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*Intelligence Note* - 665

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
DIRECTOR OF INTELLIGENCE AND RESEARCH

September 18, 1969

To : The Acting Secretary  
Through: S/S  
From : INR - George C. Denney, Jr. *h.c.D.L.*  
Subject: Communist China: War Fears and Domestic Politics

The recently published slogans for China's 20th anniversary celebrations on October 1 intensify the current stress on the danger of war, and warn explicitly of atomic war. This focus reflects increased leadership concern over the possibility of escalated military confrontation with the Soviets. Although the fear is genuine, its expression is also politically useful to justify measures designed to restore order, and enforce labor discipline after another violent summer. Peking's combined use of a war scare and military crackdown may temporarily ease mainland China's domestic malaise. But it does not attack the problems underlying disunity and indiscipline and will have little long range effect, unless there is indeed a war.

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Slogans Warn of Possible Atomic War. Four of the twenty-nine slogans stress the danger of war. Numbers 10 and 11 call generally for increased production and preparedness. Number 12 calls for readiness "at all times" to destroy "enemy intruders." Number 22 asks peoples of all countries to oppose "especially a war of aggression in which atom bombs are used as weapons" launched by the "imperialists" or the "social imperialists" i.e., the Soviets.

August 28 Crackdown Billed as War Preparations Measure. The regime's preoccupation with the Soviet danger and its exploitation of the theme for domestic purposes have been reflected most concretely in a major Central Committee Directive dated August 28 and reportedly signed by Mao, which

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urges the entire country to prepare for war "ideologically, materially, and physically." The directive authorizes troops to arrest "counterrevolutionaries" and travellers without proper identification and contains provisions for establishing a more accurate population register, for rigidly enforcing leave times, for speeding up construction, and for storing food.

Travellers report that the directive has been widely disseminated and discussed. The language apparently conveys such an air of concern that one traveller drew from it the implication that another major incident on the Sino-Soviet border would lead to a declaration of war.

Good Reason for a Crackdown. This past summer, like every other summer of the Cultural Revolution, was a violent one. Factional fighting reached the highest levels since the summer of 1968, with clashes reported in about a dozen provinces, including four through which a key rail line runs to central and western China. Robberies, murders, and gang fights were widespread, reflecting popular disrespect for local authority. Students sent to the countryside were returning illegally and with impunity. Labor indiscipline and unrest -- slowdowns, malingering and tardiness, and widespread demands for more pay -- were at high levels.

A Palliative Rather than a Cure. Given increasingly serious internal troubles, Peking had good reason to try to crack down, even without the threat of war. In the past, Peking has at different times both exploited the war danger to promote political unity and authorized the military to muzzle factional fighting with force. In the August directive, for the first time, preparedness for war and coercive measures were linked explicitly. Moreover,

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the coercive measures appear more detailed and systematic than previous ones.

Nevertheless, the current round of military coercion is no more likely to provide a lasting solution to domestic disorder than previous attempts, because the indecisive leadership in Peking remains unwilling or unable to force the settlement of the local power disputes responsible for most of the disorder, and promulgate practical policies that would alleviate discontent. Until there is unity of purpose in Peking -- and little short of a real war or a decisive change of leadership will create this -- Communist China will be plagued by recurring waves of domestic political turmoil,

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