

October 12, 1961

**Memorandum of Conversation from the Meeting
between Vice Premier Li Xiannian and the Albanian
Ambassador to China Reis Malile**

Citation:

"Memorandum of Conversation from the Meeting between Vice Premier Li Xiannian and the Albanian Ambassador to China Reis Malile", October 12, 1961, Wilson Center Digital Archive, PRC FMA 109-02376-01, 3-7. Translated by Max Maller.
<https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/119519>

Summary:

Li Xiannian and Reis Malile discuss Albania's position within the socialist bloc and Sino-Albanian trade relations.

Credits:

This document was made possible with support from MacArthur Foundation

Original Language:

Chinese

Contents:

Translation - English

Memorandum of Conversation from the Meeting between Vice Premier Li Xiannian
and the Albanian Ambassador to China Reis Malile

(Not yet proofread)

1. On [Abdyl] Kellezi's Visit to China
2. On Some Issues in Shipping
3. On the 22nd Congress of the CPSU and Albanian-Soviet Relations

Time: 4:30 p.m. - 5:20 p.m., 12 October 1961

Location: State Council

Translator: Fang Zu'an

Recorder: Chen Zhenhua

Li: There is something I would like to ask you to circulate to your central committee. We received the telegram from your embassy saying Comrade Kellezi is on his way. We welcome Comrade Kellezi's arrival, but there is a problem: the Premier has to go make an appearance in Moscow for the Soviet government's 22nd Congress. It is possible that the meeting will continue until the end of the month. At the earliest, the Premier will not be getting back until 10 November. We don't know whether there are still any complications between us, whether the fraternal parties will need to have a separate meeting. It is possible that there will be some problems—at the moment it is difficult to make a prediction. We have gone through this before with you, where you do not notify us ahead of time, or you notify us and then don't act accordingly. Secondly, our National People's Congress intends to hold meeting, possibly at the end of November, but we have to wait for the Premier to return. Thirdly, this is a very busy time, since we have to finalize next year's economic plans. After talking with the central committee, we of course welcome Comrade Kellezi's visit. It is just a question of timing. We recommend that next January, we set aside some time to talk. If our comrades working in economics want to come beforehand to talk about specific questions, that is also fine. What's important is that we hope that with a substantial amount of time we will be able to have good meetings and avoid feeling rushed.

Next, I want to give you a heads-up that I spoke with the Premier this morning, and this year's harvest was a little bit better than last year's, but we are basically still in a famine, and next year we will have to continue importing certain grains. This year we imported 5,300,000 tons. Next year's number is not fixed yet, but it will not be much less than that.

And third, we want to know if you have any news about the two steamships?

Malile: As far as the first issue, I will go back and notify the government and Comrade Kellezi. You might first invite some economists to see whether my understanding of the following is right or not.

Li: I have heard that you plan to send them; they can come beforehand.

Malile: When in January can Comrade Kellezi come? The beginning, middle or end?

Li: It doesn't matter.

Malile: Thank you for pointing out the second issue.

Li: We can also put together a detailed briefing for you.

Malile: Thank you. The harvests these past few years have been unparalleled in China's history.

Li: It has basically been a three-year-long famine. This has posed great challenges to our work. But we are capable of surmounting challenges. The party and the masses still have an intimate bond.

Malile: While stopping in Guangzhou on my return from Vietnam, I had a chat with a few ordinary workers. The public really understands that the CCP and the PRC government have put forth strident efforts, that they are devoted to overcoming the challenges. They believe in the future.

As concerns the steamship, it is on its way. It has already reached the Suez Canal. At the moment we do not have direct contact with the two ships. Due to the new situation in Syria, some new difficulties have arisen. Albania is not anxious to acknowledge Syria, out of a desire not to make Nassar angry with us. On the Syria question, we are identical to China. China has acknowledged them, and in fact so have we, just that we have not announced it over a cable. We have to wait for Nassar to adopt a few more measures to send our cable, so we can make sure that Nassar has no excuse to oppose us. Keeping this road open is extremely important to us.

(Comrade Li Xiannian lowers his head in agreement.)

