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Cable from Géza Kótai, 'Report on the China Consultation of CC International Departments of Fraternal Parties of Ten Socialist Countries'

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Summary:

Report on annual Interkit meeting to coordinate Soviet bloc analysis of and policy towards China.

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Strictly confidential!
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Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party
Central Committee
International Department

Handwritten notes:

1/For Crd. Horn to read!

2/ Good report with many lessons! Complete report can be released in the Information Bulletin of the Political Committee as soon as possible!

REPORT

on the China consultation of CC International Departments of fraternal parties of ten socialist countries

I

Representatives of the international departments of Bulgarian, Czechoslovak, Cuban, Laotian, Polish, Hungarian, Mongolian, GDR, Soviet and Vietnamese fraternal parties held their annual Interkit meeting entitled "China-1983" in Prague on 6-7 December 1983. The meeting was attended by myself and Comrade Iván Németh as representatives of the international department of HSWP CC.

Prior to the meeting that consisted of plenary sessions, the Czechoslovak side prepared an analytical material. As customary, participants adopted a brief Protocol Note which summed up China's current domestic situation and their foreign policy activities as follows:

- the on-going changes taking place in the PRC are complex, contradictory, and incomplete processes;

- although the PRC has embarked on certain tactical maneuvering in international politics, and has announced to pursue an "independent and autonomous" policy line, the PRC proceeds parallel to imperialism or even takes action on their side regarding a number of fundamental issues (such as Euro-missiles, Afghanistan, Cambodia, US-Japan military cooperation, etc.);

- in the current international situation strained by tensions, all possible attempts with the aim of loosening ties in military and political cooperation between China, the United States, Japan and NATO member states are to be supported, and all conflicts between the PRC and capitalist states are to be utilized for the benefit of the socialist community;

- as a result of consistent and constructive policy by countries belonging to the socialist community some positive steps have been taken in the relations between China and a number of countries belonging to our community, and a political dialogue has been initiated with China. Further progress in the normalization of relations, to a great extent, depends on the development Chinese society achieves as well as on coordinating our China policies and our activities;

- further strengthening of the unity of our parties and of our countries is a determinant precondition for actively countering the PRC's differentiation policy, for fending off attempts at weakening our relations with the Soviet Union, and for

preventing China from turning some socialist countries against the others;

- current conditions are not mature enough to take up party and military contacts with the PRC.

II

More than the usual attention was paid to the Soviet, GDR, and Hungarian contributions, and partly to the Vietnamese contribution at the plenary session. The essential elements of these contributions, as a way of compromising, are mirrored by the train of thoughts elaborated in the Protocol Note.

O. B. Rakhmanin, member of CPSU CC, first deputy to the head of CC International Department contributed with the following evaluation:

- the price paid for the slight increase in the standards of living and for economic recovery currently witnessed in the PRC is growing social inequalities, the "secret selling" of land in collective ownership, and strengthening tendencies of petty bourgeois private ownership. The on-going cleansing of the party is aimed to stabilize Deng Xiaoping's nationalist policy line;

- China basically takes sides with NATO on vital international issues; [China's] international activities as a whole are based on the thesis that the "two super powers" are responsible for the increasingly strained situation;

- the Soviet Union aims to frustrate cooperation between Beijing and imperialism, while the socialist community aims to counteract China's policy to divide socialist countries;

- the Soviet Union pursues the policy of "small steps" in Soviet-Sino relations, which has yielded some results: consultations by deputy foreign ministers, increase in the volume of foreign trade, sports contacts, establishment of contacts with social organizations, student exchanges, contacts by experts of the economy, rest in the border area (despite border incidents coming from Chinese part). However, China sets unacceptable preconditions for real normalization, and with reference to these [preconditions] it refuses to discuss questions related to "measures to strengthen trust" proposed by the Soviet Union. However, the Soviet Union will not settle relations with China at the expense of risking the security of its friends and allies. China formulated the threat that the issue of Indo-China might lead to a military conflict between the Soviet Union and China, which was also countered with a firm denial by the Soviet Union at the consultations for deputy foreign ministers.

The views of the two sides regarding the question of ways and means of normalization substantially differ, at the same time it is still in Beijing's interest to maintain a political dialogue, and to develop state to state relations to a limited extent;

- as to ties between the PRC and the international communist movement, "international opportunism and like-minded politicians can already present good results in some countries as the outcome of sharing common interests with Beijing, and borrowing the political slogans thereof". He made reference to Berlinguer's statement at the plenum of the Italian CP CC on 25 November, according to which "the main reason for the increasingly tense world situation is the grave antagonism and tug-of-war between the two superpowers manifested at a global scale".

Bruno Mahlow, member of the SED Central Auditing Commission and first deputy to the head of International Department said the following:

- relative stabilization is taking place in the political and economic life of the PRC, which has yielded, as the main result, some increase in agricultural and light industry production. At the same time there are considerable obstacles that are objective and subjective in their character. There are still struggles within the leadership, and the pragmatic economic reform gives rise to new problems;

- as the main objective in Chinese foreign policy remains unchanged, China still strives for becoming the "third centre of power". However, it should be seen that China has a more critical attitude towards the USA than earlier, and it went beyond the scope of questions pertinent to bilateral relations in the dialogue conducted with the Soviet Union;

- by the decision to acknowledge Eastern European socialist countries as being socialist, the Chinese leadership intends to demonstrate interest in the experiences of these countries gained in building socialism;

- the GDR and the PRC have embarked on a political dialogue, but no military relations have been created. Official interparty relations between the SED and CCP have not been established either as necessary preconditions are missing, but "informal work contacts" have been taken up.

