

June 27, 1960

**Memorandum of Conversation between Albanian
Ambassador to the PRC Mihal Prifti and Soviet
Ambassador to the PRC Stepan V. Chervonenko**

Citation:

"Memorandum of Conversation between Albanian Ambassador to the PRC Mihal Prifti and Soviet Ambassador to the PRC Stepan V. Chervonenko", June 27, 1960, Wilson Center Digital Archive, Central State Archive, Tirana, AQPPSh-MPKBS-V. 1960, L14/1, D.20. Translated by Enkel Daljani.

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Summary:

Prifti and Chervonenko discuss Chervonenko's meetings with Peng Zhen on the Sino-Indian border dispute, the decision to send a delegation to the Romanian Workers' Party Congress in Bucharest, and Peng's visit to Moscow. Prifti and Chervonenko also reviewed China's attempts to develop atomic bomb and to compete with the Soviet to be the leader of the world's workers' and communist movement, and the power struggle with the Chinese Communist Party.

Original Language:

Albanian

Contents:

Translation - English

Today, 27 June 1960 I had a conversation with the Soviet ambassador Comrade Chervonenko, at his house. Below I am writing briefly the contents of the conversation.

For your information, before my return to Beijing, he had personally inquired about me with our Secretary and had tried to find out whether in our meeting with [Chairman of the PRC] Comrade Mao Zedong in the city of Hangzhou we had any political conversations with him and of what nature these conversations were. He had asked our comrade to notify him upon my return because he wanted to discuss something with me. Our comrade had replied that so far as he knew, our conversation with Comrade Mao was simply a protocol meeting by our comrades and that no political conversations took place during the meeting. Our embassy comrades do not know about our Beijing meetings with the Chinese leadership comrades. Given that while our comrades were still in Beijing, the foreigners here were interested in knowing about the eventual talks we were going to have with the Chinese comrades and that their interest grew even more after the events of the General Council of World Unions' Federation (WUF) [in Bucharest in June 1960], I, after consulting with Comrade Liri, instructed our comrades that if they would be asked by foreigners, they should answer that [First Secretary, Communist Albanian Party of Labour (ALP)] Comrade Hoxha's visit to China and to the other fraternal countries was simply a friendship visit of our president to these countries and that there were [not] and would not be any political talks. The Soviet ambassador was sick at the time of our comrades' visit and continues to be. He only leaves the house on rare and special occasions, such as the meeting organized on the 10th anniversary of the Attack on Korea [i.e., on 24-25 June 1960]. I met him then and he tried to find out from me whether there had been any political talks with Comrade Mao. After I assured him that there had not been any political talks, he expressed the desire to meet with me because he also had something to tell me. I met him under these circumstances.

The contents of the meeting are below. After we left Beijing (7 June 1960) he had had three meetings with [Member of the Central Committee and Secretariat of the Central Committee] Comrade Peng Zhen. He told me that after we left Beijing, all the other Chinese leadership comrades also left, except for Comrade Peng Zhen. They all left for Shanghai, where on 8 June 1960 the Plenum of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CC CPC) would start, and Peng Zhen had remained behind to oversee all matters in Beijing. On 8 June 1960 Chervonenko, at his own initiative and without authorization from Moscow, asked for a meeting with Peng Zhen and talked with him about the session-in-progress of the General Council of the WUF, which due to the insistence of the Chinese comrades was lasting on without purpose while the WUF itself was in danger of disunity. He said he had spoken to Peng Zhen as a communist and not as an ambassador of the Soviet Union. He had not been authorized to meet on the situation of the session and the dangers they posed, but had, nonetheless, asked Peng Zhen that the proceedings end as soon as possible, even if that meant approving a very simple communiqué containing only general statements.

