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January 24, 1969

Minutes of Todor Zhivkov - Indira Gandhi Meeting, Delhi

Citation:

"Minutes of Todor Zhivkov - Indira Gandhi Meeting, Delhi", January 24, 1969, Wilson Center Digital Archive, Central State Archive, Sofia, Fond 378-B, File 249. Obtained by the Bulgarian Cold War Research Group. Translated by Dr. Rositza Ishpekova, Edited by Dr. Jordan Baev, Kalin Kanchev.
<https://wilson-center-digital-archive.dvincitest.com/document/110065>

Summary:

The two leaders talk about Vietnam, the Arab-Israeli conflict, and the situation in Europe.

Original Language:

Bulgarian

Contents:

Translation - English

Official talks

Between the president of the Council of Ministers of the People's Republic of Bulgaria Todor Zhivkov and the Prime Minister of India Indira Gandhi

Delhi, January 24th 1969

11.30 A. M.

The talks were attended by:

For the Bulgarian side - Ivan Bashev, Minister of Foreign Affairs; Marii Ivanov, Minister of Machinery construction; Yanko Markov, Vice-President of the National Assembly; Milko Balev, Chief of the Prime-Minister's office; Ognyan Tihomirov, Deputy-Minister of Foreign Trade; Hristo Dimitrov, Bulgarian Ambassador in Delhi;

For the Indian side - Fahrudin Ahmed, Minister of Industry; Mohamed Kureshi, Deputy-Minister of Trade; Surendra Singh, Deputy-Minister of Foreign Affairs, etc.

INDIRA GANDHI:

I would like once again to greet you and your delegation, and to say how happy I am that you spared some time to come to our country.

As I already told you the other day, we attribute great significance to our friendship with Bulgaria.

When I was in Bulgaria I introduced you to the situation in our country. Now I would like to talk about some of the difficulties we have in leading our people forward.

[...]

Regarding the international situation.

Vietnam has advanced a small step ahead. Hopefully, this will lead to improving the situation there. Yet, despite the negotiations, the situation there is still very tense, full of explosions. Whatever happens - no matter whether the negotiations succeed or not - the situation in Southeast Asia will remain equally difficult.

We back the peace in Vietnam. Changing the situation always creates certain difficulties. The countries from this region are receiving help from the USA at this moment, but I consider it an artificial force. Settling the problems through peaceful means would mean that the problems could be settled without an artificial force.

Recently I was in London at the conference of the British Commonwealth. There I met the prime ministers of many countries - Australia, New Zealand, Malaysia, and Singapore. They said they would like to have some defense capabilities or some agreement in this respect, since they didn't feel safe enough. These countries had a meeting last year, but since nothing came of it, they suggested holding a new meeting.

We think that such alliances would actually increase tensions in this part of the world.

As for the Western Asia [Middle East], we share common views and hence I have nothing to say. We are in close contact with Nasser and we see that he has gone significantly ahead in meeting some of Israel's demands-for example for recognizing the state of Israel. Maybe the internal conflicts in Israel also impede the settling of the conflict.

After visiting Eastern Europe, I visited Latin America last year as well. I am under the impression that Latin American countries, although being in American sphere of influence and strongly dependent on the US, are trying to free themselves from that influence. And we will have to help them, so that an opposition can be created. Of course, posing the question for all Latin American countries is incorrect, since some of them have different stances.

Our relations with all countries are good, with the exception of two of our neighbors.

We are doing our best to find ways to relieve the tension, since it's not good to have hostile neighbors. Actually nothing in particular has been done in this respect. We must mention here the latest declarations of Ajud Chan. We will do our best to use every possible gesture in order to normalize the relations between our two countries.

This is all I will say for now. You will probably want us to clarify some of the major issues.

We would readily like to hear your presentation and more specifically we would like to hear about the attitude of Yugoslavia and Romania towards the Warsaw Pact countries, and also about the situation in China and Albania.

