

September 16, 1971
**German translation of a Russian-language
information from the CPSU Central Committee sent
to GDR leader Erich Honecker**

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Summary:

A report on Sino-Soviet and Sino-American relations with a discussion of Maoist policy. Specific attention is called to Sino-Soviet border disputes.

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[Handwritten]
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[signed] EH[2]
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[Handwritten note]

Comrade Erich Honecker!

I consider this statement so excellent that, with certain reductions and modifications, it should be distributed as internal party material. So comprehensive, in-depth, and informative is this communication, that it is deserving of a wider circle of readers.

[Signature] Norden[3]

[Handwritten]
Done, 5 October 1971

Following customs, the Central Committee of the CPSU deems it necessary to inform about the status of Soviet-Chinese relations in the recent period.

The principled course of our party towards China has been reaffirmed through the decisions of the XXIV CPSU Party Congress[4]. This course is combining within itself the consequent defending of principles of Marxism-Leninism and the comprehensive strengthening of the unity of the socialist community of states and the international communist movement, with the course towards a normalization of state-to-state relations between the USSR and the PRC, and the restoration of friendship and good neighborly relations between the Soviet and the Chinese people. We think this will serve towards the fulfillment of the task posed by the meeting of the fraternal parties in 1969: solidification of the union of all revolutionary forces of present times in the interest of the struggle against imperialism.

After the meeting of the Prime Ministers of the USSR and the PRC, which had occurred on our initiative on 11 September 1969 [at Beijing Airport], there followed a certain progress concerning normalization of state-to-state relations. An exchange of ambassadors occurred, and the working conditions for the Soviet representations in Beijing have somewhat improved. The negotiations over border issues are continuing. Our trade with China, which is supposed to amount to 100 million Rubles this year, has somewhat increased; yet obviously such an exchange is by far not even coming close to the capacities of both sides. You only have to remember that in 1959 Soviet-Chinese trade of goods exceeded 1.8 billion Rubles. For a comparison, in 1970 the volume of Chinese-Japanese trade was 825 million Dollars.

We are of the opinion that efforts to normalize Soviet-Chinese relations have to be continued. In this year alone, the Soviet Union has submitted several important proposals of general nature, among them the following: for joint actions by USSR and PRC in light of the escalation of U.S. aggression in Indochina; for the signing of a treaty between our countries about the renunciation of force, including conventional arms, missiles, and nuclear weapons. We have proposed to the Chinese leaders that both sides reaffirm their commitments from the Soviet-Chinese Treaty of Friendship, Alliance and Mutual Assistance from 14 February 1950. The Soviet Union turned to

China's government with the proposition to participate in a conference of the five nuclear powers on nuclear disarmament.

An acceptance of such proposals by the Chinese leadership would obviously contribute to a normalization of Soviet-Chinese relations. However, all our motions were rejected under various pretexts. Likewise without responses remained our proposals to have an exchange of correspondents from central newspapers, to resume trade in the border areas, to reestablish contacts between the friendship societies, and to arrange for an exchange of foreign policy information.

On the one hand the Chinese leadership has in all these two years since the meeting of the Prime Ministers not shown any interest in improvement of Soviet-Chinese relations, not even on second-ranking issues.

It follows from all this that our efforts towards normalization continuously run into serious problems and obstacles erected by Beijing. We see as the main reason, behind the negative attitudes of the Chinese leadership towards our positive steps, that anti-Sovietism is still the core of domestic and foreign policy of the PRC leaders. The hostile course against the Soviet Union, laid down in the decisions of the IX CCP Party Congress^[5], and the anti-Soviet line in China's propaganda and policy have not experienced any changes whatsoever and are continued with the same intensity.

Beijing's unwillingness to join on a path of normalization of Soviet-Chinese relations is especially on display in the negotiations about border issues. Talks have now been dragged out for almost two years, but so far there has been no real progress. This has been so far exclusively the responsibility of the Chinese side because of its ultimate and obstructionist positions.

Since the launch of negotiations, the Soviet delegation has been proposing to begin with a review of the border line, because for that very purpose representatives from both countries are meeting. This also had been the agreement by the Prime Ministers of the USSR and the PRC on 11 September 1969.

