

# RADIO FREE EUROPE *Research*

## COMMUNIST AREA

● USSR

21 June 1965

### 'PRAVDA' WILLING TO IGNORE IDEOLOGY

In an editorial of 20 June, Pravda returned after eight months to open criticism of the Chinese. A theme of the editorial was that, although there are "profound differences within the communist movement," these differences should be subordinated to "practical actions" toward unity. Parties should search for "practical ways for drawing together." This line seems tantamount to admitting that the ideological differences are unbridgeable as well as to wishing that ideology be set on the shelf. Thus we see new evidence that the Sino-Soviet conflict is reinforcing a gradual trend toward pragmatism in the Soviet mentality.

Pravda's admission that thus far, almost four months after the fact, only forty parties have approved the work of the innocuous 1-5 March Moscow meeting, is a devastating admission of Moscow's lessened prestige in the international movement. The editorial's comment that parties "have not yet completed their study" of the meeting in no way explains away the embarrassing fact.

There was no call for an international meeting of communist parties in the near future. Instead, Pravda

approval on the recent Brussels meeting of West European parties -- "an important measure." It is doubtful whether Moscow really greets the trend toward disintegration into squabbling regional groupings in the international movement, but it is powerless to prevent it.

There is a clear effort in the editorial to present the Vietnam crisis as a rallying point for all parties. This line is in a way parallel to Moscow's falling back on the issue of "West German imperialism" as one of the few remaining common denominators on which all East European parties can agree. It is evident to the contrary, however, that the Vietnam issue is being used by the Chinese and Albanians to exacerbate further the schism.

The open criticism of the Chinese can be characterized more as a rap on the knuckles than as a skull-bashing editorial of the Khrushchev era. The Chinese of late, says Pravda, have published editorials "of an openly unfriendly nature." This is something of an understatement. Pravda pointed out that Moscow has refrained from open polemics with China for eight months but did not announce their resumption. It is possible that the Soviet press will take the Chinese to task for opposing their participation in the second Afro-Asian conference in Algiers, but there is no sign that Moscow is about to resume hurling lightning bolts at Peking.

Although the rather colorless character of the new Soviet leadership may be a factor in this continued reluctance to come to grips with the Chinese challenge, the major cause still appears to be Soviet recognition that a stiffer China policy risks open criticism or condemnation by régimes and parties whose support they need.

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