

Minutes of Conversation

between Comrade Ion Gheorghe Maurer, member of the RCP CC Permanent Presidium Executive Committee, president of the Socialist Republic of Romania Council of Ministers and Comrade Paul Nicolescu Mizil, member of the Permanent Presidium Executive Committee, secretary of the RCP CC,

[and] with Comrade Zhou Enlai, Chinese Communist Party CC Politburo Permanent Committee member, People's Republic of China State Council Premier and Comrade Li Xiannian, People's Republic of China CC Politburo member, State Council Vice Chairman.

– 7 September 1969 –

Witnesses to the discussions: Qiao Guanhua, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Yu Zhan, director of the MFA [Ministry of Foreign Affairs] Department for the Soviet Union and Eastern European Countries, Ding Yuehong, Romanian translator, Ion Dorobantu, Chinese translator and Viorica Ivascu, stenographer.

The discussions began on 7 September 1969 at 11:45 p.m. and ended on 8 September at 2:20 a.m.

Cde. Ion Gheorghe Maurer: First of all, I wanted to send greetings—and I am glad I can do this—to Comrade Mao Zedong, Comrade Lin Biao, to you personally, and to the other comrades, from Comrade Ceausescu and our party and state leaders.

Cde. Zhou Enlai: I thank you for these greetings. How is Comrade Ceausescu doing?

Maurer: He is in good health.

Zhou Enlai: I noted from the photo that he seems very healthy. How is Comrade Bodnaras doing? I heard that he is not doing too well.

Maurer: He had a heart attack but he was able to get through it. He is convalescing right now.

Zhou Enlai: He did not participate in your congress.

Maurer: No, because it took place while his heart attack was announced so he could not participate.

Then this sad event occurred in Vietnam, spurring this trip in order to express our condolences. And we thought that on this occasion it would not be a bad idea to make a quick political tour. We haven't seen each other in a long time, Comrade Zhou Enlai. Many events have taken place in the world since then.

Zhou Enlai: We haven't seen each other in two years.

Maurer: But a lot has happened in the world in these past two years and we figured it would not be a bad idea to make a little tour.

First, we wish to thank you for participating in the festivities that we had this year at the Congress of the Party celebrating the 25th anniversary of the liberation of our country. The participation of the Chinese state and party proved your strong support during the difficulties we encountered in trying to establish fair rapport between socialist countries. We thank you for this.¹

Zhou Enlai: I noticed that the telegram I sent you caused the Soviet revisionists to leave the room where the congress was taking place.

Maurer: If you would have sent another one... (laughs).

Zhou Enlai: We are afraid we could cause you further difficulties. Even though our telegram was written in rather moderate terms, they have put pressure on you.

Maurer: The problem now is this: we view your position towards us as one that has been of use to us and that has helped us.

Likewise, we also appreciated the fact that things were expressed with great care and we would like you to know that we are grateful for your support and count on it. It is exactly for this reason that we wish to expand relations, obviously, within the limits of mutual interest and possibilities. We have previously talked about this matter. We talked with your comrade ambassador to our country and with the comrade deputy minister of foreign trade.

Zhou Enlai: Yes, on the occasion of the visit he made to Romania.

Maurer: We showed our interest in further developing relations; this refers to economic relations, exchanges of merchandise, an eventual cooperation in production and in special production. Of course, we have to look at all these in a reasonable and realistic manner.

Our political relations are developing. We never tried to hide our desire to develop these relations. On the contrary, we have affirmed our wish to develop these relations as an essential element of our policy.

I insisted on making a couple comments concerning our bilateral relations so you could meditate on them and see what we can do to develop these relations multilaterally. Of course, we wished to make this tour in the light of certain recent political developments. It seems to me that Nixon's visit to Romania has raised much interest and that is why I wish to begin with this.

Comrade Ceausescu communicated through your ambassador the content of this visit. I told the ambassador, however, that there are certain aspects that could be better explained during a direct conversation, so this is why I will concentrate on this visit. Of course, since the discussions with Nixon were so long, several things were discussed during the visit. Some of these, such as European security, would probably be of less interest to you; others are of more importance to you.

First of all, Nixon expressed without any reservation his wish of finding a way to normalize relations with China. He articulated this very clearly and asked us to help in this matter if we can. I am not sure how we can help (smiling); I told him that what we can do is inform the Chinese leadership about the situation. I told him, however, that it seems to us that there is a series of issues towards which the Chinese leadership has taken a stance and for which you should find solutions, and maybe, by seeking solutions for these problems, will find a way to normalize relations with China. One of these problems is Taiwan (Zhou Enlai laughed).

Of course, we didn't discuss any details such as what has to be done with Taiwan or what doesn't. It is not our business to discuss such matters. If you will set a date to discuss this, then this discussion will be between you and them, but the man expressed this wish.

