

June 26, 1962

Transcript of a Meeting between Vice Minister Ji Pengfei and the Ambassador of the Soviet Union to China Stepan V. Chervonenko

Citation:

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Summary:

Ji Pengfei and Stepan Chervonenko spar over the Soviet Union's handling of the peoples who crossed into the USSR from Xinjiang.

Credits:

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Original Language:

Chinese

Contents:

Translation - English

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Transcript of a Meeting between Vice Minister Ji Pengfei and the Ambassador of the Soviet Union to China Stepan V. Chervonenko

-Personal Delivery of Reply to the Soviet Government's Memorandum Dated 7 June and Memorandum of the Soviet Ambassador's Additional Verbal Statements Dated 11 June

[Not reviewed by Vice Minister Ji]

Date: 26 June 1962, 4:00 p.m.

Venue: Reception Room, East Block

Attendees: Yu Zhan, Deputy Director General of the Department of Soviet Union and European Affairs, First Secretary of the Soviet Embassy V. Sanfirov

Interpreter: Wang Jinqing

Minutes: Xia Daosheng

Vice Minister Ji (hereafter Ji): I invited the Ambassador here today to discuss an issue. (Reads out and presents a copy of the memorandum, full text appended at the end)

Ambassador Chervonenko (hereafter Chervonenko): I will convey this to the Government of the Soviet Union. We had repeatedly mentioned this in our previous documents to you that we hope the situation of large-scale illegal border crossings could come to an end, and for the problem to be resolved. I fail to understand why your side is unwilling to and does not see it necessary to send your people to the Soviet Union to work on these illegal trespassers with our help, and this document of yours does not make it clear either. Regarding the document's reference to the normal practice of repatriating illegal trespassers by both sides in previous instances, yes, this was the usual practice in the past. But the current situation is one of massive flight across the border, which goes beyond the scope of usual practice. Considering the nature of our common border, the number of illegal crossings in the past was low and trespassers were repatriated accordingly, but this is now beyond the scope of previous experience. We had hoped that the Chinese would take measures, including those aimed at stopping these illegal crossings and sending people to work on these illegal trespassers, amongst other measures. However, these actions were not taken. The Soviet Union is thus forced to take the unusual step of securing the border. For this, we definitely need some time. Hence, the criticism directed at us in the document is rather baseless. Finally, there is a series of statements made in the document suggesting that we are concerned about these illegal trespassers, and might even be encouraging them to enter the Soviet Union. This is not reflective of reality. We firmly oppose such statements. From the very beginning of this incident, we have taken measures to stop these illegal crossings. You can consider for yourselves, why would we want to let these people enter the Soviet Union? The document alluded that the Soviet Union was encouraging them to head for the Soviet Union, but did not cite any factual evidence for this. I fully agree with the document's final argument, which is to completely resolve this issue through joint effort. What we hope to see from the Chinese is precisely such an effort.

Ji: Regarding the issues that you have discussed, Zhang Hanfu had previously negotiated them with you more than once, and there have been repeated discussions of this. In today's memorandum, it is stated that we find the Soviet Government's criticism of us in the last memorandum unacceptable. On the issue of the measures taken by our side, we have implemented measures from the start of the incident. During then, the Soviet Union had simply informed us of the situation and did not take any measures. This led to the exodus of large numbers of people. The situation has improved a little now that you are taking action. If the Soviet Union continues to

harbor those who have fled across the border, it makes our actions futile. The Soviet Union has not taken active measures to repatriate those who have fled across the border, choosing instead to shelter them. This creates a huge problem for us.

Chervonenko: We have no intention of absorbing them, we asked them to leave, but they refused to.

Ji: If you had simply repatriated every single individual who went over right from the start, the problem would not have become what it is now. Now the Soviet Union wants us to send people over to persuade them, we see it as your responsibility to do so. Your side should take action to send them back. What you said earlier echoed what was discussed in the last memorandum; there is nothing much that is new. Regarding these issues, we have given our reply in the current memorandum to the effect that we do not accept these criticisms. We hope that the Soviet Union can take measure to resolve the problem. You have said that some of our statements are groundless, but we do have full facts to support them, such as the fact that it was the Soviet Union that provided openings in the perimeter fencing and sent vehicles to pick up these illegal trespassers. These have been brought up in the past, and I will not repeat them.

