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MEMORANDUM

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

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August 29, 1973

MEMORANDUM FOR: HELMUT SONNENFELDT  
FROM: William Hyland  
SUBJECT: The Sino-Soviet Polemic

Attached is a quick resume of the main themes and probable purposes of the new Soviet polemic. You may want to send it on to Dr. Kissinger with an addition, etc.

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MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

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MEMORANDUM FOR: MR. KISSINGER

FROM: Helmut Sonnenfeldt

SUBJECT: The New Phase of Sino-Soviet Relations

It is obvious that the Soviet leaders have made some important new decisions concerning China.

-- The first phase is a major public polemic; it is designed to persuade other communists that China has totally and completely broken with socialism. On this basis, the Soviets are pressing for another international communist conclave, that presumably would ratify China's final, irrevocable excommunication.

-- It is a subsequent phase that is more worrisome. The general line now being carried by Brezhnev and in numerous authoritative articles is that a "normalization" of interstate relations, while still desirable, is less and less likely, given Chinese policies and leadership.

-- Since China has rejected all of the Soviet offers for a negotiated accommodation, the implication is that the Soviets have now given up all hope of a reconciliation with the Chinese state.

Most ominous is the accusation in Pravda on August 26 that China is seeking the status of a nuclear missile "superpower" and that its policy foresees war as inevitable and the only means of resolving disputes.

The timing seems to go back to just after the US summit. Shortly afterward the Soviets ostentatiously announced that their negotiator on the border question was returning to Moscow. Then, in the Communist summit on July 31 the Soviets apparently expounded their new Chinese plans.

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The rapid development of the public campaign also may relate to the Chinese party Congress, and Soviet hope of influencing it.

For now there is no indication that military preparations are accompanying the polemics. And if this is a two stage operation, beginning with an international conference, military pressures would probably undermine the Soviet appeal to other communists.

The Chances that the Soviets can arrange the kind of excommunication that they now seem to want are not very good. The Romanians for one, intend to drag their feet, to buy time. The Yugoslavs are not going to subscribe to an excommunication. And some of the Western European parties will be reluctant to take the final step.

Nevertheless, the Soviets do not necessarily have to hold a meeting. They are, in effect, unilaterally making the final judgment that China has made a total break with the principles of socialism, and citing evidence that China can only be treated as any other "reactionary" state.

They are claiming that a war psychosis is building in China and that it is directed against the USSR.

All of this is somewhat reminiscent of the 1969 crisis which built to the climax of a Kosygin Chou meeting and the agreement to begin border talks.

Apparently, the Soviets in the wake of US summit, believe it is an opportune moment to close out this four year effort, and to return to the path of confrontation. If the Chinese party Congress confirms that the pro-American forces around Chou En lai have been strengthened, then it is possible that the Soviets will resort to more blatant and open pressures.

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