

August 21, 1961

Information on the Meeting with Comrade Zhou Enlai

Citation:

"Information on the Meeting with Comrade Zhou Enlai", August 21, 1961, Wilson Center Digital Archive, Central State Archive, Tirana, AQPPSH-MPKK-V. 1961, D. 22.
<https://wilson-center-digital-archive.dvincitest.com/document/110802>

Summary:

Zhou Enlai and Reis Malile talked about the visit by Ho Chi Minh to Moscow. Zhou Enlai inform Reis Malile the conversation and opinions he and Liu Shaoqi had with Ho Chi Mind regarding the relations between Soviet Union, Albania, and Vietnam.

Original Language:

Albanian

Contents:

Translation - English

[Seal]THE EMBASSY OF THE PEOPLES REPUBLIC OF ALBANIA□□□□BEIJING□□□□AUGUST 1961
No. 58 Top SecretContents: Information on the meeting with comrade Zhou Enlai.
TO THE CC OF THE PRATIRANAOn the evening of 21 August 1961, I was called to a
meeting by comrade Zhou Enlai and he spoke to me about the visit by comrade Ho
Chi Minh to Moscow. At the beginning, he told me that today he had received a
telegram by their ambassador in Tirana, through which the ambassador notified him
of the particulars of the meeting he had had with comrade Enver Hoxha. Of this
conversation, comrade Zhou Enlai notified me in brief. Comrade Zhou Enlai told me
that today he had had a meeting with the Vietnamese minister of foreign affairs,
comrade Ung Van Hien, who on his return from Geneva passed through Beijing on his
way to Hanoi. Comrade Zhou Enlai told me that he had talked with him about the
issue of the visit by comrade Ho Chi Minh. Comrade Ung Van Hien knew about the
Khrushchev position as well as our party's position on this visit. He had told comrade
Zhou Enlai that initially comrade Ho Chi Minh was not planning on coming to Albania.
There must have been some misunderstanding about this, because he first wanted to
go to Sochi and then to Tirana. The intention of comrade Ho Chi Minh was to fulfill his
mission through unofficial channels. "If," comrade Ung Van Hien had continued, "he
would have followed the request by the ALP that he come to Albania in November at
the helm of a party delegation, then his travel would not have an unofficial character
anymore, but would be official." After the second telegram that he received from the
CC of the ALP, comrade Ho Chi Minh went to Sochi and met twice with Khrushchev.
Comrade Ung Van Hien had told comrade Zhou Enlai that he was not aware about the
details of what had been talked about in these meetings and that one of these days
comrade Ho Chi Minh would be returning to Hanoi. This was the information in brief
that was given to comrade Zhou Enlai by the minister of foreign affairs of Vietnam.
Later, comrade Zhou Enlai presented to me his opinions on this issue as follows: "Our
opinions," he said, "do not differ from those that comrade Liu Shaoqi expressed in the
meeting you had. In the beginning we thought that the visit by comrade Ho Chi Minh
would have the effect of lowering the tensions in the relations between the ALP and
the CPSU, but of course the principal problems would not be solved by it. "Now," he
continued, "the war against imperialism is sharpening; we must join all our forces; the
problem of the peace treaty with Germany and the issue of Berlin must be solved.
The US sent their Vice President Johnson to West Berlin; England and France have
increased their troop presence in West Germany. The situation in Laos is sharpening
even more, as well as in the area of Taiwan, where the Americans are increasing their
activities. In Congo, the imperialists are increasing their control. American
imperialism until now was obstructing the French imperialism in Africa, but now it is
helping it in Algeria and elsewhere. When they increase the international tensions,
the imperialists operate united, even if only temporarily. In this very serious situation
all the socialist countries must get together and strengthen their unity, and that is
why we thought that the visit by comrade Ho Chi Minh could have helped in
smoothing the disagreements, but not in the essential solving of the problems. "We
have also had some concerns that maybe comrade Ho Chi Minh could have wanted to
make the visit at the urging of by the Soviets, but comrade Ho Chi Minh says that this
idea was of his own initiative. We had had some hope that he could have smoothed
out the situation, but it seems that he could not do anything about it. "We hope that
you will continue to remain cold-blooded - as you have done so far - composed, and
will have the initiative in smoothing out the disagreements. Let them (Khrushchev
and friends) make provocations; let them try to isolate you; let them undertake
subversive actions against us. One day all these will be known and the truth shall be
on our side. We must always let them be the first to say things against us, because as
a Chinese proverb says, 'Be not the first to start, then win.' We are able to discount
their attacks with very strong arguments. "Now, in this actual case, Khrushchev will
speak badly of the ALP to comrade Ho Chi Minh, even worse than before, but by this
he will unmask himself. We have a multitude of facts to answer him with. As far as
the disagreements that we have had with the CPSU, our tactic has always been to let
Khrushchev say the first word, but this does not mean that we are backing down. By
being the first to speak, they showed to everyone who they are and how crassly they
act toward us. We had a stronger basis from which to discount their attacks and to
argue better about our position and the other parties could judge from a better
position about which side the truth favors. Despite the influence that Khrushchev
wields over the other parties, this tactic will cause them to see the truth better. "We
are making all efforts to explain to the other parties the situation surrounding your

