

April 29, 1962

**Minutes of Vice Minister Zhang Hanfu's Discussion
with Soviet Ambassador to China Chervonenko**

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Summary:

Zhang Hanfu and Ambassador Chervonenko continue the debate over the Yi-Ta incident.

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Chinese

Contents:

Translation - English

[...]

Minutes of Vice Minister Zhang Hanfu's Discussion with Soviet Ambassador to China Chervonenko

- Representations concerning the Large Scale Flight of Ethnic Minority Residents in Xinjiang's Border Areas to the Soviet Union-
(The Soviet Ambassador presented a Soviet document concerning this issue)

Time: 29 April 1962, 5:50 p.m. - 7.50 p.m.

Venue: Meeting Room, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Also Present: Xu Ming, Deputy Director, Soviet Union and Europe Department

Interpreter: Wang Gaoqing

Minutes Prepared: Li Guanru

Soviet Ambassador Chervonenko (hereinafter referred to as "Chervonenko"): First, I'd like to ask you to forgive me for requesting you to meet with me on such short notice, as the matter is very urgent.

Vice Minister Zhang (hereinafter referred to as "Zhang"): Never mind.

Chervonenko: In certain circumstances, I have to ask you to meet with me as soon as possible.

Zhang: Never mind. [I] welcome you [here].

Chervonenko: My government is concerned about the situation occurring in China's Xingjiang region along the Sino-Soviet border. We know that your government is also concerned about this matter. As instructed by the Soviet Government, I'd like to give you the following report regarding this matter, which is unpleasant to both you and us. To save time, could we ask the interpreter to directly translate our document for you?

Zhang: Good. Okay.

(The Soviet Ambassador presented the Soviet document-see the Appendix-to Vice Minister Zhang and the interpreter orally translated the full text of the document into Chinese.)

Chervonenko: Some issues are covered in this document. In addition, I'd like to comment on the conversation between Comrade Liu Yufeng, Deputy Director of the Department of Consular Affairs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Comrade Qi-ku-nuo-fu [sic], Director of the Consular Section of our embassy. Qi-ku-nuo-fu is in charge of consular affairs at our embassy and thus it's normal for him to discuss visa issues with the Department of Consular Affairs of your Ministry of Foreign Affairs. What we don't understand is that Comrade Liu Yufeng, during his conversation with Comrade Qi-ku-nuo-fu today, linked what he had talked about with Comrade Qi-ku-nuo-fu to what had happened on the Soviet-China border, saying that the two matters were closely connected. Qi-ku-nuo-fu mentioned the visa issue to the Department of Consular Affairs at the end of March this year, which was something normal. In the past, we consulted with you, and in the future, we still need to consult with each other. But why did Comrade Liu Yufeng link this issue to what is going on in the Xinjiang region? I don't quite understand. Today, I can say in a very responsible manner to you that they are not connected. As I see it, it's unnecessary to accuse our comrades on this issue. Accusation is not necessary; it does no good. I'm not sure

whether you know the contents of their conversation or not. I understand that the conversation between Comrade Liu Yufeng and Qi-ku-nuo-fu could not have bypassed the leaders of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. After returning to the embassy, Qi-ku-nuo-fu informed me of the contents of the conversation and I don't feel good about it. The problem occurring in the Xinjiang region has been talked about in both sides' documents: we are both very concerned and we have both expressed our opinions. I think we should work together to figure out a solution to the problem in Xinjiang. On one hand, Chinese citizens should be stopped from crossing the border, while on the other hand, we should think about how we're going to deal with the people who have crossed the border. Regarding the problem that has come up, as we have said in our document, the Soviet Government feels perturbed and expresses its sincere and brotherly hopes of figuring out a way to stop the border crossings and working out a solution for the people who have crossed the border, instead of making unnecessary accusations against each other, so that the problem can be solved from start to finish in the spirit of unity and friendship.

