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Report by S. Goncharov for the Russian Leadership on the Question of the Current Situation in Relations between Russia and China (Excerpt)

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Summary:

S. Goncharov describes the lessons the Soviet Union drew from China's suppression of the student protests in Beijing in spring 1989.

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One of the most important, although underestimated, consequences of the suppression of the coup for the foreign policy of the Soviet Union and Russia will undoubtedly be serious changes in the relations with the PRC. One imagines that at the present it is extremely necessary to urgently analyze the situation that has unfolded and, on this basis, to take measures, which would prevent sharp deterioration of relations with this country. This memorandum makes an attempt to answer several questions, which arise in this connection, grouping them in several main categories. First and foremost one must say something here about the attitude of the Chinese towards the coup, and towards its suppression.

It has now become known that the putschists realized perfectly well that the possibility of severe deterioration of the international situation as a result of their actions and, moreover, consciously strove towards provoking a confrontation with the USA and other Western states. There is reliable information that the plotters, evidently, planned to accomplish strategic rapprochement with the PRC as one of the bases of their foreign policy.

In this respect, one finds quite informative the content of negotiations between [Minister of Defense Dmitrii] Yazov, [Chief of the General Staff Mikhail] Moiseev, and the Chief of the General Staff of the PLAC[hina] Chi Haotian, which took place in Moscow just over a week before the coup. According to trustworthy Chinese sources, during the negotiations the Soviet military leaders repeatedly declared their wholly positive attitude towards the Chinese "experience" of military suppression of the democracy movement and spoke about their own resolve to apply military force "for the prevention of chaos in the country." The leaders of the Chinese delegation drew the unequivocal conclusion that the Soviet leaders would soon "undertake decisive measures." After their return to Beijing, these conclusions were undoubtedly reported to the leadership of the PRC and for the leaders of that country the coup, evidently, did not become a surprise. It is also known that during another set of talks between the militaries of the two countries, which took place this summer, the Chinese side declared that it would support Soviet colleagues if they used force "to impose order."

One is also alerted to the fact that during Hao Chitian's visit, for the first time since the restoration of military ties between the two countries, an agreement was reached about cooperation in "increasing the military spirit of the PLA." This fact is extremely important, for it signified the establishment of an ideological foundation under military cooperation, the core of which were supposed to be anti-imperialism and "commitment to socialist ideals." Thus a basis was being created so that in the future one could move towards strategic cooperation or even to some variant of a quasi-alliance.

[...]

It is known that during the days of the coup the PRC Ambassador in Moscow met with its leaders (according to some information - with [Gennady] Yanaev). One still needs to clarify the details of this episode, because there is information that the Ambassador agreed to this meeting only after being persuaded by responsible officials of the Foreign Ministry of the USSR. It looks like the Ambassador had instructions from Beijing not to show particular activism, and to observe the development of events...