party and its correct stance." Later, comrade Zhou Enlai told me that he had spoken to the minister of foreign affairs of Vietnam about the conversation that he and comrade Liu Shaoqi had had with comrade Ho Chi Minh before he had left for Moscow. He had asked the minister of foreign affairs of Vietnam to inform the general secretary of the party, comrade Le Duan and [DRV] prime minister, Pham Van Dong, as follows: (Below I will enumerate the opinions presented by comrade Zhou Enlai to the minister of foreign affairs of Vietnam about the visit by comrade Ho Chi Minh.)

1) "Comrade Ho Chi Minh's desire was positive, but it seems that he was not well-informed about the state of relations between the ALP and the CP of the Soviet Union, and that is why his method is not very suitable. As a result, it is not very likely that it will produce any results. On the contrary, it is possible that it will lead to new provocations. In fact, Khrushchev could now say to comrade Ho Chi Minh, 'Look, we received you and greeted you, but the Albanians did not.' This," added comrade Zhou Enlai, "could damage the prestige of comrade Ho Chi Minh."

2) "To be able to reconcile Albania with the Soviet Union," comrade Zhou Enlai had said to minister of foreign affairs of Vietnam, "is more difficult than reconciling China and the Soviet Union. This is so because the CCP is a large party, because China itself is a very large country, and because should the relations between these two countries should be severed, it would be of grave international consequence. As a result, when trying to reconcile China and the Soviet Union a compromise can be achieved while preserving the principles. This was apparent, for example, in the Moscow Conference where the CPSU backed down on three of its points and we accepted the formula on the 20th Congress. But the Soviets would not do the same with Albania. They think that the ALP is small, that Albania is very small, and use pressure to debase them at all costs; otherwise the Albanians would severely damage its prestige, which would have the effect of the other parties in Europe not obeying to the 'stick that keeps the order' But we understand well," continued comrade Zhou Enlai, "that the ALP, despite its size, is tough, it defends the principles with determination and does not give in. And they (Khrushchev and friends) would not back down, because the 'stick' would lose its power. That is why reconciling Albania and the Soviet Union is harder than reconciling China and the Soviet Union, and, as a result, why the visit by comrade Ho Chi Minh may increase the disagreements, instead of lessening them."

3) "Before the present situation, all the disagreements between the ALP and the CPSU had a collegial character, an internal party character. That is why if the concrete reasons could be looked at more closely, they could have been solved easily through bipartite talks, but the Soviet Union made two very grave mistakes: a) It removed the military base from Albania, along with the specialists; and, b) Khrushchev did not agree to let the Albanian delegation take part in the proceedings of the Moscow meeting of the Warsaw Pact on the issue of Germany. These are principal and very important mistakes. What we are dealing with here is a great truth and a small truth. By removing the military base, the Soviets openly showed our disagreements to the enemies. In the second case, that of the Warsaw Pact meeting, if the CCP had not insisted that the ALP be included in the final communiqué, the pertaining document that would be published after the meeting would also have openly showed to the enemies our disagreements. These stances weaken our position toward the enemy. This means that the Soviet Union is wrong in this case. Is Albania more afraid of the Soviet Union, or is the Soviet Union more afraid of Albania? It cannot be fathomed that the ALP is trying to overturn Khrushchev's rule, but he (Khrushchev) is undertaking diversionist activities to overturn the leadership of the ALP. The Soviet Union is mobilizing the parties of the socialist countries of Europe to attack the ALP and this is making the Yugoslavs happy. In that case, the Albanian comrades are right to doubt Khrushchev's intentions. How could comrade [First Secretary of the Albanian Party of Labour (ALP)] Enver Hoxha and comrade [Chairman of the Ministerial Council and Member of the Political Bureau of the CC of the ALP] Mehmet Shehu have gone to Moscow in this situation? These facts show that Khrushchev carries the principal responsibility."

