



**May 31, 1977**

**Embassy of the GDR in the USSR, Political  
Department, 'Note about a Meeting with Comrade  
Kireyev, Deputy Head of the 1st Far Eastern  
Department of the MID on 24 May 1977'**

**Citation:**

"Embassy of the GDR in the USSR, Political Department, 'Note about a Meeting with Comrade Kireyev, Deputy Head of the 1st Far Eastern Department of the MID on 24 May 1977'", May 31, 1977, Wilson Center Digital Archive, PA AA, C 6559. Translated by Bernd Schaefer. <https://digitalarchive.umd.edu/document/209700>

**Summary:**

A description of Chinese domestic policy, specifically the continuation of Maoism, differences in policy held by political leaders (Hua Guofeng and Ye Jianying), and the campaign against the Gang of Four. China's foreign policy, specifically towards the Soviet Union, USA, Japan, and India is also discussed.

**Original Language:**

German

**Contents:**

Translation - English

Embassy of the GDR in the USSR  
Political Department  
Moscow, 31 May 1977

#### Note about a Meeting

with Comrade Kireyev, Deputy Head of the 1st Far Eastern Department of the MID[\[1\]](#)  
on 24 May 1977

The meeting had been arranged by our Embassy for Comrade Salzmann who stayed in Moscow on his transit to Beijing, where he will assume the post of a Counselor at the embassy.

The meeting lasted 2 and a half hours. Comrade Berthold from the Joint Government Commission[\[2\]](#) and Comrade Menzer also participated.

Comrade Kireyev provided the following assessments of Beijing's current domestic and foreign policy course and of the conflicts within the Chinese leadership:

The main focus of the domestic policy course is the objective to restore order to the economy, while preserving and solidifying the Maoist regime created as a result of the "Cultural Revolution" and to propel economic development. For that purpose, they have the conflict with the "Gang of Four". With this campaign, they want to remove impairing and disrupting factors working against the country's development. A foundation is supposed to be laid for a more farsighted, moderate, and more realistic domestic policy.

Maoism is receiving new clothes, but its foundations are remaining untouched. In foreign policy, the most chauvinist, most reactionary, and anti-Soviet guidelines are getting fully adopted. The goal declared at the National People's Congress in 1975[\[3\]](#) to establish China as the primary world power is continuing to be the priority.

Domestic policy is completely subordinated to this goal. In addition, one can currently note a revision of the initial intention proposed by Hua Guofeng[\[4\]](#) to improve the living conditions of the population. In contrast to the Dazhai Conference in December 1976[\[5\]](#), there was much less talk about this intention at the most recent conference of this kind.

Soviet research on China is intensively studying the question what positive aspects might come with a return of China to a planned economy and economic accounting. Such aspects are mainly seen as the state doing more for the needs of the people, and that the thinking of the Chinese leaders would be objectively directed towards a cooperation with the socialist countries.

On the other hand, one can draw the conclusion that the regime will gain more potential and better opportunities to conduct, together with imperialism, the struggle against the Soviet Union and the socialist fraternal countries.

Therefore there exists no logical correlation between a turn by Beijing towards a more realistic domestic policy and an improvement of its relations with the Soviet Union and the socialist fraternal countries.

After Hua's article for the publication of the 5th volume of Mao's Collected Works, which contains Mao's well-known speech from 18 November 1957 about the possibility of a Third World War, the Soviet Comrades are not harboring any doubts any more that Maoism is remaining as the foundation for the great-power chauvinist policy of the current regime.

As far as the domestic situation is concerned, one can observe a further escalation in the country and an increasing fight within the Chinese leadership. The Chinese economy is characterized by great disruption. With the year of 1976, two economic years were actually lost, not only, and not primarily so, as a result of the earthquake [\[6\]](#).

The last Dazhai Conference in April and May [1977] demonstrated that there still does not exist within the leadership a joint concept and a program how the economy is supposed to be developed after this breakdown.

