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Introduction

The years covered by these documents, 1953-55, were years of transition in the People's Republic of China (PRC), an interlude of relative calm, but with severe storms still ahead. This is reflected in the documents published here which show an expansive Mao Zedong, occasionally anxious about his health, but confident in his control of major policy issues and alert to emerging problems. In Sino-Soviet affairs, the death of Stalin in March 1953 had ushered in a tenuous, but not untroubled, *modus vivendi* with the new Moscow leadership; in foreign affairs there emerged the brief and comparatively benign Bandung phase, and the moderation of the 1954 Geneva conference on Indochina and Korea. In domestic affairs, while the intellectuals were troublesome and needed to be reminded of their duty to their new masters—as Mao saw it—this would be a relatively low-key process. This interlude turned out to be short-lived, for shortly after the first rumblings of the Sino-Soviet dispute became audible, imperialism became the target of a more shrill foreign policy, and the intelligentsia the objects of the brutality of the 'anti-Rightist' movement.

No single theme emerges from these records of Mao's conversations with Soviet Ambassador Pavel Yudin. Mao ranges over foreign and domestic policy with ease, often seemingly at random. One topic, however, takes more of his attention than any other, and also spans this three year period quite precisely. It arises sporadically but repeatedly in these conversations as Mao ruminates, soliloquizes, and occasionally throws out some outrageous assertions. This topic is the “Gao Gang-Rao Shushi affair,” which emerged in 1953 and concluded in 1955. By that time the key figure in the affair, Gao Gang, had

committed suicide. Nonetheless, as a struggle which impinged on the unity of the Party itself, it was thought expedient to bring it to a formal conclusion despite the death of the leading protagonist, in order to punish Gao's allies and warn against imitation. For students of the Cold War this brief, intense conflict turns out to be significant for what it reveals about the state of Sino-Soviet relations in the mid-1950s.

The “affair” arose from the alleged “careerist” and “factional” activity of Gao, who after 1949 became the senior Chinese Communist Party (CCP) figure in northeastern China. By early 1954 he was to face a special party plenum, answering charges of having conspired against Liu Shaoqi and Zhou Enlai, and intending to replace Liu as second to Mao in the party hierarchy.¹ Rao Shushi,² whose political base was in Shanghai, was part of this still somewhat mysterious “anti-party conspiracy,” although in effect the junior partner, as it developed from the middle of 1953. Even at the time of the writing of this article, some of the basic facts of this episode are in dispute. Russian historian Constantine Pleshakov, for example, claims that Mao “killed” Gao,³ although the conventional view (which receives tangential support from documents I have obtained from Russian Foreign Ministry archives but not published here⁴) accepts that Gao

¹ F. C. Teiwes has written in great detail about this affair in his two excellent books: *Politics and Purges in China: Rectification and The Decline of Party Norms* (New York: M. E. Sharpe, 1979) and *Politics at Mao's Court: Gao Gang and Party Factionalism in the early 1950s* (New York: M. E. Sharpe, 1990).

² Head of the Party's Organisation department and the leading figure in the CCP's East China Bureau.

³ See his article in the invaluable collection O.A. Westad, (ed.): *Brothers in Arms: The Rise and Fall of the Sino-Soviet Alliance* (Washington D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press and Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998). The reference to Gao is on p. 229.

⁴ Zhou Enlai and Liu Shaoqi informed Yudin, in a briefing on the case, of Gao's propensity to suicide: AVPRF (Foreign Policy Archive of the Russian Federation) 'Iz dnevnika P. F. Yudin: Zapis besedi s sekretarem TsK KPK Liu Shaoqi i presedatelem gosudarstvennogo administrativnogo soveta i ministrom inostrannix del KNR Zhou Enlaem', 9 March 1954, AVPRF fond 06, opis 13a, papka 39, delo 227.

committed suicide in 1954. Chinese historians Chen Jian and Yang Kuisong go a step further and suggest that the USSR was told very little about the Gao-Rao affair as it unfolded, concluding that this suggests poor relations between the two parties at that time.⁵ In fact, the documents presented here show Mao himself making a significant number of references to the Gao-Rao affair, and it is quite clear that Yudin was very well informed about the case. While Mao's own conversational style with Yudin inclined to the vague and did not disdain the use of the unverifiable assertion, he gave instructions to both Liu Shaoqi and Zhou Enlai to brief the ambassador on the detail of the charges and the course of proceedings, which they did, in detail and on several occasions.⁶ It is quite clear that the Chinese went out of their way to keep the Russians informed, but it is less clear what that implied about relations with the USSR. Perhaps it suggests simply a more confident Mao, one who, after Stalin's death, felt comfortable enough to speak plainly and without prevarication to senior Soviet figures.

This aside, there is a compelling question raised by some of Mao's apparently offhand remarks in these conversations, namely the degree to which Gao's fate was a consequence of the closeness of his contacts with the Soviet Union on the one hand, and the death of Stalin on the other. In some of the major accounts, Gao's alleged pro-Soviet sympathies are of relatively little import, secondary to his inner-party factionalist activity.⁷ Certainly, Gao's "factionalism" is the major part of the case as related by Mao himself, as well as by Liu and Zhou in their extended briefings for Yudin. Yet for some

⁵ Westad, ed., *Brothers in Arms*, p.259

⁶ As well as the conversation cited in note 5 above, there is additionally a conversation of 2 February 1954 between Liu, Zhou and Yudin, where a lengthy account of the case is given: AVPRF, fond 0100, opis 47, papka 379, delo 7. I also have copies of these briefings, but they are not published here.

⁷ See Teiwes, *Politics and Purges in China: Rectification and The Decline of Party Norms*.

years there have been suggestions that Gao's personal and political closeness to Moscow may have been a significant but deliberately minimized part of the case⁸—publicly minimized by Beijing to soften the Soviet response. This theme pervades the Mao-Yudin conversations, and the Liu-Zhou briefings, sometimes referred to tangentially, but occasionally forcefully, bluntly and undiplomatically. Certainly Mao seems to have worried little about the impact some of his claims may have had on Ambassador Yudin—for example that Gao Gang became more active in his “factionalism” after returning from Moscow in 1953.

Evidence from other sources which has emerged in recent years buttresses the case for a Soviet dimension to the Gao-Rao affair. The already well-used recollections of Ivan Kovalev,⁹ for example, suggest that Mao's suspicions about Gao's pro-Soviet inclinations may have been fuelled by events which took place in 1949-50. The main item of Kovalev's account revolves round an alleged incident in July 1949 when Gao was a member of a secret Chinese mission, headed by Liu Shaoqi, sent to Moscow to conduct talks with Stalin. During a meeting of the delegation with the Soviet leadership, Gao is said to have called for Manchuria to become the seventeenth republic of the USSR; reportedly he also made other suggestions which seemed intended to bring Moscow into Chinese affairs as a bulwark against potential American actions. Kovalev reports that Stalin wisely poured scorn on Gao and his proposal. This is a pretty outlandish story, to

⁸ Khrushchev, for example, was aware that some Chinese thought of Gao as Moscow's man: see *Khrushchev Remembers: The Last Testament*, vol. 2, ed. S. Talbott (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1977), p. 292. Mao, too, in a speech of March 1958 made the point that “Stalin was very fond of Kao Kang...” See *Mao Tse-tung Unrehearsed* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1974), p.100.

⁹ Kovalev was in effect a personal emissary from Stalin to Mao in the years 1948-49, although ostensibly assigned to assist railway reconstruction in north China.

put it mildly. Although fleshed out with some credible detail by Kovalev, it has to be viewed skeptically, even given Kovalev's status as an eyewitness. Further recollections by Kovalev, to the effect that Gao was providing information about the CCP's internal affairs to Kovalev and to Stalin, is perhaps more firmly founded since it receives support from other sources—including Zhou Enlai (who makes the charge that Gao talked irresponsibly to Soviet figures¹⁰) and Mao himself. Stalin, for unknown reasons, handed over Kovalev's reports to Mao at the time of the Mao-Stalin meetings in 1949-50, a step which had a marked impact not only on a number of Russians who learned of this action,¹¹ but evidently also on Mao, for he refers to Kovalev's infamous "letter," and Gao's involvement in it, in one of the conversations published below (conversation of 26 March 1954), and offers to show this "letter"—which had been 'preserved'—to Yudin.

