

March 11, 1969

**Embassy of the GDR in the PRC, 'Note about the
Inaugural Visit of Comrade Ambassador [Gustav]
Hertzfeldtt with the Acting Ambassador of the USSR
in the PR China, Comrade Yelisavetin, on 10 March
1969'**

Citation:

"Embassy of the GDR in the PRC, 'Note about the Inaugural Visit of Comrade Ambassador [Gustav] Hertzfeldtt with the Acting Ambassador of the USSR in the PR China, Comrade Yelisavetin, on 10 March 1969'", March 11, 1969, Wilson Center Digital Archive, PA AA, C 1365/74. Translated by Bernd Schaefer.
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Summary:

Notes on acting Ambassador of the USSR in the People's Republic of China Alexei Yalisavetin's remarks to German Democratic Republic Ambassador Gustav Hertzfeldtt about what he viewed as China's troubling anti-Sovietism as well as the PRC's attempt at rapprochement with America and West Germany. Yalisavetin also discussed the eventuality of Mao Zedong's death and named Lin Biao, Zhou Enlai, and Yao Wenyuan as likely successors.

Credits:

This document was made possible with support from Carnegie Corporation of New York (CCNY)

Original Language:

German

Contents:

Translation - English

Embassy of the GDR in the PR China

Beijing, 11 March 1969

Note about the Inaugural Visit of Comrade Ambassador [Gustav] Hertzfeldt with the Acting Ambassador of the USSR in the PR China, Comrade [Alexei] Yelisavetin, on 10 March 1969

Further present: Comrade [Helmut] Ettinger, Interpreter

At the beginning, Comrade Yelisavetin spoke very approvingly of the positive and close cooperation with comrades from the German Democratic Republic's [GDR] Embassy in the past, and about the assistance and support provided by the GDR so far in difficult situations. Comrade Hertzfeldt expressed his desire and willingness to continue with the close and fraternal cooperation and mutual support.

In continuing, Comrade Yelisavetin informed about the work of the club^[1] of the chiefs of mission of the seven fraternal countries.

Then Comrade Yelisavetin talked extensively about the escalation of anti-Sovietism in Chinese politics. He referred to the increase of anti-Sovietism at the 12th Plenum of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party [CCP] in comparison to the 11th Plenum. The new statute of the CCP had also firmly affirmed anti-Sovietism as a foundation of foreign policy. The 9th [CCP] Party Congress^[2] is supposed to sanction this. The Congress has to break decisively with the 8th Party Congress^[3], where friendship with the Soviet Union was declared to be a pillar of the PR China's foreign policy. In order to create the atmosphere necessary for this undertaking, the recent border provocation was organized. Comrade Yelisavetin admitted that this provocation had been organized by the Chinese side with great perfection. This way the Chinese had also politically achieved the desired effect within the country.

Asked about future prospects, Comrade Yelisavetin replied the following:

Today the Albanian [embassy] counselor indicated that in his opinion the 9th CCP Party Congress will open on March 23. According to the Soviet comrades, the Chinese leadership has achieved the political effects needed until the Party Congress. If the Party Congress will really start on March 23, there are probably no further provocations to be expected before its opening. Certainly the Chinese leaders themselves would not consider an open anti-Soviet campaign during the Party Congress as advisable. Moreover, they are afraid that now, with the Soviet side being prepared, stronger counterpunches could follow. In any case, anti-Sovietism will definitely be sanctioned at the Party Congress. Afterwards one has to be continuously alert to provocations. In case the Party Congress will be delayed, you have to expect further provocations still before its opening.

Comrade Hertzfeldt asked how the Soviet comrades envisage further developments after the death of Mao Zedong.

Comrade Yelisavetin replied that in his opinion this will be followed by a certain transition period. Lin Biao had already been declared to be Mao's successor. He had once studied in the Soviet Union and would be more or less known to the Soviet comrades. He is not a great political leader. Furthermore you have to keep Zhou Enlai in mind. He will be turning 70 this year, but he is healthier and more popular with the people than Lin Biao. He is a very able politician. Since it is very important for all

Chinese people not to lose their face, there will also be no decisive criticism of Maoism after Mao's death. Mostly you will first have to deal with Lin Biao and Zhou Enlai. Zhou is a realist, who maybe will not allow a further stoking of anti-Sovietism at its current pace. However, the transition will proceed gradually. Stalin was also criticized only two to three years after his death.

