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Peking, Moscow, and the SALT Talks

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The estrangement of Maoist China from the Soviet Union in the early 1960's destroyed the bipolar political alignment which had prevailed in the world since the end of the Second World War. The resulting triangle—Washington, Moscow, and Peking offers many possibilities for realignment which are undoubtedly under consideration by the national leaders involved. China's continuing border dispute with the Soviet Union and the outcome of the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks between the United States and the Soviet Union in Vienna will serve as barometers of any future diplomatic shifts among these three powers.

PEKING, MOSCOW, AND THE SALT TALKS

An article prepared

by

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Introduction. On 8 July 1968, *The New York Times* carried a short article hailing the "cornerstone of the present world order, the informal Soviet American survival pact of 1963." The formal manifestation of this informal pact was, of course, the Partial Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, the first step toward putting the atomic genie back in its bottle. This Soviet-American achievement was traced from President Kennedy's American University speech on 10 June 1963 through Premier Khrushchev's positive reaction to it, to the signing of the test-ban accord on 5 August 1963. Five years later, after crisis-control in the Middle East, an agreement to ban nuclear weapons from outer space, a nuclear nonproliferation pact, an approaching consular agreement and imminent opening of New York-Moscow air service, it was evident that the Soviet Union was continuing to act in accordance with the informal survival pact, and Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei

Gromyko's policy statement of a few days earlier had indicated that the Soviet Union hoped to continue this cooperation.¹

In Peking the concept of a Soviet-American pact, whether a "survival pact" or called by some other name, whether informal or formal, was not new. Although public advertisement of such an accord in the United States most prestigious newspaper probably caused some outrage among the Chinese leadership, they themselves believed that such an understanding existed. They were certain that the Kremlin had sold out to the Western capitalist-imperialists and that China alone had become the repository of leadership of the world Communist movement.

The essence of scientific socialism as practiced by Communist Parties is the minute examination of political, economic, and military power relationships between themselves and their enemies at every critical juncture in history. From

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this examination is derived an overall power relationship which determines whether the party will take one step forward or two steps back. Deviations from the Communist movement are produced when one group sees the overall power relationship in more favorable or less favorable terms than another group. The left deviationists, anxious to move forward, minimize the strength of the enemy. Right deviationists, more cautious, will appraise enemy strength more generously. But both groups will claim the center and denounce the other accordingly.²

Thus Mao Tse-tung and the Chinese leadership interpreted Soviet nuclear weapon and strategic missile delivery system achievements as a great turning point in history. To Peking, Moscow's thermonuclear explosions and sputnik successes meant a drastic shift in world power relationships. The East wind was prevailing over the West wind. But Moscow, beset with problems and responsibilities of a world leader, was not so sure. Thus Moscow, claiming the center, classified the Chinese leadership as leftist, dogmatic, and adventurist. To Peking, claiming the center, the Soviet Union was classified as rightist and revisionist. The CPSU leadership was accused of adopting the doctrines of Bernstein and Kautsky. Almost nothing that Moscow did or tried to do was acceptable to the Chinese, and Chinese moves, whether domestic or in international politics, rarely met Soviet approval. Peking accused Moscow of lack of support during the offshore islands crisis of 1958 and in the Indian border clash of 1959. But to Moscow these Chinese moves were ill advised. Moscow thought that the Chinese communes were misguided at best, and Khrushchev tried to dissuade Peking. But Peking replied that such an effort at economic development was necessary because of insufficient Soviet aid. By 1960 the relationship had deteriorated to the point that Moscow cut off economic aid

and withdrew Soviet technicians and their engineering blueprints. The Soviet Union in the period late 1954-1957 had promised aid in nuclear technology, including nuclear weaponry for defense; although commenced, it was withdrawn on 20 June 1959.³ Peking derided Moscow's performance during the Cuban missile crisis in 1962, arousing Khrushchev's ire, but concurrently Moscow chose neutrality in the Sino-Indian border war, which Peking classified as objective aid to the enemy. Subsequent Soviet military aid to India reinforced Peking's belief. By 1963 the dispute had reached a point that when Moscow signed the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty with Washington, Peking was sure that the two were in league against her. The Chinese complained of collusion between U.S. imperialists and Soviet revisionists and spoke regularly of encirclement. Only a change in leadership seemed able to reverse the downhill course, and when Khrushchev was "relieved of command" by his compatriots in 1964, Peking probably was greatly relieved. There must have been smug smiles of satisfaction in Peking when Khrushchev was denounced in Moscow for "subjectivism" and "harebrained schemes."

The new Kremlin leadership of Brezhnev and Kosygin, in fact, proved a good deal more reserved and cautious than its predecessor. However, their policy decisions were not much different than those of Khrushchev. They, in fact, seemed to be more flexible and more successful on a number of counts in their international political stance and gained while Peking was losing. Peking was soon to declare that Moscow was exhibiting "Khrushchevism without Khrushchev" and may have believed, deep in its heart, that the leadership of the *apparatchiki* was a good deal more wily and tougher than it ought to be.⁴

Concurrently with Khrushchev's removal from power, China had joined the nuclear club; her first atomic explosion

was in October 1964. It has been noted that one of the major effects of the partial test-ban treaty of 1963 was that it firmly split the Communist world.⁵ In 1964 Peking therefore proved that China could go it alone, testing in the atmosphere in the face of widespread public opinion condemning the radioactive fallout contamination produced by such tests. Moreover, Peking continued testing atomic munitions over the next 5 years, improving her weapons know-how. While continuing to test and expand capabilities, Peking denounced all efforts of arms control short of the ultimate-general and complete disarmament. While the impetus to other strategic arms control measures provided by the test-ban treaty of 1963 was greatly slowed by the Vietnam war, the United States and the Soviet Union nevertheless reached agreement on banning nuclear weapons from outer space and from the seabed and on the nonproliferation of nuclear weapons to nonnuclear nations. Peking denounced each of these steps as collusive acts to keep China in an inferior status.

