

February 18, 1969

Hungarian Politburo Minutes of the meeting of the Political Committee on 18 February 1969

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Summary:

One of the main agenda items during this meeting was a discussion of the China question and a recent memorandum on the issue. It is debated whether the memorandum embellishes the isolation of Mao and his group, both internally and internationally. Participants also make predictions of how the situation in China will likely develop.

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Hungarian "Politburo" Minutes

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MINUTES

of the meeting of the Political Committee on 18 February 1969

Agenda

[...]

3. Submission of International Departments' representatives on the Chinese question in Berlin, at talks held between 28-31 January 1969.

Speaker: Comrade András Gyenes

Commenters: Comrades Rezso Nyers, István Szirmai, Sándor Gáspár, Dezso Nemes, Jeno Fock, Béla Biszku and János Kádár

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3.

[...]

The Political Committee notes and approves our participating delegation's report on the Berlin talks.

It agrees with the proposals in the Memorandum, and instructs the Central Committee Agitprop and International Departments to carry out those proposals, taking into consideration our own resolutions in force.

The material entitled "The Chinese situation and the Mao Zedong group's policy at the present time" is noted as theses of political assessment of the present situation in China.

It endorses the publication of the theses, as an analysis prepared by fraternal Parties, in the Central Committee International Department Bulletin, for the purposes of information and use. The theses must however be preceded by a suitable introduction, to be approved by the Agitprop Committee.

[Pages 5-16]

Comrade BÉLA BISZKU: How should these recommendations be understood?

Comrade ANDRÁS GYENES: We understand these recommendations as unified forms of cooperation on the Chinese question, but those Parties showing willingness to cooperate or take part in a collective action, can do so. As stated in the first point of the agreement, the Central Committees themselves decide at their own discretion how they wish to proceed with this question.

We shall not enter into details, because our obligation - and this has been emphasized both by ourselves and representatives of other Parties - extends only to issuing a statement to the Central Committee. The Poles in particular have emphasized that these ideas be regarded as recommendations, and that the Central Committees will then decide what they intend to take part in.

Comrade REZSO NYERS: Unfortunately I have not been able to study the material, and so would only like to raise whether this represents some sort of modification to our earlier tactical line - if so, I am concerned. I think that the rug has fairly been pulled out from underneath the Chinese over the past few years, their plans to bring about splinter groups in the international workers' movement have not been successful. The influence they extend over the international workers' movement is significantly less than 3-4 years ago, therefore I do not think that a frontal political attack against them is justified. Besides, were we to initiate such a thing, we would need to bring the Asian Parties on board.

Furthermore, the opposition of the Japanese Party indicates perhaps clearly enough that they have got themselves into a mess, and we should take care not to give them new impetus with this initiative.

Comrade GYÖRGY ACZÉL: First I would like to raise a concern and a question regarding the material. Aren't we deceiving ourselves? Doesn't the material embellish the situation, doesn't it portray Mao and his group more isolated and weaker, internally and internationally, than it is in reality? My first problem therefore is whether the Mao group's internal power role and international authority are as bad as the material states.

My second question is whether a bureaucratic military dictatorship is actually taking shape, or whether it is a great internal struggle, which of course does not contradict the former.

The third question that occurs to one is whether a formal, actual split with Marxism-Leninism has taken place so that [the CPC] has become a chauvinist, petty bourgeois Party.

To these questions, the material gives a fairly unambiguous yes, and suggests determined political consequences.

But questions also arise at the international level. If it is not clear at the international level that we wish to approach them, and that our approach is rejected by them, then I am not sure we would be helping the international workers' movement. I think it better if the "Wall of China" is erected by them, and not us.

Another problem: it is my opinion that we would do well to think a little in advance. We should analyze power relations realistically, and must also consider whether if a split still took place, what sort of impact there would be on the positive forces there, on the situation of the socialist countries and Parties, the parties of the capitalist countries, and what concerns me in particular, the situation of the third world. The impact of this unsubtle propaganda suggested by the material is not certain. This chauvinist hatred against white people on the part of the Chinese is not certain to produce the same result in the third world as in Europe, or the same in Latin America as in the developed countries.