At the same time, one can draw also the conclusion that currently such a program is in the works. In this context, also preparations have begun for the XI CCP Party Congress and the convening of the National People's Congress.

At the last Dazhai Conference it was increasingly emphasized that the new program of development must correspondent to the independent Chinese way.

It is significant for the political situation within the leadership that unity only exists with regard to further struggle against the "Gang of Four". However, there also had been a process regarding this issue over the last half year. In a statement from 29 December 1976 the Army leadership had expressed its strong support for Hua Guofeng, but then a division became evident between the Army and the civilian leadership. In mid-March [of 1977] apparently a compromise was reached again, until differences in opinion on this issue came again to the fore in the first half of May. This resulted in the formation of two groups, where the first is led by Hua Guofeng and the second by Ye Jianying (Army leadership)[\[7\]](#).

Three questions in particular are subjects of these differences:

□The position on radical-leftist views

While Hua is advocating a compromise and a more tolerant course in the struggle against the "Four", Ye is standing here on very uncompromising positions. Japanese sinologists are assessing that in the CCP Central Committee about 30 percent of members are represented by extreme leftist deviationists, while those amount to between 30 and 42 percent in the provinces.

## 2. The position on priorities in economic development

In speeches and articles Hua is toeing Mao's line, according to which agriculture is the foundation for development of the other branches of the economy and the industry. At the same time he also paid great attention to the development of leading industrial branches.

This course, according to Comrade Kireyev, is more representative of China's current state of development and is moving the country forward, albeit by a slower pace.

Ye, however, is in favor of an energetic course towards rapid development and growth of China's potential, especially by focusing on those branches most important

for scientific-technological progress - in order to correspond to the demands for a rapid war-appropriate armament.

Only after that, the role of agriculture is getting subordinated. This means, in contrast to Hua's initial promises, a continuance in keeping the people's standards of living low.

If and how one is able to convince the people of this course, will have to be seen at the next Party Congress.

### 3. The position on Deng Xiaoping

The Army leadership is for his return, Hua is against it. If Deng would return to the leadership, this would signify that Mao's line from the 1950s will become dominant. Another disintegrating factor is the traditional North-South divide, which represents a kind of watershed within the Chinese leadership.

Overall the situation within the ruling body is very unstable. The discontent among the population is great, because of the non-fulfillment of promises regarding improvements in living conditions.

A result of this is a growing crime wave. Death sentences are on the rise. There are also tense questions regarding general education and culture, although attempts are undertaken here to establish order.

It is interesting in this context that now expressions of arts from the period after 1960 are becoming public (theater, film).

Hua is linking two aspects to the campaign against the "Four":

1. Breaking the resistance of the extreme leftists (as said above, between 30 and 42 percent).

2. Overcoming unexpected opposition forces, which spontaneously emerged with above mentioned campaign. However, they are not big in numbers, and also they are not organized. (An indication for their existence was, for instance, that in December 1976 "Renmin Ribao" printed excerpts from Mao's speech on agricultural policy at the VIII CCP Party Congress in 1958. In November/December of 1976 during the confrontation with the "Four" several Marxist-Leninist arguments were used, e.g. regarding the need for knowing determinisms; it showed that above mentioned forces are using this opportunity to state their position, which is considered to be audacious. Meanwhile Hua has put these tendencies in their place.)

The Soviet comrades are assessing that the Chinese leadership's objective to lead China to first rank in the world is not realistic. At the same time, they acknowledge that there will be a certain development in forward direction.

The Soviet Union will analyze these processes exactly and without bias. It will not just condemn, and not condemn everything, but also support the slightest indications for a return to socialist development. You also have to see the positive sides, and no opportunities must be missed to exert influence on developments in China from our side. The struggle for China is not yet over.

Regarding China's foreign policy, there are no principal changes from the Mao course. This confirmed insight was the reason for the article in "Pravda" on 14 May 1977.

