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**Memorandum of Conversation with the Deputy
Chairmen of the Committee of Cultural Ties with
Foreigners, Zhang Zhixiang, and the Deputy of the
Department of the Socialist Countries, Lu Ming**

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Summary:

Sudarikov, the Soviet embassy advisor, discusses with the Chinese deputy chairman of the Committee of Cultural Ties with Foreigners and the deputy of the Department of the Socialist Countries to discuss plans for Chinese-Soviet cultural exchange in 1959. The goal of the cultural exchange is primarily to collaborate in the areas of culture and art and strengthen the friendship between the two countries. Zhang Zhixiang expresses the step-by-step Chinese point of view on how this should be achieved.

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Embassy of the USSR in the PRC
From the Diary of N.G. SUDARIKOV and
S.A. ZIMA

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

With the deputy chairmen of the Committee of Cultural Ties with Foreigners under the State Soviet of the PRC, c. Zhang Zhixiang, and the deputy of the department of the socialist countries, c. Lu Ming
28 January 1959

In regard to the previously agreed upon plan of talks on cultural exchange in 1959, I met with Zhang Zhixiang and Lu Ming and had a discussion.

At the beginning of the discussion I laid out the views of the Embassy on several questions regarding the fulfillment of the plan of cultural exchange for 1958 and offered a general picture of the state of cultural exchange between the USSR and the PRC. I emphasized that the fulfillment of the plan in 1958 is testimony to the further development of cultural exchange between our countries, and also set forth various suggestions and general principles which were intended to support our side in the realization of cultural exchange in 1959. In particular, I noted that in connection with economic and cultural development in China at the present time the forms and extent of cultural exchange will change. In the opinion of the Soviet side, in the present year our main attention will be devoted not to the quantity but to the quality of measures to be considered in the plan of cultural exchange for 1959.

In this regard the Soviet side, for example, considers it necessary in the plan of cultural exchange for 1959 not to consider the joint production of new films, but rather complete the joint production of films planned for 1958. In the same regard we can reduce somewhat the quantity of trips of various delegations and specialists, having in mind the need to improve the practical results brought by these trips.

As a result of these ideas, the Soviet side will reduce somewhat its initial plan of cultural exchange for the current year and adopt the suggestions of a variety of societies and creative unions involved the exchanges.

Zhang Zhixiang agreed with my comments, and noted that in 1958 collaboration between the USSR and the PRC was useful for the Chinese side, and that in the future the PRC will devote significant attention to the question of the development of collaboration with the Soviet Union.

Zhang Zhixiang noted that China had received from the USSR support on a series of international issues, as, for example, the question of the "two Chinas," the participation of the PRC in international sports organizations and so on. From the Soviet Union, said Zhang Zhixiang, we have received much that is useful and we always should study the experience of the Soviet Union especially in the areas of technology, science, and culture, as in these areas the Soviet Union has achieved great successes. In the course of the realization of cultural collaboration the Soviet comrades have paid us much attention and rendered numerous forms of aid, as well as diverse kinds of informational material that we do not make in China.

This year the plan of cultural collaboration contains significantly fewer items than the previous plan, but we are making these reductions in connection with the fact that we are busy in preparation for the celebration of the 10th anniversary of the formation of the PRC, and this will significantly influence our work in the reception of foreign delegations and in the preparation of our delegations to go abroad. I think, said Zhang Zhixiang, that this is a temporary thing and that in 1960 and beyond we will not reduce the quantity of our cultural collaboration. We always consider work on cultural collaboration with the USSR to be extremely important, as this collaboration is means of strengthening the friendship between our peoples. We completely agree that in our collaboration the main attention should be devoted to the quality of the measures, to their practical effect.

Further Zhang Zhixiang addressed several concrete questions.

1. In the opinion of the Chinese side, the Soviet comrades very carefully observe the principal of equal measures in the plan of cultural exchange. They try to observe this principle in the realization of cultural exchange, but we consider that we must refrain from a mechanical approach to this matter. For example, the Chinese side in 1958 sent to the USSR specialists on monument restoration, although in practice this trip, it turned out, was not necessary. [Soviet] specialists came to China to restore oil-based paintings, although in China oil-based painting is only just beginning to be introduced. It is clear that must study the Soviet Union more and that this will help us but a mechanical approach to the observance of equality is not necessary. We are not against equality in general, but in each particular instance it is necessary to arrange things so that we can receive help from each other on matters that are of mutual interest. So, for example, this year we want to consider a trip to the USSR of workers from Xinhua [the press agency], but you, it is possible, do not need to send us TASS workers, but perhaps medical workers would be more appropriate.

2. The Chinese side expressed a desire for the broadening of contacts between the leaders of the workers in the area of culture and the arts of our countries. This does not mean that we are rejecting the exchange of delegations from fields in culture and the arts, but for exchange on the cultural front to take place at a higher level more significance has to be granted to the arrival of leading workers [in these areas]. Before we had few such contacts, and in the future we should broaden them. For example, we can organize trips of different writers, but it would be better if we both sent leading workers from the union of writers to study the problem, exchange opinions, and find some sort of common line and so on.

3. It is necessary to improve the exchange of opinions on the question of collaboration in international organizations. Earlier we conducted such work, but we must strengthen it. It is necessary to broaden the preparatory exchange of opinions and information before the union of international meetings or conferences, and this is especially important if representatives of capitalist countries participate. In that way we can avoid all possible provocations, as the ideological battle between capitalist and socialist measures has taken a very sharp character.

