

April 28, 1969

Embassy of the GDR in the PRC, 'Note about a “Club Talk” of the Ambassadors and Acting Ambassadors of the fraternal countries on 25 April 1969 in the Embassy of the GDR'

Citation:

"Embassy of the GDR in the PRC, 'Note about a “Club Talk” of the Ambassadors and Acting Ambassadors of the fraternal countries on 25 April 1969 in the Embassy of the GDR'", April 28, 1969, Wilson Center Digital Archive, PA AA, C 1365/74. Translated by Bernd Schaefer. <https://wilson-center.drivingcreative.com/document/198186>

Summary:

Ambassadors to China from Hungary, Czechoslovakia, the German Democratic Republic, the Soviet Union, Bulgaria, and Mongolia discuss Chinese border provocations, the ninth Party Congress of the Chinese Communist Party, and other aspects of Chinese domestic and foreign policy.

Credits:

This document was made possible with support from Carnegie Corporation of New York (CCNY)

Original Language:

German

Contents:

Translation - English

Embassy of the GDR in the PR China
Beijing, 28 April 1969

Note about a "Club Talk" of the Ambassadors and Acting Ambassadors of the fraternal countries on 25 April 1969 in the Embassy of the GDR

Present:

Comrade Halasz, Ambassador of the Hungarian People's Republic
Comrade Kohoušek, Ambassador of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic
Comrade Hertzfeldt, Ambassador of the GDR
Comrade Yelisavetin, Acting Ambassador of the USSR
Comrade Bossev, Acting Ambassador of the People's Republic [PR] Bulgaria
Comrade Chulunbaatar, Acting Ambassador of the Mongolian People's Republic
2 interpreters

I. On Relations PR China-Soviet Union, Socialist Countries:

Comrade Yelisavetin informed that so far there is no reaction to the content of the Soviet statement about the border provocations. The Soviet Comrades are expecting a reaction in the vein of the Chinese film addressing this issue, which was recently shown. African ambassadors who maintain good relations with the Chinese have voiced in conversations they do not expect a resumption of [Chinese-Soviet] consultations on border issues. According to their opinions, the Chinese side will let the problems linger in order to exploit them at a random, and for them opportune-appearing, moment to stir up tensions internationally and to divert from domestic problems. The Soviet comrades as well do not expect a resumption of consultations about the border demarcation line any time soon.

Also, Comrade Yelisavetin reported an incident involving some comrades from the Soviet Trade Mission during a trip to the Ming Tombs on April 20. Because of a wrongly marked street sign, they had left the road designated for foreigners. When they realized the mistake and wanted to turn around, they were surrounded and interned for four hours. It was demanded from them to sign a confession that they intruded in a forbidden area with "black intentions". Since they refused to do so, they were brought to a school and interned for another three hours. The Chinese Foreign Ministry acknowledged a note from the USSR Embassy and demanded in response also the already mentioned written confession. The Soviet comrades rejected that demand.

Currently the Soviet comrades do not receive any more travel permits. Repeated requests for trips to Shanghai and the fair in Guangzhou were denied.

Comrade Bossev informed about a meeting some days ago with Li Lianqing, the Deputy Head of the Main Department of the Foreign Ministry of the PR China. Comrade Bossev had been summoned to the Foreign Ministry where the Chinese side launched a verbal protest concerning the following issues:

1. Against protest rallies and meetings in Bulgaria against the Chinese border provocations at the Ussuri river.
2. Against statements by members of the Bulgarian Politburo on the same subject.

3. Against an anti-Maoist slogan at the Chinese Embassy in Sofia.

4. Against statements in the Bulgarian press, on television, and on radio against the border provocations.

Comrade Bossev called this meeting the roughest and rudest he had so far experienced in his two years here in Beijing. The Chinese side ventured into insults and outbursts against the Bulgarian leadership and its leading comrades in personal terms. Comrade Bossev had refuted those insults and slander strongly, and he himself aborted the meeting.

The Chinese side has refused to buy two Bulgarian ships because there were slogans against the Chinese border provocations on display during the transfer of the ships in the [Bulgarian] harbor. Also, recently the Bulgarian comrades were denied various travel requests as well. Based on all these facts, they have drawn the conclusion that the Chinese side is further aggravating the relations with the PR Bulgaria.

Comrade Halasz reported on the recently occurring expulsion of the Hungarian correspondent: His journalistic visa had expired on 22 April 1969. On 21 April he was asked to come to the Foreign Ministry where they explained his visa will not be extended because he had multiple times incorrectly informed the Hungarian people about the situation in China, and he had gravely offended Mao, Lin Biao, and the Chinese people. They ordered him to leave the country within three days. The Hungarian side has protested against this to the Chinese Acting Ambassador in Budapest.

