

August 24, 1954

Mao Zedong, 'On the Intermediate Zone, Peaceful Coexistence, Sino-British and Sino-U.S. Relations'

Citation:

"Mao Zedong, 'On the Intermediate Zone, Peaceful Coexistence, Sino-British and Sino-U.S. Relations'", August 24, 1954, Wilson Center Digital Archive, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China and the Party Literature Research Center, eds., Mao Zedong on Diplomacy (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1998), 122-125.
<https://wilson-center-digital-archive.dvincitest.com/document/118431>

Summary:

In this excerpt, Mao speaks with a delegation from the British Labour Party and argues that Britain changed its attitude toward China after World War II because of the United States. He emphasizes that China and Britain can not only coexist in peace, but can cooperate and trade with each other.

Original Language:

English

Contents:

Transcript - English

ON THE INTERMEDIATE ZONE, PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE, SINO-BRITISH AND SINO-U.S. RELATIONS*

(August 24, 1954)

The People's Government, democratic parties and mass organizations of China all welcome your visit to China and regard you as friends. Please feel at home here. It is very good that you have come to China to see for yourselves.

There must be many areas where we still lack mutual understanding. However, since the beginning of World War II Sino-British relations have radically changed, although this does not mean that there are no disputes and differences of opinion between us, nor that there is no difference between the social systems of our two countries. In the past Japan dominated China. That was quite a few years ago. After the war with Japan the United States replaced Japan and helped Chiang Kai-shek to bully us. In those two periods of time Britain changed its attitude toward China. There are not many fundamental disputes between us, are there? This is a basic point.

Our relations with France are similar. In the past the problem was that of the Japanese, now it is the American. We too have an ocean beside us, called the Pacific Ocean, yet the Pacific Ocean is by no means pacific. There are some questions we do not understand. For instance, Australia signed a treaty with the United States, alleging that its purpose was to oppose the Communist Party and that we were out to commit aggression against Australia, so it was necessary for Australia to conclude such a treaty with the United States and New Zealand for joint opposition against communism. The hue and cry of anti-communism has been quite loud, especially in the recent past. It is alleged that the Chinese have committed a great crime, mainly in driving out a very good guy called Chiang Kai-shek, who is said to be the nicest guy possessing perfect virtue and the whole truth. This is the "bad thing" we are supposed to have done. I have read an article written by Mr. Bevan, in which he says the Americans have invented a new kind of logic-the Chinese have committed aggression against themselves.

The Americans allege that we have committed a big crime, and the issue is not yet resolved even now. On the question of whether Chiang Kai-shek is a good man or a bad man, there are two views. In the eyes of the United States, Chiang Kai-shek is better than we are. Your view is somewhat different, for you have long refused to recognize Chiang Kai-shek. That is why I say we do not have fundamental divergences. On the question of Japan we do not have a fundamental divergence either, as this question is today out of the control of Britain. So we are very pleased to meet you.

There is another point I should like to make. That is, so-called anticommunism is not an entirely true thing. As I see it, the United States is using anti-communism as a pretext to attain its own ulterior motives, firstly to occupy the intermediate zone stretching from Japan to Britain. Situated in North America, the United States is on the other side of this intermediate zone, while the Soviet Union and China are on this side of the zone. The objective of the United States is to occupy the countries in this vast intermediate zone, bully them, control their economies, establish military bases on their territory, and see to it that they are increasingly weakened-with Japan and Germany included among them.

You ask if there can be peaceful coexistence between us and your socialism. I think, yes. Then a question arises: Can there be coexistence only with this kind of socialism, and not with other things? Nonsocialist things, such as capitalism, imperialism, feudal kingdoms, etc.? I think the answer is also yes; only one condition is needed, i.e., both sides must be willing to coexist. Why? Because we think that different social systems can coexist peacefully.

There can also be cooperation between us. First of all, there will not be any war between us. Why fight a war? Not only would we not fight a war with the Labour Party, we would not fight a war with the Conservative Party either.

