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Embassy of the GDR in the PR China, 'Note about the Club Meeting of the Ambassadors and Acting Ambassadors of the GDR, the USSR, Bulgaria, Poland, Mongolia, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia, on 14 August 1970 in the Embassy of the Soviet Union'

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Summary:

A report on the current domestic situation of China and changes in the country's foreign policy.

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Embassy of the GDR in the PR China
Beijing, 20 August 1970

Note about the Club Meeting of the Ambassadors and Acting Ambassadors of the GDR, the USSR, Bulgaria, Poland, Mongolia, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia, on 14 August 1970 in the Embassy of the Soviet Union

Assessment by the Soviet Comrades
on Domestic and Foreign Policy of the Chinese Leadership

The Soviet Acting Ambassador, Comrade Potapenko, gave the following talk on the subject:

China's domestic situation is significantly calmer than during the previous year. This year there have been no major clashes neither in the center nor in the provinces. At least nothing has become known. At the beginning of the year there were still trials held against so-called counterrevolutionary elements, but now this is no longer the case. Troops are moved from the Beijing area to the Northeast and Inner Mongolia. The entire foreign policy becomes activated. Leading personalities, Mao included, are now very frequently undertaking actions themselves. Functions of individual groups within the leadership have emerged with a clearer picture. The group around Zhou Enlai, Huang Yongsheng[1], Li Xiannian[2] and Wu Faxian[3] is dealing very actively with economic issues and foreign policy. Kang Sheng[4] is in charge of building up the party, Chen Boda[5], Yao Wenyuan[6] and Jiang Qing[7] are responsible for ideological questions. The main task is currently the activation of the party apparatus.

The economic situation has reached a stage of normalization. According to Chinese press reports, a couple of cities and provinces are over-fulfilling their plans by 20 to 50 percent, sometimes even by 100 percent. Notwithstanding exaggerations, there is no doubt that the economic situation is currently better than in the year before. Developments in the coal industry, oil industry, electronic industry, in metallurgy and in mechanical engineering are marked by progress. Investments in construction have again moved more to the forefront. For instance, they have built a new canal of 200 kilometers in length and a new iron foundry complex in the Northeast. However, the Chinese propaganda is linking all success reports about the completion of investment projects to the demagogic claim that construction had started under [then PRC Chairman] Liu Shaoqi[8], but had not been finished. There are a lot of reports about developments in local industries. Apparently the Mao Group wants to overcome through the establishment of small factories the problems created by the "Cultural Revolution", namely the supply of the local population with mass consumer goods.

As far as this year's summer harvest is concerned, the Soviet comrades are of the opinion that it will be higher than last year.

The Mao Group is firmly holding all means of information (mass media) in its hands. Therefore it has the opportunity to consequently and comprehensively subject the population to Maoist propaganda.

Reopening of the universities, especially the technical ones, is possibly in preparation for September this year. Certainly this will come along with problems. So far there are no new teaching materials, no new faculties and no curricula.

That what you call here cultural life, has also become more active. Theaters are again

performing on a regular basis and films have been made about the new and revised theater productions. In addition, there are a couple of new scientific and documentary films.

In spite of the relative stability of the situation, several problems must not be overlooked. Until today, the center does not have stable state and administrative organs. There is no date yet for convening the National People's Congress although they are officially talking about it since the spring. This is an indication for difference in opinions in the center. Apparently there also exist different positions regarding the constitution, which is already discussed at meetings in residential quarters.

Locally the position of the Maoists is not yet very solidified. It is said that in June and July there had been cases of sabotage in industrial factories and the railway system in the provinces of Yunnan, Gansu, and Heilongjiang, as well as in Tibet. An implementation of the goal to turn every province into a self-sufficient entity is running into problems. On the other hand this is strengthening the military which is dangerous. The military has the power at the provincial level. However, in the context of subordinating the Revolutionary Committees under the Party Committees, the military had apparently had to step back - what it attempts to block. In this context one also have to review the increased propaganda concerning the study of materials from the 1959^[9] Lushan Conference and the plenary session of the Central Committee's Military Committee in 1960 on subjects of ideological education. At the Lushan Conference, Mao had spoken out against the overrating of the role of the army. He had juxtaposed the military and policy structures and stressed that the military is just one element of policy and has to be subordinate to the political leadership. At the plenary session in 1960 there apparently had been a decision made to focus on the study of Mao Zedong Ideology after the purge of [Defense Minister Marshal] Peng Dehuai^[10].

