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Embassy of the GDR in the PRC, 'Note about the “Club Meeting” of the Ambassadors and Acting Ambassadors of the Fraternal Countries on 6 June 1969'

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Summary:

Notes on a meeting between the Ambassadors to China of the Soviet Union, the German Democratic Republic, Hungary, the Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, Mongolia, and Poland in which they discussed a broad range of domestic and international concerns related to the People's Republic of China including the Cultural Revolution, Vietnam, and provocations at the Soviet border. They report throughout on conversations with other Ambassadors in China.

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Beijing, 10 June 1969

Note about the "Club Meeting" of the Ambassadors and Acting Ambassadors of the fraternal countries on 6 June 1969

Present:

Ambassadors of Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and the GDR;

Acting Ambassadors of the USSR, Poland, Bulgaria, and the Mongolian People's Republic;

four interpreters

I. On domestic issues [of the PR China]

Comrade Kohousek, Ambassador of Czechoslovakia, informed about the meeting by a Czechoslovak diplomat with the Head of the Main Department Soviet Union and Eastern European countries in the Foreign Ministry of the PR China, Yu Zhan. It occurred at a dinner given by the Czechoslovak Ambassador to honor the [Chinese] Deputy Minister of Foreign Trade who had traveled to Prague to sign [the bilateral] trade agreement [between Czechoslovakia and the PR China].

Yu Zhan, who had not appeared for a while during the course of the "Cultural Revolution", replied to the question where he had been in the meantime, that he had stayed in Beijing all along and performed some other work. Gradually all the other cadres would return to their positions. Asked about some other officials of the Foreign Ministry who are currently not around, he said that they currently perform some service outside of Beijing in the context of the "Cultural Revolution".

[Yu Zhan:] So far it has not been decided yet whether Chen Yi [\[1\]](#), who temporally serves as Foreign Minister in name, will return into this position. Right now the employees at the Foreign Ministry are very busy with studying the materials of the Party Congress. Gradually Ambassadors will be sent to the socialist countries. No decision has been made regarding the Ambassador for Czechoslovakia.

Regarding the domestic situation in the country, he said the influence of supporters of Liu Shaoqi does still exist. Therefore there are still groups within the population who confront each other. Whether existing contradictions are differences between ourselves and the enemy, or within the population, will be decided by core leaders of respective revolutionary committees.

Currently the system of province party organizations and party organizations at the grassroots are built up. Those are all within a process of renewal. They do not yet exist everywhere. However, there are party members within all revolutionary committees. According to the party statute, those members are subordinate to the highest organs of the party. The new system of social organizations will be comprised in essence of three institutions:

- the delegate conference of the workers (*gong daihui*)

1. the delegate conference of the peasants (*nong daihui*)
2. and the delegate conference of the Red Guards (*hong daihui*)

Organizations of the communist youth association will also be rebuilt. Trade unions do not exist. It is not yet decided what is going to happen with other mass organizations (organizations of culture and sports, artist associations).

The National People's Congress does still exist, it has not been dissolved. Yet it is also unclear

whether it will be convened again, or whether also a congress of chairmen and deputy chairmen of the revolutionary committees from the provinces and the leaders of mass organizations will be convened, in order to decide personnel matters for the highest state offices.

During this conversation Yu Zhan refrained from any polemics against the Soviet Union or other socialist countries.

Comrade Kwiatkowski, Acting Ambassador of the PR Poland, informed about his talk with the Albanian Ambassador:

The Party Congress has resolved the power question in China and laid the foundations for solving important issues in domestic politics. An important problem after the Party Congress is to speed up with the liberation of cadres. This is a very important and humanitarian issue. In fact, all cadres have the opportunity to return to work. This way foundations of a power structure will be laid.

The situation of the agricultural economy is good. A rich harvest is to be expected for this year. The plan for the 1st quarter 1969 has been fulfilled by the industry, although that plan had asked for a step increase over 1968.

Chinese Ambassadors have undergone a reeducation in Beijing. They drafted an analysis of the international situation and worked out concepts for bilateral relationships. Their return into the embassies will result in a reactivation of Chinese foreign policy.

