

RADIO FREE EUROPE *Research*

COMMUNIST AREA

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1296

USSR: Foreign Relations

19 February 1972

SOVIET MEDIA WARMING UP FOR U.S. PRESIDENTIAL VISIT TO PEKING

Summary: In advance of the presidential visit to Peking, Moscow's propaganda media have for weeks past used a stronger anti-Chinese tone than at any time since 1969. This paper reports and comments on the main Soviet criticisms of China's foreign and domestic policies and draws some conclusions concerning the likely aims of the campaign.

In February the Soviet anti-Chinese propaganda barrage reached a crescendo unmatched since 1969 as the press, radio and TV were used to criticize virtually every aspect of Peking's domestic and foreign policies. In advance of the US presidential visit, Soviet media attacks on the US were largely confined to criticisms of the increased defense budget and to vigorous polemics against the bombing of North Vietnam and the US government's peace proposals.

The tone used against Peking is much sharper, and the range of denunciation far wider. February began ominously with the appearance in Moscow of an official pocket manual on communism,

which for the first time excludes both China and Albania from the list of "socialist" countries. (1) Since it has 271 pages, the omission is clearly not accidental, and although it claims 89 communist parties with 50,000,000 members (a figure made possible only by including CCP members), it has nothing more to say about China.

Concerning US-Chinese relations, Radio Moscow's present tactics seek to find evidence of "collusion" throughout the world. If Radio Peking argues that the US is losing its economic power (something that Radio Moscow asserts almost daily), that is because "after two decades of being told that there can be no contacts with imperialism, Maoist propaganda now seeks to justify Peking's rapprochement with Washington in the eyes of the world." (2)

As far as Asia is concerned, Peking is portrayed as seeking "hegemony," and acting with "US imperialism" in an attempt to destroy the national liberation movement in Bangladesh (3) and to betray it in Vietnam.

Novosti claimed in early February that in order to "advance towards an ambiguous alliance with the American imperialists," (4) the Chinese leaders do not protest against the US military operations in Vietnam. China had avoided "common actions" with the USSR on behalf of North Vietnam ever since February 1965, had rejected Brezhnev's appeal for unity of action in April 1967, had detained the Soviet tanker Komsomolets Ukrainy, which was taking fuel to Haiphong in May 1968, and had repeatedly asked Moscow to send weapons by sea instead of overland through China.

The Biafran campaign in Nigeria is being recalled as an example of how Peking "undermined" a national liberation movement by supporting "the separatist, Ojukwu." (5) Regarding Burma, Moscow is reporting "deliberate attempts by China to interfere in Burma's domestic affairs and to force the country to abandon non-alignment." (6)

As for Taiwan, "the Chinese leaders are not very interested in its liberation," and hence they are conniving in the two-Chinas policy. "Mao has sacrificed the interests of the Chinese people, and therefore he refuses to liberate Taiwan. By agreement with the US government, Peking uses the two-Chinas policy to hoodwink the people and to defend Chinese concessions to US imperialism." (7) Moscow Radio also uses this explanation to attack Chinese passivity towards Hong Kong and Macao, where it is

pointed out by Soviet commentators that all Mao need do is to cut off the water and food supplies for the two colonies to fall into his hands without even the need for a military assault.

The February issue of Mezhdunarodnaya Zhizn which has now reached Munich, carries an eight-page article on Chinese policy towards Europe. It denounces Chinese "applause for the EEC," which "confirms Peking's deviation from a class approach." China is accused of opposing the integration of the "socialist" economies, while viewing the EEC as an instrument of "unity and cooperation."

Regarding Germany, the Soviet author claims that China approved of the Kiesinger government's policies because they "raised tensions in Europe and put forward revanchist claims against neighboring countries." Thus Peking is said to be opposed to the West German-Soviet Treaty, and therefore to be slowing down its relations with Bonn.

On February 8, all the major Soviet papers carried a massive article on Chinese policy and reminded Mao of a remark he made in 1948: "If there is no alliance with Russia, then there is an alliance with imperialism." Mao's regime is reducing its attacks on the US, while stressing in its propaganda "the threat from the North."