In summary, my opinion is that a proposal is necessary, based on - even if there is one-thousandth of a chance of this - initiating state, cultural and economic relations, and that we should take the lead. As many [Chinese] as possible should know what sort of initiatives we have. At the same time we should continue the struggle of principles, but discretely, and should take care not to confuse our own wishes and

desires with the existing situation there. I think that we could produce more, and more discrete results, than this material.

I would like to add that however correct the material is in part, the struggle is unavoidable. But we must also think what will be more helpful to the positive forces there, striving for a split or seeking connections. I think the response to this is beyond doubt.

Comrade ISTVÁN SZIRMAI: I too have a few remarks on this question.

My first is whether it is correct for us to form the orientation of the group of seven Parties in this way, even if it is on the basis of a collective decision. I think it would be better if discussions took place not in such a closed way between representatives of the seven socialist countries, but that we should bring in, for example, the Western European Parties to discussions. My opinion is that we would be able to give a more realistic analysis of the Chinese situation if the question was being discussed by more than such a uniplanar group.

My second observation: it seems the Parties have decided they do not wish to excommunicate the Communist Party of China at the meeting of the communist and workers' Parties, this body however, which prepared this material, returns via another door only in order to exclude the Communist Party of China.

One more thing regarding the arguments. It is well known that there exist great general and very serious ideological disputes between the Communist Party of China and the other Parties. We must engage on every front - these are questions of ideology and principle - but as much as possible, we must continue to maintain our patient, friendly tone.

But more than the significant ideological differences between the Communist Party of China and the other Parties, in this situation I regard the power politics pursued by China more significant, and which power politics is turning against the socialist countries. This draft thesis or study does not analyze these contradictions of power politics at all, or deals with them only in brief, and incorrectly.

Here we have this American-Chinese pincer attempt around the Soviet Union. Of course I cannot say how serious and important this is. It is a very complicated matter. There is Asia, Southeast Asia, so the question is not straightforward. But it is precisely because it is not straightforward that it is worth dealing with.

I have one more general observation. I do not think that we should regard China as a place of happiness, where we do not have to take any sort of external opposition into account. It is a country threatened by the USA, by Japan and other Asian countries. It looks however from this study that China is preparing for something, but that nobody wants to upset China. I do not think this is true!

Another thing: when we analyze China's internal situation, we should try to do so objectively and without emotion, in the interests of the international workers' movements and ourselves. The study lacks objectivity, but not emotion. Just one or two examples of this. Here on page 18 for example, it reads: "The aim of socialist society - Lenin emphasizes - is to ensure the complete welfare and free all-round development of every member of society. The Maoists have given up this aim." One thinks: is this the first socialist country where this has been violated? Wasn't this violated in the Soviet Union under Stalin, or in Hungary under Rákosi? and was not socialism then built in the Soviet Union and Hungary? Socialism was built, so we should not say that in China everything that is socialist has been destroyed.

Allow me to illustrate the material's lack of objectivity with one more thing. On pages 36-37 we read of the mortal crime of the Chinese to broaden their relations with the Federal Republic of Germany. I know other such socialist countries whose largest trading partner is also the Federal Republic of Germany.

Finally I would like to propose that the material should be objective. I also propose that we should not accept the first point of the resolutions, because it contains things we think in need of separate examination. I agree that the arguments should be reported in the International Department Bulletin.

Comrade SÁNDOR GÁSPÁR: I do not dispute the arguments, because I do not know who can give a precise picture of the situation in China. I do not think that we need to modify the position of our Party on this. What is new however is that the Mao tendency has triumphed, and this has placed great stresses on diplomatic and military paths. This is why we must address the question.

I understand the question to mean that we must continue a struggle of self-defense, and I think we should address the question in three respects. We have now been invited to this meeting, and should aim for such in future. Analysis of the situation is necessary, for which there are these and other opportunities. Second: the Party opinion should be informed accordingly about the Chinese situation in future as well, as the HSWP has done so to date. So I think it important that we report this material in the bulletin. The third thing: we must ensure our actions, more broadly the actions of the socialist camp, the international workers' movement, are carried out more cautiously, but with the aim of self-defense.

I do not wish to bore the Political Committee, but we saw with the Cairo conference as well that the Chinese are working with impure means not only in the Arab world, but in Black Africa too. We need to respond with an agreed measure against them.

Comrade DEZSO NEMES: The material contains useful elements, but cannot give a complete picture. It would be correct to use the arguments used by Liu Shaoqi when he said: Mao's political line threatens to deny China of its most important allies.