Comrade Kwiatkowski provided the following summary of opinions had so far by the Polish Comrades on provincial party conferences:

According to their information, such conferences were so far held in six provinces. Those were attended by the following groups:

1. party members from provincial revolutionary committees
2. party members from district revolutionary committees
3. party members from revolutionary committees of autonomous districts counts, etc.
4. party members from revolutionary committees of people's communes and large brigades

Overall, attendances were between 5,000 and 6,000 people. The agendas of party conferences are similar to those of the 9th Party Congress, i.e. first there is a report by the Revolutionary Committee Chairman (or another delegate from the Party Congress), followed by discussion in groups. So far there is no information whether local party organs are elected at these conferences. Main subjects are the speeches by Mao and Lin Biao from the Party Congress, the party statute, and an analysis of the situation in the respective territory. In Guangdong Province the primary subject, in addition to analysis of the situation in the province, was economic issues. In Guangxi Province they mostly talked about the danger of war and preparations for such a war.

Comrade Yelisavetin, Acting Ambassador of the USSR, assessed the following current problems as being the central issues in Chinese domestic policy:

1. Thinking about preparation for World War III. He especially referred to an article in "Jiefang Ribao", Shanghai, from May 14, 1969. There are rumors that the state planning commission, with Zhou Enlai as a participant, had met after the Party Congress. High-ranking military cadres have supposedly participated as well. Zhou Enlai had focused attention on developing the arms industry. He is to have said this requires great sacrifice, but it would be necessary. Currently there are frequently articles published in the press about individual military branches, like for instance about the Artillery of the Tank Forces.

2. The struggle about establishing the big unity. Main problem here is apparently the establishing of unity within the Revolutionary Committees.

3. The liberation of the cadres.

The two final points clearly focus on development of the economy. Without a solution for those two problems, a future rapid development of the economy is impossible.

Comrade Bossev, Acting Ambassador of the PR Bulgaria, reported from a Chinese source (there is no guarantee for its reliability):

The implementation of the Party Congress is now conducted on a broad scale. As a first stage, it began with party cells in all places. Assessments for them covered all details very extensively. Implementation among the masses is conducted with much broader strokes. Aforementioned source is also thinking that the main problems of Chinese domestic policy are currently the establishment of unity and preparation for a war. Parts of the Chinese intelligentsia do not believe there really will be a war, as Lin Biao has propagated. Those parts believe such a slogan was promoted because of inner problems. Large parts of the Chinese public do not believe that the Soviet Union is longing for a war with China. The Soviet Union would be a large country that possesses all material resources itself and to sufficient extent.

At the Party Congress Mao Zedong had given three major speeches. In the first one on April 1 he had only spoken about the establishment of unity. The second speech on April 14 dealt with the purge of ranks of the classes. He put a strong emphasis on applying lenient treatment to the cadres. Even those cadres, who previously had collaborated with the Japanese, should be treated leniently. In his third speech he talked about the old party cadres who had committed mistakes, and which had to be exploited. He explicitly insisted that such does not apply to Liu Shaoqi, Deng Xiaoping, Peng Zhen, Peng Dehuai and Luo Ruiqing. During the course of the Party Congress, Mao Zedong made additional statements another four or five times. Overall he had spoken for altogether six hours.

Currently there are concrete actions of war preparations going on. For instance, there is now running a blood donation drive among the population.

Prior to the publication of the Chinese government declaration of May 24, the Chinese people were not aware of ongoing border issues between China and the Soviet Union. The Chinese people know about these problems only from public statements. The people do not understand why the Chinese declaration says on one hand that border treaties so far have been unequal treaties, but that it gets proposed at the same time to sign new agreements on the basis of those unequal treaties. The Chinese intelligentsia does not want a war with the Soviet Union. It is viewing such a war as a huge adventure. The intelligentsia wants the problems solved by way of negotiations.

