

October 3, 1957

**Notes on Conversation between Polish Defense
Minister Spychalski and PRC Leader Mao Zedong**

Citation:

"Notes on Conversation between Polish Defense Minister Spychalski and PRC Leader Mao Zedong", October 3, 1957, Wilson Center Digital Archive, AAN, KC PZPR, XI A 130, Confidential. Obtained by Douglas Selvage and translated by Malgorzata Gnoinska. <https://wilson-center-digital-archive.dvincitest.com/document/117779>

Summary:

Mao Zedong discusses the history of the Chinese Communist Party, among other topics with Marian Spychalski.

Credits:

This document was made possible with support from MacArthur Foundation

Original Language:

Polish

Contents:

Translation - English

Notes from the reception of the Polish Army delegation by the Chairman of the PRC, Cde. Mao Zedong, on 10.3.57

Ambassador Kiryluk accompanied the Polish Army delegation under the leadership of Minister Spychalski. The delegation arrived at the reception past 22:00 hours. Mao Zedong as well as Field Marshal Zhu De, Premier Zhou Enlai and Field Marshal Peng Dehuai welcomed the delegation in the garden in front of the entrance to the [reception] hall. Cde. Mao Zedong proposed to take a joint picture and then invited [the delegation] into the reception hall. The welcome was of a very cordial nature. The subsequent conversation between the leadership of the party and government of the PRC and the delegation leadership was conducted in the same atmosphere.

It is worth emphasizing that the visit lasted over two hours with a clear interest of Mao Zedong in Polish affairs. According to the information of the employees of the embassy of the PPR in Beijing, Mao Zedong's conversations with foreign delegations of such a type usually do not exceed one hour.

The course of conversation between the Chairman of the PRC, Mao Zedong, and Minister Spychalski, that was recreated from notes, [can be found] below. A Chinese interpreter mediated in the conversation.

MAO: (after having exchanged a few pleasantries, he moves on to elucidating the current political situation).

The American imperialists have surrounded us with a chain of military bases. They are stronger than us and this is our main enemy. And, who is your enemy?

SP: Our enemy is also world imperialism, headed by American imperialism, which is rebuilding the retaliatory military forces of Adenauer's Germany. We could not stand up to the aggressors by ourselves if we did not have the support of the forces of the socialist camp; the forces of the first socialist country, the Soviet Union, the great China and the countries of the people's democracy.

MAO: Well said, your views are very correct.

SP: The fact that it was in Poland where the Warsaw Pact was signed, which guarantees the protection of our country's borders [and] which strengthens the forces of socialism in the West, means a lot to us.

MAO: (in turn, [he] expresses his opinion on the issue of relations with the Soviet Union)

When it comes to the Soviet Union, Cde. Stalin committed certain errors in the previous era. But these errors should be counted rather as transitional phenomena, and should not be treated as fundamental matters. The temporality of certain phenomena differs from the long-lasting phenomena. However, even phenomena of a temporal, transitional, nature have often caused us certain unpleasantness. Anyway, this is understandable. However, the fundamental, the most important matter is the fact that the Soviet people were the first to build socialism; that it won against German fascism. And this [the fact that the Soviet nation was the first one to build socialism and defeat German fascism] is the basic and most important [thing] which should make us maintain reason and peace in the presence of other phenomena. Even though the USSR committed certain errors, after all it is a socialist country and the main force of our camp in the fight against imperialism.

If there were no Soviet Union, we could not build socialism in our country.

I agree with what Comrade Spychalski said; and that is, that your country can only develop within the socialist camp. This is a right direction. China is also adhering to this direction. Our country had been under the shackles of imperialism for a long time. Even though China has a large population, nevertheless we are weak in the face of imperialism, we are lacking developed industry, [and] a strong army. If the American imperialists were to attack us, and if we have only such forces as today, then we can only fight a guerilla warfare.

SP: When it comes to the military forces of the socialist camp, then there are undoubtedly two sides of the issue:

[technology, which means the defense industry, which we need to build up in order to ensure peaceful development of our socialist nations as well as the forces of nations building socialism which are enormous. [ed. note—previous eight words deleted in original] enormous human potential of the countries of our camp.

Indeed, the imperialists, by using the means of mass destruction, can threaten our existence. However, the undisputable fact is that the USSR, the first socialist country whose peoples built socialist industry with their enormous sacrifice and a great amount of work, also has at its disposition atomic and hydrogen weapons. This fact seriously restrains imperialist aggression.