Kovalev additionally recounts some other stories of lesser significance but with the same implications—that Gao was too sympathetic to the USSR for his own good, and in consequence Mao chose to remove or weaken him, but—crucially—only after Stalin had died and could no longer protect his client. These are interesting recollections, but the value of this material needs to be set against the fact that Kovalev was, by his own admission, highly sympathetic to Gao (whom he refers to as a "true comrade" and "an exceptional man"), even to the extent of briefly withholding criticism of Gao in a telegram sent by Stalin to Beijing.¹² This friendship was critically commented on in Zhou Enlai's recital to Yudin of the main points of the case against Gao in March 1954.¹³

¹⁰ This constitutes part of one of a number of points made by Zhou and Liu Shaoqi, talking to Yudin. 'Iz dnevnika P. F. Yudin: Zapis besedi s sekretarem TsK KPK Liu Shaoqi i presedatelem gosudarstvennogo administrativnogo soveta i ministrom inostrannix del KNR Zhou Enlaem', 9 March 1954, AVPRF fond 06, opis 13a, papka 39, delo 227. This document is not published here.

¹¹ Khrushchev, for example: "God only knows what Stalin thought he was doing," *Khrushchev Remembers*, p.291.

But Kovalev was not alone in his sympathy for Gao. His account finds support from another Soviet commentator who, like Kovalev, was a personal acquaintance of Gao: the former Soviet diplomat (and later scholar) Andrei Ledovsky. His biography of Gao Gang is little known in the West, but is a valuable source and perhaps more reliable than Kovalev's recollections.¹⁴ Ledovsky developed a friendship with, and admiration for, Gao, whom he came to know while serving as Consul-General in Mukden in the period 1950-52. In part his feelings toward Gao were political rather than personal. He offers a defense of Gao as an orthodox pro-Soviet Communist, sympathetic to the Soviet model of economic planning, hostile to the bourgeoisie and to the non-Communist parties in the PRC, appreciative of the work of Soviet specialists in China and of the helpful role of the USSR in Manchuria after 1945.¹⁵ By implication, Mao had none of these qualities, while Gao was a "great friend of the Soviet Union." This is not simply hagiography, however; Ledovsky has interesting information to offer not only from his personal knowledge of Gao, but also from being able to use (without attribution) secret documents from the Russian Foreign Ministry archives.

His argument is similar in tone to Kovalev's—that Gao had so offended Mao by his (in Ledovsky's view, perfectly correct) contacts with Russians over a number of years that, not long after the PRC's founding in 1949, Mao determined to weaken Gao's political base in Manchuria.¹⁶ Possibly the plan was put on hold as Gao played a crucial role during the Korean War but then, in 1952, Gao was called to Beijing to take control

¹² Kovalev's account can be found in *The Journal of Northeast Asian Studies* (Winter 1991), pp. 45-76.

¹³ 'Iz dnevnika P. F. Yudin: Zapis besedi s sekretarem TsK KPK Liu Shaoqi i presedatelem gosudarstvennogo administrativnogo soveta i ministrom inostrannix del KNR Zhou Enlaem', 9 March 1954, AVPRF fond 06, opis 13a, papka 39, delo 227.

¹⁴ A. M. Ledovsky, *Delo Gao Gana-Rao Shushi* (Moscow: Institut Dalnego Vostoka, 1990).

¹⁵ These views are scattered around the Ledovsky biography, see chapters 2, 3, 4.

¹⁶ See Ledovsky, *Delo Gao Gana-Rao Shushi*, p.111.

of central planning. This Ledovsky interprets as a move by Mao to put Gao under closer surveillance and to distance him from his power base in the Northeast. Gao was apparently reluctant to be transferred to Beijing, and Mao had to put the question to him in ever more forceful terms, finally demanding of Gao if he wanted this to be put to a vote of the Politburo.¹⁷

Ledovsky further argues that Gao's fate was finally sealed when Stalin died, and Mao no longer felt constrained to behave with quite so much consideration for the views of the Soviet leadership, an argument also made by Kovalev. This is not an easy case to sustain purely from the evidence provided by Ledovsky or the conversations published here, even though the moves against Gao coincided, very roughly, with Stalin's death. In one respect there does seem to be a connection, however. We can see in the Mao-Yudin conversations that Mao draws a direct parallel between the Gao case and the Beria affair¹⁸ in 1953 ('if you can purge Beria, we can purge Gao'), suggesting that even after Stalin's death Mao felt the need to cover himself against criticism from Moscow. In other parts of the conversations Mao even makes some rather bizarre attempts to link Gao directly to Beria in treasonable activity. In this connection, Ledovsky points to the puzzling decision, apparently made by the Chinese Politburo, to send Gao in the summer of 1953 to post-Stalin Moscow to gather information and report back to Beijing. Ledovsky interprets this as a trap: "Why did Beijing allow the choice to fall on Gao Gang? Was this accidental?"¹⁹ Evidently not, to Ledovsky's mind. In conversation with Yudin (26 March 1954), Mao refers to this visit, backdating the intensification of Gao's

¹⁷ Ledovsky, *Delo Gao Gana-Rao Shushi*, p.112. Ledovsky seems to be quoting Mao, as reported to him by Gao.

¹⁸ Reference to the "trial" and execution of Soviet intelligence chief Lavrenti Beria, June-December 1953.

illicit activity to the time when he returned from Moscow after carrying out the Chinese Politburo's mission, with various unspoken assumptions left hanging in the air. Even in the form it was presented, this was an astonishing suggestion to put out before a Soviet ambassador—that a CCP member may have stepped up his conspiratorial activity against the party leadership after returning from Moscow. For the most part, however, Mao was rarely this blunt, and preferred hints and implications rather than direct accusations.

Using uncited Soviet Foreign Ministry documents, Ledovsky is able to add another possible reason for Gao's downfall, which has a convincing logic. In this version, Gao was just too talkative, spending too much time with important Russian figures resident in or visiting China, criticizing economic policy (and by implication Mao himself), often in severe terms. Although, according to Ledovsky, there were tight restrictions on Chinese leaders talking to foreigners, he himself had many conversations with Gao, and Gao certainly talked to a number of other Russians. Ledovsky cites as examples Gao's conversations with Paniushkin (January 1953), Arkhipov (August 1953) and Tevosyan (December 1953).²⁰ Gao's critical tongue apparently did not escape Mao's notice. For example, in the conversation of 25 May 1955, he shows considerable sensitivity about Gao's December 1953 meetings with Tevosyan, when the latter visited China in connection with the Soviet technical assistance program. Interestingly, however, Mao may have sanctioned Gao's meeting with Tevosyan about the time that the Politburo was to meet and set in motion the process of formal criticism of Gao. Odd Arne Westad has a little further evidence that Gao's willingness to talk so freely to Soviet

¹⁹ Ledovsky, *Delo Gao Gana-Rao Shushi*, p.118. Ledovsky met Gao in Moscow and reports that, about to return to Beijing, Gao said that he felt that the storm clouds were gathering around him.

²⁰ These conversations are recounted in Chapter 5 of Ledovsky. They are obviously summaries of AVPRF documents; I have a copy of the record of the Gao-Tevosyan conversation of December 1953.

officials angered Mao.²¹ Given the critical manner in which Gao discussed party and state policy—with references to “mistakes” in economic management and to the ideas of the “utopians” that China could catch up with the USSR in 15 years²²—it is certainly conceivable that this may have cemented Mao's decision to move against him.