Peking seems to regard all arms control and disarmament schemes rather as did Lenin before the Bolsheviks came to power: they merely distract the masses from the only real means for eliminating war, a Communist revolution that would end the class struggle. Thus Peking regards disarmament as a dangerous tactic and harmful as a strategy. Moscow seems to hold to Lenin's view on disarmament after achieving power: it indeed could be used to tactical advantage to preserve the base of socialism and to embarrass and divide the capitalist powers. Moreover, Moscow now undoubtedly finds arms control strategically useful. Despite their distrust of Western intentions, the Soviets seem to believe that political and military realities today require moderation of the arms race and reduction of the threat of accidental war.⁶

In addition to their differences on

grand strategy, on foreign and domestic policy actions, on the responsibilities of one Communist power toward another, especially in regard to economic and military aid, and on the value of disarmament and of negotiating with the West, Peking and Moscow have a most serious problem in their long common border. More specifically, the problem is one of Chinese irredentism. Mao is reported to have reminded Khrushchev as early as 1954, on the new Soviet leader's first visit to Peking, that China did not accept permanent Soviet retention of eastern lands acquired by the czars. The territorial dispute continued to bubble to the surface from time to time. When Khrushchev remarked that Nehru could take Goa but that the Chinese did not move against Macao or Hong Kong, Mao reportedly replied that when the Chinese began to collect for foreign-held territory not only Portugal and Britain would have to pay their bill. Armed clashes along the border first came to light in 1966, when Soviet and East European sources reported over 150 incidents in 1965. Also, in 1966 Moscow renewed its Mutual Defense Treaty with Outer Mongolia on unfavorable terms to Peking and reportedly moved as many as 10,000 men (armored units) to the eastern frontier.⁷

By 1969 the Sino-Soviet dispute had reached a critical stage. The border issue, aggravated over the years by population pressures from both sides, had become a tinderbox. Moreover, Peking and Moscow were at figurative dagger points on every other issue, be it strategic, political, economic, or ideological. Since 1964 Brezhnev and Kosygin had improved Moscow's posture internationally, while Peking's reputation in the world community had slipped badly. Thus China, despite growing atomic prowess, remained in many ways a "have not" nation, an outcast, a nation with not much power but great power potential, and a nation with pretensions to grandeur. In Moscow,

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Peking undoubtedly was considered highly dangerous. Border warfare with former comrades appeared imminent. Paradoxically, to the West, Moscow saw a chance to reopen a dialog of disarmament in which both capitalists and Communists stood to gain. The Soviet Union, a "have not" nation scarcely 52 years earlier, had come a long way.

The Border Clashes. It is doubtful that Lenin envisaged the necessity for neighboring nations under Communist rule to observe the diplomatic protocols of the capitalist world. However, as the situation has developed in the "socialist camp," all the trappings of traditional diplomacy indeed have come to be used. Most of the Communist governments are adept at the use of the protest note. These notes, published as adjuncts to polemizing, are valuable sources of information, provided the reader takes into account their generally self-serving nature.

We know from a series of Chinese and Russian protest notes that tension along the border flared into violence early in March. Peking denounced Soviet incursions in the vicinity of Chenpao Island on 2 March and 15 March 1969, noting that the Soviets had continued to fire artillery in that vicinity since 15 March.⁸ These disturbances prompted Moscow to propose that the Soviet Union and China resume consultations to clarify the borderline in certain sections, consultations which Peking allegedly had broken off in 1964.⁹

Apparently the Chinese did not accept the Soviet proposal, and further clashes occurred, this time in the Sinkiang area, on 16, 17, and 25 April and again on 2 May 1969.¹⁰ Moscow was seriously concerned, and the Russian people were alerted to the possibility of open hostilities. Yevgeny Yevtushenko's poem "On the Red Ussuri Snow" was released to the public on 19 March.¹¹

By 5 May *Pravda* was quoting one of the

Soviet Union's foremost China experts as accusing the Chinese of using population pressures as an excuse for expansion. Readers were warned that "Mao has not yet presented the bill for the Soviet territories of Kamchatka, Khabarovsk, and Vladivostok."¹² Soviet military authorities were not idle. It was reported that between one and two hundred thousand Soviet soldiers, including rocket troops, had moved into Mongolia, that the Soviets had deployed 1½ million men from Irkutsk eastward, and that Soviet missiles were capable of striking Paotow and Lanehow, Chinese nuclear research centers south of the Mongolian border. At least nine eastern airfields in the Soviet Union were rapidly enlarged, and travel was banned to Khabarovsk on the Amur, and Irkutsk near Lake Baikal.¹³

Concurrently with the military build-up, further incidents occurred. There apparently was a major confrontation from 12 to 15 May at Weipalao Island in the Heilung River, Heilungkiang. The situation there remained unstable, and further incidents were reported in the same locale on 25 May and 28 May. Meanwhile the Sinkiang border was restless. Incidents were reported on 20 May at Yehhsikai and Taheheng.¹⁴

By early June, Peking, too, had begun to believe that war might be imminent. Vice Chairman Lin Piao had alerted the party to the fact at the Ninth Party Congress in April; now he was quoted for widespread public consumption as urging preparations for conventional or nuclear war. "... We can vanquish the enemy in close range combat taking place within 200 meters... We rely on foot soldiers, men armed with Mao Tse-tung thought..."¹⁵

In a note of 11 June to Moscow, Peking denounced a Soviet border incursion in the Barluk Mountains, Sinkiang Province, in which one Chinese shepherd was killed, another kidnapped.¹⁶ Moscow replied indignantly

to this note the following day, stating that it "grossly distorted events." The Soviet version told of a Chinese incursion in the vicinity of the Tastau River, Semipalatinsk Province in which a Chinese citizen with a flock of sheep and a group of Chinese servicemen had intruded into Soviet territory.¹⁷

The summer season proved hot in more ways than one along the border. There was a major clash in early July at Pacha Island in the Heilung River, Fuyuan County, Heilungkiang Province involving Soviet frontier troops, gunboats, and aircraft. Peking accused the Soviet forces of landing on the island and burning a house.¹⁸ And in mid-August a battle of large proportions occurred in Sinkiang. Peking reported many Chinese killed and wounded when two helicopters, dozens of tanks and armored vehicles, and several hundred troops intruded into the Tientiekti area, Yumen County, Sinkiang Uighur Autonomous Region, China, on 13 August 1969.¹⁹

If the Chinese had, in fact, initiated any of the border incidents prior to 1 July, and they undoubtedly were responsible for some of them, it was obvious after 1 July that Moscow was well prepared for punitive action and not averse to taking it.

