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Embassy of the GDR in the PRC, 'Note about a Working Breakfast of the Ambassadors and Acting Ambassadors of the Fraternal Countries on 28 March 1969 in the Bulgarian Embassy'

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Summary:

Notes on a meeting between the Ambassadors to China of the Soviet Union, the German Democratic Republic, Hungary, the Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, Mongolia, and Poland, in which they discussed a border incident at the Ussuri River, among other recent developments in China.

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Embassy of the GDR in the PR China
Beijing, 1 April 1969

Note about a Working Breakfast of the Ambassadors and Acting Ambassadors of the fraternal countries on 28 March 1969 in the Bulgarian Embassy

Present:

Comrade Halasz, Ambassador of the Hungarian People's Republic, with an interpreter [\[1\]](#)

Comrade Kohousek, Ambassador of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic

Comrade Hertzfeldt, Ambassador of the GDR with an interpreter

Comrade Yelisavetin, Acting Ambassador of the USSR

Comrade Bossev, Acting Ambassador of the People's Republic [PR] Bulgaria

Comrade Chulunbaatar, Acting Ambassador of the Mongolian People's Republic

Comrade Kwiatkowski, Acting Ambassador of the PR Poland with an interpreter

Comrade Bossev:

Information from Chinese source (no guarantees for reliability to be made):

On the border provocation:

The Chinese public is considering the Island of Damansky as Chinese territory. However, a large part of Chinese intelligentsia [\[2\]](#) believes those provocations were orchestrated by the Chinese side. This assumption is based on the fact that so far the Chinese side has published no numbers whatsoever on the dead and wounded. The Soviet side had published specific numbers. Probably there are fewer victims on the Chinese side, which leads to the conclusion that [the Chinese] prepared and staged the incident. The Chinese side had also not published any details about the course of events. The reasons behind the provocations are not territorial issues, but of political nature.

On the Chinese intelligentsia:

The process of a more moderate treatment of the intelligentsia is continuing. It gets confirmed by the fact that children of well-known "capitalist roaders" like Peng Zhen [\[3\]](#), Luo Ruiqing [\[4\]](#), and Peng Dehuai [\[5\]](#), who had been temporarily relegated from the universities where they studied, are now readmitted. The same is applying to children of former capitalists, landowners and Kuomintang supporters. The argument goes that children cannot choose their parents but their path in life by themselves.

On instruction at universities:

As a rule, there still is no instruction at universities but each year students are promoted to the next year of studies. Those who are currently scheduled for graduation even receive diplomas. Afterwards they are sent to labor in the countryside. There exists a massive shortage of teachers in schools and universities. Experiments to assign workers and peasants as teachers have failed. If the current course against teachers and professors continues, it will be tantamount to suicide.

On positions held by the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) and the Democratic

People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) regarding the border incident at the Ussuri River: It has become known that both strongly condemn those provocations, but they will not say so publicly.

Information from talks with English diplomats in Beijing:

In South China, especially in Guangdong Province, there occurred a massive return of youth to the cities. The youth are forming according institutions (similar to those of the Red Guards). These groups are sowing factionalism again, which is leading to an increase of anti-Maoist tendencies.

As far as the party [CCP] is concerned, [the diplomats] think that it is currently not of major importance. There was a phrase in "Hongqi" [newspaper] that the party committee serves as a permanent council of the revolutionary committee (this would have to be verified).

Currently a reorganization of the party is emphasized more than the construction of the party. The English diplomats concluded that the construction of the party has been already completed, and one now focuses on a new structure and purges.

Comrade Bossev informed that a few days ago representatives from the Chinese textile trade association tried to explain to [Bulgarian] trade counselor Gumnerov the Chinese version of the border provocations at the Ussuri. This attempt was successfully rebuffed.

Comrade Kwiatkowski:

He informed that currently a delegation from the Shipping Ministry of the PR Poland stays in Beijing to negotiate about the mixed shipping association.

Regarding the 9th Party Congress, he has heard from the National Liberation Front [NLF] of South Vietnam that it will be held pretty soon, namely in April.

The Polish Comrades from Shanghai [Consulate] reported that the Chinese side is attempting to replace previously used terms with new ones, for instance no longer "countries of the People's Democracy" but "Eastern European countries", no longer "People's Republic of Poland" but "Poland", no longer "GDR" but "Germany". So far there has been no agreement reached.

