

March 20, 1964

Record of Conversation between Liu Shaoqi, Zhou Enlai, and Pak Seong-cheol

Citation:

"Record of Conversation between Liu Shaoqi, Zhou Enlai, and Pak Seong-cheol", March 20, 1964, Wilson Center Digital Archive, PRC FMA 109-03909-07, 124-129. Obtained by Shen Zhihua and translated by Jeffrey Wang and Charles Kraus.
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Summary:

Chinese and North Korean statesmen discuss border issues, conversations with representatives of the Romanian Communist Party, and the unreasonable Soviet attitude regarding the Sino-Soviet debates.

Credits:

This document was made possible with support from MacArthur Foundation

Original Language:

Chinese

Contents:

Translation - English

Chairman Liu [Shaoqi]: How is the health of Comrade Kim Il Sung?

Minister of Foreign Affairs Pak [Seong-cheol] [Pak Song-chol]: Very good.

Liu: What about Comrade Choe Yong-geon [Choe Yonggon]?

Pak: All very well. When I was departing, Premier Kim Il Sung asked me to send his greetings to Chairman Mao [Zedong], Chairman Liu, Premier Zhou [Enlai], and other leaders of the Chinese [Communist] Party.

Liu: Thank you. Have the border issues been handled?

Pak: It has been handled.

Liu: Good. It is good to resolve this issue so that it will not occur again in the future.

Pak: There will not be any issues in the future.

Liu: The delegation of the Romanian [Communist] Party visited you. What did you talk about?

Pak: There were two conversations, [but] I did not attend either. The conversations will be quickly delivered to you through the Embassy.

Liu: They talked for many days here, saying that they want to stop the debate [between China and the Soviet Union]. At the end of the conversation, the [Romanian delegation] received a phone call from [Gheorghe] Gheorghiu-Dej, asking for one more meeting. Basically, they begged us to halt the [Sino-Soviet] debate, even if for three months only—this was actually the Soviet view. We said, what is the point of [stopping for] three months? We are afraid we cannot [stop]. A total of 42 parties are part of a resolution opposing China. There are also parties that are not part of the resolution but have written articles [that oppose China]. There are nearly 50 parties [which oppose China]. We can stop the war of words if they publicly admit to their mistakes and admit that their resolutions and articles were mistakes as well. It was the 22nd Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union that started the debate, and [our main point] is to have [the Soviet Union] admit that the 22nd Party Congress was a mistake. Our second point is to stop the argument, [and] in the future we will no longer argue. If we are attacked again, then we will still express our position and viewpoint. After we conveyed these two points, the [Romanians] felt these [the other parties] were being unreasonable. The Romanian [Communist] Party admitted that the resolution opposing China [sponsored] by the 42 parties was incorrect. I asked him, since the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union recently passed a resolution to oppose [China], does that mean you also agree that they are wrong? They said yes. I said that since you admitted that you are wrong, you can publicly express that. They had originally planned to stay four days with you. They only stayed one day because they were ordered to hurry back.

Pak: It is not clear if they were ordered to hurry back or because the talks were meaningless. In Pyongyang, they wanted to leave at midnight of the second day, [but] eventually they agreed to extend by six hours and leave during the morning of the third day. Eventually because of poor weather, they had to extend for another three hours.

Liu: The delegation of the Romanian [Communist] Party had wanted to hold some activities on their own. They wanted to see [North Korea], and their original plan [to

stay] for four days was genuine. Eventually, they changed their plans and left immediately. The Romanians feel it is beneficial for them, on the world's [stage], to converse with China and you [North Korea]. They left in a hurry because Khrushchev had ordered them to. It is very easy to conduct affairs between our two countries. We have resolved our border issues with you, [and] now we only have [border issues] with the Soviet Union and India. In Beijing, we are currently negotiating the border issue with the Soviet Union. Their delegation has been here for more than a month and we have had three meetings, but the talks have not been productive because of issues with principles. Historically, there have been Sino-Soviet border treaties, but despite the stipulations of the treaties, they have still occupied many of our territories. They have proposed three different borders: the border stipulated by the treaty, the border formed by history, and the border that they currently occupy. They say that the territories which they currently occupy are also theirs. We say that the treaties are unequal but we are prepared to acknowledge [the treaties]. In the beginning they did not admit that the treaties are unequal. They still do not acknowledge that the treaties are unequal. However, they welcome our readiness to accept the treaties. The dispute is between the border formed by history and the border that they currently occupy, but we do not acknowledge [the territories they occupy now as theirs]. We still do not know if we can resolve issues with the Soviet Union through negotiations. We want to negotiate a resolution if we can and, after the resolution of border issues, then we can debate principles. If we do not agree to a truce in the war of words, then they might not [seek to] resolve [the border] issue and they will stall [the negotiations]. The [Sino-Soviet] border negotiations have not been publicly disclosed. We issued a message but did not reveal specifics.

Premier [Zhou Enlai]: They are conducting some small military moves along the border to threaten us.

Liu: On 21 September [1963] the Soviet Union issued a statement saying that if we do not stop the debate, then they will strike at us with the firmest resolve. During our talks with Romania, I asked them what is a strike of the firmest resolve? Why has it not come yet? We estimate that there are four possibilities. First, there could be a break in diplomatic relations. Second, there could be a voiding of the Sino-Soviet Treaty of Friendship, Alliance, and Mutual Assistance. Third, there could be a complete cessation of trade. Fourth, they could drive the Soviet army to China and there could be a Sino-Soviet war. We believe that, at most, these four possibilities exist, and we are prepared for all four possibilities. We are waiting. The first three have already been implemented against Albania, [but] Albania, with a population of 1,000,000 or so people, held their own. They have also prepared for the fourth possibility. If Albania can hold their own and they can even prepare for [war], then China can also hold its own! I say the outbreak of a Sino-Soviet war would be difficult [because] they would have to mobilize all of their people and soldiers in order to be able to fight against China. I do not think they will be able to conduct such a mobilization.

Pak: They are afraid of fighting wars, how could they fight!

Liu: If the [strike of the firmest resolve] is not one of these four possibilities, then what is it? They said it is insisting upon the principles of Marxism-Leninism. I said, that is not a strike of the firmest resolve because that has long been implemented—thousands of articles have been issued. It does not count [as a strike of the firmest resolve].

Pak: They have said what they wanted to say, what else is there to say!

Liu: They want to publish the file from the February Plenary Meeting and then wait for our response. We responded by agreeing for the publication. The Romanian delegation said that we have opposed the publication and they have supported

publication. We cannot ask them not to publish, we can only agree to the publication [of the file].

Premier [Zhou]: Even now they have yet to publish [the file].

Pak: If they really want to publish, they will not listen to us, even if we asked them not to publish it.

Liu: This is because they do not dare to publish.

Premier [Zhou]: They are trying to scare people.

Liu: If they wanted to publish it, then they will not write letters to you and Romania. We agree with the publication [of the file] but they still have not.

Pak: In late November last year, the Soviet Ambassador to [North] Korea brought us a letter asking for an end to the [Sino-Soviet] debate, [but] after a while they said that they want to have an open debate. Our Minister of Defense asked him [the Soviet Ambassador], you wanted to argue but then you wanted to stop the argument, so what exactly do you want? He could not answer, so he smiled and walked away.

Liu: The whole situation is changing. In the struggle against revisionism, we have gained the initiative and we are entering into the stage of counterattack. Presently, Khrushchev is passive.

(The conversation concluded and the ceremony for the signing the Sino-[North] Korean Border Agreement was held.)