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# The Quarrelling Brothers: New Chinese Archives and a Reappraisal of the Sino-Soviet Split, 1959-1962

By Dong Wang



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The Quarrelling Brothers: New Chinese Archives and a Reappraisal  
of the Sino-Soviet Split, 1959-1962

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## **Abstract**

Relying on newly available Chinese archival documentation, this paper challenges the conventional wisdom about the Sino-Soviet split, arguing that the conventional wisdom has underestimated China's strategic need to minimize the rift with the Soviet Union, thus misplacing the timing and origins of the split. The paper demonstrates that at least up to early 1961, Chinese leaders had repeatedly intended to repair their relationship with the Soviet Union. Contrary to the conventional argument about Mao being dogmatic and provocative in pushing Sino-Soviet relations into a downward spiral, this paper, with the help of new Chinese evidence, provides a different perspective, one which suggests that Mao and his comrades tend to be more rational and realistic than we might have thought, and far more reluctant to break with Moscow than people usually believe. It is of course not for purely ideological reasons that Beijing ardently attempted to avoid a rupture with Moscow. Rather, the new evidence shows that the Chinese leadership understood that a rupture in Sino-Soviet relations would impair China's strategic and security interests and would benefit only the United States.

The spectacular and bitter divorce between the communist brothers, China and the Soviet Union, which began with open polemics and ended in a border war, remains one of the most significant and puzzling events in the history of the Cold War. Generations of scholars have debated the origins, nature, and consequences of the Sino-Soviet split, and despite the complexity of the issue, have reached a consensus on many aspects of the Sino-Soviet split. New Chinese archival evidence that this author recently examined during field trips to the Jiangsu Provincial Archives (JPA),<sup>1</sup> together with primary sources recently published in China, prompts a reconsideration of many of the conclusions concerning the split between the two communist giants.

The conventional wisdom holds that China and the Soviet Union broke up after 1959, with their relationship becoming increasingly acrimonious in the years that followed.<sup>2</sup> Albeit with slight differences regarding the exact timing of the break, students of Sino-Soviet relations tend to agree that by 1959 – 1960 Beijing and Moscow were on an irreversible collision course. William E. Griffith argues that the radical worsening of Sino-Soviet relations began in the spring of 1958, and that the “point of no return” occurred at the latest in the summer of 1959;<sup>3</sup> while a new generation of Cold War scholars agrees that the process of breakdown became “irredeemable” around 1960.<sup>4</sup> New Chinese evidence shows, however, that Chinese leaders, at least until early 1961, placed high hopes on Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev and intended to repair their relationship

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<sup>1</sup> The author took two trips to the JPA in the summer of 2004. See Appendix I for a detailed description of the JPA collections of materials related to Chinese foreign policy.

<sup>2</sup> The notion that after 1959 China and the Soviet Union were on a collision course is widely shared in the literature. See William E. Griffith, *The Sino-Soviet Rift* (Cambridge, M.A.: The M.I.T. Press, 1964); Donald S. Zagoria, *The Sino-Soviet Conflict, 1956-1961* (New York: Atheneum, 1969); Vladislav Zubok and Constantine Pleshakov, *Inside the Kremlin's Cold War: From Stalin to Khrushchev* (Cambridge, M.A.: Harvard University Press, 1996); Chen Jian, *Mao's China and the Cold War* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 2001).

<sup>3</sup> Griffith, *The Sino-Soviet Rift*, p. 18.

<sup>4</sup> A group of leading scholars of the Cold War history from the United States, Russia, and China recently made this contention in an edited volume. See Odd Arne Westad ed., *Brothers in Arms: The Rise and Fall of the Sino-Soviet Alliance, 1945-1963* (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 1998), p. 3.



with the Soviet Union. It was not until October 1961, when Moscow held its 22<sup>nd</sup> Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), that the Chinese lost all confidence in Khrushchev. Shortly thereafter, Beijing became pessimistic about improving relations with Moscow.

It has often been argued that Mao Zedong, the confrontational, challenge-oriented Chinese leader, consistently challenged Moscow and pushed Sino-Soviet relations to their limits,<sup>5</sup> in order to contend for power and authority in the international communist movement, consolidate his domestic political position, or advance his agenda of “continuous revolution.” New Chinese evidence, however, shows that Chinese leaders, Mao included, were far more reluctant to break with Moscow than usually assumed. Scholars tend to criticize Chinese leaders, especially Mao, for being dogmatic and provocative in pushing Sino-Soviet relations into a downward spiral. New Chinese evidence provides a different perspective, one which suggests that Mao and his comrades tended to be more rational and realistic than previously assumed, as they were very much inclined to avoid an open split with the Soviet Union. It was of course not for purely ideological reasons that Beijing ardently attempted to avoid a rupture with Moscow. Rather, the new evidence shows that the Chinese leadership understood that a rupture in Sino-Soviet relations would benefit only the West.

Deteriorating relations between Beijing and Moscow were also characterized by a partial detente in a cyclical course of escalation, which the literature holds was merely a

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<sup>5</sup> For the argument that China constantly challenged the Soviet leadership in the international communist movement, see Griffith, *The Sino-Soviet Rift*, p. 23; Franz Michael, “Common Purpose and Double Strategy,” in Clement J. Zablocki ed., *Sino-Soviet Rivalry: Implications for US Policy* (New York: Praeger, 1966), pp. 15-25; Zagoria, *The Sino-Soviet Conflict*, pp. 21-22; Zubok and Pleshakov, *Inside the Kremlin's Cold War*, esp. chapter 7, pp. 210-235. For the argument that Mao instigated disputes with Moscow for the purpose of striking down dissents at home and bolstering domestic support, see Westad ed., *Brothers in Arms*, pp. 24-27, and Lorenz Luthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split* (forthcoming). For the argument that Mao purposely wrecked the Sino-Soviet relationship in order to carry his continuous revolution, see Chen Jian, *Mao's China and the Cold War*, esp. chapter 3, pp. 64-84.

“tactical maneuver” intended by each party to worsen its rival’s position and to woo support within the socialist camp.<sup>6</sup> Vladislav M. Zubok even argues that Mao from time to time appealed to détente with the aim of placing the blame for a split on the Soviets.<sup>7</sup> Newly uncovered primary evidence, however, suggests that Chinese moves toward détente were more than tactical. The new evidence shows that Chinese leaders understood that an improvement in the Sino-Soviet relationship would greatly enhance China’s strategic position vis-à-vis the United States and reduce the American threat to China’s security.

The new Chinese evidence thus enables us to take a new look at the Sino-Soviet split and reexamine much of the conventional wisdom. This paper argues that the consensus opinion about the Sino-Soviet split has discounted the genuine strategic needs that led Beijing to rein in the drift toward schism. It holds that the United States was a crucial factor in China’s strategic calculation regarding “consolidating Sino-Soviet unity.” New Chinese evidence shows that Beijing was keenly aware of the American strategy to sow discord between China and the Soviet Union.<sup>8</sup> This knowledge had a far-reaching impact on Chinese strategic calculations regarding the Soviet Union in the early 1960s. Chinese leaders keenly understood that by quarrelling, the brothers could only weaken their strategic position vis-à-vis the United States.

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<sup>6</sup> William E. Griffith, *Sino-Soviet Relations, 1964-1965*. (Cambridge, MA: The M.I.T. Press, 1967), p. 1.

<sup>7</sup> Vladislav M. Zubok, “The Mao-Khrushchev Conversations, 31 July-3 August 1958 and 2 October 1959,” *Cold War International History Project (CWIHP) Bulletin*, Issues 12/13, Fall/Winter, 2001, p. 248.

<sup>8</sup> It is argued that the United States, since the time of Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, had come to grasp the significance of the differences between China and the Soviet Union, and intentionally devised a “wedge strategy” to exploit these differences. John Lewis Gaddis, *The Long Peace: Inquiries into the History of the Cold War* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), esp. chapter 6, pp. 147-194.

## **“To Have the Soviet Union as the Head”: Preserving the Leadership of the Soviet Union in the Socialist Camp**

The idea that Beijing had repeatedly challenged Soviet leadership in the worldwide communist movement since 1956 is so prevalent that it is seldom recognized that China once took great pains to support the Soviet leadership, even as late as early 1959.<sup>9</sup> Chinese archives allow us to put this “missing piece” back into the picture and help us arrive at a more accurate understanding of what exactly occurred. New Chinese evidence contradicts the conventional wisdom that Mao and Khrushchev were on a collision course by early 1959.<sup>10</sup>

On 26 January 1959, Chinese Deputy Premier and Foreign Minister Chen Yi, who was also director of the Foreign Affairs Group of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party (CC CCP) (*Zhonggong zhongyang waishi xiaozu*), the primary party agency designing and implementing foreign policy,<sup>11</sup> sent the Central Committee for review a draft report concerning the basic assessment of foreign affairs work in 1958 and guidelines for foreign affairs work in 1959. Chairman Mao Zedong read the draft, made a few revisions, and sent it back to Premier Zhou Enlai and Foreign Minister Chen Yi on 13 February. He thus endorsed the report, which was then transmitted to high-level party and government officials for discussion and implementation.<sup>12</sup> The document, which was

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<sup>9</sup> This notion is prevalent in the literature, see Griffith, *The Sino-Soviet Rift*, p. 23; Franz Michael, “Common Purpose and Double Strategy,” pp. 15-25; Zagoria, *The Sino-Soviet Conflict*, pp. 21-22; Zubok and Pleshakov, *Inside the Kremlin’s Cold War*, esp. chapter 7, pp. 210-235.

<sup>10</sup> Zagoria, *ibid.*, p. 236; Zubok and Pleshakov, *ibid.*, p. 229; Chen Jian, *Mao’s China and the Cold War*, p. 78.

<sup>11</sup> The Central Foreign Affairs Group (CFAG) (*zhongyang waishi xiaozu*) was established in 1958. As a major advising agency for the CC CCP on foreign affairs, the CFAG, together with the State Council Foreign Affairs Office, plays a pivotal role in the making, coordination, and implementation of Chinese foreign policy. It administers several ministerial departments, including the International Department, the Intelligence Department, the Investigation Department, the Committee on Foreign Cultural Affairs, the Ministry of Foreign Economy and Trade, the Committee on Overseas Chinese Affairs, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

<sup>12</sup> “Dui zhongyang waishi xiaozu wenjian he zhongyang zhuanfa zheyi wenjian de zhishigao de piyu he xiugai” (Comments on and Revisions to the Central Committee Foreign Affairs Group Document and the Center’s Draft

prepared by the Central Foreign Affairs Group (CFAG) and approved by the highest level of the party leadership, reflected the Chinese leadership's view of the international situation, especially Sino-Soviet relations at the turn of 1959.

The document noted that the increasing strength of the socialist camp headed by the Soviet Union was “the determining factor in the development of the international situation in the past year.”<sup>13</sup> It then argued that the Soviet Union's economic and scientific development, such as the launching of Sputnik, “must greatly strengthen the power of the socialist camp and galvanize the will of people all over the world for the struggle against imperialism.”<sup>14</sup> The report warned that “imperialism, counter-revolutionaries, and revisionists will not let go of any opportunity to use some internal weaknesses of socialist countries to carry out sabotage and instigation.”<sup>15</sup> It saw the acute possibility of American moves to “entice” the Soviet Union, predicting that “the United States will do its utmost to disguise itself as a peace-lover and take a certain posture of detente with the Soviet Union with regard to some international issues... Meanwhile, the United States will amass forces to attack China, ‘isolate China,’ and spare no effort to undermine the unity between socialist countries, especially between China and the Soviet Union.”<sup>16</sup>

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Instructions for the Transmission of the Document), 13 February 1959, *Jiangguo yilai Mao Zegong wengao* (JMZW) (Mao Zedong's Manuscripts since the Founding of the People's Republic of China) (Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian, 1993), vol. 8, pp. 38-40. JMZW published five sections of the document to which Mao has made several revisions. The author found a complete version of this document in the Jiangsu Provincial Archives (JPA).

<sup>13</sup> Item No. 3 “*Zhonggong zhongyang wenjian: Zhongyang waishi xiaozu guanyu yijiuwuba nian waishi gongzuo de jiben guji he yijiuwujiu nian waishigongzuo de fangzheng guihua*” (The CC CCP Document: the Central Foreign Affairs Group's Basic Assessment of the Foreign Affairs Work in 1958 and the Planning of the Guidelines for Foreign Affairs Work in 1959), *Juanhao* (Series No.) 87, *Zhonggong zhongyang guowuyuan guanyu di'erci quanguo waishi gongzuo huiyi wenjian* (the CC CCP and State Council Documents Concerning the Second National Foreign Affairs Working Conference), January-July, 1959, *Quanzong hao* (Collection no.) 3124, *Quanzong mingcheng* (Collection name): *Sheng waishi bangongshi* (Provincial Foreign Affairs Office), JPA, Nanjing, China.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

The document shows that Chinese leaders at the turn of 1959 still firmly believed that the world was trapped in a Cold War between two camps, and that the United States was the greatest threat to both the socialist camp in general and China in particular. In the aftermath of Sino-American confrontations over Taiwan straits in the summer of 1958, the report argued that “in light of conditions from all aspects, the United States for the time being does not dare to launch a world war, which, however, does not preclude the danger that some warmongers, like a desperate dog who tries to jump over the wall, will provoke a world war or a regional war.”<sup>17</sup> The report elucidated the following guidelines for China’s foreign policy in 1959: to “rely upon the solidarity and unity of the socialist camp headed by the Soviet Union” and “further discredit the United States, and isolate the United States.” It stated that:

China “must continue to strengthen political unity and cooperation concerning economic, technological and cultural aspects with the Soviet Union and other socialist countries; must in all aspects defer to and give consideration to (*zunzhong he zhaogu*) the leading status of the Soviet Union in the socialist camp, vigorously support correct, important measures concerning internal or foreign affairs by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CC CPSU) headed by Comrade Khrushchev, and further strengthen the mutual support and intimate coordination in international struggles between our country and socialist countries, especially the Soviet Union; must be vigilant against the deliberate plots of imperialists and revisionists to sabotage the unity between socialist countries, especially between China and the Soviet Union, and leave no crack [for them] to squeeze through.”<sup>18</sup>

Such emphasis on Sino-Soviet unity clearly went beyond simple rhetoric. Indeed, it reveals important strategic calculations. Chinese leaders not only firmly believed in a world divided into two camps, but also apparently believed that Sino-Soviet unity would improve China’s strategic position and security interests. In view of the Sino-American

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

confrontation over Taiwan in 1958, the CFAG's report twice mentioned the danger of "imperialist war mongers" (namely the United States) provoking a world war or a regional war. Moreover, Chinese leaders feared that US strategy was to create "two Chinas" and to occupy Taiwan permanently. Deputy Foreign Minister Luo Guibo concluded in an internal talk on 4 March 1959 that "the goal of the United States is to attempt to seize possession of Taiwan permanently."<sup>19</sup> Both Luo's talk and the CFAG report recognized the United States as the primary enemy of China. Chen Yi also argued at an internal meeting that the US was China's "foremost and also last enemy."<sup>20</sup> Such a belief was not merely based on the ideological consideration that the United States was "the head of imperialism." Equally, if not more important, was that Beijing saw American designs regarding Taiwan as being hostile and threatening to Chinese strategic and security interests. It believed, as Luo's words bluntly put it, that the United States sought to separate Taiwan—where ruler Generalissimo Jiang Jieshi (Chiang Kai-shek) had been clamoring for "recovering the mainland" and overthrowing the communist regime in Beijing—from the mainland permanently by promoting a so-called two Chinas plot.

In such a strategic situation, Sino-Soviet unity would have greatly improved China's strategic position. Luo Guibo acknowledged in his talk that "the active support of and coordination in our diplomacy by the Soviet Union and other fraternal countries is also an important factor to the victory of our diplomacy."<sup>21</sup> Recent sources and studies also show that the Soviet Union was more active and enthusiastic in supporting Chinese military operations against the offshore islands of Jinmen (Quemoy) and Mazu (Matsu),

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<sup>19</sup> "Luo Guibo fubuzhang zai di'erci waishi gongzuo huiyi shang de fayan" (Deputy Minister Luo Guibo's Talk at the Second Foreign Affairs Working Meeting), 4 March 1959, *ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> "Chen Yi fuzhongli zai di'erci quanguo waishi gongzuo huiyi shang de baogao (jilu gao)" (Vice Premier Chen Yi's Report at the Second National Foreign Affairs Working Meeting (Recorded Copy)), 7 March 1959, *ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> "Luo Guibo fubuzhang zai di'erci waishi gongzuo huiyi shang de fayan", 4 March 1959, *ibid.*

strongholds of Guomindang (KMT) armies, during the second Taiwan Strait Crisis in the fall of 1958.<sup>22</sup> In the first few weeks of August, the Soviet Union promised a series of transfers of military equipment to China, including long-range artillery, amphibious equipment, air-to-air missiles, and combat aircraft, together with Soviet military advisers, in hopes of aiding China's upcoming operations against the Jiang Jieshi regime.<sup>23</sup> In early September 1958, Khrushchev received Chinese Ambassador to the Soviet Union Liu Xiao in the Crimea and offered Soviet assistance to strengthen Chinese air forces in the Taiwan Strait so that American and Nationalist naval forces might be deterred.<sup>24</sup>

Recently published Chinese sources reveal that Chinese leaders went to great lengths to preserve the status of the Soviet Union as the leader of the socialist camp. In January 1959 Khrushchev informed the Chinese leadership of his decision to announce at the coming 21<sup>st</sup> Congress of the CPSU that the Soviet Union would no longer be the head of the socialist camp and that the CPSU would cease to be the center of the international communist movement. The CCP quickly sent Zhou Enlai to Moscow to dissuade Khrushchev from doing so.<sup>25</sup>

In his first meeting with Mikhail Suslov, a senior member of the Politburo of the CC CPSU, Zhou conveyed the view of the Chinese leadership that “under current conditions, it is inappropriate to revoke the formulations (*tifa*) of having the Soviet Union

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<sup>22</sup> The earlier literature takes the view that Khrushchev withheld military support from China in the summer of 1958 because he worried that Mao might draw the Soviet Union into a nuclear war with the United States. Recent research, however, reveals that Khrushchev was actually supportive of Beijing's brinkmanship strategy. See Zagoria, *The Sino-Soviet Conflict*, p. 217; Zubok and Pleshakov, *Inside the Kremlin's Cold War*, pp. 226-227.

