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Information about A.N. Kosygin's Conversation With Zhou Enlai on 11 September 1969

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Summary:

A.N. Kosygin met with Zhou Enlai, Li Xiannian, and Xie Fuzhi in an effort to improve strained relations between the Soviet Union and China. The main focus was the on-going Sino-Soviet border dispute. Kosygin also proposed the expansion of trade relations and economic cooperation as well as the normalizing of railroad and aviation connections. Significantly, the Soviet premier also acquiesced when Zhou declared that Beijing would not curtail its political and ideological criticism of the Soviet Union.

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Information

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The CC CPSU considers it necessary to inform You about A.N. Kosygin's conversation with Premier of the State Council of the PRC Zhou Enlai which took place on September 11 of this year in Beijing.

As is well known, relations between the USSR and China, and the leadership of the PRC is to blame for this, are extremely aggravated. The Chinese authorities are exacerbating tension on the border with the Soviet Union. In the PRC, appeals to prepare for war against the USSR are openly made. Trade relations have been reduced to a minimum, scientific-technological and cultural exchanges have ceased, contacts along diplomatic lines are limited. For more than three years ambassadors have been absent from Moscow and Beijing. The anti-Soviet policy of the Chinese leadership is being used by the imperialist powers in the struggle against world socialism and the Communist movement.

In the report of CC CPSU General Secretary L.I. Brezhnev to the Moscow meeting of Communist and Workers' Parties the course of our policy in relation to China was clearly set forth. The CPSU and the Soviet government, proceeding from its unchanging policy oriented towards an improvement in relations between the USSR and the PRC, has repeatedly appealed to the Chinese leadership with concrete proposals about ways to normalize relations. The pronouncements of the government of the USSR of March 29 and June 13 of this year are very well known. The message of the Council of Ministers of the USSR to the State Council of the PRC sent in July of this year, in which concrete proposals regarding the improvement of contacts between the Soviet Union and China along government lines were put forth, including the organization of a bilateral summit meeting, also served the aims of putting to rights Soviet-Chinese inter-governmental relations.

Undertaking these actions, the CC CPSU and the Soviet government proceeded from and proceeds from a principled course in Soviet-Chinese relations. According to our deep conviction, a softening of tensions in relations between the USSR and the PRC would correspond to the interests of our two countries, and also of the whole Socialist commonwealth overall, would facilitate the activation of the struggle against imperialism, would be an essential support to heroic Vietnam and to the peoples of other countries which are leading the struggle for social and national liberation.

Guided by these considerations, the CC CPSU decided to undertake one more initiative aimed at a softening of the situation in relations between the USSR and the PRC.

The Chinese side responded pretty quickly to our proposal to hold a meeting of A.N. Kosygin, who was present in Hanoi at Ho Chi Minh's funeral, with Zhou Enlai. However, the Chinese response arrived in Hanoi an hour after the departure of the Soviet Party-State delegation to Moscow via Calcutta, and therefore A.N. Kosygin set off for Beijing already from the territory of the Soviet Union.

The meeting of the Soviet delegation headed by Comrade A.N. Kosygin with Zhou Enlai, Li Xiannian, and Xie Fuzhi continued for about four hours. From the Soviet side efforts were applied to assure that the conversation took place in the spirit of a concrete consideration of the knotty issues of inter-governmental Soviet-Chinese relations. In this regard, Zhou Enlai's various attempts to introduce into the conversation polemics on issues of ideological disagreements were decisively

deflected. The Soviet side firmly declared the immutability of our principled positions and political course in the area of domestic and foreign policy.

A consideration of the situation on the Soviet-Chinese border occupied the central place in the conversation. The sides recognized the abnormality of the existing situation and exchanged opinions regarding the search for paths to the settlement of the border issues. Zhou Enlai declared that "China has no territorial pretensions toward the Soviet Union." At the same time he repeated his previous assertions about the unfair nature of the agreements which define the border, although he said that the Chinese side does not demand that they be annulled and "recognizes the border which exists in accord with these treaties." From the Soviet side a proposal was introduced to move toward the practical preparation for negotiations on border issues. Vis-a-vis these goals, we proposed to organize over the next week or two a meeting between delegations headed by the deputy ministers of foreign affairs of the two countries. In this regard it was noted by us that the place where these negotiations will be held has no particular significance for us. Zhou Enlai responded to our proposal about negotiations and expressed a wish that the negotiations would be held in Beijing.

