

October 22, 1959

**Letter of Hungarian Ambassador Sándor Nógrádi to
the Hungarian Foreign Ministry on the Meeting of
Hungarian President István Dobi and Mao Zedong**

Citation:

"Letter of Hungarian Ambassador Sándor Nógrádi to the Hungarian Foreign Ministry on the Meeting of Hungarian President István Dobi and Mao Zedong", October 22, 1959, Wilson Center Digital Archive, MOL, XIX-J-1-j China, 1945-1964, 3. doboz, 4/b, 006853/1959. Published in Szobolevszki, Sándor & Vida, István, eds., Magyar-kínai kapcsolatok, 1956-1959: dokumentumok (Budapest: MTA Jelenkor-kutató Bizottság, 2001), pp. 323-325. Translated by Balázs Szalontai.
<https://wilson-center-digital-archive.dvincitest.com/document/121189>

Summary:

In their conversation, Dobi and Mao Zedong discussed political, economic, and agricultural development in Hungary and China, and compared opposition to the current Great Leap Forward in China to the 1956 uprising in Hungary.

Original Language:

Hungarian

Contents:

Translation - English

Dear Comrades!

In brief, I report the following about Comrade [István] Dobi's meeting with Comrade Mao Zedong. On the occasion of the conversation, which started on October 19th 10.30 PM, the Chairman of the Presidential Council was accompanied by Ambassador Sándor Nógrádi; [Károly] Csatorday, head of the Protocol Department; Szunyogh, the secretary of Comrade Dobi; [Ferenc] Szebeni, an official of the Council of [Producers'] Cooperatives; and [István] Szabó, the Kossuth prize-winning chairman of the co-op in Nádudvar. On the Chinese side, Foreign Minister Chen Yi and Deputy Premier Tan Zhenlin were present. The conversation lasted 45 minutes; it took place in a very good, friendly atmosphere, and it was quite vivid.

Comrade Dobi informed Comrade Mao Zedong about the very positive experiences and impressions he had gained during his visit in China, then he started to [describe] which point we had reached in Hungary in the field of our political and economic development. He spoke in detail about the factors that led to an almost "leap-like" progress in the socialist reorganization of agriculture during last winter. In addition to such [factors] as the greater political maturity of the peasantry, the clearer vision they gained after the suppression of the counter-revolution, and the rapid economic, political, and moral consolidation of the country, he strongly underlined the correct general political line of the party, and he even said, "I must put this first."

Comrade Mao Zedong expressed the opinion that conditions were "very good" in Hungary. Less than 3 years had passed since the counter-revolution, he said, and the Hungarian People's Republic was already much stronger than ever before. He directly asked whether the Hungarian People's Republic was stronger now than it had been in the previous years, or not. Comrade Dobi replied that now Hungary was much stronger than in the previous years.

In a quite detailed way, Comrade Mao Zedong elaborated the lessons of the rightist attacks that had occurred in China in 1957. He remarked that the current Hungarian ambassador had also witnessed these [attacks], for he arrived in China just before these [events]. At that time, the issue disputed among the masses was whether capitalism or socialism was the better way. The masses decided in favor of socialism. This dispute was influenced by the events of the Hungarian counter-revolution, too. Then he started speaking about that at present, during the Chinese Great Leap Forward, they again faced a rightist attack from certain elements who conducted their activities within the party. At the latest plenary session of the Central Committee, of the over 190 Central Committee members, 8 attacked the policy of the party with regard to the Great Leap Forward and the people's communes. (This refers to the rightist group headed by former Minister of Defense Peng Dehuai and former First Deputy Foreign Minister Zhang Wentian.) This group, even though it constituted an insignificant minority, was still very cohesive, Comrade Mao Zedong said. What is the issue with them? These are individuals who entered the party during the war of liberation and the bourgeois revolution. They agreed with the objectives of the war of national liberation and the bourgeois revolution, but they do not agree with the objectives of the socialist revolution. This is the essence of their opposition to the general line of the party.

Comrade Mao Zedong started his commentary by saying that China needed 50 years to really overcome its backwardness. Thereupon Comrade Dobi remarked that this might not take such a long time after all. Yes, it would, Mao Zedong said, though of the 50 years, 10 had already passed. He implied that in the case of China, he did not consider this 50-year [period] a long one.

He also mentioned an example. In China, large areas, which are now barren, must be afforested (as is known, only 5 percent of China's territory is covered by forest). It takes 50 years to grow a forest from the trees one has just planted.

This was the essence of the conversation. It must be added that Comrade Dobi forwarded the greetings of Comrades János Kádár and Ferenc Münnich to Comrade Mao Zedong, which he warmly returned. They also took a joint picture of the persons who participated in the conversation.

Comment:

The 50-year general perspective that Comrade Mao Zedong mentioned is characteristic of the fact that at the plenary session held in August, the Chinese comrades clarified the pace and perspectives of development for the party. This means that in China, the people's communes are considered the best form of socialist construction, which accelerates the development of the productive forces and the construction of socialism but it cannot make one forget that [in] the Chinese economy as a whole, the level of development of the productive forces is still very low. They presumably also think that if currently the economic development and other forms of development are of a leap-like nature, the present pace cannot remain, or it will hardly remain, constant. In sum, this remark of Comrade Mao Zedong indicates that since the August plenum, they assess the material possibilities of development in a more realistic way than they had done in the previous period.

With comradely greetings:

[Sándor] Nógrádi
Ambassador

PS: I request that a copy of this letter be sent to the Secretariat of the party.