

January 27, 1957

Speech, Mao Zedong, 'On Sino-American and Sino-Soviet Relations'

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Summary:

According to Mao, it would be beneficial for China to wait until after the Third Five-Year Plan to establish a relationship with the United States. In regards to the Soviet Union, he discusses the arrogance of the Soviets as a result of their abundant natural resources, and the "inevitable" disputes between the Communist parties in each country.

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[Let me] talk about U.S.-China relations. At this conference we have circulated a copy of the letter from [Dwight D.] Eisenhower to Jiang Jieshi. This letter, in my view, aims largely at dampening the enthusiasm of Jiang Jieshi and, then, cheering him up a bit. The letter urges [Jiang] to keep calm, not to be impetuous, that is, to resolve the problems through the United Nations, but not through a war. This is to pour cold water [on Jiang]. It is easy for Jiang Jieshi to get excited. To cheer [Jiang] up is to continue the hard, uncompromising policy toward the [Chinese] Communist Party, and to hope that internal unrest would disable us. In his [Eisenhower's] calculation, internal unrest has already occurred and it is hard for the Communist Party to suppress it. Well, different people observe things differently!

[I] still believe that it is much better to establish diplomatic relations with the United States several years later than sooner. This is in our favor. The Soviet Union did not form diplomatic relations with the United States until seventeen years after the October Revolution. The global economic crisis erupted in 1929 and lasted until 1933. In that year Hitler came to power in Germany whereas Roosevelt took office in the United States. Only then was the Soviet-American diplomatic relationship established. [As far as I can anticipate], it will probably wait until when we have completed the Third Five-Year Plan^[1] that we should consider forming diplomatic relations with the United States. In other words, it will take eighteen or even more years [before we do so]. We are not anxious to enter the United Nations either. This is based on exactly the same reasoning as why we are not anxious to establish diplomatic relations with the United States. The objective of this policy is to deprive the U.S. of its political assets as much as possible, so that the U.S. will be placed in an unreasonable and isolated position. It is therefore all right if [the U.S.] blocks us from the United Nations and refuses to establish diplomatic relation with us. The longer you drag on [these issues], the more debts you will owe us. The longer the issues linger there, the more unreasonable you will appear, and the more isolated you will become both domestically and in face of international public opinion. I once told an American in Yanan that even if you United States refused to recognize us for one hundred years, I simply did not believe that you United States could refuse to recognize us in the one hundred and first year. Sooner or later the U.S. will establish diplomatic relations with us. When the United States does so and when Americans finally come to visit China, they will feel deep regret. It is because by then, China will become completely different [from what it is now]: the house has been thoroughly swept and cleaned, "the four pests"^[2] have altogether been eliminated; and they can hardly find any of their "friends." Even if they spread some germs [in China], it will have no use at all.

[Since the end of the Second World War, every capitalist country has suffered from instability which has led to disturbance and disorder. Every country in the world is disturbed, and China is no exception. However, we are much less disturbed than they are. I want you to think about this issue: between the socialist countries and the imperialist countries, especially the United States, which side is more afraid of the other after all? In my opinion, both are afraid [of the other], but the issue is who is afraid more. I am inclined to accept such an assessment: the imperialists are more afraid of us. However, such an assessment entails a danger, that is, it could put us into a three-day-long sleep. Therefore, [we] always have to stress two possibilities. Putting the positive possibility aside, the negative potential is that the imperialists may become crazy. Imperialists always harbor malicious intentions and constantly want to make trouble. Nevertheless, it will not be that easy for the imperialists to start a world war; they have to consider the consequences once war starts.

[Let me] also talk about Sino-Soviet relations. In my view, wrangling [between us] will continue. [We shall] never pretend that the Communist parties will not wrangle. Is there a place in the world where wrangling does not exist? Marxism itself is a wrangling-ism, and is about contradiction and struggle. Contradictions are everywhere, and contradictions invariably lead to struggle. At present there exist some controversies between China and the Soviet Union. Their ways of thinking, behavior, and historical traditions differ from ours. Therefore, we must try to

persuade them. Persuasion is what I have always advocated as a way to deal with our own comrades. Some may argue that since we are comrades, we must be of the same good quality, and why in the world is persuasion needed among comrades? Moreover, persuasion is often employed for building a common front and always targeted at the democratic figures^[3] and, why is it employed toward communist party members? This reasoning is wrong. Different opinions and views do exist even within a communist party. Some have joined the party, but have not changed their mindset. Some old cadres do not share the same language with us. Therefore, [we] have to engage in heart-to-heart talks with them: sometimes individually, sometimes in groups. In one meeting after another we will be able to persuade them.

□As far as I can see, circumstances are beyond what persons, even those occupying high positions, can control. Under the pressure of circumstance, those in the Soviet Union who still want to practice big-power chauvinism will invariably encounter difficulties. To persuade them remains our current policy and requires us to engage in direct dialogue with them. The last time our delegation visited the Soviet Union, [we] openly talked about some [controversial] issues.^[4] I told Comrade Zhou Enlai over the phone that, as those people are blinded by lust for gain, the best way to deal with them is to give them a tongue-lashing. What is [their] asset? It involves nothing more than 50 million tons of steel, 400 million tons of coal, and 80 million tons of oil. How much does this count? It does not count for a thing. With this asset, however, their heads have gotten really big. How can they be communists [by being so cocky]? How can they be Marxists? Let me stress, even ten times or a hundred times bigger, these things do not count for a thing. They have achieved nothing but digging a few things out of the earth, turning them into steel, thereby manufacturing some airplanes and automobiles. This is nothing to be proud of! They, however, turn these [achievements] into huge burdens on their back and hardly care about revolutionary principles. If this cannot be described as being blinded by lust for gain, what else could this be? Taking the office of the first secretary can also become a source for being blinded by lust for gain, making it easy for one to be out of one's mind. Whenever one is out of his mind, there must be a way to bring him back to his senses. This time Comrade [Zhou] Enlai no longer maintained a modest attitude but quarreled with them and, of course, they argued back. This is a correct attitude, because it is always better to make every [controversial] issue clear face to face. As much as they intend to influence us, we want to influence them too. However, we did not unveil everything this time, because we must save some magic weapons [in reserve]. Conflict will always exist. All we hope for at present is to avoid major clashes so as to seek common ground while reserving differences. Let these differences be dealt with in the future. Should they stick to the current path, one day, we will have to expose everything.

□As for us, our external propaganda must not contain any exaggeration. In the future, we shall always remain cautious and modest, and shall tightly tuck our tails between our legs. We still need to learn from the Soviet Union. However, we shall learn from them rather selectively: only accept the good stuff, while at the same avoiding picking up the bad stuff. There is a way to deal with the bad stuff, that is, we shall not learn from it. As long as we are aware of their mistakes, [we] can avoid committing the same mistake. We, however, must learn from anything that is useful to us and, at the same time, we must grasp useful things all over the world. One ought to seek knowledge in all parts of the world. It would be monotonous if one only sticks to one place to receive education.

^[1] China adopted the first five-year plan in 1953. So, the year of completing the third five-year plan would be 1968.

^[2] The elimination of the "four pests" (rats, bedbugs, flies, and mosquitoes) became the main goal of a national hygiene campaign in China during the mid- and late 1950s.

^[3] "Democratic figures" is a term used by Mao and the Chinese Communists to point to non-communists or communist sympathizers in China.

[\[4\]](#) This refers to Zhou Enlai's visit to the Soviet Union, Poland, and Hungary on 7-19 January 1957. See Zhou Enlai's 24 January 1957 report.