

January 25, 1982

**Cable from the Embassy of the Hungarian People's
Republic to China, 'Some New Phenomena in the
Chinese Pursuit to Differentiate Socialist Countries'**

Citation:

"Cable from the Embassy of the Hungarian People's Republic to China, 'Some New Phenomena in the Chinese Pursuit to Differentiate Socialist Countries'", January 25, 1982, Wilson Center Digital Archive, National Archives of Hungary (MNL OL) XIX-J-1-j-Kína 103-001239-1982. Obtained by Péter Vámos and translated by Katalin Varga. <https://wilson-center-digital-archive.dvincitest.com/document/119996>

Summary:

Soviet bloc diplomats respond to a report on China's foreign policy and strategy to move closer to Soviet allies.

Credits:

This document was made possible with support from MacArthur Foundation

Original Language:

Hungarian

Contents:

Translation - English

Embassy of the Hungarian People's Republic to China in Beijing

Strictly confidential!

Beijing, 25 January 1982

Re: Submission of the material entitled: Some new phenomena in the Chinese pursuit to differentiate socialist countries

Prepared in 3 copies
2 copies Headquarters
1 copy
Enclosure: 1 (in 2 copies)

I hereby submit the material with the title indicated above as subject. The material was prepared by Comrade Tamás G. Gál in collaboration with our colleagues in the diplomatic corps. The report was discussed in the progress of work, and it was included as a special item in the agenda of the meeting of diplomats. Due to its character, this subject is always topical, but the contents of the report prove that it is especially worthy of attention this time. It was a decision brought by the heads of missions of fraternal countries in the middle of last year that this material should be produced and put on the agenda of the conference of ambassadors. In addition to being one of the initiators, I took the responsibility for compiling the material on behalf of Hungary with a number of considerations taken into account.

The report was discussed at the consultation of ambassadors held on 11 January 1982, where it was agreed upon and adopted after a meaningful debate. All the heads of missions contributed to the debate. It was uniformly emphasized that the staff of our embassy had successfully handled perhaps one of the most difficult issues that had emerged last year. They all agreed to the structure of the report, the chain of thoughts, the statements, the conclusions and the tasks outlined in the material. I feel that it was not out of compulsory politeness that all speakers expressed their thanks to us for preparing this summary.

Attn: Comrade Frigyes Puja
minister of foreign affairs
Budapest

I would like to present below all contributions, relevant comments and additions:

The Ambassador of the Soviet Union stressed that the material was complete as it embraced the main areas of the subject matter, and discussed the main issues appropriately. The ambassador agreed with the methods used to approach the issues. However, he commented that our statement saying that "It is an essential element of the Chinese strategy to aim at breaking the unity of socialist countries"..., etc. needed to be modified. In his opinion breaking the unity is not simply an essential but the "chief element" in the strategy adopted by the Chinese leadership. The Chinese strategy itself is aimed against the Soviet Union and against socialism. The Maoist leadership of China embarked on a strategic attack against socialism, and an important element of this attack is the intention to differentiate and split. Perhaps we should have made reference already in this section that according to our information the Chinese leadership has been recently engaged in debates on this issue, namely on the issue of orientation.

The Soviet ambassador also commented on the statement on page 5 that says, "the deterioration... in Chinese-American relations.... may be an objective factor that forces China to widen relations with our countries". In his opinion, this might happen, but realistically chances are higher that both the USA and China would, first of all, attach priority to strategic objectives. It follows from this that there is no possible rapprochement evolving out of this tactical framework. Although there is a great deal of debate going on among Chinese leaders about orientation, those who are convinced about the necessity to carry on with the current strategy will presumably win, and the same strategy will be continued - at least for the time being. This circumstance and the fact that China is in pursuit of its "own special road" and "system" will, at the most, yield the outcome that China will go back to the "theory" of "two enemies". Not much more serious can be expected in a way of rapprochement in our direction for the time being. Thus rapprochement is tactical in its character, which has to be underlined.

Regarding our statement related to Cuba, he added: Cuban activity in Africa is painful to China, so Cuba is considered to be one of their enemies there.

As to Chinese initiatives and proposals to develop relations, we know this process very well: proposals, keeping back, maneuvering. The evolution of trade relations is a proof of this. It is very important to us that we managed to remain in the Chinese market although our market share diminished. The Chinese leadership had to take into account their own opportunities and limitations [to these opportunities] as well.

As to Yugoslavia, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and Romania: it carries great importance for us that they have not given up their own positions in the question of war and peace, and they have not accepted the opinion of the Chinese. The Chinese also have territorial disputes with Korea, but they are silent about these claims now for tactical reasons. In their assessment, the Korean question may become a very important source of conflicts between China and Korea in the future.

