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MEMORANDUM

## NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

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INFORMATION  
April 9, 1971

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MEMORANDUM FOR DR. KISSINGER

FROM: K. Wayne Smith *KWS*SUBJECT: Communist China's Military Posture Toward the  
USSR (1960-1970)

This CIA report (Tab A) discusses changes in the CPR military posture which have been caused by the deterioration in Sino-Soviet relations between 1960 and today. The focus is on the geographical region near the USSR/CPR common border and CPR redeployments there in response to the Soviet troop buildups.

Disengagement: 1960-1965

During the early years of deterioration in Sino-Soviet relations, changes in the CPR military posture were limited to its northern border and were confined to civil measures including:

- Resettlement of native inhabitants ethnically related to the people on the Soviet side of the border.
- Expansion of border defense stations and increases in the frequency of border patrols.
- Settlement of the border areas by province Production and Construction Corps (a para-military organization used much as a territorial army).

During this period the Soviet threat to the northern border of the CPR was virtually non-existent and security of the area was a very minor concern to the Chinese military.

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The Soviet Build Up: 1965-1970

In 1965, Soviet forces situated along the CPR northern border included a small force of:

- 11-12 divisions containing 78,000-85,000 men.
- 500 fighter/attack aircraft and 190 tactical aircraft.

These Soviet forces were concentrated in the Far East military district and were apparently deployed to counter U.S. forces in Japan and Korea rather than to pose a threat to the Chinese border.

At the same time, the CPR forces in the northern sector were concentrated in the southern sector of Manchuria where they were in position to counter U.S. forces in Japan and Korea. In 1965 therefore, both Soviet and CPR troop concentrations were deployed to meet the common threat from U.S. and allied forces in Japan, Korea, and at sea (see map, page 3).

However, in later 1965, a methodical buildup of Soviet strength along the border began and continued through 1970 until -

- Ground forces more than tripled from 11 to 34 division and from 75,000 to 350,000 men.

- Some 800 more aircraft were deployed to support the increased land forces. The 500 fighter attack aircraft there since 1960 also remain in the area.

The majority of Soviet forces (80%) are today situated in the far eastern USSR around Manchuria in the same positions from which the Soviet invasion of Japanese-held China emanated in 1945. This deployment threatens not only Peking itself, but the Manchurian industrial centers of Shen-yang, Kirin, and Dairen. The rest of the Soviet forces are concentrated on the northwestern border of Sinkiang province in Western China (see map, page 3).

The Chinese Reaction: 1965-1968

The Chinese capability to respond to the Soviet force buildup was severely constrained between 1965 and 1968 by:

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-- The threat which the CPR perceived in the U.S. combat force involved in South Vietnam and bombing North Vietnam. According to the CIA, this forced the CPR to keep the majority of its troops garrisoned near the Southern border to be in position to meet a potential U.S. invasion.

-- China was plunged into a Cultural Revolution in mid-1966. Military production, recruitment and training were all disrupted and the Army's attention was diverted away from foreign affairs and towards internal problems.

Some improvements to the forces stationed along the northern border were made during this period, but these were a result of nationwide force improvement programs rather than a direct reaction to the Soviet buildup of forces. These measures included:

-- The construction of ten new airfields (4 in the east(Manchuria) and 6 in the west (Sinkiang)).

-- The establishment of an early warning radar network all along the northern border.

-- The subordination of the Production and Construction Corps to the explicit control of the armed forces removing its para-military character and making it more of a territorial army.

No substantial increase in Chinese troop or aircraft deployments had been observed despite the massive Soviet buildup. Substantial measures were taken, however, to build the defenses of the Shuang-Cheng-Tzu missile test range

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By 1969, certain events turned China's attention to the north including:

-- A lessening of tension on the southern border as the U.S. bombing of North Vietnam was restricted to the southern section.

