

Soviets Make Peace Initiative to China As U.S. Pushes Second Front

May 1 (IPS) — The Soviet Union, in a major Politburo statement in the CPSU paper Pravda on April 28, offered the Chinese government full normalization of relations and settlement of all outstanding disputes between the two countries. This Soviet peace initiative, issued simultaneously with a warning of the dangers of war in the Middle East and a call for Geneva peace talks, accused the clique of Chairman Mao of blocking these and previous efforts and trying to “push humanity, first of all the peoples of the USSR and the USA, into mutual destruction in the course of a new world war.”

The Soviet Politburo statement is in direct response to efforts by Atlanticist circles to encourage the Maoist leadership in Peking to open up a “Second Front” against the Soviet Union, up to and including military confrontation. The “Second Front” strategy, openly discussed in Atlanticist policy circles for many years, is behind the recent open moves by the U.S. to gain backing for sales of U.S. arms and sophisticated military technology to China and to back similar activities by its allies in Europe and Japan. These efforts are part of an overall coordinated policy of thermonuclear confrontation with the Soviet Union.

The Soviet statement reviewed the history, since the so-called Sino-Soviet split, of Soviet efforts on a party and state level “to make everything possible for regularization and normalization of Soviet-Chinese relations.” Efforts in the 1960s to maintain unity and to offer the basis for practical cooperation, including a united front against the U.S. imperialist attacks against Vietnam, as the statement details, were rebuffed by the Maoists. Continual Soviet government proposals in 1969, 1970, 1971, and 1973 to resolve conflicts following the 1969 border clashes, including offers of non-aggression and non-use of force pacts were “either left without an answer, or rejected by the Chinese government.”

Instead, the statement emphasizes, the Maoist clique has made every effort to encourage world war. The Maoists require the “myth of the ‘Soviet danger’ and the danger from the North,” to enforce the militarization of China and distract the restless Chinese population from the failures of Maoist domestic and foreign policy. The Maoist course “is directed first of all towards the building up of the nuclear missile potential, towards the realization of the Maoist slogan ‘Cannons instead of rice.’ The policy of the Peking leaders presents a great danger for peace.”

The seriousness of the Soviet effort to defuse all attempts to spur the Peking regime to war is demonstrated by the conciliatory nature of the statement, which includes offers to discuss the groundless territorial claims of the Chinese. “All questions concerning the necessary definitions for a number of districts on the Soviet-Chinese border could be solved in the mutual interest of the USSR and the PRC” the statement asserts.” The Soviet Union is ready to normalize relations on the principle of peaceful coexistence...It is up to the Chinese side.”

Atlanticists Push the Second Front

Atlanticist efforts to create a viable second front against

the Soviet Union is based on the same insane calculations that lead them now to push for thermonuclear confrontation in the psychotic belief the Soviet Union will capitulate in face of the threat of nuclear war. As these calculations go, the increase in tension between the Soviet Union and China will “tie down” Soviet military forces on the Chinese border and keep the Soviet Union psychologically in a state of tension over the potential of a two-front war. Such a conception has no credibility militarily. Given the backward level of Chinese Society and its military, no amount of technology could represent a serious threat to the Soviet Union, especially not in the short-term timetable upon which the Atlanticists are now guiding their war preparations.

The value of the Atlanticists efforts, as they themselves admit, is purely psychological warfare. That is the reason behind the public leaks and statements of U.S. intention to supply weapons to China — pure bluff. The Czechoslovak Communist Party paper, Rude Pravo, in a major analysis of this strategy published one day before the Soviet statement, perceived this operation clearly and linked it to such Atlanticist policy-makers as George Ball. Rude Pravo commented that the talk of arms to China is only “supposed to keep the USSR in a state of tension and nervousness. This is doubtlessly a primitive tactic, which can only be estimated to have marginal value, like all war propaganda, war threats and blackmail.” The purpose of this effort, as they state, is twofold: “to heat up, as much as possible the adventuresome and anti-Soviet ambitions of the Peking leadership, and, on the other side, to sabotage as much as possible the Soviet-American detente relationship.”

The Maoist Response

The actual viability of the second front operation has been shattered in reality by the events within China. The Maoist cliques hold on power is increasingly tenuous and tendencies favoring reconciliation with the Soviet Union, which have strong support within the Chinese military, are gaining ascendancy. This process is not surprisingly part of the motivation for the desperate efforts of the Atlanticists who hope to shore up the Maoists with arms and to deflect anti-Maoist sentiments among professional military officers in the Peoples' Liberation Army (PLA). Such sentiments are well known to the Soviet Union, and the Politburo statement is a direct offer to these circles to avoid war and the destruction of China as a result of the Atlanticist designs.

An indication of the factional struggle within leading Chinese circles on this policy was the unprecedented bombing of the Soviet Embassy in Peking which took place the day after the Soviet statement was issued. The only official Peking statement on the bombing, which must be taken as a Maoist effort to sabotage any Sino-Soviet reconciliation, was to label it the work of “counter-revolutionaries,” a term usually reserved for the anti-Maoist faction. The use under these circumstances strongly implies, as the New York Times was forced to admit in a lead editorial today, that a strong effort for progress toward better Sino-Soviet relations

is already underway. The indications of this, other than the Soviet statement itself, are abundant, and include the recent Indian overtures toward normalization of relations with China, an effort deliberately "misinterpreted" in Atlanticist circles as an anti-Soviet move.

