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X/8 SINO .- THE YUGOSLAV ISSUE INSOV.-SINO. DISPUTE F- 124

MUNICH, 14 May 1963 (Non-Target Communist Area Analysis:
China - j.c.k.)

In view of the Soviet postponement of the Central Committee plenum from 28 May to 18 June, one cannot but wonder whether the Chinese-Soviet bilateral meeting will take place in mid-June as suggested by the CCP last week, or will be subject to further postponement. If it takes place in mid-June, the Russian hopes to achieve any substantial progress must be very slight indeed.

Although both parties proposed the discussion of practically the same questions, (the larger, "strategic problems" of contemporary Marxism-Leninism), the debate on the relations toward Albania and Yugoslavia will give at least as hard a time to the delegations as the broader issues of peaceful co-existence and differing attitudes toward liberation struggles, etc. While the Russians are trying somewhat to de-emphasize the discussion of the Yugoslav problem, the Chinese attach particular importance to exactly this point of the debate. Moreover, by connecting the question of relations with Yugoslavia with the attitude toward the Moscow Declaration and the Moscow Statement they make it a question of primary importance, a question of Marxist-Leninist principle.

The publication in People's Daily of an article attacking Yugoslavia's new constitution one day after the announcement of the composition of the Chinese delegation to Moscow, could have a more than usual effect on the Soviet attitude toward the forthcoming bilateral talks. The article itself, as published in the 10 May issue of the paper, attacks primarily Yugoslavia; its references to Khrushchev or the CPSU are only indirect and never personal. The main emphasis is put on proving that Yugoslavia is not a socialist but a capitalist country, that the new Yugoslav constitution is a "legal, political and organizational embodiment" of the concepts elaborated in the program of the YLC, and therefore a "revisionist" constitution.

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It is formed "to consolidate the system of exploitation of various forms... and to give constitutionality to restored capitalism in that country".

As to Yugoslav foreign policy, the article points out that in the new constitution "the Tito group, under the signboard of the so-called 'peaceable coexistence and active co-operation' altogether negates class struggle in the international arena, negates the antithesis between the socialist camp and the imperialist camp, and negates the antithesis between the oppressed nations on the one hand and imperialism and colonialism on the other". The foreign policy of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia not only has not changed in a "positive" direction but moved in an even more pro-US position. Therefore, (and here comes the crack on Khrushchev) this "also proves that they are talking sheer nonsense who consider that the Tito group has shown some repentance and changed their wrong policy".

Since all these arguments have already been made in the countless ideological manifestations that have come out of Peking, the entire article would not be of particular importance had it not been published on May 10th. It is not accidental that the Chinese chose this day to break off their temporary silence in the polemics which has lasted since the beginning of March.

There can be no doubt left in Russian minds that the Yugoslav issue is one on which no compromise is possible, that China is making this issue a touchstone of loyalty to Marxism-Leninism, and to the Moscow documents. The Chinese not only demand open endorsement of the passage of the 1960 declaration condemning Yugoslavia on various grounds, but also demand the "further exposure of the leaders of Yugoslav revisionists and active struggle to safeguard the communist movement and the working class movement from the anti-Leninist ideas of the Yugoslav revisionists" which, according to the Moscow statement, "remains an essential task of the Marxist-Leninist parties".

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It is inescapable duty of all communist and workers parties, People's Daily concludes, to carry out this stipulation of the Moscow documents. "The CCP will, in close unity with all fraternal parties in the world which adhere to Marxism-Leninism, continue to struggle in the accomplishment of this sacred task".

Consequently, if the Soviet Communist Party does not wish to join in the pursuance of the "sacred task" of exposing the leaders of the Yugoslav revisionists etc., they do not adhere to Marxism-Leninism. This is the same vicious circle which has in the recent past carried Sino-Soviet relations toward a complete split.

The basic cause of the differences between China and the Soviet Union therefore lie (as the Chinese put it in their letter to the Soviet Central Committee on 9 March) in the question "how Marxism-Leninism is understood and what attitude is taken toward it, and the question of how the Moscow Declaration and the Moscow Statement are understood and what attitude is taken toward them".

The gaps in understanding are so great that even temporary bridging seems to be much more than a bilateral session can hope to accomplish.