Especially given that at present, Krushchev has taken a few antagonistic measures against us. It has been reported that Soviet aircraft are refusing to take off or land within Albania. If aircraft from the USSR and other Eastern European countries all refuse to go to Albania, our airplanes will not be able to go to these countries, then we will only be able to get around by sea. The USSR has already protested against us twice, saying that Soviet flight workers have received disturbances in Albania. This is complete provocation, and is meant as an excuse to stop flights. If you buy a ticket, they claim there are none, but the plane is quite empty. If your officers in the USSR buy a ticket for Albania, they will say that they can only sell you one ticket, they cannot sell to families, but the plane is actually quite empty. I have gone off the subject; I will go back to the question of the ships.

The ships have already transported one load, our thanks to China for helping us with the loading. But I still ask Comrade Li Xiannian to find an appropriate comrade if possible to make the loading a little faster. The first time we loaded the cargo it took 28 days, which is a little too long. We bring up this question not because our Chinese comrades are not diligent. It is merely because the international situation changes so quickly, and it is very possible that our enemies the imperialists and revisionists will adopt still harsher measures. Comrade Li Xiannian will acknowledge that we desperately need the cargo aboard these ships. I hope that Li Xiannian will have a moment, when it is agreeable, to bring this up to the appropriate comrades. I am sorry for the inconvenience.

Li: This is a good question. We care deeply about these two ships that are in motion, and hope that their arrival in Albania will be kept secret. The first batch was slower because we used PLA forces instead of longshoremen.

Malile: If I may be permitted...when we unloaded the cargo, we also used troops. When I was coming back from Vietnam, I went to the Port of Zhanjiang to take a look. The Chinese comrades had taken very good measures. Perhaps we had obstructed your normal shipping activity.

Li: That's not important, what matters is smooth shipping. We ordered the port

completely closed down, and only made use of soldiers, which perhaps slowed things down.

Malile: I went with two comrades in the delegation to Shanghai, Hangzhou, and elsewhere for some traveling. The Chinese comrades treated us just like brothers.

Li: As they should.

Malile: If permitted, I will ask one question. What do you think the chances are that during Soviet conference there will be warfare (note: this was the original phrase, it is likely that he meant an argument) or new provocations?

Li: We have not thought about that. But it is not worth it for war or provocation to happen. And yet there could possibly be some questions, such as in a discussion of the Albania question. This could lead to problems. Depending on the conversation, it could give rise to debate: what have the Albanian comrades done wrong? Opposing imperialism, opposing revisionism, championing popular movements, constructing socialism, supporting the international workers movement, upholding harmony, what could be wrong with that?

Malile: I have spoken about this with some foreign ministers—they do not understand a thing. It's as if they have been blocked off from the news. For example, the Romanian ambassador asked who would be leading the Albanian delegation at their appearance in the 22nd Congress. I told him that we were not invited. He was surprised, he said, "Maybe you have done something wrong." "I would like to have it pointed out to me, this thing we have done wrong!" I replied. I very frankly told him about Khrushchev's treatment toward Albania, he said that their understanding completely contradicted what I was saying. I told him, the measures being used against us today, will be used against you tomorrow. Your party needs to be responsible for the present situation. Khrushchev has made a mockery of the Warsaw treaty, bringing us in for an appearance several times and then later not allowing us to appear. The Warsaw Pact is not NATO's treaty; it has its own principles. And we must struggle for these principles.

Li: Yes. At the recent Warsaw Pact summit, it had been agreed that the Germany issue would be discussed. Why was Albania again brought up?

Malile: As a Bulgarian attaché said, they are terrified at the level of leadership, because their ideology is so narrow.

Li: Unreasonable actions are hard to discuss out in the open.

Malile: The Bulgarian attaché said he only knew about the problems between the USSR and China, and that he hadn't considered Albania. It seems that Albanian-Soviet relations are still worse.

Li: Sino-Soviet relations, Albanian-Soviet relations, they are the same. They do not open with Marxist-Leninist beliefs, but with the belief in strength. From our experience and the situation in other countries, we believe that the most important thing is self-reliance. We look at Albania and we see the spirit of self-reliance.

Malile: That's correct. If we do not have Soviet aircraft we will figure it out ourselves. From 1948 until 1954 neither Yugoslavia nor Greece would allow planes into Albania, but we are still alive, and in fact we are more consolidated.

Li: We have also had such experiences. From 1927 until 1949 we were chased into the mountains, completely cut off from the outside world. Sometimes we would not even receive radio, we could not get the KMT newspaper. But we still resolved our problems for ourselves.

Malile: I have troubled you long enough.