

April 29, 1962

**Response to the Soviet Side's Memorandum of 29
April on the Mass Exodus of Xinjiang Chinese
Residents to the Soviet Union**

Citation:

"Response to the Soviet Side's Memorandum of 29 April on the Mass Exodus of Xinjiang Chinese Residents to the Soviet Union", April 29, 1962, Wilson Center Digital Archive, PRC FMA 118-01154-04, 35-39. Translated by Charles Kraus.
<https://wilson-center.drivingcreative.com/document/118191>

Summary:

The Chinese Government rejects the Soviet position on the flight of 60,000 Uyghurs and Kazakhs from Xinjiang to the USSR.

Credits:

This document was made possible with support from MacArthur Foundation

Original Language:

Chinese

Contents:

Translation - English

Comrade [Zhang] Hanfu, please check.-[Qiao] Guanhua, 8/5, 1963.

Sent to Vice Premier Chen [Yi] and the Premier [Zhou Enlai] for approval-Hanfu, 8/5

Response to the Soviet Side's Memorandum of 29 April on the Mass Exodus of Xinjiang Chinese Residents to the Soviet Union

The Chinese Government has carefully studied the memorandum of the Government of the Soviet Union dated 29 April [1962]. The Chinese Government cannot help but express regret that the Government of the Soviet Union is not willing to take due measures to handle the problem of Chinese residents illegally crossing the border into the Soviet Union in accordance with long-standing practices between the two countries.

The explanation put forward in the memorandum of the Government of the Soviet Union is not convincing. The memorandum says that because the number of illegal border crossers was large, Soviet border defense personnel could not realistically block such a large flow of border crossers and that using force against peaceful inhabitants was obviously out of the question; thus, the Soviet border defense organs abandoned any possibility of following such normal practices. This argument is inconsistent with the facts.

This border crossing incident began in mid-March and, according to our understanding, at that time very few Chinese residents were crossing the border illegally. The Soviet border defense organs had both the power and the responsibility to turn them back, or to return them to the Chinese side after they had illegally crossed the border. However, the Soviet Union did not act in this way. Moreover, during a meeting between the responsible cadres from the Soviet border defense organs at Ba-ke-tu [sic] and the Chinese side's border defense personnel on 23 April, the Soviet side only raised that three Han Chinese residents had crossed the border but did not make any representations about the roughly 20,000 Chinese residents who had already crossed the border. When the Chinese side's border defense representatives then took the initiative to inform the Soviet side of this situation, the Soviet side's representatives expressed that they would report [this] to higher authorities. It seems, in the eyes of the Soviet Union's border defense personnel, the flight of roughly 20,000 Chinese residents does not constitute a problem of illegal border crossing. How could the Soviet border defense personnel have noticed that three Han Chinese residents had crossed the border, but not have seen that roughly 20,000 people had illegally crossed the border? The large numbers of Chinese residents who have crossed the border illegally have done so over the past month and [this] is continuing to take place. It is difficult to envisage that the Soviet border defense organs will obstruct [the border crossings]. If the Soviet Union really wanted to stop them, then according to the facts at our disposal: the Soviet side's barbed wire fences in the border region had many holes opened up. If the Soviet border defense organs had seriously [wanted to] prevent Chinese residents from illegally entering [the Soviet Union], this situation would not have arisen. If [illegible] evildoers had cut the holes in the barbed wire fences, then it was entirely within the realm of possibilities for the Soviet border defense organs to mend the barbed wire fences. However, these holes were open for a long-period of time, and of the Chinese residents who illegally entered the Soviet Union, the vast majority did so through these open holes. After entering Soviet territory, these people then were received and resettled by the Soviet side. Not only humanitarian considerations can fully explain this situation. If only the sick and women and children had been provided food and temporary resettlement, then why could the Chinese side not have been immediately notified and the people repatriated doing so? We have every reason to believe that, as long as the Soviet side had taken the right attitude from the outset, then the Chinese residents would have known that the Soviet authorities would not accept them. This would have greatly dispelled their ideas about crossing the border, and this affair would not have developed to such a serious stage as it is now. It is

obvious that one of the most important reasons why more and more Chinese residents have illegally entered Soviet territory [is because] the Soviet border defense personnel did not take such a correct attitude.

