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**Embassy of the GDR in the PR China, 'On the
Escalation of Anti-Sovietism by the Leadership of
the PR China since mid-1973'**

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Summary:

An analysis of the rise of Anti-Soviet propaganda by the Chinese Government, including suspected reasons for the rhetoric and the current state of Sino-Soviet relations.

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Embassy of the GDR in the PR China
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On the Escalation of anti-Sovietism
by the Leadership of the PR China since mid-1973

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The dominant characteristics of the foreign and also domestic policy of the current Chinese leadership are nationalism, great-power chauvinism, anti-socialism, and in particular anti-Sovietism.

The X CCP Party Congress^[1] has reconfirmed that anti-Sovietism has been declared as being the irreversible and sacrosanct party and state doctrine. It has been made into the supreme law for any political decision-making of importance, as well as for the appearances of all leading officials in the party, state, and army apparatus. With the task to implement its great-power ambitions, the main objective of the Chinese leadership's anti-Sovietism in foreign policy consists "in afflicting greatest possible damage on the USSR and in violating the interest of the socialist community", as L. I. Brezhnev, the General Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee, has noted in his speech^[2] at the 50th Anniversary of the Foundation of the USSR. In the context of China's foreign policy appearances, there is hardly a stage of international policy not abused for anti-Soviet attacks (see, for instance, the speech by Qiao Guanhua^[3] before the 28th United Nations General Assembly [in 1973]). This refers both to China's relations with several groups of countries (socialist community of states, capitalist world, developing countries) as well as to positions on individual issues of international policy (struggle for peace and international security, disarmament, national liberation movements, communist world movement).

In domestic political terms, anti-Sovietism is serving as a decisive instrument to preserve the current Maoist repressive regime, to stimulate the economy, and to legitimize and maintain a low standard of living for the population. Anti-Sovietism is used for political-ideological education and the guidance and manipulation of party members and state officials, as well as of the masses of the population, in the vein of Maoist world views and policy. As, among else, the historical experiences of the "Cultural Revolution" and the purge of Liu Shaoqi and Lin Biao have demonstrated, anti-Sovietism is also playing a specific role in the power-political conflicts between the various groups and factions within the leadership of the PR China. Furthermore, anti-Sovietism has become a litmus test for the loyalty of cadres and functionaries vis-a-vis Mao Zedong and their ability to recognize and understand substance and goals of Maoist policy; as well as for political and professional promotions (respective the rehabilitation) of cadres and functionaries on all levels of the party, army, and state apparatus.

The anti-Soviet direction has developed towards becoming a constant factor of policy and propaganda for the Chinese leadership in both external and internal regards. However, as historical experiences are showing, the intensity, aggressiveness, depth, and scope, as well as concrete content, is flexible. Therefore it is contingent on certain internal and external conditions and facts, as well as on specific requirements in domestic and foreign policy.

II.

Since about mid-1973, anti-Sovietism has gone through another escalation which is still continuing until today, both in qualitative and quantitative terms. For instance, in the central daily press in May 30, in June 43, in July 91, in August 75, in September 133, and in October 96 anti-Soviet articles were published.

The escalation of anti-Sovietism in preparation for the X CCP Party Congress was finally reflected in the party congress materials, where the Soviet Union was de facto declared to be the main international enemy of the Beijing leaders. Thus a fundamental foreign policy orientation of the party congress consists in the power-political conflict with the Soviet Union, this is in the implementation of the great-power chauvinist course of the Chinese leadership and a maximum pushback against the Soviet Union in the international arena. Like already at the IX CCP Party Congress [in 1969], the Soviet Union was also smeared at the X Party Congress as a potential aggressor against China. In comparison to the IX Party Congress, however, the escalation of anti-Sovietism at the X Party Congress consists, among else, in the United States being no longer listed as a potential aggressor against China; while in Zhou Enlai's report the slanderous assertion was made that for the PR China the special threat does exist of a "surprise attack by the Soviet-revisionist social-imperialism".

Furthermore, the peace and detente policy of the USSR (clearly delimited from the one of the USA) is made responsible for being the source and reason for all tensions, conflict situations, and problems in the world (so, among else, for the outbreak of war in the Middle East, the nuclear arms race, the existence of military blocs like NATO, et cetera). In extraordinary massive form it is alleged that the Soviet Union is pursuing an aggressive, hegemonic, and interventionist policy.

As evident from the central and local press, those statements from the Party Congress received special attention in propagandist activities as well as in the context of the campaign on learning from the documents of the Party Congress. In addition, respectively in the context of the so-called criticism of Lin Biao, this topic has become very obviously a main focus during the adoption of the materials from the Party Congress, especially in the study groups to be established for that purpose on all levels. According to press reports, party organizations in all areas have to confront the "aggressive" nature of "social-imperialism" and "modern revisionism" and to condemn it.