4. In the matter of the joint production of films the Soviet comrades have rendered us much aid. Practice shows that in terms of politics our methods of approach to a given topic does not differ, but regarding artistic methods for the expression of political ideas, it must be noted, our workers have divergent points of view. In a given case the specific role played by these issues [is a product of] differences in the customs and traditions of our peoples. During the joint making of a film it is difficult to do things in such a way that pleases both the Soviet and Chinese viewer. We would like this year to conduct joint work on the production of films that more deeply address these issues and continue discussions about the continuation of work on the joint production of films.

Zhang Zhixiang emphasized that such a decision is not in response to mistakes on the part of film workers, like for example, Varlamov in the process of the joint production of a film, but because the Chinese comrades are not entirely prepared for joint collaboration in this area and want to study it more. We consider that the films that are in the production process right now should be completed.

We would like to address the question of honorariums paid to cultural figures. I am not sure whether our views are correct on this, said Zhang Zhixiang, but we think that the matter deserves more study, as differences of opinion frequently arise here. The current practice of the payment of an honorarium has a negative influence on the Chinese artists who travel abroad. As it is difficult for us to develop a general principle for all countries, each should address this matter in their own way. Sometimes artists are offended (Poles, Hungarians) that we provide such a small honorarium, and our artists receive abroad a lot of money and return with several suitcases full of goods, inspiring an unhealthy interest in foreign trips, as they are not interested in the matter [at hand], culture, but are paying attention to money.

The goal of our collaboration is a mutual acquaintance with the accomplishments in the area of culture and the arts of our countries, and also the strengthening of friendship between our countries, and the growth in culture of the people of our countries, and the honorariums are not of any significance. Therefore we believe that we should refrain from the payment of honorariums. It is necessary to provide money for daily expenses, providing a bit more for the leading soloists. Several socialist countries have already agreed with us on this. In 1959 we will not provide their artists with honorariums, and they will not pay our artists. We request the views of the Soviet side on this suggestion.

6. This year the Soviet side has suggested the exclusion of measures in the plan that are the responsibility of a variety of social organizations and creative unions. In principle we are not against this, but we want to inform you how this works with us. The thing is that the activities of all organizations and creative unions in the PRC directed abroad falls under the control of the Committee on Cultural Ties Abroad. All the measures of organizations in connection with foreign countries are included in the general plan of the Committee, that is, all cultural ties abroad are directed and financed by the Committee. In our opinion such a program is good, in the sense that one organ—the Committee on Cultural Ties Abroad—is best situated to provide political leadership to the activities of the social organizations and the creative unions, coordinate and control their activities, and significantly make easier their work with foreign countries.

To the extent that social organizations and creative unions in the Soviet Union independently fulfill programs with foreign countries, these measures of the various Unions are not included in the state plan, but we will ask, said Zhang Zhixiang, that these plans relating to the PRC are present to the Committee on Cultural Ties so we can coordinate our work [with these plans].

7. The question of the exhibits can be resolved according to discussion in the plan, that is, the Chinese side will send a photo-exhibit about the accomplishments of the PRC the last 10 years to the USSR, and the Soviet side will send an exhibit about the applied arts of the peoples of the USSR and an exhibit about the seven-year plan. Although the OKSD will take part in the organization of our exhibit about socialist construction in the PRC for the past 10 years, we'll keep this issue as it is in the plan, as the Committee on Cultural Ties will handle this exhibit. The Soviet side can arrange for the display of the exhibit in the USSR according to its own program.

8. The last issue concerns the direct links between separate institutions in culture and the arts in the USSR and the PRC.

As such ties are useful to the exchange of informational material and the setting up and arrangement of direct correspondence concerning delegation exchanges, it would be useful and beneficial to plan the trips and include them in the plan of cultural collaboration. If exceptional needs or unforeseen circumstances arise, we can come to a special agreement.

In the course of the discussion about the draft of the plan Zhang Zhixiang expressed the desire on the part of the Chinese side to have the Bol'shoi Theater ballet group perform their performances in China during the celebration of the 10th anniversary of the PRC, accompanied by the Soviet orchestra. During this time only the Bol'shoi Theater ballet among the many foreign artistic groups will be performing, in order to illustrate the full brilliance of the Soviet ballet before the foreign guests. Many of our leading comrades have suggested this plan, for example, Zhou Enlai.

Besides this, said Zhang Zhixiang, regarding points 2-6 [of the plan] that only vocal soloists be included, he communicated that Premier Zhou Enlai expressed his wish to have Rashid Beibutov come to China in May.

Zhang Zhixiang expressed the wish that an artistic ensemble of the PRC (point 1 in the plan) immediately after the conclusion of the festival, travels to Moscow and performs and participates in the [Moscow] celebration of the tenth anniversary of the PRC. In this regard the length of the stay, if possible, should not be one month but he asked whether or not we would consider a two month stay in the USSR.

Zhang Zhixiang also expressed a desire to include in the plan general points about collaboration in the area of science, physical culture, and sports which will be achieved based on mutually agreed upon plans, and which are viewed as a component of the plan of cultural exchange. He expressed his agreement with our suggestions about the reduction of the exchange of radio broadcasts, directed at friends on magnetic tape recordings three times per week.

In conclusion Zhang Zhixiang suggested we meet for a discussion of other problems that we still have not agreed upon, and make suggestions about how to conclude the editing of the plan of cultural exchange for 1959.

Having expressed my views about matters raised by Zhang Zhixiang, I agreed with his suggestions and promised to pass on to him the final decision from our side about these matters after consultation with the Committee on Cultural Ties with Foreign Countries in the USSR Soviet of Ministers.

Colleagues Lu Ming and Gao Dewei of the PRC Committee on Cultural Ties were present at the conversation.

Note: The contents of the discussion were passed on to the VCh-grammoi Center on 29 January 1959.

USSR Embassy Advisor in the PRC - N. Sudarikov
USSR Embassy Third Secretary in the PRC - S. Zima