CHAPTER 2
THE MYTH OF AMERICA'S LOST CHANCE IN CHINA

Did there exist any chance in 1949–50 for the Chinese Communist Party and the United States to reach an accommodation or, at least, to avoid a confrontation? Scholars who believe that Washington "lost a chance" to pursue a nonconfrontational relationship with the CCP generally base their argument on two assumptions—that the Chinese Communists earnestly sought U.S. recognition to expedite their country's postwar economic reconstruction, and that the relationship between the CCP and the Soviet Union was vulnerable because of Moscow's failure to offer sufficient support to the Communists during the Chinese civil war. These scholars thus claim that it was Washington's anti-Communist and pro-Guomindang policy that forced the CCP to treat the United States as an enemy.[1] This claim, though ostensibly critical of Washington's management of relations with China, is ironically American-centered on the methodological level, implying that the Chinese Communist policy toward the United States was simply passive reaction to Washington's policy toward China.

This chapter, with insights gained from newly accessible Chinese and, in some places, Russian materials, argues that the CCP's confrontation with the United States reflected the revolutionary essence of the party's perception and management of China's external relations, and that the CCP's alliance with the Soviet Union and confrontation with the United States must be understood in relation to the party's need to enhance the inner dynamics of the Chinese revolution after its nationwide victory. In the environment in which the Chinese Communists and the Americans found themselves in 1948–49, it was next to impossible for the two sides to establish a normal working relationship, let alone for them to reach an accommodation.

"Squeezing the Americans out of the Liberated Zone"

Contrary to the assumptions of the "lost chance" thesis, Chinese materials now available demonstrate that in 1949–50, Mao Zedong and the CCP leader-

ship were unwilling to pursue Western recognition or to establish diplomatic relations with Western countries. This attitude was most clearly demonstrated by the CCP leadership's handling of the Ward case.

In early November 1948, Chinese Communist troops occupied Shenyang (Mukden), the largest city in China's northeast. U.S. consul general Angus Ward, together with his consulate staff, remained in the city after the Communist takeover.[2] In the first two weeks of November, Ward actively pursued establishing official contacts with the new Communist municipal authorities.[3] Local Chinese Communist officials demonstrated some interest in dealing with Ward,[4] but the attitude of the CCP central leadership was intransigent. After a short waiting period, CCP leaders decided to adopt a policy of "squeezing" American and other Western diplomats out of the "liberated zone" in the Northeast, rendering Ward's efforts hopeless. A CCP Central Committee telegram (drafted by Zhou Enlai) to the party's Northeast Bureau on 10 November maintained that because the British, American, and French governments had not recognized Chinese Communist authorities, the CCP in turn would not grant official status to their diplomats either, but would treat them as common foreign residents without diplomatic immunity. The telegram further instructed the Northeast Bureau to take "certain measures" to confine the "freedom of action" of the Western diplomats, so that "they will have to withdraw from Shenyang."[5]

By mid-November, Shenyang's situation had worsened dramatically for Ward and his staff. On 15 November, the Communist Shenyang Municipal Military Control Commission informed "former" British, French, and American consulates in Shenyang that they should hand over their radio transmitters to the commission within thirty-six hours.[6] In reality, this order was particularly targeted at the Americans since the British and French usually relied upon regular Chinese communication services. As it soon turned out, the purpose of this order was to create another excuse for the Communists to force Western diplomats, and the Americans in particular, from the city.[7]

In a few days, when the Americans refused to hand over their radio transmitters, the pressure from the Chinese Communists escalated. On 17 November, Mao Zedong instructed Gao Gang, secretary of the CCP Northeast Bureau, to "act resolutely" to force the British, American, and French diplomats out of Shenyang. The CCP chairman also criticized Zhu Qiwen, the Communist Shenyang mayor, for his unauthorized reception of Ward during the early days after Shenyang's liberation.[8] The next day, Mao authorized the Communists in Shenyang to seize the radio transmitters in the Western consulates and instructed them to isolate the American, British, and French consulates,

so that they "would evacuate in the face of difficulties and our purpose of squeezing them out could be reached."[9] On 20 November, when the Americans persistently refused to hand over their radio equipment to Communist authorities, the Communists followed the advice of Soviet representatives in the Northeast and, without advance warning, placed Ward and his staff under house detention.[10] Ward and the other American diplomats were not allowed to leave China until December 1949.[11]

The CCP's challenge to Western presence in Shenyang resulted in part from immediate concerns that Western diplomats might use their radio transmitters to convey military intelligence to the GMD in the ongoing Chinese civil war.[12] The advice from Soviet representatives in Shenyang that the CCP should not permit Western diplomats to remain in the liberated zone also played an important role.[13] Mao, eager to maintain solidarity with Moscow, instructed CCP leaders in the Northeast to inform the Soviets that "in so far as our foreign policy in the Northeast and the whole country is concerned, we will certainly consult with the Soviet Union in order to maintain an identical stand with it."[14]

In a deeper sense, though, the CCP's action against Ward and his staff in Shenyang reflected the party leadership's determination to "make a fresh start" in China's external relations, which required the party to "clean the house before entertaining guests," as well as to "lean to one side" (the side of the Soviet Union).[15] Indeed, these three principles constituted the guidelines of Communist China's early diplomacy. In a telegram to the Northeast Bureau on 23 November 1948, the CCP Central Committee expounded its view that the party would refuse to recognize diplomatic relations between the GMD government and the West.[16] In the Central Committee's "Directive on Diplomatic Affairs," a key CCP foreign policy document issued on 19 January 1949, Mao Zedong declared that "with no exception we will not recognize any of those embassies, legations, and consulates of capitalist countries, as well as the diplomatic establishments and personnel attached to them accredited to the GMD." The directive also made it clear that the CCP would treat American and Soviet diplomats differently since "the foreign policy of the Soviet Union and the other new democratic countries has differed totally from that of the capitalist countries."[17] At the Central Committee's Second Plenary Session in March 1949, the CCP leadership further reached the consensus that the new Chinese Communist regime should neither hastily seek recognition from, nor pursue diplomatic relations with, the United States or other Western countries. "As for the question of the recognition of our country by the imperialist countries," asserted Mao, "we should not be in a hurry to solve it now and need not be in a hurry to solve it even for a fairly long period after nationwide

victory."[18] During 1949–50, CCP leaders repeatedly emphasized that the party would go all out to pursue strategic cooperation with the Soviet Union, and that establishing diplomatic relations with the United States or other Western countries was not a priority.[19]

Behind the Huang-Stuart Contacts

After the Chinese Communists occupied Nanjing, the capital of Nationalist China, in late April 1949, John Leighton Stuart, the American ambassador to China, remained in the city. In May and June, Stuart held a series of meetings with Huang Hua, director of the Foreign Affairs Office under the Communist Nanjing Municipal Military Control Commission. They discussed, among other things, conditions under which relations between the CCP and the United States might be established.[20] In the meantime, CCP leaders asserted on several occasions that if Western capitalist countries cut off their connections with the GMD and treated China and the Chinese people as "equals," the CCP would be willing to consider establishing relations with them.[21] Advocates of the "lost chance" thesis have used these exchanges and statements to support their position.

It is true that for a short period in the spring of 1949, Mao and the CCP leadership showed some interest in establishing contacts with the United States. In a telegram to the front-line headquarters of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) on 28 April, Mao mentioned that the Americans were "now contacting us through a third party to inquire into the possibility of establishing diplomatic relations with us." A previously unknown memorandum kept at the Chinese Central Archives indicates that the "third party" was Chen Mingshu, a pro-Communist "democratic figure" who was also a longtime friend of Stuart. On 25 and 26 March, Stuart had two secret meetings with Chen in Shanghai. The American ambassador, according to the memorandum, expressed two major concerns on the part of the United States: "(1) that the CCP might ally with the Soviet Union in a confrontation with the United States . . . , and (2) that the CCP, after unifying China by force, would stop its cooperation with the democratic figures and give up a democratic coalition government." Stuart promised that "if a genuine coalition government committed to peace, independence, democracy and freedom was to be established in China and if the CCP would change its attitude toward the United States by, among other things, stopping the anti-American campaign," the United States would be willing to "maintain friendly relations with the CCP and would provide the new government with assistance in new China's economic recovery and reconstruction."[22]

After receiving Chen Mingshu's report on his meetings with Stuart, Mao and the CCP leadership speculated that the Americans were simply forced to change their position because the old U.S. policy of supporting the GMD had failed. They also asserted that "if the United States (and Great Britain) cut off relations with the GMD, we could consider the question of establishing diplomatic relations with them."[23] As longtime players of the "united front" strategy, Mao and his comrades were determined to stick to their principles, but they would never ignore an opportunity to weaken the threat from enemies and potential enemies.[24] On 30 April, Mao, speaking on behalf of the PLA headquarters, publicly announced that the CCP would be "willing to consider establishing diplomatic relations with foreign countries" if such relations could be placed "on the basis of equality, mutual benefit, mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity and, most importantly, no help being given to the Guomindang reactionaries."[25]

In a telegram dated 10 May 1949, the CCP chairman authorized Huang Hua to contact Stuart, instructing him "to listen more and talk less" in the meeting. In response to the CCP Nanjing Municipal Committee's suggestion of asking "the United States to do more to help the Chinese people" as part of the CCP's conditions to establish relations with the United States, Mao rebutted that this "implied that the U.S. government had done something beneficial for the Chinese people in the past" and that it would "leave the Americans with an impression that the CCP was willing to accept American aid." The chairman particularly ordered Huang Hua to make it clear to Stuart that unless the Americans were willing to sever relations with the GMD regime and to treat China "equally," the Chinese Communists would not consider having relations with the United States.[26]

In retrospect, these two conditions were impossible for the Americans to meet. Cutting off connections with the GMD would require the complete reversal of America's China policy, which had been in place since the end of World War II. And treating the Chinese as "equals" presented the Americans with a profound challenge in a historical-cultural sense. Indeed, reflected in Mao's perception of "equality" was a profound Chinese "victim mentality." When Mao pointed out that Sino-American relations had been dominated by a series of unequal treaties since China's defeat in the Opium War of 1839–42, he revealed a deep-rooted belief that in a moral sense the United States and other Western powers owed the Chinese a heavy historical debt. As the first step toward establishing an equal relationship, he argued, the United States had to end, as well as apologize for, its "unequal" treatment of China. Only when the historical phenomenon of unequal exchanges between China and

the West ended would it be possible for the new Chinese Communist regime to establish relations with Western countries. Therefore, Mao's definition of "equality" meant a total negation of America's role in China's modern history and posed a crucial challenge to the existing principles of international relations to which the United States and other Western countries adhered. In Mao's opinion, America's willingness to change its attitude toward China represented a pass-or-fail test for policymakers in Washington; and he simply did not believe that they would pass the test.[27]

Thus, the Huang-Stuart meetings failed to bring the CCP and the United States any closer. Stuart emphasized the legitimacy of American interests in China and tried to convince the Chinese Communists that they had to accept widely recognized international regulations and principles. Huang, on the other hand, stressed that the CCP's two conditions were the prerequisites for any further discussion of establishing relations.[28] Consequently, the more Stuart and Huang Hua negotiated, the wider they found the distance between them and the two political cultures they represented.

Not surprisingly, while the Huang-Stuart contacts were still under way, the CCP dramatically escalated its charges against Ward and his staff. On 19 June 1949, the CCP media alleged that the American consulate in Shenyang had close links with an espionage ring directed by an American "Army Liaison Group." The Xinhua News Agency published a long article about this "espionage case," claiming that "many pieces of captured evidence show clearly that the so-called Consulate General of the United States in Shenyang and the Army Liaison Group are in fact American espionage organizations, whose aim is to utilize Japanese special service as well as Chinese and Mongols in a plot against the Chinese people and the Chinese people's revolutionary cause."[29] On 22 June, Mao instructed the CCP Northeast Bureau not to allow any member of the American consulate in Shenyang to leave the city before the espionage case had been settled.[30] Two days later, the CCP chairman ordered the party's media to use this espionage case to initiate a new wave of anti-American propaganda.[31]

Late in July and early in August, when Stuart, after the failure of his contacts with Huang Hua, returned to the United States and the U.S. State Department published the *China White Paper*, the anti-American propaganda campaign reached its peak. Mao wrote five articles criticizing America's China policy, claiming that, from both historical and current perspectives, the United States was the most dangerous enemy of the Chinese people and the Chinese revolution.[32]

The CCP's "Lean-to-One-Side" Decision

As the CCP's relations with the United States reached an impasse, its dealings with the Soviet Union grew closer. Indeed, new Chinese and Russian evidence reveals that the relationship between the CCP and Moscow in 1949 was much more intimate and substantial than many Western scholars previously realized. While it is true that problems and disagreements (sometimes even serious ones) existed between the Chinese and Soviet Communists, as well as between Mao Zedong and Stalin (as in any partnership), the new evidence clearly points out that cooperation, or the willingness to cooperate, was the dominant aspect of CCP-Soviet relations in 1949.

