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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

Memorandum

IMPLICATIONS OF THE SINO-SOVIET RUPTURE
FOR THE US

18 July 1963

DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

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18 July 1963

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
MEMORANDUM:

SUMMARY

Whether or not a complete Sino-Soviet break occurs, relations between the USSR and Communist China will almost certainly remain seriously ruptured for the foreseeable future. The most important implication of this rupture is its potential for complicating and perhaps significantly changing world politics over the long term. Meanwhile it will also create or intensify a number of difficulties for Moscow and Peiping--and for the US as well. At the same time, however, the Sino-Soviet rupture will offer the US a number of new opportunities.

These opportunities may arise principally from a certain coincidence of US and Soviet interests, especially with respect to concern over a nuclear-armed China. Such common interests might permit the US to undertake some new tactical initiatives and to take a tougher stance with respect to China, should the need arise, with somewhat less concern for adverse Soviet reactions than may have been the case previously.

The chances of a genuine Soviet approach to the US at China's expense are not great, but they do seem sufficient at least to justify US planning now for meeting the new hazards and opportunities such a future contingency might entail.

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Implications of the Sino-Soviet Rupture
For the US

1. For most practical purposes, there now is an open split in Sino-Soviet relations. The virulence of the present confrontation, the directness of the most recent insults and accusations at Moscow, and the theological certainty of both disputants reflect new dimensions of antagonism too extensive to be bridged. Similarly, present Chinese Communist pretensions, and the increasing use of the Sino-Soviet dispute by European Communist parties and factions as a lever for promoting their grievances against Moscow, constitute new challenges which must almost certainly be impelling Khrushchev and the Soviet leadership to question whether the forbearance they have shown in the past under Chinese provocations might bring unacceptable harm to the interests of the CPSU and the Soviet state. Accordingly, whatever the immediate results of current Sino-Soviet confrontation, the USSR and China will almost certainly not be able to restore mutual confidence or to achieve any genuine or lasting reconciliation. Although efforts may be made from time to time to restore a more cordial relationship, especially by new Soviet and Chinese leaders, we believe that Sino-Soviet relations will almost certainly remain seriously ruptured for the foreseeable future, whatever the case with respect to a complete break.

2. Probably the most important implication of the Sino-Soviet rupture is its potential for changing the strategic setting of international politics. It will contribute to the displacing of two distinct and hostile power groups by a more pluralistic world. The force of ideology will probably decline. The major states will probably re-examine some of their attitudes and re-evaluate their various interests in the light of the slowly changing strategic situation, with consequent effect upon their policies toward the USSR, Communist China, the US, and the Western Alliance. Of greatest import to the US, however, will probably be the conclusions the USSR itself

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draws from the changing situation. The Soviets will probably have to decide whether to incline toward competing with China in hostility to the US, or as we consider somewhat more likely, toward pursuing the logic of their "peaceful coexistence" line and searching for new ways to demonstrate its validity. The US will in any event encounter a much more complicated world of new opportunities and problems. It is to these opportunities and problems implicit in the Sino-Soviet rupture that this memorandum is addressed.

A. Implications of Rupture for Communist China and the Soviet Union.

3. We can expect increased national antagonism between the Soviet and Chinese states. The present rupture signifies that Communist ideology has not only failed to overcome nationalism within the bloc, but has indeed aggravated such sentiment. The USSR of necessity places its own interests--which it identifies with bloc interests--before those of China. Peiping, believing that such Soviet behavior imperils China's ambitions, at home and abroad, insists in turn that only its interpretation of Leninist doctrine can save the Communist movement--and China's interests--from dreadful harm. Because these basic positions seem unlikely to change under successor leaderships, because they involve as well a profound competition for authority, and because they will probably be intensified to the degree that Communist China emerges as a great world power, the prospect is probably not just for rupture but for increased levels of tension between these two giant neighbor states. They may remain nominal allies for some time, but even so this tension will almost certainly be reflected in increased meddling in each other's internal affairs, more attempted subversion of the other's party and military leaders, and more regard for border defenses and troop dispositions against the other.

