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SINO-SOVIET CONFLICT: REPORT ON SINO-SOVIET CONFLICT AND ITS IMPLICATIONS

by

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**A summary of the Subcommittee on the Far East
and the Pacific of the Committee on Foreign Affairs,
House of Representatives, May 14, 1965, 412 p.**

INTRODUCTION

A recent U.S. Government publication provides an exceptionally valuable assessment of the Sino-Soviet dispute and its implications. Since this topic is of such widespread interest, and since the complete record of the hearings is long and diffuse, this summary attempts to bring together systematically the major points recorded in its 412 pages. The publication presents the testimony heard from expert witnesses before a House Subcommittee from March 10 to March 31, 1965. In addition to the testimony, it includes a list of Communist Parties in all countries, indicating figures for membership and orientation toward the USSR or China (pp. 17R-19R); Russian Party and government leaders (pp. 20R-21R); Chinese leaders (pp. 22R-26R); and a chronology, April 1958 through March 29, 1965 (pp. 367-412). Witnesses heard included leading scholars and government officials: Robert J. Alexander; Zbigniew Brzezinski; Admiral Arleigh Burke; Alexander Dallin; Bernard Fall; William Griffith; Abraham Halpern; Roger Hilsman; Harold Hinton; George Kennan; Richard Lowenthal; Franz

Michael; Lucien Pye; Robert Scalapino; George Taylor; Thomas Wolfe; Donald Zagoria; and, from the State Department, Richard Davis; Marshall Green; James Leonard; Allen Whiting; and Secretary of State Dean Rusk.

SINO-SOVIET CONFLICT

According to these observers, Sino-Soviet conflict involves these major factors:

1) A power struggle for leadership of the Communist bloc and movement. The Chinese aim to dominate the whole movement, but they particularly intend to gain the leading position in Asia.

2) An ideological struggle concerning evolutionary change vs. revolutionary change as the correct tactics to reach the common goal of Communist world victory. Related to this is the differing assessment of the importance of underdeveloped areas, with China allotting them first priority, and the Soviet Union, second, after its own economic development to compete peacefully with the West. This also involves Chinese suspicion of Soviet relations with the United States. Some of these observers see Soviet-United States detente as the key factor in the whole conflict.

3) China aims to become a Great Power, roughly comparable to the United States and the USSR.

4) The Soviet Union "selfishly" builds its own power and withholds substantial economic assistance.

5) The Soviet Union refused to support China regarding India.

6) China and the Soviet Union conflict on their borders. Generally these observers assess the border question as of no more than secondary importance in the dispute.

7) Internally, China fears revisionism, and a strong sense of "cultural distance" divides Chinese and Russians. China fears that the "petty bourgeois" elements, in its opinion already dominant in the Soviet Union, will grow in China, that the lack of revolutionary experience of the younger generation and the pragmatism of technicians will erode orthodoxy in China as they already have in Russia. The "European" Russians consider the Chinese alien.

Implications of the Dispute. In regard to the significance of the Sino-Soviet conflict for the United States, these observers suggest several favorable and unfavorable factors: The World Communist movement now lacks a coordinated strategy, and

comprises a divided instead of a unified opponent. The movement's unity is irrevocably shattered, and the different power-centers rest on separate cultural bases, intensifying the dispute. Ideology must be so stretched as to lose any practical meaning, to try to cover such divergent cases. Communists in all countries now can and do make choices, stressing their various national interests and particular views. Many more alternatives and far greater room for maneuver result. Communist victory in a particular place, Vietnam, e.g., does not now automatically mean extension of Soviet power. Loss of international unity tends to erase distinctions between Communists and left-wing socialists in many countries. The dispute has provided a "magnificent educational opportunity for the whole world"; we have learned many important "inside" facts.

But, competitive subversion also results: in Africa it already operates; and both Chinese and Russian arms have been competitively sent to Indonesia and Cambodia. Peking's accusations force the Russians, at least partially, to abandon peaceful co-existence and require them to support socialist countries against the West. The Soviets cannot permit China to be sole representative of revolution and radicalism.

Flat disagreement, rarely evidenced in this volume, occurs in assessment of the relationship of the Sino-Soviet dispute to Khrushchev's fall. Franz Michael, Harold Hinton, and, less categorically, Abraham Halpern, consider the dispute to have been the cause of Khrushchev's removal. Richard Lowenthal, Robert Scalapino, and Zbigniew Brzezinski, specifically deny it.

Hinton suggests an interesting hypothesis (p. 16): "Since about 1960 . . . the Soviet Union has evidently wanted the United States to stay on in Okinawa, because an American withdrawal from that important base would seriously impair the ability of the United States to continue its military containment of Communist China, with results that might involve the Soviet Union in undesired risks and complications."

