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DIRECTORATE OF
INTELLIGENCE

APPROVED FOR RELEASE
9 SEPT 99

WEEKLY REVIEW

~~Top Secret~~

519

28 March 1969

SINO-SOVIET BORDER CONFRONTATION EASES

No shooting has been reported in the area of the disputed island in the Ussuri River on the Sino-Soviet border since 19 March, and the situation there appears to have stabilized. Soviet military attention to this sector of the border has remained high, [REDACTED]

During the past week, Peking has shown little interest in continuing propaganda exploitation of the border conflict, and probably believes it has already made a strong case regarding ownership of the island. Chinese commentary on the clashes has all but ended and there have been no anti-Soviet demonstrations in China for almost two weeks.

Soviet propaganda output is still voluminous with the accent largely on patriotic themes. There is also a hint of a shift in focus from the disputed island

to the larger issue of border demarcation. On 20 March two Soviet newsmen privately informed [REDACTED] that a statement on the border situation was being prepared that would express a willingness to discuss broader boundary demarcation problems as well as a solution to the disagreement over the disputed island.

Although no statement has yet come forth, Moscow might profess a willingness to negotiate in order to gain a propaganda advantage. The Russians, however, undoubtedly realize that Peking would demand a Soviet recognition of the 19th century treaties establishing the present frontiers as "unequal treaties" before entering into any border negotiations. A Chinese Foreign Ministry statement on 10 March denounced Moscow for refusing to concede this point during the boundary talks in 1964. As a result, any serious dialogue on border problems seems unlikely. Spring floods will inundate the island in a few weeks and reduce the chance of further clashes. [REDACTED]

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