<sup>23</sup> Mark Kramer, “The USSR Foreign Ministry's Appraisal of Sino-Soviet Relations on the Eve of the Split, September 1959,” *CWIHP Bulletin*, Issues 6-7, Winter 1995/1996, pp. 170-185.

<sup>24</sup> Khrushchev's offer, however, was politely declined by Mao in a reply to Khrushchev ten days later, presumably due to Mao's sensitivity to the penetration of Soviet influence into Chinese military. Liu Xiao, *Chushi sulian banian* (Eight Years of Diplomatic Mission to the Soviet Union) (Beijing: Zhonggong dangshi, 1998), pp. 74-78.

<sup>25</sup> The Institute of Documentary Research of the CC CCP ed., *Zhou Enlai nianpu, 1949-1976* (A Chronological Record of Zhou Enlai's Life, 1949-1976) (Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian, 1997), vol. 2, p. 203.

as the head and having the CPSU as the center. We do not favor [it]. The Moscow Declarations are correct, and should be adhered to continuously.”<sup>26</sup> Zhou made the concerns of Chinese leaders evident in his conversation. “This weapon,” Zhou said, referring to having the Soviet Union as the head, “cannot be revoked, otherwise it would be equivalent to handing over the knife to the enemy and letting him play against us.”<sup>27</sup> In his meeting with Khrushchev on January 25, Zhou again indicated that given the existence of the two camps, the Soviet Union should be the core and leader of the socialist camp.<sup>28</sup> Khrushchev accepted Zhou’s opinion and dropped the initiative.

In his speech delivered at the 21<sup>st</sup> Congress of the CPSU on January 28, Zhou warned against the danger of war initiated by imperialism and stated that a strong socialist camp and Sino-Soviet unity would serve as a good deterrent to the “war plot of imperialism.” Rhetoric aside, Zhou’s speech made clear that Chinese leaders believed the unity between China and the Soviet Union should be preserved: “Under the condition of the existence of a strong socialist camp in the contemporary world, all the peace-loving nations and peoples across the world are united to carry on struggles, and the war scheme of imperialism can be stopped.” Zhou went on to warn, “Of course we cannot forget that imperialist warmongers, in order to salvage their failures, might very well, as a desperate

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<sup>26</sup> In November 1957, Mao led a delegation to attend a communist parties and workers’ parties conference in Moscow at which Mao put forth the famous proclamation that “the east wind has prevailed over the west wind,” meaning the socialist forces have outweighed the imperialist forces. The conference concluded with the Moscow Declarations, which stressed the unity of the socialist camp and declared “the imperialist aggression groups of the United States is the center of the reactionary forces around the world.” Mao considered the Moscow Declarations to be in accordance with Marxism and Leninism. Wu Lengxi, former chief editor of *the People’s Daily* and head of the Xinhua News Agency, who was a close adviser to Mao and frequent attendant of the Politburo meetings, gave a lively account of the 1957 Moscow conference in his memoirs. Li Yueran, Mao’s top Russian interpreter also recorded the behind-the-scenes stories in his memoirs. Another brief but informative account can be found in the memoirs of Liu Xiao, who served Chinese ambassador to Moscow from 1955 to 1962. See Wu Lengxi, *Shinian lunzhan—1956-1966 zhongsu guanxi huiyilu* (A Decade of Polemics—Memoirs of Sino-Soviet Relations, 1956-1966) (Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian, 1999), pp. 92-155; Li Yueran, *Zhongsu waijiao qinliji—Li Yueran huiyilu* (A Record of the Personal Experiences of the Sino-Soviet Diplomacy—Memoirs of Li Yueran) (Beijing: Shijie zhishi, 2001), pp. 148-179; Liu Xiao, *Chushi sulian banian*, pp. 65-73.

<sup>27</sup> Zhou Enlai nianpu, vol. 2, p. 203.

<sup>28</sup> Liu Xiao, *Chushi sulian banian*, pp. 93-94.



dog tries to jump over the wall, resort to war. We must never relax vigilance on this point...Our two nations, China and the Soviet Union, all of our socialist countries, must stand united forever, and march on the broad way toward communism with heroic strides.”<sup>29</sup>

### **“To Correct Phenomena of Arrogance in Foreign Relations”: Smothering Dissenting Views of Sino-Soviet Relations at Home**

The Chinese leadership’s belief in the importance of Sino-Soviet unity was also manifested in careful management of the domestic feelings of buoyancy and superiority elicited by the Great Leap Forward.

The Chinese embassy in Moscow sent the Foreign Ministry a report on 13 January 1959 concerning Sino-Soviet relations, which pointed out that “recently some of our comrades during contacts with the outside were not modest enough in their manner of speech and behavior, communicating the view that the Soviet Union did not have as effective measures as we did and there was nothing we could learn from it. [They] inappropriately emphasized the achievements of our nation, and even exaggerated the pace of development of our nation...Some even took an arrogant attitude only to embarrass the Soviet side.”<sup>30</sup> The report asserted,

“We consider that it is certain that the attitudes and policy of the Soviet Union are in complete accord with our nation on the fundamental direction and many important issues, and that it is natural that some differences might emerge over the attitudes and practices on individual issues. If we do not handle that well, it might easily cause misunderstandings with Soviet comrades and will also be used by the enemies in the international arena to conduct propaganda that foments

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<sup>29</sup> *Zhou Enlai nianpu*, vol. 2, pp. 204-205.

<sup>30</sup> “Dui zhusu shiguan guanyu zhongsu guanxi zhong yixie wenti de chuli yijian de piyu” (Comments on the Opinions of the Embassy to the Soviet Union Concerning the Handling of Some Issues in the Sino-Soviet Relationship), 15 January 1959, JMZW, vol. 8, pp. 5-6, note 2.

disunity and dissension.”<sup>31</sup>

In order to prevent and dispel the negative impact on Sino-Soviet relations, the report proposed that the composition of the CCP’s delegation to the upcoming 21<sup>st</sup> Congress of the CPSU “should sufficiently demonstrate the importance our party attaches to the unity and intimacy between the Chinese and Soviet parties.”<sup>32</sup> Mao transmitted the document on the following 15 January to Liu Shaoqi, vice chairman of the CCP, and Deng Xiaoping, general secretary of the CCP, with a comment saying “The content raised in this document needs to be taken seriously. How about asking the secretariat to have a discussion of it?”<sup>33</sup>

About three weeks later, on 5 February 1959 Chen Yi sent to Mao for approval of draft “Instructions of the CC CCP Concerning the Correction of the Phenomena of Arrogance in Foreign Relations,” together with an attachment, “Some Materials Concerning the Emotions of Arrogance, Impetuosity and Taking the Enemy Lightly,” which had been prepared by the State Council Office of Foreign Affairs on 3 February 1959. Mao made a few revisions to the draft instructions, added several comments, and on February 13 ordered that the instructions, along with the attachment, be transmitted to high-ranking officials. The CC CCP then transmitted the instructions along with the attachment on February 16.<sup>34</sup> The CC CCP document stated that “the arrogance revealed in foreign relations is first manifested in the supercilious and conceited attitudes taken by some comrades toward fraternal countries.” The document went on to criticize the fact

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>34</sup> “Dui zhongyang guanyu zai guiwai guanxi zhong qieshi jiuzheng jiao’ao xianxiang de zhishigao de piyu he xiugai” (Comments on and Revisions to the Draft Instructions Concerning the Earnest Correction of the Phenomena of Arrogance in Foreign Relations), 13 February 1959 JMZW, vol. 8, pp. 41-43. The JMZW published three sections of the revisions which Mao had made to the draft instructions. The author found a complete version of the instructions at the JPA.

that “some comrades seem to believe that we are more brilliant than the Soviet Union and other fraternal countries in many aspects, and [we] do not need to learn from them; [they] only demand that others show respect and consideration for us but pay no heed to showing respect and consideration for others.”<sup>35</sup>

An attached document compiled by the State Council Foreign Affairs Office listed as the first major example of such arrogance in foreign affairs the fact that some were questioning the status of the Soviet Union as the leader of the socialist camp. It reported that some diplomats in the Chinese embassy in Indonesia said the arrangement of having the Soviet Union as the head should be changed to having the Soviet Union and China as the heads, claiming “This is not megalomania but a fair modesty.” Some even argued that the center of the communist movement had shifted to China. Some officials in the Xinhua News Agency commented in public, “The Soviet Union as the head is only true in economic development.” The document listed a case in which some diplomats at the Chinese embassy in Moscow showed no respect for the Soviet leaders, remarking that Chinese leaders could all become chairman if they were in the Soviet Union.<sup>36</sup> Besides those cases, the document also criticized the propaganda organs for not paying enough attention and not giving timely support to the major internal events in the Soviet Union and Moscow’s diplomatic measures. It gave as examples that *The People’s Daily* did not publish Khrushchev’s important report to the plenary meeting of the CPSU in December 1958, and that officials at the Xinhua News Agency, considering that “there is nothing new,” did not publish *Pravda*’s editorial on the plenary. The document also reported that

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<sup>35</sup> Item No. 3, “Zhonggong zhongyang wenjian: Zhonggong zhongyang guanyu zai duiwai guanxi zhong qieshi jiuzheng jiao’ao xianxiang de zhishi” (The CC CCP Document: The Instructions of the CC CCP Concerning the Earnest Correction of the Phenomena of Arrogance in Foreign Relations) (26 February 1959), *Juanhao* 87, *Zhonggong zhongyang guowuyuan guanyu di’erci quanguo waishi gongzuo huiyi wenjian*, January-July, 1959, *Quanzong hao* 3124, *Quanzong mingchen: Sheng waishi bangongshi*, JPA.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

the Foreign Ministry was often slow in expressing support for Soviet diplomatic measures, such as recommendations on the Berlin issue and suggestions about convening a Four-Party conference in Paris. The document pointed out that the Soviets took Chinese attitudes very seriously. It gave an example in which the Soviet Union, after launching a spaceship on 2 January 1959 did not publish congratulatory telegrams from other socialist countries until the Chinese telegram arrived four days later, and placed the Chinese telegram above all others.<sup>37</sup>

It is striking that such cases of “defiance” occurred not at the highest levels of the party and government but at the lower ones, which usually are believed to be disciplined and reserved. These cases, however, also attest to a growing tendency towards chauvinism within the party, which to some extent can be viewed as a social basis for anti-Soviet policy in China. But what is all the more interesting is the leadership’s great effort to rein in those emotions at the time, which they believed were impairing China’s strategic interests by working against Sino-Soviet unity.

The leadership’s concerns are evident in the solemn language of the instruction:

To consolidate unity with the Soviet Union and to consolidate unity with all fraternal countries are where our fundamental guidelines and fundamental interests lie. [We] must repeatedly explain to all cadres and party members the significant meaning of the consolidation of the unity with fraternal countries, especially Sino-Soviet unity, and resolutely rectify all thoughts and behaviors that are not beneficial to such unity. [We] must stress the principle of having the Soviet Union as the head, show respect and consideration to the foremost place of the Soviet Union within the socialist camp in all aspects, and support the leadership of the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party headed by Comrade Khrushchev; [We] must strengthen prior consultation with Soviet comrades in all international events, and even if a divergence of views exists between us on certain issues, [we] should make every effort to maintain the unity between China and the Soviet Union toward the outside; [we must] maintain

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

sharp vigilance against the schemes of the imperialists and revisionists to sabotage Sino-Soviet unity.<sup>38</sup>

New Chinese evidence thus reveals that in early 1959 Beijing was taking great effort to preserve and support Soviet leadership in the socialist camp. Later during an October 1959 summit with Chinese leaders, Khrushchev claimed that China's support of the Soviet leadership was disingenuous and deceptive.<sup>39</sup> New material from the Chinese archives reveals, however, that Chinese leaders genuinely believed that Sino-Soviet unity was indispensable to the improvement of China's strategic situation, and that the benefits of unity far outweighed the differences between the two. China not only supported the leadership of the Soviet Union but also took pains to suppress the growing sentiment at home in favor of defying the Soviet Union.

### **Unrest in 1959: The "Point of No Return?"**

1959 was nonetheless a year of strain in Sino-Soviet relations, despite the optimistic hopes of the Chinese leadership. The question, however, is whether 1959 should be viewed as the turning point after which both sides became convinced that their relations were no longer reparable. Griffith argues that the Lushan Plenum in the summer of 1959 was the "point of no return" in Sino-Soviet relations.<sup>40</sup> Chen Jian takes the view that after the October 1959 summit meeting, Mao no longer saw any chance of improving relations with Moscow.<sup>41</sup> New Chinese evidence shows, however, that at the end of 1959 Chinese leaders still believed that a split between Beijing and Moscow should and could

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Zubok, "The Mao-Khrushchev Conversations," pp. 268-269.

<sup>40</sup> Griffith, *The Sino-Soviet Rift*, p. 18

<sup>41</sup> Chen Jian, *Mao's China and the Cold War*, p. 83.

be avoided.

On 20 June 1959 Moscow informed Beijing that, because of the ongoing test ban negotiations with the West, it would not supply China with a prototype of the atomic bomb and related technical data. The letter arrived at a time when Chinese leaders were bogged down by a stumbling economy in the wake of the Great Leap Forward.<sup>42</sup>

Khrushchev's move stemmed from his worry that the acquisition of nuclear weapons by China, the perceived unreliable ally, might bring the Soviet Union unwillingly into confrontation with the United States. More importantly, Khrushchev feared that Soviet assistance to the Chinese nuclear program would jeopardize Moscow's efforts to pursue détente with the West.<sup>43</sup>

Khrushchev's abrogation of the Soviet commitment to nuclear assistance may have significantly changed the Chinese leadership's perceptions of Soviet intentions. At an internal talk on 7 March 1959, Chen Yi still acknowledged the importance of Soviet assistance to China's economic transformation.<sup>44</sup> And just about a month earlier, in a 6 May interview with Soviet and socialist delegates, Mao still stressed that China should learn from the Soviet Union's experience of economic construction.<sup>45</sup> But Khrushchev's sudden recission of nuclear aid led Chinese leaders to sense that the Soviet Union might sacrifice China's interests in order to facilitate détente with the United States, and even stand with the United States in opposition to China. In a 23 June Politburo meeting, Mao,

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<sup>42</sup> Wu Lengxi, *Shinian lunzhan*, p. 206; Zubok and Pleshakov, *Inside the Kremlin's Cold War*, p. 228; John W. Lewis and Xue Litai, *China Builds the Bomb* (Stanford, C.A.: Stanford University Press, 1988), p. 64.

<sup>43</sup> Westad ed., *Brothers in Arms*, pp. 21-22; Griffith, *The Sino-Soviet Rift*, p. 12.

<sup>44</sup> "Chen Yi fuzongli zai di er ci guanguo waishi gongzuo huiyi shang de baogao" (Vice Premier Chen Yi's Report at the Second National Foreign Affairs Working Meeting), 7 March 1959, *Juanhao 87 Zhonggong zhongyang guowuyuan guanyu di'erci quanguo waishi gongzuo huiyi wenjian*, January-July 1959, *Quanzong hao* 3124, *Quanzong mingchen: Sheng waishi bangongshi*, JPA.

<sup>45</sup> "Jiejian sulian deng shiyiguo daibiaotuan he zhuhua shijie de tanhua" (The Talk [by Mao] When Receiving Delegations to and Diplomats in China from Eleven Countries Including the Soviet Union), (6 May 1959), *JMZW*, vol. 8, pp. 247-249.

Liu Shaoqi, and Zhou Enlai laid out their analyses of Soviet intentions and all agreed that Khrushchev for the moment intended to make concessions to the Western countries in order to achieve an agreement on nuclear testing. More importantly, they believed that Khrushchev's abrogation of the Sino-Soviet agreement on nuclear aid was part of a plan to hold a summit with US President Dwight D. Eisenhower.<sup>46</sup>

As the Chinese leadership's suspicion of the Soviet Union grew, a political storm arose at the Lushan Plenum of the CCP.<sup>47</sup> On 14 July, Defense Minister Peng Dehuai wrote to Mao criticizing a "leftist tendency" in the Great Leap Forward and proposed to systematically review its "achievements and lessons."<sup>48</sup> When Mao distributed Peng's letter—which had been meant to be private communication for Mao's eyes only—most high-ranking party officials, to Mao's surprise, sympathized with the views of the outspoken marshal.<sup>49</sup> Worried that Peng's letter represented a challenge to his power and authority within the party and, probably more importantly, that it might lead to negation of his "continuous revolution" program, Mao responded fiercely, calling Peng's letter a "furious attack by the rightists within the party." Soon Peng was denounced as the head of an "anti-party group" and deprived of the position of defense minister. Scholars have noted that many CCP leaders, including Mao, charged that Peng's attack was supported by "international friends," namely the Soviet Union.<sup>50</sup>

Such an allegation, however, was probably more of an internal political maneuver than anything substantive. In party struggles, one of the most convenient and powerful

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<sup>46</sup> Wu Lengxi, *Shinian lunzhan*, pp. 206-207.

<sup>47</sup> The best first-hand account of the Lushan conference so far remains Li Rui, *Mao Zedong mishu shouji: Lushan huiyi shilu* (Personal Notes of Mao Zedong's Secretary: A True Record of the Lushan Conference) (Zhengzhou, Henan: Henan renmin, 1994).

<sup>48</sup> The text of Peng's letter can be found in JMZW, vol. 8, pp. 358-361.

