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COMMITTEE OF POLITICAL ADVISERS

SOVIET BLOC REACTION TO CHINESE COMMUNES

Note by the United States Delegation

Communist China's radical communes programme, has given rise to a difference with Moscow comparable to previous differences over Moscow's de-Stalinisation policy in 1956, Soviet satellite policy up to the Hungarian revolt, and Mao's "hundred flowers" policy of 1957. There is no reason to believe that this difference threatens the essential solidarity of the Sino-Soviet alliance, as demonstrated most recently in the Taiwan crisis. However, the communes question merits continued attention as a potentially important source of discord in Sino-Soviet relations.

2. Soviet Treatment Marked by Reticence

In contrast to the wide attention which it devoted to Communist China's collectivisation drive in 1955, for example, Moscow has treated the communes with a reticence markedly out of keeping with Peiping's exuberance and the development's intrinsic importance. Moscow has pointedly asserted traditional doctrine in a manner to contradict Peiping's more radical ideological claims and has failed to comment on strong criticisms of the communes, voiced by the Yugoslavs among others. Apart from a brief reference by Mikoyan during his recent visit, no public Soviet leadership statement has so much as mentioned the communes, but Khrushchev privately disparaged the experiment in his conversation with Senator Humphrey.

3. Particularly since Moscow's distinct upgrading of its own claim of progress toward communism in the 14th November theses of the Seven-Year Plan, Peiping has toned down its own statements, in favour of praise of Soviet leadership toward communism. While this action has probably served to relieve the immediate strain with Moscow, Peiping has not eliminated and has reaffirmed some of basic issues of potential disagreement.

4. Points at Issue

These issues involve both internal policy and ideology. Elements of the Chinese commune system run counter to certain basic Soviet internal policies. They are at variance with Khrushchev's

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policy of strengthening the collective farm system (as a necessary interim step toward the eventual end of collective ownership under communism) and the stress on increased reliance on material incentives and a money economy. The doctrinal framework with which Peiping surrounded the commune movement contained implications that Communist China was further "advanced" than the Soviet Union on the road toward communism.

5. On the one hand, Moscow may fear that miscarriage of the commune programme, may affect the stability of the Chinese Communist regime, with important effects on the Alliance, or may tend to discredit the whole communist movement. A dramatic success, on the other hand, might force Moscow into a competition of radicalism which would ill accord with the trend in the Soviet Union toward economic rationalisation. By reinforcing Peiping's emergence as a second ideological centre, the communes could have long-term power implications for the leadership of world communism.

6. Reaction in Yugoslavia and the Satellites

Despite the evident importance within the Sino-Soviet bloc of the Chinese programme, its whole development has been treated with reserve in Moscow's Eastern European satellites. This reserve does not extend to Belgrade, and the Yugoslavs have strongly attacked the communes for their regimentation and socially distasteful conformity. Yugoslav criticism appears to be based more on annoyance with Chinese activities directed against Yugoslavia in the context of the Yugoslav-bloc dispute than on a serious effort to apply Marxist arguments against the Chinese experiment.

7. Belgrade's charge that the bloc was "passing over in silence" the commune question is exaggerated. Some factual material has appeared in the public media of all the East European satellites, but comment has been rare and generally has termed the communes significant within "the specific conditions of China." Probably this is due to the inherent caution of the Moscow-oriented satellite leaders. It may also stem from their probable doubts about the Chinese programme as a development for possible emulation in Eastern Europe. The peoples of the area, to the extent they concern themselves with such remote developments, probably view the commune programme as do the Yugoslavs.

8. Only in Bulgaria is there evidence of an intention to base practical policy on the Chinese example. Within the framework of a programme to speed up completion of the current Five-Year Plan, the Bulgarian regime has introduced enlarged collective farms called "communes" evidently modelled to some extent on the Chinese form. The regime has proven sensitive to the charge of imitating the Chinese Communists, probably for fear of irritating Moscow.

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