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**Transcript of Conversation between Todor Zhivokov
and Zhao Ziyang in Beijing**

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Summary:

Talks with Zhao Ziyang 6 of May 1987 in Beijing regarding Chinese and Bulgarian Communist policies.

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Meeting of Comrade Todor Zhivkov with Zhao Ziyang, Acting Secretary General of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party and President of the State Council of China People's Republic
Beijing, 6 May 1987

ZHAO ZIYANG:

Let me welcome you, comrade Zhivkov. We attach special importance to your visit.

TODOR ZHIVKOV:

This is my first personal visit to China, and the first top-level visit from Bulgaria.

ZHAO ZIYANG:

I guess you have not seen as many people in Sofia as there are in Beijing.

TODOR ZHIVKOV:

To be honest, I expected far more people than I see now; I thought it would be like an anthill. Nothing of the kind. I guess there are more people in Shanghai?

You know that Bulgaria is situated in a very sensitive region. There are socialist countries, members of the Warsaw Pact; there is a socialist country, which is not a member of the Warsaw Pact; there are capitalist countries, members of NATO and the Common Market. Part of NATO's South flank is situated here. Fortunately or not, we are in the center of the Balkan Peninsula. We are striving for good-neighborhood relations with other countries; our policy is very important because we are in the center of the Balkan Peninsula. No Balkan question can be resolved without Bulgaria. We are taking this into account and in general our relations with the Balkan countries are good. Recently we had some problems with Turkey but we are doing our best to normalize relations. It is our idea to transform the Balkans into a nuclear weapons free zone as well as to make it a zone free of chemical weapons. The question of preserving the environment has been raised at the 13th Congress of our Party.

The situation on the peninsula is very complex because the interests of too many countries are represented there: NATO and the Americans are there. Despite that one cannot say that the situation is strained. There are contradictions between Greece and Turkey. We are doing our best to prevent those contradictions from intensifying.

Our relations with Europe are normal. We have established diplomatic relations with all European countries. Early next month I will pay a visit to the Federal Republic of Germany. The relations with the socialist countries are good. They are not good enough with Albania but I hope they will improve soon. Our country is small, however we are trying as much as possible to pursue an active foreign policy.

That is all I wanted to say concerning our relations with the other countries in our region. We are also very close to the Mediterranean region and the Middle East. We are really concerned about the situation there. This is a region closely connected to us. During my visit in Algeria I had a meeting with the leaders of the Palestinian movement. I had anticipated that they would resolve the contradictions between them. And it happened, today they are united.

I think this is most important: Your church tower is bigger. Ours is a small one, our country is a small one.

ZHAO ZIYANG:

Thank you for the nice information on Bulgaria, for your evaluations, comrade Zhivkov. After we listened to your analysis, we now have a more comprehensive view of Bulgaria. For the last 30 years the leadership of the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party with Todor Zhivkov as its head has achieved significant results in building up socialism. There has indeed been a sustained and high growth rate of your economy for a longer period of time. You have gained much useful experience in building up socialism through reforms.

Your theoretical concept of the owner and the proprietor of socialist ownership has provoked much thought on the matter. We have already had your lectures before the professors and academic audience of the Social Sciences Academy translated and printed.

Generally speaking, we are very happy with your success and wish you even greater results in the future.

Since you began with Bulgaria, let me start my comments with China.

For the last 30 years, since the People's Republic of China was established, we have made great achievements. On the one hand, one can learn certain lessons from our errors. There are two major lessons: the first one is that there was too much haste and rashness in our economic development, which resulted in the so-called "Great Leap." Great leaps are normally followed by severe slumps. We have gone through such cycles several times so far. There hasn't been a sustainable level of economic development. On the other hand, we have been conducting a leftist policy, there are too many political movements. After we successfully carried out our nationalization, we focused our attention on construction and housing. The Cultural Revolution was too hasty a measure as well. We are deeply impressed with the stable and normal rate of economic development in your country for the last several decades. Since you have often mentioned the April Policy, allow me to inform you of the third plenum of our party. The third plenum of the Chinese Communist Party was held at the end of 1978; at this plenum a thorough analysis of our past experience and the lessons we have drawn was made. We drew up a program adopting the policy of building socialism in a specifically Chinese manner. This program has two major items: the first is our commitment to (and observance of) the four major principles. I think that may be a general principle valid for all socialist countries. The central point of these four principles is the leadership of the communist party and the socialist road of development.