The Polemics. As the border situation became more serious, the tenor of Sino-Soviet polemics increased in pitch and intensity. Probably most indicative of Chinese apprehension was the Peking line on United States-Soviet collusion in the encirclement of China. Soviet newsman Victor Louis, who is probably an official of the KGB, visited Taipei in October 1968 for long conversations with Defense Minister Chiang Ching-kuo, the son of President Chiang. Peking almost certainly was aware of the Louis visit immediately but did not comment on it until after the border clash of 2 March, when a Soviet-United States plot was denounced.²⁰ Peking saw further

evidence of this plot when President Nixon entertained, *inter alia*, Soviet Ambassador Dobrynin at a concert in the White House Rose Garden: "... now through the note of harmony between the United States and the Soviet Union struck at the White House concert, that U.S. imperialism and Soviet revisionism, the two biggest tyrants in the world, are 'natural friends' in opposing China..."²¹

Peking denounced Moscow for aiding in the search for a Strategic Air Command tanker aircraft which disappeared over the Bering Sea on 3 June 1969. (One Soviet fishing vessel took part in the search.)²² A Soviet shipment of titanium to the United States constituted further evidence of its collusion charge to Peking. When the freighter *Orsha* docked in Seattle with the strategically valuable metal on 26 June, it was the first time in 19 years that a Soviet ship had moored in an American port. China said "... while the Soviet revisionist renegade clique feigns anti-imperialism it is ganging up with U.S. imperialism..."²³ Even the Soviet reception for Apollo 11 astronaut Col. Frank Borman was denounced as symbolic of sinister United States-Soviet machinations.²⁴ Moscow was accused of hatching a "Middle East Munich" in collaboration with the United States at the expense of the Palestine guerrillas,²⁵ of sham support and real betrayal of the Vietnamese people ("The Soviet revisionist renegade clique and U.S. imperialism are jackals of the same lair"),²⁶ and of building up naval strength in the Indian Ocean to fill the vacuum created by departing Britain.²⁷ In late August, Peking was denouncing Soviet aid to the Congo, collaboration with West Germany, aid to Suharto's Indonesia, aid and ship visits to India, ship visits to Japan, and, most vehemently of all, the Soviet plan for a system of collective security in Asia.²⁸

Moscow's sponsorship of an Asian Collective Security System, coming at

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the time of threatening acts on the border, assuredly triggered apprehension in Peking. The Chinese responded with great vituperation. The Moscow leadership was referred to as the expansionist "new tsars," compared to Eisenhower and Dulles in the 1950's, accused of "gangster logic," and of reaching the "height of absurdity."²⁹

In keeping with its responsible posture in international politics, Moscow was rather restrained in its responses to Peking's diatribes. The Kremlin obviously was speaking comparatively softly but carrying a big stick. In the early spring Peking was accused of "cultivating the Cold War spirit." *Kommunist* noted that Jenmin Jihpao alone had published more than 600 anti-Soviet attacks in 1968. Mao was accused of working at party-splitting; and Chinese adventures in the third world, trade with West Germany and Japan, and border provocations were denounced.³⁰ By the end of April, Moscow had decided that, as evidenced in the Ninth All-Chinese Communist Party Congress, the struggle against the Soviet Communist Party had become the "main direction of the Maoists' activities in the field of foreign policy." Moscow noted, however, that China had nearly admitted being isolated from international communism, thus announcing the de facto achievement of a Khrushchevian aim of 1963-1964.³¹

By early June the Soviet leadership decided that a major statement aimed at China was necessary. Communist Party General Secretary L.I. Brezhnev delivered the policy at the long-delayed International Conference of Communist and Workers Parties in Moscow:

Barring the road to the threat of war and not relaxing our vigilance with respect to the machinations of aggressive and revanchist circles, we shall continue to do everything in our power to eliminate hotbeds of the danger of war

on our planet... the burning problems of the present do not push into the background more long-range tasks, especially the creation of a system of collective security in those parts of the world where the threat of the unleashing of a new world war and the unleashing of armed conflicts is centered... (speaks of the Karlovy Vary conference joint program of struggle for ensuring security in Europe; says U.S.S.R. will help) ... We think that the course of events also places on the agenda the task of creating a system of collective security in Asia.³²

Having enunciated this position, Moscow's polemics adhered closely to it for the next several months. Thus it is possible now to turn to developments on the SALT talks.

Slow Progress on SALT. As the new administration assumed office in Washington, Moscow affirmed that it was ready to start a serious exchange of views on the control of nuclear missiles.³³ But the Republican appointees required some time for serious study before proceeding with a major project under consideration by their Democratic predecessors since the immediate aftermath of the test-ban treaty. President Nixon affirmed his interest in SALT at a March press conference, but it was not until late April that Secretary of State Rogers indicated that talks with the Soviet Union on strategic arms limitation would open in late spring or early summer. When summer had almost arrived, President Nixon affirmed that SALT talks were still in prospect, but did not announce a date. Meanwhile there had been a certain amount of background maneuvering. One mysterious incident, probably related to SALT, was the visit of Soviet Vice Minister of Defense Vasily Chuykov to the

Pentagon in April. Chuykov had been in Washington for President Eisenhower's funeral.

