

October 6, 1969

**Notes from a Conversation between Comrade
Rakhmanin and Comrade Bruno Mahlow on Chinese
Leadership and the Situation in China**

Citation:

"Notes from a Conversation between Comrade Rakhmanin and Comrade Bruno Mahlow on Chinese Leadership and the Situation in China", October 6, 1969, Wilson Center Digital Archive, Foundation Archives of Parties and Mass Organisations of the GDR in the Federal Archives (SAPMO-BA), DY 30, 3613. Translated by Bernd Schaefer.
<https://wilson-center.drivingcreative.com/document/110261>

Summary:

Rakhmanin discusses the topics addressed by Zhou Enlai and Comrade Kosygin in a recent meeting. He highlights such topics of conversation as Chinese/Soviet border lines, propaganda issues, Chinese domestic disturbances and foreign policies issues.

Original Language:

German

Contents:

Translation - English

Department of International Relations
Berlin, 6 October 1969

On Thursday, 2 October 1969, the International Relations Department Deputy Head, Comrade Bruno Mahlow, had a conversation with Comrade Rakhmanin, First Deputy Head of the CPSU Central Committee's International Department. During this talk Comrade Rakhmanin made the following remarks about current positions of the Chinese leadership and the situation in the PRC:

Even after the meeting between Comrade Kosygin and Zhou Enlai there are no recognizable changes in fundamental positions of the Chinese leadership. For the Soviet Union, the meeting with Zhou Enlai was about steps to normalize state-to-state relations, and to simultaneously exploit all options for a decisive struggle against extremist forces in the Chinese leadership.

The Soviet-Chinese border is the pivotal issue of negotiations. As it is such a big headache, it has become the central question for Soviet policy and its resolution is imperative. The meeting [between Kosygin and Zhou] was also held to create a certain atmosphere. This explains a certain reduction resp. reluctance to publish [anti-Chinese] propaganda pieces in the USSR's official newspapers. Yet a change of the CPSU's fundamental position towards the Mao course is not on the agenda at all. There has been no change concerning publication of scientific books or pieces in scientific journals. Scientific confrontation will systematically continue.

Currently it looks like border negotiations will begin in Beijing in October. Comrade Kusnetsov, the First Deputy Foreign Minister, has been appointed head of the Soviet delegation. Already during the meeting with Zhou Enlai, Comrade Kosygin had replied to a question from the Chinese side about the potential venue for negotiations that such is not an issue of Soviet prestige, and Beijing is fine as the location. In the interest of a positive solution the Soviet Union is ready to make some concessions towards a more precise borderline. The same readiness it had already shown during the negotiations of 1964. Soviet border units are under strict order not to allow for any provocations, notwithstanding the continuation of Chinese transgressions at certain points of the border (like, for instance, in the area of Damansky Island).

According to Comrade Rakhmanin, there might be opportunities to resolve the border issue. Problems are mainly to expect from two Chinese demands concerning the Chabarovsk urban area (an acceptance of the Chinese proposal would draw the border line right through the city) and in the Pamir area (the Chinese demands amount to an incorporation of a 28,000 square kilometer territory).

Overall we have to solve the border question. Otherwise, the Mao Zedong Group would finally unmask itself before the entire global audience [as the ones responsible for obstruction, BS].

Other questions discussed during the meeting [between Kosygin and Zhou, BS] are currently not subject to any modifications (like trade relations, aid transports to Vietnam, dispatch of ambassadors). The Chinese leadership does want to be guided in the long run by the resolutions of the "IX CCP Congress". However, the Soviet Union will continue to separate all questions of normalizing bilateral relations from the necessary fundamental ideological confrontation.

Currently there are some modified nuances in Chinese propaganda. In the slogans on display in Beijing, as well as in official speeches for the 20th Anniversary of the PRC, terms like "Soviet" before "social-imperialism", "modern revisionism" etc. were omitted. The anniversary event as such, however, witnessed the shout-out of the same anti-Soviet slogans as usual. The same applies to the Chinese press.

Yet the Soviet comrades want to use even the slightest opportunity to influence certain parts of the Chinese population. Primarily they want to demonstrate how the Chinese people are betrayed by the assertion that the Soviet Union wants a war with China. This is one of the reasons behind the Soviet [congratulatory, BS] telegram for the 1st of October [20th PRC Anniversary].

On Chinese Motives for the Meeting with Kosygin

a) The difficult domestic situation

There are serious conflicts in the entire country. Armed clashes have gone so far that the Mao Group was even forced to relocate some troops from the Chinese-Soviet border to the interior of the country. Especially fierce are clashes in South China, as well as in the provinces of Sichuan, Shaanxi, Xinkiang, and Inner Mongolia. In Xinkiang, for instance, where emergency rule was declared, there are real massacres going on, as we can gather from testimonies of defectors.

Currently Chinese society is basically rudderless. The old power structure has been liquidated, the new one is not yet able to stabilize itself. The entire country resembles more a badly organized army. Currently one can thus talk of military rule in the country. There is no clear differentiation within the Chinese leadership. Dramatized rumors about bad health conditions of Mao Zedong and Lin Biao seem to be part of Maoist tactics. All official speeches always return to reference decisions of the "IX Party Congress".

There is a particular need for academics to closer research the question how long such a society can exist even under the specific conditions of China. According to Comrade Rakhmanin, it would be appropriate here to study closer the developments in Jiang Jieshi's Guomindang China since currently some parallels can be drawn.

b) Foreign policy aspects

It becomes ever more difficult for the Chinese leadership to master problems in foreign policy. They encountered major difficulties in foreign relations not only with socialist but also with capitalist countries.

Successfully developing, however, are relations with Japan and West Germany in particular in the economic and scientific-technological area. In this context Comrade Rakhmanin hinted at the grave danger of a possible future bloc China-Japan-West Germany that might be joined by the United States. Remarks by a Japanese Sinologist are not too far-fetched, according to which there are forces in the Chinese leadership that want to provoke the U.S., via negotiations with the Soviet Union, to undertake active steps to develop its relations with China, i.e. they offer China [to the U.S.] as a kind of "bride".

The hard blows delivered to the Maoist provocateurs at the Soviet-Chinese border have had major effects on the Mao Group. In addition, imperialist propaganda has done its own share to make Chinese leaders aware of their position of adventurist policy. Another lasting impact on the Chinese leaders was the ideological isolation of the Mao course at the International Conference of the Communist and Workers Parties in Moscow [in June 1969]; also the targeted ideological confrontation by the seven fraternal parties based on the materials of two internal China meetings in Moscow and Berlin.

Obviously the Chinese leadership will continue to attempt in the future to differentiate between the socialist countries (like, for instance, especially vis-à-vis Romania) and to sow mistrust against Soviet policy on China.