Taken together, the evidence of Kovalev, Ledovsky and the Mao-Yudin documents here presented make a strong case for a significant Soviet dimension to the Gao-Rao affair. But these conversations are simply too fragmentary (they do not form a complete series), and too elliptical to allow firm conclusions. Nonetheless they have value in giving some feel for the more confident, less servile manner, which Mao adopted towards the new leadership in the USSR in the years following Stalin's death.

Where Mao does speak fleetingly on some of these other questions we see, perhaps, the first signs of that overconfidence which later alarmed Khrushchev: his comments about the Yugoslavs being “Trotskyists” and *de facto* capitalists; his apparently profound indifference to obtaining US recognition; and a muted version of his later flamboyant dismissal of the power of the atomic bomb. These can be seen as forerunners of some of the elements that contributed to the chaotic events in domestic and foreign policy that characterize China from the late 1950s through to the early 1970s.

²¹ Westad understands (from an interview with the late Mikhail Kapitsa) that records of some of Gao's conversations with Russians were delivered to Mao by the Soviet Embassy in Beijing.

²² Ledovsky, *Delo Gao Gana-Rao Shushi*, p.115.

DOCUMENTS

DOCUMENT No. 1

**From the Journal of P. F. Yudin, 23 February 1954, Top secret
Note of Conversation with the Chairman of the Central People's Government of the
Chinese People's Republic Mao Zedong, 4 January 1954**

Today in Hangzhou, where Mao Zedong is taking his vacation, in my presence and accompanied by the interpreters V. V. Vaskov (an Embassy official) and Shi Zhe (Mao Zedong's personal interpreter), the final verdict on the Beria affair was read to Mao.²³

Mao Zedong listened with particular attention and asked some questions on the following sections of the judgement: the treacherous activity of Beria in the period of the civil war, his treacherous activity up to and during the Great Patriotic War, his treacherous activity after the death of I. V. Stalin. Mao Zedong also showed great interest in questions concerning Beria's links to foreign spies and imperialist agents. Mao Zedong expressed great indignation on account of the fact that Beria had damaged and demolished the work of Soviet agents in capitalist countries.

After the verdict had been read, Mao Zedong pointedly noted that the unmasking of Beria had great significance not only for the Soviet Union but also for international communism. The Central Committee [CC] of the CCP, said Mao Zedong, expressed its deep gratitude to the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) for the exposure of Beria. Mao Zedong described the exposure of Beria as

²³ This was the announcement on 24 December 1953 of Beria's execution.

having great significance for the Chinese Communist Party [CCP] and for other fraternal communist parties. Touching on the situation in the CCP, Mao Zedong noted that some unhealthy phenomena had recently emerged. These were not widespread, but since they affected even members of the CC it was impossible not to take account of them.

There have been cases, said Mao Zedong, where certain individuals have tried to set some members of the Politburo against others; there have been attempts to discern a pattern in the occasional failures or errors of some members of the Politburo, and thus to discredit these comrades. We are presently studying this question, said Mao Zedong, keeping in mind the fact that the unity and cohesion of the ranks of the party is a key condition for solving the tasks it confronts. On the matter of the unity and integrity of the party, the CC was working at present on a special document, which would not be made public. This document would be completed within the next two or three weeks. Mao said that following the completion of the document he would give instructions for me to be acquainted with its contents.

Mao Zedong further said that the CCP CC had already prepared a document on the general line of the party in the transitional period. Mao promised to acquaint me with this document also.

During the discussion Mao expressed the wish to familiarize some members of the CC, as well as members of the Politburo with the judgement on the Beria affair. Mao promised to give the appropriate instructions on this matter to Liu Shaoqi.

Referring to the section of the judgement which concerned Beria's treacherous activity during the civil war, Mao Zedong drew attention to the fact that it was now established from archival materials, brought to light in Beijing after the liberation of the

city from the Guo Min Dang [GMD], that Zhang Guotao (a well-known renegade from the CCP), was recruited by the Chinese secret police as far back as 1920. Mao also drew attention to the fact that Wang Ming was arrested by Jiang Jieshi's [Chiang Kai-shek's] secret police in Shanghai 1930. In spite of the fact that he (Wang) was already known as a prominent CCP activist, somehow he managed to get out of prison while less well known CCP activists were executed by the GMD.

Embassy official V.V. Vaskov and Mao's personal interpreter, Shi Zhe, were present during the conversation, which lasted about 4 hours.

Soviet Ambassador in the PRC, P.F. Yudin

[Source: Arkhiv vneshnei politiki Rossiiskoi Federatsii (AVP RF), fond [f.] 0100, opis [op.] 47, papka 379, delo [d.] 7, ll. 41-43. Translated by Paul Wingrove.]

DOCUMENT No.2

**From the Journal of P.F.Yudin, 31 March 1954, Top secret
Note of Conversation between the Ambassador of the USSR in China, P. F. Yudin,
and Comrade Mao Zedong, 26 March 1954**

In accordance with instructions from the Center, I visited Mao Zedong on the matter of bringing together leading figures in the CCP, Korean Democratic People's Republic [KDPR] and [the Democratic Republic of] Vietnam at the CC of the CPSU in connection with the imminent Geneva Conference and simultaneously imparted to him the content of Comrade [Mikhail] Suslov's letter. The memorandum of conversation on both these questions has been produced separately.

After the conclusion of discussion on both the aforementioned questions, I was about to leave, but Mao asked me to stay and said that he wanted to have a chat with me as we used to do, as comrades, as we often did on my previous visits to China.

1.) He said that during his stay in Hangzhou he had managed to get a good rest and felt well. In the last thirty-five days of his holiday he had walked in the mountains a lot. "During my absence," said Mao Zedong, "they began to spread fabrications abroad concerning my serious ill-health, that I was seriously ill from tuberculosis according to one version, and that I had heart disease according to another. And they were spreading rumors that in the event of my death, Gao Gang would take over my position. But, as you see, I am in fine health and not about to die."

Continuing this train of thought, begun in connection with the aforementioned Gao Gang, Mao said that for a long time it was felt that both within the party and outside it something had not been right. There was a feeling as if an earthquake was taking place,

with tremors breaking out sometimes here, sometimes there, but it was impossible to say where the epicenter was located. This became particularly evident in June-July of last year, when the CCP CC convened a conference on financial and economic matters. Then, from July to December of 1953, it became more strongly felt that two centers existed within the party, one the Party's Central Committee, but the other invisible and underground. The tremors began to be felt even more strongly in the party. After 24 December, when this question was discussed in the Politburo, many things became clearer. Now we know where this was all coming from. However, that does not mean that an earthquake cannot occur in another place.

Elaborating some of the details of this "Gao Gang affair," Mao Zedong informed me that after the February Plenum of the CCP CC, two commissions worked for two weeks and managed to clarify a good deal. An especially noteworthy fact was that Gao Gang and Rao Shushi had both been arrested in the past. Some parts of that period of their biographies were previously unclear, but now this has become a little clearer. In his personal life Gao Gang was a sordid individual. He had a lot of women, some of whom, as had become clear, were hostile elements. Now, in a number of ways, the CC was trying to establish whether Gao Gang was connected with imperialists. Much valuable material exposing the activities of Gao Gang was provided by his secretaries.

