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Intelligence Memorandum

The Current State of Sino-Soviet Relations

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Directorate of Intelligence
13 January 1972

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

The Current State of Sino-Soviet Relations

China's New Year Editorial Knocks Soviets

Soviet revisionist social-imperialism is grabbing out everywhere under all sorts of covers. While oppressing the people of different nationalities in the Soviet Union itself, the Brezhnev renegade clique is doing its utmost to control and exploit the people of the other countries in its "community" and working feverishly to expand its spheres of influence all over the world. Thus it is putting more and more nooses round its own neck...All this has further exposed its social-imperialist features before the people of the world, subjecting it to their fierce denunciation and landed it in a more and more isolated position. (1972 New Year's Day editorial by the People's Daily, the Red Flag and the Liberation Army Daily.)

1. The adjournment of the United Nations 26th General Assembly last month removed an important podium for the face-to-face confrontations which had raised Sino-Soviet polemics to the most vitriolic level in over two years. It is clear, however, that neither Peking nor Moscow intends to let the invective subside.

Note: This memorandum, the 46th in a series of bi-weekly reports on Sino-Soviet relations, was prepared by the Office of Current Intelligence and the Office of Strategic Research and was coordinated within the Directorate of Intelligence.

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2. Peking's joint editorial statements on the international situation on New Year's Day predictably praised the enhanced position China had achieved during the past year. In contrast to the 1971 editorial which had soft-pedaled criticism of the Soviet leadership, the 1972 editorial hotly attacked the Soviet leadership, assailing the "Brezhnev renegade clique" for oppressing its people and attempting to extend its influence throughout the world. It raised many of the charges tossed out by Chinese delegates in the United Nations, accusing Moscow of colluding with the US in "nuclear deals," undermining the case of the Palestinian and Arab peoples, subverting other countries, and "above all, shamelessly and flagrantly supporting the Indian reactionaries' armed aggression against Pakistan." It also reiterated Peking's claim that the Soviets sold out East German interests in negotiations on the Berlin issue and that they have threatened the Balkans. Last year's editorial bitterly denounced "Nixon's reactionary rule," but this year's remarks about the US were relatively low key.

3. These same accusations against the USSR were repeated in early January by the Chinese ambassador in Afghanistan. He told his Yugoslav counterpart that Moscow's South Asian policy had brought Sino-Soviet relations to their lowest depths. The ambassador added that "fortunately the USSR actions have left the Peking-Washington dialogue undisturbed" and expressed pleasure that neither Chinese nor Americans had "succumbed to the temptations the subcontinent could have provided."

Soviets Also Sustain High Polemical Level

4. The Soviet Party Central Committee's directive in November to intensify efforts to "unmask" China's "attempts to encroach on the national interests of the USSR" has generated a steady stream of anti-Chinese material from Soviet presses during the past two weeks, much of it critical of the internal situation in China. One notable item was a 31 December article in the party paper Soviet Russia. It discussed a pamphlet entitled "Problems

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of Sino-American Relations" that allegedly appeared briefly in Peking last September and claimed the pamphlet said that the announcement of the President's forthcoming visit to Peking provoked bitter disputes in China. According to the article, the pamphlet said that "comrades following Marxist-Leninist theory" opposed the visit as "a far-reaching right-wing deviation" but were opposed by Mao and Chou En-lai.

5. There is, in fact, no reason to think that the pamphlet originated on the mainland. Indeed, the chances are good that it is a Soviet fabrication. The themes fit neatly with Moscow's current campaign to portray China as badly divided over the Nixon trip. In addition to attempting to stir up controversy in China, Moscow apparently hopes that articles like this will contribute to an image of instability in Peking that might damage Chinese efforts to expand its international ties.

Moscow Seeks to Score Points Over Indochina

6. The speed and vehemence of the Soviet response to the US bombing attacks on North Vietnam indicate that Moscow was as anxious to maximize Peking's embarrassment over the raids on the eve of President Nixon's visit as it was to strengthen the Soviet position in Hanoi. Moscow bested Peking's Foreign Ministry statement on the raids by issuing a government statement declaring the USSR's "most serious" view of the attacks. It underscored this declaration by announcing the signature of yet another supplemental aid agreement with North Vietnam.

7. Soviet propagandists sought to heighten Hanoi's suspicions of its Chinese ally by stressing that Peking's mild reaction to the attacks was designed to avoid aggravating Sino-US relations just before the President's visit. As in their criticism of China's position on the Indo-Pakistani conflict, the Soviets also clearly hoped to discredit Peking's credentials as a supporter of "national liberation movements." One writer in the military paper Red Star wrote that Chou En-lai "could have stopped

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these raids" merely by hinting that they would disrupt the visit of "his new-found friend in the White House." Another commentary linked the timing of the attacks to the visit of Brigadier General Haig's party to Peking.

On Again, Off Again Talks

8. On 14 December, Soviet Embassy Counsellor Rogachev, who is a member of Moscow's delegation to the Peking talks, confirmed that these meetings are in recess, ostensibly because the illness of head negotiator Vice Foreign Minister Ilichev. He said that Ilichev would return to continue the talks in Peking, but professed not to know when. On 11 January, however, a Soviet Foreign Ministry China specialist stated that the talks were continuing at the "deputy level" in Ilichev's absence. He added that the annual Sino-Soviet Border River Navigation Talks had opened, probably in a Soviet border town, in December.

Moscow Reports Border Guards Head Off Intruders at Border Pass

9. The Soviet Foreign Ministry officer reported that the border itself was quiet. But the next day Komsomolskaya Pravda printed an unusual article describing a border violation in an unidentified area by herdsmen whose nationality was not specified. According to a Reuter's report, the article described how Soviet border guards overcame difficult mountainous terrain to intercept the intruders at a 13,130-foot pass.

10. The only Soviet frontier territory fitting that description is along its border with China from Afghanistan to Mongolia. Parts of this area have been under dispute between Moscow and Peking, and in past years there have been occasional reports of border violations by Chinese herdsmen. It is not clear whether the article is meant to signal a turn for the worse in the border dispute. There has been no indication of significant incidents along the

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frontier, and the absence of specific references to China in the article--or any indication that an armed conflict took place--suggests that the item was not meant to signal a deterioration of the situation. It may be that Moscow merely wanted to remind Peking of the prowess of its border guards. Peking has from time to time printed similar items.

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Western China-USSR Border

