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The Sino-Soviet alliance and the Cold War in Asia, 1954–1962

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The superpowers' competition for allies constituted a large part of the Cold War in Asia. The alliance between the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China (PRC) in February 1950 seemed to be a major diplomatic victory for Moscow. How to maintain the alliance proved a serious challenge. Conventional wisdom dictates that the commonalities in ideological, economic, political, and security interests between the two Communist powers would sustain the compact. Along with the personal idiosyncrasies of Mao Zedong and Nikita Khrushchev, cultural, racial, and domestic factors, nevertheless, eroded the cohesion of the Sino-Soviet alliance. This chapter aims to reconstruct how Beijing and Moscow tried to maintain the alliance, and how the corrosive Sino-Soviet partnership affected the course of the Cold War in Asia.

From the Korean War to the Hungarian uprising

From the outset, the Sino-Soviet alliance was loaded with expectations and aspirations. When the alliance treaty was signed, China wanted more than the Soviet Union was willing to give: the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) leaders aspired to secure Moscow's commitment to defending China, not only to thwart a perceived threat from the United States, but also to ensure that the Kremlin would be a more reliable partner in the future than it had been in the past. They still remembered Stalin's reluctance to support the CCP fully during China's anti-Japanese war (1931–45) and his making deals with Jiang Jieshi (Chiang Kai-shek) during the civil war (1945–49).[1] Ideologically, however, Mao had mixed feelings toward Stalin-style Communism. Although

1 Shu Guang Zhang, *Deterrence and Strategic Culture: Chinese–American Confrontations, 1948–1958* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992), 13–33; Odd Arne Westad, *Cold War and Revolution: Soviet–American Rivalry and the Origins of the Chinese Civil War, 1944–1946* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 32–36.

identifying himself as a Marxist, Mao aimed to apply Marxist-Leninist principles to Chinese realities. His open proclamation to "lean" to the Soviet side in 1949 was more a political move – intended to contain calls within and outside his party for taking a "third road" rather than following Soviet or American models – than an ideological requirement.[2] For economic reconstruction, Beijing intended to learn from the Soviet experiences but without necessarily relying on Soviet assistance. Although trying to avoid expected Soviet interference, Mao found it unrealistic to be completely self-reliant, given China's war-torn economy and political instability.[3]

The Korean War was the first serious test of the Sino-Soviet alliance. Soviet military aid – materiel and personnel – supporting China's intervention in Korea was evidence of Moscow's will to keep its promise. Mao's decision to confront the United States in Korea was in part to prove to Stalin that the former was not an "Asian Tito" but a trustworthy partner.[4] After the conflict came to a halt in July 1953, Beijing began to amend its expectations of the alliance. With the security situation in East Asia more stable, the CCP was filled with anxieties, wanting to expedite economic reconstruction, upgrade defense capability, and minimize the impact of the Western economic embargo on China. To these ends, it expected Soviet economic and technological aid to play a crucial role.[5] By sacrificing itself to save North Korea on the Soviet Union's behalf, Beijing expected Moscow to reciprocate with favors.

Khrushchev's Kremlin did not disappoint Beijing in the immediate post-Korean War years. In May 1953 (only two months after Stalin's death), Anastas Mikoian and China's Vice Premier Li Fuchun signed an agreement in Moscow that the Soviet Union would provide technology and equipment to build up to ninety-one defense-related projects.[6] A large number of Soviet experts began to arrive in China, and even larger numbers of Chinese students were

2 John Lewis Gaddis, *We Now Know: Rethinking Cold War History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 63–64. See also Michael Sheng, *Battling Western Imperialism: Mao, Stalin, and the United States* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997).

3 Di Chaobai, "The Great Implications of the Sino-Soviet Agreement on Loans," *Renmin ribao* [People's Daily], March 2, 1950, 2.

4 Chen Jian, *China's Road to the Korean War: The Making of the Sino-American Confrontation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 17–20; Shu Guang Zhang, *Mao's Military Romanticism: China and the Korean War, 1950–1953* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1994), 55–84.

5 Shu Guang Zhang, *Economic Cold War: America's Embargo against China and the Sino-Soviet Alliance, 1949–1963* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2001), 59–68.

6 *Dangdai Zhongguo duiwai maoyi* [China Today: Foreign Trade], vol. II (Beijing: Dangdai Zhongguo, 1992), 258–59 (hereafter *DDZGDWMY*).

accepted to study advanced science and technologies in top Soviet universities. Mao, in turn, supported Khrushchev's political position in the USSR.[7]

Once Khrushchev's control over the Kremlin was more secure, there was substantial improvement in Sino-Soviet relations. Khrushchev visited China from September 29 to October 16, 1954. He and Mao met several times while others conducted comprehensive negotiations on further Sino-Soviet cooperation at different levels. The two leaders then issued two communiqués to declare their common assessment of and policy toward the current international situation as well as toward Japan. Khrushchev also confirmed that the Soviet Union would assist in China's economic reconstruction so as to "defeat" the "imperialist" economic sanctions.[8] Moscow's aid to China consequently increased. In late 1954, the Soviet Union financed fifteen new projects to aid China's energy and raw and semi-finished materials industries.[9] In March 1955, sixteen more projects to upgrade China's defense and shipbuilding industries were aided by the Soviets.[10] Moscow also helped Beijing to construct 116 industrial plants with complete sets of equipment and 88 plants with partial equipment – from East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Romania, Hungary, and Bulgaria.[11]

A significant portion of Soviet and East European aid to China comprised industrial and military technology. With the Sino-Soviet agreement on technology transfer signed in October 1954, Beijing obtained similar commitments from East European countries. These agreements enabled China to acquire more than 4,000 technical devices and inventions. While East European governments focused on providing agriculture and forestry technologies, the Soviet Union supplied advanced technologies such as smeltery, ore dressing, petroleum prospecting, locomotive manufacturing, hydraulic and thermal power plants, hydraulic turbine manufacturing, machine tools, high-quality steel manufacturing, and vacuum apparatus. Not liable to pay for the patent rights, Beijing obtained these technologies practically for free.[12]

7 Soviet Embassy in Beijing to Chinese Foreign Ministry, March 24, 1954, K109-10500-01, Foreign Ministry Archives, Beijing (hereafter FMA); Ministry of Higher Education, "On the Dispatched Students in the Soviet Union," April 2, 1954, K109-10500-01, *ibid*.; Foreign Ministry to Ministry of Higher Education, "On the Fees Related to the Dispatched Students in the Soviet Union," May 19, 1954, K109-00500-01, *ibid*.

8 *Renmin ribao*, October 12, 1954, 1.

9 *Dangdai zhongguo jiben jianshe* [China Today: Capital Construction] (Beijing: Dangdai Zhongguo Press, 1989), 52–53 (hereafter *DDZGJBJS*).

