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**Information # 2 / 72 for the Members and
Candidates of the Politburo of the Central
Committee, 'Information about the So-Called
Disputed Territories at the Soviet-Chinese Border'**

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Summary:

A report, produced by the CPSU and shared with the East German SED, on the Sino-Soviet border conflict. The CPSU analyzes China's position on the disputed territories in their shared border, and how the Soviet Union ought to respond.

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Information # 2 / 72
For the Members and Candidates of the Politburo of the Central Committee[\[1\]](#)

RE: Information about the so-called disputed territories at the Soviet-Chinese border

(The Information was handed[\[2\]](#) to Comrade Markowski[\[3\]](#) by the Member of the Central Revision Commission of the CPSU[\[4\]](#) and Deputy of the Head of the Department [of Socialist Countries] in the Central Committee of the CPSU, Comrade O. B. Rakhmanin[\[5\]](#)).

[Signed] Markowski
Markowski

CC:
Copy 1 to 25: Politburo
Copy 26 to 43: Secretariat

About the so-called "disputed territories" at the Soviet-Chinese border

The main demand raised by the Chinese side in ultimate fashion during the border negotiations in Beijing, and the one we[\[6\]](#) cannot accept, is the demand that the Soviet Union should recognize the existence of so-called "disputed territories" on its own territory. Most of the other theses brought up by the Chinese are supposed to help support this concept of "disputed territories" (for instance about a troop withdrawal from the "disputed territories", about the economic activities of the border population in those territories, et cetera).

How did the "disputed territories" come up?

Until 1960 the Chinese never and nowhere ever raised doubts about the border between the PRC and the USSR, and they also did not talk about whatever "disputed territories" along the Soviet-Chinese border. With the emergence of the hostile course of the Beijing leadership towards the Soviet Union, the Chinese began ever more

persistently to raise issues about the border line, but even then they did not yet talk about "disputed territories". When in 1964 the Soviet-Chinese consultations began to specify the border line at certain sections, both delegations exchanged topographical maps. And only now it became evident that on the Chinese maps several parts of Soviet territory were marked as belonging to China; over a length of more than 4,000 kilometers the border line was marked in the Soviet hinterland, this is behind that line which is protected by our border guards since the emergence of the Soviet State. Those are the parts of Soviet territories declared by the Chinese as "disputed".

It must be emphasized that the border marked on the Chinese maps in the so-called "disputed territories" is devoid of any legal basis, and that it is not identical with the line set in contractual agreements. Neither in 1964 nor in the current negotiations, the Chinese delegation is willing to come up with references and explanations to support such border demarcations.

The "disputed territories" are not just small areas but overall amount to about 33,000 square kilometers (this is more than the area of such countries like Belgium or the Netherlands). Tens of thousands of Soviet people are living and working there. All these areas are on Soviet territory, they have never belonged to China. A Chinese population with potential economic activities did not exist there.

What do the Chinese need the "disputed territories" for?

The Chinese concept of the "disputed territories" has several objectives. The term "disputed territories" alone, which frequently comes up in the process of border negotiations, is very convenient for the Chinese. It is allowing them to use such a term, which is common in diplomatic language and as such does not raise suspicions, for nothing less as making territorial claims against Soviet sovereign territory. In Chinese intention, the concept of "disputed territories" is supposed to soften the existing border and to strike huge breaches over a length of more than half of its actual overall length. The Chinese representatives openly declare that "there is no border in the "disputed territories"", that the "Soviet-Chinese border does not represent a consistent, closed demarcation line" et cetera. Therefore this is already no longer about the demarcation line in the "disputed territories", but this is about a revision and new demarcation of the entire border as such.

Because of this, the Chinese consider as a consequence of their claim to the "disputed territories" those already now as "their territory". As it becomes apparent from their statements during the negotiations in Beijing, they have even more territorial claims against the Soviet Union in the amount of 1.5 million square kilometer, about which Mao Zedong had talked in 1964.

The intention of the Chinese is quite simple and divided into stages: after a fixation of the existence of "disputed territories" in a bilateral interim agreement, which would set a precedent for the discussion of the actual border, the Soviet Union would no longer have to recognize the legitimacy of the Chinese claims to the "disputed territories", as well as the non-existence of the border over a length of more than 4,000 kilometers. With that, the remaining half of the border would also be up in the air, because with the recognition of "disputed territories" the entire contractual foundation of the border demarcation would be destroyed.