A relatively new angle was found by Novosti on 13 February when it announced that since China does not belong to the third world, Peking's claim to lead the underdeveloped countries is baseless. "China is the quintessence of a powerful industrial land which is producing all sorts of classic and modern weapons, including missiles and atomic bombs. China ranks fifth among the nuclear powers, exports armaments and grants large credits to many countries." This note of apprehensive respect for a growing atomic power comes as a welcome change from the usual Soviet portrait of a country of underfed peasants with an economy wrecked by Mao's blunders.

Radio Moscow developed another new gambit on February 13 when it claimed to have discovered a pamphlet published in Peking by the Red Flag publishing house which was said to have been briefly on sale in September 1970. The pamphlet, thoughtfully supplied to Radio Moscow by a defector, argues that Mao's "attempt to woo the imperialists" is only a diversion from a real effort to solve China's internal crisis. It seems likely

that the pamphlet is a fake, but its production and use by the Soviet media suggest that "Dept. D" (8) of the KGB has been busy recently.

A considerable amount of air time has been used to denounce the Chinese (and Rumanian) theory of the "two superpowers," which is allegedly a "non-class theory." (9) Its purpose is "to whitewash the acts of class betrayal perpetrated by its authors, and to defend their refusal to take part in united action against imperialism."

In mid-February a rare note of moderation was heard through all the vituperative static. This was Oleg B. Rakhmanin's article in Izvestiya (10), which reviews the work of the Soviet-Chinese Friendship Society and hopes for an eventual restoration of good relations.

While Rakhmanin is a first deputy of the CC section for relations with the "socialist" countries, he is also a deputy chairman of the Soviet-Chinese Friendship Society, so that his relatively courteous tone is at least partly functional. It may also be due to a current Soviet belief that domestic opposition to Mao is still strong and active, and that therefore it might be encouraged by evidence of a Soviet willingness to reduce the level of tension. For example, the Soviet media have claimed that seven of the ten commanders of military districts in China are opposed to Mao's policies.

At any rate, Rakhmanin recalls a 1924 "Agreement on General Principles for Resolving Disputes" which he says was voluntarily accepted by China. These fair words are, however, negated by any sign of Soviet willingness to concede that the 19th century border treaties were in fact "unequal," which is the principal Chinese precondition for any improvement in relations.

On 17 February Pravda continued the Rakhmanin style of moderation in publishing a commentary by Yuri Zhukov. He held the opinion that it is still too early to judge the presidential visit, and argued that a normalization of Soviet-US relations is natural, "provided that it does not take place at the cost of other states."

This diplomatic position is similar to the initial response of the Soviet Politburo after the first announcement of the visit last July. But it does not exclude vigorous polemics designed to blacken the Chinese leaders in the eyes of the Soviet public and of other CPs around the world. On Feb. 18th, for example, Pravda announces: "For more than a decade the Soviet communists have struggled against the theory and

practice of Maoism as one of the most dangerous opportunist and anti-Leninist currents which the history of the revolutionary movement has ever witnessed." (11)

Soviet Media on China's Internal Problems

As we noted previously, in analyses concerning Soviet attempts at subverting the PLA leadership and at sowing discord between Mao and Chou En-lai, Moscow seems to believe that China's internal situation is still fluid enough for it to be worth fishing in troubled waters.

Moscow is also appealing to the victims of the purges in the Party to unite against Mao, by arguing that there have been no "leftist deviations," since the excesses of the cultural revolution were carried out on Mao's orders. For instance, "...everyone knows that the order to 'Bombard the Headquarters' was issued by Mao," Moscow Radio said on 3 February. It held Mao responsible for "destroying tens of millions of Chinese lives during the cultural revolution, which was a terrible catastrophe for society." His anti-party line was unable to solve subsequent contradictions, the Russian commentator said, implying clearly that he should be removed and replaced by those holding a pro-Soviet policy.