10 *Ibid*., 53.

11 Chinese Embassy in Warsaw to Foreign Ministry, "On Zhou Enlai's Visit to Poland," August 20, 1954, 32–89, K117-00385-02, FMA; Mao's talk with a Polish delegation, September 28, 1954, 1–9, K109-00409-01, *ibid*.

12 *DDZGJBJS*, 56–57.

28. A Soviet engineer conferring with Chinese colleagues, Wuhan, 1956.

Moreover, to help the Chinese to master the new techniques, the Soviet and East European states dispatched more than 8,000 advisers to China and hosted as many as 7,000 Chinese for advanced training through the end of the 1950s.[13]

What pleased Beijing was that Khrushchev appeared more sensitive than Stalin had been to Chinese national sentiment. Understanding the CCP's sensitivity about its sovereignty, during his October 1954 trip Khrushchev proposed that four Sino-Soviet joint adventures established in 1950–51 – oil and nonferrous metal manufacturing plants in Xinjiang and civil aviation

13 *Ibid*., 54.

and shipbuilding companies in Dalian – be turned over to sole Chinese ownership and operation. Khrushchev also accepted China's request to withdraw Soviet forces from naval bases in Lüshun (Port Arthur) and promised that an infantry division and several hundred military advisers would leave before May 31, 1955. China could then resume its authority over these bases.[14]

The Sino-Soviet collaboration was also effective on the diplomatic front. A much-celebrated case was the Geneva Conference of 1954. From the start of the Council of Foreign Ministers meetings in Berlin on February 8–12, Moscow not only kept Beijing informed of the talks, but also pushed to have China invited as "an equal partner" to a five-power conference on conflicts in Asia.[15] In early April, V. M. Molotov met with Chinese premier Zhou Enlai in Moscow to strategize how to negotiate at the conference.[16] In May, he passed to Zhang Wentian, the Chinese ambassador to Moscow, a Soviet proposal regarding the agenda, North Vietnamese representation, the appropriate number of Chinese delegates, transportation, safety, press relations, and activities outside the meeting rooms. The Soviet Foreign Ministry even ran a training program on protocol for Chinese diplomats.[17]

At Geneva, Molotov and Zhou collaborated with one another. They persuaded North Vietnamese leader Ho Chi Minh to accept the conditions set by the Mendès-France government of France, including a temporary partition of Vietnam and self-determination and neutralization of Laos and Cambodia under the supervision of an international control commission.[18] Such arrangements paved the way for the final signing of the Geneva Accords on Indochina on July 21, providing for an immediate ceasefire in Indochina, a partition of Vietnam, and neutralization of Laos and Cambodia.[19] Although

14 Shi Zhe, *Zai lishi juren shenbian* [Together with Historic Giants: Shi Zhe Memoirs] (Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian, 1991), 570–71. See also Soviet Embassy to the Foreign Ministry, "The Schedule for the Soviet Armed Forces to Withdraw from Port Lüshun and Transfer Material to the Chinese Government," February 2, 1955, K109-00593-01, FMA.

15 Soviet ambassador in Beijing to Chinese Foreign Ministry, February 17, 1954, K109-00396-01, *ibid*.

16 Zhou to Mao, "On the Talks with the Soviet Leaders [on Geneva]," April 7, 1954, 206-Y0054, *ibid*.

17 Ambassador Zhang's meeting with Molotov, May [undated] 1954, 1–9, K109-00496-02, *ibid*.

18 Zhou to Mao, July 10, 1954, *Zhou Enlai nianpu* [The Chronicle of Zhou Enlai] (Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian, 1997), vol. II, 396–97 (hereafter *ZELNP*); Zhou to Mao, July 12, 1954, *ibid*., 397; Zhou to Mao and Liu Shaoqi, "On Revised Positions of the Soviet and Vietnamese Leaders," July 15, 1954, 206-Y0051, FMA; Zhou to Mao and Liu, July 22, 1954, 206-Y0051, *ibid*.

19 Xiao Donglian, *Wushinian guoshi jiyao: waijiao juan* [Fifty Years of State Affairs on the Record: A Volume on Diplomacy] (Changsha: Hunan renmin, 1999), 125.

achieving no final settlement of the Korean conflict, CCP leaders were encouraged that, with Soviet support, they could play a respectable and responsible role in multilateral diplomacy.

Although these developments were very encouraging, the long-sustained suspicion and hard feelings on the Chinese side were persistent. During Khrushchev's visit to China in 1954, Mao bluntly dismissed the possibility that China would be part of the Soviet economic system. After listening to Khrushchev's proposal that China could develop faster by joining the East European economic community, Mao replied that he saw "no need" for such an arrangement. In his view, China would be better off if it were self-reliant and established its own way of development.[20]

Mao suspected that the Soviets might want to take advantage of China. The first half of the 1950s saw a rapid increase in Soviet manufactured exports to China, which convinced the Chinese that Soviet industries depended on China's market.[21] More importantly, over 30 percent of China's exports to the USSR were raw materials, especially those of "strategic importance" including tungsten, tin, antimony, lithium, beryllium, tantalum, molybdenum, magnesium, and sulfur mineral ore and pellets. More than 70 percent of the annual yield of rubber manufactured in China's Hainan Islands was being sold to the Soviets at "preferential prices." The Chinese believed that these strategic materials were indispensable to Soviet military programs.[22] Given its special relations with Hong Kong, Sri Lanka, and other Asian countries, China had also been acquiring materials that the West had been seeking to embargo to the Communist bloc, and had been carrying on an *entrepôt* trade on behalf of the Soviet Union. Between 1953 and 1957, China imported goods for the Soviet Union worth a total of $330 million from third countries. Moreover, the Chinese leaders believed that China's agricultural products, which made up more than 48 percent of China's exports to the Soviet Union, proved essential to Soviet efforts to survive the Western trade embargo. Meanwhile, China paid back Soviet loans with gold and hard currency. Understanding that the Soviets were short of US dollars, Beijing paid Moscow a total of $156 million in cash.[23]

Unhappy about this Sino-Soviet trade, Beijing initiated negotiations with Moscow in July 1956, requesting that the Soviets rectify the "unreasonable" pricing system and "inequitable" payment. CCP trade authorities even

20 Shi Zhe, *Zai lishi juren shenbian*, 580–81.
21 *DDZGDWMY*, vol. II, 259.
22 *Ibid*.
23 *Ibid*., 260.

criticized Moscow for failing to comply with the principle of mutual respect and equality in treating fraternal socialist countries, and expressed "serious" concerns over Soviet "chauvinism."[24] To placate the Chinese, Moscow returned the money it had allegedly overcharged China in trade and agreed to an "equitable" pricing system.[25]