<sup>49</sup> Li Rui, *Lushan huiyi shilu*, pp. 104-127.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 161-170; Chen Jian, *Mao's China and the Cold War*, p. 79.

weapons was the accusation of “*litong waiguo*” (having treasonous relations with a foreign country). It is no surprise that both Liu Shaoqi and Lin Biao, who were to fall from grace later, were also denounced as being “Soviet agents.” Decades later, the CCP itself would admit that Mao’s charges against Peng were groundless.<sup>51</sup> Mao himself probably also understood that such a charge against Peng was far-fetched. Peng wrote Mao another letter on 9 September, this time about submitting himself to Mao’s authority. Mao quickly indicated that he “warmly welcome[d]” Peng’s submission and asked that the letter be distributed widely within the party.<sup>52</sup> Satisfied that Peng’s capitulation had marked his prevailing over any potential challenge to his policy and power, the Chairman decided that the “Soviet agent” argument no longer should be allowed to derail Sino-Soviet relations. Speaking at the enlarged meeting of the Central Military Committee of the CCP on September 11, Mao took the opportunity to stress that China “shall do well [in maintaining unity] with the Soviet comrades, and must be able to do well also.”<sup>53</sup>

Deteriorating relations between Beijing and New Delhi—first set off by the Dalai Lama’s flight to India after a failed uprising in Tibet in March and later aggravated by a Sino-Indian border skirmish in late August—also brought tensions into Sino-Soviet relations. Before they quarreled with Khrushchev over India at the October summit in Beijing, Chinese leaders had hoped to make the Soviets understand China’s stance on Sino-Indian disputes. In an effort to appeal to the socialist camp, Mao received delegates from the Soviet Union and ten other socialist countries on 6 May. Mao argued that the storm aroused by the Tibet issue would only expose the Indians as reactionary and

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<sup>51</sup> JMZW, vol. 8, p. 602, note 1.

<sup>52</sup> “Dui Peng Dehuai laixin de piyu” (Comments on the Letter from Peng Dehuai), 9 September 1959, JMZW, vol. 8, pp. 520-521.

<sup>53</sup> “Zai zhongyang junwei kuoda huiyi shang de jianghua tigan” (The Outline of the Talk at the Enlarged Meeting of the Central Military Committee), 11 September, 1959, JMZW, vol. 8, p. 523.



consolidate the unity of the socialist camp headed by the Soviet Union.<sup>54</sup>

Then came the Sino-Indian border conflict on 26 August. The skirmish was apparently instigated by the Indians.<sup>55</sup> Khrushchev, however, had reason to believe that the Chinese perpetrated the incident to sabotage his forthcoming visit to the United States. This indeed became one of the hotly debated subjects at the coming October summit in Beijing. The Soviets, disregarding China's desire that Moscow not issue any comments on the Sino-India border conflict, released a TASS statement on 9 September in which the Soviet Union expressed "regret" at the incident and complained that it had "complicated the situation prior to the mutual visits between Chairman of the Council of Ministers Comrade Khrushchev and US President Eisenhower." This move surely troubled the Chinese, who saw Khrushchev's move as actually giving support to India.<sup>56</sup>

The tension culminated in the dramatic clashes between Chinese leaders and Khrushchev, who had just visited the United States before he came to Beijing on 30 September. Khrushchev arrived in Beijing in an overly-confident mood, because Eisenhower had privately told him that he believed Khrushchev "had an opportunity to become the greatest political figure in history" because of the tremendous power of the socialist camp at his disposal.<sup>57</sup> Khrushchev's boastful tone, parading his visit to the United States and summit meeting with Eisenhower upon his arrival in Beijing, dismayed Chinese leaders.<sup>58</sup> On 2 October Chinese leaders and Khrushchev had a strained, full-of-the-smell-of-gunpowder meeting at the *Zhongnanhai* compound. Khrushchev first

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<sup>54</sup> "Jiejian sulian deng shiyiguo daibiaotuan he zhuhua shijie de tanhua," 6 May 1959, JMZW, vol. 8, pp. 247-249.

<sup>55</sup> Wu Lengxi, *Shinian lunzhan*, p. 210; Westad ed., *Brothers in Arms*, p. 23.

<sup>56</sup> Wu Lengxi, *ibid.*, pp. 208-217.

<sup>57</sup> Memorandum of conversation of Eisenhower's private conversation with Khrushchev, 15 September 1959, *Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS), 1958-1860* (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1993), vol. X, part 1, p. 409.

<sup>58</sup> Wu Lengxi, *Shinian lunzhan*, pp. 220-221.

brought up the issue of five American detainees in China, as he had promised Eisenhower he would, and advised China to set the Americans free. But Khrushchev quickly dropped the issue when Mao became evidently displeased and hinted that the Chinese had the right to decide whether and when to release the detainees.<sup>59</sup>

Khrushchev seemed to have Germany and Taiwan on his mind when he arrived in Beijing. During his first conversation with Eisenhower on 15 September, the Soviet leader had tried to push the president toward “recognizing the existence of two German states,” and made no secret his desire to “come to terms on” Germany. The president, to Khrushchev’s disappointment, just muddled through.<sup>60</sup> On 27 September the Soviet leader again brought up the subject of Germany, this time during his conversation about China. Khrushchev said he would like to point out that there was “a lack of consistency” in US policy. The United States had been arguing that if two German states remained, “they would be an indefinite hot bed of conflict.” If that was true, the Soviet leader argued, then it was true for China as well. After all, East and West Germany had 18 million and 50 million inhabitants respectively. Whereas in China the Chinese Communists had 650 million, with only 7–9 million on Taiwan. Khrushchev argued that the Americans had accepted “two Chinas,” but would not accept “two Germanys.” Hit hard by Khrushchev’s words, Eisenhower had to admit that “it was possible to make such a comparison.” Perhaps having caught some overtones in Khrushchev’s statement however, Eisenhower quickly added that he wished to point out that “the US seeks

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<sup>59</sup> The transcript of the 2 October summit meeting was translated and published by the CWIHP in 2001. See Zubok, “The Mao-Khrushchev Conversations,” pp. 244-272. Although the Chinese version of the transcript is still unavailable, several personal accounts of the meeting provide a Chinese perspective. See Wu Lengxi, *ibid.*, pp. 218-229; Li Yueran, *Zhongsu waijiao qinliji*, pp. 191-195; Liu Xiao, *Chushi sulian banian*, pp. 88-91.

<sup>60</sup> Memorandum of conversation between Khrushchev and Eisenhower, 15 September 1959, *FRUS 1958-1860*, vol. X, part 1, p. 400.

peaceful settlements in both instances.”<sup>61</sup> One of the tacit understandings between the two leaders when they emerged from their exchanges over China at Camp David seemed to be that if Khrushchev could sell “two Chinas” to the Chinese, then Eisenhower might very well consider “two Germanys.”

Khrushchev nonetheless understood that it was going to be a difficult sale. When Mao, after hearing an excerpt of the Khrushchev-Eisenhower conversation of 27 September concerning China, categorically denied that China could in any way be equated with Germany, the Soviet leader’s hopes must have begun to sink. “China cannot be equated with Germany,” the Chairman stated, “not only because the population of Taiwan is considerably smaller than the population on the Chinese mainland, but also because China was not a defeated country at the end of World War II, but was among the victorious powers.”<sup>62</sup> Khrushchev, however, did not give up. The Soviet leader then brought up the case of the Far Eastern Republic:

A while ago Lenin created the Far Eastern Republic in the Far East of the Soviet Union, and Lenin recognized its [sovereignty]. Keep in mind that this republic was established on the territory of the Soviet Union. It was unbelievable, but Lenin temporarily put up with this. Later, as it aspired, the Far Eastern Republic merged with the Soviet Union.”<sup>63</sup>

The Chinese were appalled by the thinly veiled implications of “two Chinas” in Khrushchev’s words. Mao felt compelled to counter: “As far as the creation of the Far Eastern Republic is concerned, and also the fact that at some point Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia were separated from the Soviet Union, you should keep in mind that in these cases there was no foreign intervention.” The Chairman went on to declare: “Our

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid., pp. 481-482.

<sup>62</sup> Zubok, “The Mao-Khrushchev Conversations,” pp. 262-263.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., p. 264.

relations with Jiang Jieshi and with the Americans are two different things. With the United States we will seek to resolve issues by peaceful means...The relationship with Jiang Jieshi is our internal question and we might resolve it not only by peaceful, but also other methods.”<sup>64</sup>

Later the Chinese, during their great polemics with the Soviets in 1963, would charge that Khrushchev had come to Beijing to lobby for Eisenhower’s “two Chinas” plan.<sup>65</sup> Some scholars doubt that Khrushchev would have directly raised the question of “two Chinas,” discounting that argument as Chinese propaganda.<sup>66</sup> The newly available archival evidence seems to suggest that the Chinese charge was fair enough. What is not so clear, however, is whether the Chinese had comprehended that Khrushchev’s “two Chinas” proposal was actually meant for “two Germanys.” Taken separately, the Soviet leader’s proposal could be understood merely as a mistake of wrongly applying the Soviet experience to Chinese case, or of not seeing the distinction between the internal and international aspects of the Taiwan issue. If linked with his goal of “two Germanys,” Khrushchev’s proposal would become one of selling out China, his ally, for his own strategic interests. That was, of course, a much more serious sin.

The fact that two months later at a meeting of the permanent members of the Chinese Politburo, Mao called Khrushchev’s recent behavior merely a “mistake,” seems to suggest that at the time the Chinese did not take Khrushchev’s proposal as betraying China.<sup>67</sup> The transcript of the Mao-Khrushchev summit shows that the Chinese seemed to have been kept in the dark about Khrushchev’s true intentions on Berlin. Mao seemed to

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid., p. 265.

<sup>65</sup> Gordon H. Chang, *Friends and Enemies: The United States, China and the Soviet Union, 1948-1972* (Stanford, C.A.: Stanford University Press, 1990), p. 343; Wu Lengxi, *Shinian lunzhan*, p. 222.

<sup>66</sup> Zubok and Pleshakov, *Inside the Kremlin’s Cold War*, p. 230.

<sup>67</sup> Wu Lengxi, *Shinian lunzhan*, p. 233.

have believed that Khrushchev's Berlin policy was designed to undermine the imperialist camp, and thus saw a strategic concert between Beijing and Moscow regarding Taiwan and Berlin. In his meeting with Soviet Chargé d'Affaires ad interim Sergei F. Antonov less than two weeks later, Mao stated that Taiwan was just "one link in the chain of difficulties that we created for the Americans. Another chain," the Chairman noted, "was the issue of Berlin put forth by the Soviet Union."<sup>68</sup>

The meeting did not collapse until the sharp exchanges between the two sides over the Sino-Indian border conflict. While Beijing believed that Khrushchev had lost his proletarian stance and sided with India against his socialist ally China, Khrushchev believed that the Chinese had instigated the incident in order to sabotage his détente with the United States. "We do not understand your position, do not understand in particular your conflict with India," Khrushchev said. "We consider this issue as follows: five kilometers more land we have or five kilometers less—this is not important." Mao countered by bringing up Moscow's TASS declaration. Khrushchev responded, "Do you really want us to approve of your conflict with India? It would be stupid on our part." He hardly veiled his intention to distance the Soviet Union from the conflict. "If we had not issued the TASS declaration," Khrushchev said, "there could have been an impression that there was a united front of socialist countries against Nehru. The TASS declaration turned this issue into one between you and India." The Chinese insisted that the Indians attacked first, but Khrushchev apparently did not buy the Chinese story. When Zhou Enlai explained that the incident took place without authorization from the center, Khrushchev derided them, saying, "That the center knew nothing about the incident is

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<sup>68</sup> Zubok, "The Mao-Khrushchev Conversations," p. 248.

news to me.” Even the usually reserved Zhou erupted angrily: “What data do you trust more—Indian or ours?” When Chinese Foreign Minister Chen Yi accused Khrushchev of “time-serving” (*opportunism-prisposoblenchestvo*),<sup>69</sup> the Soviet leader burst out, “Chen Yi is Minister of Foreign Affairs and he can weigh his words. He did not say it at random.” The exchange between Khrushchev and Chen Yi quickly became heated. “If you consider us time-servers, comrade Chen Yi, then do not offer your hand. I will not accept it,” Khrushchev declared. Chen Yi replied firmly, “Neither will I. I must tell you I am not afraid of your fury.” Khrushchev threw back, “You should not spit from the height of your Marshal title. You do not have enough spit.”<sup>70</sup>

Immediately after seeing Khrushchev off on 4 October, Mao convened a special Politburo meeting to discuss their talks. The meeting concluded that Khrushchev held illusions about Eisenhower and did not see the essence of American imperialism. Believing that Khrushchev had demonstrated his tendency toward revisionism, the Chinese leadership nevertheless held that China should still adopt a guideline of attaching the greatest importance to unity, carrying no debates and observing events with calmness.<sup>71</sup>

Khrushchev, on his return to Moscow, stopped in Vladivostok and delivered a speech on 6 October. He spoke about his recent visits to the United States and China, and claimed that Sino-Soviet friendship was developing and consolidating day by day. Chinese leaders, however, were particularly attentive to possible hidden messages in Khrushchev’s speech. The Chinese embassy in Moscow sent back a detailed report about

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<sup>69</sup> Zubok notes that it is not clear what the word exactly meant in Chinese. In both Wu Lengxi and Li Yueran’s accounts, the term Chen Yi used was “*qianjiu zhuyi*” (accommodationism). Zubok, “The Mao-Khrushchev Conversations,” p. 248; Wu Lengxi, *Shinian lunzhan*, p. 226; Li Yueran, *Zhongsu waijiao qinliji*, p. 193.

<sup>70</sup> Zubok, “The Mao-Khrushchev Conversations,” p. 269.

<sup>71</sup> Wu Lengxi, *Shinian lunzhan*, pp. 228-229.

the speech on 8 October. The report noted that Khrushchev had claimed that “it was unwise to long for war and to be prepared to fight like a bellicose rooster.” The report received special attention from Mao, who ordered it circulated to Liu Shaoqi, Zhou Enlai, Chen Yi, and Peng Zhen, among other top Chinese leaders, and asked them to “read it within two days” and “think it over” in preparation for a meeting with Mao.<sup>72</sup>

Khrushchev’s Vladivostok speech seemed to have confirmed the Chinese leaders’ belief that the Soviet leader had a tendency toward revisionism, but the Chinese leadership still believed that the policy of attaching most importance to unity and observing events with calmness should be maintained.

The Khrushchev-Mao summit of 2 October 1959 has been widely regarded as evidence of a radically deteriorating relationship between Beijing and Moscow.<sup>73</sup> Chen Jian argues that after the summit, Mao saw little chance to avoid serious confrontation with Moscow.<sup>74</sup> Westad argues that by late 1959, Mao had been determined to instigate public dissension between Beijing and Moscow to place blame for the eventual break on the Soviet Union.<sup>75</sup> Recent Chinese evidence seems to suggest, however, that even after the summit, Mao had a quite optimistic view of Sino-Soviet relations, believing Khrushchev might change the course.<sup>76</sup> True, the Chinese had many grievances against the Soviets, most notably Khrushchev’s siding with India in the Sino-Indian border dispute and pursuit of détente with the United States. Nevertheless, Chinese leaders had more reasons to believe that the fundamental interests of the two socialist powers were

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<sup>72</sup> “Zai zhusu shiguan guanyu hrluxiaofu haisenwei jianghua qingkuang baogao shang de piyu” (Comments on the Report by the Embassy to the Soviet Union Concerning the Situation of Khrushchev’s Talk in Vladivostok), JMZW, vol. 8, pp. 564-565.

<sup>73</sup> Zagoria, *The Sino-Soviet Conflict*, pp. 277-287; Zubok, “The Mao-Khrushchev Conversations,” pp. 244-272; Chen Jian, *Mao’s China and the Cold War*, pp. 82-83.

<sup>74</sup> Chen Jian, *ibid.*, p. 82.

<sup>75</sup> Westad ed., *Brothers in Arms*, p. 24.

<sup>76</sup> Wu Lengxi, *Shinian lunzhan*, p. 233.

still in accord. While Moscow had abrogated its nuclear agreement with China, Mao noted that the Soviet Union was still supporting China's socialist construction, which was of crucial importance to China when its economy was faltering in the midst of the Great Leap Forward.<sup>77</sup> Khrushchev's accusation of CCP's adventurism on Taiwan and his "two-Chinas" proposal might have offended Beijing, but the Soviet leader nevertheless steadfastly supported Beijing's stance while he was in Washington, claiming that "Taiwan is a province of China" and that Beijing had "the right to liberate Taiwan."<sup>78</sup> Soviet support on the Taiwan issue was critical to Beijing's strategic posture vis-à-vis the United States. That is why Mao acknowledged to Soviet Chargé d'Affaires Antonov on 14 October that Khrushchev "spoke very firmly and correctly on the issues of Taiwan" during his talks with Eisenhower.<sup>79</sup>

Indeed, Mao felt the need to repair the summit's damage to Sino-Soviet relations. He quickly sent out a conciliatory signal to Moscow by arranging a special appointment with Antonov on 14 October. Mao stressed that the differences over some specific issues during the previous week's summit were just "one finger out of ten," and "the accord of nine fingers between China and the Soviet Union should not be influenced by the differences of one finger."<sup>80</sup> Mao tried to convince his Soviet comrades that the Chinese goal in the Sino-Indian conflict was limited: "We would never go beyond the Himalayas."<sup>81</sup> Although referring to Lenin's experience with the Far Eastern Republic might have been too much for the Chinese, Mao nevertheless indicated that Beijing would be willing to "take into account the experience of the Soviet Union, which for

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Memorandum of conversation between Eisenhower and Khrushchev, 26 and 27 September 1959, *FRUS, 1958-1960*, vol. X, part 1, pp. 479-481.

<sup>79</sup> Zubok, "The Mao-Khrushchev Conversations," p. 248.

<sup>80</sup> Wu Lengxi, *Shinian lunzhan*, pp. 229-30.

