

## COMMUNIST AREA

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### SOVIET MEDIA TRAIN THEIR SIGHTS ON CHOU EN-LAI

Summary: Within the past week, Soviet media have launched two personal attacks on Chou En-lai, who in the past decade has usually been exempted from the torrents of invective which have been showered by Russian propagandists on Mao Tse-tung and the extreme Leftists of the cultural revolution group. This paper describes the evidence and discusses some possible reasons for the new and aggressively hostile Soviet attitude to the Chinese Premier personally.

Although the Sino-Soviet dispute has now raged in the open for more than a decade, until this month it was standard practice for Moscow's propagandists to go easy on Chou En-lai. Exactly why this should have been the case was never clear, but it seemed to the attentive reader that the Kremlin had noted Chou's relative moderation, his pragmatism, his diplomatic skill and influence over the Chinese

government machinery, and was hoping to keep its lines open to him in case he should emerge one day as a more acceptable leader than Mao. In December 1971 the line suddenly changed, and twice in the last week Chou has become the target of scathing personal attacks in Soviet media -- the type of attacks which were formerly directed only against Mao himself and the Left extremists of the cultural revolution group.

The process seems to have begun with a major article by Viktor Mayevsky in Pravda (1) which was published just before Christmas. It accused the Chinese leaders of "betraying the national-liberation movement" by their support of Pakistan against Bangla Desh. Mayevsky writes:

Attention is focused on the fact that one of the main instigators of the anti-Indian and anti-Soviet campaign is none other than Premier of the State Council of the CPR, Chou En-lai. Recently he delivered a harangue in which, turning black into white, he strove to justify the terror of the military dictatorship against the people of East Bengal, accused India of "aggressive war," and accused the "social-imperialists" invented by the Maoists of a desire to "establish control over India and fight for hegemony over the South Asian sub-continent and the Indian Ocean."

Even before this sally, Radio Moscow (in Mandarin to Southeast Asia) had launched an esoteric attack on Chou En-lai in a commentary concerning the flight of the Uighurs to the USSR in 1962. (2) The commentator said:

Chinese propaganda has more than once alleged that in the well-known 1962 incident in the Uighur Autonomous Region of Sinkiang, the USSR stirred up a counter-revolutionary revolt in that area, and used force to send tens of thousands of Chinese citizens to the Soviet Union. Obviously the Peking leadership is turning out fabrications to divert the peoples' attention from the real causes of the flight of large numbers of Chinese citizens to foreign countries. These causes are universally known. The major cause was the Maoist clique's anti-national and adventurous policy toward nationalities in China.

The "Chinese leaders" attacked by the commentator are clearly a reference to Chou En-lai, since only two days earlier (December 19) his interview with Mr. Neville Maxwell had appeared in the Sunday Times. In it Chou said:

Khrushchev made another provocation against us in 1962. That was their second act of subversion against us -- they got many of our people to leave Sinkiang. It was like what India did. India has inherited the mantle of the British Empire, and Soviet revisionism has inherited the mantle of the tsars. One carried out subversion against us in 1959, and the other in 1962. What the Soviets did led to the Soviet-Indian border conflict in 1962. The Soviet revisionists told India: "China will not fight back." Why did they say that? Because they had got a lot of our people from Sinkiang, but nevertheless we maintained the status quo according to our past practice, and our men did not cross the border to fight them. But when India crossed the so-called McMahon line, how could we not fight back?

On the same day as Mayevsky's article in Pravda, Moscow's "Peace and Progress" radio station also named Chou directly, in a detailed attack broadcast in Mandarin (3) to Southeast Asia.

According to this broadcast, an anti-Chou pamphlet appeared in Chinese bookstores in September, entitled "The Issue of Sino-U.S. Relations." It was then promptly confiscated by the authorities, apparently because it was strongly critical of Chou En-lai. (The broadcast quotes "foreign news agencies" as the source of this information, but they are not yet identifiable here.)