The Chinese efforts to differentiate and split normally aim to distance countries of the socialist community from the Soviet Union. We are well aware that the initiatives and proposals, which are not repeated for the Soviet Union, have served and still serve this purpose. It is an observation made in the recent past that new elements have been included in their activities. They [the Chinese] have been trying to come forward with proposals that seem favorable for the Soviet Union. They expect the Soviet Union to be willing to take up a proposal that may put fraternal countries in a difficult situation. A good example for this can be taken from foreign trade where in the field of needs and offerings for the increase in turnover, the Chinese have come out with a proposal for twice the volume compared to the volume that was included in the Soviet proposals that had already been handed over. Since this is a political issue for the Soviet Union, it will naturally turn down such proposals. The Chinese are intent on winning in such a case as well: if it is not possible to differentiate or turn one country against the other, then they can argue that they have been in favor of growth, they have done all they can, but their proposal has been turned down, and thus responsibility lies with the Soviet Union.

As to our statement about our having been generally forced to take a defensive position regarding proposals coming from China, he would rather stress that our "collective holding back" was a deliberate, concerted response. Naturally, this is something that is obvious to all of us. He agrees that we also need to initiate, first of all in the field of "small steps".

In connection with the need for rapid and straightforward exchange of information, he expressed his agreement. We need to do the same in the field of economic, trade, technical and scientific relations. While we are careful in fields that may promote the development of the Chinese military potential, and we refrain from developing such

relations, we need to strive for development in other respects, e.g. we need to make headway in the field of reconstruction. It is necessary to take "small steps". We need to make initiatives, international in character, in the field of sport events, trade symposia, and exchanges of scientific delegations. Last year 7 scientists from the Soviet Union and 11 scientists from China participated in conferences, international in character, held in either of the two countries.

It has been observed that the Chinese make a distinction, and treat visiting Soviet scientists and experts differently, with embarrassing precision. Some receive distinguished attention, while others receive an explicitly reserved welcome, and are treated as if they were ordinary tourists. All in all, they will use these channels more actively.

He agrees with the need to launch more powerful propaganda. In the Soviet Union there are 4 radio stations that are involved in broadcasting to China in the Han language as well as in several other languages (Tibetan, Uyghur) and various dialects. According to his information, a Mongolian radio station is also engaged in similar activities.

The Chinese are subscribers to a great number of newspapers or periodicals published in the Soviet Union. In the Soviet Union the Lenin Library, the Foreign Language Library and the Far East Research Institute, etc. are entitled to subscribe to or exchange publications directly. A great many of publications were sold to China last year through the ministry of foreign trade. (500 thousand copies in 1980, 320 thousand copies in 1981. The Chinese have already proposed a 50 per cent increase for 1982.)

Consequently, in their view, they have some influence on informing and shaping the knowledge of Chinese intellectuals in certain circles. An expert from the Soviet Central Radio and TV pays a visit to Beijing annually in order to gain first hand experiences. Materials are gathered for the expert by the embassy.

In his opinion, the Chinese who have access to publications released in the Soviet Union have up-to-date information about the Soviet Union, about issues regarding the life, science and literature, etc. in the Soviet Union.

I need to note here that I have not heard such an up-date in the consultations held for ambassadors for the past 5 years or more. In my opinion, the above statements deserve attention.

The ambassador of Cuba made some remarks related to the use of the word "paradoxically" in our report. He pointed out that although the Chinese have an interest in the sugar business, the increase in turnover was also thanks to the attitude Cuba had taken, by which it was made obvious which side Cuba was on. In his opinion it is more expedient, especially on the long run, not to give in to Maoists. He justified his standpoint by listing various neurological points (Angola, Ethiopia) that strained Cuban-Chinese relations. He was praiseful of our report.

The ambassador of Bulgaria emphasized that the material was of high quality in his judgment, and pointed out that the objectives defined there stimulated further thinking. He also shares the opinion that the Chinese tactics is undergoing changes and modifications. For instance it is obvious that there are growing Chinese aspirations in the direction of our community. Indicative of this is the lower level of propaganda, more precisely criticism, aimed at certain countries in comparison to earlier periods. Their observations prove that hostile manifestations in the direction of countries belonging to the second group came to an end about two years ago. Naturally there are those who are picked and made mention of more positively in the

radio, television or press. The meaning of these manifestations is clear to all of us.

Turnover in foreign trade was first of all, and mainly reduced for political reasons. We need to be prepared that they will tend to differentiate when it comes to growth. We need to be able to tell the difference between steps that serve real interests, and steps that serve differentiation and tactical purposes. He agrees that information needs to be rapid and accurate otherwise actions in the wrong direction may be encouraged. This can also create an opportunity to differentiate. "Small steps" are important, this method can usefully be employed. In his opinion, presumably there is some scope for activities among Chinese intellectuals.

The Polish ambassador thought that the report was useful and valuable, stimulating both debate and practical action. In his opinion time has come and conditions have been created for "small steps". Regarding initiatives, the Soviet Union does what is right. China is in a situation that if we do not take initiative steps now, we will make a mistake. Naturally we need to create the appropriate setting for our steps, and obviously we need to coordinate the steps we take. Mutual trust is indispensable in such an activity. We must not weigh things on a chemist's scale. For instance if the GDR sends an instructor to the University of Beijing, we must avoid making the conclusion that it is a mistake or an attempt at distancing us. At the same time neither does it imply that all other countries need to feel obliged to send instructors. However, it is important to have a straightforward and rapid exchange of information on a mutual basis.