Comrade Chuluunbataar, Acting Ambassador of the Mongolian People's Republic [MPR], reported from a Chinese source that there are no Revolutionary Committees in both the Foreign Ministry and the Office for Diplomatic Services^[2], and the great unity has not been yet established. Certain forces in those are demanding that Chinese diplomats ought not to work continuously for more than three years in the embassy of a country. After that, there should be a change [in personnel].

II. On Foreign Policy Issues

1. About provocations at the Soviet border

The Ambassador of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) attempted to downplay the importance of the incidents in a conversation with Comrade Kohousek. Those, the [DRV] Ambassador said, are not causing any damage to Vietnam. They are not preventing Vietnam to maintain good relations with both sides. He also voiced the opinion that China's attacks against the

Soviet Union have not reached their peak yet. Regarding the Chinese declaration of May 24, he said Vietnam is welcoming efforts to solve disputes by way of negotiations. He condemned both sides for their use of armed force. He said in Vietnam large numbers of people are thinking it would be better to give those arms used at the border to the Vietnamese people for its fight against imperialism.

The Swedish Ambassador told Comrade Kohousek about his inaugural visit with Zhou Enlai. Asking him whether China thinks the Soviet Union or the United States is more dangerous, Zhou replied China's position concerning the United States is known: China does not trust U.S. policy. As far as policy vis-a-vis the Soviet Union is concerned, the [Swedish] Ambassador might have noticed that China opposes only the Soviet leadership clique, but not the glorious Soviet people.

The Cuban Ambassador told Comrade Bossev regarding the PR China's government declaration of May 24 that it pursues tactical as well as strategic goals. The [Cuban] Ambassador listed the following tactical objectives: 1. the direction against the Moscow [World Communist] Conference (attempt to make communist parties to waver); 2. the declaration used strong wording on purpose in order to force the Soviet side to reject it, thus then giving the Chinese side new arguments for its polemics against the Soviet Union. The strategic goals, according to the Cuban Ambassador, are efforts from the Chinese side to restore its authority, which had suffered after the [border] incidents, through a willingness to negotiate.

2. On delegations of Ambassadors of the PR China

Comrade Kohousek reported that the appointed new Chinese Ambassador for Tanzania, Zhong Shitong, is the former Ambassador to Czechoslovakia. The Ambassador departing for Pakistan is the former long-term military attache of the PR China in India. As of recently, he had been head of the Asian Department of the Foreign Ministry. On June 6 the newly appointed Ambassador in Cambodia, Kang Maoqiang, departed; previously he had been Acting Ambassador in Yugoslavia). As the new Ambassador to Romania was Zhang Haifeng appointed, the former Ambassador to the GDR. Sweden has also been asked to prepare for accreditation of a new Chinese Ambassador.

3. On the Vietnam Question

Comrade Kohousek reported the following about his conversation with the Ambassador of the DRV:

Asked about the position of the Chinese side regarding the 10-Points-Program of the National Liberation Front [NLF; of South Vietnam], the DRV Ambassador replied China has so far not stated an opinion. From some circumstantial evidence, however, he is drawing the conclusion that the Chinese are in agreement with the program. He provided the following example: When Madame Nguyen Thi Binh had returned from [the peace talks in] Paris to Hanoi, the airliner had to make an unplanned stop in Wuhan. The Chinese side immediately supplied her with a special plane. This is demonstrating the positive attitude of the Chinese towards the talks in Paris. Although the Chinese side has not made an official statement regarding its position on the Paris talks, it is apparently in support of them. When, for instance, Le Duc Tho traveled through Beijing on his itinerary to Paris, he met with Zhou Enlai who told him about Chinese experiences from negotiating with the United States in Korea and gave some advice how to proceed in such negotiations. The DRV Ambassador advocated against any public polemics. When the Paris talks had started, there appeared for instance fierce attacks against the DRV in the Albanian press where Vietnam was accused of having surrendered. Back then the Vietnamese side did not enter into polemics [with the Albanians]. This proved to be wise because time has told that Vietnam has actually not surrendered. Later the Albanians apologized for these attacks.