Thus the anti-Soviet commitment of the cadres and functionaries became, potentially to larger extent than previously, elevated to a fundamental element of the so-called line education. According to the line of the documents of the Party Congress, also the demanded consequent strengthening of the ideological and organizational build-up of party organizations will become more pronouncedly anti-Soviet within the context of the criticism movement against Lin Biao. Here it is on display that the implementation of concrete domestic political tasks becomes increasingly stimulated towards an anti-Soviet direction. Especially pronounced is this escalation of anti-Sovietism in press reports about the accelerated build-up of the People's Militia. For instance, a Xinhua report ("Renmin Ribao" from 18 October 1973) is saying, among else, under the headline "The Shenyang Party Organization on all Levels is ramping up the Build-up of the People's Militia in the City": "[...] The armed units within the City Revolutionary Committee have unmasked the character of expansion and aggression of imperialism and social-imperialism [...] Many factory and mining party committees, as well as organs of the People's Militias, have organized picture exhibits for the Days of the People's Militia under the slogan 'Beat the new Czars' "[...].

Similar reports do exist on political work, especially in the units of the PLA [People's Liberation Army] stationed in the border provinces next to the USSR and Mongolia. According to these reports, PLA propaganda units within the PLA as well as vis-a-vis the population, are becoming active to demonstrate and unmask the "threat of aggression" from "Soviet social-imperialism". This is tied to the demand to increase

defensive readiness in all areas and to improve the fighting power of the Army.

The manner and method how Zhou Enlai in his report to the Party Congress portrayed the elimination of the "enemies-of-the-party-clique Lin Biao" must be seen as a provocation against the Soviet Union and an escalation of anti-Sovietism, especially with regard to domestic policy. In fact the Soviet Union not only got accused of interference in internal affairs, but also of complicity in the alleged coup attempt by Lin Biao.

A stern warning is given in this context to all the forces who do not unconditionally surrender to the anti-Soviet course of confrontation by the leaders, and who advocate a more realistic view of the international situation, respectively those who harbor reservations towards China's rapprochement with the main imperialist powers. Those forces will have to expect to be denounced as "surrendering to social-imperialism".

III.

The expressis verbis promoted escalation of anti-Sovietism at the Party Congress has been notable for several months already, and it might be based on reasons which are motivated by both domestic and foreign policy interests.

The positive results of the peace and detente policy of the Soviet Union and the socialist community of states have resulted in a global strengthening of the international positions of socialism and a change of the balance of forces in its favor. On that background, one has to view the escalation of anti-Soviet attacks, as well as the anti-Soviet war hysteria, as a defensive-destructive reaction by the Chinese leadership. This is especially the case, because the coordinated policy of the states of the socialist community is objectively countering the Maoist course followed by the leaders of the PR China. It is narrowing its maneuvering room, and it is beginning to force the policy of the Chinese leadership internationally into a defensive position.

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It became evident that the Soviet Union is representing the main obstacle to the implementation of the foreign policy goals pursued by the current Chinese leadership.

The Chinese top leadership is in particular extremely concerned about the generally progressive development of relations between the Soviet Union and the United States since the summit meetings in Moscow^[4] and Washington^[5], and especially so about the agreements signed between both states, which are of far-reaching political, economic, and especially military significance (also with regard to China). Like in case of the process of detente in Europe, the Chinese leadership is viewing this development as an impactful and long-term hindrance for its global great power ambitions. Through a massive anti-Soviet posturing, the leadership of the PR China is probably hoping to receive from the United States a more explicit commitment to, respectively a stronger consideration, of respective Chinese interests, and to thus have a more direct negative impact on Soviet-American relations.

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Furthermore, there seems to be no doubt that the Chinese leadership wants to move ahead with the further normalization of Chinese-American relations (especially in sorting out the Taiwan issue, which is also becoming domestically more sensitive; this is a withdrawal of U.S. forces and a freeze of diplomatic relations between Taiwan and the United States). In order to stimulate the United States, the Chinese leadership is expressing itself, and is becoming more active, with regard to more anti-Soviet terminology in order to align more effectively and comprehensively with the main imperialist powers. The PR China does also intend to speed up the development of non-political relations (trade, science, culture) with the United States both qualitatively and quantitatively.

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□ Another aspect of anti-Sovietism in this context can be noted in the efforts by the Chinese leaders to engage in targeted fashion, and also in theoretical terms, with the peace policy of the socialist community of states - in light of the globally recognized results and successes of the foreign policy of the USSR and their fraternally allied socialist countries.