4. We will consequently see a growing incompatibility of Soviet and Chinese interests. Increasingly, the questions which cause the USSR to be concerned chiefly with its own national interests--military relations with the US, nuclear war, Germany, and the difficulties of resource allocation amid the

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increasing costs of military and space programs-- will almost certainly result in less coincidence of Soviet and Chinese interests. Also, the present gulf which separates Chinese and Soviet societies will probably widen, the one remaining much more austere and revolutionary for some years to come, the other looking forward increasingly to enjoying the fruits of domestic gains won.

5. We can also expect an accelerated emergence of two competing and hostile Communist world centers, with accompanying disruption of world Communism. The collapse of unitary authority within world Communism is a development of major consequence. The appearance of China as a second center of Communist authority has already impaired Soviet prestige in the movement and made it more difficult for the USSR to contain impulses toward autonomy in the other parties. In Eastern Europe, this has been an important catalytic factor in stimulating Rumania to resist Soviet economic dictation, and other Eastern European parties will probably be emboldened from time to time to insist on national interests, although none will probably wish to imitate the Albanian breakaway. World-wide, Communism will come to be a beast of more variegated aspect: a spectrum of parties, some in power, some not, complete with all kinds of dissident groups and factions. The Sino-Soviet rupture will probably not in the near future seriously impair the ability of the world movement to injure non-Communist positions and interests. The rupture will, however, dampen morale and even basic belief among Communists. It will complicate CP efforts to palm off Communism on uncommitted audiences as "scientific" truth guaranteed to yield amazing new brotherhood and progress dividends. And it will markedly reduce the ability of Moscow to continue enlisting other CPs in support of the USSR's diplomatic and other interests.

6. There will be an increase in the Chinese presence and in Chinese-sponsored racialism and radicalism in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Such Chinese activity has been harming Soviet influence in these areas for some time. The rupture will further stimulate Peiping to these ends, in the belief that the situation in the underdeveloped countries gives them a number of advantages over the Soviets: economic and revolutionary situations

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much more akin to those of China than of the Soviet Union, antiwhite sentiments, histories of grievances against the colonial powers, and--perhaps, most telling--a proclivity for irresponsible action which Peiping can encourage much more than can Moscow. Although we can expect some increased susceptibility to these Chinese efforts among extremist movements in the underdeveloped world, such emphasis will in many cases work to Peiping's detriment, and demand of the Chinese the most varied and subtle tactical touch.

7. There will probably be a decrease of Chinese confidence in the deterrent effect of the Sino-Soviet Alliance on US forcefulness in the Far East. Communist China's failure thus far to seek to gain its foreign policy objectives by the exercise of all-out force, Peiping's brave oratory to the contrary, has of course chiefly been the result of respect for the overwhelming military power the US has appeared ready to bring to bear against it. This has been in part the product of Chinese uncertainty with respect to Soviet support. The most recent deterioration in Sino-Soviet relations has almost certainly reinforced Soviet concern lest Chinese rashness involve the USSR in an East-West nuclear war not of its own choosing, and caused Peiping to suspect that the USSR would let China absorb US punishment so long as vital Soviet interests were not endangered.

8. China's economic and military programs will continue to suffer greatly from the denial of Soviet support, although China will probably increasingly explore the possibilities of obtaining needed industrial supplies from nonbloc sources. The depth of Chinese ill-feeling toward the USSR is perhaps illustrated best by the known costs China has accepted in defying Moscow. The decline of Soviet deliveries and technical assistance since 1960 has already caused enormous harm to China's economy and military establishment. China's leaders have thus succeeded in cutting off China from both bloc and nonbloc aid for her economic development and military programs. Moscow has one remaining sanction--denial of the POL currently supplied to China--but China has already inquired about obtaining POL from nonbloc sources. Whether or not Khrushchev applies this sanction, China will attempt to expand its trading relations with nonbloc countries. It will probably succeed, particularly with respect to Japan, Western Europe, and Southeast Asia. This expansion will probably not, however, make up the losses suffered from the decline of Soviet

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support--either in over-all trade level, or especially, in the unique nexus of patterns, procedures, and technical assistance which obtained a few years ago in Sino-Soviet economic relations. Moreover, Peiping's interest in greater trade with Japan and the UK, for example, may exert a more restraining effect on its foreign and military policies in Asia than might otherwise be the case.

