

October 6, 1969

**Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Note of Asia-Oceania
Department, 'Sino-French Relations'**

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Summary:

Following the peak of the Cultural Revolution, the French Foreign Ministry concludes that Sino-French relations "have shown signs of détente, which, in the current context, represents important progress."

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Note

Sino-French relations

Sino-French relations, which had suffered from the general hardening of Beijing's foreign policy during the Cultural Revolution and the disparaging attitude adopted by the Chinese press towards our country after the May 1968 events, have shown signs of détente, which, in the current context, represents important progress.

If our relations have not yet returned to the path that had been set in 1964 after the establishment of diplomatic relations, several hints suggest some favorable perspectives.

We should first note that the Chinese Ambassador in Paris, M. Huang Zhen, away from France for two years, was one of the first Chinese diplomats to return to his post after the end of the 9th Congress. In the meantime, he had been promoted to the Party's Central Committee.

The words spoken by M Huang Zhen, during the courtesy visits he quickly made to the French authorities after his return, highlighted Chinese goodwill and their desire to maintain close ties with us. The welcomes given to our new Ambassador in Beijing, M. Manac'h, who was cordially hosted by the Vice-President Dong Biwu (to whom he presented his credentials two days after his arrival), by M. Guo Moruo, Vice-Chairman of the Permanent Committee of the National People's Congress, and by Zhou Enlai on 25th September, confirm this impression; we can hope that the Chinese will progressively agree to engage in a more substantial dialogue with us.

The new atmosphere is also affecting the tone of the Chinese press. Lacking in indulgence insofar as the internal and economic situations of our country, the newspaper editorials are nevertheless moderate in tone. Despite China's reserves towards our initiatives aiming at a political settlement of the conflicts in the Middle East and Southeast Asia, Beijing is still interested as ever by the French government's aspirations to be independent.

This détente in the political field is visible in other domains. The Paris offices of Xinhua, closed in 1968 after the departure of all the staff, are now functioning normally; the Agency's new correspondent recently took his post.

In the cultural domain, there is also some movement, even if it is largely limited. Beijing has sent, as we requested, a Chinese lecturer to the School of Oriental Languages and has nominated a Professor, in the same discipline, for the Lycée of Montgeron.

After several inquiries, the Chinese authorities seem ready to soon send a small contingent of Chinese students to France. The current situation in China explains the Chinese reluctance to welcome either French scholarship students or cultural and scientific missions. But we should not hide the fact that much remains to be done to give a real impetus to Sino-French relations, whose achievements since 1964 are very limited.

In the economic field, the situation is more encouraging. China is our second partner in Asia after Japan. After slowing down during the Cultural Revolution, economic exchanges are showing signs of recovery. The exhibition of machine tools in Beijing in May was an important success; the results are significant since half the material exposed was sold and negotiations are still ongoing.

Early this year, we reached an agreement for the sale of 800,000 tons of wheat, for the supply of urea and ammonium, and for the delivery of 800 Berliet trucks... It is possible that there will be greater sale of trucks in the future.

It remains that the negotiations with the Chinese are laborious. We are dealing with difficult interlocutors, but who recently have made efforts to be friendly.