MAO: Even though military matters are also political issues, the most important of all is politics. We have to say to each other: Has the socialist revolution ended in China and in Poland or not? How do things look, for example, in Poland?

SP: The socialist revolution is not over yet in our country. For example, we have very serious difficulties in reforming agriculture; much has to be done in the area of the industrial development. Very serious tasks await us when it comes to a socialist education of the masses, primarily the significant part of the intelligentsia. Even though power is in the hands of the masses, [there is] an economic base, and mostly the socialist industry, [nevertheless] a certain part of the non-socialist economy as well as non-socialist thinking of it, which is also felt by a certain part of our nation, still exists in our country.

MAO: The situation in China is similar, taking into account that the socialist revolution occurred on our end much later. The capitalist class still has great influence. The influence of the bourgeoisie intelligentsia should also be noticed. When it comes to the peasants, even though they joined collectives it does not mean that the whole problem has been taken care of. The issue of who will win—socialism or capitalism, has not yet been decided in our country. We need at least 10-15 years. Only then will we have a socialist industry and a socialist countryside. Only during this period will we be able to educate our bourgeoisie, the intelligentsia and the rich peasantry, and to transform their way of thinking to the socialist one. There is a possibility of a victory for socialism, the final victory. But the possibility does not yet mean reality. A lot of work is necessary to make over [przekuć] possibility into reality. That is why we have to fight decisively as much as we can with the bourgeoisie views, [and] that is why we are criticizing these views publicly, and in a decisive manner, in order for our people to liberate themselves from their bad uncles, in order for them to see who represents what view. The point here is [to establish] a clear division between the enemies and us.

The bourgeoisie stands at a higher intellectual level in relation to the workers and the peasants. The handling of technology and the cultural level are superior. The

influence of the bourgeoisie is still serious. But, after all, we cannot sweep it out, because then we will not have any scientists, engineers, and artists. Even in our own army there are a certain number of the bourgeoisie intelligentsia. [Because] we cannot throw them out, that is why we need to educate them, persuade them and fight their views...And in our Party there are also rightist elements...

Do you know about our struggle against the rightist elements and about the improvement of the work style?

SP: Yes, we heard about two lines of the activity of the Communist Party of China. Besides, when it comes to our party, we are following very carefully what is happening in China, in the CCP, and in other communist parties. In our party, which also made serious mistakes and is still not free from errors today, there is currently a process taking place of repairing the work style which we call the democratization of the Party and political life. Our Party was seriously burdened with the methods of commanding which replaced the political and ideological effect on the masses, and going into how the masses live and what they want, and analyzing what disrupts the construction of socialism. In the process of repairing the work style we also came across a second phenomenon: the attitude of the petty bourgeois and the bourgeoisie. Our party took up a decisive fight with these phenomena during the IX Plenum of the CC.

(Subsequently, Cde. Spychalski is referring to the experiences of the past period)...We are aware of the serious achievements which the building of socialism contributed to in our country. But during this process there were at the same time phenomena which were causing dissatisfaction of the masses, such as the disproportion between investment costs and satisfying the needs of the masses.

The process of building socialism is characterized, as I see it, by two sides: producing material goods and educating a socialist man. Our party has not been able so far to correctly approach the latter side of the issue, educating a man.

We have had some achievements in repairing the work style in the past year. At the same time, our party is putting much effort in the struggle with elements which are attacking the positions of socialism. In the process of building socialism in our country we are distinguishing two sides: an internal one; that is, relations in our country, the attitude of the majority of the people towards socialism; and the external one; that is, our relations with the entire socialist camp. The petty bourgeois and the bourgeoisie elements are attacking both sides, but in our conditions they are especially concentrating their attack on the external one, particularly relations with the Soviet Union. As far as internal matters, for example, they [harmful elements] are often in favor of socialism, but at the same time they are trying to oppose the USSR as a non-socialist country. During the [CPSU] XX Congress at the time of the "cult of personality," not everything was correct in Poland. The view to automatically transfer undoubted practical and theoretical achievements of the USSR to our soil, had quite a few adherents. But the specificity of our own conditions was taken only to a small degree; they were analyzing too little the situation and conditions in which we are building socialism in Poland. These errors of ours have undoubtedly stemmed from the insufficient maturity of our party, our belief in our own people's masses, and at the same time an insufficient understanding of our tasks in relation to the entire socialist camp. And after all, the worldview of Marxism-Leninism obliges one to an insightful and systematic analysis of the situation in which the party is working among the working class in one's own country, among its own people's masses. One must constantly and continuously see its own role in building socialism in one's own country in comparison with the development of socialism on the international scale. For example, the indispensable condition of the development of our socialist motherland is the friendship and alliance with the USSR, friendly relations between our parties and the USSR. People, who are acting even out of their best will, while automatically transferring to our soil certain experiences of the Soviet Union which

are unnecessary to us, created the base for the oppositionists of socialism to the ideological and political influence on the masses against the Soviet Union.

