

**May 7, 1987**

**Memorandum of Conversation of Bulgarian  
President Todor Zhivkov with Chinese Leader Deng  
Xiaoping, Beijing, 7 May 1987**

**Citation:**

"Memorandum of Conversation of Bulgarian President Todor Zhivkov with Chinese Leader Deng Xiaoping, Beijing, 7 May 1987", May 7, 1987, Wilson Center Digital Archive, Central State Archive, Sofia, Fond 1-B, Record 60, File 395. Translated by Kalina Bratanova. <https://wilson-center-digital-archive.dvincitest.com/document/112704>

**Summary:**

Talks with Deng Xiaoping 7th of May 1987 in Beijing regarding Chinese and Bulgarian Communist policies and accomplishments of these countries.

**Original Language:**

Bulgarian

**Contents:**

Translation - English

CC BCP  
Top Secret

Meeting of Todor Zhivkov with Deng Xiaoping  
7 May 1987, Beijing

DENG XIAOPING:

You already had talks with comrade Zhao Ziyang and comrade Li Sinyan. They have informed you of the problems we are solving at present. I've been less busy than they have, since they do the everyday routine work.

We are both veterans. Our meeting today can be called the meeting of the veterans. I mean only the two of us, not any of the other of the participants.

TODOR ZHIVKOV:

We are veterans of the communist movement in general, not only the one in our countries.

DENG XIAOPING:

Veterans are called to do more work for the sake of their people, for their countries and the communist movement in general. We have made a lot of mistakes in the past, we have even let conflicts break out. The problems must be solved within our life span. Yugoslavia's ex-president Tito, who visited China in 1977, had talks with me then. I told him: It is true that we had rows in the past, we made mistakes; yet I cannot claim that you have always been right in your judgments.

TODOR ZHIVKOV:

I absolutely agree with you: the most important task that is before us, the veterans, is to solve the problems, and not leave such a bad legacy to the generations to come.

I am very happy that I have the opportunity to visit China and meet you. I will never forget you and Peng Zhen; I have known you since our meeting in Moscow in 1957. He came to Bulgaria then.

DENG XIAOPING:

We met in 1957.

TODOR ZHIVKOV:

Yes, we met at the conference in Moscow. There was even a very nice meeting we had; I would like to remind you of it, so that our comrades from Bulgaria hear about it. I'll tell you what happened. We had some problems with our comrades from Poland at one of these conferences. The late Gomulka made several statements, which were considered by everyone to be of generally negative attitude. All participants that then took the floor exposed Gomulka to severe criticism, but they would not explicitly say his name. Since I was the youngest first secretary then, I openly criticized him. Then you came to our delegation and gave us some Chinese tea. Mao turned to me to congratulate me for my speech. He told me I was very smart and clever. "I completely agree with you. - he said - When socialism is a well-established system on a global scale, I'll propose that you become chairman of the World Socialist Federation." I'm telling you that story because I just want to let my comrades know about Mao's evaluation of my work; while my merits haven't been recognized in Bulgaria yet...

DENG XIAOPING:

I feel healthy, however a man of my age never knows when he will leave forever to meet Marx.

I am glad that under comrade Zhivkov's leadership there reigns an atmosphere of sustained political peace and stability in Bulgaria. There has been a sustainable economic development as well. Maybe nature favors you, maybe the people have created such a favorable economic environment. Yet we have gone through a lot of up and downs in our development. We can claim that when the People's Republic of China was established in the early 1950's, both countries were at the same level of economic development. China was probably poorer than Bulgaria. There were not any cataclysms in Bulgaria that must be the reason for its sustainable economic growth.