B. Problems for the US

9. The Sino-Soviet rupture will probably not cause either Moscow or Peiping suddenly and radically to change its basic objectives or attitudes toward the US in the near future: the morning after even a complete break, Communist China and the Soviet Union would still be sworn to our destruction, and not yet critically weakened in the hostile power they could bring to bear against us. The Sino-Soviet rupture will probably not remove or materially lessen substantial Far East problems facing the US: eventual Chinese Communist advanced weapons status; Chinese belligerency and encouragement of Communist insurgency in Southeast Asia; continuing fear of China in Asia, and uncertainty concerning US intentions; and the possibility that the Chinese Communists will some day undertake such rash military action, in the Taiwan Strait or Southeast Asia, as to initiate larger hostilities in the Far East. Also, Peiping will in time almost certainly gain sufficient world support for UN entry, even though Soviet and Indian advocacy of its cause will probably lessen.

10. The rupture will create unique new problems for the US. Whether a complete Sino-Soviet break occurs or not, the US - Soviet - Chinese Communist equation will be changed significantly. Moscow will continue to probe US intentions with respect to Communist China, and will seek to persuade us that there are benefits to be gained by accepting the USSR's peaceful and honorable professions at face value.* China will meanwhile probably grow somewhat more important than it has been in the equation, and Moscow and Washington may well find it more difficult to read Chinese intentions, in times of acute crisis, than one another's.

*See paras. 20-21 below.

11. The Sino-Soviet rupture will create serious new problems affecting the policies of third states. Soviet "peaceful" stances will almost certainly be interpreted somewhat liberally by many US allies, and will further complicate US efforts to maintain firm lines against Soviet pressures and cajolery. In West Germany, particularly after Adenauer steps aside, added pressures may develop for establishing a new modus vivendi with the USSR. President de Gaulle may tend to be confirmed in his view that the Chinese "yellow peril" demands of the West that Moscow not be alienated. In the case of Japan, the inducements the USSR has at its disposal, especially its ability to return certain of the southernmost Kurile Islands to the Japanese, might cause Tokyo leaders to consider using the Sino-Soviet estrangement as an entering wedge for exploratory bargaining. Also, the USSR's lessening influence--and, presumably, restraint--with respect to Peiping may cause increased fears of China among its neighbors in Asia.

12. Although China's potential for expanding foreign trade is limited, some attractive commercial opportunities are likely to arise, especially for Japan and Western Europe, as China looks to the West for capital goods and raw materials it once purchased from the USSR. The commercial ties that might result could run counter to US policies toward Peiping and complicate our relations with our allies.

13. In their struggle with Moscow the Chinese will doubtless continue to try to capitalize on the division of the world into white and non-white, developed and undeveloped countries. The Chinese will be careful to mute racialism in those instances where they will be seeking greater support from "white" parties (e.g., Argentina, Belgium, Australia, and New Zealand). The net effect, however, will probably be to stimulate racist sensitivities. The Chinese will probably encourage radicalism in those areas where they can make the Soviets appear timid without committing China to overt physical support of radical actions. For its part, Moscow may on occasion undertake more dangerous courses than might be the case in the absence of Chinese pressures; indeed, this was probably a factor in the USSR's Cuban missile-base venture. In some cases, such as in Italy, Moscow's waning control over the local CP may have the effect of enhancing

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the nationalist cast and respectability of the party which in turn could increase its political strength. In more backward settings, on the other hand, the weakening of Moscow's control may at times lead some CP's to increased radicalism.

C. Opportunities for the US.

14. To a greater degree than we feel is generally appreciated, the Sino-Soviet rupture has been the by-product of US policy. The nature of the Communist system, and Soviet dominance of that system, have from the outset tended to dictate that Communist China--proud, not indebted to the USSR for its revolutionary victory, and potentially a world power--would eventually defy Moscow. Nevertheless, even though the developing rupture of the past seven years or so has been caused primarily by Soviet and Chinese actions, it has probably come more quickly and perhaps more profoundly because of US actions. US firmness and nuclear power have presented the USSR with enormous problems of national defense, overriding all other Soviet interests--certainly that of regard for the Chinese ally. US firmness has denied Khrushchev foreign policy gains anything like those he has so long predicted as justifying, for Communist audiences, the risks and costs of his "peaceful co-existence" course. The US has kept Mao from achieving his heart's desire of "completing the Chinese revolution" by acquiring Taiwan; indeed, we have not even let him take the offshore Quemoy and Matsus.

