoisie participating."

Stalin said: "If you are not ready, the NPC can be postponed, and you can continue with the Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) [7]. However, the CPPCC is not elected by the people, which is a weakness. Externally, if people attack you on this point, the public may not understand. Holding a People's Congress reflects the voice of the people; it is better to have one elected by the people."

(Published based on Liu Shaoqi's original manuscript.)

Part II

To Chairman Mao and the Central Committee:

In my previous letter to Stalin, I mentioned that we currently use the Common Program [9] and will draft a constitution later once the issue of the bourgeoisie is resolved and we enter socialism. Stalin said: "I agree with using the Common Program for now, but you should prepare a constitution." On the 28th, I asked if this "prepared constitution" meant a socialist one.

Stalin replied: "No. I am talking about a constitution for the current stage."

Liu explained: "When the Common Program was first drafted, people doubted if we would truly implement it. Over the past three years, we have, and its prestige is high. If we draft a constitution in the next two or three years, it would essentially repeat the Common Program—recognizing capitalist property and the hiring of labor as legal. If we then nationalize capitalist enterprises seven or eight years later and draft a socialist constitution then, it might look bad."

After my explanation, Stalin spoke at length, insisting on his view:

"If you do not draft a constitution and do not hold elections, the enemy can use two arguments to propagandize against you: First, that your government is not elected by the people; second, that your country has no laws. Because the CPPCC is not elected, people can say your regime is 'established on bayonets' or is self-appointed. You should take these weapons away from the enemy."

Stalin suggested that in the 1954 constitution, China could:

1. Grant voting rights to all, including capitalists and rich peasants.
2. Recognize the property rights of entrepreneurs and rich peasants.
3. Recognize the concession rights of foreign enterprises (though the government can limit these in practice).

On the Coalition Government and Secrecy:

Stalin noted: "Your current government is a coalition government. Therefore, the government is responsible not just to one party, but to all parties. Because of this, state secrets are hard to protect. I feel that foreigners know some of your important secrets. For example, when your delegation came to the USSR [10], the British and Americans knew you were here to discuss Lushun (Port Arthur). Many members of other parties have ties to the West. If the election results show a Communist majority, you can organize a single-party government. You can still bestow 'favors' on other parties within the government structure to maintain the United Front, but you won't be as vulnerable."

Stalin concluded by comparing China to India: "Nehru [11] can claim India is democratic because they have a constitution and elections. China should not be seen as lagging behind even Albania."

I promised to report Comrade Stalin's opinions to the Central Committee and Chairman Mao.

Liu Shaoqi

October 30