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THE CHINESE CULTURAL REVOLUTION AND THE  
SINO-SOVIET BORDER DISPUTES

BY

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The Fear Of The Lord Is The  
Beginning Of Wisdom, And Knowledge  
Of The Holy One Is Understanding.

Proverbs 9:14

The King's Heart Is In The Hand  
Of The Lord. He Directs Like A  
Watercourse Wherever He Pleases.

Proverbs 21:1

My Son, Give Me Your Heart And  
Let Your Eyes Keep To My Ways.

Proverb 23:26

敬畏耶和華是智慧的開端，  
認識至聖者，便是聰明。

箴言九章十節

王的心在耶和華手中，好像隴溝的水，  
隨意流轉。

箴言二十一章一節

我兒，要將你的心歸我，你的眼目，也要  
喜悅我的道路。

箴言二十三章二十六節



謹以此文獻給我敬愛的雙親

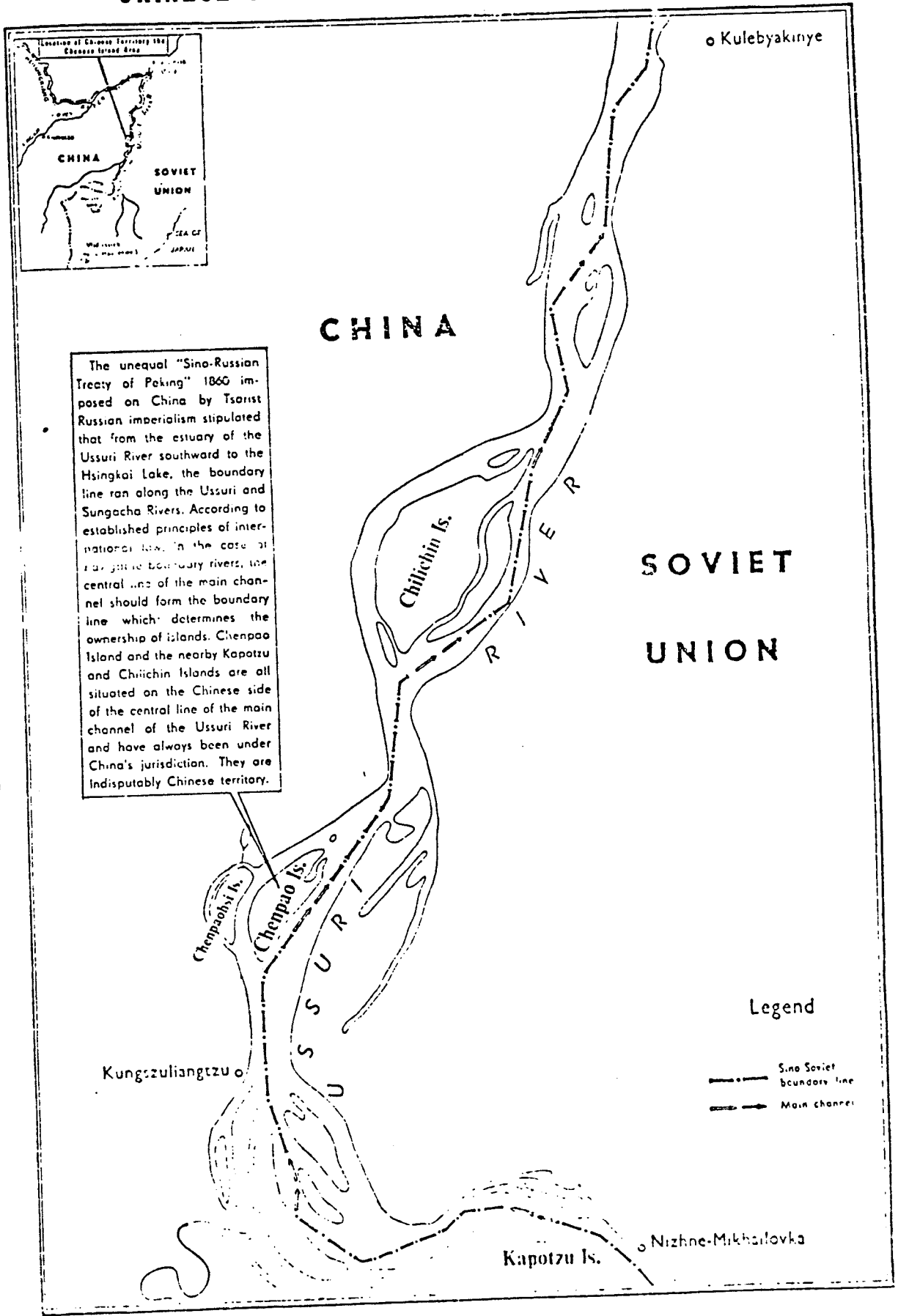
文化大革命與中蘇邊界衝突

蔡貴恒

五七年三月

My Thanks To All The  
Teachers, Friends, Brothers  
And Sisters In Christ.  
For Their Helps And  
Encouragement.