Chinese leaders, however, remained unhappy when the Soviets were not supportive of China's nuclear program. Moscow had sent a group of geologists to China to prospect for uranium early in 1950. Partly because of that, in his 1954 talk with Khrushchev, Mao requested Soviet assistance for China's atomic weaponry program. To the Chinese leader's disappointment, Khrushchev refused and stressed that, as long as China was under Soviet nuclear protection, it would be "a huge waste" for China to build its own bomb. If China wanted to develop a nuclear-energy industry, Khrushchev told Mao, the Soviet Union could consider providing a small atomic reactor but purely for scientific research and education.[26]

While refusing to aid China's atomic program, Moscow kept asking for access to China's uranium mines. When Soviet scientists discovered uranium in southwestern China in late 1954, the Kremlin pushed for "a joint effort" to mine uranium, but with the Soviets taking the lead. The CCP leadership then responded that it would accept the Soviet request if Moscow changed its mind on aiding China's nuclear program.[27] After several rounds of negotiations, Soviet leaders agreed in April to provide technology and equipment to China in order to construct a high-water-moderated reactor and a cyclotron accelerator. They also promised to help the Chinese to build a laboratory for nuclear research. Moscow, however, stipulated that Soviet nuclear technology would be "for peaceful use" only.[28]

While becoming increasingly skeptical about Soviet support, Mao by the mid-1950s began to change his perspective on China's development.

24 Office of Soviet and East European Affairs, Foreign Ministry, "Some Major Events concerning Soviet Internal and External Policies and Sino-Soviet Relations: As Background for Premier Zhou's Visit to the Soviet Union," December 24, 1956, K109-00788-01, FMA.

25 *Dangdai Zhongguo waijiao* [China Today: Diplomatic Affairs] (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui Kexue, 1987), 31 (hereafter *DDZGWJ*).

26 Shi Zhe, *Zai lishi juren shenbian*, 572–73.

27 Shu Guang Zhang, "Between 'Paper' and 'Real Tigers': Mao's View of Nuclear Weapons," in John Lewis Gaddis, Philip H. Gordon, Ernest R. May, and Jonathan Rosenberg (eds.), *Cold War Statesmen Confronting the Bomb: Nuclear Diplomacy since 1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 202–05.

28 *Dangdai Zhongguo hegongye* [China Today: Nuclear Industry] (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui Kexue, 1987), 20–21 (hereafter *DDZGHGY*).

Although endorsing the first Five-Year Plan (1953–57) with an emphasis on building heavy industry, he believed that the CCP's priority should be to elevate agricultural productivity.[29] Noting differences with the Soviet experience, he thought that China's farm collectivization could and should move faster than Soviet leaders had advised. Between September and December 1955, Mao personally drafted more than 104 instructions to expedite "a high wave of socialism" in villages nationwide. He believed that the CCP needed to hasten the country's socialist transformation in order to defeat conservative impulses within the party, consolidate national unity, and prepare for contingencies.[30]

One such contingency was Khrushchev's de-Stalinization move at the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) in February 1956. Upset at not being consulted in advance, CCP leaders protested. Khrushchev rebuffed their concerns and claimed that he had no need to consult Beijing or others.[31] Not prepared to sever the relationship and himself highly critical of Stalin, Mao at first endorsed Khrushchev's de-Stalinization. He was subsequently pleased when the Kremlin suddenly changed its attitude toward the CCP by admitting "errors" in its China policy and promised more aid to China.[32] Chinese Communist leaders then supported Khrushchev's crushing of the Hungarian uprising in the fall of 1956.[33] At the Second Plenary Session of the Eighth Central Committee in November, Mao advocated tolerance of "small-scale democracy" to cope with domestic criticism, "resolute opposition to 'Great-Han'ism" in treating ethnic minorities, and "firm objection to Great Nation chauvinism" in international relations.[34]

From dissonance to crisis

Khrushchev's and Mao's efforts to accommodate one another were short-lived. The already fragile alliance was tested by a series of Beijing–Moscow

29 For the first Five-Year Plan, see *Jianguo yilai zhongyaowenxian xuanbian* [Collected Key Documents since the Founding of the PRC], (Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian, 1993), vol. VI, 405–571 (hereafter *JGYIZHYWXXB*).

30 Mao's instructions, September and December 1955, *Jianguo yilai Maozedong wengao* [Mao's Manuscripts since the Founding of the PRC] (Beijing: Central Archives and Material Press, 1991), vol. V, 488–547 (hereafter *JGYIMZDWG*).

31 Gaddis, *We Now Know*, 212.

32 Office of Soviet and East European Affairs to Zhou Enlai, December 24, 1956, 109-00788-01, FMA.

33 Jin Chongji (ed.), *Zhou Enlai Zhuan* [Biography of Zhou Enlai] (Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian, 1998), vol. III, 1274–78, 1282–87 (hereafter *ZELZ*).

34 Mao's speeches, November 1956, *JGYIMZDWG*, vol. VI, 245–47.

interactions over domestic and external affairs in 1957–58. Again, hard feelings, strong beliefs, erroneous perceptions, and historical memories proved more difficult to overcome than policy differences.

The first encounter was economic. China's first Five-Year Plan seemed successful. In 1957, production of steel reached 5.35 million tons, iron 5.8 million tons, electric power 19.3 billion kWh, and coal 131 million tons, each exceeding the aims of the plan (which stood at 4.12 million tons for steel, 5.75 million tons for iron, 15.9 billion kWh for electric power, and 113 million tons for coal).[35] The success made the CCP more anxious to implement industrialization quickly. Toward the end of the plan, Mao had declared his "firm belief" that it might take just three "Five-Year Plans" to "build a powerful socialist country" in China. He anticipated that China, already not too far behind the United States in iron and steel production, would soon catch up with other industrial countries.[36]

Moscow, however, doubted Beijing's aspirations, and the CCP felt disgruntled. In an economic development review in early 1957, the Soviet Far East Economic Committee was very critical of China's economic policies. After seeing the report, the PRC Foreign Ministry protested and singled out every "error" the Soviet report contained. Refuting the Soviet claim that Chinese peasants opposed collectivization, for example, Chinese officials argued that the pace of China's "agricultural collectivization" was welcomed nationwide. The Foreign Ministry then pointed out that Soviet experts "deliberately distort and obliterate" China's achievements simply because they were unhappy with the CCP's not following their model.[37]

Mao, in particular, was bothered by Soviet skepticism about China's success. He believed that Moscow harbored an unnecessary fear that an industrialized China would seriously challenge Soviet leadership in the international Communist movement. Some Soviet leaders, Mao said to a Yugoslav delegation in September 1957, wanted "China's socialist construction … to fail." They wildly imagined that China might become "an imperialist state," reviving the adventures of Chinggis Khan, and resulting in another "Yellow

35 Bo Yibo, *Ruogan zhongda juece yu shijian de huigu* [My Recollections of Decisionmaking on Several Important Policies and Events] (Beijing: Zhonggong zhongyang dangxiao, 1993), vol. I, 295–96; *JGYIZHYWXXB*, vol. VI, 291–92, 297.