Chou is described in the Soviet broadcast as one of the authors of the Sino-U.S. rapprochement, and therefore of the Nixon visit to Peking. His foreign policy is called "two-faced," and the pamphlet is described as saying that:

Many people in China dislike Chou's pro-U.S. policy, and regard the invitation to the US President as a surrender to U.S. imperialism. . . . Nixon's visit to China will not only stir up dissatisfaction within the country but will worsen China's relations with

many nations. In order to formulate a correct foreign policy, it is necessary, first of all, to solve the problems facing the country; to reconstruct party committees based on Marxist-Leninist principles; to rehabilitate the cadres who were repudiated during the cultural revolution; to improve the people's living conditions, etc.

The pamphlet is evidently the work of some faction in Peking which is strongly opposed to Chou's (and Mao's) policy of mending fences with the U.S. But the reference to the need to "rehabilitate the cadres repudiated during the cultural revolution" seems to make it unlikely that former Red Guard elements are behind it. Perhaps it is the product of some military group which was harrassed by the cultural revolution and which is adamantly anti-American, possibly even pro-Soviet, thereby explaining Moscow's interest in it.

The "Peace and Progress" broadcast then moved on to dabble in Pekingology. It quoted "foreign observers" for the view that Chou had persuaded Mao to remove Lin Piao, who had had a bitter dispute with the Premier:

First, Chou wished to eliminate his main opponent, and secondly this would allow him to blame Lin Piao for all the mistakes and faults in domestic and foreign policy.

This is said to be proof of Chou's "two-faced" attitude. The "Peace and Progress" commentator concludes with a dire warning to Chou that he may soon follow in the footsteps of Lin Piao, Liu Shao-chi and the other fallen leaders:

Foreign specialists on China believe that under present circumstances, Chou cannot be assured of his future. Who knows but that someday Mao will have to find another scapegoat because he will begin to believe that the domestic discontent caused by the policy of rapprochement with the U.S. is too profound and the difficulties within the country are too serious? Who can guarantee that someday a pamphlet will not appear, like the earlier one which was confiscated, containing accusations about Chou En-lai?

Whether these rhetorical questions are meant as an invitation to Mao to remove Chou in order to change course away from the U.S. presidential visit, or whether they are a clumsy hint to Chou that he should make a bid for supreme power before it is too late is a matter for speculation. That they are intended to cause trouble in the Chinese Politburo seems undeniable.



The fact remains that Chou is now being personally assailed in Soviet media in a manner most unlike that of the past decade. This suggests that even should he take over the leadership of China from Mao in due course, Soviet policy-makers have already abandoned hope of any improvement in Sino-Soviet relations stemming from that development alone. Moscow appears to be gratuitously narrowing its options.

Just why it should do so at this moment is an unexplained mystery. If the Kremlin is angry because of Chou's part in arranging the presidential visit, that has been known for months, and his responsibility is scarcely greater now than it was in the summer. Chou's support for Pakistan can scarcely be the answer, since it has caused a major setback for Chinese policy in Asia, and should therefore have been welcome to Moscow. One possibility might be that Chou has infuriated Moscow by his attitude to the abortive border talks, which have now dragged on for two years without any tangible result except the absence of shooting.

Moreover the latest issue of Novoye Vremya to reach Munich carries an article by V. Rybakov on Chinese attitudes to disarmament which includes a striking passage: (4)

In recent years hatred has been fanned in China for everything Soviet; military psychosis is being aroused, trenches are being dug, fortifications built. Militarism has penetrated into all strata of Chinese society. Colossal funds are being spent for military purposes. Peking has made and is making territorial claims on neighboring states. It has repeatedly organized armed provocations on their frontiers. Peking is intervening in the internal affairs of certain countries bordering on China. . . .

[emphasis supplied]

The use of the present tense concerning territorial claims may be no more than a polemical exaggeration. But it may also be an indication that Peking has recently revived its demands for Soviet concessions on the disputed borders, and as Chou En-lai was Kosygin's negotiating partner in starting the frontier talks, this may provide a partial explanation for the new vilification of the Chinese Premier by Soviet media.

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- (1) Pravda, 22 December 1971.
- (2) Radio Moscow, 21 December 1971.
- (3) Radio Peace and Progress, 22 December 1971.
- (4) Novoye Vremya, No. 50, 1971, p. 10.