However, the Chinese representatives are persistently rejecting to deal with the main subject of the negotiations, namely the borderline. In their efforts to loosen the current order of border security and to render moot the respective border agreements signed by both countries, the PRC delegation demanded to sign a so-called "Agreement about Interim Measures to Maintain the Status Quo at the Border". The draft of this agreement contained a large number of unacceptable, for the Soviet Union discriminatory pre-conditions. Still before any discussion of the actual border question, the Chinese side demanded from us to recognize the existence of "disputed territories" on Soviet territory over an area of many tens of thousands of square kilometers. The Chinese side is also insisting that we (again before discussing the actual border question) withdraw our border guards from those territories and leave our population there without any protections, while the Chinese forces would remain in their current positions. It is obvious that the Soviet delegation could not agree to such pre-conditions which represent an attack on the sovereignty of our country.

We are telling the Chinese representatives again and again: If you think you can assert legitimate claims, we have to sit down around a table, compare the treaty documents and maps of the border line, explain motives and arguments, and finally reach an agreement. In response we are always hearing the same thing: "First accept our conditions, sign the agreement about the interim measures, and only then we can move on towards discussion of the border line".

Nonetheless our delegation showed flexibility and undertook several steps aiming at

a search for a reasonable compromise.

We have proposed to simultaneously review the border line as well as the measures on maintaining the Status Quo at the border. The Chinese delegation responded with a categorical "No". Then we showed another concession and declared our willingness to reach an agreement over "interim measures", on which the Chinese side had insisted, before a begin of concrete talks about the border line. Then we submitted our draft of an Agreement on Maintaining the Status Quo at the Border for discussion. In this our draft of the mentioned agreement, all reasonable proposals from the Chinese side had been adopted. The discussion of individual provisions of both drafts demonstrated again the unwillingness of the Chinese delegation to move the negotiations beyond deadlock. They still persistently insisted on their initial positions.

In order to move the talks forward and make some progress, we proposed in July 1970 to fixate the line of the Soviet-Chinese border in its Eastern segment through a bilateral document already before signing an Agreement about Maintaining the Status Quo. The border line is running there mostly along the rivers Argun, Amur, and Ussuri, where the incidents had occurred. Here we took into consideration that this border segment had been mostly agreed upon during the Soviet-Chinese border consultations in 1964. Back then, the working groups of both delegations had reached agreement and prepared the maps and documents for signing. If the Chinese side would have agreed to our proposal, more than half of the overall length of the border line (more than 4,200 kilometers) would have been specified. This way automatically many other problems would have been resolved, which in the past had led to incidents, like for instance the economic activities of the border populations, navigation, and other things. However, the Chinese side refused to discuss these constructive proposals.

The Chinese leadership is escalating the situation and delaying the negotiations on purpose. At the same time, it is eager to maintain the tensions at the border. Military personnel and civilians from the PRC do attempt to cross the border without permission of the Soviet authorities, to enter into our territory, and to create conflict situations. While violating the Status Quo the Prime Ministers of both states have agreed to maintain, the Chinese border authorities attempt, by way of creating fait accomplis, to take individual segments of Soviet territory in "possession" and to fabricate numerous and completely bogus "protests" and "protest notes". On the PRC territory along the border with the Soviet Union and in the hinterlands, the heightened construction of fortifications, bases, and air raid shelters is continuing. Trenches and dugouts are built, military maneuvers are taking place.

In the negotiations, the Beijing leaders are obviously raising unacceptable demands to delay any agreement on border questions. Because of their own claim of authority, they try to "possess" individual segments of Soviet territory, and they are exploiting all this to create in the PRC a psychosis over a danger of war.

In order to exert pressure on us, in talks with bourgeois personalities^[6] the Chinese leaders are spreading a version of an agreement between the Prime Ministers which they made up themselves and is contrary to the facts. They falsify our positions, accuse us of "intransigence" and of attempting "to negotiate with the threat of force" etc.