"Peng Zhen," he said, "received me with a temper and told me that if the situation has thus deteriorated, we are responsible for this because we are the ones to have raised issues unilaterally. When I asked him what he had in mind, he referred to the communiqué by TASS on the Sino-Indian border dispute. I knew this issue well, because I started my tenure as ambassador in Beijing last October with talks on this issue. (Chervonenko had been a member of the Soviet delegation [in Sept.-Oct. 1959] attending the 10th anniversary of the establishment of the People's Republic of China and took part in the talks on Sino-Indian relations.) I told Peng Zhen that as a member of the Political Bureau of his party he should know about the talks held during the month of October on this issue and the letter that Comrade Mao wrote after the discussions. I told him that his posing the problem in such a way was a distortion of the truth and hypocritical behavior and asked that this be recorded exactly by the interpreter and that Comrade Mao be notified accordingly. He said that in last October's letter Comrade Mao had accepted that our side had been right in the

position on the Sino-Indian conflict it held during the talks." His talks with Peng Zhen lasted three hours. On the same day, [Politburo Member Viktor] Grishin (the president of the Soviet Professional Union) had also held talks on this issue with the Chinese comrades during the session. "In the evening," he said "I spoke to Grishin over any possible back-tracking on the language of the session documents. The next day, however, the Chinese comrades had withdrawn their opposition and had accepted all the documents as they were prepared by the session bureau."

On 15 June 1960 Chervonenko told me that he had had another meeting with Peng Zhen. This time Peng Zhen had requested the meeting and had invited him to his house. He said that Peng Zhen's demeanor this time had been completely different from the first meeting. "Peng Zhen told me," continued Chervonenko, "that he had just returned from Shanghai where he had had conversations with all the comrades and with Comrade Mao. He notified me that the CC of their party had decided to send a delegation to the Romanian Workers' Party Congress in Bucharest, gave me the delegation member list and added that he would be leading the delegation. He also told me the opinion of the leadership of his party that representatives of 14 parties of capitalist countries, including representatives of the Communist Party of France, of that of Italy and of the parties of a few Latin American countries also be invited to the next meeting of the socialist sister parties. Since he intended to discuss this issue with our comrades in Moscow, he asked to go there 2-3 days before the meeting and for this he asked to fly with a special plane. I notified Moscow immediately of this and they agreed with everything. On our third meeting I notified him of this and told him that during their stay in Moscow, he and his comrades would be guests of the CC of my Party. Peng Zhen left for Moscow on 16 June. Aside from the comrades of the delegation, with him there were also eight functionaries of the CC apparatus carrying many documents. The Moscow talks took place on 17 and 18 June, and [First Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union] Comrade Khrushchev took part in them. He spoke to them about the unfair talks they had here with you and also on their positions during the session meeting of the General Council of WUF. The talks continued for five hours and I expect details on them in the coming days. Judging by Peng Zhen's speech in Bucharest, they [the Chinese] have made a sharp turn."

Then he told me that the meeting of the representatives of our parties, slated to be held this time in Bucharest, would not be held since the CC of the Polish comrades and the CC of the Chinese comrades had their own meetings. With that meeting rescheduled for later we would only schedule a preliminary/consultative meeting to decide the place and time for the representatives' meeting, which could be held in Moscow on the occasion of the anniversary of the October Revolution. We would also have a meeting of the representatives of the Warsaw Pact countries.

Then he told me very confidentially that after we left Beijing, the Chinese comrades invited [General Secretary of the Korean Workers Party] Kim Il Sung; and Comrade Mao and other Chinese comrades held talks with him in the same spirit as our own Beijing talks. Kim Il Sung went from Pyongyang directly to Shanghai by a special plane. He told me this was information coming directly from their own people, because they had people in every airport both in Korea and here in China. "I notified Moscow immediately," he added, "and was instructed to show no interest whatsoever in their talks. In reality, the Chinese comrades have not told me anything about it and think that we do not know. On the other hand, Kim Il Sung, on his return from Pyongyang, went immediately to Moscow and notified our comrades there of everything he had discussed with the Chinese comrades in Shanghai, and this is another thing the Chinese comrades do not know. Until now the Chinese comrades have not told us anything about their talks with Kim Il Sung. We'll see if they tell us anything tomorrow."

Then, speaking uninterrupted, he said, "What they have told you that you are the first to learn about their opinions is a lie. [Premier of the People's Republic of China] Zhou Enlai spoke about this same matter when he was in Mongolia. It should be noted that