Comrade Kohousek:

He informed about a conversation with the Albanian Ambassador, who had answered negatively to the question whether his party has already received an invitation to the 9th Party Congress of the CCP. The latter stated the Party Congress is certainly a Chinese domestic affair and will be held without foreign participants. This would be nothing special at all; Lenin had also convened such Party Congresses.

About a meeting [by Kohousek] with the French Acting Ambassador Cerles:

During the Cultural Revolution, French diplomats have read a large wall newspaper in Beijing that featured a speech by Zhou Enlai about positions of the Chinese delegation at the 20th Party Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union [CPSU]. In that speech Zhou was to have said the following: When Khrushchev gave his speech against Stalin at the 20th Congress, Zhu De [\[6\]](#) applauded intensively afterwards and stated this approach against the cult of personality is appropriate.

Back then already, it was Mao who was in his mind on that matter. Deng Xiaoping^[7] was reserved and said he cannot comment but first needs instructions from the party leadership. After returning from Moscow, he conferred with Liu Shaoqi^[8] who told him one has to react positively to [Khrushchev's] speech. Only then Deng Xiaoping went public in this regard.

[Cerles] At the 12th [CCP] Plenum, Zhou Enlai had given a quite realistic speech. He demanded to make better use of specialists [experts] in the economy, to reeducate, and not to dismiss them. The good ones among them should be employed in the economy again. [Zhou] proposed to retain as many specialists as possible.

French Acting Ambassador Cerles thought that Deng Xiaoping has already been rehabilitated. He had even participated in drafting the statute. He certainly will receive a position at the Party Congress. The French said to have information according to which the National People's Congress will be reconvened after the Party Congress. Cerles was of the opinion that currently a preparatory conference for the Party Congress is being held. The current editorials of [the CCP official newspaper] "People's Daily" would concern the main questions [for the Party Congress]. Those editorials have the character of directives. Possibly the Party Congress will be organized such that it is completed by the 1st of May.

Concerning the border provocations, [Cerles] said the French think those were orchestrated by the Chinese side. Possibly this way the conference of communist parties in Moscow^[9] is supposed to be hampered.

[Kohousek:] The deputy of the Mauritanian Ambassador said the preparatory Central Committee session for the Party Congress had begun on March 22. There they are discussing the materials provided by Mao. Among other things, they are working on additions to the draft of the statute. As soon as those discussions will conclude, the Party Congress will begin.

Furthermore, Comrade Kohousek pointed out that, after a very long time, on March 25 the first positive article concerning Yugoslavia was published in the Chinese press. It was reported there that Yugoslav workers and students had come out against the "border attack by the Soviet Union at the Ussuri". [Kohousek said] one has to note that, since the [1968] events in Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia has adopted a strong anti-Soviet position. It is advocating against military blocs without differentiating between NATO [North Atlantic Treaty Organization] and the Warsaw Pact. In this regard, the Yugoslav position coincides with the one held by the Mao Group.

Comrade Kwiatkowski:

[He] interjected to state that Chinese press has currently begun to apply some new terms vis-a-vis our^[10] policy. At the 9th Party Congress of the Yugoslav communists they talked about [our] "limited sovereignty". A similar article was also published in the Chinese press.

Comrade Halasz:

He pointed out that this article with voices from Yugoslavia has so far has only appeared in the bulletins of [the Chinese official news agency] Xinhua, but not in "People's Daily".

Regarding the trade negotiations between Hungary and the PR China, he informed that so far this year only about 3 million rubles are covered by treaties. It is not yet known when the Chinese delegation will travel to Budapest. Many traditional goods (trucks, buses) are not accepted by the Chinese side. Probably there will be a decline in the trading volume.

Concerning the Hungarian National Holiday, Comrade Halasz said the Chinese side is currently demanding that invitations to offices do not contain specific names.

In addition, Comrade Halasz quoted some statements from a conference of U.S. China experts held between March 15 and 20 in New York.

Comrade Kwiatkowski added that parallel to the New York conference a similar conference of the U.S. State Department was supposed to begin in Hong Kong on March 19. There, all ambassadors of the United States in the Far East, as well as experts on China issues, have been invited.