Beijing is pushing forward with the policy of securing material conditions in order to achieve its great-power chauvinist objectives. This is a matter of concern to the entire world, since this is the question about war and peace.

As a nuance in our current foreign policy line, we can notice that the latter is more pro-imperialist and more pro-American than during Mao's time.

Vis-a-vis the socialist fraternal countries the method of selectiveness and differentiations, already practiced until 1973, is getting repeated. For instance, Beijing wants to convey the impression as if Czechoslovakia and Hungary are more advanced in development of relations with China than the other socialist countries - in order to achieve a split of the socialist community.

On the other hand trade with the Soviet Union and Poland is getting reduced, and so on.

Through the increasing support for NATO and the European Economic Community, Beijing wants to strengthen military and political adversaries of the socialist states and weaken the latter. Here we have a more colorful picture than under Mao.

Concerning relations with the United States, China is following the premise that the existing parallels in both countries' interests are more important than the formalization of diplomatic relations. Several gestures toward Washington (meeting of U.S. Senator Menzel[8] with the Deputy Chinese Premier[9] on 9 October 1976, invitation of an American physicist of Chinese origin[10] to Beijing on 19 May 1977, and many other things) are supposed to demonstrate to the U.S. that Beijing strictly intends to continue with the anti-Soviet course.

The Soviet Union is evaluating that indeed commonalities between China and the United States are larger and stronger than the unresolved issues. It is therefore of lesser relevance, if also in coming years no visible progress will be achieved in formal relations because of the Taiwan problem (this can be indeed assumed).

China is exerting pressure on Japan in order to achieve a worsening of [the latter's] relations with the Soviet Union (after the airplane incident; through exploiting and stimulating the Japanese territorial claims, plus the issue of the 200-mile fishing zone). So far Beijing was not able to achieve any concrete progress in those regards, especially because itself it is sticking to its own positions regarding the question of a friendship treaty with Japan (hegemony clause).

Excessive demands are continuing to be raised by the Beijing leadership during the Soviet-Chinese border negotiations, where there is still no progress whatsoever.

Concerning relations with countries of the "Third World", Beijing could not yet recover from the Angola shock. On the other hand the Chinese, because of their position during the Zaire events[11], were able to regain in part lost positions with pro-Western African states that are afraid of separatist activities. A countervailing reaction is notable on such issues in countries of socialist orientation.

Concerning the change of government in India, the Chinese are attempting to achieve a worsening of Soviet-Indian relations and to push India towards the Egyptian option [12].

With the visit of Comrade Gromyko[13] to India those objectives have failed. Now the Chinese have chosen the tactics of waiting it out, and they are hoping for later effects of the more anti-communist and chauvinist general orientation of the new Indian leadership[14].

Beijing declared itself to be willing to sign a trade agreement with India. With an overall volume of just 15 million Dollars, it has however rather symbolic character. Still, this received favorable coverage in the Indian press.

India is advocating for a policy of equal distance towards the Soviet Union, China, and the United States. The re-establishment of normal relations with China after the events between 1959 and 1962 is, however, complicated for any Indian government. The Indians are continuing to view China as a hostile country. Thus it is to be expected that India will conduct vis-a-vis China a policy of "small steps" and not rush anything. It is difficult to answer the question today whether an increase in quantity will also result in a new quality in Indian-Chinese relations.

The "Pravda" article from 14 May 1977 received big attention in most capitalist countries (FRG, Italy, Great Britain, Japan, somewhat less in France and the United States). So also in this regard the article was right on target. Its main idea was immediately understood: the Chinese are preparing a hot war.

Of the major capitalist countries only Canada is still remaining silent, which is apparently due to the grain business deals with China.

Concerning Beijing's position towards the Soviet Union, there is no change in principle. There is a nuance according to which the economic policy of the Soviet Union gets attacked less. Fire is directed more towards social-economic aspects and the national question.