During China's civil war in 1946–49, the CCP's relations with Moscow were close but not harmonious.[33] When it became clear that the Chinese Communists were going to win the civil war, both the CCP and the Soviet Union felt the need to strengthen their relationship. From late 1947, Mao actively prepared to visit the Soviet Union to "discuss important domestic and international issues" with Stalin.[34] The extensive telegraphic exchanges between Mao and Stalin culminated in two important secret missions in 1949. From 31 January to 7 February, Anastas Mikoyan, a politburo member of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, visited Xibaipo, the CCP headquarters at that time. Mao and other CCP leaders had extensive discussions with him, introducing to him the CCP's strategies and policies. In particular, Mao explained to Mikoyan the CCP's foreign policy of "making a fresh start" and "cleaning the house before entertaining guests."[35] From late June to mid-August, Liu Shaoqi, the CCP's second in command, visited Moscow. During the visit, Stalin apologized for failing to give sufficient assistance to the CCP during the civil war and promised that the Soviet Union would give the Chinese Communists political support and substantial assistance in military and other areas. Moreover, the Soviets and the Chinese discussed a "division of labor" to promote the world revolution, and they reached a general consensus: the Soviet Union would remain the center of the international proletarian revolution, and promoting revolution in the East would become primarily China's duty. Liu left Moscow in mid-August, accompanied by ninety-six Russian experts who were to assist China's military buildup and economic reconstruction.[36] Mikoyan's mission to China and Liu's visit to Moscow, as the first formal contacts between the CCP leadership and the Soviet Communist leaders in many years, served as two important steps toward cooperation and a new mutual understanding between the CCP and the Soviet Union.[37]

During this period, the CCP frequently exchanged opinions with Moscow on how to evaluate the "American threat" and how to deal with the United

Image Not Available

Soviet politburo member Anastas Mikoyan with Mao Zedong in Xibaipo, early February 1949. From left to right, Soviet intelligence officer Doctor Orlov, Mikoyan, Chinese interpreter Shi Zhe, and Mao. Courtesy Shi Zhe personal collection.

States. In November 1948, as discussed previously, the CCP Northeast Bureau accepted Soviet advice to seize the radio transmitters of the American consulate in Shenyang. Early in January 1949, when Jiang Jieshi and the GMD regime started a "peace initiative" to end the civil war, Mao originally intended to rebuff it completely. But Stalin advised Mao and his comrades that the Americans were behind Jiang and that it would better serve the CCP's interests if, instead of simply rebuffing Jiang's proposals, it proposed its own conditions for ending the war through nonmilitary means (Stalin emphasized that the CCP should make these conditions unacceptable to Jiang). After a few exchanges, Mao Zedong "completely agreed with" Stalin's opinions and acted accordingly.[38] In the spring of 1949, Stalin warned the CCP about possible American landing operations in the People's Liberation Army's rear, convincing the CCP leadership to maintain a strategic reserve force in northern coastal China while the PLA's main force was engaged in the campaign of crossing the Yangzi River.[39] During Liu Shaoqi's visit to the Soviet Union in June–August 1949, the CCP

presented to Stalin a detailed memorandum, summarizing the party's domestic and, particularly, international policies (including the policy toward the United States).[40]

Particularly revealing are Mao's communications with Stalin on how the CCP should handle Huang Hua's contacts with Stuart. After receiving Chen Mingshu's report about his secret meetings with Stuart in Shanghai, the CCP immediately informed Moscow of the contact.[41] Mao Zedong met with I. V. Kovalev, Stalin's representative to China, on 9 April 1949, asking him to report to Stalin that the CCP was preparing to make minor adjustments in its foreign policy by conducting some "limited contacts" with Western capitalist countries, including the United States. But Mao also promised that the CCP would not formalize these contacts; nor would it legalize the relationship emerging from them. On 19 April, Stalin instructed Kovalev to advise Mao: "(1) We believe that China's democratic government should not refuse to establish formal relations with capitalist countries, including the United States, provided that these countries formally abandon military, economic, and political support to Jiang and the GMD government . . . and (2) We believe that, under some conditions, [the CCP] should not refuse to accept foreign loans or to do business with capitalist countries."[42] During the Huang-Stuart meetings, Mao informed Stalin about the substance of the meetings, emphasizing that "it is unfavorable that the embassies of the United States and other [capitalist] countries remain in Nanjing, and we will be happy to see that the embassies of all capitalist countries get out of China." Stalin, while expressing his gratitude to Mao for informing him about the meetings, advised him that for tactical considerations, "we do not think this is the proper time for the Soviet Union and Democratic China to demonstrate extensively the friendship between them."[43]

One may argue that when Mao informed Stalin of the contacts between the CCP and the United States, he might have been trying to pressure Stalin to strengthen the Soviet Union's support to the CCP. But this interpretation cannot explain the extensive and substantive exchanges between the two Communist leaders concerning CCP-U.S. contacts. Judging from the contents of the Mao-Stalin exchanges, it is more logical to regard them as a means for the two countries to reinforce the foundation of their relationship. From a Chinese perspective, the CCP's "lean-to-one-side" policy was more than lip service.

America's "Lost Chance" in China Is a Myth

There is no doubt that Washington's continuous support of the GMD during China's civil war played an important role in the CCP's adoption of an anti-

American policy. But America's pro-Jiang policy alone does not offer a comprehensive explanation of the origins of the CCP-American crisis. In order to comprehend the CCP's policy toward the United States, we must explore the historical-cultural environment in which it emerged, thus revealing the dynamics and logic underlying it.

The Chinese Communist revolution emerged in a land that was historically known as the Central Kingdom.[44] The Chinese during traditional times viewed China as civilization in toto. In modern times, this worldview had been severely challenged when China had to face the cruel reality that its door was opened by the superior forces of Western powers, and that the very survival of the Chinese nation was at stake. Mao's and his comrades' generation became indignant when they saw the West, including the United States, treat the "old," declining China with arrogance and a strong sense of superiority. They also despised the Chinese governments from the Manchu dynasty to the regimes of the warlords, which had failed to protect China's national integrity and sovereignty. An emotional commitment to national liberation provided the crucial momentum in Mao's and his comrades' choice of a Marxist-Leninist-style revolution.[45] For Mao and his comrades, the final goal of their revolution was not only the total transformation of the old Chinese state and society they saw as corrupt and unjust; they also wanted to change China's weak power status, proving to the world the strength and influence of Chinese culture. In the process, they would redefine the values and rules underlying the international system. In short, they wanted to restore China's *central* position in the international community.

Mao and his comrades never regarded the Communist seizure of power in China in 1949 as the revolution's conclusion. Rather, Mao was very much concerned about how to maintain and enhance the revolution's momentum after its nationwide victory. Indeed, this concern dominated Mao's thinking during the formation of the People's Republic and would be a preoccupation during the latter half of his life.[46] Consequently, Mao's approach toward China's external relations in general and his policy toward the United States in particular became heavily influenced by this primary concern. Throughout 1949–50, the Maoist political discourse challenged the values and codes of behavior attached to "U.S. imperialism," pointing out that they belonged to the "old world," which the CCP was determined to destroy. While defining the "American threat," Mao and his fellow CCP leaders never limited their vision merely to the possibility of direct American military intervention in China; they emphasized long-range American hostility toward the victorious Chinese revolution, especially the U.S. imperialist attempt to isolate the revolution from without

and sabotage it from within.[47] Indeed, when Mao justified the CCP's decision not to pursue relations with the United States, his most consistent and powerful argument was that the decision would deprive the Americans of a means of sabotaging the Chinese revolution.[48]

It is also important to point out that while Washington's hostility toward the Chinese revolution offended Mao and his comrades, the perceived American disdain for China as weak and the Chinese as inferior made them angry. In the anti-American propaganda campaign following the publication of the *China White Paper*, Mao sought to expose the "reactionary" and "vulnerable" nature of U.S. imperialism and to encourage ordinary Chinese people's national self-respect. In other words, Mao used anti-American discourse as a means of mobilizing the masses for his continuous revolution, a practice that would reach its first peak in 1950–53, during the "Great War of Resisting America and Assisting Korea" (the Chinese name for China's participation in the Korean War).[49]

The CCP's adoption of an anti-American policy in 1949–50 had deep roots in both China's history and its modern experiences. Sharp divergences in political ideology (communism versus capitalism) and perceived national interests contributed to the shaping of the Sino-American confrontation; and suspicion and hostility were further crystallized as the result of Washington's continuous support to the GMD and the CCP's handling of events such as the Ward case. But, from a Chinese perspective, the most profound reason underlying the CCP's anti-American policy was Mao's grand plans for transforming China's state, society, and international outlook. Even though it might have been possible for Washington to change the concrete course of its China policy (which was highly unlikely given the policy's complicated background), it would have been impossible for the United States to alter the course and goals of the Chinese revolution, let alone the historical-cultural environment that gave birth to the event. America's "lost chance" in China must therefore be regarded as a myth.

CHAPTER 3
MAO'S CONTINUOUS REVOLUTION AND THE RISE AND DEMISE OF THE SINO-SOVIET ALLIANCE, 1949–1963

Fluttering high are the banners of victory,
shaking the earth and mountain is the singing of millions;
Mao Zedong–Stalin,
like the sun(s) shining in the heaven.
—"Song of Sino-Soviet Solidarity"

Never are there two suns in the heaven,
Never should there be two emperors on the earth.
—Age-old Chinese proverb

No other event during the Cold War contributed more to changes in perceptions of the Communist powers than the rise and demise of the Sino-Soviet alliance. Emerging in the late 1940s and early 1950s, the "brotherly solidarity" between the People's Republic of China and the Soviet Union was claimed to be "unbreakable" and "eternal." But by the latter part of the decade, serious disputes began to develop between Chinese and Soviet leaders, causing the alliance to crumble and then, in the mid-1960s, to collapse. In the years that followed, the hostility between the two countries grew so intense that it led to a bloody border war in 1969.[1] In the 1960s and 1970s, the complete break in the two Communist giants' alliance became a basic element of international affairs.

What, then, were the causes underlying the rise and demise of the Sino-Soviet alliance? Scholars may answer this question in many ways. This chapter adopts a domestic-politics-centered approach. Without ignoring the merits of other interpretations, especially those emphasizing the role played by China's security concerns and international ideological commitments, this chapter argues that China's alliance policy toward the Soviet Union was *always* an integral part of Mao Zedong's grand continuous revolution plans designed to transform China's state, society, and international outlook. While security

concerns and socialist internationalism conditioned the rise and fall of the alliance, it was Mao's efforts to define and redefine the mission and scope of his continuous revolution—which constituted the central theme of Chinese politics during his era (1949 to 1976)—that had shaped Beijing's attitude toward China's alliance with the Soviet Union.

The "Lean-to-One-Side" Approach

On 30 June 1949, Mao Zedong issued his famous "lean-to-one-side" statement. In a long article titled "On People's Democratic Dictatorship," he announced Communist China's special relationship with the Soviet Union. He said that revolutionary China must "unite in a common struggle with those nations of the world that treat us as equal and unite with the peoples of all countries—that is, ally ourselves with the Soviet Union, with the People's Democratic Countries, and with the proletariat and the broad masses of the people in all other countries, and form an international united front. . . . We must lean to one side."[2]

Why did Mao choose these extraordinary terms? The statement was obviously linked to the longtime revolutionary policy of the Chinese Communist Party of attaching itself to the international "progressive forces" led by the Soviet Union. By the late 1940s, CCP leaders clearly perceived the postwar world as divided into two camps, one headed by the Soviet Union and the other by the United States, and regarded their revolution as a part of the Soviet-led international proletarian movement.[3] It is apparent that Mao's statement was consistent with this view of the postwar world structure.