Comrade Mao Zedong was correct in saying that the matter of errors is only a certain moment in the great process of building socialism. It even seems that these errors can, here and there, weaken the pace of the development of socialism, but they will not be able to stop the process of building socialism.

We also appreciate the danger of the return of the bourgeoisie, and the attempt to topple the people's rule. But the PUWP, while feeling responsibility towards all communist parties, wants to crush the bourgeoisie in our country. Of course, it is possible in such conditions that when we can rely on the forces of the entire socialist camp.

MAO: Correct. Now I want to say a few words while referring to your matter. The automatic transfer of foreign experiences also brought about many damages in our country. For example, do you know about our Long March? We walked barefoot for 12 thousand kilometers. We had 300 thousand people before the march, but before its finishing stages we had only 20-30 thousand. The number of the members of the party also decreased from several hundreds of thousands to several tens of thousands. We lost the southern revolutionary base. This caused great damages to our Revolution, but at the same time these matters educated our party. There is no such man who would not make a mistake. The Party also makes mistakes and this is unavoidable. The only important thing is whether there are many or few of these errors.

The errors should be looked at from two sides, from the negative and from the positive ones: to what degree do they harm the revolution; and, through insightful analysis of them, how do they allow us to avoid the mistakes in the future.

(Subsequently Cde. Mao Zedong further analyzes the essence of the errors committed by the communist parties while emphasizing the negative side of the issue, that is how much this weakens the power of the revolution; and the positive and educational [side], that is the avoidance of similar problems in the future)...We have considered these errors as ours (reference to the Long March). And we did not throw the blame on the USSR, on the Third International which was headed by Stalin. We think, for example, that the Third International was not correctly guided (the exact translation of the interpreter: "the leadership of the Third International was wrong"). But, after all we ourselves listened to the leadership of the Third International. And that is why we are encouraging our Polish friends to take their own responsibility.

Some mistakes are unavoidable. For example, our party, during the period when the leadership of the CP China was headed by Wang Ming, was still young. Wang Ming shared at the time the views of Stalin. But our cadres and all our comrades thought the views of our leadership to be correct and they listened to Wang Ming. When we were repairing our errors, there was not even one word in the resolution that mentioned the mistakes of Stalin and the Third International. However, we were openly and publicly criticizing dogmatism. This is a matter from 15 years ago, that is that we already fought this phenomenon before. But, while criticizing dogmatism, we were at the same time emphasizing the significance of taking advantage of the experiences of the USSR. Putting matters this way is correct, because criticism of dogmatism prevents the automatic transfer of experiences. Not only did we emphasize the significance of learning from the Soviet comrades, but indeed we were benefiting from the experiences of the USSR in the course of [these] 15 years. In fact, it would happen that during this later period we automatically transferred some experiences automatically, but there were no longer any serious dangers, and those could be easily overcome.

We try to differentiate the experiences of the Soviet Union, what is correct and what is not. We consider what is correct to be the most important. But we cannot automatically transfer even those correct experiences. And the mistakes made by the Soviet comrades should be carefully studied. We think that valuable lessons can be drawn from such analysis of these errors for the international proletariat, which does not have to repeat the same mistakes.

One should not hate the mistakes made (literal translation) by the USSR, because this is a thing of the past. We need to take a scientific position and examine them, for example, in the area of the struggle with the counterrevolution. Then we can carefully carry out this struggle. One should not think that if Cde. Lenin were alive now, then there would not be such mistakes in strangling the counterrevolution.

In the years 1931-1933 we also committed serious errors in the struggle with the counterrevolution, especially in the land of southern China. This was a Leftist deviation.

We cannot guarantee that we will not commit any errors in our work. Currently, we can only state that we committed errors in the past, but the issue is whether there were many or few of these errors. The fact is that we are trying to commit as few errors as possible. As far as the past, we could have said that it was Stalin's fault, but in the future we will not be able to say so. Stalin died and Wang Ming no longer holds a responsible position. Therefore, if there are any errors now, they will only arise due to our fault.