After Gao Gang's return from Moscow, where he had flown in connection with the Beria affair, continued Mao Zedong, Gao became particularly active. An especially revealing fact was that, having returned from Moscow, he talked to noone about the two extremely important aspects of the decision of the CC of the CPSU, namely the damage of the propaganda of the cult of personality and the necessity for collective leadership of

the party. Typical was this: having returned from Moscow Gao Gang did not go home, but immediately headed for the Beijing Hotel, where party workers who had come from the provinces on business were staying, and began to work on them. The Gao Gang-Rao Shushi anti-party group adopted this tactic for its underground activity: to avow support for Mao Zedong and Lin Biao, but struggling in the first instance against Liu Shaoqi and then against Zhou Enlai. “But of course,” Mao remarked, “it’s not a matter of names, but of the party and its unity.” To my response that this was the usual tactic of factionalists, that to act openly against Mao was beyond their power, Mao replied that by hiding behind his name the factionalists had deceived many comrades and that was precisely why he (Mao Zedong) must swiftly and clearly state his point of view and show where he stood, otherwise “an epidemic of factionalism would quickly spread inside the party.”

When the Gao Gang affair was revealed, the majority of party members correctly understood the actions of the CC, but some of them could fairly charge it with sluggishness. In this connection Mao Zedong, half in jest, said, “Mao Zedong proposed Gao Gang for membership in the Politburo, and he named him as deputy chairman of the central government. Now the comrades are having to approve all sorts of measures in relation to the Gao Gang affair, and they are asking why the CC overlooked this matter. Mao replies that evidently it was because he was blind. Then the comrades ask how Mao can work if he has gone blind—to which Mao replies that he has now recovered his sight.”

In this regard, Mao noted that he felt poorly at the end of last year. Knowing the verdict of the USSR procurator on the Beria affair helped CCP CC in finding the right way to expose the anti-party activity of Gao Gang. At that time he suspected Gao Gang of anti-party activity but was not absolutely sure, and that is why he was guarded in his relations

with him. To my remark that it was understandable that at our meeting in Hangzhou that Mao, when asking to be allowed to familiarize members of the Politburo with the verdict on Beria, did not refer to Gao Gang, Mao Zedong said that at that time the CC still did not know everything. They thought it would not be necessary to convene a Plenum, but later they decided it was necessary. He remarked that he [Mao] now feels better, since all this has helped to produce a healthier situation. Now additional material on Gao Gang is coming to light which clarifies many details. The final decision will be put to the next Plenum of the Central Committee. Drawing on the words of Lenin, that a party strengthens itself when it cleanses itself of its enemies, I said that in the present circumstances the CCP was going through a process of strengthening itself. Mao remarked that this did not preclude the possibility of the appearance of “factionalists” in the future. In reply to my rejoinder that if there are classes then there is class struggle, even within the party, Mao Zedong said: when outwardly all seems well in the party, that does not mean that in fact all is well inside the party.

Then, having remarked that Gao Gang was a friend of Kovalev, Mao asked me if I had seen Kovalev’s letter to Stalin. I replied that I had not seen the letter, but that Comrade Stalin had told me about it. Mao Zedong said that in this letter, which had been kept and which he could show to me, everything had been suggested by Gao Gang. The basic content of the letter was that apart from Gao Gang himself, there wasn’t a single good comrade in the Central Committee. Of course, Gao Gang was leading Kovalev when he characterized some members of the CC as pro-American in inclination and the others as anti-Soviet. It is clear that Gao Gang had had intentions of that sort for a long time.

In reply to Mao's question about where Kovalev was now working, I said that I had heard he was a railwayman who had become involved in politics—I don't know. He was an unimportant figure in China. (Shi Zhe, present at the conversation, remarked that he thought he was working as deputy minister for the coal industry).

2.) Then Mao Zedong told me about the organization of work in the CC. He informed me that at present he is little occupied with current problems, but that [he] delegates their handling to other members of the Politburo, who consult with him in the process of preparing the most important decisions. This has been done so that, on the one hand, it raises the activity of each member of the CC, and, on the other, to give himself [Mao] the opportunity to study and prepare the most important decisions and problems. Experience has shown that such an organization of work gives the best results. "The last two months in Hangzhou," Mao commented, "I did quite a lot more than I would have done if I had been preoccupied with current problems here in Beijing." Mao Zedong said that in that time he had composed or edited the following documents: (1.) A document about the work of the CCP CC; (2.) The decision of the February Plenum of the CC concerning the unity of the party; (3.) Zhou Enlai's theses on the Gao Gang affair; (4.) An announcement for the press regarding the February Plenum of the CC; (5.) The draft constitution of the CPR [Chinese People's Republic]; and other things. Recently, continued Mao, a practice in the CC was developed whereby a document created by Mao or some other member of the Politburo might be considered jointly by a group of leading comrades from the CC. This method of working gives the best results and has met with the approval of members of the Politburo. Continuing this reflection on organizational work Mao, laughing, said, "we have put younger members of the CC into the front line of day-to-day work, while I

am as it were, in the second rank. It's like in war: if the enemy breaks through the first line, then the second line steps forward to take up the fight.”[...]

[Source: AVP RF, f. 06, op. 13a, papka 39, d. 227, ll. 1-5. Translated by Paul Wingrove.]

DOCUMENT No. 3

**From the Journal of V.V. Vaskov, 27 August 1954
Note of Conversation with Comrade Mao Zedong on 5 July 1954**

Today at 7 p.m. I visited Comrade Mao Zedong and, on instructions from the Center, informed him that the CPSU CC considers it necessary to take advantage of the favorable circumstances developing in France to find a resolution of the Indochina Question. In this connection [Soviet Foreign Minister] Comrade [Vyacheslav] Molotov will arrive in Geneva on 7 July, intending to meet with [French Premier René] Mendes-France before the start of the official sessions. I further informed him that in the opinion of the CC CPSU it would be good if Comrade Zhou Enlai could arrive in Geneva before 10 July. I further informed him that the foreign ministers of England and France would be informed, through the Soviet embassies in London and Paris, that V. M. Molotov would arrive in Geneva before 10 July, in order to rest for a few days before the start of the sessions.

Mao Zedong said that he considered us to be absolutely correct in seeking to take advantage of the improving situation in France to resolve the Indochina question. At the same time he told me that Zhou Enlai was at present in Liuzhou [Guangxi province] where he was holding discussions with [Vietnamese leader] Ho Chi Minh and Vo Nguyen Giap. These discussions should be concluded on 5 July. Under favorable conditions Zhou Enlai would be able to arrive in Beijing no earlier than 6/7 July. He would be able to fly from Beijing to Moscow on 9/10 July and, thus, would in practice only be able to arrive in Geneva by 12/13 July.

Later, in the course of the conversation, Mao referred to the recently concluded discussions between [British Prime Minister] Churchill and [US President Dwight D.]

Eisenhower. Mao said that he had read with great interest an article devoted to these talks, translated from “Pravda” of 3 July. Mao noted that while the US government was slamming the door on talks with the USSR and other countries of the democratic camp, the British government was expressing itself in favor of these talks. Churchill, boasting of his services as an old battler with communism, nonetheless declared to the Americans that he was in favor of talks with the communists and of peaceful co-existence with the communist countries. Obviously, remarked Mao ironically, the international situation is such that even reactionary figures like Churchill are beginning to acknowledge Marxist-Leninist principles in foreign policy.

As for the US, Mao continued, they have spread their forces across the globe, but in the event of significant international complications that does not bode well for them. That is why the US tries by all means of its aggressive policy to revive the armed strength of West Germany and Japan. However, relying on West Germany and Japan, in the light of opposition to American policy in those countries, as well as in other countries, especially France, is an uncertain position for the US.

During the conversation Mao gave me, for my information, Zhou Enlai's telegram sent from Liuzhou on 4 July (we have sent the translated telegram by telegraph to Moscow). The conversation took place in Mao Zedong's apartment and lasted 30 minutes. The Director of Affairs of the CCP CC, Yang Shangkun, and the First Secretary of the Soviet Embassy, I. I. Safronov, were also present during the conversation.

V.V. Vaskov (Temporary Plenipotentiary)

[Source: AVP RF, f. 0100, op. 47, papka 379, d. 7, ll. 69-70. Translated by Paul Wingrove.]

