

February 15, 1962

Minutes of Conversation between Liu Shaoqi and North Korean Ambassador Ri Yeong-ho

Citation:

"Minutes of Conversation between Liu Shaoqi and North Korean Ambassador Ri Yeong-ho", February 15, 1962, Wilson Center Digital Archive, PRC FMA 106-01380-10, 27-36. Obtained by Shen Zhihua and translated by Jeffrey Wang and Charles Kraus. <https://wilson-center-digital-archive.dvincitest.com/document/116537>

Summary:

Chairman of China Liu Shaoqi and Ambassador of North Korea Ri Yeong-ho exchanged views on international communist movement and the growing split between China and the Soviet Union. They concurred that both China and North Korea would not take the "revisionist" path, and would instead strictly adhere to Marxism-Leninism.

Credits:

This document was made possible with support from MacArthur Foundation

Original Language:

Chinese

Contents:

Translation - English

Time: 15 February 1962, 5:30PM

Location: Zhongnanhai Complex, Chairman Liu [Shaoqi's] Residence

Accompanying Personnel:

Ministry of Foreign Affairs Vice Minister Geng Biao, Deputy Department Head Cao Keqiang

[North] Korean side: Second Secretary Tae Ho [Thae Ho]

Translator: Kang Ryong-gu [Kang Ryong Gu]

Documentation: Wang Baoming

An exchange of greetings [took place].

Ambassador Ri Yeongho (abbreviated as Ri as below): When I was Ambassador [to China], I was cared for meticulously by Comrade Chairman [Mao Zedong], the Chinese [Communist] Party, and the [Chinese] government and [my] work was completed successfully. During this period, I was sick for a year and could not do work, and I am very sorry [for that]. As a result of your Party's correct foreign policy, we received great support from the Party and government of your esteemed country. There were no problems in our friendly relations. I wonder if you believe there is something else.

Chairman Liu Shaoqi: No. [Everything is] very good. We are very satisfied with your work, and we are also very satisfied with the work done by other comrades from the [North Korean] Embassy. In the past, there were issues in the relationship between our two countries. Comrade Peng Dehuai once displayed tendencies of great power chauvinism toward your country, [but] after these ideas were criticized, the relationship between our two countries took a step forward. We do not have any remaining problems with the Korean Workers' Party, the [North] Korean government, or the [North Korean] Embassy. This is the truth. I wonder if you have any other thoughts about us. Please tell Comrade Kim Il Sung, the Central Committee of the [Korean] Workers' Party, and the [North] Korean government that, if there are any issues or complaints about us, then [you] can be frank [with us]. The relationship between our two countries is very good. We can take a comradely method to resolve [any problems].

Ri: You are speaking too modestly. I heard Premier [Kim] say that the relationship between our two countries is becoming more consolidated. In the future, [we] still need to strive, [we still need to] strengthen and develop the bilateral relationship. There were some small problems in the past, [but] both of our parties are pure Marxist-Leninist parties and we follow the Marxist-Leninist way. [We] had talks and resolved [our problems]. Regarding the Peng Dehuai issue, we will not talk about it anymore. We do not have any opinions about it right now.

Chairman Liu: Good.

Ri: In the future, our friendly bilateral relationship will develop further and become even more consolidated. Nothing can stop the development of the relations between our two countries [as] they are noble and honorable. Only when the fraternal countries have a unified ideology and are united as one can [we] fight against the enemy. We are not opposed to peace, only imperialist invasions. We will not surrender. If the enemy invades us, we can fight to the last man. We need to strengthen the class education of the masses. I once discussed my views about modern revisionism with Comrade Wu Xiuquan and Vice Premier Chen Yi. We do not blindly follow others. If it is correct, we will support it, [but] if it is incorrect, then we will oppose it. We have our own positions. Our views on international issues are the

same as your country's. Our friendship is eternal.

Chairman Liu: Quite right.

Ri: These are honest words from me. Today [I] will speak with you [only] briefly, [as] I have already had more detailed discussions with other leading comrades.