The lean-to-one-side approach also grew out of the CCP's assessment of the serious nature of the threat from Western imperialist countries, especially from the United States, to the completion of the Chinese revolution. As the CCP neared final victory in China's civil war in 1949, Mao and his fellow Chinese Communist leaders became very much concerned about the prospect of direct U.S. intervention in China.[4] Although the American military did not intervene directly during the latter phase of the civil war, the CCP chairman and his comrades, given their belief in the aggressive and evil nature of Western imperialism, continued to view the Western capitalist countries in general and the United States in particular as dangerous enemies.[5] In the eyes of Mao and his comrades, "it was the possibility of military intervention from imperialist countries that made it necessary for China to ally itself with other socialist countries."[6]

Mao's lean-to-one-side decision cannot be viewed in terms of these ideological commitments and security concerns only, though. It also must be un-

derstood in the context of his determination to maintain and enhance the inner dynamics of the Chinese Communist revolution at the time of its nationwide victory. The final goal of Mao's Chinese revolution, as the CCP chairman himself repeatedly emphasized, was the transformation of China's "old" state and society and the destruction of the "old" world in which, as Mao and his comrades viewed it, China had been a humiliated member during modern times. Mao never concealed his ambition that his revolution would finally turn China into a land of universal justice and equality, and that, simultaneously, through presenting the experience of the Chinese revolution as a model for other "oppressed nations" in the world, China would reestablish its central position in the international community.[7]

In 1949, when the Chinese Communist revolution approached nationwide victory, Mao and his comrades understood that the new China would have to meet such challenges as establishing and consolidating a new revolutionary regime and reviving China's war-worn economy. But what concerned the CCP chairman the most was how to prevent the revolution from losing its momentum. In his 1949 New Year's message, the CCP chairman called upon his party "to carry the revolution through to the end," by which he meant not only the thorough destruction of the Guomindang regime but also the promotion of the revolution toward its higher, post-takeover stage.[8] Throughout 1949 Mao repeatedly warned against imperialist plots to sabotage the revolution from within either using the "sugar-coated bullet" to shoot down the weak-willed Communists or dividing the revolutionary camp by applying the "doctrine of means" to confuse the distinction between revolution and counterrevolution.[9] He stressed that "after the destruction of the enemies with guns, the enemies without guns are still there, and they are bound to struggle desperately against us." The CCP chairman therefore warned his party: "If we fail to pay enough attention to these problems, if we do not know how to wage the struggle against them and win victory in the struggle, we shall be unable to maintain our political power, we shall be unable to stand on our feet, we shall fail."[10]

It was primarily for the purpose of creating new momentum for the Chinese revolution that the CCP leadership made three fundamental decisions on Communist China's external relations, what Zhou Enlai referred to as "making a fresh start," "cleaning the house before entertaining guests," and "leaning to one side."[11] These three decisions were closely interconnected. While the first two represented CCP leaders' determination not to be influenced by the legacy of "old" China's diplomatic practice, the last one reflected their conviction that an alliance with the Soviet Union would help destroy any remaining illu-

sions among the Chinese people, especially the intellectuals, of the utility of assistance from Western capitalist countries. Because the Soviet Union had been the first socialist country in the world and had established the only example for building a socialist state and society, Mao's continuous revolution had to follow the example of the Soviet experience. In this regard, the argument of Zhang Baijia, a leading Chinese scholar in Chinese diplomatic history, certainly makes good sense: "Contrary to the prevalent view, Mao treated the 'lean-to-one-side' concept as a grand strategy to influence the party's foreign *and* domestic policies. The key question Mao tried to answer by introducing the lean-to-one-side approach was how to define the *general* direction of New China's development."[12]

Not surprisingly, despite the tortuous development of the CCP-Soviet relations during the course of the Chinese revolution, Mao and the CCP leadership made genuine efforts to strengthen their relations with Moscow when the party was winning China's civil war. For example, as discussed in Chapter 2, Anastas Mikoyan made a secret trip to Xibaipo in early 1949 and Liu Shaoqi met with Stalin in Moscow in the summer of 1949. The Chinese Communist efforts to achieve a strategic alliance with the Soviet Union culminated in December 1949–February 1950 when Mao personally visited the Soviet Union. The CCP chairman's experience during the visit, however, was uneasy. During his first meeting with Stalin on 16 December, the Soviet leader asked him what he hoped to achieve from the visit. The CCP chairman, according to his interpreter's recollections, first replied that he wanted to "bring about something that not only looked nice but also tasted delicious"—a reference to his wish to sign a new Sino-Soviet treaty.[13] However, Stalin greatly disappointed Mao by initially emphasizing that it was neither in Moscow's nor in Beijing's interest to abolish the 1945 Sino-Soviet treaty the Soviet Union had signed with the GMD.[14] Mao's visit then hit a deadlock for almost three weeks before the Soviets relented.[15] Chinese premier Zhou Enlai arrived in Moscow on 20 January to negotiate the details of the new alliance treaty, which was signed finally on 14 February 1950. The Chinese, however, had to agree to allow the Soviets to maintain their privileges in China's Northeast and Xinjiang;[16] in exchange, the Soviets agreed to increase military and other material support to China, including providing air-defense installations in coastal areas of the People's Republic.[17]

Mao must have had mixed feelings when he left Moscow to return to China. On the one hand, he had reasons to celebrate the signing of the Sino-Soviet alliance treaty. The alliance would greatly enhance the PRC's security, and, more important, it would expand the CCP's capacity to promote the post-

Image Not Available

Joseph Stalin (center) *and Mao Zedong at the celebration rally for Stalin's seventieth birthday, Moscow, 21 December 1949. At the far left is Chinese interpreter Shi Zhe. Courtesy Shi Zhe personal collection.*

victory revolution at home. With the backing of the Soviet Union, Mao and his comrades would occupy a more powerful position to wipe out the political, economic, social, and cultural legacies of the "old" China and carry out "new" China's state-building and societal transformation on the CCP's terms. It was not just rhetoric when the CCP chairman, after returning to Beijing, told his comrades that the Sino-Soviet alliance would help the party cope with both domestic and international threats to the Chinese revolution.[18]

On the other hand, however, Mao could clearly sense that divergences persisted between Stalin and himself. Stalin's raw use of the language of power put off Mao. Mao's wish to discuss revolutionary ideals and the Communists' historical responsibilities came to nothing. The CCP chairman never enjoyed meeting Stalin face to face, and he was extremely sensitive to the way Stalin treated him, the revolutionary leader from the Central Kingdom, as the inferior "younger brother."[19] The Sino-Soviet treaty made the lean-to-one-side approach the cornerstone of China's external relations, yet, because of the way the agreement was designed, the future development of Sino-Soviet relations was bound to be rocky.

The Alliance and China's Korean War Experience

The first major test for the Sino-Soviet alliance came just eight months after it had been established, when, in October 1950, the CCP leadership de-

cided to dispatch Chinese troops to enter the Korean War. From Beijing's perspective, such a test not only allowed Mao and his comrades to define more specifically the alliance's utility for China's national security; it also provided them with a valuable opportunity to achieve a better understanding of how the alliance would serve Mao's revolutionary projects. China's Korean War experience, consequently, would profoundly influence both Mao's concerns about the prospect of the Chinese revolution and the future development of the Sino-Soviet alliance.

The Korean War, as revealed by new Russian and Chinese sources, was, first of all, North Korean leader Kim Il-sung's war, which he initiated on the basis of his judgment (or misjudgment) of the revolutionary situation existing on the Korean peninsula.[20] Stalin initially feared that such a war could result in direct military conflict between the Soviet Union and the United States, and he did not endorse Kim's plans of unifying his country by military means. At the end of January 1950, however, U.S. secretary of state Dean Acheson's statement indicating that Korea would be excluded from America's western Pacific defense perimeter appears to have convinced him that direct U.S. military intervention in the peninsula was unlikely.[21] In the months prior to the outbreak of the Korean War, the Soviet Union provided large amounts of military aid to the Korean Communists, but Stalin never made the commitment to use Soviet military forces in Korea, and he insisted that Kim travel to Beijing to consult with Mao Zedong, so that the Chinese Communists would share responsibility for Kim's war preparations.[22]

Mao and the CCP leadership faced a dilemma on the Korean issue. Mao and his comrades were reluctant to see a war break out in Korea because they worried that that might complicate the situation in East Asia and jeopardize the CCP's effort to liberate Taiwan, which was still occupied by Nationalist forces.[23] Yet, because Mao and his comrades were eager to revive China's central position on the international scene through supporting revolutionary movements in other countries (especially in East Asia), and because profound historical connections existed between the Chinese and North Korean Communists, it would have been inconceivable for Mao to veto Kim's plans to unify his country through a revolutionary war.[24] From 1949 to 1950, in meetings with North Korean leaders (including Kim Il-sung in mid-May 1950), Mao made it clear that the CCP supported the Korean revolution but hoped that the Koreans would not initiate the invasion of the South until the PLA had seized Taiwan.[25] In the meantime, during Mao's 1949–50 visit to the Soviet Union, the CCP chairman shared with Stalin his belief that it was unlikely for the United States to involve itself in a revolutionary civil war in East Asia, thus enhancing Stalin's

determination to back Kim's plans to attack the South.[26] Furthermore, from summer 1949 to spring 1950, the Chinese sent 50,000 to 70,000 ethnic Korean PLA soldiers (with weapons) back to Korea.[27] As a result, Mao virtually gave Kim's plan a green light.

The Korean War erupted on 25 June 1950, and U.S. president Harry Truman promptly decided to come to the rescue of Syngman Rhee's South Korean regime and to dispatch the Seventh Fleet to "neutralize" the Taiwan Strait, a decision that turned the Korean War into an international crisis. Chinese leaders quickly decided to postpone the invasion of Taiwan and to focus on dealing with the crisis in Korea.[28] On 13 July the CCP leadership formally established the Northeast Border Defense Army (NEBDA), assigning it with the task of preparing for military intervention in Korea in the event that the war turned against North Korea.[29] On 18 August, after over a quarter million Chinese troops had taken up positions along the Chinese-Korean border, Mao set the end of September as the deadline for these troops to complete preparations for military operations in Korea.[30]

Beijing based its handling of the Korean crisis on the assumption that if China entered the Korean War, the Soviet Union would honor its obligations in accordance with the Sino-Soviet alliance treaty and provide China with all kinds of support, including supplies of ammunition, military equipment, and air cover for Chinese land forces. Early in July, when the Chinese leaders informed Stalin of the decision to establish the NEBDA, Stalin supported the plan and promised that if the Chinese troops were to fight in Korea, the Soviet Union would "try to provide air cover for these units."[31] In the following weeks the Soviets accelerated military deliveries to China, and a Soviet air force division, with 122 MiG-15 fighters, entered China's Northeast to help with air defense there.[32] These developments must have enhanced Beijing's belief that if China entered the Korean War, the Soviets would provide them with substantial military support.

When the course of the war reversed after U.S. troops landed at Inchon on 15 September, however, Stalin's attitude regarding Soviet military assistance changed. He became more determined than ever to avoid a direct military confrontation with the United States. In a telegram to Chinese leaders dated 1 October, Stalin pointed out that the situation in Korea was grave and that without outside support, the Korean Communist regime would collapse. He then asked the Chinese to dispatch their troops to Korea. It is noticeable, however, that he did not mention what support the Soviet Union would offer China, let alone touch on the key question of Soviet air support.[33]