<sup>81</sup> Zubok, "The Mao-Khrushchev Conversations," p. 248.



twenty-two years did not take military measures to return the Baltic states to the USSR.”<sup>82</sup> Mao was thus trying to assure the Soviets that Beijing was willing to maintain the status quo. “The People’s Republic of China is not going to begin a war with the United States of America because of Taiwan,” Mao stated. “We can wait ten to twenty and even thirty to forty years.”<sup>83</sup>

Taken as an isolated incident, Mao’s move might be interpreted as “hardly sincere” and as merely a political maneuver to place the blame for the Sino-Soviet rift on Moscow, as most scholars have concluded.<sup>84</sup> However, when seen in its historical context, it becomes clear that at the time the Chinese leadership did believe that the two socialist brothers needed to put their common fundamental interests before their differences. At a State Council meeting on 19 November, Zhou Enlai stressed that unity with the Soviet Union should be strengthened, reminding his comrades that the overall strategic situation dictated that China should still “attach the greatest importance to unity.”<sup>85</sup> Liu Shaoqi, in his 10 December meeting with S. V. Chervonenko, the newly arrived Soviet ambassador, revealed his conviction that “there is unanimity between our two parties on all principal questions, and the differences on the other questions are only temporary and can be worked out.”<sup>86</sup>

On 3 December 1959, Mao convened a three-day-meeting in Hanzhou, a beautiful historic resort in Zhejiang Province, that brought together the permanent members of the Politburo to discuss the international situation. Mao’s perception of the threat of imperialism to the socialist camp formed the backdrop for his analysis of Sino-Soviet

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<sup>82</sup> Zubok and Pleshakov, *Inside the Kremlin’s Cold War*, pp. 228-229.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 228.

<sup>84</sup> Zubok, “The Mao-Khrushchev Conversations,” p. 248; Zubok and Pleshakov, *ibid.*, pp. 228-229.

<sup>85</sup> Wu Lengxi, *Shinian lunzhan*, p. 230.

<sup>86</sup> Quoted in Zubok and Pleshakov, *Inside the Kremlin’s Cold War*, p. 232.

relations. He argued that the strategic goal of imperialism was to preserve capitalism and imperialism while annihilating the socialist system and national independence movement altogether. Mao argued that imperialism was trying to induce opportunism and revisionism in order to disrupt socialism through internal peaceful evolution.<sup>87</sup> He gave a careful analysis of the Soviet leader. “Khrushchev is not a good Marxist, but neither is he completely a revisionist,” Mao judged.<sup>88</sup> Mao did not hide his contempt for Khrushchev. “The Khrushchev people are very naïve,” Mao noted. “He does not understand Marxism, and is easily fooled by imperialism.”<sup>89</sup> Mao’s personal disdain for Khrushchev, however, did not prevent him from making a balanced analysis of the Soviet leader. “There are two possibilities with Khrushchev: one possibility is to continue to develop in the direction of severe deterioration; the other is to change, to develop in a positive, good direction,” the Chairman pointed out. “Now there are these two possibilities, but [we] should believe that such a mistake of his will eventually be corrected; [we] should have such confidence.”<sup>90</sup>

Although Mao had labeled Khrushchev a “time-server” during the October summit meeting, he still did not view him as a revisionist. On the contrary, the chairman said some positive things about the Soviet leader: “Khrushchev is not completely wrong. He still wants the socialist camp [to prevail] in the international arena, and he still

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<sup>87</sup> Bo Yibo recalled in his memoirs that Mao had “paid full attention” the US strategy of “peaceful evolution” when US Secretary of State John Foster Dulles first laid down the strategy in January 1953. Bo was financial minister in 1953 and later became vice premier. Bo Yibo, *Ruogan zhongda juece yu shijian de huigu* (Several Major Decisions and Events in Retrospect) (Beijing: Zhonggong zhongyang dangxiao, 1991). Excerpts of Bo’s memoirs were translated and published by the CWIHP. Qiang Zhai, “Mao Zedong and Dulles’s ‘Peaceful Evolution’ Strategy: Revelations from Bo Yibo’s Memoirs,” *CWIHP Bulletin*, Issues 6-7, Winter 1995/1996, pp. 228-231.

<sup>88</sup> Wu Lengxi, *Shinian lunzhan*, p. 231.

<sup>89</sup> “Guanyu guoji xingshi de jianghua tigang,” (Talking Point Concerning the International Situation), December, 1959, *JMZW*, vol. 8, p. 601.

<sup>90</sup> Wu Lengxi, *Shinian lunzhan*, p. 233.

supports China's development."<sup>91</sup> He went on to add, "The fundamental interests of China and the Soviet Union determine that these two great powers will always want unity. Some disunity is merely a temporary phenomenon; [it] is still a relationship of nine fingers and one finger."<sup>92</sup> Mao concluded with an optimistic tone: "Our guideline is still to attach the greatest importance to unity. It is difficult to imagine that two socialist great powers will split; it is impossible...[We] should have such confidence and determination."<sup>93</sup>

### **From "Long Live Leninism" to the U-2 Spy Plane Incident**

The Khrushchev-Mao encounter of October 1959 nevertheless greatly changed Soviet perceptions of China. On the eve of his 15 September 1959 visit to the United States, Mikhail Zimyanin, head of the Soviet Foreign Ministry's Far-Eastern Department, prepared for Khrushchev a detailed background report on China. The report, while acknowledging the danger of recurrent differences causing growing acrimony and recriminations, held an overall favorable view of the relationship. Zimyanin noted that in view of revisionist and imperialist propaganda "to provoke a schism in relations between the Soviet Union and PRC," Chinese leaders took great efforts to stress "the close unity of the socialist camp and the leading role of the CPSU among Communist and workers' parties."<sup>94</sup>

In a secret report delivered by Mikhail Suslov, a senior member of the Politburo

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<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> "Guanyu guoji xingshi de jianghua tigang," JMZW, vol. 8, p. 599.

<sup>93</sup> Wu Lengxi, *Shinian lunzhan*, p. 234.

<sup>94</sup> Kramer, "The USSR Foreign Ministry's Appraisal of Sino-Soviet Relations on the Eve of the Split, September 1959," p. 179.

of the CC CPSU, to a December 1959 Plenum of the Soviet party, the Soviet leadership came to a dramatically different view of the leadership in Beijing. In reporting to the plenum on Khrushchev's October 1959 visit to Beijing, Suslov stated, "The crux of the matter is that the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party has recently developed tendencies to embellish its successes and capabilities, to exaggerate the degree of maturity of socialist relations in China." After complaining that Chinese leaders' "heads have gotten somewhat dizzy," Suslov went on to claim that the mistakes and shortcomings in the field of domestic and foreign policy of the CCP "are largely explained by the atmosphere of the cult of personality of comrade Mao Zedong."<sup>95</sup>

Khrushchev soon made no secret of his disdain for Mao. At the summit meeting of Warsaw Pact leaders on 4 February, Khrushchev took the opportunity to broadcast his complaints against Mao, charging that the Chinese border conflict with India had created difficulties for the Communist Party of India. The Soviet leader's imprudent style of diplomacy was evident when he referred to Mao as an "old galosh" at the reception.<sup>96</sup> Khrushchev's bite was felt strongly back in Beijing. On 22 February, Mao called a meeting of the permanent members of the Politburo to discuss Khrushchev's comments at the summit meeting. Mao and his comrades concluded that Khrushchev's performance was an important sign that Khrushchev, in trying to reach a compromise with the West, wanted to curry favor with the West by opposing China. It was at this meeting that the Chinese decided it was necessary to deal a counter-blow to Khrushchev's anti-China

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<sup>95</sup> James G. Hershberg, "A New 'Cult of Personality': Suslov's Secret Report on Mao, Khrushchev, and Sino-Soviet Tensions, December 1959," *CWIHP Bulletin*, Issues 8-9, Winter 1996/1997, p. 244, p. 248.

<sup>96</sup> Wu Lengxi, *Shinian lunzhan*, pp. 250-252; Yang Kuisong, *Mao Zedong yu mosike de enen yuanyuan* (Mao Zedong's Relations with Moscow) (Nanchang, Jiangxi: Jiangxi renmin, 1999), p. 447.

moves.<sup>97</sup> At a meeting in early March, the Politburo decided that China should use the opportunity of the ninetieth anniversary of Lenin's birth to fight back against "modern revisionism."<sup>98</sup>

It took another month for the Chinese to assemble their weapons—three articles entitled "Long Live Leninism," which targeted the surrogate of Moscow, so-called Yugoslav modern revisionism, and alleged the betrayal of Leninism by modern revisionism. The three articles systematically expounded the CCP's views on a series of important theoretic issues such as peaceful coexistence, peaceful transition, socialist revolution and the essence of imperialism. The Soviets countered with articles attacking Chinese views and positions. Allen S. Whiting has argued that the publication of the three articles was "the first clear manifestation of the depth and seriousness of long-accumulating antagonisms" between China and the Soviet Union.<sup>99</sup> In the eyes of Western scholars and policymakers, the controversy aroused by the three articles represented Beijing's first open challenge to Moscow, driven by Mao's determination to "reach top status in the hierarchy of the world revolutionary movement."<sup>100</sup>

Soviet leaders shared such a perception. In its report to Moscow, the Soviet embassy in Beijing noted, "The cult of personality of Mao Zedong is continuing to develop in the PRC." This observation received much attention from top Soviet leaders such as Khrushchev and Yuri Andropov.<sup>101</sup> Suslov's report had revealed the Soviet leaders' perception that Mao was becoming another Stalin, and Khrushchev continued to

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<sup>97</sup> Wu Lengxi, *ibid.*, pp. 250-253.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 253-258

<sup>99</sup> Allen S. Whiting, "A Brief History," in Zabolocki ed., *Sino-Soviet Rivalry*, pp. 10-11.

<sup>100</sup> Zubok and Pleshakov, *Inside the Kremlin's Cold War*, p. 232.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*

assess Mao's challenge against the backdrop of his own political experience.<sup>102</sup>

Mao, however, had his own rationale. He had come to believe that the Soviet leadership's misunderstanding of a series of theoretical issues was at the root of the problems in Sino-Soviet relations. Therefore, Mao decided to shift the focus of debates with Moscow from specific issues such as the Sino-Indian border conflict and policy towards the United States, to theoretical views of Leninism.<sup>103</sup> Indeed, Mao still did not want to push Sino-Soviet disputes to an extreme. He had pointed out that Khrushchev was "prone to change" and believed that through "necessary struggles" Soviet leaders might be pulled in a positive direction. Mao believed that the three articles, which he had personally reviewed and edited, had been quite reserved about Khrushchev. The articles implicitly noted that Khrushchev and Soviet leaders "are not revisionists," calling them "people with good intentions" who merely had many "incorrect thoughts."<sup>104</sup> Chinese sources also seem to suggest that to "reach top status" in the world revolutionary movement was not yet Mao's priority. Actually, new Chinese archives show that it was not until late 1962, that China came to believe that Khrushchev had become a full-fledged revisionist, that the Chinese began to argue that China should "compete with revisionism for leadership in international struggles."<sup>105</sup>

In 1960, another major development in international politics occurred, and Soviet misperceptions of Beijing's intentions might have further deepened mistrust of the Chinese. On 1 May, eight days after China published the three articles on Leninism, an

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<sup>102</sup> Zubok, "The Mao-Khrushchev Conversations," p. 248.

<sup>103</sup> Yang Kuisong, *Mao Zedong yu mosike*, p. 449.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 448-449.

<sup>105</sup> Item No. 2 "Guowuyuan waiban: diliuci quanguo waishi huiyi chuanda yaodian," 17 December 1962, *Juanhao* 145 *Guowuyuan waiban diliuci quanguo waishi gongzuo huiyi* (The State Council Foreign Affairs Office's Sixth National Foreign Affairs Working Meeting) (July-November, 1962), *Quanzong hao* 3124, *Quanzong mingchen: Sheng waishi bangongshi*, JPA.

American U-2 spy plane was shot down over Soviet territory on the eve of the planned Paris summit between the United States, Britain, France and the Soviet Union.

The Chinese believed that the U-2 incident proved their points. First, that the United States sent a U-2 spy plane to invade Soviet airspace demonstrated that the nature of American imperialism would not change. Second, Chinese leaders were also pleased that the three articles had forced Khrushchev to stand up to the United States. On 22 May Mao called the permanent members of the Politburo, including Liu Shaiqi, Zhou Enlai, Deng Xiaoping, and Chen Yun, to Hangzhou to discuss the aborted Four-Power Summit and views of Khrushchev. Mao again made a careful analysis of the Soviet leader.

“Khrushchev has a dual character,” Mao noted.

Look, he exalted Eisenhower to the skies after the Camp David summit last year, and this time around the two of them abused each other over the U-2 incident. It’s very difficult to imagine that the head of the strong socialist Soviet Union will suddenly kneel down to the US president. But it should be noted that the basic thinking of Khrushchev of dominating the world through US-Soviet cooperation has not changed. This time he confronted Eisenhower with a tough gesture indeed because the US sent the U-2 plane to invade the Soviet Union, putting Khrushchev in a very embarrassing position. He had to respond with toughness and could not show weakness. Otherwise, [he] would be unable to justify himself to the Soviet people, unable to justify himself to the people of the socialist countries and the people of the world, and he would collapse. In any case, this time he did a good thing, and we should support him greatly.<sup>106</sup>

While the other permanent members of the Politburo agreed that the three articles of “Long Live Leninism” were very timely and powerful, and would cause Khrushchev to think twice, the Chairman took a slightly different view. “Our articles do have influence,” he said, “but for people like Khrushchev, it’s very difficult to say how big the influence is. To Khrushchev, positive education might work, but it is limited...It is

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<sup>106</sup> Wu Lengxi, *Shinian lunzhan*, pp. 271-272.

negative teachers such as people like Eisenhower and Adenauer who can have a great effect on him,” Mao stated. He then went on to argue, “In view of the situation of the past two years, Khrushchev does have a tendency toward revisionism on major issues, but it can’t be said that he is a complete revisionist on all issues; it’s hard to say his revisionism has completely taken shape. But generally speaking, it can be said that he is a half-revisionist.”<sup>107</sup>

The imperialist “negative teachers,” Chinese leaders thus believed, might help the Soviet leadership realize how erroneous their policy of unprincipled appeasement and reconciliation with American imperialism was, and gradually come to accept China’s stance on the essence of imperialism and war and peace. In a 28 May telegram to the Foreign Ministry, Huan Xiang, Chinese Chargé d’Affaires to Britain, provided a careful analysis of the international situation after the aborted Paris summit. Huan noted that “there is the possibility” of the Soviet Union “gradually changing.” Huan also warned that the West, afraid that the incident would “further strengthen the unity of the socialist camp, especially the unity between China and the Soviet Union,” was “directing the spearhead of the Cold War at China,” and “intensifying [efforts to] undermine Sino-Soviet relations.” “Under such a situation,” Huan wrote, “we should deal very cautiously with the issues concerning Sino-Soviet relations.”<sup>108</sup> After adding a comment noting that “what this document said is very good,” Mao asked that copies be sent to participants in the enlarged meeting of the Politburo of the CC CCP held in Shanghai 14 to 18 June

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<sup>107</sup> Ibid., p. 272.

<sup>108</sup> “Dui Huan Xiang guanyu siguo shouao huiyi liuchan zhihou guoji xingshi de fenxi he zhanwang de piyu” (Comments on Huan Xiang’s Analysis and Forecast of the International Situation after the Abortion of the Four-Power Summit), June 7, 1960, JMZW, vol. 9, pp. 200-201



1960.<sup>109</sup> In an unusual move, on 9 June, Mao forwarded to Khrushchev an internal appraisal of American military production prepared by the Chinese Foreign Ministry, along with a short hand-written note calling to the Soviet leader's attention the thesis that the reason the United States was unwilling to disarm was that "monopoly capitalists need[ed] a large military force and a large weaponry warehouse." The Chairman did not forget to mention Sino-Soviet unity at the end of his short note, carefully reminding Khrushchev that it was China, and not the United States, that the Soviet Union should rely upon.<sup>110</sup>

Khrushchev, however, apparently read the Chinese messages differently. Rather than appreciating Beijing's support, the Soviet leadership took the Chinese moves as insidious maneuvers to create trouble behind their backs. The Soviet embassy in Beijing sent a report to Moscow in early June arguing that China's support of the Soviet Union was meant to prove "the correctness of the analysis and estimates of the leadership of the CCP...Having used the aggravation of the international situation after the failure of the Paris summit...Chinese leaders for the first time directly and openly opposed the foreign policy of the CPSU."<sup>111</sup> It seems a misperception might have been involved here. While the Chinese believed that they were trying to persuade Khrushchev to refrain from making further "mistakes" down the road, the Soviets believed that Beijing was maneuvering to sabotage Moscow's détente with the West.

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<sup>109</sup> Wu Lengxi, *Shinian lunzhan*, p. 272.

<sup>110</sup> "Dui 'youguan meiguo junshi shengchan de yixie ziliao' de piyu" (Comments on 'Some Materials Concerning US Military Production'), 8,9 June 1960, JMZW, vol. 9, pp. 202-203.

<sup>111</sup> Quoted in Zubok and Pleshakov, *Inside the Kremlin's Cold War*, p. 233.

## The Bucharest Conference 1960: Tit for Tat

Believing that putting more pressure on Beijing might exploit the differences between Mao and his colleagues and force Mao to change his domestic and international policies, Khrushchev took steps to try to bring China into submission.<sup>112</sup> The Soviet leader soon prepared two “surprise attacks:” to use the forthcoming Bucharest conference to organize a siege against China, and to withdraw Soviet experts from China.