The Swedish Ambassador told Comrade Kohousek from his inaugural visit with Zhou Enlai that the latter expressed on the Vietnam issue his complete agreement with the 10 Points of the NLF. [Swedish Ambassador:] The NFL, however, does not dare to give in on even one of its points or to

make concessions. Especially the points on American troop withdrawal and a coalition government are unacceptable to Saigon.

In a conversation with Comrade Halasz, Ambassador of the Hungarian People's Republic, the French Ambassador asserted that with the Chinese you always have to distinguish very carefully between words and deeds. At the beginning of the Vietnam War, they had declared that they consider each bombardment of the DRV like a bombardment of Chinese territory. When the bombings began, they did not undertake according steps. The French Ambassador said he knows from a quite reliable source that back then in Warsaw negotiations were held between China and the U.S. about mutual non-aggression.

To Comrade Kwiatkowski, Acting Ambassador of the PR Poland, the French Ambassador said that China is viewing the Vietnam issue always in the overall context of Southeast Asia. For China, there exists an anti-Chinese belt from Japan, over South Korea, Taiwan, and South Vietnam all the way to Thailand. South Vietnam is only one link in this chain. China is not interested in a solution to the Vietnam question just between the United States and Vietnam. This is why it is eager to find opportunities to insert its own positions on how to solve the issues. At the same time, China is trying to modify its relations with other links of this chain, especially with Japan.

Comrade Yelisavetin conveyed assessments by the Soviet Comrades in Hanoi on Vietnamese-Chinese relations:

Recently anti-Chinese sentiments have been on more open display in Vietnam. Vietnamese officials are voicing more often and more openly critical remarks about China's domestic and foreign policy. In the population, only a small minority is believing the official [Vietnamese] government version that everything is in order with regards to relations with China. The Vietnamese side is very displeased that the 9th [CCP] Party Congress did not adopt a special statement on the Vietnam issue, and that Vietnam was mentioned in Lin Biao's report just in one sentence. The NLF is hoping that China will officially support the 10 Points Program. NLF representatives are very upset that so far there has not been a meeting on this program [with the Chinese]. During the withdrawal of the Chinese pioneer units from [Northern] Vietnam, the Chinese side had demanded to organize large rallies and celebratory sending-offs with the Vietnamese population. This did not happen, and the Chinese were very angry about this. Therefore there occurred the known riots during the troop withdrawal. Overall, the clashes between Chinese military personnel and the Vietnamese population are on the rise.

4. On Relations between the U.S. and China

The French Ambassador told Comrade Halasz the following from his inaugural visit conversation with [Vice President] Dong Biwu^[3]:

[Dong Biwu:] Relations between China and the United States are not progressing. The U.S. is continuing to argue against China and to keep Taiwan occupied. They still advocate against China to claim its legitimate seat in the United Nations. They act vis-a-vis Taiwan as if the latter is the representative of China. When the French Ambassador interjected that there are apparent modifications in the U.S. position towards China (e.g. the agreement by the U.S. that several NATO countries are in negotiations about the establishment of diplomatic relations with China), Dong Biwu just acknowledged those facts.

Comrade Yelisavetin reported from the Soviet Embassy in Washington that the Deputy Department Head for Asia in the U.S. State Department, [Paul] Kreisberg^[4], has currently no hopes for an improvement of relations with China. Currently there are no contacts with representatives of the PR China. Those contacts will hardly be resumed within one to two years. Kreisberg does not see any prospect of success in such contacts as long as Mao, Lin Biao and Zhou Enlai are in power. He categorically rejected the rumor that American members of Congress want to travel to China. Though there are desires of some Senators to go to China, they would not receive permission and

definitely not an invitation from Beijing in the current situation.