Comrade Chulunbaatar told that the Chinese side informed the Mongolian Embassy on 22 April that the phone lines between Beijing and Ulaanbaatar are interrupted. The embassy was told to find another way to communicate with Ulaanbaatar. The Chinese side said that soon a trade delegation will travel to Ulaanbaatar to begin trade negotiations.

II. On the IX Party Congress of the Chinese Communist Party [CCP]

Comrade Halasz shared the following thoughts on the final communique of the Party Congress:

For the first time in the history of the CCP in recent decades, such a large convention like the final session of the Party Congress was not chaired by Mao Zedong but by someone else - Lin Biao. This fact and the emphasis on Lin Biao's role in the preceding communique hints at a strengthening of his position.

Apparently there was no election commission at this Party Congress. Instead the presidium instructed the individual delegations to appoint candidates for the Central Committee [CC]. Apparently the delegations were told how many candidates they can nominate. Due to the cumbersome selection process, and the advance decisions, the ultimate election was just a mere formality.

The VIII Party Congress did still publish how many members the party has, and how many members are represented by each individual delegate. This time those numbers were missing. It indicated how the party is currently organized from top to bottom, and that the leadership does not have an exact count of the actual number of party members.

Noticeable is the enlargement of the CC from previously 97 to currently 170 members and an increase of the number of candidates from previously 73 to now 109. Apparently this occurred in order to completely secure the [majority for the] Mao course. When the districts from where the CC members are coming were announced,

the Red Guards were left unmentioned. They only appeared during the greetings from the Party Congress to the various parts of the population.

The communiqué only talks about the 48-year struggle of the party, not about individual Party Congresses.

Furthermore, it talks about the need to increase the study of Mao [Zedong] Thought although this slogan has now been with us for many years. This hints at certain deficits in this area. Already at the 12th [CC] Plenum, they noted that the line of Liu Shaoqi has been smashed entirely. The current communiqué is now demanding to completely extinguish the poison of this line. Apparently there are still some problems here as well.

In addition, there is an appeal to fight against counterrevolutionary elements who want to achieve restoration. Also here as well there seems to be resistance left.

The communiqué embraces a strong anti-Soviet orientation - in contrast to previous communiqué where this issue had not been addressed directly.

The Party Congress is also sending greetings to all patriotic minded Chinese outside the country. Apparently this is to serve as an appeal to the Chinese abroad who previously remitted up to 700 million Dollar annually to the country. The message for them is that the situation has been stabilized and their concerns over the Cultural Revolution are not warranted. The communiqué literally contains the slogan "more, faster, better, cheaper" from 1958.

The greetings to foreign countries are mentioning Albania in first place. This seems to fit the context of informations that the Albanian leadership was displeased about not being informed about the Party Congress, and also about not being invited. Maybe this emphasis of the Albanian party in the communiqué is an attempt to assuage them, like it was done in previous communiqués as well. Vietnam is only mentioned as a country without any reference to the party. The Romanian party is left unmentioned as well. The remark that the CCP wants to join all true Marxist-Leninists of the world in the struggle against American imperialism and Soviet revisionism is indicating the rising claim for [Chinese] leadership in the international communist movement.

Comrade Bossev reported from a Chinese source (reliability is not guaranteed) that there will be probably no General Secretary of the party. This would be very dangerous for Mao since the General Secretary has a very independent position.

III. Issues of Domestic Policy

Comrade Halasz talked about a trip to Guangzhou:

From the train you could see that the fields were cultivated very well and the harvest stood up well. In almost all train stations the platform was closed during the stay of the train. Only travelers with tickets for the train were permitted on the platform. A lot of free ranging pigs were seen in the villages, which allows for the conclusion that individual pig farming has increased.

From this year's Guangzhou Spring Fair Comrade Halasz returned with the impression that it was the so far poorest he saw during visits in his six years in China so far. Mao propaganda accounted for about 40 percent of the space in the exhibit halls. There were a lot of anti-Soviet slogans on display.