Concerning the New York conference, Comrade Yelisavetin added that [the Soviets] have some information from the Soviet delegation at the United Nations: At that conference, the former adviser to President Kennedy, [Theodore] Sorensen, spoke and demanded to proceed according to the old Chinese proverb in light of the current aggravation in Chinese-Soviet relations: "Sitting on the mountain and watching the fight of the tigers". National interests of the United States would demand a rapprochement with the Soviet Union as well as with China. You have to remove the barriers between the United States and China. This would be even more important insofar the United States is in many parts of the world in direct confrontation with the Soviet Union, for instance in Vietnam, in West Berlin, in the Middle East, and in the Mediterranean. In contrast, Beijing is confronting the U.S. just with words. The conclusion drawn [at the New York conference] was that past U.S. policy on China has so far not succeeded.

Furthermore, Comrade Yelisavetin informed about an incident at the Chinese-Korean border (see analogous information from Berlin).

[Yelisavetin:] The Soviet comrades have reliable information from Hanoi that in February a Chinese military delegation headed by the commander of the Chinese military border district had been in the DRV. There they negotiated over the withdrawal of the Chinese construction and pioneer units from the DRV. It got confirmed by the DRV Foreign Ministry that the Chinese will withdraw part of their troops. Of the previous 100,000 men about 20,000 will remain in the DRV.

The Vietnamese side is very concerned about the context of deterioration of Soviet-Chinese relations and the anti-Soviet campaign in China. They are afraid of ripple effects on the Vietnamese situation. There are reports that Ho Chi Minh plans to come to Beijing soon to have talks about this at the highest level.

Comrade Halasz:

He added in this context that the PR China this year had provided aid in the amount of 800 million Yuan to the DRV.

Comrade Yelisavetin introduced a figure of 200 million Yuan. It is suspected that the Chinese side has included the costs for the transports of [aid from] the socialist countries into their own aid figures.

Comrade Kohousek:

He informed that the Chinese initially intended to demand payments for the transit of aid transports from the socialist countries. The Vietnamese side raised objections to this. Then the Chinese side promised to defer their demands for the current year.

Comrade Yelisavetin:

He pointed out that, in the context of the Chinese border provocation, the Chinese currently reference an alleged statement by Lenin according to which the Soviet

Union had annulled all unequal treaties with China. The border treaty of 1860/1861 would fall into this category. This reference is wrong. Lenin had talked about that all unjust secret agreements between Russia and other powers about China had been annulled. Border issues were not touched upon at all back then. During negotiations in August 1964, the Chinese side had attempted to force the Soviet side to agree to a resolution according to which those [border] treaties were unjust and, based on this presumption, new treaties have to be agreed upon. The Soviet side had rejected this. The Soviet side demanded a precise demarcation of the border line, because this border exists for more than 100 years now. For a long time, it had not been demarcated or controlled at all. There continues to exist a tense situation around the island of Damansky. The Soviet side has mined the island, the Chinese are trying to remove the mines. Incidents are to be expected also at other sites along the border.

Furthermore, Comrade Yelisavetin reported about his talk with [Soviet Minister President Alexey] Kosygin (see separate memorandum [\[11\]](#)).

Comrade Chuluunbaatar:

He informed about a Mongolian Foreign Ministry delegation supposed to travel to India, Cambodia, and Burma. Pakistan had refused to receive the delegation.

Comrade Halasz:

He informed about the soon to be expected Acting Ambassador of India in Beijing, Mishra:

Previously he was for 9 years counselor at the Indian Delegation at the United Nations. He is regarded as a very flexible and elastic diplomat and had played an active role in the resolution of problems at the United Nations. His [Misha's] opinions tend towards the Western countries; on controversial issues he is advocating India's mediating role between East and West. He had maintained good relations with the socialist representatives and was always very well informed.

Notes taken by:

[signed Ettinger]

Ettinger

Interpreter

[\[1\]](#) female.

[\[2\]](#) Original uses German translation (Intelligenz) for this Russian term to define the "educated class".

[\[3\]](#) 1901-1993.

[\[4\]](#) 1906-1978.

[\[5\]](#) 1898-1974.

[\[6\]](#) 1886-1976.

[\[7\]](#) 1904-1997.

[\[8\]](#) 1989-1969.

[\[9\]](#) International Meeting of Communist and Workers Parties, held June 5-17, 1969 in Moscow.

[\[10\]](#) The pro-Soviet socialist countries represented at this ambassadorial meeting.

[\[11\]](#) [I am not aware of this memorandum, BS.]