# SKETCH MAP SHOWING SINO-SOVIET BOUNDARY LINE IN CHINESE TERRITORY CHENPAO ISLAND AREA



The unequal "Sino-Russian Treaty of Peking" 1860 imposed on China by Tsarist Russian imperialism stipulated that from the estuary of the Ussuri River southward to the Hsingkai Lake, the boundary line ran along the Ussuri and Sungacha Rivers. According to established principles of international law, in the case of navigable boundary rivers, the central line of the main channel should form the boundary line which determines the ownership of islands. Chenpao Island and the nearby Kapotzu and Chilichin Islands are all situated on the Chinese side of the central line of the main channel of the Ussuri River and have always been under China's jurisdiction. They are indisputably Chinese territory.

o Kulebyakinye

### Legend

- Sino Soviet boundary line
- Main channel

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## INTRODUCTION

The topic of this thesis, "The Chinese Cultural Revolution and the Sino-Soviet Border Disputes" warrants study because of the lack of attention given it in the past. The Cultural Revolution in China and the Sino-Soviet border disputes were complicated, interrelated phenomena which demand analysis by any serious student of Chinese politics.

The coincidence in time of these two complex phenomena suggests possible inter-relationships between them. An attempt to understand these possible inter-relationships could well add to some understanding of the fundamental factors underlying these phenomena, and at the same time, provide some basis of predicting future events and their source of development.

There have been a number of theories presented on the historic, social, economic and political factors underlying the Sino-Soviet border disputes and the Cultural Revolution as separate phenomenon, but few have attempted to analyze them as interrelated phenomena.

The Sino-Soviet border disputes<sup>1</sup> involved a number

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1. For a chronological study, see Tai Sung An, Sino-Soviet Territorial Disputes, (Philadelphia:Westminster Press, 1973). For a thorough analytical study, see Thomas Robinson, "Sino-Soviet Border Disputes", American Political Science Review, Vol.66 no:6, Dec. 1972. Also see Ch'i Sun, 珍宝岛事件始末, (Hong Kong:Seventy Publication, 1972); Leonard Schapiro, "Communism in Collision" and Peter Burton, "Background of the Territorial Issues" in Study of Comparative Communism, Vol.2, no:3 & 4, pp.121-129, 130-148.



of political and military conflicts along the 4000-mile border of China and the USSR. At one level of analysis, one could conclude that the fundamental factors underlying the border disputes were economic and territorial in nature. I propose that deeper analysis reveals patterns of symbolic conflicts in other areas of the world, and fundamental antagonisms between the respective social systems of China and the Soviet Union. Some border disputes occurred near Sinkiang, a place where Russia historically had the greatest concentration of interests, and where China today maintains her nuclear installations. However, it was at Ussuri, where, in 1969, military clashes between the parties took place, that the border disputes revealed a higher level of intensity to the extent that both countries increased preparations for war.

The Cultural Revolution was a classic power struggle<sup>2</sup> with diffuse functions, which lasted from August 1966 to April 1969. It was a conflict over political, economic,

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2. See for example, The Great Power Struggle, (Hong Kong: Union Research Institute, 1969); SzeMa Cheng-feng, The Cultural Revolution, Vol.1 & 2, (Chinese Edition), 文革始末 (Hong Kong: Wen-I Book, 1972); Harold Hinton, China's Turbulent Quest, (New York, 1970); Thomas Robinson, The Cultural Revolution in China, (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1971)

military and foreign policy differences.<sup>3</sup> As a temporarily successful attempt by the 'radicals' to recapture national leadership, the Cultural Revolution involved the remolding of the party machinery and the purges of many leaders. The strong anti-Soviet revisionist features of the Cultural Revolution further convinced us that it was not solely an internal reconstruction, but was also a mass campaign to articulate internal hostility toward foreign foes. The revolution also turned China into a chaotic stage when thousands of red guards intervened, created an extremely dangerous phenomenon in the late 1960s.