Halpern and Lucien Pye argue that the Chinese have made clear gains over the Russians since the dispute became an open one. Discussion of Indonesia in this volume suggests that the island country aims at Chinese and Indonesian division of spheres of influence in Asia. Assessment of India indicates that her reputation in Southeast Asia is low, and Lucien Pye suggests, "there is a very high probability that India will find it impossible

not to follow the path of adding to nuclear proliferation." China, unlike India, is respected and feared. However, argues Lowenthal, "the prospects of communism in the world will depend . . . more and more on local conditions and the quality of Communist leadership within each country."

Eastern European countries have exploited the dispute to acquire greater autonomy; the United States ought to encourage this trend, for they look to the West and not to China. Brzezinski, however, believes that differentiated bilateral relations with individual Communist states are much less desirable than a uniform American approach to Eastern Europe; he fears "social fascism" (industrialization, nationalism, domestic dictatorship, anti-Semitism) will develop in some of them, Poland in particular, if we handle these countries selectively. Kennan stresses the importance of Yugoslavia as a test-case of national communism and opposition to Chinese views.

Cuba is judged to be the Latin American "testing ground between the Soviets and the Red Chinese for leadership and influence." Chinese pressure forces the Russians to support a revolutionary line in Latin America. Alexander supplies an excellent country-by-country survey of Latin American Communism (pp. 256-260), and Griffith does the same for Communism in Africa (pp. 265-287).

The observers agree that Chinese expansion into Soviet Asia is unlikely, but also appear to consider Chinese expansion into Southeast Asia as not profitable. China's population problem cannot be solved by migration (10 million annual emigration is not possible), and the relatively small amount of rice gained would not compensate for the political and other risks involved in forcible takeover of the area. Southeast Asia's underdevelopment further argues against significant economic gains for China. And even if China did "take over" Southeast Asia, "the tendency," argues Kennan (p. 97), "is going to be for national traditions, national deviations of psychology, national interests, national pride, to assert themselves, and they will begin to act as independent governments at some point." China follows selective and variant policies of "protection" (Cambodia, Indonesia, Pakistan, Burma) and "punishment" (Thailand, South Vietnam, Malaysia), and increasingly, "advantages in one area are likely to produce countervailing influences elsewhere." (Pye).

The U.S. and the Dispute. Zagoria suggests (p. 112):
... the relationship among the three powers (China, USSR, USA) strongly resembles a lovers' triangle in which Peiping plays the part of the aggrieved spouse betrayed by Moscow's 'liaison' with Washington. What makes this betrayal all the more unbearable to Peiping is not only the fact that the third party is an infidel, but, more important, that it is Peiping's principal national enemy. It is as though Josephine had been seduced away from Napoleon by Wellington."

Most of these observers judge that Russia strongly desires, and even needs, good relations with the West, and that China's major aim is to destroy such relations. Vietnam and Southeast Asia appear to be effective Chinese weapons to attain their aim of splitting the U.S. and the USSR. Necessity to maintain influence in Asia and Africa, and continue world revolutionary leadership, force the Soviet Union to play, at least partially, the Chinese game. Russia probably *wants* America as a counterweight to China, and also probably hopes to pursue its own course in non-Western areas, to compete with both the U.S. and China without allying with either one. The result is vacillation and indecision, with a possible outcome, disastrous for us, of political and military extremism, and reversal or slowing down of Soviet "peaceful" evolution.

Zagoria believes that Khrushchev was moving toward, "an accommodation with the United States even at the expense of a final showdown with the Chinese" (p. 155), and Kennan suggests that, "A Soviet foreign policy based exclusively on relations with the West would practically undermine the rationale for the maintenance of Soviet power in Russia itself" (pp. 76-77). The Soviet Union strongly resists making a choice; powerful reasons cause it to recoil from China, but perhaps even more powerful reasons operate to prohibit its choosing the United States. Wolfe sees (p. 65) a tendency for Soviet citizens generally to interrelate peaceful coexistence with the West and improvement of internal living conditions, and hence a "public opinion" which favors the United States over China.

The U.S. in Southeast Asia. The interest of the United States in Southeast Asia, according to most of these witnesses, is to "contain" China so that countries that can develop viable and effective modernizing governments under the protecting wing of American power. Ideally, Southeast Asia would be "neutral" ground, where neither China nor the United States maintained

bases against the other. But the United States must not unilaterally pull out, or in any way fail to exert sufficient pressure to keep China from expanding. Two observers indicated a different assessment: Lowenthal expressed concern that a strong United States commitment in Southeast Asia would weaken our role in Europe, and he rates Southeast Asia as relatively unimportant to us. Kennan believes that the United States is already seriously overextended, and he apparently would have us maintain predominant (naval) power in the Pacific Ocean while trusting to a kind of "Titoism" to vitiate the threat of expanding communism even if China did expand through Southeast Asia.

Most agreed, however, that China must accept continued American power and presence, but some noted that China's "major goal" is to remove America from Asia. It was also noted that China considers Southeast Asia as its "natural" sphere of influence, and that the United States has no business there. Griffith suggested the parallel with Japan before World War II and that China poses a greater threat, but the United States reaction must be the same against China as it was against Japan.

