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Comment on Predictions in the American Press
of a Sino-Soviet Split

The American press has recently been echoing, almost as though by inspiration, the theme that differences between the Soviet Union and Communist China have reached the point where a split between the two seems possible, if not probable. The purpose of this memorandum is to cast doubt on the validity of this theme, and to suggest that its uncritical propagation may play directly into Communist hands.

It is axiomatic that between any two powerful allies there will arise differences over the method of approach to commonly held goals, and even, on occasion, over aspects of the goals themselves. Our relation with our NATO allies - especially the United Kingdom - has abundantly illustrated this principle. The vital question is whether a balance in the commonality of interests and beliefs of an alliance can be preserved amidst the fluctuations to which inevitably it is exposed. Again our NATO experience has demonstrated that tendencies toward dis-equilibrium are most easily rectified when the alliance is subjected to perturbing influences - Berlin is the classic case - manifestly directed by a hostile system. We believe that this is also true of the Sino-Soviet axis. Patent attempts to foment discord between Moscow and Peiping tend to force them closer together. Only the subtlest type of manipulation can contribute to an estrangement of allies so firmly linked by ideology, by interest and above all by a common enemy.

We do not believe that the evidences of Sino-Soviet discord adduced in these journalistic forays are likely to make much of an impression on the parties chiefly concerned: Mao and Khrushchev. It can hardly be doubted that these two men, and the other leaders closely surrounding them, are better aware of their own points of difference than we can hope to be. They are also experienced and vigilant masters in the art of warding off provocative and divisive assaults.

Indeed, the question may arise, who actually is doing the provoking. While SRS is not prone to see a fully orchestrated master plan in every Communist course of action, we do believe it prudent to consider the

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possibility that such may exist. We have suggested elsewhere (SRS-12, "The Tenth Anniversary Celebration of the People's Republic of China") that in the assignment of international roles, the Chinese and the Soviets have sought advantage in maintaining a dialectic of hard and soft tactics, simultaneously breathing militancy and peaceful coexistence. Since the early days of the Comintern, some such dialectic, whether distributed between Party and State, or, as in this case, between two seemingly polarized States, has been classic, the natural outcome of Leninist tactics. In a sense, Red China is in just as irresponsible a position as was the Comintern. It is not a member of international organizations, it seemingly cares little about Western recognition, but it is a vast component of the "world socialist system." Between members of this system, as within Communist China, "non-antagonistic contradictions" are recognized as normal phenomena of Communist development. But far from endangering unity, these contradictions are used to pursue policies which are to confuse and confound the West. In other words, non-antagonistic frictions are considered, in Communist doctrine, to be healthy, and apt to strengthen rather than weaken Bloc countries or the Bloc as a whole.

We do not go so far as some have done in seeing here an active deception program, calculated to create the impression in the Free World that the Moscow-Peking alliance is about to break in two, with the USSR forced to resort to the United States for ultimate protection against the leaping Chinese giant. Nevertheless, we do believe that the eager voice of hope which has sprung up in the American press can hardly have surprised or discomfited Mao or Khrushchev. Whether they planned it that way or not, they will see in this outburst evidence of that willingness to relax tensions and accept peaceful coexistence, which is clearly the objective of the latter and probably also of the former. They would not be far wrong in interpreting this as still another manifestation of the tendency toward complacency which apparently nothing can shake out of the American people.

A brief examination of the three principal items of evidence used to document the existence of serious Sino-Soviet discord reveals both the inadequacy of our information and the probability that we are interpreting them incorrectly.



(1) Soviet "peaceful coexistence" versus Chinese "aggressiveness."

We have suggested above that these two themes are being played dialectically. We doubt whether there is a basic difference of strategy between Mao and Khrushchev on such issues as Taiwan, Tibet or Laos. There may, however, be a real "contradiction" over Chinese pressure against the Himalayan frontier. Here, and perhaps here only, lies the rub of Khrushchev's warning against "testing by force" and "predatory" wars. G. F. Hudson, in the 12 October New Leader, suggests rather convincingly that China's motivation in probing the Ladakh, Sikkim and Bhutan areas is one of irredentism, the absorption of outlying ethnic Tibetan fringes. This form of "nationalistic" adventurism may have given Khrushchev a chance to reciprocate the not too friendly admonition which Mao gave him in 1956 in his famous warning against "great power chauvinism." If the Soviet leader is thinking far into the future about any form of re-insurance against an overweening China, it would probably be toward India rather than the Western Alliance that he would turn. Moreover, as we have suggested in SRS-10 ("The 'Socialist Commonwealth of Nations': Pattern for Communist World Organization"), Khrushchev seems to have a fairly tangible vision of a future "socialist commonwealth" (sodruzhestvo) in which national frontiers, as they have been known in the past, will disappear. He would hardly be pleased to see this process - essential to the "transition to Communism" on a world scale - jeopardized by a unilateral act of national aggrandizement on the part of China, especially over such paltry gains.