[...]

The proponents of peace outnumber the proponents of war. A world war may break out, but we may witness a long period of world peace. Our foreign policy is a policy of independence and peace.

There are three basic issues in this policy: the protection of peace is a central issue; having adopted the five principles of peaceful co-existence, our goal is to keep and further develop friendly relations with all the countries of the world; to have an independent stance on international affairs. We do not enter into an alliance with any country or bloc, and we shall not establish relations of strategic importance with any country whatsoever. Although China is a less developed country in terms of its economic development, it plays an important role in world affairs because of its size. We believe that the policy we have been conducting favors the protection of world peace.

On disarmament, it is above all the Soviet Union and the USA, who possess over 95

percent of the nuclear arms in the world that are to work together to reduce these arms. We are in favor of the dialogue between them. We hope their talks will be frank and open and an agreement will be reached. As for disarmament, we consider it a topic of prime importance since the future development of the world and of mankind are closely related to it. All countries, irrespective of their size, should have equal rights in this process and contribute to its enhancement. The two super powers should respect the stance of the smaller and medium-sized countries and listen to their position on disarmament.

Our position is that on disarmament, Europe and Asia have to develop a common stance. We are against militarism in the open space. We want all the countries with space programs to cease the experiments as well as the production and deployment of weapons to the open space. Those countries should sign a Joint Convention on this matter. The Chinese position on the disarmament issue is sincere. Despite our size, our military expenditures are lower than the expenditures of other countries. We reduced the size of our army, we also reduced other military expenditures. As a nuclear state we do not want to get rid of our responsibilities. When the two superpowers reduce their nuclear weapons we think that an international conference on nuclear weapons should be held and China will take its part of the responsibilities.

As for China's relations with other countries, I suppose that our relations with the Soviet Union are of interest to you. We are pursuing a complete normalization of our relations with the Soviet Union. We would like the relations between the two great neighboring socialist countries to be normalized as soon as possible. The whole world would benefit from this.

A central issue in the normalizing of these relations is the so-called Kampuchea problem. The Soviet Union supports the intrusion of Vietnamese troops into Kampuchea, whereas China provides assistance for Kampuchea's resistance movement. This war has been going on for 8 years now. Its coming to an end seems unlikely in the foreseeable future. Unless this Kampuchea problem is solved, one can hardly speak of normalizing relations. There is one point of heated debate in the relations between the Soviet Union and China, and that is the Kampuchea problem.

On the other hand, there has been progress in our relations with the Soviet Union in the other spheres of life. I think that there will be a step forward in our relations in terms of politics. It all depends on solving the Kampuchea problem. The factor determining the deterioration of our relations with Vietnam was the occupation of Kampuchea effected by Vietnamese troops. Regardless of the motives, the fact is that a country has openly sent troops to occupy territories of a weaker neighboring country. By no means can this be considered a correct act. Therefore China cannot support Vietnam on this important international issue; that is why Vietnam considers China to be its greatest enemy and has adopted an anti-Chinese policy. Those who have artificially created this problem must find its solution. If the Vietnamese troops withdraw, the relations between Vietnam and China will become normal. I don't think there will be any progress in these relations unless Vietnam changes its policy of aggression towards Kampuchea.

We rely on Vietnam's new leaders. We hope they will adopt a reasonable policy. This war seems a catastrophe for the Vietnamese people; it should therefore be stopped. It is not in line with the Vietnamese people's interests. A lot of problems will be easy to solve once they have withdrawn their troops from Kampuchea. The relations between China and Vietnam, on the one hand, and China and the Soviet Union, on the other will improve. Vietnam's relations with the countries of South-East Asia will be normalized. The national economy of Vietnam can expand only in a peaceful environment. This is what I wanted to tell you about our foreign relations.

