

April 24, 1962

**Minutes of Vice Minister Zhang Hanfu's Talk with
the Soviet Ambassador to China Stepan
Chervonenko**

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Summary:

Zhang Hanfu and Stepan Chervonenko spar over the flight of Uyghurs and Kazakhs from Xinjiang to the Soviet Union.

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Chinese

Contents:

Translation - English

[...]

Minutes of Vice Minister Zhang Hanfu's Talk with the Soviet Ambassador to China [Stepan] Chervonenko

—Representations concerning the Large Scale Flight of Ethnic Minority Residents in Xinjiang's Border Areas to the Soviet Union—

Date: 29 April 1962

Time: 10:20 p.m.

Venue: Meeting Room, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Also Present: Xu Ming, Deputy Director, Department of Soviet and Eastern European Affairs

Interpreter: Wang Gaoqing

Minutes Prepared: Li Guanru

Vice Minister Zhang Hanfu (hereafter Zhang): We've asked Comrade Ambassador to come here as we want to discuss a matter with you. (Comrade Zhang reads our side's memorandum—see Appendix I—). Comrade Ambassador, please pass this message along to the Government of the Soviet Union.

Soviet Ambassador Chervonenko (hereafter Chervonenko): I'd like to say a few words before accepting the document read by Comrade Zhang Hanfu (in reference to the our side's memorandum). This morning, I made a request to meet with you and we emphasized the urgency of the meeting we were requesting. I believe that comrades notified you of this. At 12:30 p.m. today, at the luncheon in our embassy, I also raised this matter with Comrade Xu Ming, Deputy Director of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Department of Soviet and Eastern European Affairs. I said that the purpose of the requested meeting was to discuss the issue of Chinese border residents crossing the border. Our government wants me to inform China of the situation without delay. As you can see here, we're also very concerned about the issue. The Government of the Soviet Union has instructed me to notify China as follows:

(The Soviet Ambassador reads the Soviet side's memorandum—see Appendix II.)

The document you read just now is also about this matter. This matter is completely understandable. It's hard for me to argue at this moment. Your document is accusatory in tone, [making it] sound as if the Soviet Union encouraged Chinese residents to cross the border into the Soviet Union. This doesn't conform to the facts. I don't think that Soviet border defense organs or local authorities would have done that. It's just out of the question. As for the matter itself, since so many people went over without having much on them, it was only natural to give them accommodations. Of course, I'll pass your document on to the Government of the Soviet Union. This issue will be properly resolved on the basis of the friendly relations between our two nations. There is a discrepancy in the number of people who have crossed the border. You've said it's "about 20,000 people," while we believe it's "about 10,000 people." Of course, at this moment, it's hard to get an exact figure.

The preliminary conclusions of your document sound as if we hoped for these people to cross the border. I believe such a conclusion is a little rushed.

Zhang: The information Comrade Chervonenko offered us just now is somewhat different from the information we've obtained. The information we provided here is based on the materials we've obtained. The number of people involved is quite large, about 20,000. It has happened not in the past one or two days, but over a period of more than ten days, and over the past few days, the number has increased. We've

said that the Soviet border defense posts did not try to stop them from crossing the border or persuade them to come back. We know this from our investigations. We've also said that the Soviet Union registered these people, arranged for trucks to pick them up, were prepared to take them to certain places within the Soviet Union, and said something to these people. All of these things were witnessed by people on the Soviet side of the border. Comrade Chervonenko said that the Soviet Union could not have done these things. We don't think that things like this should happen between our two nations; however, they have happened, and we cannot help but feel astonished. It is exactly because of these things on the Soviet side of the border that the number of people crossing the border is increasing.

Chervonenko: Things like that could not have happened.

Zhang: You have not investigated [this], but you're insisting that things like that couldn't have happened. Your insistence is a little rushed and a little too early.

Chervonenko: I don't believe that our comrades would have encouraged Chinese residents to cross the border into the Soviet Union.

Zhang: We're just telling you the truth. Considering the relations between our two countries, I personally don't think things like this should happen. It's precisely this point that has astonished us.

Chervonenko: I was about to notify you of this when I received the notice that you would like to meet with me.

Zhang: I don't want to repeat. We just want to tell you the truth and ask you to pay attention to the seriousness of the situation. We also hope the relevant authorities on your side will swiftly take effective action to reverse this situation and restore normalcy to the Sino-Soviet border.

Chervonenko: Sure. Sure.

Zhang: Yesterday, the head of our Ba-ke-tu [sic] Border Defense Post met with the responsible cadres of your border defense agency and requested that the Soviet Union help us find our people who crossed the border and send them back to China. The responsible cadres of the Soviet border defense agency promised to relay this message to higher authorities. The Chinese Huoerguosi [Horgos] Border Defense Post has also been in touch with your people and is prepared to hold a meeting. We hope that through the communication between the governments of our two nations and through contacts between our local border defense posts, the problem can be resolved as soon as possible.

Chervonenko: There is no doubt about this, I think. We firmly believe this. I don't want to talk about the number of people who crossed the border, as the discrepancy is huge. You should have a clearer idea of the situation. As a matter of fact, it's impossible to conduct a very accurate count. You commented on this matter in your document, but our document doesn't contain comments. It just emphasizes the need for investigation. So, I think that your comments are a little rushed.

Zhang: We've just spoken about the facts that we've obtained. You've rushed by insisting that those things never happened even without [conducting an] investigation.

Chervonenko: I'm referring not to the matter itself, but the comments. You've made a serious accusation, claiming that we plan to send Chinese residents who have

crossed the border to other places within the Soviet Union, that we dispatched trucks for them, etc. This is impossible and unbelievable.

Zhang: That is why I said just now that, given the relations between our two nations, things like that should not happen. But they have happened, and we can't help but feel astonished.

Chervonenko: This is an issue worth studying. For example, the argument that Chinese residents who crossed the border have been sent to certain places is not just a claim made by someone; it may also be a form of instigation!

Zhang: We've made it clear in our document that if nothing is done about the situation, it's very likely that evildoers will take further advantage of this to drive a wedge in relations between China and the Soviet Union. We must watch out. It's obvious that some bad people are driving a wedge between us. It's very unfavorable to you, to us, and to the friendly relations between the people of our two countries.

Chervonenko: There is no dispute over this. We must pay serious attention [to this]. If it is the truth, we must get to the bottom of it. We both should carefully review the matter. In sum, they crossed the border into the Soviet Union from the Chinese side of the border. China let them pass, and the Soviet Union failed to stop them.

Zhang: We did try to dissuade them. We've always been trying to dissuade them.

Deputy Department Director Xu Ming: In accordance with previous practices...

Chervonenko: China is very concerned about this matter. The fact that we notified you of this matter also shows that we're concerned too.

Zhang: What you should do now is to send back the people who crossed the border into the Soviet Union in accordance with customary practices and to stop those who are seeking to cross the border.

Chervonenko: Okay.

Zhang: I'm very sorry to have disturbed you so late at night.

Chervonenko: It is not you that have disturbed me; rather, it is me that has disturbed you, not during the day but at night.

Xu: I immediately began looking for Comrade Zhang Hanfu. I couldn't find him and did not inform him of this matter until just now.

Zhang: I've been busy the whole day. I've had a full schedule. Comrade Xu Ming did inform me.

Chervonenko: I have no comments on this.