On 2 June, Beijing received a letter from the CC CPSU that suggested using the Third Congress of the Romanian Communist Party as an occasion to hold a conference of communist parties in Bucharest to exchange opinions about the international situation. Deng Xiaoping presided over a meeting of the central secretariat on June 4 to discuss the CC CPSU letter. Deng and his colleagues concluded that the CPSU’s intention in holding a conference was to support (*baojia*) Khrushchev in view of the difficulties he faced at this time. “We can give him such support,” the central secretariat stated in its opinion summarizing the meeting, because “if Khrushchev collapses at present, Soviet society might fall into chaos, and this will be of no benefit to the whole situation (*daju*).” “We consider him to be a half-revisionist, not yet a full-fledged revisionist, and the possibility of [his] changing in a good direction cannot be ruled out,” the opinion stated. The central secretariat, however, did not neglect another possibility, that is, Khrushchev might have believed China to be causing trouble and disrupting his effort to reach a compromise with the West. “[We] have to recognize that there is the possibility that they are going to try to punish us in order to protect Khrushchev,” the central secretariat stated.<sup>113</sup>

Deng then flew to Shanghai to brief Mao about the central secretariat’s appraisal.

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<sup>112</sup> Chen Jian, *Mao’s China and the Cold War*, p. 82.

<sup>113</sup> Wu Lengxi, *Shinian lunzhan*, p. 273-274.

At a June 8 meeting of the permanent members the Politburo, the Chairman instructed: “[We] should make preparations with two hands; with the first, we must be prepared for them trying to punish us, and with the second, we must be prepared for them to try to win over us.” Mao emphasized that “[we] should have sufficient mental preparation for the possibility that they will punish us, vent their anger on us for the failure of the Paris summit meeting, and organize a siege against us.”<sup>114</sup>

Therefore when Peng Zhen, a senior Politburo member, left Beijing for Bucharest on June 16, he departed prepared to resist Khrushchev’s pressure. Khrushchev received the Chinese delegation on June 22. The delegation, under the instructions of the CC CCP, remained silent for most of the 6-hour-long conversation in order to discern Khrushchev’s intentions. Khrushchev did not spare the opportunity to fire salvos against the Chinese, taking the liberty to lash out with scathing satire and criticism. “You were carrying out a Great Leap Forward, but your people were too poor to wear pants,” Khrushchev declared, “You love Stalin so much, why don’t you just move Stalin’s coffin to Beijing? We can give it to you. You always talk about the east wind prevailing over the west wind. It was you, China, that wanted to prevail over us, to prevail over the whole world.”<sup>115</sup>

Khrushchev’s insults might have gone beyond the wildest expectations of his Chinese guests. The delegation telegraphed back to Beijing that now the intentions of Khrushchev were clear, he wanted to punish China in Bucharest. On 21 June the Soviet delegation distributed a notice to the conference in which the Soviets not only systematically rebutted Chinese views in the articles “Long Live Leninism,” but also sternly criticized the Chinese for having taken irresponsible moves to distribute the

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<sup>114</sup> Ibid., p. 277.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid., pp. 280-281.

articles in other fraternal countries. In the next few days, Khrushchev and Peng Zhen clashed, exchanging bitter attacks. As the leaders of the Eastern European communist parties stood up one after another to attack the Chinese, Khrushchev must have enjoyed his revenge. The Soviet leader could not forget how he had been under the barrage of the Chinese when he was in Beijing nine months earlier.<sup>116</sup>

After the Chinese delegation returned to Beijing, Mao convened a Politburo meeting on 30 June to discuss the Bucharest conference. Chinese leaders perceived the Bucharest conference as a “surprise attack” against China by Khrushchev. The meeting concluded that Khrushchev attempted to use the Bucharest conference to press China into submission, but the result turned out to be just the opposite. The Politburo meeting informed high-ranking party officials about the Bucharest conference, explaining to them that China’s differences with the CPSU were over significant, principled issues, while making it clear that these differences were still of “one finger out of ten.” It was surprising that Chinese leaders did not take a gloomier view. “Our guideline is to insist on principles and carry on necessary struggles, meanwhile to insist on unity because both parties have the need, and there is indeed a basis for unity.” The meeting concluded, “Khrushchev is not immutable, and he might also change....The purpose of carrying on struggles against him is still unity.”<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> Yang Kuisong, *Mao Zedong yu mosike*, p. 452; Zubok, “The Mao-Khrushchev Conversations,” p. 248.

<sup>117</sup> Wu Lengxi, *Shinian lunzhan*, pp. 298-300.

## Reappraisal of Sino-Soviet Relations: The Beidaihe Conference and the Withdrawal of Soviet Experts

From 5 July to 10 August 1960, the CCP brought together high-ranking party officials in a central working meeting in Beidaihe, a seaside resort close to Beijing. The Sino-Soviet relationship was a major topic throughout the meeting.

Beginning on July 14, Zhou Enlai delivered a three-day-long speech on Sino-Soviet relations.<sup>118</sup> Zhou stated that it was not coincidental that Khrushchev came to have a major quarrel with Chinese leaders in October 1959, because “at that time his bottom had already been sitting on the side of the United States, no longer viewing the United States as his biggest, most dangerous enemy.”<sup>119</sup> In concluding his lengthy report, Zhou nevertheless stressed unity:

We should always hold high the flag of unity. Struggles are for unity, and it is not for a split that [we] carry on struggles. But [we] should also be prepared for the possibility that Khrushchev wants to engage in a split. Our goal is to strive for unity, to try to put off and delay a split, which is beneficial for China, beneficial for the world revolution, as well as beneficial for the people of the Soviet Union.<sup>120</sup>

Despite their complaints against Khrushchev, Chinese leaders probably did not expect that Moscow would take the extreme measure of withdrawing its experts from China.<sup>121</sup> Consequently, when a letter from the Soviet government arrived on 16 July informing China that all Soviet experts would be recalled to the Soviet Union, the Chinese were shocked.<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> Wu Lengxi provided a detailed account of Zhou's talk in his memoirs. *Zhou Enlai nianpu* also contains a brief summary of Zhou's talk. See Wu Lengxi, *ibid.*, pp. 314-334; *Zhou Enlai nianpu*, vol. 2, pp. 331-333.

<sup>119</sup> Wu Lengxi, *ibid.*, p. 332.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 333.

<sup>121</sup> Yang Kuisong, *Mao Zedong yu mosike*, p. 453.

<sup>122</sup> A copy of the note delivered by the Soviet Embassy in Beijing to the Chinese Foreign Ministry dated 18 July 1960 was retrieved by German historian Dieter Heinzig in the archives of the East German Socialist Unity Party in East

18 July 1960 was a sober day for Chinese leaders. It was on that day that the participants in the Beidaihe conference were informed of the Soviet move. Chairman Mao commented, “We should not forget the great help the Soviet party and the Soviet people gave to us historically. Now there is no more help, and we have to adopt the guideline of self-reliance and build the country with diligence and thrift. There is no other way except this. [...] We cannot beg Khrushchev, neither can we beg the United States,” the Chairman went on. “Why must we have foreign aid? We should follow the road of Lenin and Stalin to build socialism within a single country.”<sup>123</sup>

The Soviet recall of all experts from China could be viewed by Beijing as nothing but a revelation of the Soviet attempt to force China into submission by taking advantage of its economic difficulties. In hindsight, Khrushchev’s decision achieved the opposite effect: it not only greatly hurt China’s pride and enraged China, but also gave Mao the opportunity to mobilize the nation by calling for self-reliance and building the country with diligence and thrift. “Chinese do not believe in evil, and are not afraid of pressure,” Mao declared. “[We] should just have moral courage.”<sup>124</sup>

Khrushchev’s move failed to divide the Chinese leadership. Rather, it only compelled it to unite in the face of outside pressure. One thing Khrushchev might nevertheless have calculated correctly was that the Chinese, in the wake of the domestic difficulties caused by the Great Leap Forward, had no choice but to swallow the bitter pill. It can be imagined how this suppressed resentment against the Soviets would one day emerge and destroy Sino-Soviet relations.

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Berlin. The document has been introduced and published by the CWIHP. See Chen Jian, “A Crucial Step toward the Breakdown of the Sino-Soviet Alliance: The Withdrawal of Soviet Experts from China in July 1960,” *CWIHP Bulletin*, Issues 8-9, Winter 1996/1997, pp. 246, 249-250.

<sup>123</sup> Wu Lengxi, *Shinian lunzhan*, p. 335

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 337.

On 10 August, Chairman Mao reviewed Sino-Soviet relations at the concluding session of the month-long Beidaihe conference. “The problems of the Sino-Soviet relationship are neither big nor small. The sky will not fall down, and [we] do not need to worry endlessly,” he asserted. “It’s no more than not giving equipment, throwing the CCP out of the gate of the socialist camp, the Sino-Soviet Friendship and Mutual Assistance Treaty blowing in the wind, carrying out military threats against China, even attacking us together with the United States. If talking in extreme terms, it’s no more than those things.”<sup>125</sup> Premier Zhou shared the chairman’s analysis, though he was less emotional. In a secret report to the fourth national foreign affairs meeting held in Beijing four days later, the premier said, “The withdrawal of experts does inflict damage on us. [But] this is a temporary phenomenon... It is causing damage to [the Soviet Union] also. Khrushchev has lifted a rock only to drop it on his own feet.”<sup>126</sup>

When Vice Premier Chen Yi proposed a resolution on Sino-Soviet relations, Chairman Mao turned down Chen’s suggestion. “It’s easy to make a resolution,” Mao said, but then “the essay will become a dead one (*wenzhang jiu zuo si le*),” likening it to leaving no flexibility.<sup>127</sup> Remarking that the Soviet Union’s rush to pass a resolution only revealed its weaknesses and fear, Chairman Mao said that for the time being, only 120,000 party officials should be informed about the situation. “This is called leaving adequate leeway (*liu you yudi*). It’s needless to be in such a rush,” the Chairman stated.

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<sup>125</sup> Ibid., p. 339. The JPA also has a document of Vice Premier Chen Yi’s 14 August 1960 talk at the fourth national foreign affairs working meeting in which Chen related to the meeting details of the Beidaihe conference, especially the talks by Mao and other leaders at the concluding session of the conference. See “Chen Yi tongzhi ba yue shisi ri jianghua” (Comrade Chen Yi’s August 14 Talk), *Juanhao* 103 long, *Disici quanguo waishi huiyi fuze tongzhi fayan baogao* (The Speeches and Reports by the Responsible Comrades at the Fourth National Foreign Affairs Meeting), July-August, 1960, *Quanzong hao* 3124, *Quanzong mingchen: Sheng waishi bangongshi*, JPA.

<sup>126</sup> “Zhou zongli baogao” (The Report by Premier Zhou), *Juanhao* 103 long, *Disici quanguo waishi huiyi fuze tongzhi fayan baogao*, July-August, 1960, *Quanzong hao* 3124, *Quanzong mingchen: Sheng waishi bangongshi*, JPA.

<sup>127</sup> “Chen Yi tongzhi ba yue shisi ri jianghua,” *Juanhao* 103 long, *Disici quanguo waishi huiyi fuze tongzhi fayan baogao*, July-August, 1960, *Quanzong hao* 3124, *Quanzong mingchen: Sheng waishi bangongshi*, JPA.

“It’s no more than such moves. [We] should brace ourselves and bear it for 10 years (*yao ying zhe toupi ding ta shinian*).”<sup>128</sup>

Even at such a difficult time, Chinese leaders did not let their anger prevail over rational calculations, and did not forget the American threat. Speaking at the fourth national foreign affairs meeting on 14 August, Premier Zhou reminded the assembled high-ranking party officials, “Our mind should remain cool, and do not forget about this enemy imperialism.”<sup>129</sup> Indeed in a report of 31 July to the Beidaihe conference concerning Sino-Soviet relations after Moscow announced the withdrawal of Soviet experts, Zhou took great pains to stress the American threat. “Now the United States is actively expanding its troops and preparing for war,” he stated, “but it’s not going to act immediately. It’s using two hands: one hand is to threaten with weapons, and another hand is to disrupt you from within, to foment internal changes and carry out a peaceful revolution.”<sup>130</sup>

Chinese leaders also stressed the need to leave adequate leeway. As Chen Yi put it on 14 August, “Do not stretch the bowstring too much, otherwise it might break.”<sup>131</sup> Beijing still distinguished between Khrushchev and Tito, calling the Soviet leader “half-revisionist” instead of “revisionist.” Premier Zhou explained, “The mistakes of the [Soviet] leading group are of a partial nature and cannot be equated to the Tito group. We say he is half-revisionist or right-deviation opportunist.”<sup>132</sup> The premier went on to state: “We support [his] anti-imperialist [struggles], of course he’ll be unhappy if we support

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<sup>128</sup> Wu Lengxi, *Shinian lunzhan*, p. 340.

<sup>129</sup> *Zhou Enlai nianpu*, vol. 2, p. 340.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 336.

<sup>131</sup> “Chen Yi tongzhi ba yue shisi ri jianghua,” *Juanhao* 103 long, *Disici quanguo waishi huiyi fuze tongzhi fayan baogao*, July-August, 1960, *Quanzong hao* 3124, *Quanzong mingchen: Sheng waishi bangongshi*, JPA.

<sup>132</sup> “Zhou zongli baogao,” *Juanhao* 103 long, *Disici quanguo waishi huiyi fuze tongzhi fayan baogao*, July-August, 1960, *Quanzong hao* 3124, *Quanzong mingchen: Sheng waishi bangongshi*, JPA.



too much. But even if one word he says is of the truth, we'll support [it].” Zhou then revealed his conviction that “in the face of a formidable enemy eventually [we] will be united. It cannot be imagined that a country with 43 years of socialism, the homeland of Lenin, of eight million party members, and of the two hundred million people who had triumphed over fascism would not want socialism.”<sup>133</sup>

It was not only the Chinese who worried that the growing schism between the two communist countries might worsen the strategic position of the socialist forces vis-à-vis the West. Ho Chi Minh, whose party and revolution badly needed strong support from both China and the Soviet Union, was among them. Just about a year and a half earlier, Ho had taken a detached, neutral attitude toward disputes between China and the Soviet Union. At the time, the North Vietnamese leader seemed not to be so worried about Sino-Soviet relations as he lightly remarked to Chinese Premier Zhou and Ambassador Liu Xiao during the 21<sup>st</sup> Congress of the CPSU that the contradictions between two family members could be resolved by themselves with their own hands.<sup>134</sup> By mid-1960, however, Ho was certainly not in a light mood.

Ho Chi Minh paid a three-day visit to China as the Beidaihe conference was drawing to a close. His eagerness to repair the damaged relationship between Beijing and Moscow was evident when he stated in a straightforward manner upon his arrival at Beidaihe that the purpose of his trip was to serve as a lobbyist and mediator.<sup>135</sup> Zhou Enlai and Deng Xiaoping received Ho before his meeting with Mao on 10 August, the

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<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

<sup>134</sup> Liu Xiao, *Chushi sulian banian*, p. 95.

<sup>135</sup> Wu Lengxi provided a detailed account of Ho's trip in his memoirs. In his August 14 talk to the fourth national foreign affairs meeting, Chen Yi also related this episode to the assembled high-ranking party officials. See Wu Lengxi, *Shinian lunzhan*, pp. 344-351; “Chen Yi tongzhi ba yue shisi ri jianghua,” *Juanhao* 103 long, *Disici quanguo waishi huiyi fuze tongzhi fayan baogao*, July-August, 1960, *Quanzong hao* 3124, *Quanzong mingchen: Sheng waishi bangongshi*, JPA.

last day of Ho's trip. Ho stated that all fraternal parties were anxious after the differences between the Chinese and Soviet parties had become public at the Bucharest conference and upon the Soviet Union withdrawal of experts from China. Ho expressed his hope that China and the Soviet Union could be united so as to "jointly deal with the primary enemy, American imperialism."<sup>136</sup> Ho then proposed that the Chinese and Soviet parties hold meetings to reconcile the many "preconceived prejudices and misunderstandings" between them, and then a conference of the communist and workers' parties from all over the world be held so that the whole socialist camp could be "united to deal with American imperialism."<sup>137</sup>

Chairman Mao received Ho on 10 August, the last day of the Beidaihe conference. "You are of good intention. Your opinions, in my view are basically good," the Chairman said. "But I disagree with your division of blame fifty-fifty" (*butongyi geda wushi daban*).<sup>138</sup> "It's good that you wanted to strengthen unity, but who are actually friends, and who are enemies? ... On this issue, we have for long had differences with Khrushchev," Mao asserted. However, after complaining about Khrushchev, Mao nevertheless agreed with Ho's proposal to hold a conference to resolve Sino-Soviet differences, recognizing that "the consequences of the Sino-Soviet discord are severe."<sup>139</sup> Ho Chi Minh took Mao's messages to Moscow, then on 19 August returned to Beijing with words from Khrushchev. Although lingering grievances remained, Beijing agreed to the suggestion to hold a meeting between the two parties.

Deng Xiaoping and Peng Zhen headed a delegation to Moscow on 15 September.

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<sup>136</sup> Wu Lengxi, *ibid.*, p. 346; "Chen Yi tongzhi bayue shisi ri jianghua," *ibid.*

<sup>137</sup> "Chen Yi tongzhi ba yue shisi ri jianghua," *ibid.*; Wu Lengxi, *Shinian lunzhan*, p. 345.

<sup>138</sup> "Chen Yi tongzhi ba yue shisi ri jianghua," *ibid.*; Wu Lengxi, *ibid.*, p. 346.

<sup>139</sup> Wu Lengxi, *ibid.*, p. 346.

