

June 21, 1977

Note About a Meeting between Comrade Hermann Axen, Member of the Politburo and Secretary of the SED CC, and Comrade O. B. Rakhmanin, Candidate of the CPSU CC and First Deputy Head of the International Department of CC, on 17 June 1977

Citation:

"Note About a Meeting between Comrade Hermann Axen, Member of the Politburo and Secretary of the SED CC, and Comrade O. B. Rakhmanin, Candidate of the CPSU CC and First Deputy Head of the International Department of CC, on 17 June 1977", June 21, 1977, Wilson Center Digital Archive, Foundation Archives of Parties and Mass Organisations of the GDR in the Federal Archives (SAPMO-BA), DY 30, IV B 2/20/126. Translated by Bernd Schaefer.
<https://wilson-center-digital-archive.dvincitest.com/document/113574>

Summary:

An excerpt of speeches given to the meeting participants. A major theme is "how to win back China."

Original Language:

German

Contents:

Translation - English

Department of International Relations
Berlin, 21 June 1977

Note About a Meeting between Comrade Hermann Axen, Member of the Politburo and Secretary of the SED CC, and Comrade O. B. Rakhmanin, Candidate of the CPSU CC and First Deputy Head of the International Department of CC, on 17 June 1977 in the House of the SED Central Committee [Berlin]

After the mutual welcome, Comrade Rakhmanin stated:

The Interkit went well. It was thoroughly prepared. Yet there have not been all i's dotted yet; there are still a major number of questions left to be discussed.

We have adopted good documents. We will report to our CC [CPSU] and make respective decisions. Comrade Brezhnev also assigned major importance to this [Interkit] meeting and emphasized how this exchange of opinions about China is of high value.

What is the purpose of our meetings? We have conducted an analysis and defined certain common lines. We hope the CC of our parties will confirm this analysis so that we can move on to jointly solve further problems.

I like the saying Comrade Axen quoted in his speech: Mao's trees will not grow into the sky . We very much hope so. Our last Interkit will be held in Beijing, and we will hand over all results of our work to Chinese internationalists.

At the Berlin Conference of European Communist and Workers Parties we had to grapple with a noticeable adversary; during Interkit we grapple with an adversary not present. During the Berlin Conference we reached certain compromises and formulas. This is not too bad after all. The Italian, French, Spanish, and Yugoslav comrades always return to certain phrases. We can, and we must, reverse those formulas. For instance, they talk about non-interference. However, we can also say to them: Do not interfere with our matters! We also have our attitudes and positions on certain issues. Therefore I think we can also use certain compromise clauses against our opponents.

In Havana [10th Interkit] we will continue to discuss about China. Certainly the situation in China will still be complicated by then. Yet sooner or later socialism will also triumph in China.

Comrade Axen thanked the CPSU CC, and Comrade Rakhmanin in particular, for the major work they have done. He stated: We have to consult each other permanently about these issues for three main reasons:

1. because of the security of our countries, in particular the Soviet Union;
2. in the interest of the Chinese people. We love the Chinese people and the Chinese Revolution, and no crime of the Maoists can overcome these facts;
3. the global balance of forces plays a major role in this context. In 1960 the Chinese still participated in the International Meeting [of Communist and Workers Parties in Moscow]. They already had some incorrect positions back then but at least they signed the final document after tough discussion. All objectives we then came up with would have been easier to realize if the Chinese would not have defected. On all questions we would have proceeded faster. The imperialists are seeing it the same way. This is why I used in my speech the term of the 2nd front.

Today we must note that there exists an objective correlation between Euro-Communism and Maoism: With regard to the assessment of the Soviet Union, of Leninism, the role of the superpowers, the neutrality on the Chinese question, the rejection of imperialism, the overemphasis on nationalism, the unscrupulous rejection of all norms of cohabitation of the communist parties, and with regard to factional and splittist activity.

There is one issue we still have to discuss: How can we conduct our public activity? How can we lead the struggle to win back China?