36 Mao's speech, June 14, 1954, *JGYIMZDWG*, vol. IV, 505–06; Huang Xiangbing, "How the Policy of 'Overtaking Britain and Catching up with America' Was Formed in the Late 1950s," *Dangshi yanjiu ziliao* [CCP History Study Materials], No. 4 (1988), 22.

37 PRC Foreign Ministry to the USSR Embassy in Beijing, March 13, 1957, fond 100 (1957), opis' 50, papka 423, delo 4, Russian Foreign Ministry Archives, Moscow (hereafter RFMA).

Peril." Their real intention, he asserted, was to discredit the CCP as a Marxist-Leninist party.[38]

Soviet skepticism in part prompted Mao to aim unrealistically high for China's development. During a high-profile visit to Moscow in November 1957, he boasted at a meeting of world Communist leaders that China would overtake Britain in iron, steel, and other heavy industries in the next fifteen years and would soon beat the United States in these areas as well.[39] In April 1958, he proclaimed that it might not take fifteen years for China to overtake Britain and the United States. CCP leaders began to plan to surpass Britain in seven years and to catch up with the United States in eight or ten years.[40] The result of Mao's dreamlike aspirations was the Great Leap Forward campaign, calling for a 19% increase in steel production, 18% in electricity, and 17% in coal output for 1958. Buoyed by unrealistic optimism, the CCP leaders kept raising the production goals in hopes of achieving an unprecedented rate of growth.[41]

Interestingly, Moscow tried to adapt itself to Beijing's quest for quick economic success. In its report to the presidium dated July 26, 1958, the Soviet Foreign Ministry said that it felt "very positive" about China's economic performance. "The sharp rise of the PRC economy," it stated, "creates the conditions for a significant shortening of the time necessary to liquidate China's economic backwardness." It was not unrealistic for China to catch up with Britain in industrial production within fifteen years. If China's second Five-Year Plan was as successful as the first, the report predicted, China could even realize this aim in some areas "in the next 2–3 years."[42] China welcomed this changed Soviet attitude and subsequently expected more aid from Moscow.

The CCP, however, was disappointed at no significant increase in Soviet aid and dismayed, in particular, by continual Soviet reluctance to help with China's atomic project. In September 1957, Marshal Nie Rongzhen – in charge

38 Mao's conversation with a Yugoslavian Communist union delegation, Beijing, [undated] September 1957, *Mao Zedong waijiao wenxuan* [Selected Works of Mao Zedong on Foreign Affairs] (Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian and Shijie zhishi, 1993), 251–62 (hereafter *MZDWJWX*).

39 Huang, "How the Policy of 'Overtaking Britain and Catching up with America' Was Formed in the Late 1950s," 22. See also Bo, *Ruogan zhongda juece yu shijian de huigu*, vol. II, 691–92.

40 Bo, *Ruogan zhongda, juece yu shijian de huigu*, vol. II, 692–98.

41 Immanuel C. Y. Hsu, *The Rise of Modern China*, 4th ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 655–57.

42 S. Antonov to the presidium, July 26, 1958, Document 16, in David Wolff, *One Finger's Worth of Historical Events: New Russian and Chinese Evidence on the Sino-Soviet Alliance and Split, 1948–1959*, Cold War International History Project (CWIHP) Working Paper No. 30 (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center, 2002), 49–51.

of China's nuclear program – led a mission to Moscow to secure Soviet nuclear assistance. Nie's trip ended with the signing of another protocol in October, in which the Soviets agreed to provide a model of an atomic bomb. But the Soviets did not specify exactly when it would be delivered and what it would entail. When Nie pressed, the Soviet leaders said they were not yet ready.[43] Even when Moscow dispatched 102 Soviet missile specialists to China with two Soviet P-2 short-range ground-to-ground missiles late in 1957, and when it sent another delegation to Beijing to talk about transferring atomic technology in August 1958, the Chinese leaders were under the impression that the Soviets were trying "to find all possible excuses not to help us."[44]

Although aspiring to acquire Soviet nuclear technology, Beijing did not want the USSR to build a missile base in China. Early in 1957, Khrushchev remarked to a Chinese news delegation that if the United States "openly" installed missiles in Taiwan, the USSR would do the same in China. Meeting with Soviet ambassador to Beijing Pavel F. Iudin on May 22, Zhou Enlai rejected the Soviet offer on the grounds that a US missile base in Taiwan served only to tighten Washington's control over Jiang with "no intention" to provoke a large-scale war. As "a counterthreat," he said, a Soviet missile base on the mainland would "intensify the situation."[45] What Zhou did not state was his concern that Moscow would exploit such an arrangement to control China. Later, Beijing became even more alarmed when it noted that some Soviet officials "casually" suggested that the Chinese should consider a "two-China" solution to the Taiwan problem. Calling in Iudin for a meeting on October 22, Zhou demanded that Moscow must firmly support China's "opposition to a two-China scheme."[46]

What transformed Chinese leaders' attitudes from suspicion to anger was Moscow's "intention" to incorporate China's coastal defense into its East Asian security system. In an April 18, 1958, letter to Peng Dehuai, Soviet minister of defense Marshal Radion I. Malinovskii suggested that they jointly build a radio communications station linking the Chinese navy with the Soviet navy in East Asia. Malinovskii said that the USSR would provide the technology and finance the construction.[47] Meeting with Mao on July 21,

43 *DDZGHGY*, 19–22.

44 Premier Zhou's meeting with P. F. Iudin, June 15, 1957, 109-00786-14, FMA; Zhou to Liu Xioa and Peng Dehuai, December 2, 1957, 109-00791-03, *ibid*.

45 Zhou's meeting with Iudin, May 22, 1957, 109-00786-13, *ibid*. It is interesting to note that an entire paragraph right after Zhou's explicit rejection of the Soviet offer remains classified.