The reason behind this is apparently, though in a de-formed fashion, that China is forced to resort to methods in its economic policy like those applied in the Soviet Union and the socialist countries, if China wants to make progress in developing the economy.

In quantitative terms the publication of anti-Soviet material in the Chinese press is looking as follows:

1975 2,200 publications

1976 3,700 dto.

1977/March 306 dto.

1977/April 296 dto.

The Chairman of the Chinese-Soviet Friendship Society said that China's struggle against the Soviet Union is not a temporary phenomenon but the fundamental course of China.

The Soviet Ambassador [to China] Tolstikov<sup>[15]</sup> had a meeting in China's Foreign Ministry on 7 May 1977. There he asked whether Hua's statement on the 1st of May this year, the "struggle against the Soviet social-imperialism will be conducted towards the end", means that China is preparing a hot war against the Soviet Union. The response to that was "no", but one also dodged the follow-up question whether the struggle is limited to the field of ideology.

Furthermore, a new element is that the Chinese leadership is recently linking anti-Sovietism directly to the domestic doctrine. China has to build up its armaments to defend the dictatorship of the proletariat from the "Soviet social-imperialists".

On the 9th of May, Hua justified the need for an increase in defense readiness with the argument of having to fight back against an attack from the Soviet Union. In the

rapid reaction to the above-mentioned "Pravda" article, the Chinese central newspapers emphasized China has to be fully prepared for the possibility of an invasion by the "Soviet revisionists". A delay and miscalculation on the Chinese side would result in China's complete defeat.

In conclusion, Comrade K. emphasized the importance of close coordination between the socialist fraternal countries, which is ever more important after the death of Mao. A good method in this regard are the meetings of the "Club of the Socialist Ambassadors" in Beijing. This model gets increasingly adopted in other countries and should take place in even more locations.

Signed [Menzer]  
Menzer  
1st Secretary

CC:

1x Central Committee, [Department of] International Relations  
1x [GDR] Foreign Ministry, Comrade [Deputy Foreign Minister Ewald] Moldt  
1x [GDR] Foreign Ministry, Far East Department  
1x [GDR] Foreign Ministry, Soviet Union Department  
1x BoMo/PA

[1] Министерство иностранных дел (Ministerstvo Inostrannykh Del/MID), the Ministry of External Affairs of the Soviet Union.

[2] A joint bilateral GDR-Soviet commission on economic, scientific, and technological cooperation with numerically equal representation from both sides.

[3] The 4th National People's Congress had its term between 1975 and 1978 and met only once for a January 1975 session.

[4] 1921-2008. Chairman of the CCP between 1976 and 1981.

[5] A conference held in Beijing referring the agricultural commune in Dazhai in Shanxi Province, heralded as a model by Mao Zedong in 1964.

[6] The magnitude 7.8 earthquake that struck Tangshan in Hebei Province on 28 July 1976 killed at least 242,000 people (the official death count). Some observers place the actual toll as high as 700,000.

[7] 1897-1986. In 1977 Minister of Defense of the PRC and Vice Chairman of the CCP.

[8] Actually Democratic Senator Mike Mansfield (1903-2001) from Montana, then Majority Leader in the U.S. Senate.

[9] Li Xiannian (1909-1992), Vice Premier of the PRC 1954-1980.

[10] Jen Chih Kung [Rhen Zhigong] (1906-1995).

[11] "Shaba I" was a separatist conflict in Zaire's Katanga Province between March and May 1977. China together with the U.S. supported the victorious Zairean government.

[12] Breaking with the Soviet Union.

[13] Andrei Gromyko (1909-1989). Foreign Minister of the Soviet Union 1957-1985. He visited India between 24 and 27 April 1977.

[14] Government of Prime Minister Morarji Desai (1896-1995) between 1977 and 1979.

[15] Vasily Tolstikov (1917-2003), Ambassador of the Soviet Union to China 1970-1979.