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This is also, among else, to legitimize and maintain the Chinese-claimed leading role especially vis-a-vis the countries of the so-called Third World.

□ Due to the destructive attitude of the Chinese side, bilateral relations between the PR China and the USSR are currently on their lowest level since the fall of 1969; even in non-political areas like trade and scientific-technological cooperation there is currently basically nothing of significance going on (the only result is the aviation agreement from summer this year, according to which a direct flight connection on mutual basis is supposed to be established between Moscow and Beijing). The negotiations ongoing in Beijing about the resolution of border issues have been in a dead end for quite some time, because the Chinese side has either not responded or rejected with flimsy arguments all proposals made by the Soviet side (like, for instance, signing a renunciation of force agreement; settling on partial solutions for individual border segments which are not under dispute). At the same time, the Chinese leadership is raising demands (like, for example, an unilateral withdrawal of Soviet troops from the Chinese border respectively from the Mongolian People's Republic), which at best can be resolved as a result of bilateral agreements, but not be put on the agenda in first place. Zhou Enlai's statements in this regard at the X CCP Party Congress did, among else, refer back to the Chinese government declaration from October 1969, which had talked about a normalization of relations on the basis of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, what at the time had been accepted by the Soviet side. This is demonstrating how the PR China clearly has now maneuvered itself into a difficult position, from where the Chinese leadership apparently now wants to "free" itself through massive anti-Soviet attacks; by trying to put the blame for the current situation in bilateral relations squarely on the Soviet Union. This might therefore serve as justification that the Soviet Union is allegedly planning a "surprise attack" against China.

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□ Notwithstanding these extraordinarily important foreign policy factors, the assumption - which is also shared by the Soviet and other embassies - is gaining traction that in the background domestic political developments are currently the decisive motives for the escalation of anti-Sovietism.

□ Of decisive importance is the fact that the beginning of the renewed escalation of anti-Sovietism is timely coinciding with the direct preparation phase for the X CCP Party Congress (similarly as it had been observed in the run-up to the IX Party Congress [of 1969]). The preparations for the Party Congress, the manner and ways of its organization, the facts of the published fundamental speeches by Zhou Enlai and Yang Hongwen: all that leads to the conclusion that fierce confrontations have been taking place (and are still continuing) within the top leadership about domestic and foreign policy fundamental issues, as well as a struggle for power. As the final consequence, the Party Congress could not establish unity within the party and the central leadership, but just reach a temporary compromise between the competing groups and factions. As a consequence, and given the condition of fierce power politics and struggles within the top leadership, on the one hand anti-Sovietism is increasingly used as an instrument to implement political concepts and power-political positions. On the other hand it is serving as a joint political platform for all factions, which can be applied as a foundation to achieve temporary compromises.

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The struggle against, and the reckoning with, the "enemy-of-the-party Lin Biao clique", as well as the anti-Soviet touch put on the Lin Biao affair, are supporting the

argument that anti-Sovietism needed to be displayed; on the one hand to eliminate opponents and adversaries, and on the other hand to restore after such purges the so-called unity, this is a functioning constellation of forces.

The "Political Report" given by Zhou Enlai [at the X Party CCP Congress] is making clear that by way of anti-Sovietism all domestic political opponents, who argue more realistically than the current leadership, are repressed and called "traitors to the country". This might be a reason why Lin Biao was hyperbolically called a "super-spy" (of the USSR).

At the same time, apparently each group is eager to prove its fidelity and loyalty towards Maoism through exaggerated anti-Sovietism.

□□□ The partial deviation from the line of the IX Party Congress and from the initiated normalization of Chinese-American relations are, among else, causing the United States in the Chinese perspective to change from an enemy to a "partner" of China. Leadership forces active in foreign policy might have primarily built and nourished this development, which is alleging that the Soviet Union is harboring growing intentions of intervention and aggression vis-a-vis China.

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For that reasons, increasing anti-Sovietism is also directed against the forces, who are skeptical towards further rapprochement and collaboration of China with the main imperialist powers and are instead advocating a more pronounced leading role for China within the Third World and the national liberation movement. The massive anti-Soviet attacks in Zhou Enlai's report and the omission of the phrase "the revolutionary foreign policy line of Chairman Mao", which had mainly been used for the rapprochement with the imperialist powers, are creating the impression as if the Party Congress had not given its unrestricted approval to the actual foreign policy. At the same time, it must not at all be ignored that the anti-Soviet war hysteria is supposed to propagandistically prepare the ground for an accelerated political and economic cooperation of China with the United States, Japan, and other capitalist countries. □

Based on the "traditional logic" of Chinese emperors and politicians, which is assuming the existence of an external enemy to be vital to internal cohesion (and if such does not exist any more, it has to be created in Mao's opinion), this role [of external enemy] was assigned to the Soviet Union to the extent that the United States and Japan did advance to "partners" of China (see "About the X CCP Party Congress", "Pravda" of 16 October, "Neues Deutschland" of 18 October 1973^[6]).