Continued U.S. attempts to carry the second front policy with China will destroy the Japan-U.S. alliance as well. The

Japanese press has recently reported secret efforts by U.S. officials to gain Japanese backing for this policy and to encourage Japanese arms exports to China, in the context of overall Japanese military rearmament. In both cases the Japanese emphatically replied in the negative, stating that this "would cause anxiety in Asia," and, in effect, threaten Japanese relations with the Soviet Union.

Chinese Leadership Factions Stalemated; China Opts Out of War Role

May 1 (IPS) — Despite a renewed public hardline Maoist campaign against the followers of deposed Vice Premier Teng Hsiao-ping, the Maoist and anti-Maoist factions within China's leadership remain totally stalemated. An indication of the influence of moderate forces, including most probably within the army, came last week when China indicated that while it might like to see a war between the United States and the Soviet Union, it wants no part of any such war itself. In a clear signal to both the Atlanticists and the Soviets, the Chinese explicitly refused to give any credence to plans recently mooted in Atlanticist circles to supply arms and intelligence hardware and software to China.

At the same time, the economic crisis confronting both factions was highlighted during the week by reports of continued collapse of both the country's imports and its exports, signalling deepening problems.

Factional Statement

The unstable factional situation is made clear by various activities of factions and faction members over the last few weeks — activities which have preoccupied many of the so-called China watchers in the West.

The renewed campaign by the Maoists began on April 18, less than two weeks after the dismissal of Teng Hsiao-ping and the elevation of Hua Kuo-feng to the premiership. An editorial in the Chinese Communist Party organ People's Daily reported that there were other "bourgeois bigwigs" like Teng in the Party who should be purged, and called on the Party to bring the anti-Teng campaign to new heights. The editorial violated the obvious "deal" worked out between the two factions at the emergency Chinese Politburo meeting on April 7 that made the personnel changes. Following that meeting, several top leaders of the Teng faction, including economic czar Li Hsien-nien and Defense Minister Yeh Chien-ying, reappeared in public for the first time since Chinese Premier Chou En-lai's funeral on Jan. 16, as an indication of their approval of the steps taken. None of the top Maoists on the Politburo were seen for over two weeks after.

Both Li and Yeh, as well as several other prominent anti-Maoists, were conspicuously absent at the first major public event following publication of the April 18 editorial, an April 27 "reception" for the security forces which were on duty during the April 5 anti-Maoist riot in Peking's central square. Instead, apart from new Premier Hua Kuo-feng, only the four leading Maoists on the Politburo appeared, Mao's wife Chiang Ching, plus Wang Hung-wen, Chang Chun-chiao and Yao Wen-yuan.

Since the position of both Li and Yeh on the Politburo are quite secure, their failure to appear at this ceremony is clearly a boycott on their part, to signal to the entire Party membership that the Maoists have broken their part of the

bargain and that the faction fight is on again. An appearance by Li and Yeh would in fact have strengthened the Maoists' hand, by indicating approval of the April 18 editorial and subsequent policy statements.

Widespread Opposition

Despite the staged public show of support, the Maoists' control over the situation is an illusion. The vast majority of the Party opposes them and their policies. Whatever attempts may have been made by the Maoists in the past to strengthen the alliance with the U.S. Rockefeller faction, the leadership made it clear last week that they desire no warlike provocations in their part of the world. Leading Party leaders, probably including top Maoist Chang Chun-chiao, told a visiting U.S. Congressional delegation that China was "emphatically not interested" in formal defense agreements with the U.S. or in acquiring U.S. weapons or military technology — preferring instead to rely on "independence and self-reliance." More significantly, according to House International Relations Committee head Rep. Lester Wolff (D-NY), a member of the nine member House team, the Chinese said that in the event of a renewed conflict on the Korean Peninsula, China would not send any troops — a signal of China's opposition to any military action in Asia.

The Chinese also directly signalled the Soviet Union to the same effect. Two weeks ago they agreed to exchange full ambassadors with close Soviet ally India. Then later this week, the Chinese government immediately denounced the attempted bombing of the Soviet Embassy in Peking as the work of "counterrevolutionaries." In China, that term is normally reserved for pro-Soviet elements. Since in this case such elements were hardly the ones responsible, the term here was used to characterize extreme Maoists who happened to take the regime's public virulent anti-Sovietism too much at face value. The regime wanted to ensure that the Soviets did not take the incident as a provocation.

The Question of Economic Program

Domestically, the Maoists published a lengthy, defensive article on April 28, stating that contrary to the charges of Teng's followers, Mao and his faction fully endorsed Chou En-lai's plans to make China a major industrial country by the year 2000. The Maoists thus demonstrated their need to attempt to counteract the correct perception among the general population that Maoist policies had slowed economic growth and were disastrous for future growth prospects. The Maoists went so far as to lie in the article that output in most major industrial categories during 1975 was 12 per cent or more above 1974 levels.

This claim was belied by continued evidence of major shortfalls in export-oriented output. Following the halving of oil exports and cancellation of talks to increase steel imports