The Chinese leadership had decided at the Beidaihe conference that the CCP should counter the Soviet attack at the Bucharest conference. They believed that a “reply letter” should be released before the meeting. The letter, which was finalized by Mao on 7 September and handed over to Soviet ambassador Chervonenko on 10 September, sharply criticized the Soviet views. Unsurprisingly, the Soviets, during their meeting with the Chinese delegation, characterized the reply letter as a serious attack against the CPSU. The week-long meeting between the CCP and the CPSU again turned out to be strained.<sup>140</sup> On 24 September, the Chinese delegation briefed the permanent members of the CCP Politburo about the meeting. Mao gave a speech after the briefing, saying, “Still, the two parties of China and the Soviet Union should be united. There’s no question about it. The problem is how solidarity is to be reached. We need unity, so does the Soviet communist party, because split is detrimental to them as well.” The Chairman noted, “Our guideline is to insist on struggle, but within the limits of no split. To struggle is to achieve agreement, not split.”<sup>141</sup>

### **The Moscow Conference: “Papering Over” or a New Basis for Solidarity?**

On the morning of 5 November, Liu Shaoqi, president of the PRC and second most important figure in the CCP, led a huge delegation to Moscow, where it would spend the next month wrangling with the Soviet leaders.<sup>142</sup> The celebrated delegation included four Politburo members and two alternate members, two alternate secretaries of

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<sup>140</sup> A transcript of the meeting, uncovered in East German archives, was published by the CWIHP. Wu Lengxi in his memoirs also provided a Chinese version of the story. See “Deng Xiaoping’s Talks with the Soviet Ambassador and Leadership, 1957-1963,” *CWIHP Bulletin*, Issue 10, March 1998, pp. 172-173; Wu Lengxi, *ibid.*, pp. 357-364.

<sup>141</sup> Wu Lengxi, *ibid.*, pp. 364-365; Li Yueran, *Zhongsu waijiao qinliji*, pp. 208-209.

<sup>142</sup> In April 1959, Liu took over the presidency of the PRC after Mao stepped down. But Mao remained chairman of the CCP. See JMZW, vol. 8, p. 176.

the central secretariat, and three Central Committee members.<sup>143</sup>

When Liu Shaoqi called on Khrushchev the day after his arrival, the Soviet leader began speaking about Sino-Soviet unity. “Neither of our two sides can do without the other,” Khrushchev stated. “Quarrels are inevitable. Sometimes we may also scratch out a few hairs, nevertheless we should be united.”<sup>144</sup> Indeed, from the Chinese delegation’s arrival, Khrushchev intentionally displayed his warmth for his guests. He and Brezhnev, chairman of the presidium of the Supreme Soviet, came to the airport to welcome Liu in person. During the ceremony celebrating the October Revolution, Khrushchev let Liu take the lead in ascending Lenin’s tomb and had Liu flanked by Brezhnev and himself. It seems that Khrushchev wanted to have a successful conference. On 9 November, the day before Khrushchev delivered his major speech, the Soviet leader sent Suslov, Frol R. Kozlov, and Anastas I. Mikoyan to the Chinese delegation to assure the Chinese that Khrushchev’s speech would emphasize unity and not deal with issues concerning Sino-Soviet disputes. The Soviets indicated their hope to look forward instead of backward and turn to unity from now on. Even at the end of the meeting with Deng Xiaoping and Peng Zhen, Mikoyan promised that after the conference the Soviets would be willing to discuss with the Chinese trade, aid, and experts issues, and that the Soviet Union would be willing to continue to aid China’s economic development.<sup>145</sup>

It is somewhat perplexing why the Chinese suddenly took the offense after Khrushchev’s speech on 10 November. Based on newly available East German and Russian evidence, scholars have tended to conclude that the Chinese took advantage of

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<sup>143</sup> Wu Lengxi, *Shinian lunzhan*, p. 368.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 372.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 376-377; Yang Kuisong, *Mo Zedong yu mosike*, p. 457.

the Soviets' eagerness to avoid an open split and to deliberately test the Soviets' nerve.<sup>146</sup>

Recent Chinese evidence, however, seems to point to another possibility: that the Chinese, having been captive to their own misperceptions and mistrust of the Soviets, might have been oversensitive and thus overreacted.

Just like their Soviet comrades, the Chinese had a large stake in preventing an open split. Mao had reminded the Chinese delegation before its departure that the goal at the Moscow conference was to achieve agreement, not split.<sup>147</sup> The Politburo meeting of 27 October had even decided that if the Moscow conference went well, Liu Shaoqi would pay a formal visit to the Soviet Union in the capacity of president of the PRC.<sup>148</sup> So it is hard to believe that the Chinese intended to derail the Moscow conference from the very beginning. Rather, the Chinese evidence suggests that to some extent, the Chinese had become captive to their own misperceptions and mistrust of the Soviets.

After Khrushchev's surprise attack at the Bucharest conference, the Chinese leadership had come to believe that the Soviet leader was a "conspirator" who was good at perpetuating intrigues and conspiracy, not only within the CPSU, but also against fraternal countries. Before the departure of the Chinese delegation, the CCP Politburo had convened several meetings and had expected that at the Moscow conference Khrushchev would use the majority to press the CCP into submission.<sup>149</sup> Therefore, when Khrushchev displayed warmth toward the Chinese delegation, their first reaction was reservation and suspicion. The Chinese seemed to believe that Khrushchev must be carrying out a

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<sup>146</sup> Vladislav M. Zubok, "'Look What Chaos in the Beautiful Socialist Camp!' Deng Xiaoping and the Sino-Soviet Split, 1956-1963," *CWIHP Bulletin*, Issue 10, March 1998, pp. 152-162.

<sup>147</sup> Wu Lengxi, *Shinian lunzhan*, p. 365.

<sup>148</sup> Yang Kuisong, *Mao Zedong yu mosike*, p. 457.

<sup>149</sup> Wu Lengxi, *Shinian lunzhan*, pp. 368-369.

conspiracy and using the warmth to deceive them.<sup>150</sup> On 5 November, Andropov, head of the International Department of the CPSU, delivered to the Chinese delegation a response to the Chinese reply of 10 September. The Chinese quickly took the Soviet's response, which was peppered with criticism of Chinese stances, as an attempt by the Soviets to exert pressure on them before the conference was convened and to force them to cave in at the conference.<sup>151</sup>

In hindsight, Khrushchev probably did not intend to have such a divisive conference, either. But he certainly believed that the Chinese “reply letter” must be rebutted so as to maintain Soviet authority within the socialist camp. Andropov, Suslov, Kozlov, and Mikoyan had repeatedly explained to their Chinese guests that the Soviet “reply letter” was meant to end past grievances, and that the conference was another matter entirely.<sup>152</sup> It seems that Khrushchev did want to end the prior disagreements, but only with the Soviet Union enjoying full justification. This was, however, difficult for the Chinese to accept. The Chinese believed that the Soviet gestures—all the warmth and sweet words—were part of a sinister plot designed to deceive them into acquiescence.<sup>153</sup> The Chinese delegation, upon seeing Khrushchev's pronounced warmth, discussed whether the delegation should tone down its speech.<sup>154</sup> It seems that mistrust eventually prevailed and the Chinese decided that they must strike back at Khrushchev's “conspiracy”.

Four days after Khrushchev delivered a major address on 10 November, Deng Xiaoping spoke out, hammering the Soviet leader and accusing him of the attitudes of

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<sup>150</sup> Ibid., pp. 371-373.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid., pp. 374-375.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid., p. 373, p. 376.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid., p. 377.

<sup>154</sup> Yang Kuisong, *Mao Zedong yu moske*, p. 457.

“great nation chauvinism” (*daguo shawen zhuyi*) and “father party” (*laozi dang*). Deng’s speech created a storm at the conference, with pro-Moscow communist parties rushing to the podium to accuse the Chinese of “dogmatism” and “nationalism,” and of instigating “factionist” and “divisive” activities.<sup>155</sup> The conference went to the brink of collapse when the Chinese declared that they would not sign any resolution if it endorsed the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> Congresses of the CPSU or accused the CCP of carrying out factionalism or nationalist communism.<sup>156</sup>

Quite a few parties began worrying that the conference might break down and lead to a split between China and the Soviet Union, delivering a huge blow to the socialist camp. Ho Chi Minh took the lead in organizing a “petition group” trying to persuade the Chinese and the Soviets to reach a compromise. The petition group lobbied Khrushchev on 26 November, and again tried to persuade the Chinese delegation the next day, but to no avail. In fact, the two sides had also begun worrying that a split might become reality and had started thinking about compromises. The issue was how to make concessions without compromising their own “principles.” Khrushchev first retreated from previous stances in his second speech on 23 November, calling for “mutual compromises.” Deng Xiaoping reciprocated by lowering the tone of his speech the next day.<sup>157</sup> On the night of 25 November, the Chinese delegation advised Beijing that taking into consideration that Khrushchev had made some concessions and that many within the camp strongly favored unity over a split, the Chinese should “further consider the conditions under which we make compromises.”<sup>158</sup> It took two days before the CC CCP

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<sup>155</sup> Ibid., pp. 385-397; Zubok, “Deng Xiaoping and the Sino-Soviet Split.”

<sup>156</sup> Yang Kuisong, *Mao Zedong yu mosike*, p. 458.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid.; Wu Lengxi, *Shinian lunzhan*, p. 394.

<sup>158</sup> Yang Kuisong, *ibid.*, pp. 458-459.

in Beijing reached the decision to agree to make concessions on 28 November.<sup>159</sup>

A dramatic turn came at midnight on 28 November, when Ho Chi Minh placed a call to Liu Shaoqi, inviting Liu to a private talk with Khrushchev. The Chinese decided to hold their line and declined Ho's invitation.<sup>160</sup> At the last minute, Khrushchev gave in, as he did two years later during the more dramatic Cuban Missile Crisis. Khrushchev's fundamental demand was that an endorsement of the 20<sup>th</sup> Congress of the CPSU must be written into the resolution.

On 29 November, Peng Zhen and Kozlov finally laid their cards on the table and reached an oral understanding. The Chinese agreed to put an endorsement of the 20<sup>th</sup> Congress of the CPSU into the resolution in exchange for the Soviets' willingness to withdraw any mention of opposing factionalism or nationalist communism.<sup>161</sup> The next morning, Khrushchev, along with Suslov and Kozlov, held a private meeting with Liu Shaoqi, Deng Xiaoping and Peng Zhen, and struck a deal on the resolution of the Moscow conference. "We should still be united, no matter how big the differences are," Liu stated. Khrushchev agreed to end the debate and indicated that the relationship between the Chinese and Soviet parties should be restored to the cordial level of 1957.<sup>162</sup> On 1 December 1960, a ceremony was staged in the Kremlin where delegations from 81 communist and workers' parties gathered to sign the statement of the Moscow conference. Liu Shaoqi gave a speech at the ceremony expressing the CCP's hope that the socialist camp should strengthen its unity so as to "concentrate forces to oppose our common

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<sup>159</sup> Ibid., p. 459.

<sup>160</sup> Ho Chi Minh later revealed to Chinese leaders that he made the call on Khrushchev's initiative. Apparently Khrushchev was equally, if not more eager to reach compromises with the Chinese. Wu Lengxi, *Shinian lunzhan*, p. 406; Yang Kuisong, *ibid.*, p. 460.

<sup>161</sup> Wu Lengxi, *ibid.*, pp. 410-413; Yang Kuisong, *ibid.*, p. 460.

<sup>162</sup> Wu Lengxi, *ibid.*, pp. 414-418.



enemy.”<sup>163</sup>

After the conclusion of the Moscow conference on 2 December, Liu Shaoqi paid a one-week state visit to the Soviet Union. On the night of 5 December, a crowd of twelve thousand people was staged in Moscow to welcome him as he gave an upbeat and enthusiastic speech. “Imperialism, just as it will not see the sun rise from the west, will never see a Sino-Soviet split,” Liu declared, arousing a storm of applause and chants “Long live Sino-Soviet unity”. The atmosphere at the convention was warm and upbeat, which indeed characterized Liu Shaoqi’s entire visit.

Consequently, when Liu Shaoqi headed back to Beijing, he returned in an optimistic mood about Sino-Soviet relations. He told Liu Xiao, the Chinese ambassador in Moscow who accompanied the Chinese president during his visit, that political cooperation could be strengthened on the basis of the Moscow conference. During his conversation with Ambassador Liu Xiao, Liu Shaoqi brought up two arguments for improving China’s relationship with the Soviet Union. First, he argued that “currently our nation is facing great difficulties, and lacks the experience of building socialism, therefore [we] must strive for Soviet aid and learn from Soviet experience.” He emphasized China’s security concerns:

Considering that the United States will probably exploit our difficulties and carry out military adventures against us along with Jiang Jieshi (Chiang Kai-shek), we have no other option but to improve relationship with the Soviet Union...If the Sino-Soviet relationship is improved, the danger of US military aggression against us will be reduced...Therefore it is of strategic importance to ease relations with the Soviet Union, and try to improve and strengthen such a relationship...Currently [Khrushchev] can’t do without China, and also is willing to improve relations with China.<sup>164</sup>

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<sup>163</sup> Ibid., pp. 424-425; Liu Xiao, *Chushi sulian banian*, p. 124; Li Yueran, *Zhongsu waijiao qinliji*, p. 219.

<sup>164</sup> Liu Xiao, *ibid.*, pp. 126-127.

Liu Shaoqi's conversation again revealed that the security threat from the United States was among the most important factors in prompting Chinese leaders to seek to improve relations with the Soviet Union.

The leadership back in Beijing was also relieved. Mao received Ho Chi Minh as he was returning to Hanoi via Beijing. "We are all communists and must be united," the chairman stated. "Sometimes quarrels are inevitable, but eventually we still want to be united and want to be at peace." Mao also revealed his relief to Ho, "Last time at Beidaihe I confided to you during our conversation. I said that there were no terrible matters, don't be afraid that an atomic bomb would drop down. Now I feel a bit funny when recalling that conversation between us."<sup>165</sup>

The Moscow conference has long been regarded by students of Sino-Soviet relations as merely "papering over" the differences between China and the Soviet Union.<sup>166</sup> Recently available primary sources reveal, however, that such an argument might have discounted both sides' genuine need to improve Sino-Soviet relations. Misperceptions could have caused the conference to collapse at the outset, but the two sides quickly came to realize the dangers of a split and moved to reach a compromise. A split between China and the Soviet Union would impair the strategic positions of both nations vis-à-vis the United States. China's efforts to deter military aggression by the US-backed Nationalist forces in Taiwan reinforced the need for an improved relationship with the Soviet Union. Both sides' internal assessments of the Moscow conference attested to such strategic needs.

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<sup>165</sup> Wu Lengxi, *Shinian lunzhan*, pp. 438-442.

<sup>166</sup> Zagoria, *The Sino-Soviet Conflict*, p. 22, p. 368; Zubok, "Deng Xiaoping and the Sino-Soviet Split, 1956-1963," pp. 157-158; Luthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split*, pp. 202-215.

At the CPSU Central Committee plenum on 10-18 January 1961, Suslov presented a lengthy and upbeat assessment of the Moscow conference. He claimed that the meeting had provided “a solid basis for strengthening Soviet-Chinese friendship and the unity of our parties.”<sup>167</sup> In its summary of the work in 1960 and the plan for 1961, the Chinese Foreign Ministry argued that the Moscow conference had “strengthened on a new basis the unity of the international communist movement, of the socialist camp, and of the two parties and nations of China and the Soviet Union, and dealt a blow to the instigation plot of imperialism.”<sup>168</sup> The Chinese Foreign Ministry report stated that “the debate between the Chinese and Soviet parties had temporarily come to an end” after the Moscow conference and China should “use this advantageous opportunity” to strengthen the unity between China and the Soviet Union. The report laid out the guideline for China’s foreign affairs work in 1961 as to “continue to consolidate and strengthen the unity of socialism” and to “isolate and strike the United States to the utmost.”<sup>169</sup>

### **“Brothers Are Still Brothers:” the Relative Detente after the Moscow Conference**

Such optimistic assessments, of course, did not mean that the Moscow conference had resolved all the problems between China and the Soviet Union. On the contrary, as both Suslov’s report and the Chinese Foreign Ministry acknowledged, the Moscow conference had not resolved all the problems. The Moscow conference resulted in real compromises between China and the Soviet Union. These compromises were reached

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<sup>167</sup> Quoted in Mark Kramer, “Declassified Materials from CPSU Central Committee Plenums: Sources, Context, Highlights”, *CWIHP Bulletin*, Issue 10, March 1998, p. 16.

<sup>168</sup> “Waijiaobu 1960 nian zongjie he 1961 nian jihua (chugao)” (The Summary of 1960 and the Plan of 1961 by the Foreign Ministry (draft)), *Juanhao* 122: *Guowuyuan waiban diwuci quanguo waishi huiyi* (the Fifth National Foreign Affairs Working Meeting of the State Council Foreign Affairs Office), *Quanzong hao* 3124, *Quanzong mingchen: Sheng waishi bangongshi*, JPA.

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*

because both sides had similar strategic needs and, by and large, still perceived each other as “brothers.” For Khrushchev, the U-2 incident and the ensuing collapse of the Paris conference had forced him to improve his strategic positions vis-à-vis the United States. A split with China and a split within the socialist camp would greatly weaken Khrushchev’s strategic positions as he tried to drive the Western powers out of Berlin. For China, economic difficulties brought by the catastrophic Great Leap Forward were still being felt, while it felt the stern US threat to its security more than ever.

The mutual strategic needs of China and the Soviet Union were elucidated by Peng Zhen, who directly confronted Khrushchev at the Bucharest conference. Speaking at the fifth national foreign affairs working meeting in January 1961, Peng Zhen stated, “The Soviet Union can’t do without us, neither can we do without the Soviet Union.” He went on to assert, “The struggles between the two camps are of life and death. This is an enemy-us contradiction (*diwo maodun*)... Are fraternal nations better or worse than enemies?” Peng Zhen questioned his audience, adding, “No matter what, [they] are better than enemies.” At the end of his talk, Peng cautioned his comrades, “the Sino-Soviet issue is paramount, and it is an issue concerning the fate of human beings. [We] should treat this issue soberly and cautiously.”<sup>170</sup>

Chen Yi, speaking at the same meeting the day following Peng Zhen’s talk, also stressed the strategic necessity of Sino-Soviet unity. “The Soviet Union and we are in the same pants and cannot be separated from one another,” Chen Yi stated. “Brothers are still brothers. [We] should have the common feeling of proletarian internationalism. It is no good to our CCP to make the name of the CPSU stink.” Chen Yi, who confronted

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<sup>170</sup> Item No. 4 “Peng Zhen tongzhi de baogao” (The Report of Comrade Peng Zhen), *Juanhao* 122 *Guowuyuan waiban diwuci quanguo waishi huiyi*, *Quanzong hao* 3124, *Quanzong mingchen: Sheng waishi bangongshi*, JPA.