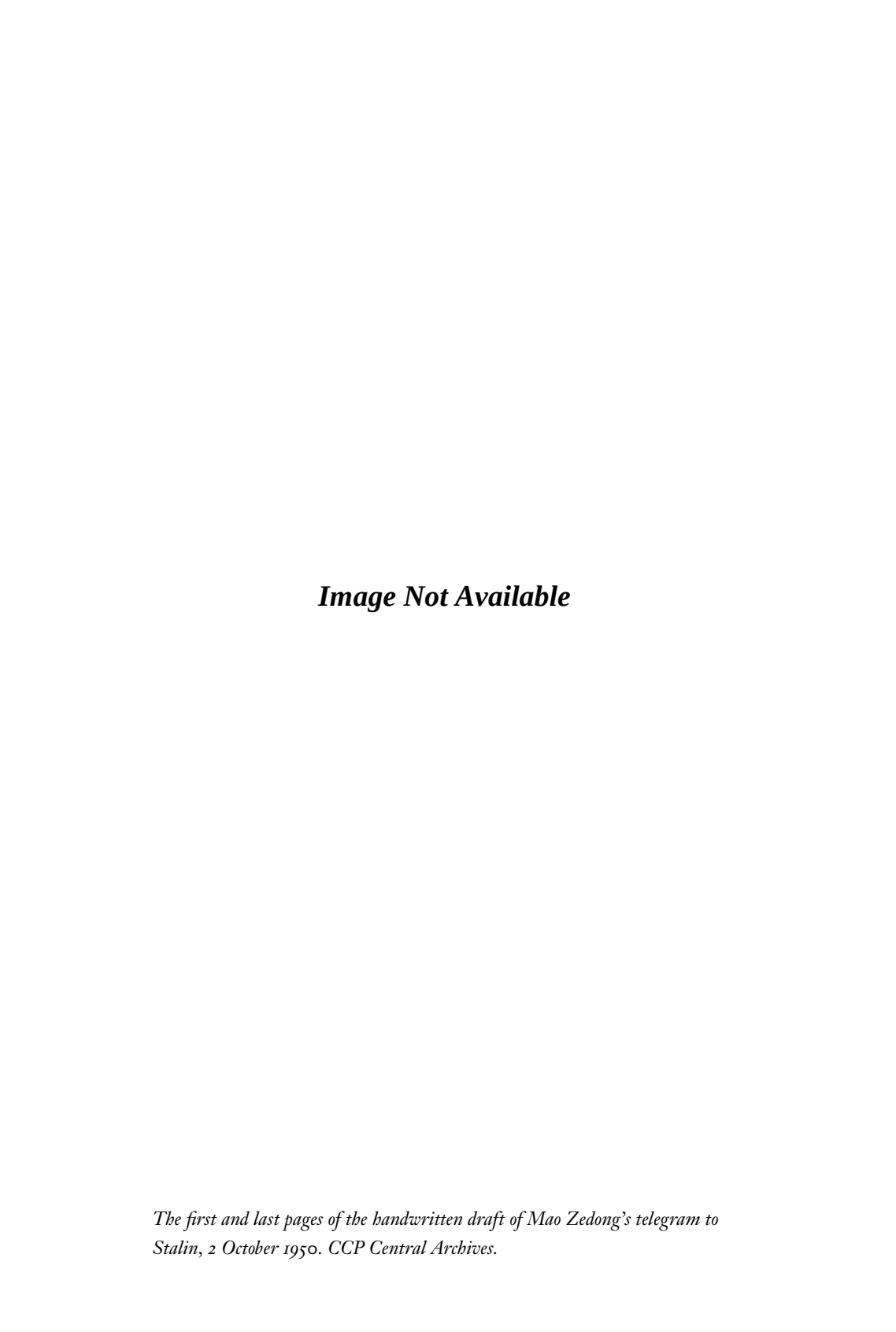
At this moment, serious differences in opinions already existed among top

Chinese leaders on whether or not China should enter the war. Mao favored dispatching troops to Korea, and on 2 October he personally drafted a long telegram to respond to Stalin's request, informing Stalin that the Chinese leadership had decided "to send a portion of our troops, under the name of [Chinese People's] Volunteers, to Korea, assisting the Korean comrades to fight the troops of the United States and its running dog Syngman Rhee." Mao summarized the reasons for this decision, emphasizing that even though China's intervention might cause a war between China and the United States, it was necessary for the sake of the Korean and Eastern revolutions. Mao also made it clear that in order to defeat the American troops in Korea, China needed substantial Soviet military support.[34] He used plain language to ask Stalin to clarify "whether or not the Soviet Union can provide us with assistance in supplying weapons, can dispatch a volunteer air force into Korea, and can deploy large numbers of air force units to assist us in strengthening our air defense in Beijing, Tianjin, Shenyang, Shanghai, and Nanjing if the United States uses its air force to bombard these places."[35]

Mao, however, apparently did not dispatch this telegram, probably because the opinions among top CCP leaders were yet to be unified and he also realized the need to bargain with Stalin on the Soviet air support issue.[36] According to Russian sources, Mao met with Nikolai Rochshin, the Soviet ambassador to China, later on 2 October, informing him that because dispatching Chinese troops to Korea "may entail extremely serious consequences," including "provoking an open conflict between the United States and China," many leaders in Beijing believed that China should "show caution" in entering the Korean War. Mao told Stalin that the Chinese leadership had not decided whether to send troops to Korea.[37]

Over the ensuing two weeks, the Sino-Soviet alliance underwent a major test. Before 7 October (when Stalin informed Kim of Mao's communication), the Soviet leader cabled the Chinese leadership, advising Beijing that for the sake of China's security interests as well as the interests of the world proletarian revolution, it was necessary for China to send troops to Korea. Indeed, Stalin even introduced a thesis that may be called the Communist version of the domino theory, warning Mao and his comrades that Beijing's failure to intervene could result in grave consequences first for China's Northeast, then for all China, and then for the entire world revolution. Ironically, Stalin again failed to mention how the Soviet Union would support China if Chinese troops did enter operations in Korea.[38]

By 7 October, Chinese leaders had already made the decision to enter the war. From 3 to 6 October the CCP leadership held a series of strictly secret



The first and last pages of the handwritten draft of Mao Zedong's telegram to Stalin, 2 October 1950. CCP Central Archives.

meetings to discuss the Korean issue. Although most CCP leaders had opposed, or at least had reservations about, entering the war in Korea, Mao used both his authority and his political insights to secure the support of his colleagues for the decision to go to war.[39] On 8 October Mao Zedong formally issued the order to establish the Chinese People's Volunteers (CPV), with Peng Dehuai as the commander,[40] and informed Kim Il-sung of the decision the same evening.[41]

In order to strengthen China's bargaining position in pursuing Soviet military support, Mao found it necessary to "play tough with" Stalin.[42] On 10–11 October, Zhou Enlai met with Stalin at the latter's villa on the Black Sea. Zhou, according to Shi Zhe, Mao's and Zhou's Russian-language interpreter, did not tell Stalin that China had decided to send troops to Korea but persistently brought the discussion around to Soviet military aid, especially air support, for China. Stalin finally agreed to provide China with substantial military support but explained that it was impossible for the Soviet air force to engage in fighting over Korea until two to two and a half months after Chinese land forces entered operations there.[43]

Stalin's ambiguous attitude forced Mao again to order Chinese troops to halt preparations for entering operations in Korea on 12 October.[44] The next day the CCP politburo met again to discuss China's entry into the Korean War. Pushed by Mao, the politburo confirmed that entering the war was in the fundamental interests of the Chinese revolution as well as the Eastern revolution.[45] Mao then authorized Zhou Enlai, who was still in Moscow, to inform Stalin of the decision. At the same time, Mao instructed Zhou to continue to "consult with" the Soviet leaders, to clarify whether they would ask China to lease or to purchase the military equipment that Stalin agreed to provide, and whether the Soviet air force would enter operations in Korea at all.[46]

On 17 October, the day Zhou returned to Beijing, Mao again ordered the troops on the Chinese-Korean border to halt their movements to give him time to learn from Zhou about Stalin's exact position.[47] The next day, when Mao was convinced that the Soviet Union would provide China with all kinds of military support, including air defense for major Chinese cities and air cover for Chinese troops fighting in Korea in a later stage of the war, he finally ordered Chinese troops to enter the Korean War.[48]

The concerns over China's physical security certainly played an important role in convincing Beijing's leaders to enter the war. Yet factors more complicated than these narrowly defined "security concerns" dominated Mao's conceptual world. When Chinese troops entered the Korean War, Mao meant to pursue a glorious victory over the American-led United Nations (UN) forces.

The triumph, he hoped, would transform the challenge and threat posed by the Korean crisis into added political energy for securing Communist control of China's state and society as well as promote the international prestige and influence of the People's Republic.

These plans explain why, at the same time Mao and his comrades were considering entering the Korean War, the CCP leadership started the "Great Movement to Resist America and Assist Korea," with "beating American arrogance" as its central slogan. The party used every means available to stir the "hatred of the U.S. imperialists" among common Chinese, emphasizing that the United States had long engaged in political and economic aggression against China, that the declining capitalist America was not as powerful as it seemed, and that a confrontation between China and the United States was inevitable.[49] When the Chinese troops were crossing the Yalu River to Korea late in October 1950, a nationwide campaign aimed at suppressing "reactionaries and reactionary activities" emerged in China's cities and countryside.[50] All of these developments must be understood as part of Mao's efforts to mobilize the Chinese population to promote his grand programs for carrying on the Chinese revolution.

Mao's already ambivalent feelings toward Stalin must have been even more uncertain during the first three weeks of October. If Mao intended to use the Korean crisis as a new source of domestic political mobilization, it would follow that he would have welcomed Stalin's constant push for China to enter the war as well as his promise, however late, to provide China with ammunition, military equipment, and eventual air cover. In turn, Mao would be in a prime position to persuade the party leadership to approve his decision to enter the war. But Stalin's behavior of always putting Moscow's own interests ahead of anything else demonstrated to Mao the limits of the Soviet leader's proletarian internationalism. Meanwhile, Mao's decision to rescue the Korean and Eastern revolution at a time of real difficulties inevitably heightened the CCP chairman's sense of moral superiority—he was able to help others out, even if the Soviet "elder brother" could not. As a result, in conceptual and psychological terms, the seed for the future Sino-Soviet split was sown.

During the three years of China's intervention in Korea, the practical aspect of the relationship between Beijing and Moscow intensified. Mao consulted with Stalin on almost all important decisions. In December 1950 and January 1951, when Mao and his comrades were deciding to order Chinese troops to cross the 38th parallel, Beijing maintained daily communication with Moscow and received Stalin's unfailing support.[51] In May–June 1951, when Beijing's leaders were considering shifting their policy emphasis from fighting to nego-

tiation to end the war, they had extensive exchanges of opinions with Stalin and did not make the decision until Moscow fully backed the new strategy.[52] After 1952, when the armistice negotiations at Panmunjom hit a deadlock on the prisoner-of-war issue, Beijing consulted with Moscow and concluded that the Chinese/North Korean side would not compromise on this issue until its political and military position had improved.[53]

As far as the foundation of the Sino-Soviet alliance was concerned, Mao's decision to send Chinese troops to Korea seemed to have boosted Stalin's confidence in his comrades in Beijing as genuine proletarian internationalists. During the war years, the Soviet Union provided China with large amounts of ammunition and military equipment. Units of the Soviet air force, based in Manchuria, began to defend the transportation lines across the Chinese-Korean border as early as November 1950 and entered operations over the northern part of North Korea in January 1951.[54] In the meantime, Stalin became more willing to commit Soviet financial and technological resources to China's economic reconstruction—during the war years, as a consequence, the Soviet Union's share in China's foreign trade increased from 30 percent (in 1950) to 56.3 percent (in 1953).[55] In retrospect, it would have been virtually impossible for China to have fought the Korean War without the strategic alliance with the Soviet Union.

Soviet support also played a crucial role in bolstering Mao's plans for continuing the revolution at home. Indeed, China's involvement in the Korean War stimulated a series of political and social transformations in the country that would have been inconceivable during the early stage of the new republic. In the wake of China's entrance into the war, the Communist regime found itself in a powerful position to penetrate almost every area of Chinese society through intensive mass mobilization under the banner of "Resisting America and Assisting Korea."[56] During the three years of war, three nationwide campaigns swept through China's countryside and cities: the movement to suppress counterrevolutionaries, the land reform movement, and the "Three Antis" and "Five Antis" movements.[57] When the war ended in July 1953, China's society and political landscape had been altered: organized resistance to the new regime had been destroyed; land in the countryside had been redistributed and the landlord class had been eliminated; many of the Communist cadres whom Mao believed had lost the revolutionary momentum had been either "reeducated" or removed from leading positions; and the national bourgeoisie was under the tight control of the Communist state and the "petit-bourgeoise" intellectuals had experienced the first round of Communist reeducation. Consequently, the CCP effectively extended and deepened

its organizational control of Chinese society and dramatically promoted its authority and legitimacy in the minds of the Chinese people.

These domestic changes were further facilitated by the fact that during the war, Chinese troops successfully forced the U.S./UN forces to retreat from the Chinese-Korean border to the 38th parallel, a development that allowed Beijing to call its intervention in Korea a great victory. Mao and his comrades believed that they had won a powerful position from which to claim that international society—friends and foes alike—had to accept China as a Great Power.[58] This position, in turn, would allow Mao, as the mastermind of the war decision, to enjoy political power inside China with far fewer checks and balances than before. His view of China's international victory in Korea made him more confident and enthusiastic to undertake a series of new steps to transform China. Mao had good reason to be thankful for the Sino-Soviet alliance during the Korean crisis.