All this is leading us to the conclusion that in Beijing one is at the moment not interested in a final and complete agreement with the USSR over the border question. Apparently the Chinese leadership is viewing the current negotiations as means towards their own political ends in their own country; as a form of struggle against the CPSU and the Soviet Union, as an element of their "new" foreign policy tactics. With the help of these tactics, the leaders of the PRC want to demonstrate their alleged love for peace and to mislead worldwide public opinion. Judging from all this,

they are afraid that a final solution of border issues between our countries would strike a severe blow to the mendacious thesis of Maoist propaganda regarding a "threat from the North", this is from the side of the Soviet Union. Provocative fabrications of this kind are spread all over the PRC in order to inflame the nationalist and anti-Soviet passions.

When we had sent our delegation to Beijing, we obviously did not harbor any illusions concerning the position of the current Chinese leadership. We were aware that we could not expect quick results and that a difficult and tough confrontation was lying ahead of us.

The continuation of negotiations is still demanding perseverance, fidelity to principles, and firmness from us. At the same time we are of the opinion that also in the future the necessary flexibility must be shown - in order to safeguard at least the not very important, but still positive aspects that could have been achieved as a result of our efforts in the area of state-to-state relations with the PRC.

The reasons for the great difficulties towards a path of normalization of the Soviet-Chinese relations are in our opinion the following: the current Beijing leadership is still sticking with its chauvinist great-power ambitions in the international arena.

Though Beijing is still maintaining its previous strategic objectives, in recent times it is resorting to more comprehensive maneuvers. There are reasons for this.

The Maoists have proven to be incapable to master the tasks of economic development of the PRC without using the old experienced cadres who had been persecuted during the period of the "Cultural Revolution".

The extremist, militant, and adventurist policy of the Maoists, the vandalism of the "Cultural Revolution" have done great damage to the international authority of the PR China. The Mao Zedong Group has suffered a fiasco in its efforts to split the communist world movement. All this caused Beijing to apply some corrections to its tactical line in domestic as well as in foreign policies in order to make them appear serious.

Verbally China is today going to bat for the rights of the small and weak peoples. It is talking about its peacefulness, about its commitment to the principles of peaceful coexistence, and its claims to advocate international detente.

However, the words of the Chinese leaders hardly match their deeds at all. The Maoists bluster about non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries. However, during the Czechoslovak events they were in fact on the side of the counterrevolution. They attempted to exaggerate the problems arising in Poland at the end of last year and to exploit them for the weakening of socialism.

The leadership of the PR China is still adopting an extremely hostile attitude towards all constructive proposals from the USSR and the other socialist states aiming at a reduction of international tensions. Beijing attempts to block the efforts for strengthening security in Europe and on convening an all-European security conference. It wants to discredit the building of a system of collective security in Asia, and in the Middle East it is supporting the adventurist extremist elements. De facto the Chinese leaders are going against actual disarmament measures, among them the signing of international treaties to ban chemical and biological weapons and nuclear tests, including underground ones.

There is the quite clear intention within the policy of the Chinese leadership to create trouble on the international stage for the Soviet Union and the other socialist states.

The Beijing leaders are categorically against any common action with the socialist states in the struggle against imperialism and [they are] against the joint support for the Vietnamese people heroically fighting back against the U.S. aggression.

Today the objective facts are like that: the Mao Leadership is striving to strengthen its positions in its struggle against the unity of the socialist countries and the communist world movement by way of an agreement with imperialism, especially with U.S. imperialism, and through a weakening of the front of anti-imperialist struggle.

To serve that purpose, the Chinese leadership is painting a distorted picture of the current world. It [leadership] is arguing against the definition jointly agreed at the conferences of the fraternal parties in 1957, 1960, and 1969^[7], according to which the main contradiction in the current epoch is the conflict between socialism and imperialism. In contrast, the Maoists are asserting that there exist allegedly four main contradictions, of which the first is the contradiction between imperialism and "social-imperialism"^[8] on the one and the oppressed nations on the other hand (with the latter they also include the peoples of socialist countries).

The current tactical line of the Maoists pursues a policy of differentiation vis-a-vis the socialist states. With the intention to split the socialist community and to act up as the "protector of the small states", the Maoists are repeating over and over again that you have to fight "for autonomy and independence from the Soviet Union". The leaders of the PR China attempt to bait the representatives of the socialist countries with the provocative thesis, that for China there do not exist such problems in relations with the socialist states of Eastern Europe as they do exist in relations between the USSR and the PR China.

