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Authority NND 789755

By NOP NARA Date 3/21/00

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
BUREAU OF INTELLIGENCE AND RESEARCH

4/14/64

Tom.

This is the little memo
to Roger I mentioned to
you in the car this
morning. It's my only
copy, so could I have
it back.

H. Somenfeld

Copy to WH - Chet Cooper 10/1/64

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By NDP NARA Date 2/21/00

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10/14/63

THE US INTEREST IN COMMUNIST CHINA

If we look at the Sino-Soviet dispute purely in balance-of-power terms, the US ought logically to support the Chinese (or weaker) side. Both the CPR and USSR oppose US interests, but of the two it is only the vastly more powerful Soviet Union which has the wherewithal directly to threaten the US with major damage, and to operate to our material detriment on a world-wide scale. Hence, our efforts should be to weaken the stronger and strengthen the weaker side in order to prolong a dispute which is to some extent debilitating to both. Indeed, a case can be made that it would not necessarily be contrary to US interest for Communist China to acquire a modest nuclear-weapons capability which could interpose something of a deterrent to Soviet military pressure but which would not threaten the US.

Limitations on US Policy

Obviously, however, there are a variety of considerations which influence US policy in directions away from classic balance-of-power considerations:

--a sudden volte face in our relations with the USSR and CPR would hardly be supported by domestic public opinion, by our allies or by nonaligned governments.

--we would not wish to encourage Chinese expansionism too much. While a certain amount of Chinese pressure on its periphery -- the Sino-Indian border dispute is an example -- works to our net advantage, resolution of such situations by Chinese victories at the expense of the free-world would not.

--we have an interest in the development of a Soviet world outlook less hostile to the West. Since we do not plan to go to war with the USSR, our long run interest is to promote Soviet evolution in the direction of more civilized international behavior. This requires us to give some measure of approval to Soviet ideological positions on peaceful coexistence and non-inevitability of war.

Chinese Heterodoxy Still Valuable

The last point needs qualification, however. While we wish to approve of Soviet moves in our direction, we still have an interest in Chinese opposition to Moscow -- regardless of the platform from

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which it is mounted. In passing, we note too that the present configuration of Soviet "liberalism" versus Chinese "rigidity" has not always existed and might change in the future. The Chinese not so long ago were the proponents of the "hundred flowers" line and the allies of Polish resistance to Moscow's dictation. Even today Chinese opposition to Soviet policy still serves to enhance Eastern European freedom of action and hence diversity in the Communist world.

Policy Implications

In framing policy we should bear in mind that we have an interest in keeping the Sino-Soviet dispute going. We have an interest in aiding the Chinese, at least to the point of assuring that they cannot be brought to heel by Soviet pressure. Since the most valuable influence Moscow could ever exercise on Chinese Communist policy on our behalf -- the denial of strategic backing from Chinese adventures -- operates more effectively than ever while the dispute is acute -- we have no interest in any sort of Sino-Soviet accommodation (not even one based on Peiping's capitulation).

For the present there appears to be little that we can actively do to improve matters. However, we may as we go along find occasions to refrain from moves which might further weaken the Chinese communists (unless, of course, they promised to end the Communist regime on the Mainland -- which would be an entirely different calculation). For example, we may not wish to attempt to block Chinese efforts to find alternative sources for PCL or other commodities. We would certainly not foresee joining the Soviet Union in military pressure or action against the Chinese, if Moscow ever decided to go that far. And we have an interest in maintaining quiet direct channels of communication with Peiping (such as Warsaw) both to be able to convey messages to it in case of need and to have the rudiments of an entree in the event it should become advantageous to build more normal relations.

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