Whether the lack of Progress was due to bureaucratic delay in Washington or to a preoccupation of both Washington and Moscow with U.S. disengagement from Vietnam or to Moscow's preoccupation with the Chinese border or to Moscow's bureaucratic delay or to a combination of all these factors is problematical. We do know that some progress was made on related disarmament matters during these months. The United States and the Soviet Union worked toward agreement on a draft treaty banning the emplacement of nuclear weapons on the seabed.³⁴ There was government-sponsored action in the Soviet Union to promote an international banning of chemical and biologic weapons in warfare (CBW).³⁵ This Soviet campaign was echoed in the United States, and the administration was asked to consider ratifying the Geneva Protocol of 1925. In August the Foreign Affairs Committees of the Council of the Union and the Council of Nationalities of the U.S.S.R. Supreme Soviet met under the chairmanship of M.A. Suslov and recommended that the Soviet Government ratify the Treaty on the Nonproliferation of Nuclear Weapons signed in 1968.³⁶ Throughout the period January to September, Soviet officials and publicists maintained a steady drumbeat, echoing the Soviet Union's position favoring limitation of the arms race and, better yet, disarmament; elimination of the hotbeds of war in Europe, Southeast Asia, and the Near East; and international détente. Brezhnev spoke in this vein at the May Day parade, which emphasized Soviet peaceful intentions by omitting Red army participation.³⁷ His major speech delivered to the International Conference of Communist and Workers Parties in June, cited above in the context of the border dispute, firmly

indicated readiness to "reach an agreement on general and complete disarmament and on measures for limiting and checking the arms race, above all in nuclear arms and missiles."³⁸ The basic document adopted by the June conference strongly favored putting the Nonproliferation Treaty into effect, creation of nuclear free zones, banning nuclear weapons, a radical cutback in military budgets, and for general and complete disarmament.³⁹ Foreign Minister Gromyko, in a major report on foreign policy delivered in July, dwelt extensively on disarmament matters. He reemphasized Soviet readiness to commence SALT talks; otherwise his comments amounted to a restatement of the Soviet position. The notable thing about the speech was the amount of explication devoted to the field of disarmament.⁴⁰

By this time Moscow publicly had begun to wonder aloud about "why the United States was delaying the SALT talks." Russians themselves did not wonder, but *Pravda's* Washington correspondent quoted American sources who were wondering about the delay.⁴¹ But for Peking the situation already had gone much too far, as the Sino-Soviet polemics on disarmament will indicate.

Polemics on Disarmament. Noting with disdain Soviet Vice Minister of Defense Chuykov's visit to the Pentagon in April, Peking declared that the proposed "disarmament conference and talks on limiting nuclear missiles . . . are nothing but deceptive tricks. Under the signboard of disarmament, they are actually engaged in arms expansion to oppose China and the people of the world."⁴² Most U.S. statements on the possibility of forthcoming SALT talks were treated in the same vein. ". . . starting with this bargain (to hold SALT talks), U.S. imperialism and Soviet revisionism will hold a 'general round' of discussions on a series of

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questions in connection with their global counter-revolutionary collaboration."⁴³

Moscow replied to these Chinese accusations in its restrained and rational manner. In the major speech cited above, Foreign Minister Gromyko noted that

For many years now the Chinese leaders have been assailing our policy aimed at the disarmament of states and the elimination of nuclear weapons, . . . a policy that . . . is opposed by imperialism. The Chinese leaders declare that any agreement on disarmament, especially nuclear disarmament, is a fraud and that under no circumstances will China accept such an agreement or sit down to negotiate on these questions. . . . In response to this bravado, one might say: "Don't spit in the well—you'll be wanting to drink the water, too."⁴⁴

Peking was far from moved by Gromyko's prediction. Jenmin Jihpao commented specifically on his speech: ". . . Gromyko's report . . . means summit meetings . . . for global counter-revolutionary deals. . . . Talks with U.S. imperialism on strategic weapons to step up nuclear blackmail against the world's people. . . . Continued sell-out. . . ." ⁴⁵ As the relationship between the Communist powers became ever more strained as the summer progressed, Peking denounced Moscow in ever more provocative terms: "The Kremlin renegades are like prostitutes who want to have an arch of chastity erected for them. . . . They are flirting and stepping up the collusion with U.S. imperialism."⁴⁶

But Moscow would have the last word. On 28 August 1969 the Kremlin pronounced its faith in its "constructive proposals" aimed at "the reduction of arms, controlling the race for ever more

destructive means of attack and counter-attack, the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons." It said that these ideas had met with a positive response throughout the world, but that Peking has replied "in its own way." Therefore, the Chinese people were warned that Mao was *courting nuclear war*.⁴⁷

It should be noted that the polemics between Moscow and Peking during this period correlate rather closely, in frequency and intensity of feeling, with periods of heightened tension on the border. This seems to be true of the polemics on disarmament as well as those on other subjects of concern to the two. For instance: the disarmament polemics peak in June along with the exchange of public diplomatic notes concerning the border clashes of the March-June period. They peak again just after the major border clashes in August. It is obvious that Moscow has maintained a more level polemical attitude throughout the period, while Peking became more strident. It is entirely possible that the Chinese side prepared its polemics in advance for release following a border clash. Thus Peking's June releases regularly referred to events of March and April. The probability of coincidence in this correlation of polemic releases with border clashes is considered to be very low.

But the phenomenon of polemics was soon to cease. An unexpected event was to have a profound effect on the Sino-Soviet dispute.

A Turning Point. President Ho Chi Minh of North Vietnam died at 9:47 a.m. on 3 September 1969. Aged 79 at the time of his passing, Ho was a highly respected member of the international Communist establishment. It could be said that Ho, in fact, was a more prestigious Communist in some respects than the *apparatchiki* in power in Moscow or the Chinese leadership, which had had very little experience in the international movement. Ho had

achieved additional stature as a mediator between Moscow and Peking. According to one press report, Ho had mediated the Chinese-Russian dispute over remarks on Yugoslavia in the draft Moscow Declaration of the 81 Communist Parties, November 1960.⁴⁸ Again in 1962 his efforts reportedly materially effected a temporary reconciliation of the two parties.⁴⁹ Now again, in death, he had attempted to bring the disputants together. In his will to the North Vietnamese, Ho urged that they work to bring unity in the international movement:

About the world Communist movement: Having dedicated my whole life to the cause of the revolution, the more I am proud to see the growth of the international Communist and workers' movement, the more deeply I am grieved at the dissensions that are dividing the fraternal parties.