they have not spoken so openly about them, but have, nevertheless, spoken to [General Secretary of Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party Yumjaagiyn] Tsendenbal about these matters." He told me that the Chinese have asked them for 130 or 300 tons of uranium (I do not remember the exact amount). I rushed a bit on this point. Thinking that they knew about it, I said "they have also opened their secret to us and told us that they will do all they can to get the atomic bomb." He did not know about this, so he asked very inquisitively, "They have told you this?" I answered positively. "This is a very bad thing," he said. "But this fact," he continued, "I know very well because I follow with much attention and care their activities on this matter. I am telling you that they have nothing in their basket on this matter and could not produce it [the bomb] before 1962. They could not test an atomic explosion because, aside from the uranium, they need many other components which they do not have yet. [Vice Premier and Foreign Minister of the People's Republic of China] Chen Yi had complained to the Czechoslovak ambassador when they met when he was leaving China that we are not giving them the bomb. (The Czechoslovak ambassador was transferred about a month ago. Here he told me that the councilor at the Czechoslovak Embassy was an agent of the Intelligence Service and had contacts with the English representative here and that was the reason he was transferred.) I repeat that they do not have the capacity to make it themselves. Even [President of the French Republic] De Gaulle had a hard time testing an atomic bomb and France is still far behind what is called a truly atomic explosion."

After this I asked him if he knew how to explain this change in position from the Chinese and if he knew whether the opinion presented to us was that of the entire Chinese leadership. I asked for his opinion on the fact that today, more and more, Maoism is being touted as the Marxism of the 20th century.

He started by answering the last question saying, "I think the Chinese comrades accept that the October Revolution was truly an event of historical proportions on a worldwide scale. But they think that its influence has been larger over the European countries, while the Chinese Revolution, according to their opinion, also of worldwide importance, is more important for the peoples of Asia, Africa and Latin America, where the general conditions of those nations, such as poverty, illiteracy, etc., are more or less like those of the Chinese people. As a result, the peoples of these countries and the entire world's workers' and communist movement should take lessons from the Chinese Revolution. They should walk in its path and not in that of the October Revolution. Furthermore, after Stalin's death, someone should be at the helm of the entire world's workers' and communist movement. This person is Comrade Mao and the CCP. This is a case of the cult of personality. They are also pushing the theory that the more suffering, misery and poverty [exists], the more appropriate conditions there are for a revolution."

To the first question he answered as follows: "You might have noticed that Comrade Mao did not present an opinion on the matters brought before you. The same was true with (President of the People's Republic of China) Liu Shaoqi who was mostly there to chair the talks, while the opinions were presented by Deng Xiaoping. It should be noted that Comrade Mao has mostly retired from managing the everyday state and party matters; all this under health condition pretenses. He is not in Beijing. He is traveling from one city to another, and this causes him to be out of touch with the issues and not to take part in solving the various problems. I may say that he has been very unilaterally informed on the Soviet Union and only through the press. When I have met and talked with him about the situation in our country, he has been very interested and has asked numerous questions on other issues as well. This is not a good thing. The one who decides here is Liu Shaoqi. What he says is what gets done. Zhou Enlai has been marginalized from the decision-making. In this situation, Comrade Mao does not present opinions. He stands above everyone. They do not want to implicate him. He stands infallible and only reserves his opinion for decisive moments. Liu Shaoqi did not speak much this time because he is preparing to visit our and other countries this year. This is why only Deng Xiaoping spoke, but his opinions are those of Liu Shaoqi.

Answering my question as to who was on Liu Shaoqi's side he answered, "On his side there is Peng Zhen, Deng Xiaoping, and (he mentioned someone else's name, but I do not remember it). Liu Shaoqi is a very slippery (hypocritical) person. He is against us, against the Soviet Union.

"And who is on the Soviet Union's side?" I asked. He answered: "Gao Gang used to be on the Soviet Union's side. I believe you have heard his name. (For your information, Gao Gang is mentioned in the 8th Congress of the CC of CCP report by Liu Shaoqi, in the last chapter, on page 90 of the book "The 8th Congress of the CP of China," Tirana 1957.) Another friend of the Soviet Union is also someone else (he mentioned the name, but I cannot recall it) who for a long time has been elected to the CC of their party, but who has never been allowed to visit the Soviet Union. Of all the actual and active Chinese leaders, the one who is on our side and stays closer to us is Zhou Enlai." Since I immediately showed a puzzled face at this fact and asked him about it, noting that he had often described Zhou En Lai to me as the most obstinate [Chinese leader], he answered, "Yes, yes, Zhou Enlai. Despite his position on some matters, he is the person that stands closer to us, but he has been marginalized in current affairs."

