

September 10, 1959

Memorandum of Conversation Between Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Zeng Yongquan and Charge d’Affaires of the Embassy of the Soviet Union in China S. Antonov

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Summary:

Zeng and Antonov talked about the outbreak of conflict along the Sino-Indian border, a TASS statement regarding the issue made without incorporating Chinese opinion and the role of publicity.

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Chinese

Contents:

Translation - English

Memorandum of Conversation between the Vice Minister [Zeng Yongquan] and Charge d'Affaires of the Embassy of the Soviet Union in China [S.] Antonov

Date: 10 September 1959, 12:00 a.m.

Place: Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Participants: Secretary Li Huichuan and First Secretary of the Embassy of the Soviet Union in China [F.V.] Mochulskii

Interpreted and recorded by: Wang [Illegible]

S. Antonov: I made an appointment to meet with you yesterday because I met Mr. Zhang Hanfu. I have notified him of the Laotian issue. I did not come to visit you because the issue was already settled.

Zeng Yongquan: I know. I came here so late tonight because I have something urgent to tell you. We hope Mr. Khrushchev can arrive in Beijing on 29 [September] regarding his participation in our National Day celebrations. If he has to take a rest in Istanbul on 29 [September], we hope he can arrive in Beijing in the morning of 30 [September].

Antonov: Thank you for making such a satisfactory arrangement for Mr. Khrushchev's visit. I will forward your recommendations to Moscow. The schedule for Mr. Khrushchev's trip to China was determined through discussions among all relevant parties. As he has to visit the U.S., he is prevented from returning from the USA too early. We will notify you when the final decision is made on the schedule of his China trip.

I met Mr. Zhang Hanfu yesterday, who forwarded the proposals of Mr. Chen Yi. Mr. Chen Yi hoped that China's stance, viewpoints, and policies on the Sino-India border dispute should be considered in the statement made by TASS News Agency and he hoped that I could tell Moscow about this. Please tell Mr. Zhang Hanfu and Mr. Chen Yi that I immediately sent a cable to Moscow and also made a phone call immediately after yesterday's meeting. I tried all possible means but the statement was already made at seven o'clock, earlier than the time when I had called Moscow.

Zeng: I personally believe that TASS was too hasty. Giving us the transcript of the statement shows that TASS wants to know our opinions. For that reason, it should have waited a little longer. I personally think TASS should have been more prudent with such an important issue.

Antonov: TASS was a little hasty here. I carefully read the statement yesterday. I don't think it contains anything to the detriment of our cause. It emphasizes our friendship, although it takes a friendly stance to India.

I think I could have made it [in time] if I had obtained your opinions earlier.

Mochulskii: You provided the document (i.e., the letter from Premier [Zhou] to Nehru) about the Sino-Indian border dispute a little too late. The conflict took place on 25 August, but we did not receive any relevant documents until yesterday. Therefore, we did not know much about the border conflict.

Zeng: You mentioned that we notified you about the issue a little too late. As a matter of fact, we told Mr. Antonov about the Sino-Indian border issue early and we clearly told him that India had initiated the invasion and attacked the Chinese frontier. But we needed some time to prepare and compile the document before we could provide it to the fraternal countries.

Antonov: Yes, the Sino-Indian border dispute is rather complicated and it took some time to compile the document. We did not have enough knowledge about the facts and your policies previously. Although Mr. Zeng told me something about it previously and talked about the Indian invasion of the Chinese frontier, we thought it was just a simple border dispute. We did not expect that the dispute related to a land area of 38,000 square kilometers in the west and 90,000 square kilometers in the east. This is equivalent to the size of a country already.

Now we have a much clearer understanding of the dispute after reading the letter that Premier Zhou sent to Nehru. But we did not know much about it previously because China kept silent even though the whole world was fussing about it. We did not know what on earth was happening.

Zeng: We do not care much about what India is talking about. We believe the world will know more about the truth when they have expressed their opinions.

Li Huichuan: It is evident that India has invaded and slandered us. Our silence does not indicate our agreement to their claims, nor does it indicate our guilt. We usually read some American magazines, e.g. Life and US News & World Report, which file slanders against the Soviet Union regarding invasion, retaliation, and espionage. But we always turn a blind eye to such slanders.

Antonov: We have heard a lot about your silence these days and [now] we understand the policy.

Premier Zhou's letter is a foundational document that offers comprehensive information, including the various issues surrounding the Sino-Indian border and the historical conditions. Our stance remains the same, i.e. no territorial invasion is tolerable.

Zeng: Yes, we never tolerate any invasions of our territory.

Antonov: As mentioned in its letter to the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party, the Central Committee of the Soviet Union Communist Party is worried about India changing its foreign policy under these circumstances, because that is detrimental to both of our interests. The current situation shows that Nehru is under extreme pressure.

Your Central Committee will research our Central Committee's letter and make a reply accordingly. We are just having a discussion on it personally.

Let me repeat it. I already tried to convey Mr. Chen Yi's message but I was too late. Please notify Mr. Chen Yi of that.

Zeng: Yes, I will.