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Embassy of the GDR in the PR China, 'Note about a Conversation with the Acting Ambassador of the Soviet Embassy in Beijing, Comrade Yelisavetin, on 17 December 1970 in the Embassy of the GDR'

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Summary:

A discussion of a conversation about the Mao regime, the establishment of the first Provincial Party Committee, the People's Congress, and changes in foreign policy, specifically Sino-Soviet relations.

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Embassy of the GDR in the PR China
Beijing, 18 December 1970

Note

about a Conversation with the Acting Ambassador of the Soviet Embassy
in Beijing, Comrade Yelisavetin, on 17 December 1970
in the Embassy of the GDR

Comrade [Evgeny] Yelisavetin paid his farewell visit to me. During our meeting he shared, among else, the following thoughts about the situation:

I. On the Domestic Situation

1. The Mao Regime has apparently solidified and consolidated itself. You have to be realistic and proceed on this assumption.
2. Apparently there are hardly any forces of resistance existing.
3. This year there evidently has been economic progress made. The situation is better than in the previous year. On this foundation, the Maoists can "continue" for now.
4. The first Provincial Party Committee has been established in Hunan province. As it is well known that Hunan is Mao's home province, this might be possibly a "present" for his birthday on 26th December.

Structure and proceedings of this committee are not fully clear. The committee has 75 members and 15 candidates. Explicitly mentioned were the election of a 1st Secretary, a secretary, and a deputy secretary. The 1st Secretary is the Acting Chairman of the Revolutionary Committee (the Chairman of the Revolutionary Committee has not been mentioned any more for quite some time). This personal union is indicating that, on this level as well, state power and "party power" have been concentrated under one roof. The secretary and the deputy secretary are from the military. Maybe these three people are the attainment of the so-called threesome combination.

5. There are speculations that the People's Congress is already in session, respectively that there are preparations or meetings taking place. Hints in this directions are that Dong Biwu^[1] and Li Xiannian^[2] did not perform certain duties in public in recent days, and in both cases health issues were given as the reason. Guo Moruo^[3] as well, who otherwise attends all receptions of this kind, did not show up at the banquet honoring the Foreign Minister of Mali. I [Hertzberg] referred in this context that several diplomats have observed during both day- and nighttime how a large number of official cars were parking near the building of the People's Congress.

II. On the Foreign Policy of the Chinese Leadership

1. The changes in foreign policy are obvious. More difficult to answer is the question about the character of these changes. Tactical modifications are evident while the

content of Maoist policy, namely anti-Sovietism, has remained; even though the latter in part decreased, it also gets in part increased again (during the establishment of the Party Committee in Hunan the delegates had studied Lin Biao's report at the IX [CCP] Party Congress and material from the 2nd Plenum: this is material of explicitly anti-Soviet content). Nevertheless, there remains the question whether there lies "somewhat more" than just tactics behind changes in foreign policy; or whether potentially even, though to limited extent, healthier forces exert a certain influence. This has to be monitored carefully and weighed with extreme diligence.

2. We have to exploit all opportunities that might arise from aforementioned changes. At the same time, we have to be clear-eyed that the new situation can also lead to some extent to greater danger, because this way for many, for instance for representatives from Afro-Asian countries, the nature of Maoist policy is harder to recognize.

3. Given all these circumstances, it is a good thing that the Soviet Union will be represented by a new ambassador in Beijing who is not "tainted" by the past, and who personally had not to go through the harsh confrontations with the Chinese side as Comrade Yelisavetin was forced to during the time of the border provocations. Taking all the elements mentioned above into consideration, the new ambassador can begin with a "fresh start" and prepare for all potential opportunities.

Signed [Gustav] Hertzfeldt
Ambassador

CC:

1. [GDR] Foreign Ministry, [Foreign Minister] Comrade Fischer
2. Foreign Ministry, Far East Department
3. [SED] Central Committee, International Relations Department
4. Foreign Ministry, Central Information Unit
5. Embassy Beijing

[\[1\]](#) 1886-1975, in 1970 2nd Vice Chairman of the PRC.

[\[2\]](#) 1909-1992, in 1970 Vice Premier of the PRC.

[\[3\]](#) 1892-1978, in 1970 Chairman of the Chinese Academy of Sciences.