

THE FAR EAST

KOREAN WAR: Bacterial Warfare

The volume, substance, and bearing of Moscow's comment on bacterial warfare seem more related to long-range and global propaganda targets than to a campaign identified with the Korean War as such. This is also suggested by the reluctance to associate the negotiations with the charges, by comparisons between the pattern of the current BW campaign and previous atrocity campaigns, and by the tremendous and unusual stress in Soviet home media.

The tremendous stress on the charges in the Soviet press and in radio propaganda directed to the home and regional audiences is in direct contrast to Moscow's past avoidance of the Korean War in home media. This strongly suggests that the current campaign is primarily designed as a further intensification of the "Hate-America" theme rather than as a precursor of things to come at Panmunjon.

Volume of Charges: The volume, intensity and sustained nature of Soviet propaganda on alleged American use of bacterial war in Korea is unprecedented in previous propaganda on the Korean War and ranks with the attention devoted to such top propaganda campaigns as the formation of the East German and Chinese "democracies" and the Prague communique on German remilitarization. There have been some 347 broadcasts on the charges since they were introduced in late February, and 263 have occurred in the current SURVEY period. Moreover, the volume of newscasts to the Soviet home audience on bacterial war exceeds the volume on any non-Soviet event in the past year.* In the second week, the total number of news items exceeded both attention to May Day and the October Revolution. The event has been surpassed in total number of news items only by the recent celebration of Soviet Armed Forces Day.

Principal Themes: The principal themes of the bacterial war propaganda are:

1. It is a violation of international law and morality, and the American perpetrators are "war criminals."
2. The United States is like Nazi Germany and fascist Japan, but "not even" Hitler's Germany dared to use this barbaric weapon.
3. The current use of bacterial warfare increases the possibility that atomic and chemical weapons will be used in the future.
4. The use of BW was willfully premeditated and carefully planned.

Most of these themes lend themselves more readily to long-range "Hate-America" propaganda than to direct preparation for an immediate resumption of hostilities or to direct pressure on the negotiations. Furthermore, there is no attempt to associate the negotiations with the charges. It appears that the war merely offers the most convenient background for these charges.

* These news shows are widely relayed by Soviet regional stations. Several news shows originated by these regional stations have devoted their entire foreign news coverage to the BW charges.

The Propaganda Goal: Several elements in the propaganda strongly suggest the possibility that Moscow's propaganda campaign is directed toward worldwide and long-range targets and not toward a resumption of hostilities or changes in the situation at Panmunjom.

- a. The American decision to use bacterial weapons at this time is said to have been motivated by military weakness. Previous emphasis in Korean War comment has been on American aggressiveness, and weakness propaganda has never been employed to any great extent, even during the course of actual hostilities. It seems doubtful that Moscow and Peking would want to picture a weak enemy if they wanted a pretext for resuming hostilities.
- b. The calls for action are to "public opinion" which must rise up against the crime. There are no calls to the Koreans to oust the "criminals" from their territory, nor are there calls for any specific type of retaliation.
- c. The charges are not explicitly related to the negotiations. There are only generalized charges of insincerity, and these have characterized Moscow propaganda ever since the negotiations began. (It is at least interesting in this connection that the bacterial-war charges have not even been mentioned by the Koreans and Chinese at Panmunjom.)
- d. The spread of the bacterial war to China is mentioned but not singled out or unduly emphasized. It is pictured as a phase of the whole atrocity campaign and not as a new and more threatening act of aggression.

The suggested possibility that the campaign is an attempt to provide a justification for raging epidemics in Korea does not seem to explain the tremendous scale on which Moscow is exploiting the charges to a world audience. Moreover, there are few mentions of actual epidemics.

Past Precedent Last May: It also seems significant that the only previous peak in atrocity propaganda on the Korean War occurred in the month prior to Malik's 23 June truce bid. One possible reason for the timing of the atrocity campaign could have been a desire to build up a propaganda background for a virulent and effective "Hate-America" campaign once a truce was achieved. The present emphasis on American "war criminality," the attempt to link the United States more closely with the Nazis and Japanese, and to link bacterial war with the atom could also serve post-truce purposes; they establish a framework for further identifying the U.S. as the chief threat to world peace and for "popular" demands for the trial of the "war criminals."

The foundation laid last May and now apparently being laid again could also be a Soviet method of maintaining tension and off-setting a possible "back to normal" attitude on the part of the Soviet and Chinese peoples should a truce be achieved. (The Free Greece Radio also charged Greek Government forces with using bacterial weapons just before the end of hostilities in 1949.)

Soviet Involvement: The possibility that the present charges are more closely related to the long-range goal of whipping up anti-American sentiments rather than to the Korean War is also suggested by the unprecedented degree of Soviet involvement in the protest movement. The Moscow protest meeting of 13 March receives voluminous publicity both at home and abroad, and protest meetings continue to be held in cities and factories throughout the country. The only protest meetings inside the USSR since the war occurred during the Greek civil war and at the outset of the Korean War; the Soviets have consistently avoided such "personal protest" propaganda and similar "protest meetings" even in incidents which involved hostile foreign actions against the USSR itself. (A Soviet war veteran accused the Americans of "unheard-of cheek" when a Liberator bomber violated the Latvian frontier in April 1950, but this was one of the rare instances when a Soviet citizen was pictured as protesting an action in the outside world. Moreover, there were no protest meetings against the six-odd Western "violations" of Soviet territory in the past three years.)

This self-involvement propaganda takes on more significance from the fact that Moscow has scrupulously maintained a noncommittal attitude by not initiating any large-scale or direct comment on the war. This precedent was shattered when all the big propaganda guns--RED STAR, LITERARY GAZETTE, NEW TIMES, PRAVDA and IZVESTIA--opened up last week.