Zhang: We'll forward this document to the [Chinese] government and give you a reply after studying it. Now I want to briefly talk about my personal opinion. I think both the document and what the ambassador has told me today fail to give a satisfying reply to China's 24 April document. What you have said in your document is inconsistent with the truth we have found out. This is the first point. And the second point is that the Soviet Government did not consider our opinion. For example, regarding the illegal border crossers, according to either international practice or our two nations' practice of handling border crossers, the Soviet Union should, and has the responsibility to, send back Chinese residents who have illegally entered the Soviet Union without going through any of the formalities. But the Soviet Union has failed to do this. Besides, the Chinese Government has reminded the Soviet Union of the severity of this situation and expressed its hope that the Soviet Union would take effective action to quickly reverse this situation and restore normalcy to the border between [our] two nations. However, your side has done nothing. This is the truth. Thus, the situation has evolved, spreading from the Tacheng [Qoqek] border area to Emin [Dörbiljin] County, Yumin [Chaghantoqay] County, and Huocheng [Korgas] County. Along the Sino-Soviet border, there is a wire fence on your side, but there is not one on our side. A few days ago, several gaps were opened up in the wire fence near the Tacheng border on your side, making it very convenient for people to cross the border illegally, and some 20,000 to 30,000 people have left. One of the gaps remains open today, and occasionally people are still using this gap to cross the border illegally. And your side has also opened up more than ten gaps in the wire fence along the border in Yumin County and there are even trucks there to pick up [the border crossers]. Thus, the number of illegal border crossers has increased. The same situation has occurred in Huocheng. I'm concerned that if you do nothing to stop it, the situation will become more serious than it is today. Gaps are always opened up here and there, trucks come and go to pick up [border crossers], and free board and lodging is offered. How can you explain that your side is concerned about the problem and wants to solve it? Moreover, in the Tacheng area, some people are running back and forth across the border, instigating others to cross the border illegally and to carry belongings across the border, shouting "all of you come over!" To this, the Soviet side has done nothing. Thus, I would say that the Soviet side hasn't taken any action; instead, it has opened gaps in the fence and, as a result, the number of illegal border crossers is naturally rising. Furthermore, people from your side of the border are returning and instigating [others to cross the border], and even in Xinjiang, some Soviet people are instigating [people to cross the border]-we have evidence for this-causing the situation to deteriorate. The situation today, on 29 April, is worse than it was when I last talked with Comrade Chervonenko. All of this proves that the Soviet Union hasn't taken any action. I feel very regretful about this.

As for whether the accusations are warranted, we have to look at the facts. Last time I talked about some facts, and today I've talked about some new facts. Under these circumstances, the Soviet Union has not only failed to stop [the border crossings]; rather, it has opened gaps here and there and sent trucks to pick up the people. How

is this not encouragement for people to cross the border illegally in massive numbers, to conveniently cross the border? Moreover, as I just said, those who have fled come back from your side at will to do bad deeds [inside of Xinjiang], instigating others. This is indeed very serious. Hence, we must pay attention to these actual circumstances. If the Soviet Union doesn't take effective action, the situation may get out of control. As I said last time, we've been trying to discourage people from crossing the border illegally, and we've been trying very hard to do this. We must take action to punish the instigators according to the law. However, your people keep opening gaps and some new gaps have been opened; some people have even run back to instigate others, making it very difficult for us to dissuade people from crossing the border. I think I must make the situation clear to you again so that you will understand how dangerous and serious it is. I want to reiterate that your practices have made our dissuasion work very difficult. Please take note of this.

About the meetings at the border defense posts, so far, three of our border defense posts have met with your border guards, and some of them have met with your people more than once. Our border defense posts have explicitly raised the issue with your border defense posts and made the situation very clear. As I said to you on 24 April, we hope that your side will swiftly take action to stop people from crossing the border illegally and stop opening gaps in the fence or giving greetings or receptions [to the border crossers]. So far, however, your people just keep saying they will report it to higher authorities, without giving any reply or taking any measures, and the situation is becoming worse. On this matter, you can't blame us for anything. As for your claim that your border defense post on 22 April sent out a signal for a meeting-by raising a flag, but the head of our border defense post did not meet your people on the same day. The actual situation isn't as what you've just said.

Deputy Section Director Xu Ming (hereinafter referred to as "Xu): The truth is that when the head of our border defense post met with your people on 23 April, you didn't tell us that some Chinese residents had illegally crossed the border into the Soviet Union. When the head of our border defense post informed your people of the incident, they replied only that they would report it to their superiors. They didn't tell us that a large number of Chinese residents had crossed the border illegally.