The argument would seem to be that Southeast Asian governments need time to develop meaningful independence, that China threatens to take them over before they have a chance, and that the American interest is to counter China in order to give them time. The consensus appears to be that they should be protected against China by us whether they want us or not, while Kennan objects that without their conviction of a need for our protection, our efforts are wasted.

American presence in Vietnam is overwhelmingly supported by these observers. This presence serves, among other things, to support the Soviet position favoring peaceful coexistence in the Sino-Soviet dispute. Communist success in Vietnam would be followed by attempts in Thailand, Laos, and other places, and the United States involvement would become greater rather than less. The already strong Asian belief in Chinese power would be fortified, making our task more difficult. Even Bernard Fall judges that, "to maintain a non-Communist presence in South Vietnam is important to the Western World." But Fall points out the terrible problems in Vietnam, far more difficult than the situation was in Malaya (pp. 192-193). Zagoria believes that American bombings have deepened the Sino-Soviet split, and have not brought Russia and China closer together; Brzezinski agrees.

U.S. Recognition of the M.P.R. United States diplomatic recognition of the Mongolian People's Republic was generally recommended because other Asians would approve, it would constitute a pro-Soviet move in the Sino-Soviet dispute, and would prove a "valuable listening post," but Nationalist China would oppose it. Hilsman, Hinton, Michael, Wolfe, and Dallin, all indicate approval of the idea, although often with reservations as to the gesture's real importance. Secretary of State Rusk (p. 366) gave some classified testimony on the question.

Nobody called for United States recognition of Communist China, but the Congressional Committee's recommendations included: "The United States should give, at an appropriate time, consideration to the initiation of limited but direct contact with Red China through cultural exchange activities with emphasis on scholars and journalists."

Some specific recommendations were made. Brzezinski proposes a "Johnson Plan," for reunifying Europe, including, "a general all-European economic development plan." Hilsman says we must clearly indicate that we are prepared for ground fighting in Southeast Asia, and that United States troops should go now to Thailand, "to deliver the message that we intend to stay in Southeast Asia." Pye argues (p. 151) for, "a differential range of (United States) policies so that those countries that are prepared to carry on economic development along the lines that we are best able to facilitate them in should get a disproportionate amount of our aid and we should be willing to give them substantial help. This would include countries like Malaya, the Philippines, and Thailand . . ." Fall, Taylor, and others argue for United States support of social reform efforts.

The Future. Brzezinski, surprisingly, appears to expect convergence (p. 305): "I would not be surprised if . . . Communists in the more developed part of the world become increasingly absorbed by the pluralistic, more stable, and more democratic Western societies . . ." Other expectations of this group are: The Sino-Soviet dispute may never result in a complete break, but the forces dividing them are powerful ones and militate against reconciliation; a "hard line" is to be expected in China for many years yet; the United States might, by aggressive policies, "force" Sino-Soviet reconciliation; there will not be war between China and Russia; the Soviet Union will continue to be a greater threat than China; the Soviet Union will not necessarily support militarily Chinese ventures; Russia does not want hostilities between the United

States and China; China needs large gifts, not loans, if it is to develop successfully; "national Communism" will develop in Asia, too; many Asians expect China to win all of Southeast Asia; there will be no unified Communist movement again; North Vietnam will resist Chinese attempts to dominate it; ideology will exert increasingly *less* influence in the Soviet Union; a strong China would constitute a physical threat to the Soviet Union; Soviet economic needs plus deterioration of ideology will influence the USSR to seek better relations with the West; China's economic needs and a new generation of leaders without revolutionary experience will erode Maoism.

In conclusion, the record of these hearings provides extremely stimulating analysis by highly competent people of one of the most important developments of our time.

BIOGRAPHIC SKETCH

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Professor Rupen is currently on leave from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, where he is Professor of Political Science.

He received his A.B. from Williams College in 1948, M.A. from the Fletcher School of Law & Diplomacy in 1949, and Ph.D. from the University of Washington (Seattle) in 1954.

He spent the year 1951-52 in Munich, Germany, as a Foreign Research Fellow of the Social Science Research Council; taught at Bryn Mawr College 1953-54; was a Research Fellow at Harvard's Russian Research Center 1954-55; Research Assistant Professor and Associate Director of the Mongolian Project at the University of Washington, 1955-56; returned to teaching at Bryn Mawr College, 1956-58; and went to the University of North Carolina in 1958.

He traveled in the USSR in 1956, 1958, and 1959, and to Outer Mongolia in 1958 and 1959. He has been to Soviet Central Asia and through much of Siberia, in the Trans-Siberia Railroad.

He is author of *Mongols of the 20th Century*, 1964 and of numerous articles in *Foreign Affairs*, *Journal of Asian Studies*, *Pacific Affairs*, etc. His principal fields of professional interest are Sino-Soviet relations, contemporary Mongolia, and Russian Area Studies.