DOCUMENT No. 4

**From the Journal of P. F. Yudin, 17 January 1955, Secret
Note of Conversation with Comrade Mao Zedong, 8 January 1955**

Today I visited Comrade Mao Zedong and handed to him the packet from the CPSU CC, sent by diplomatic post. Comrade Mao, having received the packet, immediately opened it and through his interpreter, Comrade Shi Zhe, rapidly familiarised himself with its content. (The packet contained information relating to a program of events dedicated to the memory of Lenin). He asked me to thank the CPSU CC for this information.

After that a discussion took place. Comrade Mao said that an especially acute question for them was the Marxist-Leninist education of the party cadres and the non-party intelligentsia. In China we have, he said, approximately five million people belonging to the intelligentsia: one million party cadres, half a million teachers of primary and secondary school, institutes and universities, half a million of different kinds of a technical intelligentsia, and a million who fall into other categories of intellectual labor, literary people, artists, architects, journalists and so on. A large part of the intelligentsia has weak links to Marxism. Their heads are full of bourgeois and petty-bourgeois prejudices. They are still under the influence of bourgeois ideology, particularly ideology inherited from Americans. In his day, the main propagandist for American ideology was Hu Shih, a follower of the subjective idealist and American philosopher [John] Dewey who, by the way, lived in China in 1920-22 and gave lectures in all the large towns. At present, the heir of Hu Shih in China is the leading bourgeois scholar and critic Yu Pingbo, under whose influence broad sections of the intelligentsia

still remain. Even party cadres from the intelligentsia are under the influence of Pingbo. For example, the editorial staff of the party journal on literature and art were completely on his side, while in the "apparat" of the CC, part of the staff were on his side, as well as key writers and communist teachers.

Having thoroughly discussed the position on the ideological front, the CC had recognized the abnormality of a situation where representatives of bourgeois ideology and idealists were openly conducting propaganda and many party cadres were following them. The CC had worked out a plan for combating bourgeois ideology and for confirming Marxist ideology in all the main areas of science, art and literature. We are considering, said Cde. Mao Zedong, actively and systematically, day by day, and over the course of a year, exposing bourgeois ideology in both the press and spoken propaganda, and propagandizing communist ideology. We think, he said, that we will manage to defeat bourgeois ideology in all its forms, and expose idealism in the various sciences, including the natural sciences, and in this struggle new young Marxists will be educated and promoted. If we don't eradicate bourgeois ideology, idealism in history, amongst the intelligentsia, and work hard to establish the foundations of Marxist-Leninist science among the broad mass of the cadres, then we will not be able to cope with the task of building socialism and lead the whole nation in overcoming the great obstacles that lie before us. We can only build socialism when, in the party and among the broad mass of people, the philosophy and scientific principles of communism are accepted.

Comrade Mao Zedong pointed out that we will ensure that the bourgeoisie and its ideology will be seriously, if not conclusively, discredited in the minds not only of members of the party but also in the minds of the non-party intelligentsia and the popular

masses. We have achieved much in the struggle with the bourgeoisie in the fields of economics and politics. In places we have even gone further than is necessary at the moment. Comrade Mao Zedong said that recently he visited a number of towns— Shanghai, Changsha and others, and talked a great deal with the workers. In the view of the workers, for instance, private traders were seriously compromised. The workers don't trust them, they say that they cheat them. At the same time the workers trust the state shops and co-operatives. In some provinces state and co-operative retail trade is about 70% of the total, with private trade being only 30%. This is clear progress. We are thinking of holding back slightly the growth of state retail trade, otherwise it may turn out that, not having fully met the demands of the population, we squeeze the private trader and the consequence of such a sharp reduction of private trade will lead to unemployment.

In the course of the conversation the question of the economic education of the party cadres was touched upon. Comrade Mao Zedong said that at the present time he was studying what has been published in their press and what is being written now on political economy and generally on economic questions. It is very important to us, he said, to have economically literate party and economic cadres, so that they can intelligently direct and lead economic affairs. We will have a special discussion on the question of the economic education of the party cadres in a special session of the CC. We will soon finish the translation of the textbook on political economy and to begin with will publish three million copies. From what I have managed to read of this textbook it seems very good and will be of great value to us, said Comrade Mao.

Mao further raised the question of the meeting in Jakarta of the Prime Ministers of India, Pakistan, Ceylon, Burma and Indonesia. He said there were significant differences of opinion at the outset of this conference. The representatives of India and Burma expressed support for inviting China to the conference of the nations of Africa and Asia, but the representatives of Pakistan and Ceylon were sharply opposed to this invitation. The representative of Indonesia at first expressed himself neither for nor against inviting China. Cde. Mao said that at this conference of the five, [Burmese Prime Minister] U Nu adopted a very good stance. He stated that if China were not to be invited to the conference of Asian and African countries, then Burma would not be able to take part in such a conference. There was a break in the meeting of the prime ministers during which the Indonesian representative worked on the representatives of Pakistan and Ceylon and came to an agreement with them to invite China to the Afro-Asian conference.

I commented that during the visit of U Nu to Beijing the Chinese comrades did a lot of good work, which resulted in the government of Burma making a major change of position to move closer to China. Comrade Mao remarked “yes, we dispelled many of his doubts and prejudices concerning the PRC and the USSR.”

Mao then went on to say that they, the Chinese friends, attached great significance to the Afro-Asian conference. The conference could seriously damage US prestige among the nations of Asia and Africa. The Americans fear this meeting since it could lead to their further isolation, especially in Asia. They (Americans) will be trying everything to wreck this conference, and they will probably be helped by Pakistan and Ceylon.

Comrade Mao Zedong noted that the Chinese friends had decided to adopt a policy with regard to the conference whereby they would not put themselves forward as

its leader, but simply play as one of the participants. We will call upon [Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal] Nehru or U Nu to take the leadership role. This will be better from the point of view of weakening the position of the US in its struggle to wreck the conference. Comrade Mao remarked that the position of the US in Asia has been seriously weakened already. At the present the USA intimidates us with a blockade of our coast, with the threat of war and so forth. However, it was much easier for them to blockade our coastline or launch war against us when the war in Korea was under way. At the moment it is much harder for them to do that because Japan is beginning to take a more or less independent position and does not want a blockade of China, since it wishes to trade with us and wants to throw off the American yoke. If we add to that the fact that India, Burma and Indonesia adopt independent positions, and do not want American dominance over their countries, then it becomes obvious that not only the position of the USA, but also that of England, has been seriously weakened and undermined in the East.

Comrade Mao spoke very sharply about [UN Secretary-General Dag] Hammarskjold, saying that he was an American stooge. He [Hammarskjold], not having agreed with us, came to speak out against China and exacerbate the position in the Far East. Meanwhile he is conducting himself badly, provocatively. Perhaps in the future he will change his position. Only, in that case the result will only be that there will be an opportunity in the future, but not now, to return to the question of the establishment of China's legal rights in the UN.

In connection with this Mao said that, to tell the truth, China was is not very much interested in recognition by the US or, consequently, in entering the UN now. These two questions were are mutually connected. We understand, he said, the well-known

advantages of entering the UN and being recognized by the USA, but in my view there are no fewer advantages if the USA does not recognize us now. This gives us the chance to more freely to educate our people in the anti-American spirit and to prepare for the liquidation of the exploiting classes in our country. If the US does not recognize us for 8-10 years, then in that time we will establish the foundations of socialism. The USSR found itself in a more difficult position than China is in now. America only recognized the USSR 16 years after the October Revolution. Nonetheless the USSR did not perish because America withheld recognition, but rather succeeded in building the foundations of socialist society.