The Cultural Revolution is thus correlated with the intensification of the border disputes, represented by vigorous fortifications and military buildups on both sides of the border. To some extent, it seems Chinese leaders deliberately employed mass domestic mobilization to initiate an anti-foreignism campaign during the Cultural Revolution period. This was reflected in red guard demonstrations against Moscow on the borders. Perpetual Chinese official attacks on Soviet revisionism further enhanced the probability that the border disputes and

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3. The functions of the Cultural Revolution were diffuse, but basically anti-revisionism. See for example, Philip Bridgham, "Cultural Revolution: Origin and Development", China Quarterly, no:29 & 34, 1967 and 1968; Stuart Schram, Authority Participation and Cultural Change in China, (Cambridge:Oxford Univ. Press, 1973); Alan P.L. Liu, Political Culture and Group Conflict in China, (Calif. Celio Book, 1975); Baum Richard, China in Ferment, (N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1971) and Tai-Sung An, Mao Tse-tung's Cultural Revolution, (N.Y.:Pegasus, 1972).

the Cultural Revolution were interrelated.

Yet, border disputes also appeared to be associated with Sino-Soviet global rivalry for political, economic and ideological spheres of influence. We must thus be very careful in attempting to ascertain to what extent the Cultural Revolution intensified the border disputes during 1966-1969. How may this have occurred? Was the Cultural Revolution the only contributing factor to the intensification of the border conflicts? What was the role of other factors? The central task of this thesis is to explore and attempt to resolve these extremely complicated causal relationships.

It is my contention that the Chinese Cultural Revolution is obviously related, both directly and indirectly, to the intensified border tensions in the period 1966-1969. That the Cultural Revolution itself does not offer a satisfactory answer to the causes of the intensifying border conflicts is substantially explained by the influence of the complicated global politics of the late sixties. Thus, the border disputes represented a typically complex and interactive international political conflict phenomenon. Conscious policy choices, reactive behavior, preventive and pre-emptive concerns, were complicated by an acquired value of the conflict for both sides.

In attempting to analyze and support the central hypothesis of this thesis, I will proceed by attempting a

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creative, yet empirically sound, eclectic synthesis of the facts, drawing on various models, theories and research on the Cultural Revolution and the border disputes. One tremendously difficult task, however, is to decide first, to what extent border clashes represented deliberate acts, and then, if so, which side may have been responsible. It is also difficult to be sure one is in possession of reliable data, in view of the propaganda machinery and news control maintained by both sides. As far as possible, multiple sources have been scrutinized to help alleviate some of these problems. For many purposes of this thesis, interpretations of events are themselves the matter of interest. The thesis will thus make use of Chinese and Soviet sources as well as western ones.

The second chapter provides some historical background information fundamental to an awareness of the character of the phenomena discussed in this thesis. Chapter Three analyzes the military dimensions of the border disputes. In chapter four, the discussion will focus on the different periods of the border disputes. The distinctiveness of the period from 1966-1969, when border disputes were aggravated, will be discussed. In chapter five, I will attempt to explain how the border disputes may have been intensified by the Cultural Revolution. Chapter six will examine other explanations for this intensification of the border disputes. Then, I will conclude my findings in the last chapter.

## Chapter II

### Background To The Sino-Soviet Border Disputes

The Sino-Soviet border clashes at Ussuri and Sinkiang in 1969 and most recently in May 1978 along the Sino-Soviet frontier in Amur, are examples of the long history of political, territorial and economic conflict between these two countries.

Fundamental differences between the two countries in respect to Marxist-Leninist strategy have been manifested in polemics and in rivalry within the international communist movement.<sup>1</sup> Yet, it has also been argued that the belligerents initiated the border disputes in order to achieve certain policy goals.

The existing Sino-Soviet frontier is regarded as de facto only by the Chinese, who claimed lost territories from centuries of Russian encroachments. They have pressed these claims at various stages, but most particularly in the late sixties. Ethnic irredenta and the presence of tribes which span the border have exacerbated the problem.

Economic factors have also been of underlying importance

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1. Two useful studies on the Sino-Soviet polemics are John Gittings, Survey of the Sino-Soviet Disputes 1963-1967, (Oxford U. Press, 1968); William E. Griffith, Sino-Soviet Relations 1964-1965, M.I.T. Press, 1967; see also Donald Zagoria, The Sino-Soviet Conflict 1956-1961, (Princeton U. Press, 1962); Alfred D. Low, The Sino-Soviet Disputes, Fairleigh U. Press, 1976 and Ch'i Sun, What Happened in Chenpao, (Seventy Publication, 1974, Hong Kong.)

in the Sino-Soviet border disputes. In part, this is related to a legacy of unequal trade relationships from the past. Disagreement over the building of socialism has represented a second phase of economic conflict.