I wish that our party will do its best to contribute effectively to the restoration of unity among the fraternal parties on the basis of Marxism-Leninism and proletarian internationalism, in a way consonant to the requirements of heart and reason.⁵⁰

However, the question was whether Ho's prestige was sufficiently great to again effect a reconciliation in the face of the now greatly amplified Sino-Soviet dispute. Initially it seemed that the two parties would avoid each other as memorial services proceeded. The Chinese delegation to Hanoi, led by Chou En-lai, made a 1-day visit on 4 September, probably so as to have departed before the Moscow delegation, led by Kosygin, arrived. Then, to the surprise of a number of observers, the Soviet delegation landed at Peking en route back to Moscow. Kosygin spoke to Chou at the Peking Airport on 11 September 1969, and Moscow Radio

reported the next day that "Both sides stated their positions and had a useful talk."⁵¹ It began to look as though Ho Chi Minh had indeed been effective in death.

However, a closer examination of events during the immediate period after Ho's death reveals other forces at work. One of the claims to fame of Ceausescu's Rumanian Communist government is that, in its usual independent mode, it has remained neutral in the Sino-Soviet dispute. In fact, Ceausescu regularly has played on the dispute to maintain his independence. Certainly, however, he as well as Ho Chi Minh would want to keep the dispute from open warfare. Thus the activities of the Rumanian delegation to Hanoi become of especial interest. This delegation, led by I.G. Maurer, stopped in Peking en route to Hanoi on 7 September. The Rumanian aircraft landed again in Peking on 11 September, preceding the Soviet aircraft. The timing is right for the Rumanians to have been the arrangers of the Peking Airport conference. Thus the testament of Ho Chi Minh may have been merely the public "cause" of the "reconciliation effect" while the Rumanian effort was its true cause. There is some additional evidence to support this hypothesis. When the authoritative Hanoi newspaper *Nhan Dan* editorialized on Ho's testament, *Pravda* immediately reprinted it.⁵² But even before *Pravda* had appeared, Moscow Radio had broadcast to Rumania an endorsement of the *Nhan Dan* editorial and stated "We understand internationalism as a realistic policy which serves the common cause of the revolution."⁵³ The Soviets may have been telling Bucharest that they were carrying out their part of the bargain.

That some major development had occurred at the Peking Airport meeting quickly became evident, for the Sino-Soviet polemics ceased almost immediately. The day following the meeting, observers in Moscow noted that the

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Soviet press did not publish any articles about the dispute with China.⁵⁴ Moscow's weekly journals took somewhat longer to taper off.⁵⁵ Peking papers, which were publishing diatribes against the Soviet revisionist renegades' trampling of the Mongolian people on the day of the meeting, required several days to cool down. After several days of comments on the chaotic state of the Soviet food industry, a depression in Soviet oil and gas industry, and chaos in Russian transport and communications areas, Peking ceased commenting altogether on Soviet matters.⁵⁶ The question was "To what had Peking and Moscow agreed at the Peking Airport meeting?"

Quiet in the East; Progress in the West. It was to take an entire week for reports to begin to filter out about the content of the meeting; even then, the reports were exceptionally tentative and brief. The situation was complicated by the release of an authoritative Soviet article that indicated that although "... China was... many times larger... and might offer active resistance,..." that was no reason for not applying the Brezhnev Doctrine in the East.⁵⁷ It is possible that this threat, however, constituted a negotiating tactic. A few days later reliable diplomatic sources reported that Kosygin and Chou had agreed to border talks. Finally, on 30 September, through a Japanese labor union leader, it was revealed in Moscow that the Soviet Union expected to hold border talks and that Kosygin had proposed to Chou that border talks be resumed, trade and economic ties be reconsidered, polemics be halted, troops be withdrawn from both sides of the border, and a "no firing" order be given.⁵⁸

The next day it was authoritatively reported that troops along the border were withdrawing from "... neuralgic points on the Ussuri and Amur Rivers and on the Kazakhstan and Sinkiang border" in an effort to prevent a new

outbreak of incidents in a situation where the terrain had been sounded for negotiations.⁵⁹ But commencement of border talks was not officially announced until 19 October, one day prior to their convening in Peking.⁶⁰

The hiatus in Sino-Soviet polemics brought on by the Peking Airport meeting is especially interesting because, on both sides, polemicizing never reached an absolute zero. Rather, it was greatly reduced, measuring relatively. Thus on 23 September Peking would comment that the "Soviet Revisionist Theory of 'International Worker-Peasant Alliance' Is Out and Out Gangster Logic," and a figleaf for a counterrevolutionary "Holy Alliance" of imperialism, revisionism, and reaction.⁶¹ Several days later Mao posthumously honored 10 soldiers of the People's Liberation Army who died battling Soviet "armed revisionism" during "frenzied enemy attacks" at Chenpao Island in March.⁶² Mao reviewed a 400,000 man parade in Peking on 1 October, celebrating the 20th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China, and the Chinese proudly announced the "vigorous" conduct of a new H-bomb explosion and their first underground nuclear test.⁶³ Periodically Chinese leaders would make cracks at the "new tsars," mention the "ring of encirclement," and, more often, refer to "social-imperialism," their now popular phrase for Soviet posture. In mid-October, just a few days prior to the commencement of talks, Peking would allow the militant New Zealand Communist leader, V.G. Wilcox, to condemn Soviet aggressive acts on the border from the rostrum at ceremonies for National Day (11 October).⁶⁴

For its part, Moscow was willing to honor the 40th anniversary of the death of early Chinese Communist Peng Pai "at the hands of Kuomintang executioners on September 23rd,"⁶⁵ and to send congratulations to the Chinese people on the 20th anniversary of the

founding of the Chinese People's Republic.⁶⁶ But, concurrently, Moscow Radio was advising its African listeners that:

There is good reason to believe that if the Peking leaders had not sidetracked the country from the socialist road, the present international situation would have been different than what is witnessed today. . . . certainly American imperialism and its satellites would never have dared unleash the aggressive war in Viet Nam (nor could it interfere) in the internal affairs of Laos and other Asian countries; the tragedy in Indonesia would never have taken place. . . .⁶⁷

Perhaps in rebuttal to Wilcox's 11 October remarks, Moscow reminded Peking of its great military strength on 12 October 1969.⁶⁸ And 2 days before the border talks commenced, the Kremlin's principal theoretician, Suslov, denounced Peking's splitism:

The tasks of strengthening the unity of the communist movement . . . demand an intensified struggle against those who are trying to split the ranks of the international revolutionary movement.