You informed us about the policy you pursue to make the Balkans a zone free of

nuclear and chemical weapons. We can understand well the Bulgarian people's striving to build socialism under peaceful circumstances. We are impressed with the effort you put into lessening the tension in the region. Turning the Balkans into a region free of nuclear weapons is a task of the peoples living there. We agree with your policy for maintaining good relations with your neighbors.

I took too long to make my comments. Thank you for your attention.

TODOR ZHIVKOV:

Thank you for the interesting information.

As for our government, we follow what you do in the country and all the reforms you undertake. We can follow these at a distance, of course; and we are neither in charge of any of these changes, nor can we contribute in any way. We would like to congratulate you on all the reforms and the significant results you have achieved in China's development, its economic development in particular, and in raising the people's living standard. I would like to point out that there is no relevant difference between our views of the state's role as owner and the role of the economic agent as proprietor. I am deeply convinced that the economy policy we pursue will yield good results both in China and in Bulgaria in the future. We have to share our experience and account for the results achieved. We will readily share our experience with you, and study yours.

[...]

I would like to talk now as one of the veterans of the communist movement, not in the capacity of secretary general of the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party. When I was elected first secretary a long time ago, I was of the middle-aged generation; when I met Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping in Moscow later, I was the youngest first secretary. My youth is over now. I most sincerely hope that a way to normalize the relations between China and the Soviet Union will be found. We share common aims and ideals. These relations should be settled and regulated and this should happen within my life span. I know this might sound egoistic, yet among the veterans I would be most honest and sincere in my satisfaction should these relations be settled. A lot of problems have arisen; these were accumulated in the course of our historical development. Certain problems have been created by ourselves. Both sides have made mistakes. There should be a way to stand above these problems that might hinder our relations and bring us nowhere, regional problems in particular. Let us find the way to solve the regional problems, so that they will not determine our relations. Settling the regional problems should not be considered a prerequisite for regulating our relations. Regional problems should be tackled in the course of friendly dialogue. We could reach an agreement on all other issues. This is my deepest wish both as a communist and as a veteran.

On Kampuchea, I don't know whether you're aware of the fact that I am the first general secretary that visited Kampuchea in 1979. I was on a one-day visit. I visited Vietnam, Laos and Kampuchea. Vietnam's new leaders have expressed their willingness to take China's interests into consideration. A dialogue and a solution to the problems should be sought. I am not one to make suggestions, yet I know that dialogue is a necessary tool. As far as I can see, there is a willingness on the part of Vietnam's leaders to take up talks.

As for the economic situation in the region during my visit, I must say it was extremely severe. I guess you know that better than I do. Let us find a way to eliminate this obstacle, so that it will not hinder relations between China and the Soviet Union. I know that the problems will be solved when there are talks. There are a lot of outstanding problems that cannot be solved at once; being realists we are aware of this.

As for the cooperation between China and Bulgaria, we are ready to stimulate its further development. Bulgaria is a small country; however we are Georgi Dimitrov's party, and, as I already pointed out, we will follow his legacy. If it was not for this conflict, China would have been the most popular country in Bulgaria after the Soviet Union. I believe this will happen. We have had close relations with the Soviet Union in the course of our historical development. The second country, gaining such popularity, was China. You can see how a conflict may hinder our relations. I hope we will forget all this. For it is often the case that the dead save the living. Let us not allow what is already dead to pull us downwards. Our relations should be frank and open, sincere and brotherly of a communist type. We are willing to further develop our cooperation. Please, come and visit Bulgaria. We are a small, yet dynamically developing country.

ZHAO ZIYANG:

After listening to your statement my wish to visit your country increased.

TODOR ZHIVKOV:

Thank you.