Khrushchev during the Soviet leader's October 1959 trip to China, evidently did not hold a high regard for Khrushchev, "I can see that he is despicable, stops at nothing, can kowtow to imperialism, and blackmail his own comrades."<sup>171</sup> "But," Chen Yi cautioned his comrades, "It should be seen that he has his own good side, and can be changed and can be united," adding, "We used to see less on this score, and this is not correct."<sup>172</sup> Chinese leaders believed the Moscow conference had placed constraints on Khrushchev. Zhou Enlai also told Chen Yi that it was premature to assert that Khrushchev would be ready to compromise with the United States and throw away China.<sup>173</sup> Assessing Khrushchev's behavior since the Moscow conference, Chen Yi noted, "Generally speaking, he [Khrushchev] still wants to oppose imperialism...if he opposes imperialism, we push him forward. You come to shoulder the flag, and I come to shoulder the flag. Don't argue." Chen Yi was also keenly aware of the threat of the United States and warned against the US plan for "two Chinas." Kennedy "needs to have a little détente to save himself, to unite the West, and to be prepared to attack us," Chen Yi stated.<sup>174</sup>

China decided to adopt a policy of détente toward the Soviet Union after the Moscow conference, and concentrated on addressing China's economic difficulties and settling border issues with neighboring countries. The Soviet Union also made efforts to remedy the rift. In a letter to the Chinese government dated on 12 January 1961, Khrushchev indicated that the Soviet Union would be willing to aid China in producing MiG 21 "Fishbed" fighter planes. Zhou Enlai, in a 5 February reply, agreed to send a delegation to Moscow to conduct follow-up negotiations in mid-February and noted that

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<sup>171</sup> Item No. 15 "Chen Yi tongzhi guanyu guoji xingshi he waijiao zhengce de baogao" (Comrade Chen Yi's Report Concerning International Situation and Foreign Policy), *ibid.*

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*

production of such fighters would “be conducive to the strengthening of Chinese defense capability.”<sup>175</sup> About three weeks later, on 27 February, Khrushchev sent Mao another letter, proposing that the Soviet Union be ready to provide China one million tons of foodstuffs and a half million tons of Cuban sugar in the form of loans.<sup>176</sup> Apparently under Mao’s authority, Liu Shaoqi received Soviet ambassador Chervonenko the next day, praising the Soviet effort as “a manifestation of real support for China.” On 20 March, Foreign Minister Chen Yi, in his meeting with Chervonenko, also expressed his optimism about a new period of close Sino-Soviet cooperation.<sup>177</sup>

In a 30 September meeting with Chervonenko, Deng Xiaoping, who received the Soviet ambassador at Mao’s instruction, made clear his satisfaction that the Sino-Soviet relationship had been developing fairly well since the Moscow conference. Recalling his recent conversation with Kozlov at the Fourth Party Congress of the North Korean Labor Party in Pyongyang,<sup>178</sup> Deng said, “We spoke about the importance of solidarity. I said to Kozlov that, of course, on this or that concrete issue we might not have identical opinions, but on the whole, after the Moscow conference, our relations have been developing fairly well. Kozlov agreed with this.”<sup>179</sup> Deng Xiaoping continued to point out that “on a series of important international problems, we expressed and continue to express support for your actions...Between the USSR and the PRC,” Deng added, “very good cooperation has been established in the international arena; for instance, at the Geneva Conference on

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<sup>175</sup> *Zhou Enlai nianpu*, vol. 2, pp. 389-390.

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 394

<sup>177</sup> Westad ed., *Brothers in Arms*, p. 26, p. 44.

<sup>178</sup> Deng took a delegation to attend the fourth party congress of the North Korean Labor Party on September 9 and returned Beijing on September 26, four days before he received Chervonenko. See *Waijiaobu dang’anguan* (the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Archives) ed., *Weiren de zuji: Deng Xiaoping waijiao huodong dashiji* (The Footsteps of a Great Man: Chronicle of Major Events of Deng Xiaoping’s Diplomatic Activities) (Beijing: Shijie zhishi, 1998), pp. 34-35.

<sup>179</sup> “Transcript of Conversation with General Secretary of the CC CCP Deng Xiaoping, 30 September 1961,” from the Diary of S.V. Chervonenko, 12 October 1961, copy no. 1, top secret, translated and published by the CWIHP in *CWIHP Bulletin*, Issue 10, March 1998, pp. 174-175.

Laos.”<sup>180</sup> During his conversation with the Soviet ambassador, Deng made no secret of China’s desire to see an improvement in Soviet relations with Albania, which had continuously deteriorated in the first half of 1961 and reached a nadir at the Warsaw Pact summit in August 1961. Calling the recent development in the disputes between Moscow and Tirana “bad news,” Deng expressed Beijing’s hope that this bad news would be the end point after which an improvement would follow.<sup>181</sup> When Ambassador Chervnonenko stated that Albania’s recent move was “damaging the security of the member-countries of the Warsaw Pact and the basic security of the entire socialist camp,” Deng spoke in the tone of a mediator, “Everyone must not take extreme measures, in order to leave room for settlement.”<sup>182</sup> In an indication of China’s willingness to persuade, if not press, Albania to preserve its unity with the Soviet Union, Deng made the following remark, “We said and will say to the Albanian comrades that relations between you should improve and not worsen.”<sup>183</sup>

During a meeting of the permanent members of the Politburo on 5 September 1961, Mao stated that “With regard to Sino-Soviet relations, we should try uttermost to extend the current period of relative reconciliation. Although neither dead nor alive for the time being, it is still more beneficial than public polemics.” Mao also admitted, however, that the extent to which Khrushchev would change was rather limited. “The general assessment is that our struggles in the past two years haven’t been able to completely hinder Khrushchev, much less change his fundamental stances,” Mao

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<sup>180</sup> Ibid.; Chinese memoirs literature has also noted the close cooperation China and the Soviet Union had been enjoying during the Geneva conference on Laos in May-July, 1961. For detailed behind-the-scenes stories, see Li Yueran, *Zhongsu waijiao qinliji*, pp. 229-232; Wu Lengxi, *Shinian lunzhan*, pp. 453-454.

<sup>181</sup> “Transcript of Conversation with General Secretary of the CC CCP Deng Xiaoping, 30 September 1961,” p. 174.

<sup>182</sup> Ibid.

<sup>183</sup> Ibid.

noted.<sup>184</sup>

### **“The Bad Brother”: From the 22<sup>nd</sup> Congress of the CPSU to the Sino-Indian Border Conflict**

Mao’s worries about Khrushchev were indeed warranted. As the Berlin Crisis culminated in the building of the Berlin Wall in August 1961, Khrushchev, believing that the construction of the Wall marked the Western powers’ recognition of a continuation of the status quo, decided to abandon brinkmanship for diplomacy from a position of strength.<sup>185</sup> Increasingly worried about Chinese militancy, Khrushchev began to wonder if it would be better to pursue détente with the United States than continue to ally with a militant Chinese line.<sup>186</sup>

On 31 October Moscow maneuvered to exclude China from participation in the Warsaw Pact, on the grounds that it was a potentially subversive influence.<sup>187</sup> The Soviet move coincided with Khrushchev’s indirect assault on the Chinese at the 22<sup>nd</sup> Congress of the CPSU, where he publicly attacked the PRC’s proxy, Albania. Moscow had been increasing its pressure on Albania in 1961. At the March Warsaw Pact summit, the Soviet Union passed a resolution condemning Albania. In May Moscow suspended aid to Albania, eventually expelling Albania from the Warsaw Pact in August. Beijing had been closely watching the unfolding drama. Although the Chinese had often tried to persuade the Soviets to reverse course on Albania, Beijing, as time passed by, seemed to become

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<sup>184</sup> Wu Lengxi, *Shinian lunzhan*, p. 463.

<sup>185</sup> Vladislav M. Zubok, “Khrushchev and the Berlin Crisis, 1958-1962,” The CWIHP Working Paper No. 6, The Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Washington, D.C., May 1993.

<sup>186</sup> Zubok, “Khrushchev and the Berlin Crisis”; Thomas W. Wolfe, “Two Approaches to Military Strategy,” in Zablocki ed., *Sino-Soviet Rivalry*, p. 56.

<sup>187</sup> Vojtech Mastny, “China, the Warsaw Pact, and Sino-Soviet Relations under Khrushchev,” in Parallel History Project on NATO and the Warsaw Pact, Document Collection No. 11, *China and the Warsaw Pact under Mao and Khrushchev*, October 2002.



more and more convinced that Khrushchev was adopting a strategy of crushing Albania, China's most staunch ally into submission, then targeting China itself.<sup>188</sup>

The 22<sup>nd</sup> Congress of the CPSU, held on 17–31 October 1961, proved to be a turning point. Although Beijing seemed to have foreseen the probability of Soviet pressure on Albania, it had not imagined that Khrushchev would go so far.<sup>189</sup> Indeed, on October 12, Zhou Enlai informed Ho Chi Minh on the way to the CPSU Congress that his forthcoming visit to Moscow was for the purpose of congratulating the 22<sup>nd</sup> Congress, and that China was “prepared to stress unity and opposition to imperialism, which [was] advantageous to the struggle against the enemy.”<sup>190</sup> Khrushchev's move certainly bore the risk of open rift with China if Beijing did not back down. Calculating that Beijing's severe economic crisis and dire need of Soviet trade, credit, and assistance may have rendered its bargaining position much weaker, Khrushchev was determined to “blackmail” his Chinese ally into surrender.<sup>191</sup>

The Soviet leader, however, underestimated the determination and fierce pride of the Chinese leadership.<sup>192</sup> The outraged Chinese leaders believed Khrushchev's move against Albania was intended to “kill the chicken to frighten the monkeys” (*shaji jinghou*) and force China into submission.<sup>193</sup> Zhou Enlai offered a rather veiled and reserved rebuttal in his 19 October address to the congress, stating “any unfair and one-sided charges against any fraternal party are of no benefit to unity and of not benefit to the resolution of the problems. It cannot be considered the sober attitude of Marxism and

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<sup>188</sup> Wu Lengxi, *Shinian lunzhan*, p. 457.

<sup>189</sup> Scholars used to believe that Khrushchev's attack on Albania at the 22<sup>nd</sup> congress of the CPSU came as a surprise to Beijing. Recent Chinese memoirs literature, however, reveals that Beijing had actually foreseen that Moscow might “oppose Albania” at the congress. See Zagoria, *The Sino-Soviet Conflict*, pp. 370-371; Wu Lengxi, *ibid.*, pp. 468-470.

<sup>190</sup> *Zhou Enlai nianpu*, vol. 2, p. 440.

<sup>191</sup> Zagoria, *The Sino-Soviet Conflict*, p. 374.

<sup>192</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 375.

<sup>193</sup> Wu Lengxi, *Shinian lunzhan*, p. 475.

Leninism to expose before the enemy disputes between fraternal parties and fraternal countries.”<sup>194</sup>

Zhou, the reserved Chinese premier, was more critical in a nine-hour talk with Khrushchev on 22 October, criticizing the Soviet leader’s open denunciation of Albania in a severe tone. Khrushchev rejected Zhou’s criticism, claiming, “We used to be in great need of your support. But now it’s different, now we’re in a much better position, and we’ll walk our own way.”<sup>195</sup> After his unpleasant talk with Khrushchev, Zhou Enlai returned to Beijing the next day, before the Congress was even concluded — a gesture widely seen as a protest.<sup>196</sup>

Between 11 January and 7 February 1962, the CCP convened an enlarged central working meeting, also called the Seven-Thousand Meeting, pulling together about seven thousand high-ranking party officials from around the PRC. It was at this meeting that Chinese leaders took pains to acknowledge the mistakes they had made during the Great Leap Forward and vowed to repair the crisis-ridden economy.<sup>197</sup> What is intriguing is that Liu Shaoqi, who had taken the lead in calling for a moderate economic policy and indeed stressed the strategic need of improving relations with Moscow only a year earlier, now took a critical view of the Soviet Union. In a hand-written outline for the keynote report to the meeting, Liu charged that Khrushchev was “ruthless to his own comrades and gentle to the enemy, and has publicly exposed the split.” He added that Moscow’s revisionism, by the 22<sup>nd</sup> Congress of the CPSU, had “developed to a quite comprehensive

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<sup>194</sup> *Zhou Enlai nianpu*, vol. 2, pp. 440-441; Wu Lengxi, *ibid.*, p. 472.

<sup>195</sup> Wu Lengxi, *ibid.*, p. 474.

<sup>196</sup> Li Yueran, *Zhongsu waijiao qinliji*, p. 236; Wu Lengxi, *ibid.*, p. 473; Zagoria, *The Sino-Soviet Conflict*, p. 370.

<sup>197</sup> *Zhou Enlai nianpu*, vol. 2, pp. 451-452.

revisionist line.”<sup>198</sup> In answering the question of whether a Sino-Soviet split was inevitable, Liu raised three possibilities: one was to “preserve the status quo”; another was a further deterioration of relations without a split; and the third was a public split. Liu wrote that when revisionists imposed a split, China should “strengthen the work of friendship toward the Soviet people” on the one hand, and “reject provocations” on the other.<sup>199</sup> In a talk on 30 January, Mao concurred with Liu’s assessments. The chairman, however, ruled out the Albanian approach. “Concerning our relationship with the Soviet Union, [we] do not necessarily adopt the Albanian way,” Mao stated. “That is to say [we] use every means to avoid the split and postpone the split, and it’s good even to maintain a situation of unfriendliness, but no split on the surface.”<sup>200</sup>

By late 1961 and into early 1962 Chinese leaders had become pessimistic about the prospect of preserving Sino-Soviet unity. Indeed, events in 1962 quickly convinced them that the nature of the relationship between China and the Soviet Union had undergone a significant change. From mid-April to the end of May 1962, more than 60,000 ethnically Kazakh Chinese Muslims residing in Ili Prefecture and Tacheng, Xinjiang fled to the Soviet Union. The causes of the exodus were complicated, and can be attributed to a number of reasons, including famine caused by failed economic policies and Soviet encouragement and even support for the fleeing crowds.<sup>201</sup> However, the

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<sup>198</sup> “Liu Shaoqi zai kuoda de zhongyang gongzuo huiyi shang de jianghua tigang shougao (bufen), yi jiu liu er nian yi yue” (The Manuscript of the Outline of Liu Shaoqi’s Talk at the Enlarged Central Working Meeting (Part), January 1962), in the Central Archives ed., *Gongheguo wushi nian zhengui dang’an* (The Precious Archives of the Fifty Years of the PRC) (Beijing: Zhongguo dang’an, 1999), vol. 1, pp. 788-789.

<sup>199</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 791; Wu Lengxi, *Shinian lunzhan*, p. 486.

<sup>200</sup> Wu Lengxi, *ibid.*, p. 488.

<sup>201</sup> The English literature takes the view that the incident was largely caused by the famines brought the failed policy of the Great Leap Forward. Chinese historian Li Danhui, using recently declassified Chinese archives in Xinjiang, has made the argument that the Soviet Union agitated, and even supported the exodus by “suddenly, illegally increase(ing) the number of Soviet resident certificates issued.” See Constantine Pleshakov, “Nikita Khrushchev and Sino-Soviet Relations,” in Westad ed., *Brothers in Arms*, p. 239; Li Danhui, “Dui 1962 nian Xinjiang yita shijian qiyan de lishi kaocha—laizi zhongguo Xinjiang de dang’an cailiao” (A Historical Examination of the Origins of the 1962 Yili-

incident greatly influenced Chinese perceptions of a Soviet threat to its security.

Historically, Moscow had great influence, both economically and politically, on Xinjiang Province, which was to a large extent independent. Many Chinese officials in Xinjiang were Soviet nationals. By 1960, about 22% of the prefecture-level officials in the Ili Autonomous Prefecture were Soviet citizens. The so-called Yili-Tacheng Incident set off alarm bells for Chinese leaders, who viewed both the Yili-Tacheng Incident in the west and the Nationalist forces' harassment on the southeast coast as taking advantage of Chinese economic difficulties by instigating subversion. The Soviet threat to Chinese security was keenly felt. The Chinese government decided to use the incident to uproot Soviet political influence in Xinjiang, vowing to make Xinjiang become the "People's Republic of China's Xinjiang, no longer other people's Xinjiang."<sup>202</sup>

On 22 October 1962, Chinese and Indian troops clashed along the Sino-Indian border. Soviet support for India irritated China. In a talk at the sixth national foreign affairs working meeting on 7 November 1962, Chinese Deputy Foreign Minister Zhang Hanfu detailed Chinese grievances against Khrushchev, alleging that the Soviet attitude toward the Sino-Indian border dispute was neutral on the surface but in essence supported India. Zhang noted that Khrushchev supported China's stance on the Sino-Indian border conflict and declared the McMahon Line "illegal" on 25 October 1962, only to reverse his words five days later. "Why has it changed from the 25<sup>th</sup> to the 31<sup>st</sup>, in only five days?" Zhang questioned. "It was because on the 25<sup>th</sup>, the situation in Cuba was very

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Tacheng Incident in Xinjiang—Archival Materials from Xinjiang, China), *Dangshi yanjiu ziliao* (Research Materials of the Party History), no. 4-5, 1999.