Our impression was that this wish was sincere, in other words, it corresponds to certain important American interests. We could not figure out what the American interests corresponding to this wish are. We know well that in the opinion of the American public, the wish to normalize relations with China has been present for quite some time. They talked to us about this wish several times. At one point, [Harvard economist John Kenneth] Galbraith conveyed to us Robert Kennedy's wish, when he was still alive, to come and discuss with us, among others, this problem and see what our opinion is vis-à-vis this situation. The visit never took place due to

particular circumstances; later it didn't take place due to Kennedy's tragic end.

It was during the discussions with Harriman that I became aware of this preoccupation with establishing normal relations with China. I had a pretty long discussion with Harriman.

Somebody has already communicated all these things to you, but I want to explain them in this context, because I am under the impression that Nixon—and this is our opinion and the reasoning of the party leadership concerning this issue—that Nixon wants to implement this tendency that is rather markedly present in public opinion and certain leading circles.

In relation to this issue, we also discussed the escalation of the Sino-Soviet conflict. Nixon stated firmly that he did not intend to support the Soviet Union in any way if it has any aggressive intention against China.

He talked about the Soviet Union's wish to achieve this Asian security pact. Nixon showed us that the United States would not enter this [pact] in any way and that, in the discussions he had in the countries he visited—India, Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand—he revealed this position to his varied interlocutors. During these discussions, he clearly showed the United States' position, which does not wish to enter this system or to support in any way the creation of this Asian security pact.

He was very concerned by the possible escalation of the conflict between China and the Soviet Union and noted that in his opinion, if this escalation would tragically lead to a confrontation, this would be the most serious threat to world peace. I understood, according to Nixon's remarks, that he did not make a secret out of this before the Russians. He didn't express it directly but he said it in such a way as to make his position known to the Russians.

On multiple occasions, Nixon expressed his wish and concern with finding a way to normalize relations with China.

Of course, within the framework of these discussions, we deplored the fact that as a result of a series of prior acts, China did not participate in the United Nations, because in the end none of the major international issues could be resolved without China's participation. Considering this, we deemed as fair his wish to normalize relations with China. This was one of the problems. Of course, we could not discuss any actual means, but estimated that Nixon's intention of normalizing relations with China was a positive sign.

We explained to him: it seems to us that the analysis of the problems between the United States and China sets the tone of this normalization. If these problems are resolved, normalization will ensue and we told him that we will communicate this discussion to the Chinese government.

In regards to this matter, Nixon categorized the Vietnam issue as being another element that worsens the international state of affairs and that bores the United States which wishes to liquidate it.

He told us that he reached the conclusion that the Vietnam issue could not be solved militarily, that they had concluded that the situation in Vietnam would have to be resolved through political channels and that he was prepared to find a political solution. He said that at the moment the most important thing was not trying to decide whether they made a mistake or not by engaging in Vietnam or if they made a mistake in the way they conducted the Vietnam War, but the problem was how to find a solution.

Due to a confluence of favorable conditions—he stated—they reached the Paris talks. However, for a while now, the Paris talks have been idle, so to speak. He said: "We are willing to discuss absolutely any problem from the ten points of the provisional government to the four points of North Vietnam government and the eight points that we, the Americans, proposed, to any other point that could come up, but we want to discuss these to reach a conclusion and move forward. But for a while now we have been coming up against an attitude in Paris and we reached the conclusion—he said—that probably the Vietnamese realized that they have to apply the following strategy: to delay the peace talks and to set in motion a military offensive in South Vietnam hoping that this way the American public opinion, which was against the war, would become increasingly strong and would force the United States to capitulate and withdraw troops under unfavorable conditions." Nixon continued with the following remarks: "If the Vietnamese reached this conclusion, they are wrong. It is true that a good part of the American public opinion wants the end of the Vietnam War, and I myself want the end of this war—Nixon said—but the Vietnamese are mistaken in thinking that this war will end by having the American public force the president of the United States to capitulate or accept unfavorable conditions."

He said: "I am willing to wait until November, when there will be a year since the beginning of the Paris talks. If the current discussion won't make any progress by November, the United States will be forced to reassess its position."

Of course, we asked: "And what does this reassessment of your position entail? Does it mean that you will further intensify the war?"

He didn't say yes or no. He only said that the situation will need to be reevaluated.

Naturally, we tried to show: but look, they want to propose a solution, to install a provisional government in which all the sides in Vietnam would participate and that, after your withdrawal, they would organize elections. We asked: "Do you think that the election that will take place under the presence of American soldiers in South Vietnam will be free and fair?"