Nguyen Van Trong, deputy head of CPV CC International Relations Department followed closely the strand of thoughts of the Soviet evaluation in his contribution, put emphasis on the real aim of American-Chinese cooperation, on the risks of China's differentiation policy towards the socialist countries, and underlined that the CCP was developing its relations with parties that follow opportunist and nationalist lines within the international communist movement. At the same time, he pointed out that Vietnam is not against developing state-to-state relations with the PRC in the field of economy, sports and culture.

III

At the session of the editorial board that discussed the draft Protocol Note, significant proposals for amendment were brought forward by the delegations of the SED and of the HSWP, while two suggestions for amendment of minor significance were made by the CPSU and CPV delegations respectively. The latter two were unanimously adopted. As a result of the uncooperative attitude of the Soviet participants that rendered debate impossible, the majority rejected some of the GDR and Hungarian proposals (which aimed to soften the political judgment of the Chinese differentiation policy, and to refine the evaluation of the Chinese response to the appeal made by leaders of fraternal parties of six socialist countries). The rest of the proposals were incorporated in the final text (the progress of normalizing relations maintained with the PRC also depends on the outcome of social development in China – SED proposal; parallelism in the activities of Chinese and American leaderships, stress on the Chinese leadership mainly extending political support to NATO efforts, and the unnecessary to coordinate views of fraternal parties on every concrete issue related to the Chinese question – HSWP proposals).

On the pretence of dealing with "methodological questions", M. I. Sladkovsky, director of the Institute of Far Eastern Studies of the USSR Academy of Sciences, shared his train of thoughts on "great Han" chauvinism, then gave a lengthy elaboration on the impossibility and harmful features of "Chinese type socialism", stating that socialism as a scientific doctrine was universal, and no Soviet, Yugoslav or Chinese models existed.

Helmut Peters, division head of the Institute of Social Sciences of SED CC, shared his personal experiences gained in China this year. He explained that the Chinese society was still going through the phase of transition into socialism; the activities of the leadership revealed nationalism and great power ambitions mixed with realistic approaches. He drew attention to the fact that there were substantial changes taking place in the Chinese party in comparison to the past decade. Essentially it implied a break with the extreme leftist line, and the development of a new concept of socialism. Currently there were significant debates about the understanding of socialism and the relevance of national characteristics. An opinion seemed to be crystallizing according to which one of the essential reasons for the failure of the "leftist line" lay with the fact that Chinese characteristics had been disregarded. The contributor considered it important that there were theoretic debates going on about the role of planning and of the market in relation to questions of economic management in China. Finally he commented that even though Chinese top level leadership was not acquainted with the real situation of Eastern European socialist countries (since what they know goes back to the late 1950s) there was a view gaining ground that studying the experiences of the Soviet Union and Eastern European socialist countries might come useful in solving problems China had to face.

In his passionate response, M. L. Titarenko, consultant of the CPDU CC International Department, drew the attention of "greatly honored Peters professor" to the importance of clarity about methodological questions. He argued that it was exactly the Soviet leadership that discouraged Chinese officials in the 1950s from copying Soviet methods, and advised them to take their own national characteristics into account. Titarenko pointed out that the debate whether socialism was the end, or the means had not come to a conclusion yet in China. For Mao and Deng it was visibly the means that had to support hegemonic ambitions and efforts [for China] to become a great power. The Chinese leadership had a utilitarian approach to the idea of socialism, and leftist opportunism dominant earlier had been replaced by rightist opportunism by now.

To sum up, we need to make the comments below:

- the main report delivered on Soviet part put the stress on listing factors that hindered the normalization of Soviet-Sino relations, at the same time the progress that had been made was not denied as a fact either. In our judgment, based on information from different sources, the Soviet Union's entire contact building activity toward China is characterized by more initiatives and is more diverse than it is suggested by the main report (e.g. no relevant mention is made of the possible Soviet role in the reconstruction of the Chinese industry or of the idea that has come up regarding possible Soviet contribution to the development of Chinese nuclear industry for peaceful uses). In our opinion, Soviet involvement in the reconstruction of the industry may become a determinant and at the same time stabilizing factor in the relations between the two countries in the future.

- owing to the objective situation of Vietnam, the attendance of the representatives of the CPV at the meeting necessarily entailed the prevalence of stronger rhetoric elements;

- the evaluation of our delegation almost completely coincided with the evaluation of the representatives of the SED, at the same time thanks to the shades in formulation and general character [of the Hungarian evaluation] it did not provoke direct comments of criticism;

- the behavior of certain members of the Soviet as well as of the host Czechoslovak delegation occasionally prevented any kind of constructive debate or elaboration of

arguments;

- the Hungarian delegation confirmed that the next meeting would be held in Budapest during 1984 in accordance with our in-principle agreement to the request to host it;

- the Protocol Note and the text of the Hungarian speech are enclosures of this report.

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We suggest that the report on the meeting, in an edited form, be included in the Information Bulletin circulated to members of the Political Committee.

The Protocol Note and the text of the Hungarian contribution are to be forwarded to CC department heads and the minister of foreign affairs.

The International Department along with the Agitation and Propaganda department are to take care that the materials of the meeting are appropriately utilized by relevant party and state organs as well as by the mass media.

In accordance with common practice, the International Department is to inform officials of fraternal parties that participated in the meeting that our party fully agrees with the outcome of the meeting, and our relevant organs will utilize it in their work.

Budapest, 14 December 1983

Géza Kótai