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**Helmut Peters, 'Note about a Talk in the
Department for International Relations of the
Central Committee of the CPSU on 13 December
1976'**

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Summary:

GDR and Soviet officials discuss possible trajectories for China following the death of Mao..

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Helmut Peters^[1]

Berlin, 14 December 1976

Note

about a Talk in the Department for International Relations
of the Central Committee of the CPSU on 13 December 1976

Upon invitation from the Sector Head of the Department of International Relations of the Central Committee of the CPSU, Comrade Kulik, a conversation was held to exchange opinions about the current situation in the PR China. There Comrade Kulik provided suggestions for preparing supplementary material about the development after the death of Mao Zedong. Participating in the meeting was also Comrade Titorenko, consultant of the Department.

1. On the Assessment of the Current Development in China by Comrade Kulik

The events are in general so far confirming our previous assessments. They are an expression of objective determinants, the deep crisis of Maoism, and the activity of various political forces who have different conceptual ideas about China's further development.

There are three different set of opinions held by the Soviet Comrades:

a) Nothing of substance has happened. The character of the [Chinese] regime does not change, likewise doesn't the policy. A new Czar has followed the old one. They are just forming a new government.

b) The changes are of important and fundamental nature. They will lead to changes in the character of the regime. A de-Maoization is occurring. If this process is continuing successfully, one can expect that China will return to the path of socialist development.

d) The events are a big blow against Maoism. The criticism of the "Gang of Four:" is objectively discrediting Maoism. Within this framework there are operating different forces with different concepts. Apparently there are forcers who want to go very far in the condemnation of the "Cultural Revolution" (parts of the old cadres etc.). The new leadership under Hua Guofeng, however, wants to save the "king" through "sacrificing a pawn". This means they want to save Maoism overall by making some corrections. Their objective is not de-Maoization, but the strengthening of the Maoist regime. So Mao himself gets separated from the "Gang of Four"; all difficulties and problems are blamed on the "Four". This way the people are supposed to be directed against a "false enemy".

Comrades Kulik and Titorenko are supporting the third opinion, which was also voiced in my talks with other comrades who are known for factual-solid assessments.

The assessment I provided, which falls also along these lines, was met with complete agreement: Due to the pressure because of conflicts between Maoism and actual requirements of development, today all fundamental questions and backed-up

problems are becoming subjects of wide-ranging debates in the context of the fight against the "Four", this is against the until now orthodox version of Maoism. Parts of the political forces are pushing for a more or less radical break with the "cultural-revolutionary" line and policy (with the latter being the actual expression of the orthodox Maoist version during the past 10 years).

The deciding part of the newly formed leadership, however, is pursuing a line of adapting the previous course to certain realities in order to gain better launching positions for the implementation of unchanged Maoist objectives.

2. Proposals made by Comrade Kulik for Preparing Supplementary Material

a) Comrade Kulik suggested to prepare supplementary material for the subsequent phase in addition to the already existing material about the development of China and Maoism 1975/76 until the summer of 1976. This material will have to consider all factors and processes since the summer of 1976 and analyze them objectively and matter of fact. It should cover the following topics and attempt to find answers to the following questions:

□

- defining the most important events

- analysis of the political forces and how they are moving along, analysis of the mood among the people's masses

- analysis of the situation and the policy of the newly formed leadership after the death of Mao Zedong

- a first prognosis on future developments

Our assessments so far should serve as the starting point.

b) When drafting this material in preparation of the first discussion between both sides [USSR and GDR], a division of labor ought to be established between the Soviet and our side. Comrade Kulik proposed that our side should have the main responsibility for undertaking the analysis of the following aspects:

- social-economic situation, situation and positions of the individual classes and social levels

- China and Western Europe after [the 1975] Helsinki [Final Act], among else relations with the FRG and the [Maoist] splittist movement

Maoism and international communist movement in the light of the Berlin Conference of European Communist and Workers Parties^[2].

c) Comrade Kulik thought the following timeline to be feasible:

- Preparing of respective parts of analysis by both sides until mid-January 1977, followed by a working consultation between both sides

- completion of the draft of the supplementary material until the end of January, handover of this material to all Parties affected

- convening the planned general conference in the 2nd half of February in Berlin.

Comrade Kulik is proposing to forward the above-mentioned deliberations to the comrades in charge in both parties [CPSU and SED] and to ask them to make decisions on respective arrangements.

This text was written in one original and two carbon copies, all of them for the Department of International Relations of the Central Committee of the SED.

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[\[2\]](#) Held in Berlin on 29 and 30 June 1976.