## 1. The Political Dimensions of the Sino-Soviet Border Disputes

### a. Ideological Polemics

In the mid-fifties, the Sino-Soviet discord manifested itself in the political realm in the form of ideological polemics. The dual policy — de-Stalinization and peaceful coexistence — spelled out by the Kremlin in 1956 is identified by the Chinese as the genesis of the split between them and the Soviet leaders:

the 20th Congress of CPSU is the root from which all the evils done by the Khrushchev revisionists grow.... The 20th Congress is the origin of the split in the international communist movement.<sup>2</sup>

Mao probably felt personally offended when the Soviets attacked the personality cult.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, the "peaceful coexistence" policy was regarded by China as a betrayal of Marxist-Leninism and the international communist movement. It was contradictory to the Chinese preference for revolutionary struggle as the general line of foreign policy and the activist Soviet foreign policy Mao may have desired.

The 20th Congress, then, signified the origin of open conflict between Peking and Moscow on ideology. In 1957, the

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2. "Statement by Khrushchev", World Cultural Press Recorded, April 1965.

3. Peoples Daily, April 5, 1965.

"Hundred Flowers" campaign in China was launched, with anti-Soviet polemics and personal attacks on Khrushchev. At the international communist conference held in 1957, China refused to follow the Soviet lead, declaring that revisionism was the major danger to the socialist camp; that an unpeaceful transition to socialism was necessary; and that the principle of equality among fraternal parties was not to be abandoned: the Soviets were not to dictate to the international communist movement, even though they might carry greater responsibilities.<sup>4</sup> Soviet hegemony was thus seriously and openly challenged.

These declarations were not, however, an abrupt change in Chinese policy. Consistent with her earlier ambivalent attitude towards the Polish and Hungarian Revolts in 1956, China decided to stay within the bloc and to maintain the consolidation of the socialist camp. Yet, China's declarations and especially her assertion of the Five Principles of Mutual Respect for the sovereignty and integrity of states, expressed her disapproval of Soviet policy.

From then onward, Chinese were increasingly bold about publicly voicing an independent line. Sino-Soviet ideological disputes were reflected in different approaches to economic policy, world revolution and basic Marxist-Leninist strategy.<sup>5</sup>

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4. Peoples Daily and Hung Ch'i joint editorial, February 4, 1964.

5. Alfred D. Low, op.cit., pp.69-102; John Gittings, op.cit. pp.59-85; Donald Zagoria, op.cit., pp.77-224; see particularly Li Wei-han "The Struggle for Proletarian leadership in the Period of the New Democratic Revolution in China" Peking Review, February 23, 1962, p.5.

In 1959, the Chinese Communist Party's interpretation of strategy for the social and economic revolution in China, "The Great Leap Forward" was denounced by the Soviets. On the other hand, the Chinese leadership denounced the "Peaceful Coexistence" policies that Khrushchev had negotiated with President Eisenhower.<sup>6</sup> While Khrushchev expressed his discontent and denounced the "Great Leap Forward", the Chinese published a condemnation of Khrushchev's foreign policy in a Hung Ch'i editorial "Long Live Leninism".<sup>7</sup> China also criticized the revisionism of Yugoslavia, identifying revisionism as the main threat to the international communist movement, but refraining from open criticism of Soviet communism until 1963.<sup>8</sup> At conferences of communist parties, at Bucharest in June 1960 and Moscow in November 1960, differences between Soviet and Chinese approaches to ideology and other policies were confirmed.<sup>9</sup> In August 1960, the Soviet Union withdrew all aid and personnel from the Peoples' Republic of China, thus shifting the conflict from policy and ideology to practical economic and diplomatic relations between the two states.

The early sixties witnessed the spreading of the Sino-Soviet ideological dispute to other communist states. The

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6. Alfred D. Low op.cit., pp.102-104.

7. Peking Review, April 26, 1960; For Khrushchev or Soviet criticism of the "Great Leap Forward", see Life Jan.12, 1959, and Soviet Government Statement, Pravda, 21 & 22, Sept. 1963.