Here are Chinese-American relations, which we must pay close attention to. It is not clear to people what is going on here. Moreover, that certain rapprochement Comrade Szirmai spoke of is certainly not simple, but a very complicated question.

In terms of our initiating broader relations with China, I would be very cautious. What is our experience? We approach with good intentions, they radically reject us, and abuse us extensively with our good intentions. Our good intentions are not sufficient.

I would like to raise a question that is very complicated, but nevertheless of concern. There are positive forces in China fighting for Marxism-Leninism. What do we know about them, and how can we help them? On occasion one or other of them has approached us, and for fear of being provocateurs, we reject them. But if they are healthy-spirited, honorable people, and we reject them, then this is demoralizing. What can we do here, how can we help?

I would also like to suggest it imperative - as someone else has already raised - that it should not be only the European Parties sitting together, but that the Asian Parties also be brought into discussions.

One final thing: it is well-known that China's main European partner is Albania. If we address the question of what to do against Chinese propaganda, then we also have to address what to do regarding Albania. Albania is now "given over" to China, and this is not good.

Comrade JÁNOS KÁDÁR: The title of the material is: "The Chinese situation and the politics of the Mao Zedong group at present." Taking this into account I propose that we note the material, because the title is appropriate: a political judgment of a transient situation. I think the material is correct in its basic tendencies and also prognosis, because it does not say that this is not a socialist country, but that if they continue along this path, the achievements of socialism are in danger. On military dictatorship, it only states that this is in a developing stage. And this usually applies to all questions. Put plainly, the Comrades have tried do what they could in the present situation, and the material reflects this.

What do I think is the problem with the whole matter? The specified Parties must address the Chinese question, but in a different way. Judgment of transient political aspects is not enough, because this is a question of day-to-day politics. Rather, I suggest that in future there be some sort of common research work that we support, and we should suggest that questions of principle be taken up, questions that in fact give the whole matter its essence in principle, and then we will strike at the real questions. If we take a fundamental look at the situation and its social aspects, then we will have to say that the revolution has won, the socialist and national revolution too. They set out on a certain correct path, nationalized industry, took culture in hand, brought into being the appropriate means, and then this was followed by a split. We should address the reasons for this, why and how the split took place. We will encounter the questions and problems we often encounter in different socialist countries, and which we must absolutely address when the fraternal Parties wish to move forward. This is when things arise such as which tasks brought the Communist Party of China to a halt, and why the thesis appears different there that socialist revolution, the socialist economy, cultural revolution and the development of socialist society must proceed together with the improvement of the people's welfare. Why was the Communist Party of China frightened by these tasks, and why were the leaders of the Chinese state frightened? Because they encountered difficulties not even we encountered starting from our semi-feudal base.

If we fundamentally and truly analytically address these questions we will encounter things we cannot avoid. We do not have to say how guilty we are, but examine whether the normal contact possible between socialist Party and state has been properly realized. I think that it has been realized. This Party has been independent until the end; nobody tried to intervene in its internal affairs because they were unable to.

And what sort of split and what sort of patience are we talking about? Which Party violated the Chinese Party's independence, and which Party intervened in China's internal affairs, and which Party says that we must split with China? Again and again we have invited them, even after they responded to our shared, collective approaches with the roughest rejection, and we have represented principled policy against China. This is also relevant, these need only be noted.

And so we come to the great questions of international politics. If we say that we live in peaceful coexistence with one another, does this look different in Hungary and Czechoslovakia than in China?

This is what I would call analytic work, on the basis of which a common denominator of what to do could be reached in overview. We must also value experiences here.

Let us take into account that this is what the examination has produced, and let us establish that we missed the fact they did not address the deep-seated, great questions of principle, and that this should be compensated for on the appropriate occasion. It is necessary to address fundamental questions such as the characteristics of socialist construction in China, and by examining those questions, the reasons for the conflict between us.

And what should we do? We usually have a few valid resolutions, and in this case I would not accept that the watchword should be defense. This is not sufficient here. We have a resolution that states that a proper plan is needed for propaganda and ideological work, where we enter into unnamed, direct or indirect dispute with fake, anti-Marxist Chinese arguments, to propagate our own positions.

This applies to policy too. We have a resolution there too, and we implement it. This should be continued.