To this he replied: "I am willing to withdraw from there, of course, under the condition that North Vietnamese troops will also withdraw. I have nothing against respecting the decision of the Vietnamese people. If the South Vietnamese people say: the government in Saigon has to leave, I am not against it. If they say that they want to unite with North Vietnam, I will not be against it but this decision has to be made freely, under international watch and with all possible guarantees."

I said: "If the government in Saigon remains there, will the election be free?"

He said: "Saigon should not organize the elections."

"Then why are you not agreeing with the solution of the provisional coalition government?" we asked.

He said: "We cannot agree with this, because this provisional coalition government will not include any of the Saigon government officials, and if I would agree to this it would mean condemning the Saigon government before the Vietnamese people could express their position, and—Nixon said—I cannot agree with this."

So what can we conclude? This is our interpretation: the man is searching for a solution. This is all. The reasons why he is looking for a political solution are pretty clear to us at this time: the war in Vietnam is becoming increasingly unpopular in international public opinion as well as in the American public opinion.

The man has all the interest, then, to find a solution. We think that this is why he is looking for a solution. Of course, he is looking for a solution that will be as convenient as possible. But in the end, since he is looking for a political solution, this war, too, will have to end. It is a good thing if it ends as a result of discussions, and in our opinion, a solution could be reached that would respect the fundamental aspirations of the fight of the Vietnamese people. Of course, the discussions won't be easy and will take place over an entire evening session. But there are some objective conditions—in our opinion—to force the American administration to make concessions over the course of these discussions. In our opinion, this should be tried. Of course, it is not something that will be solved quickly, but it is a

matter which, if approached rationally and skillfully, could lead to the mobilization of large popular masses that could push the United States to make these substantial concessions that have to be won by the Vietnamese peoples, either during the discussions or militarily. We believe that promptly solving the Vietnamese issue is very indicated under the current circumstances, Comrade Zhou Enlai. Of course, not any solution will do. Nobody is thinking about this, but this needs to be settled under the condition that it assures that the Vietnamese people will have the possibility of taking control of their own future.

Why do we think that under the current circumstances there is an additional reason to wish that the conflict in Vietnam will be solved more quickly? We want this because of an escalation of the conflict between the Soviet Union and China and we are afraid that the existence of this war in Vietnam—I tell you exactly what we think about the situation—could encourage the Soviet Union to do something hasty. It would not be the first time that this would happen. Ultimately, it's only been a year since the intervention in Czechoslovakia, which, in our opinion, first of all, was the direct result of the fact that they did not think beforehand and did not analyze the situation or the consequences of their actions. In other words, we are very close to a situation which shows us that the Soviet leaders take action, at least sometimes, in very critical instances and circumstances, literally, in a manner other than rational, calm or wise. They are not capable of evaluating the situation realistically or having a sensible vision of the future. That is why we think that this ongoing conflict in Vietnam could be considered by these people as something that invites a hasty act. They're probably thinking that the Americans are on this side, China supports South Vietnam [NLF], we are coming in the North and doing a little cleansing, a preventive action—or whatever else you could call it. There are a couple other hypotheses but facts show us that very often these people are not able to evaluate situations and particularly their consequences in a rational, judicious manner.

This is why we think that this is the moment to find a solution to end the conflict in Vietnam as quickly as possible. It is clear that this solution, to a certain extent, represents an advantage for America. The fact that America ends the war in Vietnam is a good thing for it. The question is, how will it bring it to an end? If it finishes it ensuring that the Vietnamese people will be able to decide their own fate, then this solution is, in our opinion, more advantageous to the Vietnamese and all of us, than to the Americans. We also think that this solution might be reached during the discussions. What is important, though, is to conduct these discussions with enough skill and to take into consideration the fact that what probably constitutes for them—so to speak—the major holdback is [the need] to save the prestige of the United States, so that the United States won't come out of this completely humiliated. If a solution that will ensure this is found, it is our opinion and conviction that during these discussions, the fundamental objectives of the Vietnamese people can be reached.

In any case, we think that this has to be tried. This does not mean that the armed conflict has to end as a result of initiating more involved discussions regarding this matter; this can continue as long as a more acceptable result is reached. What we are not in favor of is the stalemate of the Paris talks.

This is what I wanted to express in regards to this matter, which I believe is one of the most important problems.

We tried to open discussions with him on the subject of the Near East. He showed relatively very little interest concerning this matter.

Zhou Enlai: Why?

Maurer: I don't know.

Zhou Enlai: It's very interesting that he didn't want to discuss this matter with you.

Maurer: The point is that the longest discussion centered on the problems that I just described.

Zhou Enlai: Couldn't the fact that they didn't want to discuss this issue with you mean that they have already reached an agreement with the Soviets?

Maurer: I don't know if they did or if they didn't. The only thing he said about the Near East is that if they did not find a way to eliminate this problem, this could become a dangerous matter. But how or what will it be...?