Chairman Liu: The Ambassador's views are very good. The main thing is that there are problems, serious problems, within the international communist movement. There is a serious problem within the socialist camp which produced modern revisionism. This ideology developed during the 22nd Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. The spirit of the 22nd Congress has been to oppose four things: Albania, Stalin, and the anti-party group led by [Vyacheslav] Molotov. The goal of opposing these three issues is to indirectly oppose China, so it is four issues. The 22nd Congress did not seriously discuss the issue of communist development. My view is that the political direction of the 22nd Congress is incorrect. The Congress was resolute on the internal problems within the communist movement [but] compromised on the enemy. Although Stalin made mistakes, his ideology was largely Leninist. To negate Stalin is to negate most of Leninism. Opposing Albania, opposing Molotov, opposing China—these are all acts against Marxism-Leninism. Their proposition that capitalism can peacefully transition into socialism, that a proletariat revolution can come via a parliamentary majority—are the old propositions of social democratic parties. [But] under the premise that imperialism exists and that imperialism is armed to the teeth, are arms reductions possible? Is it [actually] possible to enter an era without weapons, without armies, without war? His [Khrushchev's] opposition to war is not an opposition against counter-revolutionary wars; rather he opposes people's revolutionary wars and people's liberation wars. It is pacifism. On one side, there are the social democrats and on the other are the pacifists. If others oppose imperialism, he [becomes] unhappy; when the people of South Vietnam and Laos rise up in arms against imperialism, he is discontented; when you [North Korea] oppose imperialism, he is also unhappy. He does not provide support for people's revolutionary wars. Sometimes when [he] cannot maintain the facade, he will provide some support, but it is not sincere. We have also considered what if China also followed what he [Khrushchev] does, would that be good? We do what they say, we say what they say—would that be good? It seems that is unacceptable. If things were this way, internally they would still produce revisionism. And if this was the way, we could not support Albania, Cuba, South Vietnam, and the peoples' revolutionary struggles in Africa. We would become the running dogs of imperialism. What to do? We can only adopt the attitude that, when they say or do something which is beneficial to the people's world revolution, then we will provide support [to the Soviet position]; when they say or do something which is not beneficial to the people's world revolution, then we will not support [the Soviet position], we will even oppose it. They are not happy that we have taken this attitude [towards them], so they are opposed to us. They might implement further means to deal with China. Might it be possible that they deal with China in a way similar to how they handle Albania? They should think for a moment, it is difficult, but it is not impossible. [We] must prepare for the possibility that some problems will arise within the international communist movement and within the socialist camp. Even if [these problems] occur, it is nothing [we] cannot [handle]. The sky will not collapse. [They can do] nothing more than to stop providing economic assistance, and even then, [they] already provide very little. If [they] take a further step, [then] they will no longer do business [with us]. If we do [business] with them, they will want to do [business] with us. This is out of mutual necessity; but if [they] really do not want to [do business with us] then that is fine too. At most they can only do those two things. The third possibility, which I think is impossible, is war. They want peaceful co-existence, so war is impossible. As long as this [third] possibility does not occur, then the previous two [possibilities] are nothing. This is to say, the territory of China is ours to govern and we will not allow others to govern it. We will also not govern other places. This is an issue which cannot be resolved in the short term. The struggle between Marxism-Leninism and revisionism is a long-term, complex, and difficult one.

