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Sigismund Ludwig Borkheim an Karl Marx in London. London, Montag, 1., und Dienstag, 2. November 1869

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Handschriftenbeschreibung:*

Der Brief besteht aus einem Bogen mittelstarkem, blauem Papier im Format 360 × 228 mm sowie einem Blatt mittelstarkem, grünem Papier mit Wasserlinien im Format 210 × 180 mm. Wasserzeichen (blauer Bogen): bekröntes Wappenschild mit Posthorn und darunter „J“. Borkheim hat alle vier Seiten des Bogens und die erste Seite des Blattes vollständig, die zweite Blattseite zu zwei Dritteln beschrieben, dabei nur eine der sechs Seiten selbst paginiert. Schreibmaterial: schwarze Tinte.

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| 10. Brunswick Gardens
Kensington
1 Nov 69

My dear Marx,

I send you a piece of news^a, of which, to my knowledge, no german, english, french or other continental paper has made any mention as yet.

I take it from the Russian “**Moscow Gazette**”^b of 23 Sept. / 5 Oct.; this paper states as its source the “**Kronstadt Messenger**”^c a russian official paper. The story runs:

“The ‘**Kronstadt Messenger**’^d prints the report of Captain-Lieutenant **Ussoff**^e, commander of the screwboat **Ssobol**, now on the China station and having instructions to examine the archipelago of islands bordering on Corea. On the 13 April / 25 April the Ssobol approached a cluster of islands, called Kanchoa on the English maps. Captain-lieutenant Ussoff writes:

‘At 8 o’clock in the morning of 13 April / 25 April a small boat was sent out by me with some officers to examine the neighbourhood. On their return they saw at the far end of the gulf a little river, but nobody could assert, that it was the river Chankon, on which the main town of Corea, Ssjaul, is situated. By calculation |(2) and by the map there are in the north, at the far end of the gulf two small islands; near them is a place marked (on the maps) for anchoring.’

“Thereupon the **commander^f** of the Ssobol goes on stating, that the anchoring place did not appear a fit one, that he observed a riff, that, on letting go the anchor, the chain snapped, and that he fished for the anchor during three days. He continues:

‘Near a wooded island, by observation in 37°30’97’’ latitude, is another island separated by a very small canal. On this latter island stands a fortification, surrounded by a wall with holes for firing; the wall, evidently, is new; the fortification has a garrison of soldiers, who number about 400, armed with matchlock guns, and, as it appeared to me, with bows. I suppose, this is an advanced post, erected on the entrance to the bay of the river Changan after the expedition of the French. I do not give this as a fact, not being in a position to prove it.

At 9 in the morning of the 17/29 April the midshipman **Malzeff^g** with a sailor was sent on shore to shoot birds, which, at low water, sit in great numbers on the sandbanks. Malzeff, remaining on shore, sent the small boat back, because the low ebb set in and he therefore did not want it. Watching them through the glass, I observed on the height, under which they stood, the appearance of Corea soldiers, numbering at least 30 and opening a running fire against the officer at a distance of 50 paces. I at once sent off the armed longboat under command of the Junker **Gärtner^h**, ordering him to get the officer and sailor away at any cost, and I myself opened fire from the ship on the shooting Coreans. Just, when Malzeffs boat had returned, I saw some Coreans descend from the height and begin firing at it; it bore a flag; but a cannon shot from a bomb-gun put them to flight.

Midshipman **Malzeffⁱ** saved himself by running into a wading place. Wearing big hunting boots, he sunk into the mud up to the waist; he made a hole with his body, and kept lying there, thus protecting himself against the fire. Having a doublebarrelled huntingpiece and seeing that 4 Coreans approached towards him, he loaded one of his barrels with five revolver balls, and to keep the Coreans aloof, he lifted the gun | to his head. His threat had little effect; one of the Coreans approached to a distance of 10 paces; fortunately his gun was not loaded, and he intended to hit him with the butt end. At this minute Malzeff fired off his grape and the Corean fell on one knee, and the cannonball from the ship forced the other Coreans to run for such shelter as the shore offered. On the return of the small boat I saw, that thank God, nobody was wounded. I called a council of the officers on the poop and after having heard their opinion, I decided—the officers were unanimous—to bombard the fortification, out of which, according to Malzeffs statement, not less than 60 men had been sent. I waited for high water until 2 o’clock, so that the ship should be on a level with the fortification and then began firing at a distance of 5 cabletowscables lengths (?); 15 balls, 10 bombs, 40 oval-cylindrical shells (with fixed fuses going off when they touch the object) were thrown. The fortification made no reply, because there were no guns in it. It was impossible to see well the effect of the shots, because they happened to be thrown over the hill, where the town lies; from the basket on the top of the mast the watch announced, that the buildings were burning, but the flame was invisible; probably the Coreans extinguished them immediately, having water so near. Balls flew against the wall of the | fortification, but I observed no holes, although there can be no doubt, that the bombs and cylindrical shells produced their advantage. At 4 o’clock I ceased firing, got steam up, got under way and arrived at the outlet of the gulf, but, an adverse South-West getting up and as I could not count on clearing the sandbanks in daylight, I anchored near the Konitschesski Island in a depth of 11 fathoms (russian). At the time of my bombarding the fortification junks began to show apparently making for the fortification, in the expectation of the ship sailing away”

This report is ridiculous on the face of it. I have translated it verbally and vouch for its correctness. I add it is the first time that I translate from Russian into English and the nautical expressions were not easy for me to render.—I hold the original | at your disposal.— This would not be a bad thing for a M. P. to “ask a question”.—How is the general silence of the newspapers to be explained?— Now довольно—enough! It is 11 o’cl. I am going to bed—Good night!

Yours
Borkheim.

Dienstag früh.—Guten Morgen!

Ich erwarte, daß Sie so freundlich sein werden, mir die Angaben zu machen betreffend die Geschichte der Romanoff-Hohenzollernschen Verwicklungen; denn grade jetzt hätte ich Zeit, hin und wieder mal einige Stunden auf dem Museum zuzubringen.

So eben nochmals das Englische durchgelesen – der Schwank des **Ussoff^j** – **Malzeff^k** ist eigentlich für den **Kladderadatsch^l**.

Ihr
B.

Erläuterungen

- a) Siehe Marx an Engels, 12.11.1869.
- b) Moskovskija Vědomosti (Московскія Вѣдомости; deutsch: Moskauer Anzeiger)
- c) Kronštadtskij vestni (Кронштадтский вестник; deutsch: Kronstädter Bote)
- d) Kronštadtskij vestni (Кронштадтский вестник; deutsch: Kronstädter Bote)
- e) Usov, Mikhail Alexandrovich (1829-1904)
- f) Usov, Mikhail Alexandrovich (1829-1904)
- g) Malzeff (-)
- h) Gärtner (-)
- i) Malzeff (-)
- j) Usov, Mikhail Alexandrovich (1829-1904)
- k) Malzeff (-)
- l) Kladderadatsch.

Kritischer Apparat