More than that, during the official address, we approached the Vietnam issue openly and very publicly, the way we normally do it, including the issue of American troop withdrawal. Comrade Nicolae Ceausescu stated this very clearly in his speech. Nixon very briefly mentioned this issue in his public speech. He didn't say yes or no. He said that the United States wanted peace, but would respect the commitments it had made. Basically, he avoided any polemic directed at this chapter. He did not want to make any public declaration or to take a public position, and this is how we concluded that the man was looking to facilitate the possibility of an arrangement.

These are the issues in Asia, as they resulted from the discussions with Nixon.

Of course, other than these, we also discussed issues related to European security and the United Nations...and on this occasion I told him: "How do you think you will be able to solve issues related to the UN, to disarmament and nuclear disarmament and all other problems without China?" He admitted that it was impossible to solve the major international issues without China and said that they have to find a way to normalize relations with China. This was the discussion with Nixon and the conclusions that we drew in the light of this discussion.

Of course, Nixon's visit to Romania set off some problems and I would like to inform you of those as part of this discussion.

On the occasion of the visit we made to Moscow, at the international conference of communist and workers' parties, it was decided that Brezhnev and Kosygin would come to Bucharest to sign the Friendship Treaty.

Cde. Paul Niculescu Mizil: The Friendship Treaty that has been agreed on for several months now and is ready to replace the one which expired over a year ago.

Maurer: We told the Soviets that Nixon would come here [to Romania].

Niculescu Mizil: They sent an official letter signed by Brezhnev and Kosygin to the Romanian side, informing us that they would come here on 15-16 July and asking for our consent. We consented immediately and the visit was arranged.

Maurer: And when Nixon's visit took place we made it known to them. Later, we received another letter also signed by Brezhnev and Kosygin, in which they stated that they regretted that they could not make it on July 15-16 due to unforeseen circumstances that would prevent them from coming.

Niculescu Mizil: The extent of their concern is what they didn't foresee...(laughs)

Maurer: Yes, this concern does not allow leaders at their level to come here. They said that they regret this since the treaty, which has particular importance, was going to be signed during this visit, but that they plan on doing this in the fall.

Niculescu Mizil: They proposed to sign the treaty in the fall.

Maurer: At a date that would be later established through common accord.

Zhou Enlai: Yes, unforeseen events... On the occasion of President Ho Chi Minh's death, Kosygin cancelled the reception of the Japanese Minister of Foreign Affairs, but later changed his mind and received him; this means that he granted more importance to Japan than to you. They do not keep their word to a socialist country.

When they found out about the death of President Ho Chi Minh, they decided to leave immediately for Hanoi. But, afterwards, when they heard that we were in Hanoi and that the funeral was taking place later, they postponed their departure. After finding out that we had returned, they rushed again to leave for Vietnam.

The Japanese Minister of Foreign Affairs was received as soon as he arrived in Moscow. We can see what attitude they have towards the Minister of Foreign Affairs of a militant country like Japan, to which they grant so much attention. In their heads the only countries that exist are the United States, the Federal Republic of Germany, Japan and then England and France. Those are their greatest friends.

This is the main problem.

Maurer: In any case, what we are concerned with is that during this whole affair our independence and sovereignty are respected.

Zhou Enlai: In our bilateral relations, we respect these principles and this is a condition that favors our friendship.

I have told you before and I want to tell you again, I also told the same thing to our Vietnamese comrades, that our guiding principle is not interfering in Vietnam's domestic affairs or asking them to continue the war or start negotiations. We will support them when they will ask us, when they need our support, according to our capabilities. I told the same thing to the current Vietnamese leadership.

Ho Chi Minh was a close friend of ours during periods of conflict; there were strong class feelings between us. However, the Vietnamese Party and state have solved and continue to be able to solve their problems independently.

Comrade Ho Chi Minh has participated at the revolutionary movement in China in 1920-1930-1940. President Ho Chi Minh's passing represents a loss not only for the Vietnamese nation, but also for the Chinese and nations around the world.

As you are aware, I wasn't able to leave the country for three years because of daily preoccupations. Yet these strong ties between our parties and the Chinese and Vietnamese nations determined me to leave the country for one day to go to Vietnam. Li Xiannian will lead the delegation that will participate at the funeral. Not attending the funeral would be a sign of disrespect on our part. I wasn't able to stay there more than a day; even though I was there during the first day, I was late. When I arrived the body was being embalmed.

When they found out that I was back in Beijing, the Soviets were relieved. They cannot understand these ties between us. There is not only a difference in our position but also in our feelings. This means that we are not going in the same direction.