In this connection, communists throughout the world view with indignation . . . the adventurist and chauvinistic policy of the present CCP leaders, who have broken with Marxism-Leninism. . . . Such a policy cannot be successful. . . . The idea of scientific socialism will inevitably triumph in China . . .⁶⁹

Once the talks were underway, however, Moscow halted its criticism of Peking in favor of a line emphasizing Soviet reasonableness. The line was

initiated by General Secretary Brezhnev in a major speech given at a meeting with the Czech leadership in Moscow on 27 October. It was Moscow's policy to " . . . normalize relations with the People's Republic of China, to open the road to restoration of Soviet-Chinese friendship . . ." Moscow was " . . . consistently upholding the Marxist-Leninist line in questions of ideology, strategy, and tactics of the world communist movement and rallying for its cohesion, . . . always striving to settle differences and resume cooperation . . ." The Soviets " . . . would like to hope that the positive realistic approach will be reigning at the talks. We are for solving borderline and other questions between the USSR and the PRC on the first and just basis. . . . Solution will be possible if the Chinese side shows good will, too."⁷⁰ Brezhnev's pronouncement was broadcast to China the following day and to Rumania on 29 October. Albanians heard what he had said on 3 November. The line was repeated for widest consumption in President Podgorny's speech on the 52nd anniversary of the Russian Revolution.

SALT becomes a Reality. With the situation in the East diverted to the conference table, Moscow could devote more attention to its relations with the United States and the West. Negotiations commenced in Peking on 20 October, and Moscow remarked the next day that " . . . We are in favor of equal talks, of a serious approach . . . The door for such contacts remains open on the Soviet side . . . If there is anything preventing these contacts . . . it is only in Washington's evident reluctance to implement its preselection statements . . ."⁷¹ Of course, the United States had said the same thing 4 days earlier. Lt. Gen. John J. Davis, Assistant Director of the Weapons Evaluation and Control Bureau, Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, had stated at the Fourth International Arms Control

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Symposium in Philadelphia that the United States was ready, willing, and able to start the talks at any time and that they could lead to substantive agreements to limit or even reduce strategic weapons.⁷²

Thus on 25 October 1969, Moscow and Washington announced that specially designated representatives would meet on 17 November 1969, in Helsinki, Finland, for preliminary discussions of questions related to the limiting of the strategic arms race.⁷³ Moscow appeared to be more optimistic over chances for the talks than did Washington. Perhaps it was buoyed up by talk in the United States about a halt in MIRV testing or by the progress on prohibiting the emplacement of nuclear weapons on the seabed as shown at the 7 October meeting of the Twenty-five Nation Disarmament Conference in Geneva. In any case, the Russians reported widespread approval of the SALT talks in Europe, congratulated the Finns on the selection of Helsinki as the site for the talks and hoped that the talks would become a further step toward general and complete disarmament.⁷⁴ Moscow further reported cautious optimism in much of the American press but noted that the military-industrial complex might be spreading "organized misinformation" about SALT because it "distrusted the consistently peaceful policy of the U.S.S.R."⁷⁵ It is probable, however, that Moscow was more concerned about the Chinese attitude toward her decision to proceed with the talks. Although in direct contact with the Chinese at Peking at the time, Moscow specifically advised Bucharest, possibly in an effort to arrange a Rumanian assist, that

... There are no foundations for the slanderous insinuations of *certain politicians* concerning a so-called deal between the USSR and the West, concerning an understanding between them to the detriment of the interests of other

countries. Such understandings and deals do not exist and cannot exist. On the contrary, the positive and concrete results of the USSR's struggle for peace and disarmament are obvious.⁷⁶

There are indications that Peking had become disturbed over events following commencement of the border talks on 20 October. Peking may have wondered why Moscow had waited until China was attached to the negotiating table to announce the Helsinki talks and to agree on the seabed proposal. Had Moscow used the border talks as a deceptive or divertive tactic? Or perhaps the initial discussions at the border talks had not proven satisfactory. In this case, Peking might have wanted to show displeasure by commenting adversely on other subjects. On 31 October 1969, Peking commented derisively on the Sea Bed Treaty: It was

... a new swindle to legalize... intensified efforts in carrying out the nuclear arms race on the seabed.

This treaty is an out-and-out fraud... a legal cover for the activities of the U.S. and the Soviet Union in sending their nuclear-armed submarines and fleets to act the tyrant everywhere... a move designed to further realize their scheme of maintaining nuclear monopoly and deceive and benumb the world.⁷⁷

By mid-November, shortly before the preliminary SALT talks were to begin, either Peking had become more and more displeased over SALT or very, very unhappy over the state of the border talks. Moscow had named its six-man delegation to the Helsinki discussions on 11 November. Concurrently, Peking was readying a specific barrage against SALT:

... This is a big plot. It shows that the U.S. and the Soviet Union are contending with each other, each seeking to maintain its own nuclear superiority by restricting the other, while at the same time both are colluding with each other in a futile effort to further develop their nuclear military alliance so as to maintain their nuclear monopoly, which has gone bankrupt, and continue to carry out their nuclear threat against the people of the world. It is also a new move . . . to step up their joint opposition to China.