46 Zhou's meeting with Iudin, October 22, 1957, 109-00786-18, *ibid*.

47 P. I. Malinovskii's letter to Peng Dehuai, April 19, 1958, cited in *DDZGWJ*, 112.

Soviet ambassador Iudin also proposed that the Soviet navy would like to form a joint fleet of nuclear-powered submarines with China in the Far East. Although the Soviet coastline was not appropriate for the Soviet navy's newly developed submarines, Iudin explained, China's "harbor conditions" were suitable for them.[48]

Moscow's proposals led Chinese leaders to believe that the long-suspected Soviet intention to control China was becoming real. Should China agree to build a joint radio station, Mao insisted on June 6, 1958, it would finance the project itself in order to ensure Chinese ownership; otherwise, there would be no deal. Should the USSR agree to provide technological help, Mao stressed, China would be willing to negotiate with Moscow about using its facilities.[49] Six days later, Mao urged Defense Minister Peng to stick to these principles in his response to Malinovskii, allowing no compromise on China's sovereign rights.[50]

In response to Iudin's "joint submarine flotilla" suggestion, Mao decided to call in the Soviet ambassador for a private meeting on July 22, 1958. He bluntly told Iudin that he was angered by the proposal because the Soviet Union intended to control China through a joint Sino-Soviet ownership scheme. To him, such an attitude was racial: "[To you] the Soviets are the first-class [people] whereas the Chinese are among the inferior who are dumb, careless," and untrustworthy. Should the Soviet Union continue in this vein, Mao said that Moscow might as well take control of China's army and economy, leaving the CCP "only to maintain a guerrilla force."[51]

Driven by Russian chauvinism, Mao explained to Iudin, the Kremlin had long ordered the CCP around. An unforgettable example was Stalin's demand to turn the northeast of China and Xinjiang into Soviet "spheres of influence" and insistence on joint ownership and operation of four newly built plants. It was all because Stalin regarded the CCP as "the Second Tito," and treated China "as a backward nation"; other Soviets followed the example by "looking down upon the Chinese people." The Sino-Soviet relationship, Mao asserted, had become a "father–son or cats–mice" one, and the CCP had to accommodate the USSR. Thus, the CCP "never openly" challenged Khrushchev's

48 Mao–Iudin meeting, July 21, 1958, *ibid.*, 113. Mao clearly stated that "first of all we ought to establish a principle; that is, we will be mainly responsible for the program only with your assistance" (*ibid.*).

49 Mao's instruction, June 7, 1958, *MZDWJWX*, 316–17.

50 Peng to Soviet Ministry of National Defense, June 12, 1958, *DDZGWJ*, 113.

51 Mao–Iudin meeting, July 21, 1958, *DDZGWJ*, 114; minutes, conversation between Mao and Iudin, July 22, 1958, *MZDWJWX*, 322–33.

peaceful-evolution idea; it had been consistently backing the Kremlin whenever there was a dispute among the Communist Parties in Eastern Europe. To assist Moscow in resolving the Polish crisis of 1956, Mao told Iudin that he personally tried to persuade the Polish leaders not to challenge Soviet dominance.[52]

This time, Mao declared, the CCP would stand up against Russian chauvinism. It was his determination that China "won't get entangled with you." It was all because Khrushchev's Kremlin intended to extend Soviet influence to China's coast with the two proposals. Although bitterly angry with Moscow, Mao did not seem prepared to break the alliance. "It still is possible," he assured Iudin, that the two governments could "cooperate in many other areas." Finally, Mao requested that the Soviet ambassador should report back "exactly what I have remarked without any polishing," which would remind Khrushchev that "he has criticized Stalin's policies but now adopts them himself."[53]

Mao's protest alarmed the Kremlin. Coming to Beijing on July 31, 1958, Khrushchev affirmed that Moscow would provide only loans and technology for building the radio station, which China would completely own. He also explained to Mao that the Kremlin never intended to establish a joint nuclear submarine force in China, and that Iudin's proposal was the result of a "misunderstanding." Although apologetic, Khrushchev reminded Mao that it was Soviet economic power and "rockets" that were "holding back" the United States, implying that China would still need Soviet protection and assistance. Mao conceded that China still needed to rely on the alliance.[54]

Whether or not Beijing would still need Soviet protection was soon tested. Late in August 1958, shortly after Khrushchev's visit, the PRC began shelling the Nationalist-held offshore islands (Jinmen), initiating the second Taiwan Strait crisis.[55] Worried about the US reaction, Khrushchev asked the Soviet embassy in Beijing on September 5 to request an urgent meeting between Mao and his personal envoy, Andrei A. Gromyko, who planned to visit Beijing secretly. Intending to draft a letter to Washington to warn the United States not to overreact, Moscow needed to know the CCP's view. Beijing appreciated Moscow's offer but suggested the insertion of stronger words in the letter which, it believed, would help to "compel" the United States to talk

52 *MZDWJWX*, 333.
53 *Ibid*., 333.
54 Mao–Khrushchev talks, July 31, 1958, *DDZGWJ*, 114; the Russian version of the minutes is in Wolff, *One Finger's Worth of Historical Events*, 51–56.
55 For Mao's decision to shell Jinmen, see Zhang, *Deterrence and Strategic Culture*, 233–37.

with Beijing about a solution to the Taiwan problem.[56] Assured that China's bombardment of Jinmen was not a prelude to an attack on Taiwan, Khrushchev wrote to President Dwight D. Eisenhower on September 7 that any nuclear attack on China would result in a Soviet nuclear retaliation. Late that month, to reinforce his stance, he sent another letter – which was preapproved by Mao and slightly edited by Zhou – urging Washington to negotiate with Beijing.[57] When Khrushchev suggested sending a third letter to propose multilateral talks on resolving the Taiwan issue, Beijing declined because the CCP did not want to appear "so anxious" that it might give "the impression of weakness."[58] Khrushchev gave in to the Chinese.[59]

But Soviet attitudes toward the CCP remained in flux. PRC ambassador to Moscow Liu Xiao reported on October 20, 1958, that Khrushchev on several occasions stated the Chinese were right "that war must not be feared and peace cannot be begged for." Other Soviet leaders willingly admitted that China could be a major player in international politics. Khrushchev, moreover, began to stress the need to speed up Soviet economic performance in the "race against time" to prevent general war. These changes, Liu asserted, were positive, but future developments were still uncertain. The Kremlin still "lacked" an accurate understanding of Chinese strategy and tactics for socialist transformation, doubted the People's Commune program, and disagreed with Beijing's anti-imperialist propaganda.[60]

Uncertain of Moscow's reliability, Mao and his colleagues, again, stressed self-reliance as a basic principle of CCP policies. What China had learned in its nationbuilding experience, Mao told two Brazilian journalists in September 1958, was to do away with "blind faith in foreigners."[61] At the fifteenth session of the Supreme State Conference that same month, he declared that growing "international pressure" compelled the Chinese people to "rely on themselves."[62] Partly to prove that China could develop quickly on its own, Mao became even more resolute in pushing the Great Leap Forward. After its

56 Zhou's meeting with a Soviet consular official, September 5, 1958, 109-00833-4, FMA.
57 *DDZGWJ*, 115–6; Zhou's meeting with Soviet chargé d'affaires, September 19, 1958, 109-00823-01, FMA.
58 Soviet Embassy to Premier Zhou, September 27, 1958, enclosed in Zhou's meeting with Soviet chargé d'affaires, September 29, 1958, 109-00823-02, FMA.
59 Zhou's meeting with Soviet chargé d'affaires, October 7, 1958, 109-00833-02, *ibid*.
60 Liu Xiao to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, October 20, 1958, in *JGYIMZDWG*, vol. VII, 486–87.
61 Minutes of conversation, Mao and two Brazilian journalists, September 2, 1958, *ibid*., vol. VII, 373–74.
62 Mao's speech at the fifteenth meeting of the Supreme State Conference, September 5 and 8, 1958, *ibid*., vol. VII, 387–89.

launch in the spring of 1958, he kept raising its production goals in hopes of achieving an unprecedented rate of growth without relying on Soviet aid.[63]

From crisis to collapse

At the end of the 1950s and the start of the 1960s, the growing internal difficulties embedded in the Sino-Soviet alliance evolved into open estrangement. As bilateral differences over domestic and foreign policies became increasingly deep, the mutual distrust that was profoundly rooted in personal, cultural, and racial factors would loom so large that temporary goodwill could not prevent the alliance from collapsing.