<sup>202</sup> Item No. 16 "Guowuyuan waiban: Zhang Hanfu tongzhi diyici de jianghua (jilu), 1962 nian 11 yue 7 ri" (The State Council Foreign Affairs Office: Comrade Zhang Hanfu's First Talk (Recorded Copy)), November 7, 1962, *Juanhao* 145 *Guowuyuan waiban diliuci quanguo waishi gongzuo huiyi* (The State Council Foreign Affairs Office's Sixth National Foreign Affairs Working Meeting) (July-November, 1962), *Quanzong hao* 3124, *Quanzong mingchen: Sheng waishi bangongshi*, JPA.

intense.” Kennedy demanded that Khrushchev withdraw weapons and threatened to use force. “Khrushchev was scared, scared to death...therefore Khrushchev cheated on us. [He] is truly a pragmatist.”<sup>203</sup> After delivering a laundry list of complaints over Soviet support for India since 1959, Zhang charged that Khrushchev not only “attacked and criticized us,” but even “sold out our nation, and betrayed [his] ally” by providing military aid to India. Zhang noted that between October 1960 and May 1962, the Soviet Union had received orders from India for 94 aircraft, including 32 Antonov An-12 transport planes, 26 MiG helicopters, 21 MiG jet fighters, and 24 Ilyushin IL-14s. Zhang added that among the three Indian jet fighters downed by the Chinese, one was actually made by the Soviet Union.<sup>204</sup>

“Pragmatism is revisionism. When [Khrushchev] wants to make [compromises] with the United States, increase his bargaining chips, and thus needs us, he treats you a bit ‘well,’” Zhang Hanfu remarked. “But when [he] no longer needs [you], in the end he slaps your face.”<sup>205</sup> Khrushchev’s determination to conclude a test ban treaty with the United States enraged the Chinese even further, who believed that Khrushchev was “colluding with the enemy to sell out [China] on the issue of nuclear proliferation.”<sup>206</sup> On 25 August 1962, the Soviet Union informed the Chinese government that US Secretary of State Dean Rusk and Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko were to negotiate an agreement to prohibit nuclear proliferation.<sup>207</sup> Dismissive of the Soviet argument that prohibiting nuclear proliferation was aimed at containing West Germany,

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<sup>203</sup> Ibid.

<sup>204</sup> Ibid.

<sup>205</sup> Ibid.

<sup>206</sup> Item No. 9 “Guowuyuan waiban: Liu Ningyi tongzhi de fayan (jilu) guanyu woguo renmin tuanti de guoji huodong wenti (1962 nian 11 yue 6 ri)” (The State Council Foreign Affairs Office: The Talk by Comrade Liu Ningyi (Recorded Copy) Concerning the Issue of International Activities of the People’s Organizations of Our Nation, (November 6, 1962)), *ibid.*

<sup>207</sup> Item No. 16 “Guowuyuan waiban: Zhang Hanfu tongzhi diyici de jianghua (jilu), 1962 nian 11 yue 7 ri,” *ibid.*

the Chinese government contended that “the truth of matter is that [Khrushchev’s] goal is to deal with China, to bind up China.”<sup>208</sup> Rejecting the Soviet argument that Moscow’s owning nuclear weapons could protect the security of socialist countries, Chinese deputy foreign minister Zhang Hanfu made a pointed remark. “[Khrushchev] wanted to coax us. In fact he worries that we might own nuclear weapons,” Zhang said, “Revisionism is afraid that Marxism may become strong. [These] are all cheating words. Who knows toward whom he will fire rockets one day? You never can tell.”<sup>209</sup>

By November 1962, Chinese leaders had come to realize that the nature of the relationship between China and the Soviet Union had changed. Zhang Hanfu noted, “Some say ‘brothers are still brothers,’ but this brother is a bad one, a revisionist elder brother.”<sup>210</sup> Zhang Yan, deputy director of the State Council Foreign Affairs Office, speaking on 26 November as the national foreign affairs working meeting was drawing to close, noted, “We should get a clear and definite understanding that Khrushchev is a traitor, not a proletarian.”<sup>211</sup> Liu Ningyi, deputy director of the International Department of the CC CCP put it more bluntly, “He [Khrushchev] colludes with the enemy, opposes the Soviet Union, and opposes communism. The purpose of all his activities was to oppose us, to strike down China and to strike down the leader of the Chinese party, Comrade Mao Zedong.”<sup>212</sup>

The Chinese leadership’s grasp of Khrushchev’s essence, however, did not mean that they targeted Khrushchev as their primary enemy. Rather, Chinese leaders made

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<sup>208</sup> Ibid.

<sup>209</sup> Ibid.

<sup>210</sup> Ibid.

<sup>211</sup> Item No. 3 “Guowuyuan waiban: Zhang Yan tongzhi jianghua, yijiu liu’er nian ershiliu ri shangwu” (The State Council Foreign Affairs Office: Comrade Zhang Yan’s Talk, November 26 Morning, 1962), *ibid.*

<sup>212</sup> Item No. 9 “Guowuyuan waiban: Liu Ningyi tongzhi de fayan (jilu) guanyu woguo renmin tuanti de guoji huodong wenti (1962 nian 11 yue 6 ri),” *ibid.*

sophisticated strategic calculations, and the United States clearly loomed large in them. Though they did not use balance of power terminology, they acutely sensed the constraints a bipolar system brought to the Soviet Union. “Because it is a great power, it is impossible for the Soviet Union to completely compromise with the United States,” Zhang Yan noted.<sup>213</sup> Chinese leaders clearly understood the pressures the bipolar system placed on the dominant two powers. “What the United States is afraid of is still the Soviet Union,” Zhang Yan analyzed, “because the Soviet Union constitutes the biggest threat to the United States, and what the Soviet Union worries about the most is still the United States.”<sup>214</sup> Deputy Foreign Minister Zhang Hanfu assessed that “the United States is not giving him consultations or making concessions, but pressing him very hard,” therefore “he still cannot completely throw away the flags of anti-imperialism, anti-colonialism, and support for revolutionary movements.”<sup>215</sup> Based on such assessments China developed a strategy toward the Soviet Union that was perhaps much more sophisticated than previously realized.

While Chen Yi warned that “we cannot have any illusions about Khrushchev,”<sup>216</sup> Beijing still saw the strategic benefit of maintaining at least superficial unity with the Soviet Union, with which China could play Khrushchev against the United States. “In terms of Khrushchev, it’s impossible for us to unite with [him] on the basis of proletarian internationalism,” Zhang Yan stated. “But it is a tactic to use his contradictions with

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<sup>213</sup> Item No. 3 “Guowuyuan waiban: Zhang Yan tongzhi jianghua, yijiu liu’er nian ershiliu ri shangwu,” *ibid.*

<sup>214</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>215</sup> Item No. 16 “Guowuyuan waiban: Zhang Hanfu tongzhi diyici de jianghua (jilu), 1962 nian 11 yue 7 ri” (The State Council Foreign Affairs Office: Comrade Zhang Hanfu’s First Talk (Notes), November 7, 1962), *ibid.*

<sup>216</sup> Item No. 6 “Chen Yi fuzongli zai difang waishi huiyi jieshu qian de jianghua yandian (jilugao), yijiu liu’er nian shiyi yue ershiba ri xiawu” (The Main Points of Vice Premier Chen Yi’s Talk before the Conclusion of the Regional Foreign Affairs Meeting (Recorded Copy), Afternoon, November 28, 1962), *ibid.*

American imperialism to hinder him.”<sup>217</sup> Refuting the more radical views that China “can still live without Khrushchev” and that Beijing should “call upon the Soviet people to overthrow Khrushchev,” Chen Yi, who spoke at the concluding session of the sixth national foreign affairs working meeting on 28 November 1962, argued that “We cannot do that; it’s not profitable for the opposition to American imperialism.” The Foreign Minister went on to explain, “Khrushchev is still the leader of a great socialist state and leader of the Soviet communist party, therefore friendship on the surface should still be maintained. [If] he doesn’t declare a break, neither do we.”<sup>218</sup>

Chinese leaders believed that the contradiction between Marxism and revisionism was one of the nature of enemy vs. us (*diwo xingzhi*). However for strategic considerations over the hearts and minds of the peoples of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe and, more importantly, opposing the United States, they believed that China should treat discord as “a contradiction within the peoples” (*renmin neibu maodun*).<sup>219</sup> “Struggles against revisionism are not a one-sided issue,” Chen Yi cautioned his comrades. “Today the most important thing is still to oppose imperialism headed by the United States. It is under the premise of opposing the United States that we expose revisionism.”<sup>220</sup>

Chen Yi then explained the strategy China should adopt: “It won’t be allowed if [we] don’t struggle, for we cannot agree with his way...Of course, if [we] struggle too much, [we] will lose the sympathy of the world proletariat and the sympathy of Soviet

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<sup>217</sup> Item No. 3 “Guowuyuan waiban: Zhang Yan tongzhi jianghua, yijiu liu’er nian ershiliu ri shangwu,” *ibid*.

<sup>218</sup> Item No. 6 “Chen Yi fuzongli zai defang waishi huiyi jieshu qian de jianghua yandian (jilugao), yijiu liu’er nian shiyi yue ershiba ri xiawu,” (Afternoon, November 28, 1962), *ibid*.

<sup>219</sup> Item No. 2 “Guowuyuan waiban: diliuci quanguo waishi huiyi chuanda yaodian” (The Main Points Transmitted by the Sixth National Foreign Affairs Meeting), December 17, 1962, *ibid*.

<sup>220</sup> Item No. 6 “Chen Yi fuzongli zai defang waishi huiyi jieshu qian de jianghua yandian (jilugao), yijiu liu’er nian shiyi yue ershiba ri xiawu,” *ibid*.



people, and [they will] say that we are for the purpose of competing for leadership.”<sup>221</sup>

Chen Yi added, “In most circumstances, [we] should still defend the Soviet authority and defend Sino-Soviet unity. But on important issues, such as the Cuban issue, [we] must seize the opportunity to expose him severely but without mentioning him by name.”<sup>222</sup>

### **Conclusion: The Quarrelling Brothers and the Sino-Soviet Split**

This examination of new Chinese evidence has shown that much of the conventional wisdom about the Sino-Soviet split may need to be revised, as it discounted the genuine strategic need of Beijing to rein in the tendency toward an open split. Most accounts state that after 1959 the Chinese and the Soviets were on a collision course, with each convinced that a break was inevitable. However, new Chinese evidence shows that the Chinese, at least up until early 1961, placed hopes on Khrushchev and repeatedly intended to repair their relationship with the Soviets. It was not until late 1962 that the Chinese came to a firm conclusion that Khrushchev had become a full-fledged revisionist. It also was not until then that the Chinese became extremely pessimistic about improving Sino-Soviet relations.

The new Chinese sources also show that Chinese moves toward “partial détente” from 1959 to 1961 went beyond tactical maneuvers calculated to place the blame over a break on the Soviets, as the literature usually holds. Indeed, China had a genuine strategic need to preserve Sino-Soviet unity in order to neutralize the American threat to China’s security, at a minimum, and, at a maximum, to advance the world socialist revolution. It is because of these genuine strategic needs that the Chinese were far more reluctant to break with Moscow than generally understood.

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<sup>221</sup> Ibid.

<sup>222</sup> Ibid.

Contrary to the prevailing view of the Chinese as being dogmatic and provocative, the new evidence suggests that Chinese leaders tended to be more rational and realistic than we might have expected, and were very eager to avoid an open split with the Soviet Union. The new evidence also shows that Chinese leaders, beneath their ideological rhetoric, were perfectly capable of thinking in terms of power politics and geopolitical strategy.

Chinese policy toward the Soviet Union was strongly influenced by Beijing's changing perceptions of Khrushchev. And indeed, misperceptions might have deepened both sides' mistrust of each other, thus precipitating the split. For China, the optimal scenario would have China and the Soviet Union united together against imperialism. A complete break in Sino-Soviet relations would be the worst case scenarios. At the sixth national foreign affairs working meeting on 28 November 1962, Chen Yi noted that "It would be surely great should, after the death of Stalin, China and the Soviet Union be united in one accord and have [the USSR] as the head to deal with imperialism through concerted cooperation; that would have been the most ideal. The reality, however, was that Khrushchev's revisionism had arisen."<sup>223</sup> The objective strategic needs of improving China's security positions and consolidating the socialist camp's strategic positions vis-à-vis the United States might explain why Chinese leaders repeatedly tried to avoid diplomatic break and why they had placed hopes on Khrushchev that the Soviet leader might "change in a good direction." In the summer of 1960, Chinese leaders were still stressing that Khrushchev should be differentiated from Tito, the full-fledged revisionist, by merely calling the Soviet leader "half-revisionist." The success of the November 1960

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<sup>223</sup> Ibid.

Moscow conference raised the Chinese leadership's hopes that Sino-Soviet unity might be preserved through a necessary struggle with revisionism.

To Beijing's chagrin, however, Soviet policy toward the West did not follow the "good direction" Chinese leaders desired. As the Berlin Crisis culminated in the erection of the Berlin Wall in August 1961, Khrushchev believed it had become time to move away from brinkmanship and seek diplomacy with the West from a position of strength. By late 1961 Khrushchev had come to perceive the Sino-Soviet alliance as more of a liability than an asset to his strategic goal of détente with the United States. It was not until the 22<sup>nd</sup> Congress of the CPSU in October 1961, however, that Chinese leaders came to a firm belief that Khrushchev had become a full-fledged revisionist. Successive events in 1962 convinced Chinese leaders that they could no longer constrain Khrushchev, evidenced by the sacrifice of China's strategic interests in the 1962 Sino-Indian border conflict and 1962-1963 Test Ban negotiations with the United States.

It was only then that Beijing began to argue that it should "compete with revisionism for leadership in the international struggle."<sup>224</sup> Just about three years earlier, China was still taking great pains to preserve the leadership of the Soviet Union in the socialist camp, even if it required smothering dissenting opinions at home. Beijing's stance changed as it gradually came to conclude that Khrushchev had chosen to "capitulate" to American imperialism and "betray" the interests of China as well as the socialist camp.

The new evidence shows that the United States always loomed large in Beijing's calculations of policy toward the Soviet Union. Chinese leaders had repeatedly factored

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<sup>224</sup> Item No. 2 "Guowuyuan waiban: diliuci quanguo waishi huiyi chuanda yaodian," December 17, 1962, *ibid.*

the United States into the equation when crafting its policy toward the Soviet Union. Indeed, China rejected the possibility of moving to the side of the United States, even after it came to believe that the Soviet Union had chosen to collude with the United States. “Opposing revisionism is opposing America and opposing imperialism,” an August 1963 CC CCP report stated. “We cannot fall in the trap, cannot for the purpose of opposing revisionism collude with the United States.”<sup>225</sup> In a September 1963 CC CCP report, the Chinese leadership concluded, “They [the Soviets] are afraid that we make compromises with the West, rendering impossible US-Soviet cooperation to divide the world evenly. It’s completely trying to estimate what’s in the heart of the great with the heart of the mean. We will never make compromises with the United States.”<sup>226</sup>

The new Chinese evidence suggests that China’s genuine strategic needs had made it far more reluctant to break with the Soviets than is usually believed. This new Chinese evidence does not make the Sino-Soviet split easier to comprehend, however. In fact, it only makes it more difficult to understand. Additional studies that combine recent archival sources from China, Russia and former Eastern European countries are needed to advance our understanding of this crucial episode of the Cold War.

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<sup>225</sup> Item No. 2 “Zhongyang: guanyu xingshi de baogao” (The Center: Report Concerning the Current Situation), August 1963, *Juanhao* 177, *Zhongyang shouzhang guanyu guoneiwai xingshi de baogao, 1963 nian sanyue dao shiyue* (Central Leaders’ Reports Concerning Situations at Home and Abroad, March to October, 1963), *Quanzong hao* 3124, *Quanzong mingchen: Sheng waishi bangongshi*, JPA.

<sup>226</sup> Item No. 1 “Zhongyang: muqian guoji xingshi wenti” (The Center: Issues of the Current International Situation), September 1963, *ibid.*

## **APPENDIX I: A Description of the Collections Held by the JPA, China**

The JPA materials related to foreign policy that are available to researchers consist of three parts: the collection of the Jiangsu Provincial Foreign Affairs Office (*Jiangsu sheng waishi bangongshi*); the collection of the General Office of the Jiangsu Provincial Committee of the CCP (*Jiangsu shengwei bangongting*); and the collection of Materials since the Foundation of the PRC (*jianguo yilai ziliao*). The materials used by this paper are mostly from the collection of the Jiangsu Provincial Foreign Affairs Office.

I) The Collection of the Jiangsu Provincial Foreign Affairs Office: China held annual “national working meetings on foreign affairs” (*quanguo waishi gongzuo huiyi*) from 1958 to 1966. At those meetings, central leaders from the Foreign Affairs Office at the State Council (*Guowuyuan waishi bangongshi*), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the CCP International Department (*Zhongyang duiwai lianluobu*) and other top decision-making agencies spoke. Premier Zhou Enlai and Foreign Minister Chen Yi gave talks at many of those meetings. The meeting materials consist of transcripts of secret talks given by leaders as well as internal documents transmitted to provincial foreign affairs offices.

II) The Collection of the General Office of the Jiangsu Provincial Committee of the CCP: the Central Committee of the CCP often transmitted important documents to provincial committees. At the JPA I also found highly valuable materials in the collections of the Jiangsu Provincial Committee of the CCP, including minutes of several Politburo meetings in 1965 which discussed war preparations in anticipation of the American escalation of the Vietnam War, as well as transcripts of top secret talks delivered by military leaders such as Lin Biao (then Vice Chairman of the CCP Central Military Committee and Defense Minister), Luo Ruiqing (then Chief of the General Staff of the CCP Central Military Committee) and Marshall Ye Jianying (a member of the CCP Central Military Committee).

III) The materials since the foundation of the PRC (*jianguo yilai ziliao*) consist of intelligence estimates and policy reports prepared by the Department of Investigation of the CCP Central Committee (the predecessor of the Chinese State Security Ministry), as well as the Chinese Foreign Ministry, including analytical reports of the situation in and policy trends of the United States, analyses of the Kennedy administration, and analyses of the domestic situation of India and its calculations in the Sino-Indian negotiations.

## Author's Note

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