The Mao Group is encountering problems concerning the establishment of party committees and party organizations at the provincial level as well as in factories. For example, several party committees have been dissolved again. Now it gets emphasized that work on the ideological front must have precedence over organizational structures. "Ultra-leftist" as well as "rightist" positions are getting criticized. The "leftist" are arguing against the rehabilitation of cadres who had committed mistakes. There are complaints in the press that the party organizations do not always consequently implement the orders from the center. This is why Mao's instruction, according to which it is necessary to first fulfill ideological tasks since otherwise organizational assignments cannot be implemented, has risen to the forefront. There are still problems with older party members who do not consequently follow Maoist policy. Those party members verbally agree to the instructions but in fact they act differently. For that reason meetings are held at various places where mainly the duties of party members according to the party statute and the decisions of the [1969 CCP] "IX Party Congress" are studied.

The Chinese leadership continues to fight against efforts to end this or that campaign. Now it is fighting against the position that in the light of consolidation in all areas a break is warranted. It is calling for the continuation of the campaign "Fight [...^[11]"]".

The youth question is still unresolved. No decision has been made yet what is supposed to happen in the future with those youth sent to the countryside. Now the leadership is attempting to blame the youth for the excesses during the "Cultural Revolution" and to hold them materially liable. This is creating additional difficulties.

As far as foreign policy is concerned, Comrade Potapenko stated, in spite of alleged changes the Chinese leadership is pursuing the same objective as before: China has to exert decisive influence on the development of events in the world. Only pertaining to form, the foreign policy has become more variable. It encapsulates Mao's order:

"Loathing the enemy strategically, but taking it seriously tactically".

Zhou Enlai, Kang Sheng, Li Xiannian, Huang Yongsheng, Zhang Chunqiao[\[12\]](#), Wu Faxian, Dong Biwu[\[13\]](#), and Guo Moruo[\[14\]](#): all of them are the implementers of this variable foreign policy of which Mao himself is an active part. In this context, Mao's utterances on foreign policy also have a certain relevance (for instance, a talk with Comrade Gankowski on the [Tiananmen Gate] podium on the 1st of May this year). Apparently there must have been a Politburo meeting held on foreign policy issues. There the leadership must have reached the conclusion that the United States and the Soviet Union are tied to two hot spots of war (Middle East and Indochina), so that there exists an opportunity for China to rally revolutionary forces under its lead and to move into the offensive in foreign policy. The Chinese leadership has started a propaganda campaign to support those countries that have friendly relations with China. In its propaganda, the Mao Group is refraining from direct attacks on other countries, except for the United States, Japan and the Soviet Union. China portrays itself as the defender of small and weak countries, and that it acts against so-called interference and aggression. It is declaring the principles of equality, justice, and non-interference; it is advocating against the existence of blocs, it is condemning the revival of West German and Japanese imperialism.

A couple of Chinese delegations have traveled again to other countries. Allegedly Zhou Enlai is planning a trip to Pakistan, Ceylon and some African and European countries. In contrast to earlier held positions, China is no longer against a conference of non-aligned states, what one can also derive from the publication of Sihanouk's[\[15\]](#) letter in "Renmin Ribao". Also attitudes towards some socialist states are under review. Recently the Chinese leadership was also showing renewed interest in the United Nations.

Changes are also noticeable in foreign economic policy. This year the PRC granted extensive economic support to a couple of countries. The aid packages for Tanzania, Zambia, DR [Democratic Republic of] Congo, South Yemen, Sudan, and Somalia are supposed to amount to 500 million U.S. Dollar.