TODOR ZHIVKOV:

Above all, I would like to thank you for your presentation. I would like also to express our cordial gratitude for the invitation to visit your country and for the cordial and friendly hospitality you are showing us. We will tell our people about your hospitality and attention. We are deeply convinced that this will be greatly appreciated in Bulgaria. We wish to develop multilateral cooperation with India.

I would like to inform you in the same order you informed us.

You were in Bulgaria and you are aware of the problems we have to solve. That is why I will be brief.

[...]

I will elaborate on some issues concerning the international situation.

We are worried about the war in Vietnam. We are helping the Vietnamese people as much as our abilities allow us to. Of course, the major help is offered by the Soviet Union, since Vietnam is fighting with Soviet weaponry. We can hardly imagine Vietnam's successes without the Soviet help. Even though the Vietnamese are a heroic people, the Americans would have defeated them, since the US economy is 900 times bigger than that of Vietnam. But the Vietnamese people are heroically fighting with the help of the socialist countries and we are simply amazed by their bravery under such conditions.

We appreciate that the Vietnamese issue has now entered the phase of political settlement. Of course, there might be surprises. As you said, there might be explosions as well. But now things are going in the direction of political settlement. Nixon will hardly take another course of action. But the negotiations will be extremely difficult. There are many conflicts of interest. The issue could be solved on the basis of compromise. But what kind of compromise? That is the problem. It must be emphasized that the Americans are taking actions to conquer the villages in South Vietnam, which are now in the Vietcong's hands. Obviously their goal is to ensure that the government is working in their favor. The final result is difficult to predict. A lot depends on progressive mankind, on the struggle of peaceful forces. The Vietnamese

comrades are convinced that a political solution of the issue should be sought. There was a time when they were under Chinese influence. But now they back a political solution to the problem. At present this already depends on the Americans, but they will probably withdraw their armed forces from Vietnam when they are able to provide for [the Vietnamese] economically.

You rightfully noted that our positions regarding the Middle East are similar. We are in favor of a political solution to the issues there. The UAR, which is the major decisive force among the Arab countries, went far ahead in terms of their conceptualizations and ideas. After the UN's decision in 1967, they aligned their position more concretely with the UN's decision. There are countries, of course, like Syria and others that have more peculiar views. But this fact is not decisive. The major force is UAR, supported by the majority of Arab countries. We must admit that Nasser shows political wisdom in this case. Nowadays, in our opinion, tension is created by the extremist forces in Israel. But, to be honest, we must admit that the Americans back them up. If the Americans move in the direction of a political solution of the issue, it will be solved very quickly-the same way the war ended. After the Americans told the Israelis to put an end to the war, they stopped their military actions. This is absolutely clear. I have been following the development of the problem concerning the war. After the Americans were told that they were going too far with the war, Johnson issued a command and in a couple of hours the war ended. Obviously the Americans should not be allowed to take advantage of their military success. Otherwise a precedent will be set and the political settlement of the issue in the interest of all countries from the region, and in the interest of the peace throughout the world, will be inhibited.

I would like briefly to discuss the problems in Europe, since we live in this region.

Last year was a very dramatic for Europe. I would say that a dangerous situation was created. As you know, enormous NATO and Warsaw Pact military forces are concentrated in Europe. If a Third World War breaks out, its outcome will be determined precisely in Europe. Any complication of the situation now or any change in the balance of powers will turn out to be disastrous. Hence we follow a policy of suppressing the forces that contribute to complicating the international situation. These forces are concentrated above all in Western Germany. They are revenge-seeking forces.

I will not go into details about this question. Yet I would like to emphasize that what happened in Czechoslovakia and what is happening now-the conduct of large military maneuvers, the concentration of new military units on the borders of the socialist countries-is extremely dangerous.