□□□ The hyped threat of an alleged war by the Soviet Union against the PR China is apparently to be exploited for the resolution of several extremely complicated domestic political tasks within a short period of time. This does also apply to the accelerated speed of economic development of the country, as well as to the creation of a military-industrial foundation a decisive instrument towards fulfillment of the great-power chauvinist plans. The leadership had to realize that the gap between hegemonic ambitions and the insufficient material basis had not been reduced but even increased. Besides the great-power ambitions, the pace of development in industrial and agricultural production does not even match the objective needs of the country itself; the planned growth rates in all economic sectors do not correspond to the planned targets. Apparently the leadership is attempting to free itself from this complicated situation, among else also by massively focusing on the need for long-term preparation for war. It [leadership] is also demanding to adapt leadership and guidance principles as well as the economic tasks to this situation, respectively to subordinate it in order to achieve in shortest time more effective economic results. By way of anti-Soviet stimuli, primarily the labor intensity of the workers is supposed to be increased, in order to achieve this way, among else, higher production outputs.

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□□□ additional domestic political aspect of instigating a war psychosis against the

Soviet Union must be seen in the following: this way the incapacity and disinterest of the leadership to gradually improve the general living conditions of the people gets camouflaged and the discontent of the population about such is getting staved off.

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The construction of a colossal defense system in the form of underground air shelter facilities, where each citizen is required to participate, is supposed to imitate the acute character of an impending Soviet attack on China. This way in particular the "concept of an enemy" gets instilled in the masses of cadres and functionaries. It is to be redirected exclusively against the Soviet Union; and because of the profound turns of the foreign policy course this might cause real problems.

□□ After the fall of Lin Biao and the subsequent wave of purges in the Army leadership, a new trend has emerged in the relationship between the state apparatus and the Army. It is characterized by - as the Party Congress has explicitly stated - the emphasis on the absolute authority of the Party over, among else, the Army. A result of this development is the limitation of the role and influence of the Army, which it had enjoyed right after the end of the "Cultural Revolution" in the life of society overall. The X Party Congress has reaffirmed this process for the central leadership organs of the Party.

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There is an instrument to reduce the Army, i.e. the influential military leaders, to their original mission and to remove them gradually from responsible functions in the central, but primarily also all the provincial Party and the State apparatuses: apparently this instrument is anti-Sovietism, and the massive orientation towards the need to prepare for a scenario of war with the Soviet Union.

IV.

The policy practiced by the current Chinese leadership is demonstrating how anti-Sovietism has become a solid aspect of the struggle against the Soviet Union and the socialist community of states; how it has become a maxim for the foreign and domestic policy approach [of the Chinese leaders]. The principled and firm peace and detente policy of the Soviet Union emerges as the ever more obvious main obstacle for the implementation of the great-power chauvinist plans and intentions harbored by the Chinese leaders. As a consequence, one has to reckon with the foreign policy anti-Soviet escalation as a constant pattern. As the experiences of the years 1969 and 1970 are showing (resuming exchange of ambassadors, start of border negotiations, development of trade relations, et cetera), temporarily possible tactical turns (which can be, among else, caused by the process of further rapprochement with the United States) are not leading towards a change in the dominant anti-Soviet directions of the foreign policy of the current leadership of the PR China.

Background and reasons behind the renewed escalation of anti-Sovietism are making it clear, however, that the specific domestic political situation, the constellation of forces in the top leadership, and other factors resulting from that, are playing a highly significant role. Therefore, the power-political conflicts escalating since summer 1973 within the Chinese leadership - and whose results are not yet foreseeable -, might have a decisive impact on the further relationship of the PR China with the Soviet Union.

Signed [Bernd Kaufmann]
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1st Secretary

CC:

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[\[1\]](#) Held in Beijing between 24 and 28 August 1973.

[\[2\]](#) Given on 3 November 1967.

[\[3\]](#) 1918-1983. In 1973 Deputy Foreign Minister of the PRC.

[\[4\]](#) Held between 22 and 30 May 1972.

[\[5\]](#) Held between 18 and 25 June 1973.

[\[6\]](#) Official central party newspapers of the Soviet Union and the GDR.