Now the Mao Group is also eager to scale back its propaganda about the inevitability of a war. Now it is just calling for the struggle against a war of aggression. Apparently it no longer wants to be called an instigator of war. Nevertheless, the thesis of an alleged danger of war coming from the Soviet Union remains unchanged and sometimes gets propagated even stronger. Propaganda continues to be directed against U.S. imperialism and "social imperialism"[\[16\]](#).

Today's foreign policy of the Chinese leadership is moving to the following main directions:

1. The design of relations towards the Soviet Union, the United States, Japan, and India. The course vis-a-vis those countries is currently showing a double character. On the one hand the position of these countries is supposed to be weakened, on the other hand life is forcing China to reach a modus vivendi with those countries. In addition to struggling against them, China is conducting in one or the other form negotiations with those countries.
2. The attempt to garner support for Chinese policy from as many countries as possible.

As far as relations with the United States are concerned, the Mao Group apparently has badly miscalculated. The latter was speculating, by way of its anti-Soviet campaign, to achieve rapprochement with the United States and secure concessions from the U.S. in Asia. However, the result has been exactly the opposite (see

Indochina). The Chinese are very alarmed about this development. A new conflict line between China and the United States has emerged in Indochina. The Chinese leadership is looking for a way to force the United States to recognize Chinese positions in Asia. This is why China has improved relations with the DPRK^[17] and supported a summit conference of the peoples of Indochina and Sihanouk's government [in exile]. This is an attempt to establish an United Front of these countries in order to exert joint pressure on the United States. On the other hand the Mao Group is worried about an escalation of the situation in this region and is thus avoiding what could potentially drag China into an armed conflict. Now this in turn is an obstacle to the establishment of the United Front. The Vietnamese are not happy about this. Under current conditions, China might also be willing to improve relations with India to have peace on that front.

Concerning Japan, Chinese criticism of the Japanese government has become stronger. On the other hand China is attempting to exploit oppositional forces in Japan to put pressure on their government in order to pull Japan on China's side.

Developments in the Middle East are monitored by other Chinese leaders attentively. Here it is [China's] main objective not to allow for a decrease in tensions.

Solidifying diplomatic and economic relations with African states is testament to increased Chinese interest into this continent. This interest is first a result of the situation in Africa, which in part resembles the Chinese concept of People's War, and second [a result] of the existence of valuable resources like copper, bauxite, diamonds, uranium, et cetera.

As far as the socialist countries are concerned, the Mao Group is for now considering the destruction of the socialist camp finished with certain results. Now it wants to create "its own socialist camp" consisting of the Asian socialist countries; and which also Albania, Romania, and Yugoslavia might join. Preferably the Mao Group wants to forge an anti-Soviet "Balkan bloc" with the three above [states].

The Mao Group has not given up on the fight against the communist world movement. Probably it will apply the same tactics of differentiation used against the socialist countries. Contacts are also activated again by mass organizations. Ding Xilin^[18] has re-emerged to develop such contacts.

To sum it up, Comrade Potapenko stated China is forced to secure its flanks in the South, Southeast, and East because of the American-Japanese offensive. This is why the Chinese leadership is attempting to establish an United Front of some Asian countries, to develop relations with India, and to dampen tensions in Soviet-Chinese relations in order to create for itself a calm hinterland. Many years of efforts to create a fighting front against the Soviet Union and the other socialist countries have yielded no success. Therefore the Chinese leadership has changed its tactics. Now the Mao Group is eager to draw socialist countries to its side which have disagreements in one or another form with the policy of the Soviet Union and its allies. The Mao Group remains relentless in its attempts to instigate crisis spots in the world where the Soviet Union and the United States are supposed to get entangled. There is no reason to assume that China has abandoned its hostile policy towards the Soviet Union. All foreign policy moves by the Chinese leadership are geared toward undermining the international positions of the Soviet Union, to deprive it of its allies and to discredit its policies. Concerning the policy of the Chinese leadership towards the International Communist Movement, he [Potapenko] fully agrees with the statements made by Comrade Hertzfeldt and has nothing to add (see letter of Comrade Hertzfeldt to [GDR Foreign Minister Oskar] Fischer from 31 July 1970 - VVS B 7/2 - 15/70^[19]).