4) "I," continued comrade Zhou Enlai, "told the minister of foreign affairs of Vietnam, that if comrade Ho Chi Minh will follow the Khrushchev advice and go to Albania, he should in no way exert any pressure on the Albanian comrades. If Khrushchev asks from comrade Ho Chi Minh to invite comrade Enver Hoxha to the Soviet Union or to a third country for talks with Khrushchev, comrade Ho Chi Minh should refuse to do this. (Comrade Zhou Enlai pointed out that he had told this to him

because the minister of foreign affairs of Vietnam had said that comrade Ho Chi Minh had initially not made any plans about going to Albania.) We must understand the position that the Albanian comrades find themselves in. in the face of these great pressures, they react strongly and quickly.5)□“Initially, we thought that the comrade Ho Chi Minh visit could have brought some kind of smoothing, despite the fact that the principled problems could not be solved by it. This did not happen. ‘What are the perspectives of the relations between the Soviet Union and Albania?’ asked the minister of foreign affairs of Vietnam. I told him,” said comrade Zhou Enlai, “that the Albanian comrades think that Khrushchev will utilize the 22nd Congress of the CPSU to attack Albania. (This is based on an opinion that I had expressed in a conversation with comrade Liu Shaoqi.) This opinion of the Albanian comrades has some validity based on the fact that it has happened a few times before, such as in the Bucharest meeting where our party was attacked. This is a very possible perspective. We also do not exclude another possibility. After the 22nd Congress, there will be a conference of the ministers of foreign affairs on the issue of the peace treaty with Germany. At that time we will be in a very embittered situation and in a state of war with the enemy. If we are divided, how will we be able to fight the enemy? This situation may force Khrushchev to stop his attacks against Albania; it may even bring about a softening of the animosity. “The relations between the Soviet Union and Albania cannot be fixed right away. Is it possible that Khrushchev would publicly accept his mistakes? It is a very hard thing. Is it completely impossible? We will have to wait. The Albanian comrades are on the side of good relations; a softening would be a good thing. It would be such from the position of its necessity for the common struggle against imperialism, but not in the interest of the strengthening of Khrushchev's position. “We must be patient and wait. We must be mature, because this is how we will achieve our objective. Nonetheless, we must also be ready for the other eventuality. If the provocations and attacks against us start, then we (the CCP) will answer to them. But our objective is the strengthening of the unity. “What I mentioned here,” said comrade Zhou Enlai, “I said to the minister of foreign affairs of Vietnam and asked from him that he transit them to the General Secretary of the Party, comrade Le Duan and the prime minister, Pham Van Dong, who are cool-blooded far-seeing people. Comrade Ho Chi Minh is well known all over Vietnam, but his words and declarations are not always approved by the other comrades of the Political Bureau or in full agreement with their opinions. In the Moscow Conference, comrade Le Duan was in full agreement with our points of view. Comrade Enver Hoxha and comrade Mehmet Shehu,” comrade Zhou Enlai said to me, “must be aware of this point.” Comrade Zhou Enlai asked me to transmit all of the above to the CC. He also added, “What I have said so far, are my personal opinions. I have not consulted the other comrades, because the time was not available and they are not even in Beijing, but I believe that they would agree with me since this is the party line on these issues. In the light of the new situation, I clarified further the thoughts that comrade Liu Shaoqi expressed to you on the meeting you had with him.” During the conversation, while replying to the thought I had expressed that Khrushchev cannot change his opinions and his demeanor, comrade Zhou Enlai said that “it is possible that Khrushchev can change his opinions and his demeanor, if the situation and the fact that he is facing imperialism and cannot fight on in two fronts are taken into account.” In the end, on the persona of comrade Ho Chi Minh and on the issue of the lack of results on his mission, comrade Zhou Enlai said that, “we may be facing two possibilities: a) the multiple attacks by Khrushchev against Albania may cause a reaction and discontent on the side of comrade Ho Chi Minh against Khrushchev, and b) comrade Ho Chi Minh wanted to come to Albania, but since he was not successful in this at this time, this may instill discontentment in him over the ALP, but this will not last long. It is not possible that Khrushchev will be able to turn the entire Workers' Party of Vietnam against you.” (Since the plane to Moscow is leaving in a few hours, we are writing the notes that we took from the above meeting for you a bit hurried and as we had taken them in shorthand, without being able to sort through them very well.) THE AMBASSADOR (Reis Malile) [Signed] [Seal of the Embassy of the PRA, Beijing]