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September 17, 1969

Report by Four Chinese Marshals, Chen Yi, Ye Jianying, Nie Rongzhen, and Xu Xiangqian, to the Central Committee, 'Our Views about the Current Situation' (Excerpt)

Citation:

"Report by Four Chinese Marshals, Chen Yi, Ye Jianying, Nie Rongzhen, and Xu Xiangqian, to the Central Committee, 'Our Views about the Current Situation' (Excerpt)", September 17, 1969, Wilson Center Digital Archive, Zhonggong dangshi ziliao, no. 42 (June 1992), pp. 84-86. Translated for CWIHP by Chen Jian with assistance from Li Di. https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/117154

Summary:

Four Chinese marshals examine recent Sino-American-Soviet relations. They recommend that China remains firm in negotiating with the two powers, both of which may be looking to strategically exploit China.

Credits:

This document was made possible with support from Leon Levy Foundation

Original Language:

Chinese

Contents:

Translation - English

The international class struggle is intricate and complex, and its core is the struggle between China, the United States, and the Soviet Union. At present a question of overwhelming importance is whether or not the Soviet revisionists will launch a large-scale attack on China. Just at the time when the Soviet revisionists have daggers drawn, the U.S. imperialists are fanning the flames, and China is making war preparations, Kosygin[i] suddenly made a detour to Beijing, expressing to us a willingness to relax border tensions, as well as to improve the relations between our two countries. # What is his purpose? This is a question worth analyzing.

1. The Soviet revisionists indeed intend to wage a war of aggression against China. Their strategic goal is to re-divide the world with the U.S. imperialists. They vainly hope to bring China into the orbit of social-imperialism. Recently the Soviet revisionists have intensified whipping up public opinion for a war against China, openly threatening us with a nuclear strike, and conspiring to launch a surprise attack on our nuclear facilities. The Cultural Revolution in our country is still under way, our nuclear weapons are still under development, and the Vietnam War has not ended. A group of adventurers in the Soviet revisionist leadership want to seize this opportunity to use missiles and tanks to launch a quick war against China and thoroughly destroy China, so that a “mortal danger” for them will be removed.

2. Although the Soviet revisionists intend to wage a war of aggression against China and, accordingly, have made war deployments, they cannot reach a final decision because of political considerations. Launching a war against China is a matter of life and death importance, and the Soviet revisionists are not certain that they can win the war. To a large extent, the Soviet revisionists’ decision to launch a war of aggression against China depends on the attitude of the U.S. imperialists, which is far from satisfactory to them so far, and is their utmost worry in a strategic sense. The last thing the U.S. imperialists are willing to see is a victory by the Soviet revisionists in a Sino-Soviet war, as this would [allow the Soviets] to build up a big empire more powerful than the American empire in resources and manpower. Several times the U.S. imperialists have expressed a willingness to improve relations with China, which reached a peak during Nixon’s recent trip to Asia.[ii] The Soviet revisionists are scared by the prospect that we might ally ourselves with the U.S. imperialists to confront them. On July 26, the first day of Nixon’s trip to Asia, the Soviet revisionists hurriedly handed to our side the statement issued by the Soviet Council of Ministers to our government. This move fully revealed the anxiousness on the part of the Soviet revisionists. The Soviet revisionists’ fears about possible Sino-American unity makes it more difficult for them to launch an all-out attack on China. Considering several other factors, it can be concluded that the Soviet revisionists dare not start a major war against China.

3. Kosygin’s trip to Beijing reflected [the Soviet revisionists’] reactionary pragmatism. The Soviet revisionists want to get out of difficulties at home and abroad by attempting to modify a brink-of-war policy toward China and hoisting the banner of peace. It was also aimed at exploring our intentions to provide the Soviet revisionists with a basis for their decision-making. It is estimated that the Soviet revisionists might enter negotiations with us, and to ask us to adopt their stand to either maintain the status quo of the border or solve the border problem. While maintaining an anti-China policy, the Soviet revisionists hope to relax, or to improve, the state-to-state relations with our country in order to gain a respite to stabilize their domestic situation and the situation in East Europe, while at the same time consolidating and expanding their interests in the Middle East, Asia, and other areas. They especially hope to take advantage through adopting a reactionary two-faced policy toward China, thus gaining strength and winning initiative in the conflict with the U.S. imperialists.

4. Premier Zhou Enlai’s meeting with Kosygin has shocked the whole world, and has caused confusions in the strategic thinking of the U.S. imperialists, the Soviet revisionists, and the reactionaries in other countries. Though we have never retreated

from the stand of beating down U.S. imperialism and Soviet revisionism, Kosygin still visited Beijing in person. All of this is China's great victory. In the struggle between China, the United States, and the Soviet Union, the United States hopes to utilize China and the Soviet Union, and the Soviet Union hopes to exploit China and the United States, so that one of them will gain the utmost strategic advantages. We must wage a tit-for-tat struggle against both the United States and the Soviet Union, including using negotiation as a means of fighting against them. We should be firm on principles and flexible on tactics. The Soviet revisionists have requested holding negotiations on the border issue, to which we have agreed. The U.S. imperialists have suggested resuming the Sino-American ambassadorial talks, to which we should respond positively when the timing is proper. Such tactical actions may bring about results of strategic significance.

[i] Alexei Kosygin was a member of the Soviet Party Politburo and chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Soviet Union.

[ii] Richard Nixon made a round-the-world journey in July-August 1969, and spent time in Asia. During a stop in Guam, Nixon announced at a news conference that while in the past Asian nations had received both men and money from the United States to fight communist threats, in the future, to receive American military and financial support, they would have to furnish their own troops. This notion of a new American Asian policy became the "Nixon Doctrine." In China, Caokao xiaoxi (Reference news), an internally circulated daily newspaper, immediately reported Nixon's remarks.