In the conversation the question of the recent letter from the CPSU to the CCP was raised, which discussed the fact that the USA, France and England were heading towards making plans for nuclear war and so were rolling out their propaganda in favor of this type of war. Comrade Mao began carefully to analyze the position of the USA, England and France from the point of view of their preparedness to wage war against the socialist camp at the present time. He said that the position of the imperialists in the East is rather insecure. However, they cannot wage war without Japan, and Japan is not ready for war, and does not even wish at present to fight with China or the Soviet Union. In the West, the imperialists cannot wage war against our camp without Germany, but Germany is likewise not ready for war. Moreover, the position of the imperialists in countries such as France and Italy is very unstable and shaky. Meanwhile, our socialist camp is a huge force, and the imperialists of course recognize this and are genuinely afraid. The communist parties in capitalist countries also play an important role, in [working] day-by-day to undermine the forces of imperialism. International communism has become a

powerful force. It is not accidental that never a session of the bourgeois parliaments, or of international conferences of representatives of bourgeois countries, goes by without them lashing out at or reviling communists. And not a single bourgeois daily newspaper misses a chance to insult communists. All this seems to be saying that communism and the socialist camp really is powerful, and that the international imperialists really fear us. That is why I think, said Comrade Mao, that the Americans and others are making a lot of noise about nuclear war in order to conceal their weaknesses. They think that with all this stir about nuclear war they will intimidate the masses of their own countries and of the socialist countries. But their fuss and the threat of atomic war will be turned against them by the efforts of the communist parties. The working class and working people in general do not want war, and the threat from nuclear war inclines them against the imperialists and instigators of war even more. [...]

[Source: AVP RF, f. 0100, op. 48, papka 393, d. 9, ll. 24-30. Translated by Paul Wingrove.]

DOCUMENT No. 5

**From the Journal of P. F. Yudin, 12 March 1955, Top Secret
Note of Conversation with Comrade Mao Zedong on 8 March 1955**

Today I visited Comrade Mao Zedong, and, after questions and answers of a protocol character, informed him about the order of the proceedings for the celebration of the 85th anniversary of Lenin's birth on 22 April 1955. Having noted that all members of the Presidium of the CPSU CC will write articles in connection with that date, I said that the CC is appealing to Comrade Mao and other leaders of the communist parties of the various countries to write articles to appear in *Pravda*.

Comrade Mao very willingly agreed to write an article, saying that its title would probably be "Lenin and the Chinese Revolution," and perhaps run to about six or seven thousand characters. He commented that he would write it by the middle of April. He could not write it sooner because he would be occupied with the All China Conference of the CCP which would be going on throughout the second half of March.

Referring to this conference, Comrade Mao told me that about 300 delegates would be sent from the provincial, regional and city party organizations. Its significance, as Mao put it, would be that it would equate to a congress of the party, discussing such important questions as the five year plan and the Gao Gang-Rao Shushi affair. A party congress had not been convened since 1945. According to the Party Statutes, a congress should be convened every three years. In truth the Party Statutes permit congresses to be held at longer or shorter intervals, in the light of circumstance. It was impossible to hold a congress in 1948 because at that time the bitter struggle with the Guo Ming Dang was still under way. Since the founding of the PRC in 1949, urgent and important matters had

allowed no opportunity for a congress to be convened: the task of national reconstruction, the war in Korea, drawing up and amending the five year plan, and so on. The next (8th) Congress of the CCP would be called in 1956. A decision on the Gao Gang-Rao Shushi question taken at the conference this year would reduce argument at the congress in 1956. Here, Mao offered the suggestion that Gao Gang could have been in conspiracy with Beria, whose representative traveled to Manchuria and met with Gao, with the latter saying nothing about this to the CCP CC. Comrade Mao also said that Gao Gang might have been connected with the English through Beria and that he was seriously studying this question.

Having noted that 12 March marks the 30th anniversary of the death of Sun Yat-sen I said that the editor of *Pravda*, Comrade Shepilov was interested in knowing how this day would be marked in the PRC. Comrade Mao said that it was intended to mark this day widely; meetings would be held in all towns and articles carried by the newspapers. Comrade Mao said that if I felt it necessary to have more detailed information on this question, I should turn to the head of agitprop at the CC, Comrade Lu Dingyi.

Comrade Mao, recalling that I had some time ago shown an interest in the question of ideological struggle in the PRC, said that I should talk to Comrade Liu Dingyi on that matter. I replied that such a talk had already taken place. He said that he would give us three documents produced by the CC (decision of the CC on the struggle against idealism and on propagandizing Marxism, instruction of the CC on united front work, instruction of the CC on urgent measures relating to food provision), which he asked me to forward to the CPSU CC.

Comrade Mao informed us that the Politburo had discussed the letter of the CPSU CC concerning the measures taken by the government of the USSR and of the people's democracies in connection with the Paris agreement²⁴. He said that the proposed measures were timely, correct and necessary. He also spoke about the position that the PRC would adopt if another war were to break out. In the next few days the CCP CC would give a written reply to the CPSU's letter and to the draft of the treaty.

Cde. Mao further talked about the CPSU's letter on the Yugoslav question. He said that the CPSU had made a correct analysis of Yugoslav affairs and that he was fully in agreement with this analysis. [Yugoslav Communist leader Josip Broz] Tito and others, he said, are behaving like Trotskyists, always shouting that they are for Lenin but against Stalin. Marxists cannot acknowledge Marx, Engels and Lenin and not recognize Stalin. In Kardelj's lectures there was nothing Marxist. This was a purely Trotskyist attitude to Marxism.

Mao also said that he had been forming the firm opinion that Yugoslavia under the leadership of Tito was a bourgeois country, and that we had to relate to it basically as we would to a bourgeois state. It was impossible to trust Tito and Kardelj. They had linked themselves firmly to the imperialist states. There was no way I could agree with the Yugoslavs when they broke with the Cominform. Even if the Cominform were wholly mistaken on the Yugoslav question, all the same, Marxists should not behave like that. If Marxists behave like that towards international communist organizations, then our slogan "workers of the world, unite" will have to be discarded.

²⁴ Presumably the Paris agreements of October 1954 which restored West German sovereignty and paved the way for West Germany to join NATO.

Here Mao raised the question of the relationship of Lenin to the Second International and to Kautsky. Lenin only broke finally with the 2nd International, said Com. Mao, after the Social Democrats had voted in favor of the war in their parliaments. Although Kautsky made many mistakes and Lenin criticized him, he did not break with him for a long time as leader of the 2nd International.

Cde. Mao said that the CCP CC had written a letter of information to its party organizations on the Yugoslav question. We were talking guardedly, he said, about possible rapprochement with the League of Communists of Yugoslavia. In our letter we have written that the future development of events would determine how far the Yugoslavs were willing to go in rapprochement with the CPSU, the CCP and the people's democracies.

On the question of dropping the charge against [US journalist] Anna Louise Strong, Cde. Mao said that the initiative taken by the CPSU CC on this matter was very good.

During the conversation the question was raised about the visit to China of Comrades Korneichuk and Vanda Vasilevskaya and their forthcoming visit to New Delhi and the session of the Council for Peace. Cde. Mao, hearing the name Korneichuk, recalled his play *The Front* and said that when put on for the first time in China, in Yan'an, it had made a great impression and was of great help to the Chinese comrades. He said that in the PLA [People's Liberation Army] there were still some loudmouths amongst the old officer corps and so the order had been given to organize the staging of this play throughout China, wherever it was possible to do so. Cde. Mao said he would be

willing to watch the film together with Korneichuk and Vasilevskaya after their return from India.

Shi Zhe and T. F. Skvortsov also attended the discussion.

Soviet Ambassador in the PRC, P.F. Yudin

[Source: AVP RF, f. 0100 op. 48 papka 393, d. 9, ll. 46-49. Translated by Paul Wingrove.]