Yet, on another level, the Chinese experience during the Korean War also ground away at some of the cement that kept the Sino-Soviet alliance together. The extreme pragmatism Stalin had demonstrated in his management of the Korean crisis, especially in his failure to commit Soviet air support to China during the key weeks of October 1950, revealed the superficial nature of the Soviet dictator's proletarian internationalism. What really offended Mao and his comrades, however, was the Soviet request that China pay for much of the military support Beijing had received during the war, which added to China's long-term economic challenges.[59] To the Chinese, Stalin's stinginess made the Soviets seem more like arms merchants than genuine Communist internationalists.

Consequently, although China's Korean War experience made Beijing more dependent on Moscow, psychologically Stalin's attitude bolstered Mao's and his fellow Chinese leaders' sense of moral superiority in relation to their Soviet comrades. Stalin's death in March 1953 further hardened this feeling. As will be discussed later, this subtle change in Mao's and his comrades' perception of themselves and their comrades in Moscow would leave a critical stamp upon the fate of the Sino-Soviet alliance.

The Alliance's Golden Years

For a period of several years immediately after Stalin's death, Sino-Soviet cooperation developed smoothly. The Soviets offered the Chinese substantial support to assist the PRC's economic reconstruction, as well as to promote its international status. From 29 September to 12 October 1954, Nikita Khrushchev, the first secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union

(CPSU), led a top-level Soviet delegation to visit China to participate in the PRC's fifth anniversary celebrations. During this visit, the Soviets signed a series of agreements with the Chinese. They agreed to return to China Soviet military bases in Lüshun (Port Arthur), together with its equipment, to give up Soviet shares in four Sino-Soviet joint ventures,[60] and to provide China with loans totaling 520 million rubles. In addition, they offered technological support to China in initiating or upgrading 156 key industrial projects for the PRC's first five-year plan.[61] In April 1955 the Soviet Union and China signed an agreement under which Moscow provided Beijing with nuclear technology, purportedly for peaceful purposes.[62] It appeared that Khrushchev and the new Soviet leadership were willing to establish a more productive and cooperative relationship with their Chinese comrades.[63]

Chinese leaders in Beijing also demonstrated solidarity with Khrushchev and the new Soviet leadership on a number of important domestic and international issues. When the Soviet leaders made the decision to purge Lavrenty Beria, Stalin's chief of the secret police, and when Khrushchev became the CPSU's first secretary, the CCP leadership quickly offered its approval. In the meantime, on pivotal Soviet foreign policy decisions such as the formation of the Warsaw Pact Organization, the establishment of diplomatic relations between the Soviet Union and West Germany, the signing of a peace treaty with Austria, and the improvement of relations with Yugoslavia, Beijing provided Moscow with timely and firm support.[64]

On important international issues, Chinese and Soviet leaders carefully consulted with each other to coordinate their strategies and policies. A revealing example in this regard was Beijing's and Moscow's management of the Geneva Conference of 1954. Before the conference, Zhou Enlai twice visited Moscow to hold a series of meetings with Soviet leaders, which resulted in well-coordinated Sino-Soviet strategies toward the Korean and the Indochina questions that were to be discussed at the conference.[65] At Geneva, the Chinese and the Soviet delegations exchanged opinions and intelligence information on a daily basis. When the Vietnamese Communists hesitated before accepting the temporary division of their country along the 17th parallel, both the Chinese and the Soviets pressured the Vietnamese, convincing them that such a solution was in the interests of both the Vietnamese revolution and the cause of world peace. In this sense it is fair to say that the conference's settlement of the Indochina issue should be attributed to the cooperation between Zhou Enlai and Vyacheslav Molotov.[66] The 1954–55 period shined as a golden age of the Sino-Soviet alliance.

The continuous enhancement of the alliance during this period reflected,

to some degree, Moscow's and Beijing's coinciding strategic concerns. From a Soviet perspective, these were the years that Khrushchev and his colleagues slowly began to rid themselves of Stalin's shadow. Khrushchev, who had just emerged as the top Soviet leader and needed time to consolidate his leadership role, certainly understood that the support from China was indispensable to him.[67]

Beijing, on the other hand, also needed Moscow's assistance. The CCP leadership was adjusting China's internal and external policies after the end of the Korean War. Domestically, in 1953–54 the Central Committee was contemplating the introduction of the first five-year plan as well as liberating the Nationalist-controlled Taiwan either by peaceful or, if necessary, by military means.[68] After five years of being excluded from the international community, Beijing's leaders (including Mao at that time) were eager to escape China's isolation.[69] Under these circumstances, especially considering that China's socialist reconstruction had to be modeled after the Soviet example, political, military, and economic support from the Soviet Union became highly valuable. In other words, the specific needs of Mao's continuous revolution at this stage were well served by the Sino-Soviet alliance.

A vague undercurrent of disagreement and distrust, however, lingered between Chinese and Soviet leaders. Even during the heyday of Sino-Soviet solidarity, Mao and his comrades were never comfortable with the junior partner's role they had to play in China's relations with the Soviet Union. As they would explain later, Mao and his comrades felt a deep sense of inequality in their dealings with the Soviets, and particularly with Stalin. Making Beijing a real equal partner with Moscow was the constant aim of Mao and his fellow Beijing leaders.[70] After Stalin's death, as we shall see, Beijing's pursuit of an elusive "equality" would eventually cause friction with the new Soviet leadership.[71]

Related to the Chinese discomfort over "inequality" were the potential tensions between Moscow's dominance in the international Communist movement and Beijing's aspiration for recognition as a central part of the "world revolution." Such international recognition would, among other things, further legitimate Mao's plans for bringing the Chinese revolution to deeper levels. When Stalin was alive, Mao and his comrades had to respect his authority and yield to his reputation; with Stalin gone, Mao became increasingly reluctant to acknowledge the authority of Stalin's much younger and, in Mao's eyes, less sophisticated successor, Nikita Khrushchev.

One outstanding example of the problems existing between Beijing and Moscow during this time can be found in Mao's management of the Gao Gang affair. Gao was a CCP politburo member and the vice chairman of the PRC Cen-

tral People's Government. Mao and other politburo members believed Gao had been a close friend of Moscow since his days as the CCP leader in the Northeast. Beginning in December 1953, Gao became the target of a series of escalating attacks from the CCP leadership. He was labeled as a "conspirator who intended to split the party" and removed from his position. He was reported to have committed suicide in August 1954.[72]

It is now believed that Gao Gang's purge was the result of a long-standing conflict between him and other top CCP leaders, especially Liu Shaoqi and Zhou Enlai, and probably was not directly related to his presumed close ties with the Soviets. However, the timing of the purge was important and revealing. Although the tensions between Gao Gang and Liu Shaoqi had existed for years, Mao did not decide to take Liu's side to criticize Gao until after Stalin's death. Despite Gao's close relations with the Soviets, the CCP did not keep Moscow abreast of what was happening to him. Gao died two weeks before Mao informed the Soviet leaders officially that Gao had committed "serious crimes in trying to split the party" on 1 September 1954.[73] Ignoring Moscow's "right to know"—if not "right to lead"—in this way would have been inconceivable if Stalin had been alive, or if genuine trust had existed between the Chinese and Soviet leaders.

Accumulated Tension

A turning point came in February 1956, when the CPSU held its Twentieth Congress. Toward the end of the meeting, Khrushchev delivered a lengthy speech criticizing Stalin and his personality cult at a secret session, to which the CCP delegation to the congress had not been invited. The Soviets did provide the Chinese delegation with a copy of Khrushchev's speech afterward,[74] but the fact that they failed to consult Beijing in advance greatly offended Mao and his fellow CCP leaders.[75]

Khrushchev's speech shocked Mao and the CCP leadership. From mid-March to early April 1956, top CCP leaders held a series of meetings to discuss Khrushchev's speech and formulate strategies to deal with the situation it created.[76] At the first of such meetings, convened on the evening of 17 March, Mao set the tone for the discussion, pointing out that Khrushchev's speech not only "exposed the problems" (*jie le gaizi*) in Stalin's Soviet Union but also "made a mess" (*tong le louzi*).[77]

Mao and his comrades believed that Khrushchev's criticism of Stalin's mistakes had shattered the myth that Stalin and the Soviet Union had always been correct and would thus contribute to "correcting Stalin's mistakes as well as the erroneous tendency of treating other parties as inferiors within the interna-

tional Communist movement."[78] Within this context, Mao detailed the mistakes Stalin had made during the Chinese Communist revolution. He stated that during the early stage of China's War of Resistance against Japan, Stalin supported Mao's chief rival Wang Ming's "rightist" policy of "putting the interests of the united front above the interests of the Communist Party," and that after the end of the War of Resistance, he "forced" the CCP not to fight against the Guomindang's anti-Communist civil war plot. The CCP chairman also recalled that during his visit to the Soviet Union from December 1949 to February 1950, Stalin was reluctant to sign a new alliance treaty with the PRC. Not until after Chinese volunteers entered the Korean War, he observed, did Stalin begin to regard the CCP as a genuine Communist party devoted to true proletarian internationalism.[79]

Despite Stalin's mistakes, Mao emphasized, he should still be regarded as a "great Marxist-Leninist revolutionary leader." He told his comrades that Stalin should be evaluated on his historical merit: "The realization of Communism is an extremely difficult task since there exists no example [for the Communists] to follow. . . . During the process of fulfilling this arduous task, it is impossible that mistakes would not be committed. This is because what we are doing is something that no one has tried in the past. I thus always believe [the Communists would] inevitably commit mistakes. The fact that Stalin has committed many mistakes should not be taken as a surprise. Comrade Khrushchev will commit mistakes. The Soviet Union will commit mistakes. And we will also commit mistakes."[80] Therefore, Mao concluded, in making an overall assessment of Stalin as a historical figure, it was necessary to adopt a "seventy-thirty ratio" methodology—that is, acknowledging that achievements should account for 70 percent of Stalin's career and mistakes for only 30 percent.[81]

As a result of these discussions, Mao and his comrades decided to make public China's view on de-Stalinization, in order to control the confusion prompted by Khrushchev's speech. Considering that the Soviets had not formally published Khrushchev's speech and that de-Stalinization was still a developing process, the CCP leadership decided to promulgate the party's official view through the editorial board of *Renmin ribao* (People's Daily). On 5 April 1956, *Renmin ribao* published a lengthy editorial, titled "On the Historical Experience of Proletarian Dictatorship," arguing that Stalin, in spite of all his "serious mistakes," still needed to be respected as a "great Marxist-Leninist."[82]

Mao and his comrades defended Stalin, first and foremost, for defending the CCP's own experience of building socialism in China. Since the early days of the People's Republic, the experience of Stalin's Soviet Union had served

as a model for the CCP's own designs for China's state-building, societal transformation, and economic reconstruction. While it is true that Mao and his comrades never intended to copy completely the "Stalin model," they found in the Soviet experience basic strategies and tactics highly useful for promoting China's "socialist revolution and reconstruction." In particular, they were more than willing to learn from the Soviet practices of establishing a highly centralized economic planning system, controlling the rural population through collectivization movements, putting emphasis on developing heavy industry and defense industry, and entrenching the top party leader's authority over the party and the state. In exploring a Chinese path toward socialist modernization, Mao criticized the "Stalin model" in many respects, but he also found that it offered him valuable grounds on which to establish basic understandings of several fundamental relationships with which he and his party had to deal in China.[83] Therefore, for Mao and his comrades to negate Stalin completely would mean to repudiate Mao's grand enterprise of continuous revolution.

Mao's reluctance to embrace de-Stalinization also reflected China's changing domestic political situation and his perception of it in the mid-1950s. In 1955–56, Mao's great enterprise had reached a pivotal point, creating tension between the CCP chairman and many of his prominent colleagues. On the one hand, the inauguration of the first five-year plan, the successful completion of agricultural cooperativization in the countryside, and the advancement of the socialist transformation of industry and commerce in the cities combined to convince Mao that the continuous revolution should be elevated to a higher stage, one that would accelerate China's economic development and its growth into a socialist and Communist society.[84] On the other hand, however, many members of the CCP leading elite—Zhou Enlai and Chen Yun in particular—believed it essential to maintain balanced economic development and societal transformation, and that "rash advance" (*maojin*) should be opposed.[85] Although this difference in opinion between Mao and his colleagues would not surface fully until late 1956 and 1957, the CCP chairman already had realized by early 1956 that China's Communist elite did not always understand the direction of his train of thought, let alone follow it.[86] As a result, he increasingly felt that one of the best guarantors of his continuous revolution was further consolidation and expansion of his own leadership role.