A Soviet film now showing in Moscow ("Russkoye Polye") shows a brisk battle fought on the Soviet borders, in which there are many Russian casualties. The landscape is Siberian, and shots of the burial of the dead with military honors are deliberately reminiscent of the funeral of the men killed at Damanskoye three years ago. It is the first Soviet-made anti-war feature film in which the enemy comes from the East, not the West. (12)

Much Soviet ink has been spilt over the "war preparations" in China, where a "war psychosis is being fanned in order to divert the attention of the people from their social and economic problems." (13) Air-raid shelters are being dug everywhere, and even young children are being trained with rifles, bayonets and grenades to become militarist robots. (14)

With some Schadenfreude, Soviet correspondents are describing the preparations in Peking for the visit. The anti-American posters at Peking Airport which were removed, and the change of name of the former "Anti-imperialist hospital" to "Capital City Hospital" are used as symbols of Chinese betrayal. (15)

Mao's treatment of his 50,000,000 strong minorities has also attracted much attention. As Lenin said, "it would be treason to socialism to deny the attainment of self-determination by nations under socialism." (16) Yet Mao has deprived them of self-determination, national culture and even of their own customs and traditions, according to Partiinaya Zhizn.

In Inner Mongolia, the Mongolians are now a minority even in their own autonomous region (like the Kazakhs, but Moscow Radio did not mention them). Tibet was broken up by Mao into nine autonomous provinces, and then flooded with Chinese. The Chuang nation has been dismembered in such a way that it now constitutes less than a quarter of the population of its own region. (17) And so on....

For Izvestiya, all this proves that Mao's group are "great-nation chauvinists," following a "great state policy." They find that the need for self-determination is "counterrevolutionary" and "revisionist," according to Izvestiya (18) (the paper does not refer to Czechoslovakia in this context). The national intelligentsia have been "physically eliminated" in China, and now Mao is trying to wipe out the national languages as well.

On the same day Pravda discovered that 250,000 Chinese intellectuals have fled to Hong Kong and Macao in recent years, taking advantage of relaxed border controls. But now the border guards have been reinforced and are firing on the fugitives from the Chinese labor camps (19) (the parallel with the East German border was not spelled out).

Pravda seems to believe that conditions in the Chinese camps "for reeducation" are worse than those in Mordvinia. It says that Mao's prisoners must work a 16-hour day, and that many of them choose suicide because they cannot stand the inhuman conditions.

In Moscow's eyes, the PLA is so anti-American that tens of thousands of its troops have had to be sent to the countryside from Peking to prevent them from staging an anti-Nixon outburst, (20) while the population is being told that "poverty is a blessing," not a temporary misfortune. (21)

Conclusion

The minimum aim of all this violent propaganda is to discredit Mao's regime by portraying it as neo-Stalinist. The maximum goal is to foster an effective opposition (in the PLA, party, minorities, and among the intellectuals) which might combine to overthrow Mao and replace him with "healthy forces." One danger is that the

Soviet propaganda to the oppressed minorities in China might set off new border incidents during the visit, since both the Uighur and Kazakh peoples straddle the frontier. But even if the provocative Soviet broadcasts do not result in any such unrest, this will still be a week to remember in the troubled history of Sino-Soviet relations.

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- (1) UPI, 1 February 1972.
 - (2) Radio Moscow, 2 February 1972.
 - (3) Novoye Kremya, quoted by Tass, 3 February 1972.
 - (4) Novosti, 3 February 1972.
 - (5) Radio Peace and Progress, 5 February 1972.
 - (6) Ibid.
 - (7) Moscow Radio to China, 8 February 1972.
 - (8) "D" for disinformation.
 - (9) Radio Moscow, 15 February 1972.
 - (10) Izvestiya, 16 February 1972.
 - (11) Pravda 18 February 1971.
 - (12) Rheinischer Merkur, 4 February 1972, reporting a Soviet TV documentary.
 - (13) Tass, 7 February 1972.
 - (14) UPI, 1 February 1972 reporting a Soviet TV documentary.
 - (15) Radio Moscow to Hungary, 9 February 1972.
 - (16) Works, Vol. 30, p. 18.
 - (17) The Chuangs are the 3rd largest non-Chinese people, Moscow Radio, 25 January 1972.
 - (18) 11 February 1972.
 - (19) Pravda, 11 February 1972.
 - (20) Radio Peace and Progress, 13 February 1972.
 - (21) Moscow TV, 13 February 1972.