What do you think of Soviet policy? They exercised so much pressure against Czechoslovakia! Likewise, they are putting great pressure on you and East Germany, while they allowed elections in West Berlin, which means selling out West Berlin. Currently, a large number of troops are concentrated to the north of China. They are trying to do too many things at once. Just as the Americans, they are involved in too many issues; they are active in the Mediterranean, the Indian Ocean, not to speak of the Pacific Ocean and the Atlantic, and they have even been in the Caribbean for a while.

Maurer: This is true, and we too are thinking of all these things, Comrade Zhou Enlai.

Zhou Enlai: What results from these facts is that all current Soviet leaders are the same, and they are all crazy.

Maurer: We are thinking the same thing, Comrade Zhou Enlai. But there is one difference. We are smaller than China, much smaller actually, and the care with which we are looking at all these things is much greater than theirs.

I want to tell you that there are many things that are very hard to explain or the explanations are very sad. But we have to take in account that the Soviet Union is right next to us. The only thing dividing us is a river not even 40 meters wide. The Soviet Union has great military capabilities. The crazier its leaders are, the more dangerous it becomes. Of course, we are by no means trying to cause a conflict. We are trying to find some common ground with the Soviet Union, not just in any way, but based on a set of principles. If the Soviet Union tries to do in Romania what it did in Czechoslovakia we will fight back. Of course, we don't have the pretension to crush the Soviet army, to reach Moscow and dictate peace in the Kremlin...

Zhou Enlai: You can't have these pretensions.

Maurer: ...We cannot do this, but we will fight in Romania the same way that the Vietnamese are.

Zhou Enlai: Just like you, we don't have these intentions either, even though they say that we are some sort of successors of Genghis Khan. We tend to ignore this calumny and we can tell you that we don't have these intentions either.

Maurer: Now, the truth is that we are worried about the deterioration of relations between China and the Soviet Union and I can tell you why: because this can cause the Soviet Union to do something stupid in China, but it can just as well do something stupid in Europe just to be able to say: my hands are free, I can do whatever I want to do there.

This situation does not only worry us but many others, too. I believe that many countries are worried about this situation; their preoccupation revolves around finding a solution to help avoid the conflict between these two great powers. Not to mention how this would affect socialism. It would be the war that started between two very powerful socialist countries and that could end up endangering international peace. We are taking this very seriously, Comrade Zhou Enlai, very seriously. The Soviet Union has put a lot of pressure on us, you know this well, to take the Soviet Union's side, to embrace its points of view, to be able to say: China leads a policy of aggression. It hasn't been easy but we thought we had to do this, it is mandatory to do this.

Zhou Enlai: Yes, we know this, and both the party and our nation appreciate your position because this is a fair position. It is not easy for you.

Maurer: We thought that for us, the only fair position is our main position.

Niculescu Mizil: And we clearly specified in the discussions between comrades Ceausescu and Brezhnev that we would never be the ones advising the Soviet Union to fight China, or the Chinese to fight the Soviets. In our opinion, the position that corresponds to the Soviet Union's interests—because we were discussing this with them—and international peace and socialism is trying not to intensify the conflict.

Maurer: Declarations of this nature have not been received calmly, Comrade Zhou Enlai. This is clear. But we thought that it is good to do this and I think that one of the things we accomplished at the Moscow talks, that took place the way it did, is that there was a fairly large number of communist parties that stood up against condemning China. It is not a secret for anyone that one of the objectives of this conference was to denounce China. When? After we agreed that there would be no

denunciations at the conference. The Paraguayan was the first to stand up.

Niculescu Mizil: The Paraguayan...this was the form.

Maurer: Yes, the form. Exactly.

Niculescu Mizil: Comrade Ceausescu had a discussion with Brezhnev before the conference.

Maurer: Comrade Ceausescu stood up and said: "This is something that we will not accept," and he wasn't alone. In my opinion it was a significant occurrence, maybe one of the most notable of the entire conference as certain things were prevented that could not previously be stopped. Comrade Ceausescu and Comrade Mizil, who talked for a long time with an entire group of parties, detected the preoccupation of an important number of parties with finding ways to improve relations with the Chinese Communist Party. The Italians expressed this wish together with the Spaniards and others.

Niculescu Mizil: This is where the following happens: certain actions undertaken by the Soviet Union, especially the intervention in Czechoslovakia, had a good side too—if we can put it this way—in the sense that they woke up a number of communist parties. An extremely important aspect, Comrade Zhou Enlai, was what I had the possibility to discover during the contact we made with various parties. This relates not only to the problems in Czechoslovakia, because there are parties that, after the invasion of Czechoslovakia, are examining their position [in the communist world] in more general terms. You see, we are giving much importance to the fact that in Moscow, a significant number of parties presented their own point of view and they clearly affirmed a party's right to independence, a fact that led to the [Soviet] failure to achieve the initial goals of the conference. The initial plan was to bring together a large number of parties that could all raise their hand in approval of the same idea, with the same discipline—so to speak—in front of which there could be only one leader. And this is not what happened since an important number of parties clearly exposed their own positions.