The Acting Hungarian Ambassador, Comrade Bihari, added that the attentive and friendly behavior by the Chinese towards the Hungarian trade delegation had a

transparent political background. Apparently the Chinese leadership wants to turn Hungary into a second Romania. The Hungarian Minister for Foreign Trade had been officially invited to the Guangzhou Autumn Fair. During the talks with the Chinese side, the Hungarian Deputy Minister for Foreign Trade said Hungary would be best able to fulfill Chinese import requests if there is a long-term [trade] agreement. In order to conclude such an agreement, the Minister for Foreign Trade would also be willing to travel to China. Then two days later the Chinese officially invited the Minister for Foreign Trade to the Guangzhou Autumn Fair but without commenting on the proposal for a long-term trade agreement. In turn, Hungary invited the Chinese Minister for Agriculture to an agricultural fair [in Hungary] in fall. So far the Chinese side has not yet replied.

Recently the Romanian Ambassador inquired with Comrade Bihari about Hungarian-Chinese relations and welcomed the fact that they are developing. He recommended to the Hungarian Comrades to follow the Romanian example. Mutual attacks would lead to nowhere. A normalization of Soviet-Chinese relations would also be appropriate. The construction of [Soviet] military objects at the border [with China] would be detrimental in this regard. Responding to the objection by the Hungarian Acting Ambassador, Huang Yongsheng's statements during the visit of the Romanian military delegation to China were not helpful to improve relations between China and the Soviet Union, the Romanian Ambassador said this is not how to interpret Chinese terminology. The main idea was that China is fighting against imperialism.

In conclusion, Comrade Bihari informed that the journal "Hungary" is publishing a series of articles on Soviet-Chinese relations which China will hardly come too like.

On the Occupation of the Cambodian Embassy in Prague

The Czechoslovak Acting Ambassador informed on this subject that the Foreign Minister of the [exile] Sihanouk Government requested him on 10 August to come to a meeting where he was asked what measures the Czechoslovak government is going to take to guarantee the safety of the students and the Secretary of the Embassy. The Minister said, following instructions by the FUNK[20] Government, the Embassy Secretary in Prague has assumed the power in the embassy. During the course of the conversation, which was held in the government residence in Beijing's "Friendship Hotel", the Minister also told he will travel to Lusaka to participate in the preparatory meeting of the conference of Non-Aligned States.

Chinese Position on the Planned Conference of Non-Aligned States

Here the Bulgarian Acting Ambassador outlined the opinion of Yugoslav diplomats. Although China has not yet made an official statement about the conference, there is the impression that this time it will have to change its position. To the 1961 Belgrade Conference[21] China had only sent journalists who, however, did not publish a single word about the event. After the conclusion of the conference, some material was published in the Chinese press that was in essence negative and did not provide an assessment. The same position was taken on the 1964 conference in Cairo [22]. Today it can be seen as a positive change that the Sihanouk letter was published in "Renmin Ribao". Reasons for this are that the Chinese leadership feels obligated to Sihanouk and is thus forced to modify its position. In addition, there is China's desire to establish good relations with most of the participating states. Furthermore, such a conference currently does not stand in contrast to its own interests, since China right now does not aspire to convene a different meeting, like in the format of the Bandung Conference[23].

About the Talks of Romanian Delegations in Beijing

The Polish Acting Ambassador informed about a talk with the Romanian Ambassador. During the meetings with Bodnarus[24] and Ionita[25], the Chinese side stated that a convening of the People's Congress is not to be expected any time soon. There is no rush here. Currently a revision of the old constitution is in preparation. As far as relations with the Soviet Union are concerned, China does not want to attack the Soviet Union. War preparations are just having defensive character. The Soviet Union, however, wants to negotiate with China from a position of strength. One can expect a further rapprochement between China and France. Concerning the Indochina issue, both sides are in agreement that the American troops have to withdraw. This is a joint platform for Chinese-French cooperation. During the talks the Chinese leaders further emphasized that China will support national liberation movements and peoples fighting against imperialism, but it will not send troops to foreign countries; support will be primarily political and moral. The Romanian Ambassador said China will avoid everything in order not to be drawn into an open conflict. Mao is holding everything in his hands, in practice Zhou Enlai is conducting policy according to Mao's instructions. Lin Biao is in charge of reorganizing the party. There is unity within the Chinese leadership, one should in no way believe rumors to the contrary.