15. These pressures and these frustrations of Soviet and Chinese Communist ambitions represent a fruition of basic US containment policy. In our view, a general continuance of such overall US effort, combined with increased US initiative and tactical flexibility, offers considerable prospect for further aggravating and weakening many of those aspects of Soviet and Chinese power already damaged by developing Sino-Soviet estrangement. We doubt the efficacy of opting basically to support either Communist antagonist against the other, since such US action would carry danger of commitment which would operate against our true interest over the long run. Rather, there would appear to be merit in maintaining our firm and patient position toward both Peiping and Moscow. At the same time, and as the occasion may arise, we can attempt to keep our enemies in play against each other.

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16. Without suggesting that there be the least reduction in US firmness or vigilance with respect to Soviet objectives and power, we think that there are a few questions where US and Soviet interests may coincide sufficiently to offer some promise of actions which might help to retard China's growth in power or to restrain some possible Chinese foreign policy folly. Such possible actions, discussed below, relate not so much to US-Soviet cooperation, as to US moves undertaken either with less concern for Soviet reactions or, in some cases, in the anticipation of Soviet acquiescence.

17. The principal such question may be that of delaying the emergence of a nuclear-armed Communist China. Nuclear proliferation will certainly benefit neither the US nor the USSR, particularly so in the case of an ambitious, hostile, and unpredictable China. This coincidence of interests will of course have increasing relevance for US-Soviet arms and testing negotiations. Additionally, new implications may in time develop, perhaps with regard to such questions as possible US-Soviet exchange of information on China, US or Soviet sanctions against China, and US and Soviet benefit from any accidents or delays China's advanced weapons program might suffer.

18. Such partial coincidence of interests might also make less risky the buildup of US striking power against China in the Western Pacific and the Far East, by making clear to Moscow--by the type of US weapons and their disposition--that this US power was not directed principally against the USSR. Similarities of US and Soviet interest may also develop situations where added Soviet assistance to India, say, might not be wholly detrimental to US interest in fashioning counterweights to China in Asia. In sum, the Sino-Soviet rupture may well facilitate US toughness in any future US confrontation with Communist China, should the need arise, by somewhat lessening the likelihood of extreme Soviet responses--provided of course that US actions did not appear to the Soviets to endanger the basic Communist position in East Asia or otherwise to threaten vital security interests of the USSR.

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19. As Eastern European parties move cautiously to promote their economic interests, acquire national prestige, and gain a greater voice in the formulation of Soviet bloc policies, opportunities for closer Western contacts and a greater exercise of US influence will tend to increase. Many parties in the non-Communist world will be more vulnerable to splitting activities and harassment which should, in time, lessen their effectiveness in national politics. The Sino-Soviet rupture will also provide us an opportunity to play psychologically on the most deep-seated Chinese and Soviet fears of the other: Chinese suspicion that Moscow and Washington are about to gang up against Peiping, and Soviet concern about China's long-run power and expansionism.

20. Finally, the Sino-Soviet rupture may encourage Moscow to alter its traditional view that world politics is essentially a bipolar struggle leading eventually to Communist world victory. This traditional outlook can explain individual renegades from Marxism, but we doubt that it can be sustained in the face of a defection of the scale of China and its retinue of other Communist confederates. The rupture with China may thus support that tendency in Soviet thinking which appears to be seeing the world in terms of pragmatic greys rather than dogmatic blacks and whites. This in turn may cause the USSR to perceive a need of the West. Indeed we now are seeing, and probably will increasingly see, various Soviet approaches to the US at China's expense. For the foreseeable future these will probably be largely tactical devices designed in part to get the US to soften certain of its East-West negotiating positions.

21. We should note that whether Soviet concern over China will rise sharply over the long run may in part depend on China's growth of power: the more such power, the more pressure on the USSR seriously to court the US. If China begins clearly to boom, the USSR may in time decide that it must modify certain of its basic objectives in order to gain Western support against a fearsome China--even in the event there should continue to be a disparity in Soviet and Chinese technical-military power. The chances of such an eventual genuine Soviet demarche are not now great, but they do seem sufficient at least to justify US and Western planning now for meeting the strange new hazards and opportunities such a contingency might entail.

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