During Mao's lifetime there are no visible signs of hope for an improvement of relations with the Soviet Union. Currently a tough political struggle is needed, the policy of the Mao Group has to be unmasked.

Another personality from the Group of 14 you have to watch is Yao Wenyan. He is writing strategic articles. The Soviet comrades are observing him very closely. So far he is not well known.

Comrade Hertzfeldt remarked that China is currently not only trying to have close connection with the Americans but also with West Germany. He referred to the correlation between the border provocation and the illegal election of the West German Federal President in West Berlin^[4]. An extremely important task of GDR foreign policy is to make any rapprochement between China and West Germany as difficult as possible.

Comrade Yelisavetin outlined five main current guidelines of Chinese foreign policy:

1. The political struggle against the Soviet Union
2. The increasing efforts to split the socialist camp, this is to differentiate between the individual countries (e.g. Czechoslovakia)
3. The flirtation with the capitalist world (especially with the United States and West Germany)

Those are the main determinant factors. Furthermore,

4. the expansion of influence in Asia and
5. the increased penetration of the African countries.

Those are the main directions and guidelines for Chinese foreign policy to be determined at the Party Congress.

Talking about China's economic development, Comrade Yelisavetin stated there are currently indications for the return to an experiment of a Great Leap. However, the leadership has drawn conclusions from the defeat in 1958 and approaches the experiment in modified form. Currently they do not simply talk about a Great Leap, but they are saying "the situation of a comprehensive leap is emerging". [Yelisavetin] has the impression they attempt to conduct the current experiments in secrecy so that nothing about them becomes public. This is showing in the radical curtailment of information outlets (especially the withdrawal of provincial newspapers). It is evident from economic results so far that there has basically no progress been made when compared to 1957. Comrade Yelisavetin presented known facts about significant decreases in production in relevant branches of the economy. The failure of all experiments over the last ten years is evidence for the bankruptcy of Maoism in China.

[Yelisavetin:] The previous period of the Cultural Revolution was a period of

destruction. Currently they are trying to build up something new. Apparently one has succeeded to end the process of forming revolutionary committees. The party apparatus still has not been built yet. Right now the following power structure is in place: 'Proletarian Staff' - Revolutionary Committees of the provinces - Revolutionary Committees of the counties - and so on. The role of the State Council has been greatly diminished. Currently it is important to identify what the character of the superstructure^[5] will be that they want to create. Here the relationships between the Revolutionary Committees and the new party organs to be created are important. So far those relationships are not clear. The draft of the new statute is using the following phrase: "The organs of the state, the trade unions and the youth organizations do recognize the leadership by the party". From this you might want to draw the conclusion that party organs will be established to which the Revolutionary Committees have to report. However, that is just an assumption. Furthermore, it is unclear what the role of the Central Committee and the People's Congress will be.

Currently the situation has reached a dead end, in a certain way. No new developments are apparent. The struggle within the Revolutionary Committees themselves is still continuing. Mostly those are criticized for a return to old patterns and methods. In any case, the task ahead in the current year is the creation of a new superstructure.

In conclusion, Comrade Yelisavetin expressed his conviction that a close, fraternal and fruitful cooperation will develop between Comrade Hertzfeldt and himself.

Notes taken by:

[signed Ettinger]

Ettinger

Interpreter

CC:

Comrade [Foreign] Minister [Oskar] Fischer

Comrade [Paul] Markowski^[6]

Department Far East/Information

Embassy Beijing

^[1] The regular meetings of ambassadors based in Beijing from the following countries: Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Hungary, Bulgaria, Mongolia and the GDR.

^[2] Held in April 1969.

^[3] Held in two sessions in September 1956 respectively May 1958.

^[4] March 5, 1969.

^[5] "Überbau", a term from Karl Marx, in the German original.

^[6] Head, Department of International Relations, SED Central Committee.