DOCUMENT No. 6

From the Journal of P. F. Yudin, 7 April 1955
Note of Conversation with Comrade Mao Zedong on 30 March 1955

Today I visited Cde. Mao Zedong. The discussion began with questions and answers of a protocol nature. Cde. Mao complained that he was so tired as a result of the work of the party conference, only managing to get four hours sleep a day. He said that he had to listen to many speakers at the conference. He had to listen to each speaker since there had not been such a meeting in the PRC for a long time. We are studying people, weighing them up. This all required a great deal of exertion. I intend to go to the south for two or three weeks, to rest, said Cde. Mao.

Then, having said that I had a letter for him from the CPSU, I handed to Cde. Mao the letter from Cde. [Nikita] Khrushchev with its invitation to Mao to come to the USSR for 1 May 1955. He immediately familiarized himself with the contents of the letter and said that circumstances of an internal governmental type might not permit him to take advantage of the invitation this year. In this respect he noted that during the discussion with Cde. Khrushchev on the matter of his visiting the USSR, the time of the visit was not fixed. I responded that the visit of a Soviet government delegation for the celebration of the 5th anniversary of the founding of the PRC had had an exceptionally important political significance and that his, Cde. Mao's, visit to the USSR would have just as great political significance. Com. Mao agreed with this, but repeated that internal state affairs could get in the way of such a visit. He asked me not to think that he did not want to accept the invitation, adding that it would be discussed by the CCP CC and we would be informed of the decision. Cde. Mao said that he would want to make use of his visit to

travel to many parts of the USSR—from Vladivostok to Leningrad, and from Murmansk to the southern towns of the USSR. Moreover, on departure from the USSR, he would want to visit the European countries of the People's Democracies.

Returning to the question of the ongoing All-China Conference of the CCP, Cde. Mao remarked that discussion of the Gao-Rao affair, along with discussion of the draft five year plan, had been very lively.

I asked whether, at the conference, there had been opinions reflecting the views of Gao Gang and Rao Shushi. Cde. Mao, in reply to this question, referred to the conditions under which the Chinese Communist Party had developed. He said that China was a large country with a backward economy, with a lot of isolation among the various regions due to lack of proper means of communication. In China, the Communist Party developed under conditions quite different from those in Russia. In Russia the revolution broke out in the big towns, with their industrial proletariat, under the most auspicious conditions for a communist party, but the CCP after its emergence was obliged to carry out its basic work in the countryside. The PLA was established in the countryside, and its cadres basically came from the peasantry, and also from the old officer corps. People who had been fighting the GMD for many years in isolated regions became very close to each other; there arose and grew amongst them a sort of group or family feeling. At the time when the PLA entered the large towns the CCP was composed of a number of such groups, and they had strong parochial sentiments. These parochial sentiments led to the individual groups beginning to struggle against the CC. Such was the struggle of the renegade Zhang Guotao's group against the CC. This group created its own CC with its own administration and government. Similar were the unprincipled groups of Li Lisan

and Wang Ming. Group ties continued to be maintained even after the GMD was driven from the large towns and the PLA had entered them. Groups which were accustomed to more autonomy in the rural regions, began to experience control by the CC after the entry of the PLA into the towns, and displayed an unwillingness to accept that control. It went so far that at banquets or other gatherings where the participants all supported each other, they discussed broad questions concerning the position in the party from the viewpoint of their group. If someone turned up at one of these gatherings who was not a member of the group, then the discussion of matters like that very quickly stopped.

Gao Gang, Rao Shushi and others who played a known role during the civil war, set party members who came from a PLA background (constituting a majority in the party at that time) against members of the party who were based in territory under the control of the GMD. Gao Gang and Rao Shushi did not consider members of the party who had worked in GMD territory genuine communists. In this category they included Liu Shaoqi, Zhou Enlai and others. According to Gao and Rao's classification I, too, would not be considered a genuine communist insofar as my party work began behind the lines with the GMD.

After the entry into the cities members of the party who did not have good Marxist training fell under the demoralizing influence of the urban bourgeoisie. These people lost their revolutionary spirit, revolutionary perspective and slipped back into a petty-bourgeois position. Many of these people spoke out for Stalin and Mao Zedong, but in fact fought against them. In revolution such people go with the party up to a certain point, but then they leave the revolution. That's what happened with Gao Gang and Rao Shushi.

Cde. Mao said that from the time of Yan'an, the party had begun seriously to educate the cadres in the spirit of Marxism, so that basically the party would be united. There was some success in this direction but it was far from being complete. The present conference is very useful for us. We are not only studying cadres and assessing them, but also using the conference for the education of the cadres, to achieve further results in the creation of a genuinely united party built on the foundations of Marxism-Leninism, and to overcome tendencies towards autonomy and parochialism.

Cde. Mao also talked about the special significance for the party of the forthcoming Party congress in 1956. In this connection he said that he had to work appropriately hard to prepare for the congress. He said that things are going well with the organization of the governmental apparatus and although as Chairman of the Chinese People's Republic he doesn't work very much, there is a hardworking State Council which carries out practical work and the running of the country.

Mao went on to say that the present leadership of the CC was elected long ago and in the main consists of military men. At the congress we will have to choose a new party leadership taking account of changes in the party and the country. We will need to think seriously about the leadership of the party. It's possible that I, said Cde. Mao, will be elected as Chairman of the CC again, but we need to find people who could lead the party, and who in the event of necessity could replace me as chairman. Probably we will have to elect a Deputy Chairman of the CC or introduce the post of General Secretary.

The question of the successes of CCP over the past 5 years was the raised. I remarked that the great successes of the CCP in all fields gave an opportunity to the government of the PRC to talk to the Americans in a language which no other Chinese

government had ever been able to use, and that the present policy and power of the PRC inspire courage in the governments of India, Burma and Indonesia in their relations with the imperialist countries.

Cde. Mao said that “the PRC is eyeball to eyeball with American imperialism and this allows India, Burma and Ceylon not to bend the knee but stand erect.” Those who brought about the convening of the conference of African and Asian countries do not speak of the struggle with communism, but of the struggle with imperialism, and that is explained precisely by that fact.

I added that those countries have nothing to fear from communism. Further in the conversation I delivered orally the content of Cde. Khrushchev's letter of 12 March. Cde. Mao agreed with the proposal of the CPSU.

Recalling the conversation which we had had regarding an article for Lenin Day, Cde. Mao said that in all probability he would not be able to write it. I informed him that I had already told the CPSU of his agreement to write such an article. Cde. Mao asked if it were not possible for such an article to be written by Liu Shaoqi. He said that there would be an article from the CCP CC for Lenin Day but who would write it would be discussed by the CC and he would inform us.

Shi Zhe and T. F. Skvortsov were present during the conversation.

Ambassador of the USSR in the PRC, P. F. Yudin

[Source: AVP RF, f. 0100, op. 48, papka 393, d. 9, ll. 71-75. Translated by Paul Wingrove.]

DOCUMENT No. 7

**From the Journal of P. F. Yudin 17 June 1955, Top secret
Note of Conversation with Comrade Mao Zedong, 25 May 1955**

Today I visited Cde. Mao Zedong and handed to him the text of the letter from the CPSU CC of 23 May addressed to the central committees of parties which are members of the InformBuro. Cde. Mao referred to this letter and the CPSU's proposals most approvingly and stated that these measures seemed principled and absolutely right. Cde. Mao expressed his gratitude to the CPSU CC for sending the aforementioned letter.

In the further course of conversation, Cde. Mao raised a number of questions of an inner-party nature. On the question of the activity of the reactionary figure Hu Feng, Cde. Mao said that it was now clear that Hu Feng was a central figure in a reactionary underground organization which had support either from the GMD or the Japanese secret service. Cde. Mao said that Hu Feng, who in 1925 led the Komsomol organization in Beijing, in that same year apprised Comrade Chen Yi, leader of the Beijing communist underground organization, that he was resigning the leadership of the Komsomol due to the difficulties and dangers of the work. During that time Hu Feng bore the name Zhang Yinda.