I have to tell you that according to the contacts I made with numerous other parties, many of the comrades in the leadership of these parties and central committees are reexamining the way they have perceived the Chinese problem until now. It is also an important aspect of the international communist scene.

There are parties, as I have informed you about some of these at the time, serious parties, which consider that it would be good to find a possibility to contact you, to hold discussions and meetings with the Chinese Communist Party and that affirm in official documents their wish to reexamine their former positions vis-à-vis the Chinese Communist Party. I am referring to the Spanish Communist Party, the Italian Communist Party and the Indian Marxist Communist Party with which I had a few meetings and which came to our Congress. I am referring to parties that are not necessarily big, but that hold a certain position, such as: the Communist Party from Reunion, a series of European communist parties, the English Communist Party, the one in Switzerland and the ones in the Nordic countries. We decided to develop contacts with these parties. I can honestly tell you, since our relations are based on complete sincerity, that the Chinese Communist Party could offer support in this process of building new relations within the workers' movement, against the infringement of principles of norms dictating relations, such as the intervention in Czechoslovakia.

Maurer: The affirmation of the so-called Brezhnev Doctrine.

Niculescu Mizil: Limited sovereignty.

These are some interesting reactions and we think that, as far as we are concerned, we should closely follow and stimulate them.

Regarding the same matter, I wish to tell you that during the contacts I made I had the opportunity to notice that many communist parties are concerned with the conflict at the Sino-Soviet border. There is a great effort to present China in a negative light. This is why, during the discussions we had with these parties, we clearly showed our position to the effect that we would not take the position that our Soviet comrades were trying to dictate [their views] and that our attitude centered on the effort to do everything possible to avoid a potential intensification of the conflict and to try to solve it by political means.

I want to underline that changes are occurring in Latin America, in the Dominican Communist Party, the Mexican Communist Party—we have good relations with both. There are some interesting positions even within the Communist Party of Venezuela, even though there are still some possibilities to maneuver things there. And there is a progression of tendencies and new aspects in the workers' movement that are worthy to mention and sustain.

Finally, with regard to the question that you posed, Comrade Maurer responded but I want to add one thing: our position is very clear. We will militate for the development of relations with all socialist countries. We will not do anything to worsen these relations, but we will firmly base these relations on the principles that we believe in and that we have already affirmed. And, to publicly state these principles, independence, the right of every nation, of every party to decide in its own country; you realize that, given our situation, it is not easy, but very difficult. I am telling you this for two reasons.

First of all, to show you that we are aware of the difficulties that we face; [but] we believe [in] stating these principles—and this is clear not only for a group of people, for Ceausescu, Maurer, for a few others, it is clear for the entire Central Committee, for the entire party, it is clear for the entire nation. The congress that we just organized, we organized it in this spirit, to clearly portray our position and that of the entire nation regarding this problem.

The second reason that comrade Maurer pointed out is the fact that we consider the development of relations between Romania and China to be extremely important in this context. In other words, we believe that the development of economic, political and military relations between China and Romania is not just another issue, or just another set of bilateral relations between two countries, but a matter that at the same time represents an important element in the promotion of the principles of independence, sovereignty, equality of rights and that helps Romania to promote these principles.

Maurer: All these show in our opinion, Comrade Zhou Enlai, that there are developments in the international communist and workers' movement, and in our opinion, it would be wise for the Chinese Communist Party to see if it could do something about these things. This is one of our concerns that we have emphasized. We believe that an intervention by the Chinese Communist Party within the framework of this debate on principles that is shaking up an entire group of parties could help clarify it, and this is why we believed it proper to raise these issues with you.

Of course, there are many problems in this world, but if we are going to discuss all of them, we would never get to sleep. But these are some of the issues that we wanted to bring to your attention. Maybe we will see each other upon your return, if you have anything to communicate to us.

Zhou Enlai: Will you stay here another night?

Cde. Gheorghe Maurer: But why not?

Niculescu Mizil: We can spend the day here, too, not only the night.

Cde. Gheorghe Maurer: Why not? If we've come all the way here and we made this trip, we can at least sit down and talk. It's clear.

Zhou Enlai: Your stop in Beijing is interpreted as a very unpleasant event by many people in Moscow.

Cde. Gheorghe Maurer: This is true.

Zhou Enlai: Considering the fact that you are the only ones stopping in Beijing. The Korean comrades have also stopped here. The others traveled through Afghanistan, Pakistan.

Cde. Gheorghe Maurer: This is exactly why we wanted to go through Beijing and why we wish to stay here another day.