5. On China's Relations with Capitalist Countries

In a conversation with Comrade Kwiatkowski, the French Ambassador informed that China is very interested in an expansion of relations with France, especially with regard to economic and scientific-technological relations. Zhou Enlai inquired in person very detailed about the outcome of the French Presidential Elections and especially the prospects of [George] Pompidou. Comrade Yelisavetin reported from a talk with the French Ambassador that the latter named the following three reasons why China had sent an Ambassador to Paris so swiftly:

1. influence on the Paris Vietnam Talks
2. broad opportunities for contacts with other capitalist countries, among them the United States
3. assumption on the Chinese side that there is a revolutionary situation maturing in France, which China may be able to influence

The current French Acting Ambassador told Comrade Kwiatkowski that he himself had launched the contacts in Paris between the Italian Ambassador and the Chinese Acting Ambassador to facilitate the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Italy. Prior to that, Italy had consulted with the United States which had stated they are neither for nor against such a move. For Italy, this was the signal to maneuver absolutely freely. On the same topic the political representative of the Italian Trade Mission in Beijing told that negotiations in Paris are moving ahead. So far the Chinese side has not raised any steep demands. It did not insist on Italy breaking up relations with Taiwan. The Chinese side asked Italy to support the accession of the PR China to the United Nations. Talks have already begun about the draft of the joint communique. Currently there exists the following issue regarding the Taiwan problem: The Chinese side demands to call Taiwan a province of China in the communiqué. The Italian side wants to say that this is a domestic issue of China. Right now negotiations have slowed down a bit because a domestic political crisis is coming up in Italy. Basically though the question of Italian-Chinese relations has been resolved, no matter which [Italian] political party will be in power as a result of this domestic political crisis.

Comrade Bossev informed there are rumors that currently 25 experts from Canada are in Beijing to discuss all still pending issues for an establishment of diplomatic relations. In Stockholm there will be just an official concluding session of the negotiations.

Comrade Yelisavetin reported about an information from the Soviet embassy in Burma that hostile activities by the PR China vis-a-vis Burma have recently increased. In April and May regular units of the People's Liberation Army [PLA] in the strength of up to a regiment have entered Burmese territory and attacked bases of government troops there. The Burmese side had suffered casualties between 200 and 500 men. The Burmese Foreign Ministry had pondered to ask the U.N. Security Council for help. However, [General] Ne Win will not agree on this since he does not want to aggravate relations with China any further. Burmese observers are thinking the reason behind these Chinese actions is to divert the attention of Burmese forces from their operations against units of the Communist Party of Burma. Since those units are too weak, the government forces recently succeeded in conducting successful operations against them. China is continuing on its course of overthrowing the Ne Win government.

III. On Issues of International Politics

The Swiss Ambassador in Beijing told Comrade Halasz about his recent visit to the DRV where he had talks about the following subjects:

1. On order of the Swiss government, he inquired about the current status of the Paris Talks. If a

certain point will have been reached, the government of Switzerland is willing to officially recognize the DRV in order to move the talks forward.

2. On order of the Red Cross organizations in Geneva, he negotiated with the Vietnamese government about the problem of prisoners of war. This was necessary because the DRV government had not issued entry visas to official representatives of the Red Cross organizations.

The French Ambassador told Comrade Kwiatkowski that Washington is overall positive towards the Ten Points Program of the NLF. It is considering them as a basis for negotiations. The most difficult issues are the withdrawal of American forces and the formation of a coalition government. Saigon can especially not agree to the second point because it would mean political suicide for the [South Vietnamese] government. The U.S. cannot agree with this point as well, therefore the United States have proposed the formula: Formation of a "Peace Government", which later might figure as a transition towards a coalition government.

Comrade Yelisavetin informed about a conversation between the Soviet Ambassador in Belgrade and Josip Broz Tito on May 18, 1969. The leaderships of the fraternal socialist countries have been already informed about the contents of this conversation.

Signed Ettinger

Interpreter

^[1] 1901-1972. Foreign Minister 1958-1972.

^[2] "BBDV" in German, basically the Foreign Ministry department in charge of dealing with foreign embassies in the Chinese capital.

^[3] 1886-1976.

^[4] Kreisberg, Paul, H. Director, Asian Communist Affairs, Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs, Department of State, March 1969–July 1971. The East German document misspells him as "Kreissberg".