About a Visit to a Silk Factory in Foshan (near Guangzhou):

There are 1,100 workers in the factory who are producing 15,000 meters of silk fabric daily with a width of 70 centimeters. Material incentives and bonuses have been completely eliminated. Average wages: 48 Yuan, with a range between 35 and 85 Yuan. Wage brackets do still exist but are called remnants of the revisionist administrative system that will be eliminated. The factory receives quarterly plan orders, there is no annual plan. The factory has a dormitory where you have to pay 3 Mao a month for a bed. A family is paying 1 Yuan monthly for a room. For the child nursery of the factory you have to pay 1.50 Yuan monthly per child. Workers with families living elsewhere receive 12 to 18 days annually of paid leave and transportation money for the trip home. The other workers do not have leave. Pregnant women get 56 days of leave. Workers reaching retirement age receive 70 percent of their previous wage as pension. There is no trade union in the factory. The conference of delegates of the workers has to take over the function. The Revolutionary Committee is based on the trifecta of workers, cadres and representatives of the People's Militia. It consists of 11 members and 5 candidates. Of those members 2 are revolutionary cadres, the other 9 are representatives of the workers and the People's Militia. The Revolutionary Committee is not elected for a certain term; if a member of the Revolutionary Committee is performing bad work, it is replaced instantly. This is said to be the highest form of democracy. The administrative body has been reduced from 80 to 20 employees. Furthermore, there are 13 technical cadres in the factory. The party organization of the factory consists of 300 members. 5 members of the Revolutionary Committee are also party members. The factory's party leadership consists of 13 members. Asked who is in charge of the factory, the party leadership or the Revolutionary Committee, the answer was: the party. The party secretary was not introduced to the Hungarian Comrades. The factory is organized according to the military structure of companies. The Hungarian Comrades observed how the workers lined up before lunch in military formation before a large Mao picture, bowed, read their quotations and then proceeded to lunch.

Visit to a Pottery Factory in Foshan:

The Revolutionary Committee also consists of 11 members. This invites the assumption that Revolutionary Committees of medium factories have 11 members as standard. Average wage is 45 Yuan, with a range between 35 and 70 Yuan. The party organization has 54 members. There exists a unit of the communist youth organization. Work organization in this factory left a very bad impression. You had the feeling that there was no firm technical leadership structure.

Reception and treatment in Guangzhou was matter of fact - polite. The guide from the travel agency did once try to ask provocative questions about the incidents at the Ussuri, what Comrade Halasz refuted right away.

Comrade Bossev reported from the above mentioned Chinese source that Party Congress delegates all remain in Beijing to participate in the festivities of 1st of May. There are no plans to invite foreign delegations to 1st of May, since there is currently no trade union which could invite such delegations. Maybe an Albanian delegation might visit China for 1st of May. In addition, festivities will feature [foreign] renegades who live in Beijing permanently.

IV. On Questions of Foreign Policy

Comrade Yelisavetin informed about a conversation with the Ambassador of Zambia whom he asked about new tendencies of Chinese foreign policy towards Africa. The latter was of the opinion that such new nuances do not exist. Relations with Zambia are still friendly, the Chinese would provide very cheap and effective aid. They had promised to construct a road from [the Zambian capital of] Lusaka to the [Tanzanian capital of] Darussalam. The African countries are interested into this aid and thus also

in friendly relations with China.

The Pakistani Ambassador has stated that Zhou Enlai had called the events in Pakistan to be a purely internal affair of Pakistan.

Comrade Bossev talked about an information he received from the Bulgarian Ambassador in Canada: There are expectations in Canada that upcoming Chinese-Canadian talks in Stockholm on the establishment of diplomatic relations will be lengthy and difficult. Canada has requested guarantees for free movement and safety of its diplomats in Beijing. The Chinese side had replied that such specific guarantees are not necessary. Canada is not an imperialist country and thus has nothing to be afraid of.

V. On Global Events

Comrade Yelisavetin informed on the intention of the U.S. government to send larger formations of battleships to the Sea of Japan in the context of the [North Korean] downing of the [EC-121] spy plane.

Furthermore, he talked about the strident statement by [Cambodian Prime Minister Norodom] Sihanouk on 28 March on the presence of DRV [Democratic Republic of (North) Vietnam] and NLF [(South Vietnamese) National Liberation Front] troops on Cambodian territory. The press campaign against the DRV and monitoring of the DRV Embassy in Cambodia has further increased. Apparently this has happened due to the influence of right wing general on Sihanouk. The DRV side is very concerned about this. There has been a meeting with the Cambodian Foreign Minister. On the other hand, Sihanouk has made a general statement of his support for DRV and NLF. Currently the DRV troops are concentrated closer to the Vietnamese border and in larger distance from populated locations in Cambodia.

Comrade Kohousek talked about articles on China topics from the New York Herald Tribune, the Japan Times from 13 April 1969 and the last issue of the "Far Eastern Economic Review" on the trade between China and Japan.

CC:

2x Far East Department [GDR Foreign Ministry]

1x [Embassy] Beijing