Zhang: Ambassador Chervonenko asked to meet with me on 24 April, and I obliged on the same day. What can you blame us for? Even this evening, I've done my best to satisfy your request to meet with me. I'm the Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs. I have my own job, and I have my own schedule. I can't just meet with anyone who wants to see me at a time he designates. I think we should consider this from two perspectives. Although it's a little bit late, but it is the same day, and we've talked! We can't be blamed.

As I said just now, we will give you a reply after studying the document you've given us. Everything I've said is just my personal opinion.

All in all, I wish to remind Comrade Chervonenko of the severity and danger of this problem. The situation is still developing and deteriorating. I also want to repeat what I've said. If we let the situation develop, it'll be unfavorable to you, to us, and to the friendship and unity between the peoples of China and the Soviet Union. I think that the Soviet Union should send back the Chinese residents who have illegally crossed the border into the Soviet Union. This is a customary practice [and] it should be followed. On the other hand, you should take effective action to prevent the situation from becoming worse.

Just now, you mentioned that Deputy Section Director Liu Yufeng from our Ministry of Foreign Affairs talked with the head of the consular section of your embassy today. I'm aware of the meeting, and I'm also aware of what they talked about. I don't want to repeat what Comrade Liu Yufeng said. I just want to point out that on 28 March of

this year, the head of the consular section of your embassy informally raised three issues with our [the Ministry of Foreign Affairs'] Department of Consular Affairs. The first issue was about the citizenship of people who came from the Soviet Union to China between 1917 and 1933. The second issue was about the citizenship of people of mixed descent. And the third issue was about the citizenship of some people involved in a 1946 Supreme Soviet Resolution. In the past, we clearly expressed our opinion on the citizenship of this group of people in Xinjiang. As the head of your consular section has raised a comprehensive, important issue, we need to study it. However, in mid-April, shortly after you raised these issues on 28 March, a large number of Chinese residents in Xinjiang crossed the border illegally. This certainly compels people to think about another issue, as Comrade Liu Yufeng said: do you want to legalize the nationality issue which you raised? Comrade Liu Yufeng stated that if the Soviet Union wants to talk with us about the citizenship issue, China is ready to talk. The Soviet Union is supposed to formally raise the issue which was brought up by the head of the consular section of your embassy through a note. There is nothing wrong with Comrade Liu Yufeng's talk. As the Deputy Director of the Consular Sector, he can surely talk to you about matters completely falling within the scope of his duties. Right here, I want to say this to the ambassador: if you want to talk about this issue, I hope that you will officially submit a note to our Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Last, I want to say that people around the world attach great importance to the Sino-Soviet relationship, and that the friendship and unity between China and the Soviet Union is extremely important. As I said last time, in normal circumstances, these things shouldn't have happened between China and the Soviet Union, but they have happened, and we're surprised. I agree with Chervonenko that this problem will be solved quickly. Hopefully, the Soviet Union will immediately take effective action to prevent the situation from getting worse, and the situation should be reversed as soon as possible. That's all I want to say today.

Chervonenko: I want to ask Comrade Zhang Hanfu a question. Do you have any evidence to prove that the gaps in the fence were opened by Soviet border guards? If they were, then may I ask why would Soviet border guards have opened gaps in the wire fence, which is meant to reinforce and strengthen the border? Facts are always facts. You've said that the gaps were opened by us. Is it a hard fact or just an assumption? As you know, we don't even have enough protective facilities or personnel for the border of this region. The reason why I ask you this question is because after I bring the question to the Soviet Government, it will receive a lot of attention. As a member of the Communist Party and as a man with brotherly feelings for the Chinese people, I can't believe that our agencies and border guards would have done that. Thus, I suspect that some evildoers are trying to drive a wedge between us. I also want to ask, is China absolutely sure that the gaps were opened by Soviet border guards? You know this is not something to be assumed. You can't just assume that our people have done this.

Zhang: Yes, it's not something to be assumed! Let me tell you this. You have wire fences at certain locations on the border. The fences consist of a couple of strands of wire tied to wooden posts. Your people removed the wire to open a gap. The gap is not blocked. New gaps were opened on the border with China's Yumin County. The gaps remain open day and night. People who crossed the border illegally have entered your territory through these gaps. Your border guards are well aware of this.