From information by leaderships of some fraternal parties, we know that the Chinese leaders demonstrate to the outside their benevolence towards individual socialist countries, but at the same time they are trying to conduct hostile subversive propaganda among the populations of those countries and to install their news agency there to gather intelligence et cetera.

It is obvious that the anti-Soviet and anti-socialist orientation of Chinese foreign policy is met with "understanding" in the capitalist world. Recently the PR China got diplomatically recognized by one capitalist country after the next. Nothing would have to be said against this; if not each of these acts would be presented as if they were an award for the policy of dividing and blowing up the united front of the anti-imperialist forces, for the anti-Sovietism, and for the Maoist "insightfulness" expressed towards the West. The Chinese leadership wants to move out of isolation and to expand its foreign policy contacts. It does so with flattering or promises, if needed also with pressure, in order to bring all those to China's side who tolerate or praise its "special" course.

The forthcoming turn in Chinese-American relations did not come about unexpectedly in any way. As a matter of fact, a normalization of relations between the PR China and the United States would actually have to be considered as something positive. However, we must not ignore the concrete situation in which this is occurring; also not the motives by which the actors are guided. Beijing as well as Washington want to exploit the Chinese-American rapprochement for a political deal at the expense of the interests of other peoples.

We are of the opinion that the Chinese leadership is operating with this subject on the basis of its hegemonist claims in Asia. In Beijing they are noticing that the U.S.

aggression in Indochina is foundering and the outcome of this conflict is only a matter of time. With the struggle against American aggression, the authority of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam and the leading role of the DRV on the Indochinese peninsula is growing and strengthening. This is the result of the combined military, political, and diplomatic offensive of the Vietnamese comrades against the United States. Also, the broad international support for Vietnam from the side of the socialist countries, and the communist and workers parties from all over the world, was of great importance.

The politicians in Beijing are worried about such a course of events. With the establishment of direct contacts with Nixon, they wanted to take away from the DRV the initiative of settling the Vietnam question; also to claim for itself the main credit and thus to weaken Hanoi's position.

One must not forget that Mao Zedong and other Chinese leaders let it be known in their flirtation with Washington that they are willing to support Vietnam only up to a certain limit, and that they will not engage in a direct conflict with the United States. This was for instance the case in 1965 when Mao Zedong, in a way in response to the U.S. provocation in the Gulf of Tonkin, indicated in his conversation with E. Snow^[9] that the PRC does not intend to intervene in the Vietnam conflict. Soon afterwards the United States began with the bombing of the territory of the DRV. A similar situation got repeated when, after a friendly statement by Mao towards the U.S. (in an interview with the same Snow), the Americans intervened into the liberated areas of Laos. Yes, and even the invitation of Nixon to the PRC just at a moment when the Vietnamese with their Seven-Point-Proposal for a peaceful solution had significantly stepped up their political offensive against the Nixon Administration, provided Washington actually with cover to avoid a response to the Vietnamese proposals and to further delay a solution of the problem how to end the war.

Objectively, the anti-Sovietism of the Chinese leaders is assistance for the dirty work of anti-communism. It is no coincidence that the reactionary forces from all over the world, including the American ultras, the West German revanchists, and the Zionists, are welcoming with joy Beijing's anti-Soviet objectives and actions.

Reality is confirming over and over again that the assessment made by the fraternal parties concerning the Maoists' policy is correct. The recent steps by the PRC leaders vis-a-vis the U.S. are a case in point.

Pursuing a course towards rapprochement with the United States, the PRC leadership is apparently striving towards changing the existing balance of forces in the world to its favor. Washington on the other hand is viewing it as advantageous in the current situation to support China's great power ambitions - as a counterweight to its main opponent, namely the Soviet Union and the socialist community of states.

Recently the Chinese leaders have used for their hegemonic goals also the slogan of a fight against the two "super-powers". Based on conceptions deprived of any class-related position, they are attempting to rally under their leadership a random, motley group of "small and medium states" for the "fight against the two super-powers". However, actual actions by the Beijing leadership, and its desire for changing the character of Chinese-American relations, are displaying their intention to conduct this struggle mainly against the Soviet Union.