When I asked him [Chervonenko] why he [Zhou Enlai] had been marginalized, he answered: "When the current Chinese leadership came to power, it thought that Stalin sought to change and replace it. It asked the most senior cadres to initiate a very anti-Stalin and anti-Soviet investigation. (I did not understand as to whether this was asked by the cadres when this leadership came to power or when the party rose to power) Zhou Enlai has not signed the ensuing declaration due to its contents and stands as our best friend." He led me to believe that the marginalization of Zhou Enlai from managing and decision-making was due to his being pro-Soviet Union and due to this last issue (the opinion on the last issue is mine).

Then I asked him who was on comrade Mao's side. He said, "Chen Yi and others are on Mao's side, but they do not exhibit this and do not make decisions. The ones that make decisions are in Liu Shaoqi's group."

Then I asked him who Liu Shaoqi was. I mentioned that when Mao Zedong, [Commander-in-Chief of the People's Liberation Army and Vice-Chairman of the Communist Party of China] Zhu De and others were talked and written about during the Chinese People's Army fighting against the Japanese and [President of the Republic of China] Jiang Jieshi [Cheng Kai-shek], Liu Shaoqi was never mentioned. He answered that Liu Shaoqi was the most influential person within the Party now (I understand this to mean after comrade Mao). He is the one who decides in all matters. By his hand and signature thousands and thousands of cadres and people had been killed in China.

To tell you the truth, I could not contain my surprise and asked, "How can this be explained?" He answered, "There is one wild card here, and it puts everything in motion. In my opinion, this card is Liu Shaoqi."

I told him that these are very delicate and important matters and they should be straightened out. He agreed with me saying that this matter required prudence and self-control. He added, "For the reasons I mentioned earlier and because they do not fully understand our policy of peaceful co-existence, they are now raising these issues for the first time."

Since he never mentioned Yugoslav revisionism, I purposefully stated that, "the Chinese are very tough and resolute toward the Yugoslav revisionists." He answered, "In this case we should not only consider [Josip Broz Tito, Yugoslavian Communist Leader] Tito and his group, who in reality are agents of imperialism, but also the Yugoslav people. The Yugoslav people should not be left to fall more deeply under the

influence of the imperialists. We should not allow this."

Later the conversation moved on to the Yugoslav chargé d'affaires here in Beijing. He said, "Even though he has come to improve relations here, he still continues to look at issues with the West's eye." I said: "What do you expect from him? He started his career in London and America and you yourself said that Tito is an agent of imperialism." I spoke at length about many issues of our relations with the Yugoslavs and he listened with interest.

After about an hour of conversing with him, I asked permission to depart, but he asked me to stay and started to talk to me about the internal Chinese situation. He said, "I have information that in North-eastern China (Manchuria) there have been many deaths due to starvation." He posed his opinion that the Chinese comrades are having economic difficulties at this time and that if they would [only] ask for aid or loans, they would not have to face these hard times. "If they would ask, we would give them aid or loans," he said. "But they do not ask. Nonetheless, we are looking for ways to help our Chinese comrades. We are thinking about giving China new aid in light of the new situation, and this is important." He stated his opinion that the actual difficulties China faced were due mainly to the increase in consumption and this was true.

Then he said that until 1967 they would be giving China [aid amounting to] 14 billion rubles in the form of various equipment. 120 large economic enterprises would be built this year from this aid. The 14 billion [rubles] in equipment, if measured by internal Soviet prices, were actually worth 140 billion, or equal to Ukraine's current holdings.

When I asked how come that China facing such difficulties was helping Mongolia and Vietnam with such large sums, he answered that this was due to the fact that China wanted to control these countries.

This, briefly, was today's conversation with the Soviet ambassador. At the end of our meeting he proposed that we meet and exchange opinions more often. I expressed agreement with this.

I forgot to say at the pertinent section of this report that he was interested to know whether we held any talks with the Chinese comrades when we visited Shanghai and whether we showed any particular interest in any issues while there. Actually, the conversation that Comrade Liri had while departing from the Shanghai airport with Ke Qingshi, the Shanghai Secretary and member of the Bureau of the CC of CCP, was noted by foreigners, including the Soviet consul.

I mentioned that the conversation between Comrade Liri and Ke Qingshi may have been noted, but the conversation actually consisted of nothing more than the issues we talked about here in Beijing of which he already knew. This is how I answered his question.

Typed by [Albanian Ambassador to the PRC] M[ihal] P[rifti].