

## Soviets set to gain from elimination of China Card

by Peter Ennis

The collapse of Henry Kissinger's decade-old "China Card" alliance between Washington and Peking has set the stage in Asia for a major shift in the relative strategic weight of the United States and the Soviet Union.

For the past 10 years U.S. policy in Asia has been based on allied efforts by Washington and Peking to forge a militant bloc of nations in the area against the Soviet Union. China's decision to abandon that policy, typified by ongoing Sino-Soviet reconciliation talks and Chinese attacks on the United States as an "imperialist" country, has exposed the United States as a proverbial "emperor with no clothes," since Washington has failed to formulate an alternative policy to the illusory "China Card" alliance.

Moscow, not failing to note that the United States and Western Europe have entered a severe depression under the direction of Milton Friedman and the International Monetary Fund, is now seeking a realignment of the Asian nations into a "zone of peace," through the creation of parallel long-term economic cooperation agreements between the Soviet Union and the three biggest Asian powers, India, Japan, and China. Such agreements would inevitably set the tone for political and economic relations in the entire area, including South Asia, Southeast Asia, and Korea, in effect creating a Soviet-influenced "zone" comprising two-thirds of the world's population. That zone would promote stability and development while economic and political dislocations continue to grow in the West.

Ironically, the break up of the Chinese-American alliance has created for the United States its best opportunity since the end of the Vietnam War to revitalize its ties with Asia. Most countries in the region were never happy with Washington's "China Card" policy, which they viewed as an effort

by Washington to promote their arch-rival China as a regional superpower while a weakening America withdrew.

Were Washington now to promote economic cooperation accords with the Asian countries as the basis for regional stability, American influence would rapidly rise. However, the Reagan administration has thus far shown no such inclination, having instead dispatched Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger to the region in mid-November to make tough speeches against the Soviet Union that reassured no one. The very existence of the Sino-Soviet talks alongside America's weakness has led many Asian countries traditionally friendly with the United States to consider if they have any option but to deal with "the new guy on the block."

### The trend reaffirmed

Events took place in both Moscow and Peking toward the end of November which should boost the shift. In Moscow, the new Soviet leader Yuri Andropov reaffirmed that Soviet policy is to seek a "zone of peace" in Asia, in a speech delivered to the Soviet Communist Party Central Committee. In Peking, changes in the important foreign and defense ministry posts strengthen the factions that support Chinese non-alignment in foreign policy while seeking some degree of reconciliation with the Soviet Union.

In his speech, Andropov stated that Moscow's policy will continue to be guided by the principles outlined by the late Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev in a March speech delivered at the Soviet Asian city of Tashkent. At that time Brezhnev presented a comprehensive Soviet policy toward Asia, and made new overtures to improve relations with both Japan and China, suggesting that the cooperation between Moscow and India become the model for ties with those countries.

Referring to China, Andropov spoke of "the ideas formulated by Leonid Ilyich Brezhnev in his speeches in Tashkent and Baku, the emphasis he put on common sense, on the need to overcome the inertia of prejudices, to look ahead. We pay great attention to every positive response to this from the Chinese side." Andropov also pointedly addressed Soviet relations with India, as the best example of Soviet ties to "the group of states that created the Non-Aligned movement."

In China, Foreign Minister Huang Hua, a protégé of the late Premier Chou En-lai who has long been associated with China's opening to Henry Kissinger and the West, was replaced by Wu Xueqian. Wu has often represented China in dealings with developing countries, a background which serves to facilitate China's stated goal of expanding such relations. Wu also spent much of the 1950s and 1960s with the youth wing of the Chinese Communist Party, and then with the CCP International Liaison Department, during which times he had extensive ties with the Soviet and East European communist parties. One expert has noted that Wu embodies the Chinese foreign policy of the late 1950s, when Peking professed support for the newly formed Non-Aligned movement, while maintaining ties with Moscow.