As for the Balkans, for better or for worse, Bulgaria is situated in the center of the Balkan Peninsula. They say that all of our neighbors took away pieces of Bulgaria in the past; that they cut off living parts. But we do not raise such issues. We try to make life for the people within the present boundaries of Bulgaria better. Despite being a small country, Bulgaria is a factor for peace in this region. Not even a single Balkan issue can be resolved without Bulgaria. The transportation links pass through our country, the Danube River also passes through Bulgaria; the major rivers in Turkey and Greece originate in Bulgaria. Thus, as a result of historical and geographical conditions, Bulgaria has become a country that can both complicate and improve the situation on the Balkans. We can turn the rivers for Turkey and Greece back, but don't do that, of course. On the contrary, we suggest undertaking measures for managing water together.

Recently there has been an easing off on the Balkans. Whatever happens, this process can not be reversed. For example, a military junta has assumed power in Greece that has no social support in the country. But it is forced to talk about good neighborly relations, about peace on the Balkans. Now they even make more

declarations than us.

Our relations with Turkey are developing positively. This holds true of our relations with Yugoslavia and Romania as well. After the military junta came to power in Greece there had been a certain amount of stagnation in our relations, yet recently there has been some improvement. The events that take place, the fuss that has been made about the Balkans, should be considered temporary. Of course, there are many forces at play and many potential conflicts on the Balkan Peninsula. But we see no serious reasons to complicate the situation. Of course, the International situation is a major factor.

As for your questions about Yugoslavia and Romania, in the last couple of years our mutual cooperation with Yugoslavia has advanced significantly. We are in constant contact. We have had meetings with Tito a couple of times, but sometimes there are certain questions, which disturb our relations. One of them is the so-called Macedonian Question. Some nationalist circles in Yugoslavia have taken advantage of it. We hold the view that the Macedonian question is legacy of the past. Raising this issue and aggravating the situation is not beneficial to our countries and peoples. On the contrary, we must use it to strengthen the friendship and cooperation between the two countries. The question should be left to the scholars, to the historians to discuss. But we must not try to deal with this problem politically. This has been one of the issues that we have reached an agreement on with Tito.

The second issue we have reached an agreement on concerns the formation of a Macedonian national consciousness that should not be done on an anti-Bulgarian basis, as it is now. All previous statistics-Turkish, Serbian etc.-spoke of 1,200,000 Bulgarians living in Macedonia. After the World War II no Bulgarian population was mentioned to live there. We do not raise this question, but they sometimes do. They make a big fuss. We show patience, because if we start retaliating, the situation will become worse. We agree with Tito's recent declarations that there could be no peace and good relations in the Balkans without good relations between Bulgaria and Yugoslavia. We support this view and our efforts have been directed towards overcoming some difficulties that have cropped up as a result of the Macedonian issue and the events in Czechoslovakia.

Our bilateral relations with Romania are marvelous. Our economic cooperation is extending. There is a cultural exchange between us. Their delegations constantly visit our country and our delegations their country-in other words we constantly exchange experience. Yet we have diverging opinions on some issues related to the international situation. We openly discuss these issues with comrade Ceausescu. But neither have I influenced him in any respect, nor has he influenced me, although we frequently go hunting together.

[...]

The major thing that our relations both with Yugoslavia and Romania should be based on is the constant extension of our contacts and links. We are doing our best in this respect.

We are not well acquainted with the issues regarding Asia. As far as the attempts at creating a military group in this region are concerned, I completely share your view.

You are aware of our views regarding China. It's a pity that the things are the way they are in the country, which has the largest population in the world. Our relations with China are not well developed, nor is our trade with them. Of course, we prize our friendship with the Chinese people and in the future we'll do our best to restore the old friendship and cooperation with the great country of China.

We might as well discuss some question regarding our bilateral cooperation.

INDIRA GANDHI:

Our cultural relations with you are good, but our economic relations must be improved.

TODOR ZHIVKOV:

Yes, I agree with you.

INDIRA GANDHI:

I would like to thank you for accepting our invitation and coming to India. What you said about your country and Europe was very interesting for us. I am sure your stay here will be interesting and pleasant.

TODOR ZHIVKOV:

It is already very pleasant. We feel in India as we would in a friendly country.

/01.00 P. M./