Zhou Enlai: The Korean comrades will also stay.

Niculescu Mizil: I said: we first of all prefer this road because we know it and we prefer to take the roads we are familiar with rather than the ones unknown to us.

Secondly, I heard that several delegations took the same flight.

Maurer: All, except the Soviet delegation.

Niculescu Mizil: We preferred to take our own plane.

Zhou Enlai: And the Koreans came on their own plane, too. Albania, being a smaller country, could not send its delegation on its own plane but had to travel on a foreign plane.

We understand very well that you are in a difficult situation. Is it inevitable to have these Warsaw Pact maneuvers on your territory?

Maurer: Now I want to tell you one thing, so that we can be very clear. We had certain agreements—regarding the clarification of the Warsaw Pact problems—which were very rigid and gave the Soviets the right to do almost everything until the end. We asked that these agreements be abandoned and that a new agreement be signed that would ensure the rights of every state participating in the Warsaw Pact, [as well as] the [Military] Command. The discussions took approximately two years. They were very heated, but in the end we imposed our point of view that no troops can be deployed from one state or on the territory of a state without the consent of that state. Of course, this new agreement establishes joint exercises, in other words, the Command is responsible for organizing the preparation for battle of the armies participant in the Warsaw Pact. During this preparation, the armies do various exercises. We agreed on an exercise on our territory right before the invasion of Czechoslovakia, in which other states were meant to participate. Before the invasion of Czechoslovakia, we decided to postpone the exercise until the fall of this year. Now they came and said: “it’s time, let’s do the exercise.” Our Chief of the General Staff is in Moscow right now. He has instructions to show clearly that we cannot hold any military exercises this year because we had a series of [other military] activities [serie de actiuni], so military exercises are out of the question. He also has instructions to sustain the idea of staff exercises, only the commanders, on the map, without troops.

Niculescu Mizil: In any case, we told them that during the fall of this year we simply cannot do any exercises.

Maurer: And we wish to only have general staff exercises even in the upcoming years. However, we think that until the very end we will push these exercises further and further. In any case, this is the position we are taking. It is clear that they cannot impose these exercises on us. It is true that the operating rules of the Command give it the right to organize exercises, but they do have a say in the way the exercises are done and in all these other aspects. Or, we are determined to push further the military exercises involving troops on our territory.

Cde. Zhou Enlai: I wish to thank you for this report at such a late hour. Even though there might be differences in our points of view, such a direct exchange of ideas between our countries is necessary. As you said earlier, when you will return here, we will talk more about a series of issues. Now I briefly want to deal with certain issues.

First of all, regarding the Vietnamese issue. I can tell you clearly: whether the resistance movement against the Americans continues or whether the Paris talks continue, it all depends on the Vietnamese. We exchanged opinions on a couple topics with them, especially on the topic of South Vietnam and the resistance fight against the Americans. This exchange of ideas referred to the way we are going to support them and what we can learn from this. In regards to the way this war will continue, what proportion it will have, greater or smaller, these are their problems. Considering that our countries are neighbors and that our nations are connected by a long, revolutionary friendship, it is natural for us to help them. Vietnam is a neighboring country and I told them that China represents the back of their front. The nation of South Vietnam, of only 14 million inhabitants, operating on a limited surface of only 170,000 km squared, has been able and continues to resist an army of over 1,100,000 soldiers, including 500,000 Americans. It is amazing that such a small country has been able to put up resistance against such a big army for over five years. Because of this, there is nothing else we can do other than offer our financial and moral support. Considering that this is their war, our help can only be indirect. The situation is different in the Korean War where we directly participated with troops.

We believe that the Vietnamese people thus contribute to the cause of the proletarian internationalism, to the fight of nations across the world against imperialism. We talked about this several times in the past. This idea deserves to be emphasized by all of us, especially the Chinese nation. The Vietnamese people deserve our respect.

Regarding the Paris talks, we have never intervened in this matter. We don’t have to intervene. We did not intervene and we do not want to intervene; not only that, but we are not interested in the way these talks are unfolding, if they are stalling or not. We know a few things about these negotiations from the reports that our Vietnamese comrades present us.

In connection with this issue, I wish to make one proposition: it is necessary for you to make known the position of the Americans concerning the Vietnamese problem, considering that you have discussed this with the Americans and that you would not be peaceful if you did not. But when looking at the way the talks are unfolding, I think it is better that none of us interferes.

Maurer: But we can’t even do it, we don’t know.

Zhou Enlai: Maybe the Soviets are interested to have the treaties go faster in some situations and slower in others.

