

**August 22, 1989**

**Note by Vladimir Lukin regarding Soviet-Chinese  
Relations**

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**Summary:**

Vladimir Lukin speculates on the future of China and Sino-Soviet relations in the aftermath of the Tiananmen Square Incident.

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**Contents:**

Translation - English

The events of recent months in the PRC substantially changed the political-ideological background of Soviet-Chinese relations. Unfortunately-not for the better. Whereas this background used to be centripetal: both we and the Chinese moved in the same direction, towards a less centralized, more market-based, human socialism, then now, after the events in Tiananmen Square, the situation changed in crucial respects.

At the surface of our relations, nothing or almost nothing worrying has happened in recent months. Contacts are being developed at all levels, good, well-wishing words are being uttered. But the background has changed-centrifugal. In order to perceive the "radiation" of this background, it would be useful to pay attention to the conversation of the new General Secretary of the CCP Jiang Zemin with a delegation of the SED on July 14 of this year (Renmin Ribao 15.07.1989). He stated, among other things: "A friend in need is a friend indeed. During these difficult times, China received help and understanding on the part of the GDR. Both you and we stand on the side of Marxism." This is just one of many signals that the current leadership of the PRC, by force, first and foremost, of their own internal political orientation, drifts more and more obviously towards the group of socialist countries with traditional ideology (GDR, Cuba, Romania, DPRK) and, at the same time, treats with fear and suspect those countries, which are reforming the administrative-bureaucratic system. This, of course, is an unpleasant fact, but it would be incorrect not to take it into account in our contacts with the Chinese.

Another important particularity of the current situation of the PRC is that the social base and the level of political stability of the current Chinese leadership is, by all evidence, extremely low. With all the traditional discipline of the Chinese in their contacts with foreigners, now, in private conversations with those whom they consider old friends and reliable people, they are practically not hiding their rejection of the current regime, and its policy of "tightening the screws" in the economy and in the political-ideological spheres. With this, it is most notable that we are talking not about representatives of the creative intelligentsia and students but about representatives of the establishment, which had never until now allowed itself anything "excessive." Thus, the delegation of the Chinese Institute of Current International Affairs (which works for the highest political leadership and organs of state security of the PRC), visiting the USSR in August on the invitation of the Institute of USA and Canada Studies of the USSR, directly expressed their sharp dissatisfaction with the "policy of the old men" and foresaw coming changes "in the Soviet spirit." Similar statements were made by the young diplomats of the PRC Embassy in the USSR.

Such facts testify that the supposition of the instability of the current political course in the PRC has a firm basis. Approximately in the period of 2 to 4 years the elder generation of the Chinese leaders, headed by Deng, will exit the stage, and the attitudes spelled out above, will break through to the surface.

The question arises: how should we act in the current situation?

And here a fine task emerges between us of drawing a line of separation between gestures and development of business ties. One can imagine that at the level of development of practical ties we can and should do as much as we can in the coming period. As for the political symbolism, here it is very important to show caution.

Our approach to the events in China, formulated in the statement of the Congress of People's Deputies of the USSR, met with approval of the majority of the qualified Soviet China specialists. Abroad, they could not, in general, "criticize it in essence," although they "expected more from us" in the USA and in Europe, for understandable reasons.

It appears very important that the main theme of our approach to the current Chinese

situation rests on the three principles: first, we do not interfere in the internal affairs of the PRC and develop good neighborly relations with it in all spheres; we are also, in principle, against the use of the economic levers for political pressure; secondly, we do not strive to "score points" in relations with the PRC at anyone's expense; thirdly, our relations with the PRC are relations, based on a long-term perspective and not connected with such or other internal political swings and subjective (especially personal) factors.

It seems that one should show particular vigilance in development ties along two directions: inter-party and military. In the course of party-to-party contacts, the ideological background will manifest itself especially strongly, and it is important for us to avoid any reasons for ideological polemics at the official level. As for the military contacts, while developing them, one should take into account that the Chinese army, after the Tiananmen events, has discredited itself in the eyes of the wide masses of the Chinese, as well as abroad. Excessively strong "fraternizing" here can be politically counter-productive due to a whole range of reasons, including our own internal political [reasons]. [...]

In general, for the nearest future, it appears optimal to use the following combination in our approach to China: "well-wishing reserve" in relations with Beijing in political terms, refrain from "peddling" any dramatic, demonstrative political actions for the nearest period, and active development of business ties at the practical level. Factual objectivity of information about events in China, without slightest lean in the direction of approval or censure at the official level. Calm attitude towards the statements of representatives of the unofficial public of our country of their personal judgments in this question, explaining, if necessary, that one is talking here about personal opinion, which does not have any relation to the official Soviet position.

Such a policy will allow, it seems, to pass through the current difficult period, without spoiling relations with official Beijing, having preserved the respect of the most advanced sections of the Chinese people (which will doubtlessly play a role during not so distant period after Deng and will not create difficulties on the road of our forward movement in the "Western direction" of our foreign policy activity).

V. Lukin  
22.08.89