... Nuclear weapon tests, manufacturing of MIRVs and ABMs shows that their so-called partial nuclear test ban, nuclear non-proliferation, and strategic arms limitation, etc., though different in phraseology, are all aimed at hoodwinking the world's people and covering up the intensified nuclear arms expansion and war preparations of U.S. imperialism and social-imperialism . . .⁷⁸

Thus, on the eve of the SALT preliminary discussions in Helsinki, an intriguing question would have been "What effect would commencement of the Helsinki discussions have on the Peking border talks?" The world would not have long to wait to find out.

Friction in the East; Cautious Optimism in the West. The preliminary discussions on SALT began on schedule in Helsinki on 17 November 1969 with both parties pledging good intentions and the U.S. chief negotiator hoping for "rapid progress." The United States evidently wanted to prove its *bona fides* early in the talks in an unexpected announcement on 20 November, U.S. spokesmen in Helsinki said that Washington was considering the possibility of a moratorium on testing MIRV's. Since it had been agreed in advance that

neither side would make public any details concerning the talks themselves, it is not known whether the U.S. delegation did formally propose a mutual moratorium on MIRV testing. But on 24 November Soviet press reaction to the talks was favorable.

Moscow had several reasons for being pleased on 24 November. In addition to satisfaction with the Helsinki beginning, it had arranged to ratify the Nonproliferation Treaty simultaneously with U.S. ratification. The United States and the U.S.S.R. signed the documents within a few hours of each other on the 24th.

All this was too much for Peking. It is probable that the border talks were not going well, and when this circumstance was added to the evidence of increasing United States-Soviet togetherness at Helsinki, Peking decided that it was time to renege somewhat on the agreement to halt polemics. Not wishing as yet to get into a direct name-calling contest, Peking resorted to the name calling by proxy, or surrogate, procedure used prior to 1963. As before, Albania was called on to do the honors. Remembering its H-bomb test and first underground nuclear test of 23 September, Peking decided the time had come to publish the congratulations it had received. Tirana's congratulatory message declared that the evidence of Peking's nuclear prowess was "... another crushing blow to the nuclear blackmail and monopoly of the U.S. imperialists and the Soviet revisionist renegade clique . . ."⁷⁹ This was the first time since the Peking Airport meeting on 11 September that the Chinese had permitted the Soviet leadership to be called a "revisionist renegade clique." Although Peking was quoting Tirana, Moscow undoubtedly understood.

In response, Moscow also began to up the polemical ante. It began to talk of "some people," "this kind of politician," "certain foreign propaganda organs," "foreign anti-Soviet elements,"

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and "certain foreign circles." For example,

... some are obsessed by their own ideas on the question of war and peace and are drawing the most absurd and irresponsible conclusions on the nature of the means of modern warfare. They childishly compare nuclear weapons to a paper tiger . . .

To this kind of politician, the outbreak of thermonuclear war in our epoch is not the greatest calamity for mankind, but rather a small squabble with imperialism . . .

The governments of the Soviet Union and other socialist countries, with their constructive proposals and measures to ease international tension and prevent a new global war, have incurred the wrath of the *adventurist elements of all shades* . . .⁸⁰

It is notable that the Soviet polemics at this stage remained confined to broadcasting. But this limitation was not to be of long duration. The atmosphere surrounding the border talks hardly could improve once polemics, however disguised or limited, had resumed. In fact, it seems probable that the Russian and Chinese negotiating teams had become nearly stalemated. By 12 December *Noveye Vremya* (New Times) was condemning the Chinese leadership by name as subjectivistic and adventuristic,⁸¹ and Moscow Radio was telling its Chinese listeners of the errors and faults of leftist opportunism.⁸² The very low ceiling which Kosygin and Chou En-lai had set for permissible polemicizing probably had been violated. If the agreement regarding polemics were once violated, what would happen to troop dispositions, to the agreed "no-firing" order, to the reconsideration of trade and economic ties, and to the border talks themselves? The

future for Sino-Soviet relations again had turned downward.

Stalemate in the East; Preliminary Success in the West. On 13 December it was reported in Moscow that Soviet negotiators in Peking were on their way home for consultation. Their return was linked to the session of the Supreme Soviet which was about to begin. But the impression was given that this linkage had been made solely to limit speculation that the talks were stalemated. As a normal practice Moscow rarely discloses when a diplomat has been called back for consultations.⁸³ There were many shrugged shoulders in diplomatic circles around the world as analysts puzzled over whether or not the talks would be resumed.

Counterbalancing this rather somber turn of events, Washington and Moscow announced on 22 December that their preliminary exchanges on strategic arms limitation in Helsinki had been useful and that they had agreed to open formal negotiations on the subject in Vienna on 16 April 1970. The tone of the communique was one of hope. It was authoritatively reported that the superpowers had agreed that each accepted the idea of mutual deterrence, that their joint problem was how to maintain the present balance of power between them, on which nuclear peace depends, and that any agreement to curb or limit weapons systems must be satisfactorily verified. The means of verification remained for future consideration.⁸⁴

Khrushchev had once said that it was easier to talk to Harold Macmillan of Britain than to Enver Hoxha of Albania. Now it seemed that Kosygin and Brezhnev had found it easier to talk with Washington than with Peking. The twists and turns of history often are difficult to understand, but any series of events that has erstwhile friends acting as enemies and erstwhile enemies acting as friends somehow seems to make an effort to understand what happened

highly necessary. The Sino-Soviet situation is much too dynamic, and it is much too early, as yet, to try to arrive at any definitive conclusions. Still, it is possible to ask meaningful questions and to draw a tentative assessment of the events of 1969.

Questions for Analysis. Perhaps the most interesting feature of the interaction between Peking and Moscow was that, having stopped polemics, both were willing to resume them, violating their agreement, even while they were negotiating the border issue. Thus the primary question "Why did this happen?" Was it because Peking really was concerned about the substantive strategic problems for China that might ensue if Moscow and Washington ultimately did agree to limit their strategic forces? Or was it because the border talks were going badly, and the Chinese had somehow to show their displeasure?