In the GMD period Hu Feng was with the forces of the Yunnan militarists, nominally part of the forces under Chiang Kai-shek, but in fact with forces operating independently in the Yunnan province. There he carried out political work, holding the position of head of department in the political directorate of the Yunnan forces. The GMD arrested Hu Feng twice, but soon after his arrest he was found to be at liberty, which he explained by saying he had escaped. In the period of particularly severe

repression by the Japanese government of all progressive forces and persons (1928-1937), Hu Feng was in Japan. At that time the Japanese government did not repress the Japanese writer Bai Hua Zi [Chinese transcription], at present the wife of CCP CC member Yi Bian [Chinese transcription], or Hu Feng. Comrade Mao made the suggestion that in this period Hu Feng could have been recruited by the GMD or Japanese secret service.

The present struggle against Hu Feng and the continuing investigation of his affairs by organs of the CCP had shown that Hu Feng had and still has his people in many responsible areas of work. His supporters are found in the Propaganda Department of the CCP CC. One of the main advisers to Hu Feng was deputy head of the department of Marxism-Leninism in the Beijing People's University, and one of the editors of the CC newspaper *Renmin Ribao* was also a supporter of his. He has representatives in nearly all the main cities of China (Shanghai, Hangzhou, Xian, Chongqing etc) who worked—and some of them still work—in the party apparatus or on the cultural front. Among the known supporters of Hu Feng we estimate that up to 200 are members of the CCP, but there must be others. Hu Feng and his people lead a certain portion of the intelligentsia, perhaps up to 5%. To our appeals to Hu Feng's supporters, said Cde. Mao, to acknowledge their mistakes and make common cause with the party, they maintained silence, and some of them are still silent at the present time. Some particular supporters of Hu Feng, after they had confessed their mistakes before the party, went to Hu Feng and repented, declaring that their confessions were a mistake. Com. Mao said that people could act like that, getting in with the party or abasing themselves. On this he mentioned that during the last exchange of party cards up to 350,000 members (from seven million)

were screened out for crimes against the party or against the people, for moral turpitude or for joining the party out of careerist or other motives. However there were still a few people of that sort in the party, against whom a serious struggle is being carried out. All this bears witness to the fact that in the PRC class war is getting sharper and sharper. We are using the example of Hu Feng and his supporters to educate the party cadres and the intelligentsia, said Cde. Mao.

Further in the conversation Cde. Mao talked about the anti-party bloc of Gao Gang and Rao Shushi. On this he said that Gao Gang and Rao Shushi stuck to two methods in their anti-party activity. Gao Gang was an individual without morals, intending to seize power; amongst his own supporters he said that around Mao Zedong two untrustworthy groups had arisen: one headed by Liu Shaoqi which also included Bo Yibo, Li Fuchun, Li Lantao, An Ziwen and others; the second, headed by Zhou Enlai, which includes quite a number of people. Gao Gang, on the other hand, speaks out against these groups to defend Mao Zedong.

Cde. Mao remarked that Gao Gang in the course of one week arranged eight evening dances: whenever he felt like dancing he gave instructions to round up women. Cde. Mao remarked on Gao Gang's political unscrupulousness. He said that he got close to a shadowy figure Zhang Menyuan and made him the link between himself and the consulate-general in Mukden. Zhang Menyuan was expelled from the ranks of the CCP in 1926, but on the insistence of Gao Gang was re-admitted to the party, sent to a party school for re-education, and then after the liberation of the north-east was moved to Mukden by Gao Gang to work in the NE bureau of the CCP CC.

Cde. Mao said that Gao Gang, during Cde. Tevosyan's visit to the PRC sought in all sorts of ways to get on the trip to the Northeast, even though the CC had intended to send Li Fuchun. Gao Gang had the opportunity to travel with Tevosyan due to Li Fuchun being ill with a cold. I replied to Cde. Mao that I also travelled in the NE with Com. Tevosyan and that during the journey Gao Gang talked twice with us, in the main about the organization of GOSPLAN in the USSR and that he, Gao Gang did not act in any special way to get close to us.

Cde. Mao, having raised this question of Gao travelling with Tevosyan evidently wanted to suggest that Gao did intend to get close to responsible figures in the Soviet government who came to China, in order to get information out of them.

Cde. Mao said that Rao Shushi had conducted underground work of service to the GMD and foreign secret services, while trying to appear loyal to the party. He had a hand in the nomination of Pan Hannian, who was connected with the American, Japanese and GMD secret services, to the posts of Deputy Mayor of Shanghai and Deputy Secretary of the Shanghai organization of the CCP. Rao Shushi, Yan Feng and Pan Hannian together headed a counter-revolutionary organization.

Pan Hannian kept the Chiang Kai-shek clique informed about everything. Very important materials were sent to Taiwan in Jan-Feb 1950. Information about the arrival of a Soviet air division in the Shanghai area was sent to Taiwan by Pan Hannian. An air raid on Shanghai on 6 Feb. 1950, carried out by GMD aircraft, was carried out at Pan Hannian's bidding. As a result of his work on behalf of the Chiang Kai-shek clique, following their expulsion from the mainland, Pan Hannian was decorated four times by

Chiang. Documentation of these decorations, as well as other evidence, had fallen into the hands of the relevant organs of the PRC.

Com. Mao said that 1953 was a particularly difficult year for the CCP. He recounted that before leaving Hangzhou, at one session of the Politburo, on 24 December 1953, he said that the CCP had two headquarters, of which one was acting openly, struggling to overcome difficulties, while the other was acting secretly, taking advantage of difficulties to struggle against the official headquarters—the Party Central Committee—and spreading all sorts of rumors. At that time, according to Mao, he did not name the leaders of the underground 'headquarters', but at a meeting Gao Gang and Rao Shushi were very downcast. They were, as Mao put it, very dispirited when the CPSU materials concerning the anti-party activity of Beria were read out.

Turning to international questions and referring to the visit of Menon to Beijing, Cde. Mao said that in the course of the ten days of his visit to Beijing Menon discussed the Chinese-American talks concerning Taiwan. Menon met with many PRC governmental figures. By prior agreement amongst themselves members of the government of the CCP gave Menon quite a few different answers. The responses of some members of the government put Menon in an optimistic in mood, and the replies of others, in a pessimistic mood. For example, Zhu De's announcement that "if the Americans want to fight, then we are ready for war", made Menon shudder. Menon was told something in general about China's attitude to direct Sino-American talks. It was noted on this that if everything that was told to Menon became known to all those states who might wish to act as intermediaries, then others might take the initiative as intermediaries. Apart from India, among those who might wish to act as intermediaries in

talks were England, Burma, Indonesia and Pakistan. It was said to Menon that India would be preferred as an intermediary for talks. Taking this position, said Cde. Mao, the Indians will not even tell Britain all that they have heard in Beijing. Cde. Mao noted that [Great Britain's Prime Minister Anthony] Eden himself wanted to come to China from Singapore to act as an intermediary. But in reply to his proposal to visit Beijing after the conclusion of the Bangkok conference the PRC intentionally gave an answer that meant Eden would refuse to come. In giving this answer the government of the PRC proceeded from the fact that the position of the government of Great Britain on the Taiwan question was almost exactly the same as the position of the government of the USA. Eden's letters sent from Singapore and London (after his return from Singapore) differed considerably in tone from each other. In the letter from Singapore, Eden tried to intimidate China, saying that the PRC's policy on Taiwan could lead to world war. In the letter from London this intimidation was not present. At the moment Britain's position on Taiwan is a little different from America's.

Cde. Mao talked about the flight to Beijing of Satroamidjoyo [Russian transcription], Prime Minister of Indonesia. He said that Satroamidjoyo, scared by provocations in Hong Kong, did not want to disembark at Hong Kong, but flew directly to Canton.

The conversation lasted more than two hours. Shi Zhe and T.F. Skvortsov also attended.

Ambassador of the USSR in China, P. F. Yudin.

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