The memorandum of the Soviet Union raised the issue of not being able to use force against peaceful residents. We believe that it was unnecessary and inappropriate to put the problem so sharply because the Soviet border defense personnel were not facing a problem of using force on the illegal border crossers, but a problem of discouraging them. First they cross the border illegally, if they are not stopped, then escort them to the Chinese side. In the past, according to conventions, no matter if it was the Chinese side handling Soviet residents who had illegally crossed into Chinese territory or if it was the Soviet side handling Chinese residents who had illegally crossed into Soviet territory, it was always handled this way. Why not now? The Soviet comrades are as clear [on this] as us. Those Chinese residents who have already crossed the border should be repatriated according to the long common practices between our two countries, via coercion.

Based on the above, the Chinese Government cannot help but believe that the position taken by the Government of the Soviet Union in its memorandum dated 29 April is surprising. Regardless of what the Soviet comrades subjectively think [about this situation], objectively, adopting such a position will only encouraged more and more people to illegally cross into Soviet territory. Now, the number of illegal border crossers has reached 60,000. One cannot say that this is not a very serious situation.

The Soviet memorandum stated that the border crossings occurred from the Chinese side; that the border crossers, prior to entering Soviet territory, had to pass Chinese border defense guards and [illegible] went through the Chinese side's border defenses; that, obviously, the Chinese border defense organs and the relevant authorities should take measures to stop them from crossing the border; that the Soviet side believes the hopes expressed by the Chinese side in the 24 April memorandum are incomprehensible and, on the contrary, as the memorandum's conclusion, the Soviet side hopes for the Chinese Government to take measures to change the situation and restore the Sino-Soviet border to its normal state. According to the Chinese side, it is unfortunate that such a large number of Chinese residents crossed into the Soviet Union. The Soviet comrades trust that the Chinese side would never willingly see such an event occur. However, since this unfortunate incident occurred, the Chinese side has of course hoped that the Soviet side would offer normal assistance to maintain the normal conditions of the border. It is unexpected that the Soviet side not only [illegible] the support which they should offer, but instead have blamed the Chinese side unscrupulously. We cannot help but feel regret over this. Maintaining the normal conditions of border area generally relies on mutual cooperation between the two [neighboring] countries, especially and even more so between fraternal countries. For a long time now, the Chinese side has not only deployed very few border guards on the Sino-Soviet border, but also not set up any obstacles. The barbed wire was set up and managed by the Soviet side and is treated with strict vigilance by armed Soviet personnel. We had originally thought that this was consistent implementing past practices and the cooperation of the Soviet comrades, so it [the barbed wire fences] was okay. Then the Soviet side suddenly took this attitude, and of course you couldn't help but increase the difficulties in our work in prevent Chinese residents from illegally crossing into the Soviet Union. Under the new circumstances and to maintain the normal state of the Sino-Soviet border, we will continue to do a lot of work. However, the cooperation of the Soviet Union is indispensable. We have always attached much importance to such cooperation. Now we still hope that the Soviet Union will cooperate with us to take the necessary measures, in accordance with past practices, to work together to maintain the normal order of the Sino-Soviet border.

The Chinese side does not agree with the proposal of the Soviet comrades to dispatch personnel to the Soviet Union to meet with the fleeing residents and persuade them

to come back. As nearly 60,000 residents are within Soviet territory, according to past practices the Soviet Union is obligated to repatriate them to China. The Soviet Union should not ignore such responsibilities.

The solidarity between China and the Soviet Union is of great significance. Neither country shall do anything to influence this solidarity. We have no reason to allow such things to happen again on our border which will affect our solidarity. We once again expect the Soviet comrades to carefully consider our proposals and opinions.

[...]