8. PD & Hung Ch'i, joint editorial, Sept. 6, 1963.

9. Alfred Low, op.cit., pp.109-115; Donald Zaroria, op.cit., pp.288-342; CDSR 12, no:6, 1960: PR June 28, 1963.



Soviet-Yugoslav rapprochement and the Sino-Albanian alliance were one way in which the Sino-Soviet dispute began to polarize the communist camp. The Soviet attack on Albania's policy of upholding the personality cult had, in turn, led to the Chinese denunciation of the Yugoslav's revisionism. In 1961, the 22nd Congress of the CPSU was the scene of a retaliatory attack on Albania. Chinese representatives supported Albania and walked out after denouncing Soviet revisionism and Khrushchev's new idea about the "State of the whole people".<sup>10</sup> When Soviet aid to Albania was cut off, China started to grant Albania credits and other supplies. As Moscow grew closer to Belgrade, Sino-Soviet relations deteriorated at a more rapid pace.

In 1962, the Sino-Soviet break had become more apparent.<sup>11</sup> China had published several articles in the Peoples Daily attacking prominent European Communist leaders who sided with the Soviet Union.<sup>12</sup> Moscow's surrender in the Cuban Missile crisis and "neutral" stance in the Sino-Indian border clashes made matters worse.

In mid-1963, the Sino-Soviet rift became so intense

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10. "Khrushchev's Report at the 22nd Congress of CPSU" CDSP, Vol. 12, no.43, Nov. 22, 1961. Khrushchev declared the end of the dictatorship of the proletariat in the Soviet Union.

11. Alfred D. Low op.cit., pp.123-175; John Gittings, op.cit., pp.158-174; Alexander Dallin, "Long Division and Fine Fractions", Problems of Communism, Vol. XI no. 2, March-April, 1962, pp.7-16.

12. Peoples Daily, February 27, 1963; Peking Review, March 1 & 15, 1963. Richard Lowenthal, World Communism Since Stalin, (N. Y. Oxford U. Press, 1964).

that the Soviet leaders decided that an international conference should be called in order to ease their differences with the Chinese leaders. This attempt at negotiation soon failed. China replied to the Soviet Union's proposal with twenty-five conditions for bilateral talks which appeared to imply the removal of Khrushchev who had proposed the policies of peaceful coexistence and peaceful transition to socialism.<sup>13</sup> Talks scheduled July 5 were eventually forced to adjourn when CPSU denounced CPC publicly and prepared, instead, to sign the Test Ban Treaty with the United States. When China issued the prominent articles on "The Origin and Development of the Differences between the leaders of the CPSU and Ourselves" on September 3, 1963, Sino-Soviet relations came to a decisive break.

The next two years were clouded by public Sino-Soviet vituperation. The Soviets' calls for conferences in 1964 and 1965 to ease the rising differences with China gained nothing but deeper misunderstandings.<sup>14</sup> Despite Khrushchev's fall in late 1964, the new CPSU leaders refused to make concessions to China, apparently following Khrushchev's old line.<sup>15</sup>

On April 3, 1965, the Soviet proposal for a tripartite summit meeting to discuss plans of joint action against the

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13. Peoples Daily, June 26, 1963.

14. John Gittings op.cit., pp. 228-246; Peking Review vol. VII, no. 19, May 8, 1964; William Griffith, op.cit. pp. 23-24.

15. Red Flag & Peoples Daily, joint editorial. China also attacked Moscow in "Khrushchevism without Khrushchev", March 22, 1965. See also PR Nov. 27, 1964, pp. 6-8.

United States was accepted by Hanoi, but rejected by the Chinese. The Soviet second proposal on April 17 was also ignored. The Chinese government may have feared the Soviet military presence on China's territories as well as in South-East Asia.<sup>16</sup>

For the 2nd Afro-Asian Conference, China anticipated enhancing her influence among the Afro-Asian states and excluding Soviet influence from this area. China argued that the Soviets were not qualified to participate in the conference because the USSR was neither a Afro-Asian state, nor was she concerned with the national-liberation movement, the theme of the conference.<sup>17</sup>

But the occurrences of certain international events had exacerbated pressures for the postponement of the conference. The coup d'état in the host country, Algeria, the withdrawal of ten African states, the Phillipino proposal for postponement, the Indo-Pakistan war and the crush of the Congo Rebellion, and other Sino-Soviet disputes in the 3rd world worked against bringing Afro-Asian nations together for the conferences. The withdrawal and the proposal of postponement had verified the unwillingness of certain states to stand on China's side. China's prestige became undermined as she failed to give confidence to 3rd world countries in the

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16. China denied that the joint action was an imperative requirement of the anti-imperialist struggle. See PR Nov. 12, 1965; CDSP July 7, 1965; John Gittings, op.cit. pp. 254-270.