When looking at the question of Soviet-Chinese relations, it must not be left unsaid that there exists a situation of total militarization in the PR China, and that an artificial atmosphere of a "besieged fortress" is getting fueled. The Army is holding the key positions in the country. In the organs of civilian administration, in the so-called Revolutionary Committees and the new Party Committees to be established, the most important positions are in the hands of the military. Democratic forms of

leadership are missing in the PR China. The leaders and members of the Party Committees and Revolutionary Committees are not elected but appointed from above. The regime of personal power is enshrined in the legislative order. In essence, in China a military-bureaucratic dictatorship has been created.

Extreme nationalism, as expressed in anti-Sovietism, is the basis for ideological penetration of the population. The round of the anti-Soviet campaign, which began with, and was linked to, and followed after the XXIV CPSU Party Congress^[10], has been continuing until this very day. To fuel an anti-Soviet psychosis they actively use the Maoist slogan of "Preparation for War". The book markets of Chinese cities are flooded with anti-Soviet publications. The recent directive articles of the Chinese leadership are containing a complete collection of slanderous attacks against the CPSU and the Soviet government. They are getting broadcasted over the radio hundreds of times, they are studied in the networks of political education, they are getting translated into dozens of languages and widely disseminated abroad. And all that is happening before the background of mitigating the propaganda against American imperialism.

We are also not excluding the possibility that Beijing, by aligning itself with imperialism while staying on the anti-Soviet course without changes, could form a bloc on individual subjects with the United States and other imperialist powers. Although the previous and deep contradictions between the PRC China and the United States, as well as the hegemonic plans of the Chinese leadership, cannot be ignored when talking about a path to rapprochement between Washington and Beijing.

Regarding the implementation of steps toward normalization of state-to-state relations with China, our party deems it necessary also in the future to conduct an unforgiving struggle against the anti-Leninist theory and practice of Maoism as one of the most dangerous enemies the Marxists ever faced in the history of the revolutionary movement, and which is based on the economic and military potential of the largest country in the world in terms of population.

In their speeches, the leaders of the communist and workers parties are emphasizing with absolute correctness that the struggle against Maoism is an extremely important international task of all Marxist-Leninist departments and the entire revolutionary movement. This is why the course of the countries of socialism is now combining the principled ideological fight against the political-ideological platform of the Maoists -which is incompatible with Leninism-, the defense of the interests of the socialist community, and at the same time the willingness to normalize state-to-state relations. Therefore this course is met with understanding and support from the side of the international communist and national liberation movement. This has been demonstrated in all clarity by the International Conference of the fraternal parties in 1969 and the recent Party Congresses of the fraternal parties from different countries, where the anti-Soviet splittist positions and actions of the Maoists were resolutely condemned.

Maoism has nothing in common with Marxism-Leninism and proletarian internationalism. From the ground up it stands in contradiction with both of them, because of its "theoretical" guidelines and its political practices. In its substance, Maoism is a reactionary ideology. Objectively it is aligning itself with the imperialists, racists, Trotskyites, and reformists to build a "united front". Not one single concept of Maoism has withstood the tests of life. It has no constructive content, what is making the strive of the Chinese leaders towards hegemony in the international communist movement and in the Third World ever more dangerous.

Our party will also in the future, together with all fraternal parties, undertake undiminished efforts to strengthen the unity of the communist world movement and

to unite the socialist community of states.

[1] German translation of a Russian-language information from the CPSU Central Committee sent to GDR leader Erich Honecker, who then shares it with his fellow SED politburo members.

[2] Erich Honecker.

[3] Albert Norden, 1904-1982. Member of the SED Politburo 1958-1981.

[4] 30 March to 9 April 1971.

[5] 1 to 24 April 1969.

[6] Western politicians.

[7] International Meetings of Communist and Workers Parties convened in Moscow on 16 to 19 November 1957, in November 1960, and from 5 to 16 June 1969.

[8] Aka the Soviet Union.

[9] Edgar Snow (1905-1972), an American journalist with a long history of living in China and supporting the Communist Party and revolution. First Western journalist to interview Mao Zedong.

[10] See footnote #4.