Matters like the West Berlin, the Middle East, and the Vietnamese and Czechoslovak issues are viewed by the Soviets as advantages in their negotiations with the Americans. It is likely that a number of well intentioned parties hope that the Americans will withdraw their troops from Vietnam and stop this war of aggression, but the Soviets do not look at things in this way. All their problems are subordinated to their external affairs, and their external policies are based on their alliance with the Americans, and this way these two big countries will determine the world’s fate. They are building a friendship with the Americans but are at the same time clashing with them. This is why today’s world is full of contradictions. In the context of these contradictions, your situation is more difficult than ours. We understand this. It is extraordinary how by promoting an independent foreign policy, you are not following the Soviets in their anti-Chinese acts and do not consider China as an aggressor country. We thank you for that.

If the war in Vietnam will end as a result of negotiations with unfavorable results for the Vietnamese people, the Soviets will be responsible for this, not us or you. If you would intervene in this matter, they would blame it on you. They would say that the Romanian comrades intervened in this matter and spoiled everything. You can express these good intentions, but without getting involved. We clearly told the Vietnamese comrades, as Comrade Mao Zedong clearly told Comrade Ho Chi

Minh, that the way this war will be conducted—fight or negotiations—will be decided by the Vietnamese. We also told them that if they will need our help in continuing this war, we will offer them this help, according to our possibilities.

Regarding the relations between China and the United States, you know that there are direct contracts between us and the Americans. You said it that, as a matter of fact, it is about China's place at the UN and Taiwan. We are discussing these problems with the Americans for the past 14 years. In any case, they know our position very well, and we know theirs. You put it very well that one day, sooner or later, these problems will be solved. Kennedy could not solve them. If Nixon won't solve them, there will be a Kennedy II and a Nixon II. In any case, we do not owe them anything, they owe us; they took over Taiwan and have to recognize the fact that Taiwan is ours.

In regard to our relations with the Soviet Union, I can tell you concisely that the border incidents that took place in the past months have been deliberately provoked by the Soviets. Their goal is to divert the population's attention from domestic problems.

Our first principle is not to provoke and the second is to resolve issues through equitable treaties. You know that we sent a delegation to Khabarovsk. In the beginning, they did not want to reach an agreement in not even one of the technical issues. However, we did reach an agreement in the end. They didn't foresee this so they proceeded to a number of calumnies.

Our attitude is based on not refusing negotiations, better said, on looking for equitable negotiations. We expressed this position in our declaration: until the issues are resolved the status quo shall be maintained and incidents shall be avoided. This is our position. During the last incident, which took place in Xinjiang, they took two prisoners and killed 22 of our people. They don't want to free the prisoners, not even the two in Xinjiang or another who was taken prisoner in the eastern sector of the border.

On the subject of the Soviet propaganda [claiming] that we would start a nuclear war, not even the Western press believes it. You understand that the only reason why we are trying to develop nuclear weapons is so we could destroy their own nuclear monopoly. Every time we tested nuclear weapons we published communiques stating that we will not be the first to use these weapons and that we seek the convocation of a conference bringing all countries together in order to ban these weapons altogether. Now they are making propaganda that they will bomb China's nuclear bases. But doesn't this mean war? Doesn't this mean an undeclared war? This will be war, it is an aggression, it can't be something else. They can say that the Americans are the first to have started bombing and now they can do the same.

In February 1965, this Mr. Kosygin stopped in Beijing on his way to Hanoi. His visit coincided with the beginning of the bombardments. At that time, Kosygin did not have any objections towards this. If the Soviets will take the same stand towards China as the Americans did towards Vietnam, we will not stand quiet, we will not allow this.

Vietnam has its own situation. They wanted to separate the war in South Vietnam from the bombardments in North Vietnam. They wanted to separate the two areas of Vietnam. You were in that country and are aware of this. China's situation is, however, different. China is a united country. In spite of this, there might be a number of crazy leaders who are considering taking action against our country. Maybe this is why Brezhnev said that it is time to create a collective security system in Asia. But we can discuss about this later, when you will return.

Vietnam needs our help.

Let's stop here and continue when you will come back.

Cde. Ion Gheoghe Maurer: This is what we will do. We will stop by upon our return and we will try to continue our discussions about the most relevant topics and if you are interested we will also update you on other issues. Maybe you have specific questions.

One last thing, Comrade Zhou Enlai. Maybe we would not have anything against sending a press announcement stating that we have met and discussed. If it doesn't bother you, we could do this.

Zhou Enlai: It doesn't bother us.

Niculescu Mizil: It is better, so nobody will say that we had a secret meeting.

Zhou Enlai: You stayed in Beijing, we saw each other...

Maurer: Yes, that we stayed in Beijing and had a friendly conversation.

Zhou Enlai: Go ahead.

1. Editor's Note: The Chinese did not participate, but sent a message to the RCP Congress. Soviet delegate Konstantin F. Katushev walked out of the Congress and returned only after the message had been read.