The struggle for winning back China includes the fight against Maoism. I want to talk about the tactical form of this public struggle. We must permanently fight against Maoism without leading special campaigns, the like how we fight them against imperialism and opportunism.

We should not just write long articles from time to time but also conduct, on daily basis, normal and persistent propaganda against Maoism without succumbing to the shouting matches they provoke. We always have to argue well, so that other communist parties can better see through Maoism's character and will fight against it as persistently as we do. I am not for a relenting of propaganda, but I plead for careful consideration when and how one writes something. We have to play all keys. We must not keep silent but fight permanently and launch our entire artillery.

There is another question I have: From the Interkit material I gathered that two CCP Politburo members from the South demanded criticism of unjustified actions since 1958. This is not much, but on the other hand nothing less either.

I think in this context we have to consider with whom we can cooperate. In the long run we must search for Chinese comrades who can make policy.

Comrade Rakhmanin: This idea is very good. There are such plans but so far nobody has been found with whom we could work. For instance, we talked to the Vietnamese and told them: Please, talk to the Chinese and tell them we are ready to meet with them. The Vietnamese comrades replied to us: China is a state currently in a process of rebirth. It is difficult to talk to them.

This means it is difficult to surmount the Chinese wall at this moment. Currently the Chinese are listening to nobody.

The Soviet Union has a defense line of 12,500 kilometers. We spend more money on this than we do for our own subsistence and our allies combined. Almost 3 million Chinese soldiers stand next to our border. We have sent Comrade Ilychev to Beijing. Nobody wanted to talk to him. The Chinese comrades also do not talk to the Vietnamese comrades. Currently we only see to the struggle against Maoism; since there is no partner we can talk to. Thus we will continue to publish such tough articles like we did on 14 May [1977].

This is not only about anti-Sovietism. We are not afraid of Maoism, but it can head towards a new global conflict, a new Munich might be in preparation. The Chinese do not fear the Soviet Union. They are not afraid that the Soviet Union would attack them. What are the three million soldiers along our border for? We, the Soviet Union, are afraid that the Chinese attack, push a button, and let the bombs fall. In the future we will say this more loudly in our propaganda. We will not do petty pinpricking here; instead we will launch the heavy artillery.

You see, the focus is on fighting. In this context we ask for the support of the SED, in

particular concerning the axis Beijing-Bonn.

Comrade Axen: This is correct. Obviously it is difficult to find people in today's China you can go a step with. Yet in the future it will be required to work with such forces so that contents of our propaganda will arrive in China's interior. As I already stated, we have to play all keys. We also have to report about the domestic situation in China, the same way as we report about other capitalist countries. Though it is hard to get facts, we will have to find ways. Decades ago we had a Richard Sorge.[1] There were a lot of other Sorges who reported not just about military issues but also on economic and political questions. There are extensive articles published about China in the West German newspaper Die Welt . We must make efforts that our comrades will also get access to such kind of facts.

Comrade Rakhmanin: All these thoughts are excellent, and we have to think about how to implement them together. 14 years ago I was, for instance, in a village about 200 kilometers from Beijing. There the peasants asked me who the current Chinese Emperor is. As Mao Zedong once said to Khrushchev, the Chinese people are like a blank slate. The Chinese people are kept in the dark. This applies to 90 to 95 percent of the population. The Maoists count on this. Apparent one can keep the Chinese people in the dark for a long time. This is why it is correct to attempt everything to make our propaganda heard in the interior of China.

We must avoid anything making the Maoists believe that the socialist countries, and the communist parties, have different positions on the Chinese issue. We have to cooperate closely and stick together.

Comrade Axen ended the conversation by saying that even closer cooperation, especially by the fraternal socialist countries, on this issue is essential. He thanked again for the extensive work done by the CPSU CC and asked Comrade Rakhmanin to give his greetings to all comrades he knows in Moscow.

[signed]

E. Winkelmann

[1] German communist and journalist Richard Sorge (1895-1944) was a master spy for the Soviet Union who ran agent rings for the NKVD in Japan. He was arrested in 1941 and executed in 1944. The Soviet Union did not recognize him until 1964.