

Merry-Go-Round

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# CIA Eavesdropping On Red Leaders



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THE Central Intelligence Agency has been eavesdropping, incredibly, on the most private conversations of Kremlin and other world leaders.

For obvious security reasons, we can't give a clue as to how it's done. But we can state categorically that for years, the CIA has been able to listen to the kingpins of the Kremlin banter, bicker and backbite among themselves.

A competent source, with access to the transcripts of the private Kremlin conversations, tells us that the Soviet leaders gossip about one another and complain about their ailments like old maids.

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IT IS EVIDENT from the conversations that Leonid Brezhnev, the party chief, sometimes drinks too much vodka and suffers from hangovers. Premier Alexei Kosygin, however, is in poor health and his complaints are more authentic.

One of their favorite pastimes is visiting a private clinic to get their aches soothed. Like fat capitalists at the end of a hard day in their plush suites, the Kremlin chiefs stop by for steam baths, rubdowns and other physical therapy.

Brezhnev, in a typical conversation, might grump about his back pains and announce he's going to have Olga give him a massage. "Olga! Oh ho!" President Nikolai Podgorny might chortle, as if he is quite familiar with the masseuse.

Like the Kremlin crowd, the Red

Chinese leaders are far less forbidding in private than they appear to the world. The mighty Mao Tse-tung, his appointed successor Lin Piao and Premier Chou En-lai are tired, old revolutionaries slowed down by the ravages of age.

Mao shares Brezhnev's taste for good food, strong drink and a woman's touch. But he is less grumpy and grim than the Soviet leader. There's an avuncular affability about Mao, and he has an infectious laugh.

But at 77, he walks slowly, though erectly, with his left arm dangling strangely. The CIA concluded from a careful study of film shots that Mao's eyes are dim from age. He seems unable to recognize old comrades until they are face to face.

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THE CIA has also caught the old fox using a ringer to stand in for him at long, dreary public parades. But it was the real Mao who made that publicized plunge in the Yangtze a couple of years ago. The picture of his moon face bobbing above the waves was carefully scrutinized by the CIA, which concluded after measuring his ears and other facial features that the swimmer was no double.

Pictures of world leaders routinely are blown up and studied by CIA doctors for clues to their health. Their behavior is also analyzed by CIA psychiatrists and psychologists.