Chervonenko: We had already explained this before. These people were from our fraternal country, and there were the ill and the children among them. They had walked for miles. Should we have left them out in the rain to die and not care? Should the Soviet Union encounter the same unfortunate situation, the Chinese would definitely do the same for us. This is not difficult to understand.

Ji: It is not about the ill or the children. Most of these illegal trespassers were young and able-bodied.

Chervonenko: I find it hard to understand. Are you suggesting that you would have ignored them?

Ji: Well, you should have sent them back.

Chervonenko: Didn't the previous documents already state that the vehicles were used to ferry the sick?

Yu Zhan (hereafter Yu): The issue is, when we catch your people illegally entering our country, we feed them too, but we send them right back to you after that. Now, instead of sending our people back to us on your vehicles, you fed them and then sent them to the rear. Why aren't the vehicles coming to our side? Where have these people gone?

Chervonenko: We had proposed more than once for you to send your representatives to the Soviet Union, and once you do so, you can see where they've gone. But you are unwilling to send your people over. We had made this suggestion on the basis of our fraternal ties and because we are fellow communists and neighbors. We are not talking about a few trespassers but tens of thousands of them. How could we deal with all of them in a single effort? I fail to understand your attitude toward this issue. These people came from your country and they are your people, why are we being blamed for this? The Soviet Union did not encourage these illegal crossings. We are fraternal countries, why is your side unable to formally send a representative to work on this?

Ji: The Soviet Union is obligated to repatriate these people based on normal practice. If you are unable to send everyone back in one effort, you can do so in stages.

Chervonenko: The issue is not about the feasibility of sending them back. It is possible to do so in batches. The issue is about the attitude to adopt toward them.

Yu: The attitude for the Soviet Union to adopt is to send them back. After repatriation, it is our own business how we want to deal with them. We know what to do with them. If you can't send them back all at once, you can do so one truckload at a time! It is perfectly doable, why is your side always insisting on your demands and emphasizing the need to persuade, and why do you insist that we send people over? We fail to understand why our fraternal country would treat the issue this way. Speaking of anger, as a fraternal country, we have very strong feelings about this issue.

Chervonenko: The trespassers come in huge numbers, and not just one or two under the usual circumstances. There is no need to prove that the usual practice is unfeasible when dealing with such a large group of people. We are all Communist Party members, and these are the Communist-educated masses. Why are we neglecting our work among them? Must we take administrative and military actions against these people, to the extent of shooting them to death?

Yu: We did not ask you to shoot them. We asked that you send them back.

Chervonenko: I am not saying that you asked us to shoot them. I am talking about the right kinds of measures to take toward them.

Ji: Had the Soviet Union's border security department adopted firm measures in the beginning, the problem would have been easily resolved.

Chervonenko: These people crossed the border from your end. Why is your side simply putting the blame on us rather than taking your own measures?

Ji: We did take action. I can tell you that we have only about 100 border defense troops along the entire border of Xinjiang with the Soviet Union and Mongolia. The Soviet Union is our fraternal country and friend; we see no need to station large numbers of troops along the border. The Soviet Union has border defense infrastructure in place and there is perimeter fencing, but this is now suddenly riddled with holes.

Chervonenko: We had also discussed this issue before. We don't have much defense presence along the Sino-Soviet border; there is maybe only one patrol a day covering this vast area. We only increased our troops, secured the border and strengthened our border defense after the incident. As for the perimeter fencing, it had long been compromised in some places, and there were no fences at all in other places. It was only after the incident that we fixed and strengthened them. This area practically had no border defense in the past, and not even fences were necessary. Both sides did not secure the border.

Ji: Previously, the openings along the border were limited to specific locations, and those who crossed the border did so from these places. New openings were made during this incident.

Yu: We are referring to the places that originally had proper fencing in place, but were later compromised.

Chervonenko: This issue had also been explained before. The border area is vast and unmanned. It is possible that someone took the fencing apart at night. Now that we have secured the border, we will of course take responsibility for it henceforth. You

must know that there was nary a soul here in the past. We didn't think there was anything wrong with this since it concerned a border with our fraternal country. We also had no reason to blame the Chinese side for not having anyone to patrol or secure the border.

Ji: These issues had been dealt with in the past; there is no need to discuss them in detail today. Please send our memorandum to your government.

Chervonenko: I will do so. I believe that this issue will be resolved. There is no problem that is irresolvable between us.

Ji: It is also our hope that this is the case.