We need to make better use of opportunities available to us. For instance, there is a translator in Shanghai who has devoted almost his entire life to translating the works by Sienkiewicz. The writings of the Polish author have been published in China thanks to his translation. If the translator lived in another country he would have received numerous awards and recognitions by the Polish government and relevant authorities a long time ago. It is also worthy of attention that western countries are extremely active in this respect. For instance if a significant literary work is translated into Chinese, they establish contacts with the translator, they invite him or her, and organize trips in England for the translator, etc.

In his opinion we need to make efforts in order to involve not only the officials of the foreign ministries but also the leaders and staff of institutions (universities, institutes, cultural organizations). Special targets are people who have conducted their studies in our countries. Our opinion and understanding explained in meetings would undoubtedly prove useful to our partners.

The ambassador of Mongolia held a positive opinion of our report. In his view, the Chinese standpoint, according to which there are only four socialist countries in the world, would become unworkable on the long run. The Mongolian case poses a special problem. China would like to annex their country. This is why China has adopted a hostile attitude to Mongolia, which is manifested in undisguised military threats, economic pressure and subversive attempts. (For instance, the transport of goods on railways in Mongolia has decreased gradually over the past 20 years. This has contributed to Mongolian railways making a loss.) The Mongolian People's Army is one of the main areas of Chinese reconnaissance activities with the main objective of studying its preparedness and atmosphere.

On their part, they will do everything that is possible to avert hostile Chinese ambitions, and will seize every opportunity to establish normal relations. They have given a positive response to the Chinese initiative of setting up a joint commission to control the borderline. They can receive the Chinese delegation in the middle of February. China has agreed to the dates proposed.

In his opinion, the need to improve the mutual exchange of ideas and the joint

evaluation of information is justified.

The Ambassador of Czechoslovakia judged the report to be valuable. In their evaluation too, it is clear that the Chinese have global aspects as their starting point, and their policy to differentiate is an integral part of this. Our report provides a realistic overview of the situation that has evolved. Conflicts in Chinese-American relations are indeed increasing. The Chinese hold the Soviet card in their hand, but at the moment they do not think that the time has come to play it. He considers it important that the report suggests the adoption of an active, offensive approach. The Soviet initiatives are appropriate and to be followed, in his opinion. It is important to examine what we can do. We need to create an opportunity to be able to explain to the Chinese our position, for instance, regarding the European situation. The Headquarters too have further possibilities to expose our standpoint to Chinese ambassadors.

In his opinion a better use needs to be made of this opportunity. He agrees with the proposal that defines tasks. There is a justified need to improve the mutual exchange of information. It is also true that we need to be more trustful with each other.

He has problems with a concrete comment related to them in the material: he dealt with the subject while he was on holiday. (Earlier he had received no information whatsoever on the relevant question.) According to the information he received at home the Chinese ambassador did not pay a visit to CzCP Headquarters. He has added that at the consultations of ambassadors on 28 December he said that the diplomatic corps in Beijing spread information about ongoing talks between the CCP and the CzCP, and he stated that the rumors were unfounded. He regarded it odd that despite this, the sentence related to them was included in the report. (In my reply I said that on the one hand it would have been better if he had shared the information he had right after his summer holiday, and had not waited until the end of December. On the other hand the comment included in the material did not state that talks were going on, it only referred to the fact that it would have been more beneficial to our work if he and we had received information about the act of contact making in good time. The comment was only included to indicate the need, voiced by all of us, for rapid and accurate exchange of ideas. The comrade ambassador has accepted this.)

The GDR chargé d'affaires a.i. thought the report was important, well-composed and correct. He agreed with the main statements and conclusions. He emphasized that we were dealing with questions which required further studying and thorough work from us all, which should become an integral part of our activity. With reference to the statement of the Soviet ambassador, he pointed out that the international activity conducted by China was not approved of and supported by Romania and Yugoslavia in every aspect. In his judgment, their point of view has much in common with that of the Chinese, and this poses a problem to our community. He feels that the need for improved provision of information is justified. (Comrade Krüger imparted the information in a conversation we had that it did occur that their Headquarters did not provide them with information on issues that were relevant to the embassy too. He has knowledge that their delegation did not sign the minutes of the last Interkit meeting. He has received no information whatsoever regarding the matter until today, which causes a problem for him as well. He has asked me to consider and treat his opinion confidentially. He agrees that mutual provision of information by our Headquarters needs to be improved.)

I considered it necessary to give a detailed presentation of the debate on the material. In my view, it provides a realistic overview of the responses, the convergence of opinions, standpoints and proposals of heads of missions who have contributed to the consultation of ambassadors. It turns out from the above that in the current situation we think it is necessary to re-adjust our activities to a certain extent; we hold the opinion that it is possible to introduce well-considered initiatives in the field of "small steps", to which we request the consent of our Headquarters.

Róbert Ribánszki
ambassador