At the end of the 1950s, the CCP still hoped to sustain the alliance. Beijing toned down its harsh attitude toward Moscow and expected the latter to do the same. Liu, the ambassador to Moscow, suggested on January 13, 1959, that, in order to save the relationship, the CCP should stop "publicly criticizing" Soviet policies even if they were "wrong" and should be "more sensible" and "more modest" toward Soviet advisers in China.[64] Endorsing Liu's suggestion, Mao instructed the rank and file to learn from the Soviet and other Communist countries' "advanced experiences" as long as they "fit" China's realities.[65] He also told the Soviet ambassador and ambassadors of ten other socialist states on May 6 that "all of you are our teachers, but the most important teacher is the Soviet Union."[66]

The Kremlin also made accommodating gestures toward the CCP. The PRC embassy in Moscow reported on January 24, 1959 that the draft of Khrushchev's speech for the Twenty-First CPSU Congress contained a statement characterizing the CCP as "loyal to Marxism-Leninism." Although the CCP "adopt[ed] different methods in constructing socialism," the draft stressed that Moscow had no "objection" to it. Moreover, the draft speech recognized that "all the socialist states will help and exchange experiences with one another on an equal basis so as to realize Communism simultaneously." The third draft of the speech, moreover, omitted the word "peace-loving" when characterizing the American people, which was in line with China's position.[67]

63 Zhang, *Economic Cold War*, 218–23.
64 Liu Xiao to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, January 13, 1959, in *JGYIMZDWG*, vol. VIII, 5–6.
65 Mao's instruction, February 13, 1959, *ibid*., vol. VIII, 41–42.
66 Mao's speech at the meeting with the delegation of eleven ambassadors, May 6, 1959, *ibid*., vol. VIII, 248–49.
67 PRC embassy in Moscow to Foreign Ministry, January 24, 1959, 108-00919-09, FMA.

Despite the more relaxed political relationship, CCP leaders remained extremely sensitive about Moscow's criticism of China's economic development, especially when Mao's Great Leap Forward was in grave trouble. On July 2, 1959, the PRC's embassy in Moscow alerted Beijing that some Soviet advisers who had just returned from China had spread "rumors" that the CCP was facing economic chaos. As these stories about China's disaster circulated in Moscow, the embassy stressed, Soviet officials might conclude that the CCP leadership had "committed grave errors." Profoundly concerned about this report, Mao added a note to it which read, "Some Soviet Comrades Are Criticizing Our Great Leap Forward," and directed his associates to "study this matter" further.[68]

Meanwhile, the Kremlin kept trying to press Beijing to adopt a "moderate" policy toward Taiwan and India. When rebuffed by the CCP, Soviet officials complained that Beijing's stubbornness would cause troubles "in the near future."[69] Pushing for a new détente with the United States, Khrushchev expected the CCP to support his initiative.[70] Invited for an urgent visit to Beijing in late September and early October 1959, Khrushchev held a seven-hour meeting with Mao and other top CCP leaders on October 2 and accused Mao of taking great risks in his belligerence toward Taiwan and India. Irritated by Khrushchev's criticism, Mao and his associates viciously refuted the Soviet leader by calling him a "time-server." The agitated Khrushchev shouted back that Mao intended to "subordinate" him.[71]

After Khrushchev left, Mao prepared the rank and file for a tough stance against the Kremlin. At a meeting with his top associates in December 1959, Mao vehemently accused Moscow of seeking to dominate China. He alluded to ten incidents between 1945 and 1959, the most recent attempt coming from Khrushchev. Because the politically "immature" Khrushchev had such a limited understanding of Marxism-Leninism, he was "easily deceived by imperialists." Knowing little about China, he refused to learn, trusted "false intelligence reports," and talked "too freely." Khrushchev, Mao said, was

68 PRC embassy in Moscow to Foreign Ministry, July 2, 1959, enclosed in Mao's instruction, July 19, 1959, *JGYIMZDWG*, vol. VIII, 367. See also S. Skachkov to the Central Committee, CPSU, July 2, 1959, "On the Present Economic Situation in the PRC," in Wolff, *One Finger's Worth of Historical Events*, 63–64.

69 Political report for 1959, Soviet Embassy in Beijing, cited in M. Y. Prozumenshchikov, "The Sino-Indian Conflict, the Cuban Missile Crisis and the Sino-Soviet Split, October 1962: New Evidence from the Russian Archives," *CWIHP Bulletin* (Winter 1996/97), 252.

70 Chen Yi's meeting with A. Gromyko, October 2, 1959, 204-00078-01, FMA.

71 Minutes of Mao–Khrushchev meeting (Russian version), October 2, 1959, in Wolff, *One Finger's Worth of Historical Events*, 64–68.

29. Nikita Khrushchev (left) and Mao Zedong: a difficult toast during the 1959 meeting in Beijing.

"fearful not only of imperialism but also of Chinese-style Communism, because he is worried that East European and other [Communist] parties will trust not them, but us." In Mao's view, all these problems were "historically rooted." He was certain that Russian chauvinism under Khrushchev would "one day" become much worse. In future years, Mao predicted, Khrushchev might be toppled if he refused to change his policy and attitude.[72] At another meeting that month, Mao chastised Khrushchev for treating China as a child, preventing its rapid development, refusing to provide the best assistance, and seeking to sabotage China's current leadership.[73]

Soviet officials, too, were growing embittered. To prepare his central committee for a possible Sino-Soviet split, Khrushchev circulated a report to the Politburo by senior member Mikhail Suslov on his recent visit to China. Elaborating on the policy differences between Moscow and Beijing, Suslov attributed the Sino-Soviet dispute primarily to Mao. The CCP chairman, he said, tended to "embellish" his successes to the extent that his head had "gotten somewhat dizzy." Much like Stalin, Suslov reported, Mao was