We made leftist mistakes. In 1957 we struggled against the rightist elements, in 1958 there was "the Great Leap" in the people's commune. We were rash and reckless to a certain extent, both in terms of our economic measures and the political activities; there was a leftist tendency. All this was true as well with regards to our policy to the international communist movement. It is leftist as well. The "Great Leap" resulted in a three-year severe slump. The international state of affairs also caused the slump, of course; I won't dwell on these, since you know them. I have in mind the fact that the Soviet Union declared about a hundred bilateral agreements with us null and void within a night. This brought about serious hardships. Yet the major reason for our hardships was our leftist policy. In the next three years we managed to cope with the slump and restore our previous level of economic development.

In 1962 a National Meeting was held with 7,000 participants, including all first secretaries of the regional committees. As a result, our economy grew steadily in the period 1962-1965. In 1966, however, the Cultural Revolution began, which lasted ten years. There were serious hardships throughout these ten years, both in political and economic terms.

One can say that upon the establishment of the People's Republic of China in the late 1950's, in the period 1958-1978, the country's development in social terms was stagnant. The annual income of a peasant was about 60 ioans. The average salary of a worker was also about 60 ioans in this period. There was some development in this period. For example it was then that we produced nuclear missiles, weapons and a satellite; social development, however, was stagnant on the whole. It was as late as 1978, when the Third Plenum of the 11th central committee was held; the experience gained throughout the 29-year period was summarized, on the basis of it present day policy was developed.

The third plenum was held in the fall of 1978. The policy that was adopted shifted the accent from the politics and the class struggle to the sustainable building of socialism. The main task on the way to socialism is the development of the productivity forces. That is why we adopted a policy toward socialist modernization, a policy of reforms and of open doors to the foreign countries. You have started this restructuring as early as the 1950s'. We started the reconstruction in the late 70s' and early 80s'. We had immediate results after the implementation of the reforms.

[...]

TODOR ZHIVKOV:

I have the pleasure to fulfill a task assigned to me by our party leadership and government: I would like to greet you personally and wish you health and great results. Most of our leaders know you and have met you. I would therefore like to send their best regards and wishes for your health.

Let me once again express my deepest gratitude for your invitation to come and visit your country, for the extreme attentiveness and hospitality towards me and those accompanying me.

DENG XIAOPING:

Our contacts and relations are of prime importance. Your country is a small one, yet your experience is very important. The reforms in your country started almost 20 years earlier than ours. Bearing in mind the specificity of your own economic environment, you have been carrying out reforms in a secret manner, I would say.

TODOR ZHIVKOV:

You are very precise in your judgment. No one has formulated it like this.

DENG XIAOPING:

It's not easy to carry out such reforms.

TODOR ZHIVKOV:

We have not been hiding. Nothing can be hidden under the sun. I am optimistic and am indeed very glad that our relations of cooperation and fraternity will be restored; we used to enjoy such healthy relations up to the events you just spoke of.

DENG XIAOPING:

We must look forward to what's ahead of us.

TODOR ZHIVKOV:

Yes, it is our future relations that we must consider. Many things took place, some inevitable and objective in nature; others were the result of our own mistakes and weaknesses. Nevertheless we must look ahead.

DENG XIAOPING:

That's right.

TODOR ZHIVKOV:

We follow the events taking place in your country and all the deep reforms that have been carried out ever since the historical third plenum of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party. We were deeply impressed with the way you managed to cope with the problem of malnutrition and starvation and provide food for 1 billion and 20 million people within such a short period. It is true that your people have not become wealthy, yet you managed to provide food for them and there are products in the department stores.

The second thing that draws one's attention is that you made a breakthrough in establishing a free market economy. We were not successful in this respect, although we made an attempt to do that in the early 1960's. Yet we are trying to deal with this problem at present.

[...]

Thus our attempts are directed at implementing the resolutions of the latest 13th Congress of our Party that was held last spring. We will be together in our common struggle side by side.

DENG XIAOPING:

We share a common aim. We must make efforts together.

TODOR ZHIVKOV:

Despite all that happened to the relations between our two socialist countries, we are actually following the same path. This is what matters. All other problems can be solved by negotiating in a communist manner.

DENG XIAOPING:

That's right. I suggest that we now go and have lunch and continue our talks.