These developments, in turn, conditioned the Maoist rhetoric on de-Stalinization in two important respects. First, Mao's criticism of the Soviet leader focused on the (re)construction of a grand narrative about his unfailing resistance to Stalin's erroneous interference in the Chinese revolution, creating

and enhancing the myth that he himself had been the symbol of eternal correctness. Second, he adopted a unique approach toward the "cult of personality" issue. In his initial response toward de-Stalinization, Mao generally avoided sharp criticism of Stalin's personality cult. With the radicalization of China's political and social life in 1957–58, he would make it clear that he had no intention of opposing personality cults in general and his own personality cult in particular. It is not surprising that Ke Qingshi, a CCP politburo member with close ties to the chairman, would openly argue that "it is all right to worship Chairman Mao to the extent of having a blind faith in him."[87] Mao agreed, saying that he favored distinguishing "correct" from "incorrect" personality cults.[88]

Mao's specific response to de-Stalinization also revealed his new perception of Beijing's more superior position in the international Communist movement in the post-Stalin era. Indeed, now Mao, consciously or unconsciously, behaved with a stronger sense of moral superiority. On 31 March 1956, he gave one of the first of his many long monologues to Pavel Yudin, the Soviet ambassador to China, in which he systematically presented his overall view on criticism of Stalin. Again, the CCP chairman reviewed the history of Stalin's relations with China, emphasizing that the late Soviet leader had committed serious mistakes during all stages of the Chinese revolution; in particular, Mao said, Stalin had failed to treat his Chinese comrades as equals. In a more general discussion about how to evaluate Stalin, though, the chairman argued that "the simple fact that the population of the Socialist Camp had grown from 200 million to 900 million speaks for itself"—that is, overall, "Stalin, without doubt, is a great Marxist, a good and honest revolutionary."[89] One week later, in another long monologue-style conversation with Anastas Mikoyan, the CCP chairman again discussed the "serious mistakes" Stalin committed in regard to the Chinese revolution but argued that in general, "Stalin's achievements surpass his mistakes" and that it was thus necessary to "concretely analyze" and "comprehensively evaluate" the Stalin issue.[90]

Through these talks, Mao meant to deliver several crucial messages. First, he conveyed to Khrushchev and the other Soviet leaders his conception of the proper tone for criticizing Stalin. Despite all of Stalin's "serious mistakes," the chairman advised his Soviet comrades that it was wrong to condemn him completely and that continuing to praise him was in the fundamental interests of both the Soviet Union and the international Communist movement. Second, by criticizing Stalin's wrongdoings toward the Chinese Communist revolution, especially his failure to treat his Chinese comrades as "equals," Mao was reminding Khrushchev and his fellow Soviet leaders that they should

not repeat the same mistake and that a new pattern of Sino-Soviet relations, one based on the principle of "equality"—as Mao himself defined the term—should be established between Beijing and Moscow. Third, in a more fundamental sense, Mao revealed his new mentality in handling relations with Moscow—after Stalin's death, Mao already felt that he should have a greater voice on questions concerning not only matters between Beijing and Moscow but also the fate of the entire international Communist movement. When Mao spoke about Stalin's mistakes and achievements, he was asserting that he, not the Soviet leaders, now occupied the morally paramount position to dominate the cause of the world proletarian revolution.

Within this context Mao endeavored during 1956 to make known his views on the Stalin issue to Communist leaders from other parts of the world. On 28 June 1956, in a conversation with Romania's ambassador to China, Mao reiterated that Communists should not be surprised by Stalin's mistakes. "After all," the chairman said, "good things exist in the world together with bad things. This has been so since ancient times, and will continue to be so in the future. This is why we need to, and can, transform the world."[91] In September 1956, in a meeting with a Yugoslav Communist Union delegation attending the CCP's Eighth National Congress, Mao repeated his views about the "serious mistakes" Stalin had committed toward the Chinese revolution, yet he again announced that achievement should be regarded as the main Soviet experience during Stalin's era.[92] On these occasions, indeed, the CCP chairman acted as if he had become the "new emperor" of the international Communist movement.

Consequently, by late 1956, China's relations with the Soviet Union changed significantly. Although in public Mao continued to maintain that Moscow remained the center of the socialist camp, he really believed that it was he who was more qualified to dictate the principles underlying the relations between and among socialist countries. This shift in Mao's view of the relationship between Beijing and Moscow was demonstrated most clearly in Beijing's management of the Polish and Hungarian crises in late 1956.[93]

As Mao and his fellow CCP leaders viewed them, the crises emerging in Poland and Hungary were not of the same nature. While they believed that both crises had resulted from Soviet "big-power chauvinism," they saw the crisis in Poland as basically anti-Soviet and the one in Hungary (after initial uncertainty) as essentially anti-Communist. Therefore, when Beijing learned that Moscow was planning to intervene militarily in Poland on 19–21 October, CCP leaders held several urgent meetings to discuss the situation. They concluded that if the Soviets were to use military force to solve the Polish

issue, they would be intervening in Poland's internal affairs.[94] Mao twice summoned Ambassador Yudin to his quarters and requested that he inform Moscow urgently that China would publicly protest if Moscow were to launch any military intervention in Poland.[95]

On 23–31 October a high-ranking CCP delegation headed by Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping traveled to Moscow to consult with the Soviet leaders about the Polish (and, it turned out, Hungarian) crisis. Largely because of the pressure from the Chinese, reportedly, Khrushchev and his fellow Soviet leaders not only decided not to use force to solve the Polish question but also agreed, on 30 October, to issue the "Declaration on Developing and Enhancing the Friendship and Cooperation between the Soviet Union and other Socialist Countries," in which Moscow promised to follow a pattern of more equal exchanges with other Communist states and parties.[96] Mao and his comrades regarded this as Beijing's victory.

Beijing's attitude toward the Hungarian crisis was very different. Although Mao and his fellow CCP leaders initially believed that the origins of the crisis lay in Moscow's failure to treat the Hungarians as equals, they were alarmed when reports came in that anti-Communist riots began to spread all over Hungary. On 30 October, after receiving Liu's and Deng's report from Moscow that the Soviet leaders were planning to withdraw their troops from Hungary, Mao chaired a meeting of top CCP leaders, which decided to oppose Moscow's abandonment of Hungary to "reactionary forces."[97] Liu, following instructions from Beijing, met with Khrushchev and other Soviet leaders on the same day, informing them that it was the Chinese leaders' belief that Soviet withdrawal would be a betrayal of the Hungarian people and that it would put the Soviet leaders on the stand as "historical criminals." The next day, on their way to the airport, Khrushchev told Liu and other members of the Chinese delegation that the Soviet leadership would use military force to suppress the "reactionary revolt" in Hungary.[98] Four days later the Soviet Red Army began its attack on Budapest.

Beijing's intransigent attitude toward the Hungarian crisis reflected Mao's persistent belief that reactionary elements and class enemies had been one of the main causes of the turmoil. Drawing lessons from the Hungarian crisis, Mao argued that the continuous revolution in China should be further enhanced, especially in the fields of politics and ideology.[99] In the wake of the Hungary crisis, an Anti-Rightist movement swept across China in summer 1957; as a result, over 300,000 Chinese intellectuals were branded as "rightists," a label that would effectively silence them and ruin their careers, and Mao and the CCP established absolute control over China's "public opinion."[100]

Along with the Anti-Rightist movement, Mao initiated an equally important yet less well known (at least in the West) political offensive within the CCP leadership aimed at those of his comrades who had opposed "rash advance" in handling China's economic development in 1956 and early 1957. The main target was Premier Zhou Enlai. Beginning in late summer 1957, Mao claimed that Zhou had been seriously mistaken in emphasizing the utmost importance of achieving balanced development in China's economic reconstruction. The chairman told his comrades that he favored "rash advance," despite its risks, because it would accelerate China's transformation into a socialist and Communist society. The chairman distrusted the premier to such an extent that he even considered removing Zhou and replacing him with Ke Qingshi, whom the chairman regarded as more faithful to his continuous-revolution programs.[101] The outcome of the Hungarian incident complicated Chinese politics at the same time that it pushed Mao's continuous revolution onto a more radical stage.

The conviction that the Chinese had made a significant contribution toward the "correct resolution" of the Polish and Hungarian crises also facilitated Mao's belief in Beijing's more prominent position in the international Communist movement. Beijing's leaders thus felt more justified to adopt a critical attitude toward the seemingly less sophisticated Soviet leadership. On 7–18 January 1957, Zhou Enlai visited the Soviet Union, Poland, and Hungary.[102] In his report summarizing the visit, he commented extensively on how the Soviet leadership lacked sophistication in managing the complicated situations both within the Soviet Union and in Eastern Europe. What this report epitomized, indeed, was China's new self-image as the most qualified candidate to be the leader in the Communist world.[103] Not surprisingly, when Mao discussed in several internal speeches in 1957 how the CCP diverged from the Soviet leaders on de-Stalinization, he charged that Khrushchev and his comrades had abandoned not only "the sword of Stalin" but also, to a large extent, "the sword of Lenin." The subtext of the statement was that the sword was already in Mao's hands.[104] In the wake of Khrushchev's de-Stalinization and the Polish and Hungarian crises, the tension between Beijing and Moscow was escalating.

Yet, in the public eye, Sino-Soviet relations seemed to be proceeding smoothly in 1956–57. While the Soviet Union continued to provide China with extensive economic and military assistance, China openly endorsed the Soviet Union's leading position in the international Communist movement. In November 1957 Mao Zedong visited Moscow to attend celebrations for the fortieth anniversary of the Russian Bolshevik revolution of 1917. At a meeting

Mao Zedong (center) *and Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev at the celebration rally for the fortieth anniversary of the Russian Bolshevik revolution, Moscow, 6 November 1957. Xinhua News Agency.*

of leaders of Communist and workers' parties from socialist countries, Mao called upon the whole socialist camp to recognize the Soviet Union's leadership role. On one occasion the CCP chairman used a metaphor to compare himself with Khrushchev, saying that the flower of Khrushchev was more beautiful than the flower of Mao Zedong.[105]

But Mao's high-profiled rhetoric should be read critically. By endorsing the Soviet Union's leading position in the international Communist movement, the CCP chairman virtually had placed himself in the capacity of a judge from a higher court, implying that it was he who now occupied a morally superior position to his comrades in Moscow, and that the legitimacy of Moscow's leadership role lay in his approval.

It was at the Moscow meeting that Mao emphasized that the Communists should not be frightened by the prospect of a nuclear war started by the imperialists but should realize that such a war, although carrying a high price, would bring the imperialist system to its grave.[106] Mao's statement was a deliberate challenge to Khrushchev's emphasis on the necessity and possibility of "peaceful coexistence" with Western imperialist countries, and it inevitably worried Moscow's leaders. Were Khrushchev and his colleagues ready to yield to such Maoist discourse? If not, a storm would be gathering in the relationship between Moscow and Beijing.

From Tension to Crisis

The year 1958 was pivotal in the history of the People's Republic as it witnessed one of the most radical episodes of Mao's continuous revolution: the Great Leap Forward. In January 1958 Mao chaired two meetings attended by central and provincial party leaders in Hangzhou and Nanning. At both meetings the chairman continued his criticism of Zhou Enlai's opposition to "rash advance" in previous years, labeling it "a mistake concerning principles, which has damaged the revolutionary vigor of 600 million [Chinese] people." He further warned Zhou that he was "only fifty meters" from becoming a rightist.[107] Facing Mao's repeated criticism, Zhou Enlai acknowledged at the Nanning conference that "as far as the mistake of 'opposing rash advance' is concerned, I should take the main responsibility."[108]

On 31 January, Mao summarized the discussions in an important document titled "Sixty Articles on Work Methods"; in it he attempted to be as explicit as the political situation allowed in defining the mission of his continuous revolution:

> Our revolutions come one after another. The seizure of political power in the whole country in 1949 was soon followed by the antifeudal land reform. As soon as the land reform was completed, the agricultural cooperativization followed. Then the socialist transformation of privately owned industry, commerce, and handicraft occurred. . . . The socialist revolution in the field of the ownership of means of production will be completed by 1958, and will be followed by the socialist revolution on the political and ideological fronts. . . . [We are] now preparing to make a revolution in the technological field, so that [we may] overtake Britain in fifteen or more years.[109]

This text was one of the foundation statements Mao made at an important juncture of his continuous revolution. Through a typical Mao-style review of history, the chairman revealed his deep-rooted postrevolution anxiety; that is, if he failed to push the revolution forward constantly, the revolution would die. By conceptualizing what needed to be done in order to bring his revolution to a higher stage, he defined the mission of the Great Leap Forward, which, in a few short months, was to sweep across China, dramatically radicalizing the country's domestic and external policies.