72 Mao's speech at the CCP Politburo meeting, December [undated] 1959, *JGYIMZDWG*, vol. VIII, 599–602.

73 Mao's speech at a meeting in Hangzhou, December [undated] 1959, *ibid.*, vol. VIII, 604.

developing "a cult of personality," portraying himself as "a great genius" and insisting that he alone made all the crucial decisions. Furthermore, Mao regarded himself as the original Marxist, maintaining that he was infallible and that his work must be viewed "as the final word on creative Marxism."[74]

It is interesting to note, though, that the CCP still wanted to keep the "internal" dispute from going public. When a U-2 spy plane was shot down over the Soviet Union, Beijing openly supported Khrushchev's protest. On May 8, 1960, Vice Premier He Long proclaimed in Budapest that any "provocative aggression" against the USSR would also mean war against China, suggesting the alliance was still operative.[75] In private, the PRC Foreign Ministry instructed its embassy in Moscow "not to provoke quarrels" with the Soviets, in particular, when dealing with an international crisis. Whatever the Kremlin said about the alleged American aggression, the embassy should express agreement with it.[76] Beijing wanted its embassies abroad to assume a "low profile," hoping to avoid leaving an impression that Khrushchev's hardened attitude toward Washington was a result of "our influence." Should the issue be raised, Chinese diplomats were instructed to say that "China and the Soviet Union remain united."[77]

But efforts to sustain Sino-Soviet unity proved fleeting. At a meeting with his top associates on February 22, 1960, Mao decided that the CCP should prepare a public critique of Khrushchev's "opportunism" and "revisionism."[78] Under Mao's close supervision, a group of CCP "theorists" drafted a series of articles accusing Khrushchev of betraying Lenin.[79] In response, Khrushchev orchestrated a "surprise attack" on the CCP at the Budapest gathering of fifty-one Communist and labor parties on June 24–26, which resulted in a resolution criticizing Beijing's radical domestic and foreign policies.[80]

What started as an ideological polemic soon turned into a diplomatic crisis in Sino-Soviet relations. On July 16, 1960, the Soviet embassy notified the Chinese Foreign Ministry that all Soviet experts would be immediately

74 Suslov's report, December [undated] 1959, in *CWIHP Bulletin* (Winter 1996/97), 244 and 248; Wolff, *One Finger's Worth of Historical Events*, 69–72.
75 Foreign Ministry to all embassies, May 11, 1960, 109-00917-01, FMA.
76 PRC embassy in Moscow to Foreign Ministry, May 5, 1960, 109-00917-01, *ibid.*; Foreign Ministry to PRC embassy in Moscow, May 6, 1960, *ibid.*
77 Foreign Ministry to all embassies, May 11, 1960, 109-00917-01, *ibid.*
78 Li Danhui, "A Last Effort: The Sino-Soviet Struggle and Reconciliation in the Early 1960s," March 27, 2007, www.coldwarchina.com/zgyj/zsjm/002110.html.
79 Mao's instruction on revisions of the draft *Red Flag* editorial, "Long Live Leninism," April [undated] 1960, *JGYIMZDWG*, vol. IX, 139–42.
80 *DDZGWJ*, 116–17.

withdrawn from China because of "their unsatisfactory treatment."[81] Without waiting for China to reply, on July 25, Moscow instructed all Soviet personnel to depart by September 1. Meanwhile, the Kremlin held back more than 900 experts already scheduled to head for China. Within one month, altogether 1,390 Soviet experts had returned, and Moscow had terminated twelve agreements on aid and over 200 cooperative projects on science and technology.[82]

Although furious, Chinese leaders attempted to minimize the damage. Soviet actions caused huge problems in China, as two-thirds of the 304 Soviet-aid projects were not yet completed. In its first response to Moscow on July 31, Beijing asked the Kremlin to reconsider its decision or, at least, to allow experts to stay until their contracts expired. At a meeting with Soviet ambassador to Beijing Stepan Chervonenko on August 4, Vice Premier Chen Yi asked Moscow to stop "severing the friendship between the two countries."[83] Since the Sino-Soviet estrangement would only benefit their common adversaries, Chen suggested to the Soviet deputy foreign minister two weeks later that Moscow and Beijing should both try to save the alliance.[84]

Thinking hard about Chen's suggestion, the Soviet ambassador in Beijing tried to mollify his boss's anger. In a telegram to Moscow, he warned that unilateral termination of aid agreements "would be a violation of international law." Urging the Kremlin to permit Soviet advisers to stay until their contracts were up, he hoped "things would get patched up at the top."[85] Khrushchev, however, refused to yield. He was now resolved to teach the Chinese a lesson. Speaking at the plenum of the Central Committee in 1960, he complained that, whenever he met with Mao, he felt as if he were "talking with Stalin and listening to Stalin," something that he could no longer tolerate.[86]

Seeing no change of policy on the Soviet part, Chinese leaders began to harden their attitudes. Accusing Moscow of "seriously violating" international law, the PRC Foreign Ministry asserted that China would now prove that it could never be intimidated by "socialist imperialist blackmail."[87] Meeting with

81 Soviet Embassy in Beijing to Foreign Ministry, July 16, 1960, 9–16, 109-00924-01, FMA. Another source indicated that the note was dated July 18, 1960: *CWIHP Bulletin*, (Winter 1996/97), 249–50.

82 *DDZGWJ*, 117–18.

83 *Ibid*.

84 Chen Yi's meeting with Soviet deputy foreign minister, August 20, 1960, 135–37, 109-00933-15, FMA.

85 Cited in William Taubman, "Khrushchev vs. Mao: A Preliminary Sketch of the Role of Personality in the Sino-Soviet Split," *CWIHP Bulletin* (Winter 1996/97), 247.

86 Khrushchev's speech is cited in Prozumenshchikov, *ibid*., 252.

87 PRC Foreign Ministry to Soviet Foreign Ministry, August 13, September 20, and October 23, 1960, f. 0100, op. 2, p. 453 (1960), RFMA.

a high-ranking Soviet delegation in September, Deng Xiaoping admitted that the withdrawal of experts had hurt China, but retorted that the Chinese people would be mobilized "to make up for the losses and build our own nation with our own hands."[88] At an enlarged Politburo meeting on November 17, Zhou Enlai pointed out that the termination of Soviet aid provided an opportunity for the CCP to demonstrate that "difficulties" could be overcome through "self-reliance." Believing that a nation would have a better chance to develop "under strenuous circumstances," Zhou wanted to galvanize the nation to work "with one will to make the country strong."[89]

Mao felt that the Sino-Soviet estrangement liberated the CCP. At a meeting of the Central Committee on January 18, 1961, he urged his associates not to fear conflict with the Soviets. The worst outcome might be a break in cultural and economic relationships. As long as China was prepared for these contingencies, he believed, "we will not be intimidated in the least" even if Khrushchev severed all relations with China.[90]