It is possible that you comrades have a prejudice towards the past, but I am encouraging you to get rid of these prejudices, to draw your own conclusions and to take responsibility for your own mistakes. If one were to compare Wang Ming to Bierut, I believe that Bierut was better than Wang Ming, who is still working with us. And now Stalin died and Bierut is no longer alive. Thus, now we have to organize our today's work very well. You will manage and you will be able to draw your correct conclusions from these matters under the leadership of the CC of your Party and that of Cde. Gomułka. When it comes to the socialist revolution, the matter of whether we [will] win or not has not yet been decided. Now, we have many difficult issues to solve. For example, there is a lack of grain in Poland. This is also a very serious problem in China. In your country half of the population lives in the city, and the other half in the country. And in China: 14% in the city, and 86% in the country. Thus, clothing and food are serious issues. Our country is backward. The economy and culture are backward. We still have many illiterates, while you don't have any.

When it comes to the matter of the future, we will take our own responsibility. Whether we are leading correctly or not, there is still time for an assessment. We believe that errors are unavoidable, thus we need to be careful all the more. In 10-15 years we will be able to see whether we acted correctly or not. In 10-15 years different people will be summing up the results of our work, and if we live until this time, we will sum them up. I have already brought up these matters in the conversation with Cde. Cyrankiewicz. I was saying then that in 10-15 years it will become clear whether our policy is right or not. Thus, we must act cautiously and carefully, to analyze [things] objectively and to sum up the experiences in time.

We welcome you warmly and we are happy that you came to us with your visit. You will have the opportunity to analyze our situation...China is backward. We have to see the mistakes which exist in our work and also appreciate what is correct and beneficial. At the same time we must study carefully your experiences both in the past and those in the future. But yours and our experiences are not as rich as those of the USSR, because the experiences have accumulated in the course of 40 years over there. Thus, we have to carefully study these experiences of the Soviet

Union, and it is better not to return to unpleasant things which took place in the past.

We also have unpleasant things. As I already mentioned, we also committed errors. Our Party must take responsibility for these errors. These errors were not connected with Stalin's persona. If we are able to look objectively and peacefully at these issues, then it will be easier to cooperate with the Soviet comrades.

The revolution has not yet won decisively in our country. And it has not yet been decided in the international arena who will finally win. Whether imperialism will win over us or whether we will have the victory over the forces of the United States and the Japanese imperialists. The imperialists want to crush us. They want to crush Poland, the Soviet Union and China. One does not yet know who will win even though socialism will win according to our conviction. But this is only a possibility. And this possibility has existed since the appearance of Marx's "Capital."

Socialism has not yet won in either China or Poland. But it is well known that it has already won in the Soviet Union. And how things will look in the international arena? - Nobody knows yet. We therefore must fight for the period of peace. If we could ensure 20 years of peace, then things will already be easy. Then China will not only fight the guerrilla war, but it will be able to carry out a regular war. However, the imperialists will then no longer be able to start the war.

By examining international issues and internal matters one comes to the conclusion that we should unite.

Some of the elements [in China] are coming against the USSR, against socialism, and against our party. The imperialist spies were, or still are, in the USSR. The example: Beria, whose activity was aimed at socialism. One has to criticize the nationalistic trend wherever it may exist. When it comes to, for example, [Egyptian leader Gamal Abdul] Nasser, [Indian leader Jawaharal] Nehru, or [Indonesian official Ali] Sastroamidjojo, then they are nationalists, but they are coming out against imperialism, and therefore their nationalism actually plays a positive role. However, in our country nationalism is a hostile phenomenon and we should carry out a fight against it.

In our country, more or less 10% of the people are against us. This is not a small number when one calculates; it comes to about 60 million people who are not pro-socialism. But 90% of the people are pro-socialism and they support it. Therefore, we are certain of our victory. We are certain because out of 10 people, 9 are with us. But at the same time one should not forget that 10% of the people of our country do not support us. Among this 10%, 2% are determined enemies of socialism and the Soviet Union and are supporting the imperialists. These are rightist elements. This is 2%, which means 12 million people. They are spread out, so it is easy to fight with them. But what principles [should we] use against them? Can one sweep away 12 million people to the sea? Of course not. Perhaps to give them to the United States? But even if the United States wants that, then we will still not give them to the US. These people can still be useful while working for socialism.