You ask how the international situation is likely to evolve. In my view, the present international situation is good; there have been some changes after the Geneva Conference. Some people criticized you, saying that coming to China you would walk into a trap. It was mainly Americans that said so. I think you would be well advised not to listen to them. History is measured in periods of years; one should not take transitory talk as a criterion, and should not listen too much to such talk. China is a backward country just beginning to change her face; economically and culturally she lags behind the Western countries. But she is beginning to change and has already attained the conditions for change. For an agricultural country like China to change into an industrialized country, several decades are needed, help from others is needed, and, first of all, a peaceful environment is needed. It is difficult to get things done if you have to fight frequent wars, and the maintenance of a large number of troops would hamper economic development. If you agree, we will continue to work for a peaceful international environment. I think this is also a need for Britain and France. Our country is still very poor and it would be good if we could have peace for several decades. Do you agree? If you do, let us conclude a treaty—a no-war pact for several decades. Of course, I do not mean for this treaty to be signed this afternoon. Let us oppose whoever wishes to make war. We have no assets other than the common people. Great numbers of people and a vast expanse of territory—these are our two assets. As for modernizing the country, it will take a great deal of time and energy. Countries like China and the Soviet Union rely mainly on domestic markets, not on markets abroad. This does not mean that we do not want links and trade with other countries. On the contrary, links and trade are needed and isolation is not what we want. Two basic conditions make our cooperation fully possible. One, both of us want peace and are not willing to fight wars. Two, each country is engaged in its own national reconstruction and so needs to do business. Peace and trade, on these two points at least we can agree. Isn't that so?

In my view, our British Labour Party friends do not properly understand the Soviet Union. Britain is a big country, and so is the Soviet Union. When these two countries are not on good terms, problems in world peace crop up. The question is not for China to move away from the Soviet Union, but for Britain to move closer to the Soviet Union. My advice is for you to move closer to the Soviet Union. This is our suggestion. Why is it that you dislike the Soviet Union so much?

China, the Soviet Union, Britain and all other countries should move closer to one another. Defrost one's views, and things will improve. How about that? Let me repeat. This includes the United States as well. We hope the United States will also adopt a policy of peaceful coexistence. If a big country like the United States does not want peace, we shall not have tranquillity, nobody will have tranquillity. Britons are in a better position to do such persuasion, for the abuses between us and Americans are rather heated. In my view, not the majority, but a small number of Americans are against China. Why is China not allowed to join the Southern-Asian Treaty? We are ready to join, but they do not want us to. What's wrong with China, the Soviet Union, Britain, the United States and France all joining it?

The Americans have acted unseemly. They are supporting Chiang Kaishek in harassing our mainland almost every day. So you would do well to advise the Americans to call off their Seventh Fleet. Those few ships are easy to handle—call them off, and off they will go. The Americans are going against the international trend and against the trend of history. They are only a minority of the Americans, such as J. F. Dulles and his ilk. We hope our friends in the Labour Party will try to persuade the Americans to do the following:

(1) Withdraw the Seventh Fleet and refrain from meddling in the affairs of Taiwan,

because Taiwan is part of China's territory.

(2) Do not go in for SEATO, which runs counter to the trend of history. Rather, if a pact is to be concluded, let it be a pact of collective peace.

(3) Do not arm Japan. Though arming Japan is directed against China and the Soviet Union, it will eventually harm the United States itself and the countries in southwest Pacific. This is lifting a rock only to have one's own feet crushed." Such a possibility exists.

(4) Do not arm Germany. Arming will lead to no good. It will likely be another case of "lifting a rock only to have one's own feet crushed."

Let us all disarm. We can do without our troops. Let us-China, the Soviet Union, Britain and France, these Asian and European countries-initiate this matter and put forward this suggestion to the United States.

(From the verbatim record)

* These are excerpts from Mao Zedong's talk with a delegation of the British Labour Party.