Nor would Mao be placated by Moscow's offer to provide relief when a devastating famine, resulting from the Great Leap Forward, afflicted China. Khrushchev offered to loan 1 million tons of grain and half a million tons of sugar, both desperately needed in China, but Mao no longer trusted Khrushchev, and he rejected the assistance.[91] Later, when Moscow offered a five-year deferment on payments for commercial transactions in 1960 (up to the amount of 288 million rubles), the CCP turned it down. Instead, Mao somehow found the money to pay the Soviets two years ahead of the due date.[92] Whereas the Chinese regarded the Soviets as "evil-minded," the Kremlin viewed the Chinese as stubborn and "ungrateful."[93]

The Sino-Soviet rift dramatically changed the Cold War in Asia. Moscow notified Beijing in August 1961 of its acceptance of a US proposal for a treaty that would ban certain forms of nuclear testing, that would forbid any nuclear power from transferring nuclear technology to any nonnuclear country, and that would prohibit nonnuclear countries from producing or acquiring

88 *DDZGWJ*, 118.
89 Zhou's speech, November 17, 1961, *ZELNP*, vol. I, 370.
90 Mao's remarks, January 18, 1961, cited in Yang Kuisong, "Toward the Split: How the CCP Faced the Sino-Soviet Crisis," unpublished paper, Center for Cold War International History Studies, East China Normal University, 10.
91 Zhou's meeting with Chervonenko, March 8, 1961, *ZELNP*, vol. II, 397.
92 *DDZGDWMY*, vol. III, 263.
93 John Gittings, *Survey of the Sino-Soviet Dispute: A Commentary and Extracts from the Recent Polemics, 1963–1967* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), 141–42.

nuclear technology. Such stipulations would endanger China's ongoing nuclear projects. Beijing reacted angrily, protesting that Soviet acceptance of the treaty would violate China's sovereignty.[94] Regarding the treaty as Moscow's attempt to collude with the United States to contain China, the CCP decided to speed up China's atomic project. In early November 1962, it set the year 1964 as the best time to explode its first bomb.[95] At the same time, wary of Indian "expansionism" and suspicious of Khrushchev's siding with Jawaharlal Nehru in the Sino-Indian border dispute, Beijing did not hesitate to attack India in October 1962. Zhou Enlai explained to the Soviet ambassador to Beijing that China could no longer stand India's provocation and was "determined to counterattack."[96] The Chinese leaders suspected that Moscow was colluding with New Delhi, thereby assisting a dangerous enemy on their border.

Why did the alliance collapse?

Both Moscow and Beijing should have benefited from a Cold War alliance. Indeed, the leaders in both capitals had tried to maintain the alliance by resolving differences through direct communications and through what they regarded as a fair exchange of resources. But unlike the key Western Cold War alliances, the Sino-Soviet one failed in the end. In explaining the Sino-Soviet estrangement, some historians have pointed to the differences in leaders' personality and psychology; others credited it to US attempts at driving a wedge between the two.[97] More recent scholarship argues that culturally bound factors such as values, beliefs, and historical memories contributed to the collapse of the compact.

The historical consciousness of Chinese leaders largely shaped their attitudes toward Moscow. Given their strong sentiment about "foreign devils" and "national humiliations," the CCP leaders could hardly relinquish their memories of Russian chauvinism, which they continued to see in Stalin's behavior regarding aid, trade, and advisers. Within this context, they treated Khrushchev's reluctance to offer the most advanced (especially atomic) technology, his proposal for further integration, and his harsh criticism of Mao's

94 *DDZGWJ*, 119–20.
95 *ZELZ*, vol. IV, 1745–47.
96 Zhou's meeting with Chervonenko, October 8, 1962, cited *ibid.*, 1657.
97 Taubman, "Khrushchev vs. Mao"; Jack L. Snyder, "The Psychology of Escalation: Sino-Soviet Relations, 1958–1963," RAND Paper, P-6191, 1978.

domestic and foreign policies as new evidence of a chauvinistic and expansionist USSR.

The Russian ethnocentric view of the Chinese formed the basis of the Kremlin's China policy. Seeing the world through the prism of their own beliefs, Soviet leaders could not allow the CCP to take a different path from theirs. Locked in their own belief system, Soviet officials expected their "junior partner" to adopt the Soviet model of socialist transformation. While denouncing Mao for his misunderstanding of the Cold War's big picture, Khrushchev failed to respect the Chinese emphasis on independence, sovereignty, and self-reliance in foreign relations. Kremlin leaders often found it hard to understand why the Chinese seemed so "stubborn" on these principles, even at the risk of losing badly needed Soviet aid.

Coming from different traditions, the Chinese and the Soviets harbored different expectations of the partnership. The Chinese tended to stress personal trustworthiness in a relationship: you can only deal with a person when there is trust. Believing that policy stances reflected a person's character, Mao took all policy differences as personal affronts. Stalin and then Khrushchev, in his view, did not pay due respect to him, and were thus untrustworthy. On the other hand, the Soviets attached greater importance to structural interests in a partnership. They believed the Chinese were in need of assistance and that Beijing had little to offer in return. Regarding the alliance as asymmetric, they were frustrated about the CCP's emphasis on building personal relations and found it hard to understand why the Chinese stressed equality and reciprocity.

The personal clashes between Khrushchev and Mao were defined by cultural differences. Having acted in official capacities under Stalinism, Khrushchev showed a limited ability to tolerate challenges and believed in the utility of coercion to resolve differences. A good student of Chinese traditions, Mao overreacted to challenges because he saw them as threats to his long-term plans. From this perspective, he regarded Khrushchev as a short-sighted opportunist: when in need of Beijing's support, Khrushchev was willing to accommodate; otherwise, he never shied away from coercion. In Khrushchev's judgment, Mao became China's Stalin: the only way for Mao to secure control was to build a cult of personality, not just in China but eventually within the world Communist movement.

Mao believed Khrushchev tried to dominate him while Khrushchev thought Mao treated him as a "subordinate." The same feeling, ironically, seemed rooted in the same oriental traditions. Bound by natural ties of kindness on one side and devotion on the other, the oriental way of relationship-building requires favors in exchange for loyalty. Both Mao and Khrushchev thought of

themselves as benefactors: Mao supported Khrushchev politically, and Khrushchev aided Mao economically. Each leader expected his largesse to be reciprocated with appreciation and deference; when this did not happen, each viewed the other as returning kindness with ingratitude. The mutually patronizing attitude invariably produced mutual animosity.

The increasingly difficult relationship between Beijing and Moscow between 1954 and 1962 shows that common interests in fighting common enemies were not enough to sustain an alliance between the two Communist powers. China and the Soviet Union failed to overcome the perceptions and misperceptions derived from their culturally bound ethnocentrism.