17. Peoples Daily, June 18, 1965 and PR June 25, 1965.

Congo Rebellion and the Indo-Pakistan conflict.<sup>18</sup>

Within the decade from 1956 to 1965, Sino-Soviet conflict was reflected in their increasing rivalry and antagonistic attitude toward each other. In addition to the ideological and foreign policy differences, there were also the territorial aspects to the two countries' political conflict.

b. Territorial Disputes

Historically, Russia had made unilateral gains that cost China approximately a million square miles of territory. The treaties of Sigun (1858), Peking (1860) and St. Petersburg (1881) had ceded the south eastern part of Siberia and the maritime provinces (about 500,000 square miles) of Central Asia as well as the 133,000 square miles of territory east of the Ussuri to Russia. These were the unequal treaties China renounced in the 1960's.<sup>19</sup>

Initially, Czarist Russia, despite the treaty of 1689, acquired new territory from a weak China. The new Bolshevik regime promised that all rights and privileges acquired by Czarist Russia would be relinquished.<sup>20</sup> However, the new regime did not return any Chinese territories, and even

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18. William Griffith, op.cit., pp. 114-118.

19. Peoples Daily, March 8, 1963; Dennis Dollin, Territorial Claims of the Sino-Soviet Conflict, (Stanford U. Press, 1965).

20. See Karakhan Declaration, China Yearbook, 1924, pp. 868-872.

expanded like its predecessor, politically and territorial-ly into China, notably in the case of South Sakhalin and in the Kuriles.<sup>21</sup>

In addition, an understanding of the ethnic problem and the border policies of both countries may also be helpful to the overall understanding of the territorial underpinnings of the Sino-Soviet political conflict. To some extent, the present border struggle between the USSR and the CPR represents the unavoidable confrontation of two major powers who were both attempting to colonize and assimilate border tribes. China and Russia/Soviet Union frequently found themselves in conflict as they tried to spread or maintain their political and economic influence in the border areas. Then, there was also the question of national security.<sup>22</sup>

From the 1800s onward, Russia was exploring Sinkiang, and supporting subversive activities against China. By 1860, Russian expansion into Sinkiang was marked by their entrenchment along the Amur. In 1864, Russia was able to take advantage of the Moslem Revolt in Sinkiang to capture

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21. Francis Watson, The Frontier of China, (N.Y.: Prager 190-195.)

22. Despite her weakness, China engaged her troops frequently on border in order to maintain national security. The few victorious battles against the Moslem rebels in 1876-1877 by Tso Chung-teng were examples of China's attempt to resist foreign intervention. See Cheng Tien-feng, op.cit., p.50, Harry Schwartz, op.cit., pp.57-58

influence in this position of fertile Central Asia. Exploiting the unrest in Mongolia in 1910, Russia stirred up the Mongols to revolt. In December 1911, a "Mongolian Empire" was created. In 1921, the Soviets intervened in Outer Mongolia, expelled the White Russian forces and assisted the Mongol to establish the MPR. (It became a Soviet sponsored Mongolian People Republic in 1921). In 1913, Russia seized Urankhai, made it into a protectorate, renamed it Tannu Tuva, and annexed it totally in 1944. By 1944, Russia had sufficient troops stationed on the border to dominate and influence the Sino-Soviet borderland.<sup>23</sup>

Soviet influence in Sinkiang grew steadily from 1917 onward. In the 1930s, the Soviet Union supported the Chinese warlord Sheng Chih-ts'ai in the suppression of the Moslem rebellion which the Soviet Union also feared. General Ma Chung-ying, the brilliant leader of the Moslems was supported by the Imperial Japanese Government. The latter's objective was both to challenge Soviet influence in Sinkiang and to make the Moslems a bulwark of opposition to the Soviets. By 1940, Sinkiang was so under Soviet influence that the latter was able to demand unconditional supplies and exploration of mines.<sup>24</sup> From 1941-43, more than 150 tons

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23. Russian influence in this area was shown by her complete political and economic control of the Chinese Eastern Railway; see Harry Schwartz, op.cit., pp.84-94.

24. Cheng Tien-feng, op.cit., pp.169-179; Li Chang, "The Soviet Grip on Sinkiang", Foreign Affairs, April 1954, p.491; J.V. Davidson, Russia and China, (London, 1960), pp. 140-161.