I can agree that we report the arguments in the International Department Bulletin, but it would be good if the Agitprop Committee prepared a heading for it. Something like that the Agitprop Committee has examined this material and finds that its main points reflect the current situation. We must continue to address the questions, exchange experiences with fraternal Parties, examine the great ideological questions too, and at the same time continue what we have been doing so far.

I would like to say something else: the comrades have frequently used phrases as if to note that the material was produced by this committee, that we decided on the split. We cannot decide on any kind of split. We have been in this split state for some time, where they split [from us]. If they think that we should now not provoke the situation, then we can talk about this. But it does not appear that seven Parties now begin canon fire, and a new situation will come about. It won't be like this. I might dare to predict what will be. The ideological struggle will seriously worsen not because we decide on it, but because there are three things that come next. One is our international meeting, the success of which we will fight for, while they will strive to scupper and destroy it. The second thing: they will convene a congress, and not an everyday congress, but a provocation to every communist movement in the world that opposes the Chinese arguments. The third thing: things will happen in politics and international politics that will sharpen the situation between ourselves and China. Naturally I agree that in this struggle we should act in accordance with our line to date, and continue principled policy, but we must also take into account the aforementioned. And it is worthwhile addressing these questions, notwithstanding the group of seven Parties. Agitprop should begin to address this, and we carry out ideological work according to plan. To be honest, we have not yet done much in this area.

The matter of China and America has arisen. Of course all sorts of things will happen here, opportunities to exploit this and that. But we must see that the fundamental social contradictions are the same as those that Marxism-Leninism taught us, and China and America throwing themselves at one another is not such a simple matter. We should take into account that this Chinese policy has made serious attempts to embitter the situation with the Soviet Union, the other socialist countries and Mongolia, and to put pressure on us by cooperating on certain questions with American imperialism. The recommendation is correct: these attempts must be unveiled. But how? Let us write the Chinese argument, and after let us write what happened. They say that we are traitors because we have diplomatic relations with some capitalist countries. But we do what we say we do, but they do the opposite, and this must be exposed. Our relations with the FRG are not the same. Cooperation with the FRG has an entirely different significance in our politics, they are our largest partner by 30 percent, while the Chinese want to break with the socialist countries in the sphere of economic cooperation, and are seeking a capitalist orientation. If we expose them, we will not be making any split.

It is difficult to answer the other questions raised, for example, how we could create contact with the healthy forces. The Chinese have indicated that they will attend talks in Warsaw. I wish we could agree how the prognosis states. So the Chinese Party and government would end up in an entirely different situation, and from our side the struggle becomes easier. But who knows who those healthy forces are. It is certain that there are proper communist and revolutionaries in China, but I fear that if we cite

Liu Shaoqi too often, that won't please us either. For even he used to begin that the Soviet Union and the socialist countries are pursuing a revisionist policy, etc. The situation there now is that everyone carries a flag with Mao's face on it, yet declares different policies. Both his and different ones.

Finally, I think that this material does not complicate our work, indeed, if we use it sensibly, it will help.

I would accept the recommendations in point 1, but would lift the second point entirely, because it concerns an entirely different matter. State policy, which is difficult to connect to the other questions. Of course, what is in there is very correct and important, and useful, for when Foreign Ministers discuss it.

I can agree with what is in point 4. Lenin's 100th birthday and the 50th anniversary of the formation of Comintern really are good occasions to propagate Marxism-Leninism, and it would be good to do this.

There is a recommendation among the organizational matters, that the press, radio, television, news agencies and representatives of book publishers hold meetings. This is rather more complicated matter, and worrying that they might get over-excited, and all understand something different. The most sensible thing would not be for 34 Hungarians to travel to this meeting, but for one or two sensible people to observe the news agency organizations. One can be from the Party Center, the other let's say the president of the radio.

Here is the last paragraph on page 8, which addresses the activities of Peace and Socialism. Experience has shown us that whatever their editors started always caused conflict between the Parties. I would desist from this or anything similar.

On the proposed resolution, only to add that the Political Committee should approve only our work, not that of all delegations. And we should not decide what other Parties should do, but address our own tasks.

Comrade JENO FOCK: It is proposed that the arguments be reported without identifying the source in the International Department Bulletin. In this case it appears that this is the position of the Hungarian state. I think we should identify the source in some form, and add that the arguments attempt to take account of the current situation.