Dominated by a profound revolutionary fever, Mao chaired another Central Committee working conference in Chengdu, from 8 to 26 March, and further escalated his criticism of "opposing rash advance." The chairman claimed that "rash advance is a Marxist way and 'opposing rash advance' is an anti-

Marxist way." He announced that "we shall continue to commit to rash advance in the future." On 19 and 25 March, Zhou Enlai, on the verge of a total political defeat, made a more comprehensive self-criticism.[110] In addition to dealing with his mistakes on domestic issues, Zhou devoted a large portion of his self-criticism to his "conservative and rightist tendency" in handling the PRC's foreign relations. He admitted that the Foreign Ministry's work under his direction had neglected the necessary struggle in dealing with nationalist countries, had maintained a kind of wishful thinking concerning imperialism (especially toward Japan and the United States), and had failed to conduct necessary criticism of the revisionist policies of other socialist countries. He particularly mentioned that while it was reasonable to learn from the experience of the Soviet Union, it was a mistake to copy it completely.[111]

Zhou's self-criticism clearly showed that profound connections existed between the domestic and international aspects of Chinese politics in the late 1950s. Following Mao's ideas, the CCP leadership at the Chengdu conference decided to revise boldly China's economic development plans, so that China "would catch the right opportunity to surpass Britain in a period even shorter than fifteen years."[112] When the Great Leap Forward was implemented, not surprisingly, Beijing's external policy became dramatically radicalized.

It was against this backdrop that the tensions between China and the Soviet Union became a political problem in China. In November 1957, during the visit of China's defense minister, Peng Dehuai, to the Soviet Union, the two sides reached an agreement that they would cooperate closely on developing naval and air forces in East Asia.[113] In a letter dated 18 April 1958, Soviet defense minister Rodion Malinovskii proposed to Peng that, in order to communicate with the Soviet Union's submarines in the Pacific area, the Soviet high command and the Chinese Ministry of Defense cooperate over a four-year period in constructing a long-wave radio transmission center and a long-wave radio receiving station specially designed for long-distance communication. The Soviet Union would cover 70 percent of the construction costs.[114] Mao immediately considered these plans a threat to China's sovereignty and integrity. He decided that China would accept the proposal only on the condition that China would pay all the expenses and would retain exclusive ownership of the station. Following Mao's instructions, Peng responded to Malinovskii on 12 June, proposing that the two governments sign a formal agreement along these lines.[115]

On 11 July, the Soviet Union provided a draft agreement for the construction of the radio stations. Without a proper understanding of the nature of Beijing's request for exclusive ownership, the Soviets still insisted that the sta-

tions be jointly constructed and managed by China and the Soviet Union.[116] Beijing responded with several suggestions for revision: China would take the responsibility for constructing the stations and they would belong to China; China would purchase from the Soviet Union the equipment it was unable to produce and would invite Soviet experts to help construct the station; and after the station's completion, it would be solely owned by China but jointly used by China and the Soviet Union.[117]

Before the radio station issue was settled, a second dispute in the military field emerged, this one concerning the establishment of a joint Soviet-Chinese submarine flotilla. In late 1957, Soviet military and naval advisers in China had indicated to the Chinese that they should purchase new naval equipment from the Soviet Union.[118] On 28 June 1958, Zhou Enlai wrote to Khrushchev requesting that the Soviet Union provide technological assistance for China's naval buildup, especially the designs for new-type submarines.[119] On 21 July, Ambassador Yudin called on Mao Zedong. Speaking on behalf of Khrushchev, Yudin proposed that China and the Soviet Union establish a joint submarine flotilla. Yudin explained that unlike the geography of China, with its long coastal lines and good natural harbors, the Soviet Union's made it difficult for the Soviet navy to take full advantage of the new submarines. Mao was offended by the proposal. "First, we should make clear the guiding principle," he told the ambassador, asking, "[Do you mean that] we should create [the fleet] with your assistance? Or [do you mean] that we should jointly create [the fleet], otherwise you will not offer any assistance?" Mao emphasized that he was not interested in creating a Sino-Soviet "military cooperative."[120]

The next day Mao summoned Yudin to his quarters for a lengthy and very emotional conversation. Once again, the CCP chairman surveyed the history of the relations between the CCP and the Soviet Union, charging that the Soviets had always treated their Chinese comrades from a posture of "big-power chauvinism." He then stressed that behind the Soviet proposals for establishing long-wave radio stations and a joint submarine flotilla was Moscow's attempt to control China. The chairman said angrily, "[Y]ou may accuse me of being a nationalist or another Tito, but my counterargument is that you have extended Russian nationalism to China's coast." As was the case during many of Mao's meetings with Yudin, the chairman presented a near monologue and the Soviet ambassador had few opportunities to respond. If an observer did not know the nature of the two officials' relationship, Yudin could have been the head of a "barbarian" tribute mission who was receiving the teachings of the Chinese "son of heaven." As the conversation approached its end, Mao told

Yudin to "report all my comments to Comrade Khrushchev," emphasizing that "you must tell him exactly what I have said without any polishing."[121]

Alarmed by Yudin's report, Khrushchev visited Beijing from 31 July to 3 August, meeting four times with Mao and other Chinese leaders. At the first meeting, Khrushchev explained to Mao that the Soviets had no intention of controlling China. On the radio station issue he emphasized that it was the "personal opinion" of Malinovskii, rather than the decision of the Central Committee of the CPSU, to construct "jointly" the long-wave station. He agreed that the Soviet Union would provide financial and technical support for establishing the station but would let the Chinese own it. On the joint fleet issue, Khrushchev explained that Yudin might not have accurately conveyed the message from Moscow, stressing that the Soviets were more than willing to treat their Chinese comrades as equals. Mao Zedong, however, would not easily accept Khrushchev's explanations, claiming that "big-power chauvinism" did exist in the Soviet attitude toward China, and that the two issues were just the two most recent examples.[122] On 3 August, after four days of intensive meetings, Malinovskii and Peng, representing the Soviet and Chinese governments, signed an agreement on the construction of long-wave stations and the dispatch of Soviet experts to China.[123] Yet the psychological rift between the Chinese and Soviet leaders, and especially between Mao and Khrushchev, persisted and intensified.[124] Mao would later recall that "the overturning of [our relations with] the Soviet Union occurred in 1958; that was because they wanted to control China militarily."[125]

Mao's harsh reaction to these two issues reflected his increasing sensitivity regarding China's sovereignty and equal status in relation to the Soviet Union. Underlying this sensitivity, though, was a strong and unique "victim mentality" that characterized Chinese revolutionary nationalism during modern times. This mentality had been informed by the conviction that the political, economic, and military aggression of foreign imperialist countries had undermined China's historical glory and humiliated the Chinese nation. Consequently, it was natural for the Chinese Communists, in their efforts to end China's humiliating modern experiences, to suspect the behavior of *any* foreign country as being driven by ulterior, or even evil, intentions. Although the Soviet Union was a Communist country, when Mao claimed that Khrushchev and his Kremlin colleagues intended to control China, he apparently equated them with the leaders of Western imperialism.

That Mao's suspicion and distrust of Soviet "chauvinist intentions" toward China came to a head in the summer of 1958, rather than earlier or later, should

Image Not Available

Mao Zedong greets Nikita Khrushchev at the Beijing airport, 31 July 1958. Xinhua News Agency.

be understood in the context of the chairman's criticism of "opposing rash advance" within the CCP leadership. Reading the transcripts of Mao's talks with Yudin and Khrushchev, one gets an impression that they were quite similar to many of the chairman's inner-party speeches throughout late 1957 and 1958. In both circumstances, Mao believed that he had absolute command of the

truth; and, in these monologues, the chairman became accustomed to teaching others in critical, often passionate, terms. Indeed, since Mao was turning his own revolutionary emotion into the dynamics for the Great Leap Forward, it is not surprising that he adopted the same challenge-oriented stance in dealing with his Soviet comrades.

When Khrushchev arrived in China at the end of July 1958, the leaders in Beijing already had decided to begin large-scale shelling of the Nationalist-controlled Jinmen (Quemoy) islands off the coast of Fujian province.[126] In determining the timing of the shelling, the chairman hoped not only to confront international imperialism and call attention to the issue of Taiwan being part of the People's Republic, but also to help stimulate the rising tide of the Great Leap. The shelling would be accompanied by an anti–Jiang Jieshi and anti-U.S. propaganda campaign—with "we must liberate Taiwan" as its central slogan. Mao, however, did not have an established plan to invade Taiwan or to involve China in a direct military confrontation with the United States.[127] What he needed was a sustained and controllable conflict, one that would enhance popular support for his radical transformation of China's polity, economy, and society. As the chairman pointed out at the peak of the Taiwan Strait crisis, "[B]esides its disadvantageous side, a tense [international] situation could mobilize the population, could particularly mobilize the backward people, could mobilize the people in the middle, and could therefore promote the Great Leap Forward in economic construction."[128]

Mao did not inform Khrushchev of his tactical plans during their meeting in Beijing.[129] When the PLA began an intensive artillery bombardment of the islands on 23 August, the Soviet leaders were at a loss to interpret China's aims. In the following six weeks, several hundred thousand artillery shells exploded on Jinmen and in the waters around it. The Eisenhower administration, in accordance with its obligations under a 1954 American-Taiwan defense treaty, reinforced U.S. naval units in East Asia and used U.S. naval vessels to help the Nationalists protect Jinmen's supply lines.

The Soviet leaders, fearing that Beijing's actions might cause grave consequences, sent Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko on a secret visit to Beijing in early September to inquire about China's reasons for shelling Jinmen. At this time the Chinese leaders said that the shelling was designed to attract the world's attention to the Taiwan question and to divert American strength from other parts of the world (especially the Middle East), but not as a step leading to the invasion of Taiwan, let alone to provoke a direct confrontation with the United States.[130] Only after receiving these explanations from Beijing did the Soviet government issue a statement on 8 September to show its

solidarity with the Chinese.[131] Nonetheless, the fissure between Beijing and Moscow widened.[132]

On the domestic front, the Great Leap Forward was progressing rapidly. In the fall and winter of 1958, tens of thousands of people's communes appeared in China's countryside and cities, which, with their free supply system, were supposed to form the basic units of an emerging Communist society. In the meantime, hundreds of millions of ordinary Chinese were mobilized to produce steel from small backyard furnaces in order to double the nation's steel production in one year's time.[133] Khrushchev and his colleagues were confused by what was occurring in China. Thousands of Soviet advisers there issued warnings about the possible negative economic consequences of the Great Leap, but the Soviet media avoided making any public reference to the Chinese plans. During a meeting with U.S. senator Hubert Humphrey, according to Western sources, Khrushchev even dismissed the people's communes as "reactionary."[134] The Soviets' reaction offended Mao deeply, intensifying his belief that the Soviet leaders, and Khrushchev in particular, lacked political wisdom and revolutionary vigor.[135]

Further Deepening of the Crisis

In early 1959, a number of events combined to further stress the relations between Moscow and Beijing. First, the negative effects of the Great Leap Forward began to be felt in the Chinese economy. Beginning in the spring of 1959, the rural population increasingly resisted the slogan of a "continuous leap forward," and, in urban areas, China's industrial production began to decrease.[136] What made the situation more complicated for Beijing was that in March, an anti-Chinese and anti-Communist rebellion erupted in Tibet. Although the rebellion itself was quickly suppressed, it caused new tensions between China and India, who, since the early 1950s, had maintained friendly relations. International pressure on Beijing mounted.[137]

Although Mao Zedong's continuous revolution was facing its most serious challenge since the establishment of the People's Republic, Khrushchev and the other Soviet leaders were willing to add to Beijing's misfortune. On 20 June the Soviets informed the Chinese that because of the Soviet-American negotiations at Geneva to ban nuclear weapon tests, it was difficult for Moscow to provide China with assistance on nuclear technology. If the Western countries learned that the Soviet Union had agreed to share its nuclear secrets with China, the Soviet leaders explained, "it is possible that the efforts by socialist countries to strive for peace and the relaxation of international tensions would be jeopardized." The Soviets thus told the Chinese that they would no longer

honor some of their obligations that had been set up in the agreement they signed with the Chinese on 15 October 1957, and would not provide Beijing with atomic bomb prototypes and technical data for producing the bomb.[138] Mao regarded this turn of events as an indication of Moscow's attempt to put pressure on the CCP and especially on himself to change the course of Chinese policy,[139] which further contributed to the distrust and tension between Beijing and Moscow.