Just now, Comrade Chervonenko said we can't assume that [Soviet border guards opened holes in the wire fences]. Last time I also said that we can't assume that. You said it's hard to believe. I also think it's hard to believe. But the facts are there for all of you [to see]. I've said many times that things like this are not supposed to happen between China and the Soviet Union, but it they have happened. It's a fact. We must respect facts.

Chervonenko: I have yet to receive a definite answer from Comrade Zhang Hanfu. Were the gaps in the fence opened before or after [we] began [these] representations?

Xu: The gaps were there before we began the negotiations. After we started talking, and even at this moment, your people are still opening new gaps.

Zhang: Right. Many gaps are still open.

Chervonenko: I'll report this to higher authorities. But it's hard for me to believe that Soviet border guards would have done that.

Zhang: Yes, it's hard to believe.

Chervonenko: Speaking of the measures taken by the Soviet Government, we first immediately notified the Chinese side [of what was happening] and the document also shows that related Soviet agencies sent troops over there. Additionally, some other measures might have been taken, including increased patrols and installation of wire meshes. As many people are crossing the border from this place, I'm afraid that no other measures can be taken. Thus, Moscow thinks that it's necessary for China to send some people to do some work [in this area].

Just now, you mentioned the conversation between the head of the consular section of our embassy, Comrade Qi-ku-nuo-fu, and Comrade Liu Yufeng. I'd like to repeat that they did not discuss what you just mentioned. They talked about some specific persons. If you want, we can check what they talked about. I just want you to not connect the two matters, because it's unnecessary and it has nothing to do the problem which has occurred in Xinjiang.

Lastly, regarding my last request to meet with you, please don't think that we have anything against you. I just want to say that I made the request to meet with you in the morning simply because I wanted to see you as soon as possible. At noon on that day, I also talked about this matter with Comrade Xu Ming. I told him that a large number of Chinese residents had crossed the border, and it was a very urgent matter.

Zhang: What I've said to you just now is meant for you to understand that I have my own job and that I have my own arrangements. I don't think that our ambassador in your country can see anyone anytime he wants.

Chervonenko: This isn't the problem I was talking about. My point is that the Soviet Government is very concerned about this matter, so I wanted to let you know as soon as possible. I know Comrade Zhang Hanfu is very busy. For non-urgent matters, we wouldn't insist and it's okay to postpone it for one, two or three days. But an urgent matter has come up, and I wanted to see you as soon as possible for the sake of our friendly relations, not because I had anything against you. As there was no meeting between the border guards on both sides on the border on 23 April, the Soviet Government instructed us to raise the issue with Chinese comrades through our embassy.

Zhang: I want to tell you again that on 23 April, border guard representatives from both sides met with each other, but your representatives didn't mention the matter. It is our representatives who brought up the matter. Your representatives just said that they "would report it to higher authorities" and then forgot about it. They haven't given our representatives a reply even to this day.

Chervonenko: I have no idea of the actual circumstances.

Zhang: I've repeated it many times, and I'm not going to say it again. I just want to add this. First, send the illegal border crossers back to China. As these people are in your territory, it's your business. It's none of our business. Second, I want to remind you again of the severity of the situation. We hope that the Soviet Government will take effective action as soon as possible to reverse the present situation and restore normalcy on the border.

Chervonenko: This is your business, and also ours.

Zhang: The people who have crossed the border are in your territory. It's your responsibility to send them back. It's getting late. We might just stop here.

Chervonenko: I trust that the Chinese Government will study our statement, and that both sides will work together to find a solution.

Zhang: Okay.

Chervonenko: Thank you.

Zhang: Thank you.

Chervonenko: The problem must be solved no matter what.

Zhang: It has to be solved as quickly as possible before it gets worse.

Chervonenko: I may not be able to see you again before May Day. Thus, personally and on behalf of the embassy, I wish you, Comrade Chen Yi, Minister and Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs, and all comrades in the Ministry a happy May Day!

Zhang: Thank you. I wish you and all your embassy staff a happy May Day!