-- An increase of tension between Soviet and CPR forces which led to fighting at Damanskiy (Chen-pao) island and probably convinced Peking that a large scale attack by the Soviet Union was a distinct possibility.

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-- The ending of the Cultural Revolutuion.

Shortly after the Damanskiy Island incident, the CPR Ninth Party Congress started a campaign of "preparations for war" which included new activities of digging air raid shelters, stockpiling strategic materials and storing food.

These measures appear to have been a short term reaction to the Damanskiy conflict but were accompanied by several national military developments of long term strategic importance. These include:

-- At least four and perhaps five armies (160,000 - 200,000 men) were moved from the southern region to the central and north/central regions where they could more quickly respond to a Soviet attack on the northern border -- this redeployment represented a long range re-orientation of ground forces away from their historic pre-occupation with defense against an attack from the sea.

-- Training activity within all branches of service was increased and command and control capabilities were improved so that tactical centralized control of all Chinese units was possible.

-- A re-alignment of the northern military regions was implemented which divided the border military region near southeastern Mongolia (inner Mongolia) between the three bordering regions of Lan-Chou, Peking, Shen-Yang. This is undoubtedly symptomatic of an increase of military concern for the security of the border regions.

-- Troop concentrations in the border regions were increased from the 1965 level of about 590,000 men and 440 aircraft to the current level of 635,000 men and 950 aircraft. The increase in CPR deployments was spread evenly along the border opposite the highest Soviet concentrations.

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The Current CPR Posture (see map, page 7)

Deployments of CPR troops in the northwest appear to be configured in enclaves to protect the Urumchi region in Sinkiang and the Shuang-cheng-tzu missile test range area. The CPR probably does not believe it necessary to defend the entire northwestern region because of the comparatively light Soviet troop concentrations in the area (60,000 men and 125 aircraft).

Considering the paramount importance of the industrial region in eastern Manchuria the deployments of its defenses are puzzling. Two armies have been withdrawn from the area and the six remaining are garrisoned in the southern third of the region. There are also no signs of fixed defenses along likely invasion routes. This posture probably does not reflect complacency on the part of the CPR, but rather a decision that defense in the northern half of the province would be impossible since the area is surrounded on three sides by the Soviet Union. Another less likely interpretation is that this deployment represents a CPR belief that it could advance its centrally located armies quickly to the north before the Soviet army penetrated dangerously far into Manchuria and they therefore do not have to be forward deployed.

Given the scope of the CPR defensive problem, and the disparity in firepower and mobility between CPR and Soviet land forces, it is doubtful that the favorable force manpower ratio which the CPR enjoys will be sufficient for the CPR to hold a Soviet attack. Most observers agree that the Chinese would not be a match for a Soviet attack at least in the forward areas. How far the Soviet armies could advance, however, in face of stiffening CPR resistance, lengthening supply lines, and Chinese guerilla attacks, is an open question.

Strategic Implications of the Current Posture

The events of the past two years have resulted in a shift in the Chinese military geographical center of gravity away from the southern coastal region towards the north. With forces more centrally located the CPR land forces are in a better position to react to an attack from either the north or southern coastal regions.

Although these deployments do not provide a blueprint for China's military doctrine they do offer some good clues:

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-- Where absolutely necessary, as on the southern coast or north of Shuang-Cheng-tzu an immediate defense is planned with provision made to conduct a continuing conventional defense along the routes to important targets further inland. This is not inconsistent with their northern strategy since defense in depth is not possible in the coastal regions and most of the countries' urban industrial power is concentrated in this area.

-- Where there are large stretches of land between the CPR and Soviet forces and there is little of value to defend, (as in the northwestern region of Sinkiang) distance itself is considered the defense.

-- Where enemy strength could be brought overwhelmingly to bear and cut off CPR troops as in the northern region of Manchuria, the Chinese would be willing to give up a great deal of territory without opposition. Main forces would be withdrawn from these areas and "Peoples War" tactics employed to attack lengthening supply lines as the Soviets penetrate.

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