The escalating crisis in the Sino-Soviet alliance coincided with the growing tensions within the CCP leadership in the wake of the Great Leap. In July 1959, top CCP leaders gathered at Lushan to discuss the consequences of the Great Leap Forward and strategies to deal with them.[140] Peng Dehuai, who had just returned from a formal visit to the Soviet Union and Eastern European countries, wrote to Mao on 14 July to propose that the party leadership "overcome petit bourgeoisie enthusiasm" and carefully evaluate the "losses and achievements" of the Great Leap.[141] The chairman, sensing that Peng's letter might pose a serious threat to both his continuous revolution programs and his position as China's indisputable leader, responded fiercely. He claimed that Peng had long been a careerist and that his "total negation" of the Great Leap aimed to overturn the party's general plan for socialist reconstruction and to overthrow the party's top leadership. Using his authority and power, the chairman converted the Lushan conference into a denunciation of Peng's "anti-party plot." Peng, in turn, lost his position as China's defense minister.[142] In terms of its historical significance, the Lushan conference represented Mao's crucial first step toward initiating the disastrous "Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution," of which the "Soviet revisionism and social imperialism" would become a major target.

It is notable that when Peng Dehuai became the main target of criticism and denunciation during and after this conference, many CCP leaders connected the defense minister's letter to his visit to the Soviet Union and his meetings with Khrushchev. Those who supported Mao asked repeatedly whether Peng's "intentional attack" against Mao and the party had an "international background," that is, the support of the Soviets. Although Peng categorically denied any such connections, Mao and other party leaders, including Liu Shaoqi—who himself would later be labeled "China's Khrushchev"—persistently claimed that at Lushan, Peng acted as a "Soviet agent."[143]

The contention between China and the Soviet Union was made public for the first time in August 1959, when a border conflict occurred between China and India. In spite of China having maintained friendly relations with India throughout the 1950s, New Delhi's acceptance of the Tibetan Dalai Lama's

exile government in the spring of 1959 caused severe discord between the two countries, making the tensions that had accumulated along the Sino-Indian borders more difficult to control.[144] On 9 September the Soviet media issued a statement expressing "regret" at the conflict between India and China. To Mao and his comrades, this statement, which failed to express that the Soviets stood clearly on Beijing's side, indicated that Moscow "had virtually adopted a policy to support India's position."[145]

On 30 September 1959, Khrushchev, after extensive conversations with President Dwight Eisenhower in the United States, arrived in Beijing to participate in celebrations of the People's Republic's tenth anniversary. The same evening he made a forty-minute speech at the state banquet held by Chinese leaders at the newly completed Great Hall of the People. Without paying any attention to the mood of his Chinese hosts, Khrushchev emphasized the "Camp David" spirit, which, according to him, would contribute to the relaxation of tensions between East and West.[146] In Mao's eyes this was a real offense—how could the Soviet leader bring such a topic to an occasion that was supposed to be devoted to celebrating the victory of the Chinese revolution? When Khrushchev mentioned that "it is unwise to use military means to test the stability of the capitalist system," Mao believed that the Soviet leader meant to insult him and revolutionary China.[147]

It was within this framework that Khrushchev and other members of the Soviet delegation had an important meeting with Mao and other Chinese leaders on 2 October.[148] This meeting was supposed to offer an opportunity for Chinese and Soviet leaders to find ways to remedy the divergence between them, but it quickly degenerated into vitriolic debate. At the beginning of the meeting, Khrushchev delivered a message from President Eisenhower to the Chinese leaders, requesting that China release five American "prisoners of war," including two American pilots, who had been detained by the Chinese. While Zhou Enlai argued that these Americans were not POWs, Mao Zedong categorically denied the request, telling Khrushchev that these Americans would be eventually released but certainly not immediately after the Soviet leader's visit.[149]

The meeting then turned to the Taiwan issue. Khrushchev criticized the Chinese for having adopted a policy of adventurism in handling the Taiwan crisis in 1958 and was particularly upset with Beijing's failure to inform Moscow of its intentions in shelling Jinmen. To show Mao and his fellow Chinese leaders that it was necessary to make compromises with the enemy, Khrushchev lectured about history, citing as an example Lenin's establishment of the Far Eastern Republic as a buffer between Soviet Russia and Japan. He

proposed that Moscow and Beijing consult with each other on the Taiwan issue in the future. The Chinese leaders angrily rebutted Khrushchev's criticism, claiming that not using force in Taiwan had been an American position and that Khrushchev wanted to acquiesce in Washington's plot to create "two Chinas."[150]

Khrushchev then shifted the conversation to Beijing's policy toward India and Tibet. He declared that Beijing was wrong in trying to solve their disputes with New Delhi by military means. He also challenged the sovereignty claim of the People's Republic over certain areas along the unsettled Chinese-Indian border, calling Beijing unwise to be competing with India over "a few square kilometers of barren land." Concerning Tibet, Khrushchev ridiculed the Chinese for "having committed the mistake of allowing the Dalai Lama to escape to India." In response, Zhou Enlai ridiculed Khrushchev for his "inability to tell right from wrong." Marshal Chen Yi, China's foreign minister, angrily reproached Khrushchev, saying that while it was necessary for socialist countries to unite with nationalist countries, it was a mistake for the former to yield to the latter's wrongdoings. Chen singled out in particular the Soviets' statement of 9 September that indicated their belief that the Chinese-Indian border conflict was "a huge mistake." While Khrushchev told the Chinese that he would never accept the Chinese claim that the Soviets had sided with India, Mao announced that the Chinese would never accept the Soviet stand on India and Tibet either.[151]

At this point the meeting deteriorated into complete disorder as leaders of both sides attacked their alliance partners. On one occasion Khrushchev complained, "Mao Zedong sternly criticized our party face-to-face with Comrade Yudin last year, and we tolerated it, but we will not tolerate [it] now." The meeting ended in discord.[152]

During his stay in Beijing, according to several Chinese sources, Khrushchev also advised Mao that the CCP's criticism of Peng Dehuai was groundless, and he urged Mao to restore Peng to his former position. This advice, as can be imagined, did Peng no good. Instead, Mao was further convinced that Peng's "antiparty plot" was instigated by the Soviets. In an inner-party speech two months later, Mao identified Peng's action at Lushan as "a coup attempt supported by [his Soviet] friends."[153] The CCP Central Committee formally declared that Peng's antiparty activities were related to a foreign "plot" to overthrow the party leadership headed by Mao Zedong.[154]

Khrushchev left China on 4 October 1959. On his way back to Moscow, he stopped at Vladivostok and made a public speech there on 6 October. He talked about his recent visits to the United States and China, and praised the

"brotherly solidarity" between Moscow and Beijing as a cornerstone for world peace. It was difficult at the time for a general audience to detect that serious discord had developed between Chinese and Soviet leaders.[155] Mao and his comrades in Beijing, however, carefully read the message contained in the speech, and found that Khrushchev had claimed that "it was unwise to behave like a bellicose cock and to long for war." The Chinese leaders believed that Khrushchev was preparing to go public in his criticism of them.[156] Mao now saw little chance to avoid a serious confrontation with the "revisionist traitors" in Moscow.

Breakdown

As the 1960s began, the chasm between Beijing and Moscow deepened. The prospect of future amicable Sino-Soviet relations was further damaged by Khrushchev's belief that putting more pressure on the Chinese would enable him to take advantage of the potential differences between Mao and his comrades, forcing Mao to change his domestic and international policies. With no understanding of Mao's confrontational, challenge-oriented character,[157] Khrushchev recalled all Soviet experts from China and drastically reduced material and military aid to Beijing in July 1960, just as China was being deeply affected by the disastrous aftermath of the Great Leap Forward.[158]

Moscow's decision to recall the Soviet experts hindered Beijing's ability to deal with the extraordinary difficulties brought on by the Great Leap. Still, Khrushchev's order was not necessarily unwelcome from Mao's perspective. The disastrous consequences of the Great Leap Forward had shaken the myth of Mao's infallibility, weakening for the first time the chairman's leadership of the party and state. Beginning in 1960 the CCP leadership—with Mao having relegated himself to the "second line"—adopted a series of moderate and flexible domestic policies designed for economic recovery and social stability. Mao could clearly sense that both his grand revolutionary enterprise and his own indisputable position as the party's paramount leader were at stake.

Thus Mao used the recall of Soviet experts as a convenient excuse to make the Soviets the scapegoat for the Great Leap Forward's disastrous consequences. The chairman also found in the conflict with the Soviets a long-term weapon he badly needed to enhance the much-weakened momentum of his continuous revolution. In the early 1960s Mao repeatedly used the conflict with Moscow to claim that his struggle for true Communism was also a struggle for China's national integrity. And as far as Chinese politics was concerned, the growing confrontation with Moscow made it more difficult for

those of Mao's comrades who disagreed with some of the chairman's radical ideas to challenge him.[159]

There is a striking similarity between the new patterns that emerged in China's domestic politics and in its external relations in the early and mid-1960s. On the one hand, Mao, especially after 1962, repeatedly argued that in order to avert a Soviet-style "capitalist restoration," it was necessary for the Chinese party and people "never to forget class struggle," pushing the whole country toward another high wave of continuous revolution. On the other hand, Mao personally initiated the great polemic debate between the Chinese and Soviet parties, claiming that the Soviet party and state had fallen into the "revisionist" abyss and that it had become the duty of the Chinese party and the Chinese people to hold high the banner of true socialism and communism.[160]

Mao's wrecking of the Sino-Soviet relationship did not happen without challenge from other members of the CCP leadership. Beginning in February 1962 Wang Jiaxiang, head of the CCP's International Liaison Department, submitted to the party's top leadership several reports on China's international polices. He argued that the strategic goal of China's foreign policy should be the maintenance of world peace, so that it would be able to focus on socialist construction at home. He particularly emphasized that "it is necessary [for China] to carry out a foreign policy aimed at easing international tension, and not exacerbating" it.[161]

Wang's views seemed to have received the consent (if not active support) of several party leaders, including Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping. Mao, understandably, was upset. The CCP chairman characterized Wang's ideas as an attempt to be conciliatory toward imperialists, revisionists, and international reactionaries, and to reduce support to those countries and peoples fighting against the imperialists. Mao stressed that this policy of "three reconciliations and one reduction" came at a time when some leading CCP members (as it turned out, he had Liu and Deng in mind) had been frightened by the international reactionaries and were inclined to adopt a "prorevisionist" policy line at home. He emphasized that his policy, by contrast, was to fight against the imperialists, revisionists, and reactionaries in all countries and, at the same time, to promote revolutionary developments at home and abroad.[162] Those of Mao's colleagues who may have had doubts about the chairman's ideas yielded to his argument without a fight.

With the continuous radicalization of China's political and social life, the relationship between Beijing and Moscow rapidly worsened. By 1963–64,

when the great Sino-Soviet polemic debate escalated in highly emotional and confrontational language, the alliance between Beijing and Moscow had virtually died. On several occasions, Mao even mentioned that China now had to consider the Soviet Union, which represented an increasingly serious threat to China's northern borders, as a potential enemy.[163] Even Khrushchev's fall from power in October 1964 could not reverse the trend of deteriorating relations. In November 1964, Beijing sent a delegation headed by Zhou Enlai to Moscow to discuss with the new Soviet leadership the prospect of stopping the Sino-Soviet polemic debates and improving Sino-Soviet relations. Zhou's visit, however, completely failed in reaching these goals, especially after Soviet defense minister Malinovskii reportedly asked the Chinese to take action to overthrow Mao Zedong as the CCP's top leader.[164]

In 1965–66, the rhetoric centering on preventing a Soviet-style "capitalist restoration" from happening in China played an essential role in legitimizing Mao's efforts to bring the whole Chinese party, state, and population into the orbit of the "Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution." When the Cultural Revolution officially began in summer 1966, the CCP chairman linked his widespread domestic purges to the "antirevisionist" and "anti–social imperialist" struggles on the international scene, labeling Liu Shaoqi, the major target of his purge during the Cultural Revolution, "China's Khrushchev." Consequently, until the last days of his life, Mao made the rhetoric of antirevisionism (and, after the Sino-Soviet border clashes in 1969, anti–social imperialism) central to mobilizing the Chinese people to sustain his continuous revolution. The Soviet Union, accordingly, became China's worst enemy throughout the 1970s. Not until the mid- and late 1980s, when Mao's continuous revolution had long been abandoned in China and Deng Xiaoping's "reform and opening" policies had dominated Chinese politics, would Beijing and Moscow move toward normal state relations.