The second Chinese leadership change was at the Defense Ministry, where Zhang Aiping replaced Geng Biao, a compromise choice for the defense post in 1981. The Army did not like Geng. Zhang, on the other hand, is allied with factions in the army opposed to China's embattled top leader Deng Xiaoping, and he is a big supporter of modern technology and heavy industry. Zhang's most recent post was chief of the military's science and technology committee, from which he helped develop China's submarine-based nuclear missile capability. The political and military factions in China which favor high technology and heavy-industry development stand in opposition to Deng Xiaoping's proposed "Hong Kong model" economic policies, and are believed to be the Chinese leaders that most favor relaxation of relations with the Soviet Union.

### Regional tensions still high

China's new foreign policy stance has been the factor opening the way for a realignment in Asia, since it removed the decade-old pressure of Washington and Peking for each country there to "declare their allegiances" and adopt a pro-China and anti-Soviet stand. For the Chinese, the economic weakness of the United States was a weighty consideration in their decision to adopt a new non-aligned stance and abandon the alliance with Washington. In Peking's view, a weak United States is useless to China; it can't deliver the products China requires for its modernization, and it does not measure up as a suitable adversary to the Soviet Union in China's scheme to set "the two tigers" to fight while the Peking leadership watches from the "mountaintop." Chinese acceptance of a "zone of peace" in Asia in the midst of a world depression is fully in line with the traditional "Middle Kingdom" chauvinism which dictates that other countries come

and go but China always remains.

That said, it does not follow that a "zone of peace" will emerge in the very near future. Border conflicts, age-old ethnic and national animosities, and other regional factors that became embroiled in the Sino-Soviet conflict remain to be settled.

Overall, the Sino-Soviet reconciliation efforts are thought to be focusing on three main areas, all of which Peking is said to be insistent upon discussing: Soviet troop presence in Afghanistan, Vietnamese troops in Cambodia, and Soviet troop deployments on the Chinese border.

Diplomatic activity on the Afghan question is now intensive, including discussions under the auspices of the United Nations, a discussion held in Moscow two weeks ago between Pakistan's Zia and Soviet leader Andropov, and a rumored meeting in Moscow (denied by Zia) between Zia and Afghanistan President Babrak Karmal. Last week, Soviet Communist Party daily editor Viktor Afanasyev told Japanese journalists that the Soviet Union intends to eventually withdraw its troops from Afghanistan, that Moscow wants to see a non-aligned Afghanistan, and that a "senior Soviet official" is now negotiating with all the parties involved.

Diplomatic activity aside, many long-time observers of the Afghanistan region believe that the Soviets have no intention of withdrawing in the near future. Diplomatic sources close to the Soviet Union report that Moscow has argued to Peking that Afghanistan is a security issue for the Soviet Union because of the proximity of the two countries, and that because of this the Chinese should cut off military aid to the rebels opposing the Kabul government. The sources say that Moscow has offered in return to lower its troop deployments on the Chinese border, since Peking views those deployments as a security issue for China.

*Pravda's* Afanasyev said that "it is possible that the two sides might promise each other a reduction of military forces in border areas." Japan's JJI wire service recently quoted Japanese Foreign Ministry sources as saying the Soviets had already significantly reduced troop deployments on the Chinese border as a unilateral gesture to Peking.

Cambodia is likely to be the most intractable of the four issues raised by Peking. Chinese sources have told *EIR* that Peking is maintaining full support for the rebel forces of genocidalist Pol Pot, who is trying to overthrow the Vietnamese-backed government of Heng Samrin in Cambodia. Vietnam insists that China will never withdraw support for Pol Pot because that would signal defeat for China's age-old imperial goal of dominating Southeast Asia. However, other diplomatic sources report that this attitude could soon cause trouble for China, because the trend in Southeast Asia is to negotiate a settlement of the Cambodia controversy. One source says that leaders in Southeast Asia are thinking of splitting the coalition of rebels opposing the Heng Samrin government, in this fashion isolating Chinese puppet Pol Pot while promoting talks between the Heng Samrin government and Prince Sihanouk.