

China's "Total Strategy" A Soviet Critique

From The Reporter

Raymond L. Garthoff

THE exchange of polemical letters and articles between the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the Communist Party of China has been highly revealing. It has, however, been a public polemic—fashioned with an eye to domestic consumption and on the Communist and "neutral" nations following the dispute abroad.

Perhaps even more revealing are documents of an internal Soviet discussion on Chinese Communist politico-military strategy not intended to be made public. One such is an article called "The Peking Version of 'Total Strategy,'" which appeared in the Soviet

General Staff theoretical journal *Military Thought* for October 1963, and it is still both pertinent and instructive. This journal is marked "For Generals, Admirals, and Officers of the Soviet Army and Navy Only"—it was not intended to be read by Chinese (or American) eyes.

Journal Is Revealing

It analyzes Chinese Communist views on military theory and policy, and while it no doubt distorts the Chinese Communist position to some degree, it reveals a great deal both about the Chinese and Soviet conceptions. The current Chinese Communist view of military science is described as "facing the past, the Chinese past, not recognizing any experience other than the experience of China. . . ." This attitude, according to the Soviet critic I. Yermashev, leads to another and even more critical fault of contemporary Chinese military science:

It is simply obsolete. And it became obsolete not merely by itself but as a consequence of radical changes in many objective conditions, including the material base of war and above all of weaponry.

Primarily, Yermashev comments,

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Dr. Garthoff is Special Assistant for Soviet Bloc Politico-Military Affairs with the Department of State. His article, "Marshal Malinovsky's Manchurian Campaign," appeared in the October 1966 issue of the MILITARY REVIEW.

the Chinese exaggerate the significance of the political and ideological character of possible future war at the expense of evaluating realistically "the balance of real material forces"—that is, recognition of American military power. The Chinese Communists are said to bank on a protracted war, and on winning such a protracted war:

. . . even if at a given time—that is, speaking plainly, at the present time—the enemy is stronger, because in the course of the struggle the relation of forces will change to the advantage of the weaker.

Soviet Rebuttal

This the Soviet writer finds unconvincing. He says:

It is absurd to suppose that a war of attrition will favor the weak and harm the strong. In such a war, the weak will be exhausted before the strong.

"Chinese Marxism" (*Military Thought* put it in quotes) is said to make population a "decisive factor, along with political-morale factors, determining victory or defeat." The Soviet rebuttal not only cites the British conquest of India as an example where size of population was no index of strength, but also pointedly recalls the defeat of China in 1895 by "little Japan." Similarly, the Chinese example of the defeat of Japan in China in 1945 as an illustration of victory in a "protracted war"—the cornerstone case for Mao Tse-tung's theories—is rejected as "unconvincing."

The Chinese neglect to note that Japan was "tied down on many fronts in the Pacific Ocean," Yermashev says, and that "the anti-fascist coalition took the war to the Japanese

homeland"—both rare, if indirect, Soviet credits to our role in defeating Japan. The author does not forget to note that "the Soviet Army dealt complete defeat to the Japanese Army in Northeastern and Northern China," without which "the might of Japanese imperialism would not have been broken." Both the historical role of the Chinese Communists and the theoretical underpinning of their present military doctrine and politico-military strategy are thus demolished.

Stress Reliance

In the early 1960's, the Chinese, seeking to make a virtue of the necessity imposed by the cessation of Soviet economic, technical, and military assistance, began to stress "reliance on one's own strength." Yermashev attacks this principle (which he terms "anti-Leninist, anti-Marxist, and Nationalist") on the ground that it is advanced by the Chinese for:

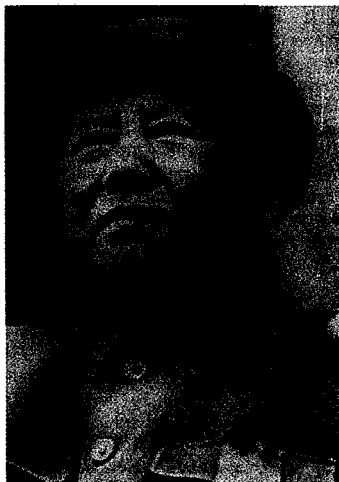
... the political and tactical aim of separating the peoples of the oppressed countries from the camp of socialism [for instance, the Soviet bloc], sowing among them the seeds of nationalism and chauvinism.

Referring to Peking's development of its own nuclear weapons, he says:

After all, not a single socialist state except China considers it necessary to have its own nuclear weapons, considering entirely correctly that the power of the Soviet nuclear forces reliably covers the entire socialist camp from attack. The leaders of the CCP [Chinese Communist Party] do not believe in fraternal friendship with the other socialist countries and do not value this friendship, orienting themselves only on 'their' own strength.