It is a struggle which communists and Marxist-Leninists from all over the world will face. A split within the world communist movement could occur; there is already a split. On one side is revisionism, and on the other is revolutionary Marxism-Leninism. It seems that this kind of split is inevitable. [But] the process [of this split] needs to be drawn out so that Marxist-Leninists from around the world can become better prepared. It is better that way. We have considered this issue from a historical perspective before. After Marx died, Engels created a large party, the social democratic party. The social democratic party did a lot of good work, [such as] spreading Marxism and organizing the revolutionary movement. However, after Engels died, during the period prior to the First World War and during the Great War, most of the social democratic party betrayed the proletariat and went over to the capitalist side. Only Lenin's Bolshevik Party was loyal to Marxism. After a long period of struggle, Lenin achieved victory of the October Revolution, set up the Third International, and organized communist parties all over the world. There are now communist parties in 80 different countries. This is much larger and more common than Engel's party [ever was]. [But] now Lenin is dead. Stalin is also dead. There are signs of a Third World War, [and] the world situation is tense. In the past, most of Engel's party defected; is it impossible that the parties organized by Lenin or a part of them also betray the proletariat? I am afraid we cannot [yet] make a conclusion on this. Lenin once analyzed [the question of] why the social democratic party betrayed the proletariats. It was because of the influence of the capitalist class; because capitalist countries gave rise to the labor aristocracy. Does the capitalist class still have influence today? Do capitalist countries still have labor aristocracy? The capitalist class still has influence, and capitalist countries still have labor aristocracy. If socialist countries are not careful, [they] may also give rise to a labor aristocracy. The aristocratic laborers in socialist countries are those with higher incomes; the authors, artists, managers, the department heads, those who had large inheritances of hundreds of thousands or hundreds of millions. An author writes a few books, the son receives the royalties; [this] produces a parasite. It also even produces an opportunist. Socialist countries still have rich peasants. [If] the labor aristocracy of the capitalist countries could influence the social democrat party to betray the proletariat, can the labor aristocracy of the capitalist countries [also] influence the Communist Party to manufacture revisionism? Yugoslavia is an [example] of such. Can they only produce one Yugoslavia? As I see it, the situation in Poland is not much better than it is in Yugoslavia. Of course, there are differences between the internal situation in the Soviet Union and that in Yugoslavia, but does [the Soviet Union] not face a similar situation? [Even] after the victory of socialist revolution and the Communist Party's seizure of power, [one] must still work carefully and implement the correct policies, otherwise the Communist Party will abandon Marxism-Leninism. I believe that there are two possibilities: the Communist Party will forsake [its goals] or not forsake [its goals]. Socialist countries also face two possibilities: one is to leave Marxism-Leninism behind, the other is to not do this. In the international communist movement, there are some communist parties who have embarked on the road of revisionism, mainly those in Western Europe. Among socialist countries, Yugoslavia has also started down on the path of revisionism, [and] in my view, there will be others which walk down the path of revisionism. We are a socialist country, you are a socialist country, is it possible that we will not take the revisionist path[?] As I see it, we will not take the revisionist path, and neither will you. If others want to walk [down this path], we will tell them not to, [but] if they do not listen, then there is nothing which [we] can do. If [they] embark down the road of revisionism, then they are against Marxism-Leninism. We adhere to Marxism-Leninism, so they are against us. [But because] we adhere to Marxism-Leninism, [does that mean we] must also resist revisionism? We say, [what] if we uphold Marxism-Leninism but are not against revisionism[?] I am afraid not. This kind of struggle is inevitable. What will this struggle be conducted with? No more than speaking and writing articles. There is no other way. A punch will not do, a kick will not do, [and] sending an army will not do. Please forward to Comrade Kim Il Sung what I have said to you today. This is my view on the internal situation of the communist movement. [I] ask that Comrade Kim Il Sung consider whether or not it is correct. Do not disclose [what I have just said] to other people.

Ri: I will certainly forward this to Comrade Premier.

Chairman Liu: Mentally, we still need to be more prepared. We will not provoke [them], [but] on the other hand, if others provoke us, we will stand up [for ourselves]. This is the objective reality of the situation. If this situation unfolds, [we] can only fight based on the actual situation. We have difficulties, and it is possible that we will still face more difficulties. We are facing the same type of problem that Lenin faced during the First World War, and we will conduct the same type of struggle that Lenin conducted. Our current position is much better than the position that Lenin was in. The situation that we are in is much better than that of Lenin. The difficulties that Lenin faced back then were much greater than ours. At that time they had very few people, they only had one Bolshevik Party, and it was a minority party. There was only one party with organization, and the other few Marxists were fragmented. But Lenin eventually achieved victory. The current situation is much better than the situation during Lenin's time. We believe that Marxism-Leninism will certainly triumph; the vast majority of the people in this world want revolution, and many of them have already had it. The others will also rise up in revolution. The broad masses from the socialist [countries] also want to continue the revolution. As long as the people carry out the revolution, then they will want Marxism-Leninism, this is a reliable [truth]. Secondly, it is a certainty that the imperialists and the colonialists will want to oppress and exploit the people. [As long as] imperialism, capitalist exploitation, and oppressed people [exist] in this world, then there will be reactionaries and the people will want revolution. [If] the people want revolution, [they] will want Marxism-Leninism. The people who uphold the positions of Marxism-Leninism—even in those countries with very few of these [types of] people—will obtain the support of the people and they will achieve the same victory as Lenin did. We are not pessimistic about the future. The future is bright. There is no doubt about it that [our] difficulties are [only] temporary. I wonder if you agree with this kind of view.