Two percent of the people among the middle-size landowners and the bourgeoisie intelligentsia are decisively fighting against socialism. Some of them are really old. Thus, let them take their views to heaven. But what to do with those who are not that old yet? One has to educate them. For example, when a cow is young, it does not want to work in the field. But we can raise it so it does. If we are raising this cow in the course of 3 years then it can already work in the field. In the first year, perhaps not so well, but later, gradually, already better. Why then can't we transform these rightist elements into different people? One can raise animals, why not the people?

SP: One can raise the people, too.

MAO: Yes, one can, but some of them are very stubborn. For example, Chang Kai-shek [Jiang Jieshi] does not want to change. Adenauer, who is not too far away from you, does not want to change either.

SP: Cde. Ulbricht is worrying about educating Adenauer. We have our own [Gen. Wladyslaw] Anders [of the Polish Government-in-Exile in London].

MAO: (Refers to the delegation of the Polish Army in China).

SP: We are very grateful for today's visit. These are very valuable remarks for us. It seems that the entire stay in China will have the effect on the improvement of our work in the fight of strengthening socialism in our country.

MAO: We will be eager to learn about and discuss your experiences. The exchange between us will be very beneficial.

SP: During [our] stay at the units of the Chinese [People's] Army we realized that Chinese comrades have very big achievements and we must get down to work very seriously in order not to stay behind.

MAO: We have some experiences, but they are not so rich. After all, we have not had any experience in this before building socialism. And if we are still not certain presently whether our 5-Year Plan has been correct, then in the next 5-Year Plans we will know what was right and what was not.

When Cde. Cyrankiewicz was here I talked to him about whether our countries are expecting any disturbances in the future or not. In order to analyze this, one has to wait for some time. Thus, one has to do everything carefully and cautiously and to correct errors in time. When you visit our country, be aware that China is stepping on the path of socialism, but the path is still backward. One can notice the legacy of backwardness everywhere. There are still many obstacles on our way and this path has to be cleared. But we can say that we have already come out on the main road. (In turn, Mao Zedong brings up the problems of agriculture in Poland and in China.)

When it comes to agriculture you place higher than us. Our peasants are poor and they have little land. Only the collectives ensure their future.

SP: Our party made mistakes while collectivizing the countryside and this stopped the process of collectivization in our country, and the output per hectare is still low. We must buy grain and that is why we are investing less in the development of the industry and the development of the entire economy.

MAO: The issue of food stops us in our development. The problem of bread is a serious and difficult problem. It is really bad that you have to import grain.

SP: The output per hectare [2.47 acres] comes, on average, to 12 quintals [100 kg or 220.46 lbs.]. If we reach an increase of the output by 1 quintal per each hectare, then we will not have to import the grain.

MAO: This is a very difficult task.

SP: We understand this, because, of course, the land will not increase, and in order to increase the output of agriculture one has to prepare machines, develop industry and chemicals.

MAO: You need to fight in order gradually to transform your individual agriculture to a collectivized countryside.

SP: We already underwent a crisis 9 months ago. Recently we took control of the situation in this area and the cooperatives are again beginning to develop; new cooperatives are being formed on the principle of full willingness on the part of the peasants, which is important. Of course, the country is helping the peasants in this.

MAO: This is very good. If year by year a certain number of cooperatives is being formed, then in several years you will have a collective countryside. We understand the conditions which exist in your countryside, because unless you have a well-developed industry, the issue of collectivizing the countryside is not an easy task for you.

After the conversation, which lasted several hours, the Polish delegation presented Mao Zedong with a gift: a crystal cup and a folkloric tapestry [kilim]. Cde. Spsychalski emphasized that these were products of the Polish workers, which he was presenting to Mao Zedong as a gift from the Polish Army. Cde. Mao Zedong looked at the gifts with interest.

While saying good-bye to the delegation, Cde. Mao Zedong once more emphasized that he was convinced that currently the leadership of the PUWP will be able to manage the solution of the tasks placed before our party and he asked Cde. Spsychalski to pass on warmhearted greetings to the comrades in the Central Committee as well as to pass on personal greetings to Cde. Gomułka.

He also asked that the conversation be treated as confidential. Cde. Mao Zedong and the comrades of the party leadership and the government, who were present at the conversation, are seeing off the delegation to the second courtyard as far as the cars. Here a warmhearted farewell is taking place, a long-lasting shaking of hands, and Cde. Mao Zedong is checking whether the doors to the car of Cde. Spsychalski are well closed. [tenses as in original—trans.]

The delegation departed while being greeted by the Chinese comrades.