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Cable from the Chinese Embassy in Czechoslovakia, 'Several Noteworthy Signs in Czechoslovakia'

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Summary:

Zhong Xidong believes that "Czechoslovakia’s situation is in the midst of changes."

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Several Noteworthy Signs in Czechoslovakia

To the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the International Liaison Department:

Over the past few days, there have been several noteworthy signs in Czechoslovakia's international activity.

(1) During a trade negotiations signing ceremony, the Czechoslovak side demonstrated, on the one hand, satisfaction with this years increase in trade, while on the other hand reminiscing about still higher levels in the past. That evening, while drinking tea after a banquet I had organized, the first deputy manager of the Czechoslovak Foreign Trade Department pulled aside the attaché Yi to explain to him that he wanted to have additional expansion outside of the protocols. One day later, the Czechoslovak chief secretary Ba-nai-ke [sic] also arranged to meet with Yi, saying that they could supply us with 10,000 metric tons of steel and that this would be taken from trade bulk intended for the West, meaning to open up exchanges for several more items. The Czechoslovak Minister of Foreign Trade seized upon something I had said offhand: "I still don't know your minister, when there is a chance we should have an audience so you can introduce him." After just this one sentence, which was only meant to actively seek out an introduction in the foreign relations context, it was arranged for us to meet after "Mayday" for a chat. During our conversation on the evening of 28 April, at the banquet organized to welcome China's naval shipment cooperative representative group, he even more baldly expressed his hopes for trade expansion. A former company manager on his way to Beijing to become a business attaché (this person had always been a friend of mine) said, "If we continue to be diligent alongside Yi Qindang, our trade gains will not be 14.7%, but 50%." One of the company's deputy managers in charge of finance says, "The fights they pick with me over politics do not actually come from anything economic. The Czechoslovak deputy department head of foreign trade Huo-nu-sai-ke [sic] grabbed fierce hold of this topic, saying something like, 'In economics we must begin with friendly collaboration'…'Economic cooperation will bring about political cooperation'…also, 'It is imperative for us to cooperate well. We should not be agitated by those unforeseen or unstable elements, etc.'

"These signs fully reveal that Czechoslovakia, faced with dire economic difficulties, wishes to get something from us. They have taken a fancy to our expansive and rich marketplace. We have plainly articulated that China and Czechoslovakia do not have any serious discord, nor is there any reason to compare marketplaces. For instance, based on our states' long term interests, there should be a mutual compromise for equal, friendly collaboration…"

At the same time he attached a fair amount of delusions, all without assigning any specific responsibility.

(2) Yesterday the President of Czechoslovakia received a prize. At the luncheon that day I encountered Du-bu-qie-ke [sic], a reserve candidate for the Czechoslovak Presidium, who in fact had already gone to Slovakia to replace Ba-chai-lian-ke [sic] (he is a new socialist). He actively came over to socialize with me, saying he hadn't seen me since China's National Day and that he had recently become a Bratislavan (Slovakia's capital). He continued to stammer, concealing his intention and speaking in riddles, and said the following: "When the ambassador came to us, he said he must speak with me. The comrade and I talked…I know the ambassador is rich in military, political and economic experience. There are some things I need not explain to fully, you will understand…Our affairs are public, so we must abide walking a public road, there is no other choice…I was very pleased to hear the news that China's agriculture has taken a positive turn. Converting a private economy to a socialist economy is

something many states have not been able to succeed in doing…”

After that, he discussed Czechoslovakia’s agricultural hardships. He discussed nostalgia for his visit to China, nostalgia for the familiarity of his interactions with China’s leaders. And he often repeated: “The most important thing is that we are all communist party members.” What he had to say was very disconnected. Sometimes he would pause and say nothing for a long while, even stopping his walk. It seemed as if he had many things to say, but could not find the appropriate language for them. It seemed as if he wanted to discuss the issue of divergence, and that he had a mind to reach an understanding with me, but found this difficult to say with clarity. And it seemed as if, faced with their manifold difficulties, he had a sense that there was no way out. He appeared unconvinced that their chosen strategy would be fail-safe. Lastly, he repeatedly invited me to come and see him, desiring a substantive talk. When we shook hands, he held very tightly onto my hand.

(3) At the same luncheon the President of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences František Šorm [1913-1980] and Vice President Shi-tuo-er [sic] both actively sought me out to socialize with me. They repeatedly proclaimed their nostalgia for their visits to China and their fervent aspiration to go back again. They extolled the industriousness, courage, inventiveness and studiousness of China’s workers. Shi-tuo-er took the liberty of telling me that he had read all of our documents (pointing out in particular a small volume on anti-revisionism). “I was in China for two months,” he said. “I was able to study a great many things, filling up an entire thick notebook. If I retire, I will work on writing a book on China,” etc. These two men have been known to praise China. The problem is that the 12th Congress [of the Czechoslovak Communist Party in 1962] tricked China in the past. Shi-tuo-er also tricked me at the 10th Congress of the Italian Communist Party. In this atmosphere, their discourse could have other meanings besides the expression of devotion.

We feel that Czechoslovakia’s situation is in the midst of changes. [I] will follow up after further research and discussion.

Zhong Xidong
30 April 1963

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