Ri: I am in agreement. I have spoken generally about this issue with other leading comrades. Revisionism will revive capitalism within socialism. If we are not against [revisionism], then we should have never even conducted our revolution. Every party member should have a correct and thorough understanding of this issue. In reality [though], this problem is a cause for worry [and] it is complicated. To give you an example, a delegation from Eastern Europe visited a [North] Korean factory and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs sent a guide to accompany the delegation during the visit. The delegation asked to hear people's views on the 22nd Congress, but the [Korean] political instructor did not want this question asked in front the working masses, so he pulled the delegation chief aside and asked whether he came to visit the factory or to study the 22nd Congress. He [the delegation chief] explained that [he did] not want a misunderstanding and that this was not what he had meant, [he just meant to] casually exchange opinions. The [Korean] political instructor said that if [the delegation] wanted to talk, then they should discuss views of the 4th Congress of the Korean Workers' Party; [if] you want to visit a factory, then visit, do not talk nonsense. They were probably not happy with this retort, but we are not afraid. They did not ask questions about the 22nd Congress again and they left following this [factory] visit.

Chairman Liu: They have adopted a policy, [one] of interfering in the internal affairs of other countries, of interfering in the internal affairs of fraternal countries. They also interfered in our internal affairs and engaged in subversive activities [in China]. Gao Gang and Peng Dehuai had relations with them. I am afraid you also have [people like Gao Gang and Peng Dehuai].

Ri: There is no way that we do not have [people like this].

Chairman Liu: Revisionism wants to shape our country in their image. They want to change our Party, [and] this is where the difficulty arises from. If you do not allow

them to change you, they will not oppose you, they will exclude you. Albania has already been excluded. It would be good to exchange views on this issue.

Ri: Chairman Liu has spoken very clearly. We need to study this closely and think [about it].

Chairman Liu: It is quite necessary [to do that].

Ri: It seems to me that [revisionism] is not appropriate for us and we will not accept it. Reducing the armed forces is not realistic for us [and] we do not [even] debate this issue. The American imperialists occupy our territory and [work] against us every day, how could we reduce our forces? For us, it is not an issue of force reductions, but [instead] how we can strengthen the military. We should reinforce [our] existing armaments and strengthen [ideological] education for the people. We will fight revisionism to the last man. Revisionism cannot be tolerated, [but] it is a certainty that revisionism exists inside of socialism. I am not speaking on [direct] orders; rather, these are my own views.

Chairman Liu: There are several different kinds of revisionism. There is Yugoslavia. There is Italy, which is a [communist] party within a capitalist country. Then there is Moscow's revisionism. There are several types [of revisionism], not just one. We need to consider this issue comprehensively and from an in-depth historical perspective [because] resisting revisionism is not [just] temporary, it may be a long-term [struggle]. This is an issue which concerns the world revolution, and the fundamental theories and principles of Marxism-Leninism.

Ri: Yes, our bilateral relationship is very good. We have identical views on major international issues.

Chairman Liu: There were two meetings in Moscow in the past. The Moscow declaration and statement were useful in resisting the development of revisionism. However, they were not able to stop revisionism [and] the development of revisionism was not restrained. Communist parties all over the world betrayed these documents soon after they were passed. This is the same as Lenin and the Second International. The Second International also passed some good documents, but they were not realized. Before the First World War, Lenin said many times that the Second International had passed a resolution which stipulated that [the Second International] will conduct civil wars to overthrow imperialism once a war breaks out. When the First World War actually broke out, they surrendered to national bourgeoisies [and] the resolutions were useless. It seems the Moscow declaration and statement were the same as the resolution of the Second International. Lenin said many times that had the social democrats not betrayed [socialism], then the victory of the socialist revolution would have occurred not just in Russia, but also in European countries. At that time, the social democratic party was afraid of the bourgeoisie, they were afraid of imperialism, they were afraid of becoming an underground party, they were afraid of becoming "traitors," they were afraid of prison, they were afraid of being killed, [and] they voted in favor of military budgets, they supported the bourgeoisies. Only Lenin did not do [this], [and] Lenin was called a "traitor" and a "German agent." Lenin was sent by Germany to Russia from Switzerland. Germany sent Lenin back to Russia because they thought Lenin would be beneficial to them, [they thought] he was against war and against the Tsar. This is how Lenin returned to Russia. The problem which we are now facing is the same as that which Lenin faced then. We need to learn from Lenin not to be afraid of isolation, of becoming the minority. In actuality, we are not the minority, we are the majority. This is because 90 percent of the world's people stand on our side. In reality, revisionism is isolated. There are not many people who support them and there will be even fewer [supporters] in the future. Let us conclude here today.

Ri: Thank you Comrade Chairman. I will certainly inform Premier Kim.

Chairman Liu: Please send my greetings to Comrade Kim Il Sung, Comrade Choe Yong-geon, and other comrades of the Korean Workers' Party Central Committee.