According to *Military Thought*, the Chinese Communists argue for—and

attempt to force on others—a strategy based on the conclusion that the anti-imperialist struggle requires war. One Chinese article in particular is cited, Lu Chih-ch'ao's "Examination of the Question of War Must Not Run Counter to the Marxist-Leninist Viewpoint of the Class Struggle," which appeared in *Red Flag* on 15 August



Department of State Photo

Mao Tse-tung has said "only" half the world's population would die in a nuclear war

1963. It argued that the Soviets judge the nature of war by the scope of its destructiveness in the nuclear age, rather than by adhering strictly to the Marxist-Leninist viewpoint of the class nature of any war.

The Soviet article deals with this charge only obliquely, but claims that the real "class approach" is to consider the consequences of such a war, which leads to the conclusion that "nuclear war must not be permitted."

Concerning Mao Tse-tung's remark that "only" half of the population of the world would die in a nuclear war, *Military Thought* comments:

All the subsequent development of this 'idea' [in Chinese Communist writings] bears witness to the fact that it was no chance remark but a considered conception.

"Just Wars"

Military Thought defends "national liberation" wars as "just wars," but it qualifies this support by reiterating the need for peaceful coexistence between states, and by challenging the alleged Chinese advocacy of revolutionary war everywhere rather than selectively. It finds in this position the "characteristics of the ideology of petty-bourgeois revolutionism," and goes on to make this condescending but slashing critique of Communist China:

One must not forget that contemporary China is still just an enormous peasant country with a relatively small proportion of proletarian elements, with a young and not yet tempered working class, actually originating only in the last quarter century; a country in which there are still strong and living remnants, not completely eliminated, of the old ideology of small and very small property owners of the recent past and even elements of feudal ideology in customs, the family, and interpersonal relations.

One cannot completely exclude the influence of all these petty-bourgeois social strata on the leaders, especially if these very leaders themselves also suffer from strokes of 'extreme revolutionaries' in a time of internal difficulties as a result of the adventurist course of the 'speedup' [Great Leap

Forward] to socialism by crude administrative measures.

The Soviet discussion argues that capitalism is, indeed, doomed but that the role of the Socialist countries is to speed its fall not through war, which would bring ruin to them, too, but through economic competition, for which peace is necessary. This is a familiar theme in the polemics of the past several years. On the basis of this Chinese theoretical readiness for nuclear war, which the Soviets dialectically interpret as desire for nuclear war, the *Military Thought* article goes so far as specifically to accuse the Chinese Communist leaders of supporting genocide.

"Pure Adventurism"

To the Soviets these deficiencies in the Chinese Communist approach to military science, policy, and strategy lead to several conclusions. First, China's military science is "pure adventurism"; her view of the West as a paper tiger is illogical and erroneous; and the result of a protracted military conflict would be defeat, not victory: "The adventurist, 'total' strategy of the Peking style is fraught with indescribable calamities for all peoples, including the Chinese people."

The Chinese Communist leaders, derisively referred to as "the Peking supermen," are not genuine Marxist-Leninist, and they know it:

When one acquaints oneself closely with the theories of the Peking leaders and their practical activity in the international arena, it becomes clear that they put in first place not the interests of the peoples struggling for peace, socialism, and national liberation, but their own great power aims.

They consider that world thermonuclear war is inevitable and, attempt-

ing to hurry it along, they evidently suppose that the Chinese people will have the best chance since they are the most populous people on the earth. In case of the destruction of the majority of the peoples of the world, their states, and their cultures (and this, in the language of the Peking political hysterics, is called 'the fall of imperialism'), there would remain, in their opinion, the epoch of world domination by people of the yellow race. The Peking leaders have already come to terms with the idea of dividing people by race, by the color of their skins, rather than by class and social characteristics. Thus, they have entered the path leading into the swamp of racism, with all the

consequences that flow therefrom.

The Soviet critique concludes:

The propaganda war conducted with unheard-of licentiousness in China against the Soviet Union, the CPSU [Communist Party of the Soviet Union], and other Marxist-Leninist parties is an integral part of this strategy. By their hostile tone, malicious impertinence, and dirty insinuations, articles in the Chinese press could 'grace' any anti-Soviet super-reactionary, even fascist press. . . . And all this is not the result of polemical ranting, but on the contrary is a cold blooded realization of the definite plan of the leaders of the CCP in descending the path of extreme racist chauvinism.

COMMENTS INVITED

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