Finally, the political importance of the recognition of "disputed territories" would result in freedom of maneuver for the Chinese leadership, which is disputing the existence of a consistent border agreed by treaties. It would allow for presenting "further bills" to the Soviet Union from the territorial "register" Mao Zedong was already talking about in 1964.

The Beijing leadership, though, is not only questioning the Eastern border of the Soviet Union (while it must be noted that the Chinese also support the Japanese on the issue of the "Northern territories", this is supporting territorial claims against the Soviet Union in any form). It is also advocating against the immutability of post-war borders in Europe, this is the Western flank of the Soviet Union. Thus the Chinese leadership is eager to "break up" our state borders one after the other in order to place our country in a situation where it has to defend and explain itself. The political objective of such anti-Soviet actions by the Chinese leadership is crystal clear: to establish an additional front against our country now on a territorial basis already.

What would the acceptance of the Chinese concept of "disputed territories" mean for the Soviet Union?

Under such a scenario we would have to:

- question the validity of existing contractual documents that determine the current demarcation of the Soviet-Chinese border;
- recognize that currently de facto there does not exist a consistent and continuous border line between the USSR and the PRC as determined by contractual documents;
- unilaterally withdraw our troops from the "disputed territories", this is in fact open up the border along a front of about 4,000 kilometers in length, and at individual sections to a depth of up to 1,200 kilometers;
- leave tens of thousands, and again tens of thousands, of Soviet people there without protection and care, while the Chinese forces would remain in their old positions and the Chinese population would gain the opportunity to take possession of these territories under the pretext of "economic activity";
- become subject to the danger of a liquidation of autonomy for entire regions of the USSR (for instance, the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region of Tadzhikistan is situated in a territory the Chinese define as being among the "disputed").

It must be particularly emphasized: A recognition of parts of Soviet territory as "disputed territories" by us would not at all guarantee that both sides will afterwards move towards discussing the demarcation line and concluding a border treaty. Rather it would delay the general complex of the border issue: When they will be assured of our recognition of the "disputed-ness" of these territories in a bilateral document, the Chinese could delay the finalization of a new border treaty until "better times". By the way, this argument is supported by the fact that they do not wish to settle on a period of validity in the interim agreement about the Status Quo.

All this leaves us with the only possible conclusion: we can in no way agree to the concept of "disputed territories".

If there are no "disputed territories" at the border, what to negotiate about then?

Exactly such questions are always posed to us by the Chinese during the negotiations; they claim that without recognition of the existence of "disputed territories", the negotiations as such are meaningless.

The Soviet side always was of the opinion it is still following currently: there does exist between the USSR and China neither a territorial issue nor a border issue - since

the current Soviet-Chinese border had been determined in accordance with the contractual documents in effect.

This does not mean, however, that for both the Soviet Union and the PR China the necessity to specify the border demarcation line at individual sections is in any way moot. The Soviet Union has always held that position, when it proposed such to the Chinese partners in 1964 as well as in 1969 to discuss questions of a border agreement. We start from the [following] assumptions: that the Russian-Chinese treaty documents were drafted in its overwhelming majority more than 100 years ago; that in this period there never had been a demarcation of the border between both countries completed; that at some sections the boundary markers have disintegrated; that the ground relief has partially changed; that some contractual provisions are based on norms of international law from more than 100 years ago, and that they are outdated and in need of modification, and more of the like. Therefore we have repeatedly called on the Chinese side - and we are also doing this now - to discuss the border line in order to specify it, to sign a new border treaty as well as an agreement about the order at the border, and undertake a demarcation of the border line with the help of modern means.

For both sides there exists therefore exactly one issue to negotiate about: the line of the border. And if one of the partners has doubts about the correctness of the border line at individual sections, it might be rather the best procedure to review the specific sections by looking at all respective documents.

[1] Of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany (SED), the ruling communist party of the GDR.

[2] Therefore the following document was a German translation of the Russian original.

[3] Paul Markowski (1929-1978), Head of the Department of International Relations in the SED Central Committee.

[4] Communist Party of the Soviet Union.

[5] Oleg Borisovich Rakhmanin (1924-2010).

[6] The Soviet Union.