(2) The Communes.

The commune issue is still cited as a "contradiction" between Mao and Khrushchev, and around this is built a conjectural web of ideological rivalry to which high divisive potential is attributed. We do not question the existence of a "contradiction" over the communes, but we would doubt whether it is "antagonistic" in nature. Here again we would emphasize the dialectic habit of communist behavior, its constant and purposeful search for a "synthesis." It is noteworthy that the silence of the Soviet speakers at the 10th Anniversary was punctuated by a number of explicit utterances in praise of the communes from satellite and Free World Party leaders. These were certainly tolerated, if not directly authorized, by the Kremlin; indeed, they may have been intended to convey a backhanded approval which at the same time subtly represented China as comparable to the less developed satellites - such as Bulgaria - rather than to the fully developed



Soviet Union. We may assume that Soviet critics, including Khrushchev, may have had a variety of objections ranging perhaps from pique over the pre-emption of the word "commune" itself, which they may have felt should be held in reserve for use during the "transition to Communism" stage, to serious concern lest the premature abandonment of the incentive principle lead to a major economic failure, disastrous to both China and the Soviet Union. There will be more of this give and take. Khrushchev may even end by paying the commune a tacit tribute of imitation, if his agrorod project comes to fruition sometime in the future. At any rate, the more our press and propaganda insist that something is wrong here, the more the two leaders will seek either to cover their differences or to adjust them.

(3) Alleged Coolness between Mao and Khrushchev.

Much has been made by the press of such points as the failure to issue a communique after Khrushchev's visit to Peking, the lack of response by Mao to the Soviet emphasis on peaceful coexistence, and the general impression of correctness rather than warmth which is reported to have characterized the relations between the two leaders. It is difficult to determine the import of these surface indications. The protocol significance of the failure to issue a communique is obscure. The substance of the long and intimate conversations between Mao and Khrushchev is perforce unknown, as is that of previous encounters such as the meeting of August 1958 before the attack on Quemoy. Again, it is possible, as we have suggested above, that a deliberate inscrutability was maintained by mutual agreement, among other things precisely for the purpose of eliciting the kind of "Kremlinological" speculations in the foreign press which have in fact appeared. We would caution against "over-analysis" of the meager data. SRS is inclined to have confidence in its own admittedly impressionistic judgment that both the treatment of Khrushchev and his own response were about what would be appropriate for the occasion - honor by the junior partner to the senior, gracious acknowledgment and praise by the latter of the achievements of the former, bright auguries for the future. Lacking solid evidence to dispel this impression, we incline to believe that the outpouring of both Chinese and Soviet media, lauding the "world socialist system" and pledging unshakeable friendship and unity among its components, represents the sincere convictions of the two leaders.

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It is not the purpose of this memorandum to ring a note of defeatism in the endeavor to find exploitable weaknesses and vulnerabilities in the Sino-Soviet relation. We have repeatedly stated that we believe them to exist, but we have also suggested that our starting point must be to study them far more carefully than has hitherto been done, and to weigh the consequences of attacking them in terms of both prospective success and failure. For this reason, several months ago we recommended the establishment of a joint DDP-DDI task force, assigned to full time study of this subject on a high priority basis. Progress has been made toward this end, but until such a study has been well advanced, we would still caution against premature action.

Finally, we venture to suggest that the soundest point of departure for any campaign against both Bloc solidarity and Bloc effectiveness in international affairs is that which was taken by Secretary Herter in his recent press conference. By anchoring the US position in an official statement of the incontrovertible fact of Soviet hegemony over International Communism, he has provided a firm base for attack against the Hydra of the movement. In one hand we must hold a sharp sword, in the other the cauterizing iron which will prevent two heads from bursting forth where one has been cut off. It will not be enough to say that the heads will consume each other.