As the bases for normalization of the situation on the border during the period before a final settlement which could be achieved as the result of negotiations between the delegations of the USSR and the PRC, the following principles were put forth: observance of the existing border, the inadmissibility of armed confrontations, the withdrawal of troops of both sides from direct contact in controversial sectors. It was agreed that issues which arise in relation to the economic activity of citizens of both countries in the controversial sectors will be decided according to the agreement between representatives of the border authorities. Both sides agreed to give an instruction to the appropriate border organizations to resolve misunderstandings which arise in the spirit of benevolence via the path of consultation.

Guided by the instructions of the CC CPSU, the Soviet side put forth concrete proposals on the establishment and development of economic contacts between the USSR and the PRC. An initiative was revealed by us regarding an expansion of trade, the fulfillment of contracts which had been concluded, the signing of trade protocols for the current and next year, the working out of measures on trade and economic cooperation during the present five-year plan. Zhou Enlai promised to present these proposals to the Politburo of the CC CPC, and expressed his agreement to exchange supplemental lists of products for 1969.

We proposed to the Chinese side to normalize railroad and aviation connections between the two countries, and to reestablish the high-frequency link which had been interrupted by the Chinese authorities in March of this year.

From the Soviet side there also was raised the issue of mutually sending Ambassadors and the creation of conditions for the normal activity of diplomatic representatives.

Zhou Enlai stated that these proposals will be submitted to Mao Zedong.

During the consideration of issues of Soviet-Chinese inter-governmental relations Zhou Enlai stressed that the leadership of the CPC does not intend to curtail its political and ideological speeches against the CPSU and the other fraternal parties. He justified the current forms of "polemics" which are being used by the Beijing leaders as having nothing in common with theoretical discussions, and referred to the statement of Mao Zedong to the effect that "polemics will continue for 10 thousand more years."

The Soviet side stressed that the CPSU believes that polemics on controversial issues are permissible; however, it is important that they be conducted in an appropriate tone, and argued on a scientific basis. Lies and curses do not add persuasiveness and authority to a polemic, and only humiliate the feelings of the other people and aggravate the relations.

From our side it was also underlined that disagreements between the USSR and the PRC play into the hands of the world imperialism, weaken the Socialist system and the ranks of fighters for national and social liberation. It was noted that over the whole history of the struggle with Communism, imperialism has never received a greater gain than that which it has as a result of the deepening, which is not our fault, of the PRC's differences with the Soviet Union and other Socialist countries.

We declared the provocative nature of the contrived imperialist propaganda to the effect that the Soviet Union allegedly is preparing a preventive strike on China. It was stressed that in the Soviet Union neither the Party nor the government has ever spoken about the unavoidability of war and has not summoned the people to war. All of our documents, party decisions summon the people to peace. We never have said to the people that it is necessary to "pull the belt tighter," that war is unavoidable. Zhou Enlai, in his turn, said that "China has no intentions to attack the Soviet Union." He stressed that from the Chinese side measures will be undertaken not to allow armed confrontations with the USSR.

The conversation took place overall in a constructive, calm atmosphere, despite the sharp posing of a range of issues.

We evaluate the meeting which has taken place with representatives of the Chinese leadership as useful. The CC CPSU and the Soviet government made a decision about the members of the delegation and time frames for their meetings with the Chinese representatives for the realization of the concrete proposals which were put forth in the course of the conversation.

It goes without saying that for the time being it is still early to make conclusions about the results which this meeting will bring. The anti-Soviet campaign which is continuing in the PRC and also the fact that the agreed text of the communiqué about the meeting was changed, put us on our guard. Upon its publication in the Chinese press it had been omitted that both sides conducted "a constructive conversation." Time will tell whether Beijing's intention to move along the path of normalization will be serious or if this is only a tactical move dictated by the circumstances of the aggravated domestic struggle in the PRC and also of that isolation in which the Chinese leadership has found itself as a result of the consistent and firm policy of the Socialist countries, Communist parties, and all forces who have condemned the peculiar positions of the Chinese leadership. We believe it necessary to follow attentively and vigilantly the further development of the situation in China itself, the activity of the Beijing leadership in the sphere of Soviet-Chinese relations, and also the international arena overall.

The CC CPSU and the Soviet government believe that if the Chinese leaders demonstrate a sober and serious approach to the proposals which were put forth by us, that this will frustrate the designs of the imperialist circles to intensify the Soviet-Chinese disagreements, to provoke a conflict between our countries and in this way to weaken the common front of the anti-imperialist struggle.

The normalization of relations between the USSR and the PRC, if they will demonstrate a desire to do this in Beijing, undoubtedly will facilitate the growth of the power of the camp of Socialism and peace, will correspond to the interests of a strengthening of unit of the anti-imperialist forces and to the successful resolution of the tasks which were posed by the International Meeting of Communist and Workers' Parties.