

15 oktober 1959

U 11381/59 - C 46 - P4/PS9.

PA 9806/17

GEHEIM

Land: Communistisch China/Sowjet-Unie.
Onderwerp: Peiping attacks its domestic and Soviet critics.

Referenties:

Datum van waarneming: Eerste helft september 1959.

Bron: Van bevriende zijde.

Opmerkingen:

Verzonden aan: de Minister van Buitenlandse Zaken.

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SECRET

PEIPING ATTACKS ITS DOMESTIC AND SOVIET CRITICS

U 11501/29 - 650 - 14/129

Peiping and his top lieutenants have been stridently defending their past and present domestic policies against criticism from several quarters, including the Soviet Communist Party. They have warned their comrades to stop criticizing and get to work, and they have in effect told Moscow that Peiping will continue to follow its own "road to socialism." Mao apparently intends to underline his point by punishing some party leaders below the politburo level.

A series of editorials in the party press has reflected the shortfall in the "leap forward" in 1958, the downward revision of 1959 goals, and the latest modification of the commune program, all announced in late August. The positions being defended in these pronouncements are primarily those of Mao and the "party-machine" leaders, including Mao's heir apparent, Liu Shao-chi, and the party secretary general, Teng Hsiao-ping. The articles are intended to conceal the extent of the dominant group's previous miscalculations, to find a scapegoat for them, and to reanimate the party cadres for a new production effort.

The line of defense taken by the dominant leaders has been to insist on the "complete correctness" of their programs as conceived, as well as to insist that they themselves took the initiative in repairing the "errors and shortcomings" in implementing their programs. Mistakes are said to have derived principally from the unprececedented scope of the programs.

The editorials take the offensive at several points, primarily against "right opportunists" within the Chinese party--and, by implication, within the Soviet Communist party. "Rightist opportunists," it is repeatedly said, have failed to understand the potential of mass movements like the "leap" and the commune program, have not done their best, have minimized accomplishments and exaggerated problems, have discouraged initiative and enthusiasm and encouraged lethargy and pessimism, and indeed "have lost faith in the whole undertaking."

It is plausibly implied in some editorials that the rightists in China have been buttressing their positions with citations of Soviet experience and of Soviet attitudes toward the radical Chinese programs. Moscow had seemed embarrassed by the preposterous claims made for the "leap" and had given them little publicity; the Soviet party was clearly hostile to the ideological claims made for the commune program; and Soviet spokesmen, including Khrushchev, had publicly and privately criticized the commune concept. The arguments attributed in Peiping's comment to opponents of the communes are similar to those made in articles by Soviet theorists.

One editorial emphasized that the Chinese people have been making remarkable progress under "their own party" and "their own leader." The Chinese party leadership--under the "great leader" Mao--is presented as a true Marxist-Leninist leadership which exploits to the fullest the potential of mass undertakings, in "direct contrast" to an "opportunist" type of leadership.

Further in this vein, the Chinese leadership, far from being guilty of "fanaticism," as hostile observers assert, is said to know well that there are no "ready patterns for everything."

Soviet experience is available for "reference and study" and is "important...but" the Chinese party in "building socialism" is faced with special conditions--a backward agrarian economy and a huge population. The problem of integrating Marxist-Leninist doctrine with Chinese conditions has been "solved" by Mao--e.g., the "leap" and the commune program.

Peiping's threats against the "right opportunists" in the Chinese party have been ambivalent. Some statements offer the rightists the hope of redemption. Other formulations treat them as already lost--as having joined "enemy elements: and as having engaged in "criminal activity."

Both lines seem to be accurate pointers. That is, most of the "right opportunists," by seizing the opportunity to move to the left, will probably be saved. Others, however, have probably already been marked for punishment, and more will fall as the party leaders continue to exhort the party to "go all out."

The chances are that the party leadership will begin to select its scapegoats at the provincial level, as in 1957-58, when several provincial leaders were purged for a similar lack of confidence in and enthusiasm for the party's basic programs. If action at this level does not stop the criticism and restore morale--as it probably will not--it is likely that higher level figures will be toppled.

Mao apparently does not intend to reach into the politburo. These politburo members who have been to the right of Mao and the party-machine figures in recent years--senior administrators and economic specialists--nevertheless agreed with the dominant leaders that a period of rapid progress was ahead, apparently viewed the "leap" and the commune program as worthwhile experiments, and seemed to be trying their best to implement the programs. Moreover, although they may continue to have reservations about Mao's programs, they probably will again cooperate in Mao's effort to save face.