On Domestic Policy

The Mongolian Acting Ambassador informed about preparations for the session of the National People's Congress. Two items will be on the agenda for discussion: 1. The new constitution, 2. A new Five-Year-Plan. Concerning changes of the constitution, they are currently discussed everywhere at house meetings. While the old constitution had 106 articles, the new version is supposed to be very brief and succinct.

It is said to contain the following new elements:

1. The ideological foundation of the state is Mao Zedong Ideology;
2. The period of the people's democratic revolution has ended, the phase of the socialist revolution has begun;
3. The People's Liberation Army must be the pillar of the dictatorship of the proletariat;
4. All cadres and members of the intelligence must be willing to participate in manual labor in the countryside;
5. Different democratic rights and duties of the citizens.

Discussions about the draft for the new constitution are supposed to be completed by the first week of August. Delegates have been chosen in February already. Some have already been dropped again. From the Foreign Ministry Qiao Guanhua[26], Ji Pengfei[27] and Li Desheng[28] are on the list.

While the old constitution had detailed provisions on the structure of administrative institutions and on national minorities, the new constitution will say very few about this.

Signed [Heribert] Kunz
3rd Secretary

CC:

1. [GDR] Foreign Ministry, Far East Department (2x)
2. Embassy Beijing

- [1] 1910-1983. In 1970 Chief of Staff of PRC First Vice Chairman Lin Biao.
- [2] 1909-1992. In 1970 Vice Premier of the PRC.
- [3] 1915-2004. In 1970 2nd Commander of the PLA Air Force.
- [4] 1898-1975. In 1970 Member of CCP Politburo Standing Committee.
- [5] 1904-1989. In 1970 Chairman of Cultural Revolution Group, Member of the CCP Politburo.
- [6] 1931-2005. Member of Cultural Revolution Group, Member of the CCP Politburo.
- [7] 1914-1991. Wife of Chairman Mao and Member of the CCP Politburo.
- [8] 1898-1969.
- [9] Typo "1929" in the original German document.
- [10] 1989-1974.
- [11] One line missing in the original typed document. Maybe it was referring to the "One Strike - Three Anti Campaign". See: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/One_Strike-Three_Anti_Campaign.
- [12] 1917-2005. In 1970 Chairman of Shanghai Revolutionary Committee and Member of the CCP Politburo.
- [13] 1886-1975. In 1970 2nd Vice Chairman of the PRC.
- [14] 1892-1978. In 1970 Chairman of Chinese Academy of Sciences.
- [15] Norodom Sihanouk (1922-2012), in 1970 deposed former Prime Minister of Cambodia and Cambodian opposition leader in exile with residence in Beijing.
- [16] Soviet Union.
- [17] Democratic People's Republic of Korea.
- [18] 1893-1974. In 1970 Vice-Chairman of the Chinese People's Association for Cultural Relations.
- [19] This letter was not attached to the document.
- [20] Front Uni National du Kampuchea (National United Front of Kampuchea), the political arm of Sihanouk's Cambodian exile government in Beijing. A coalition of Sihanouk's supporters and the Khmer Rouge.
- [21] Conference of Heads of State or Governments of Non-Aligned Countries from 1 to 6 September 1961.
- [22] 2nd Conference of Heads of State or Governments of Non-Aligned Countries from 5 to 10 October 1964.
- [23] Afro-Asian Conference from 18 to 24 April 1955.
- [24] Emil Bodnăraș (1904-1976), 1970 Vice President of the State Council of Romania.
- [25] General Ion Ioniță (1924-1987), 1970 Minister of the Armed Forces of Romania.
- [26] 1913-1983. In 1970 PRC Deputy Foreign Minister.
- [27] 1910-2000.
- [28] 1916-2011. In 1970 Director of PLA General Department and Member of the CCP Politburo..