An affirmative answer to the first question is not convincing, at least during the time frame of the next 10 to 15 years. For China is as yet far behind both the United States and the U.S.S.R. in strategic capabilities. As a matter of fact, SALT could mean that Peking had less distance to make up in armament if both Moscow and Washington put a numerical ceiling on their strategic delivery vehicles. No, China was not concerned about the SALT talks, per se, but about the fact that they might bring Moscow and Washington closer together politically, to China's detriment. Peking seems to be most concerned about political-military isolation and encirclement imposed jointly by Moscow and Washington. Peking is anxious to emerge as a true major power and not remain a *potential* major power at the mercy of others, be they capitalist, Communist, or both. Thus the major Chinese concern in 1969 was not strategic arms talks from which her representatives were excluded, but the possibility that Moscow, the nearest and possibly the

most threatening power, might act to strip China of borderlands or to emasculate her growing atomic capability. To Peking the border talks were of substantially greater importance than the SALT talks. If the border talks were going badly, Peking could afford to use the SALT talks as a convenient focus for polemical displeasure.

If this is true of Peking, is it also true for Moscow? The evidence seems to indicate that Moscow is much more concerned with the Chinese situation than with strategic arms limitation. Perhaps the Russians feel that the United States will not make sudden rash moves while the Chinese, although *acting* very conservatively to date, might quickly decide to match actions to their very provocative verbiage. At the October Pugwash Conference in Sochi on the Black Sea, the Soviet delegation indicated that Moscow might be willing to discuss limitation on numbers of ABM's despite the Chinese situation, for the Soviets were not disturbed about Chinese missile capabilities. However, the delegation was very disturbed over the "Chinese problem" generally, and saw little hope for reconciliation.⁸⁵ This seems to be proven by Soviet actions: after the March border clashes Moscow tried to bring Peking to the conference table, to no avail. Thus Moscow may well have decided that a show of force, militarily and diplomatically, was required to bring the Chinese to their senses and to a conference. The eastern military buildup followed. When forces were ready, Moscow apparently orchestrated a rather heavyhanded punitive strike on the border (the August incident) with a diplomatic offensive incorporating talk of a Southeast Asian Collective Security System and extension of the Brezhnev Doctrine to China. Rumors of a preemptive strike on China's atomic installations were floated rather obviously. By the time Kosygin had landed at Peking on 11 September, the Chinese were ready to talk. It was

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not until the Soviet delegation had its feet under the negotiating table in Peking in October that Moscow would allow itself to undertake another set of discussions.

However, unlike Peking, Moscow must consider SALT of great current and prospective importance. Although SALT is not as pressing a matter of diplomacy as the ragged Chinese border situation for Moscow, its ultimate great or greater importance seems to be accepted by the Soviet leadership. Success at the SALT talks would permit Moscow to point with pride to a defusing of the arms race, to redistribute resources to the Soviet consumer sector, and to increase its aid and influence in the third world. The cost-benefit ratio of SALT is favorable indeed for Moscow.

As the two major capitals of polycentric world communism enter the new decade, Moscow wants to bring Peking back under some semblance of control and to solidify the world Communist movement once again, if possible. Thus we can anticipate that the Soviets will try to keep the Chinese talking as long as possible. Moscow knows that Mao Tse-tung will not live forever—perhaps his successors will be more willing to cooperate with Moscow as Marshal P'eng Teh-huai once had been willing to side with Khrushchev. In the meantime Moscow will try to continue the SALT talks even at the expense of vocal Chinese resentment.

For its part, Peking may or may not decide that border talks are worth the effort. The Chinese may come to believe that Moscow is "stringing them along" and decide to discontinue. They may

see little hope for changes in the Muscovite leadership. Thus, firm in their isolation and continuing laboriously their "bootstrap" operation of economic growth, they may tacitly agree to keep the border quiet until new changes in their relative strength vis-a-vis the Soviet Union permit further moves. It will be fascinating to observe Peking's actions in the future. Will the Chinese choose to worry the Soviets by moving closer to Washington? Or will the self-imposed ideological blinders worn by the Chinese leadership thus far preclude their attempting to move in what might be a new dynamic balance of power situation in the world?

BIOGRAPHIC SUMMARY



Designated as a naval aviator in October 1949 and later commissioned in June of 1950, Comdr. William A. Platte, U.S. Navy, has served in patrol, transport, and training squadrons.

His assignments include duty with Fleet Air Wing 10, during which time that unit established the Market Time air patrols in Vietnam, and a tour as Commanding Officer of Training Squadron 29. Commander Platte completed his undergraduate work at Stanford in 1956 and was awarded a master's degree in international relations in 1958. He was selected for the Navy Doctoral Studies Program in 1968 and was accepted by the Political Science Department of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology for doctoral study. He is the author of several articles published in the *Naval Institute Proceedings*.

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4. This summary account does not do justice to the rich and detailed works of Zagoria, *op. cit.*; Zbigniew K. Brzezinski, *The Soviet Bloc* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967); and William E. Griffith's three volumes, *Albania and the Sino-Soviet Rift* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1963), *The Sino-Soviet Rift* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1964), and *Sino-Soviet Relations, 1964-1965* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1967), from which it was abridged.

5. Clemens, p. 57.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 225-230.

7. Summary taken from Clemens, p. 71-73.

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10. *Peking 6 June Note*.

11. Yevgeny Yevtushenko, "On the Red Ussuri Snow," *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, 19 March 1969, *The Current Digest of the Soviet Press*, 30 April 1969, p. 12-13. The poem blasts the Chinese leadership.

... O, if Marx could see
 how pitifully, vilely they play
 The tragic farce
 of the brazen-faced pseudo-Communist . . .

and says the Russians may have to act

... Not just for Rus and for faith
 for our fifteen republics,
 For any little village or town
 and for Chinese babies yet uncomprehending,
 Tied on their peasant mothers' backs
 you and I will don our helmets. . . .

... Vladimir and Kiev,
 you see in the smoking twilight
 The new Batu Khans,
 bombs rattling in their quivers.
 But if they fire,
 the warning bells will sound
 And there'll be heroic warriors aplenty
 for new battlefields of Kulikovo!

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