

~~Secret~~  
Controlled Dissem

# NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE ESTIMATE

CIA HISTORICAL REVIEW PROGRAM  
RELEASE IN FULL

Possible Changes in the Sino-Soviet Relationship

~~Secret~~  
NIE 11/13/6-73  
25 October 1973

Nº 299

~~SECRET~~

THIS ESTIMATE IS SUBMITTED BY THE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AND CONCURRED IN BY THE UNITED STATES INTELLIGENCE BOARD.

*The following intelligence organizations participated in the preparation of the estimate:*

The Central Intelligence Agency and the intelligence organizations of the Departments of State and Defense, the NSA, the AEC, and the Treasury.

**Concurring:**

The Deputy Director of Central Intelligence  
The Director of Intelligence and Research, Department of State  
The Director, Defense Intelligence Agency  
The Director, National Security Agency  
The Assistant General Manager for National Security, Atomic Energy Commission  
The Special Assistant to the Secretary of the Treasury

**Abstaining:**

The Assistant Director, Federal Bureau of Investigation, the subject being outside of his jurisdiction.

~~WARNING~~

This material contains information affecting the National Defense of the United States within the meaning of the espionage laws, Title 18, USC, Secs. 793 and 794, the transmission or revelation of which in any manner to an unauthorized person is prohibited.

Classified by 438  
Exempt from automatic  
declassification under E.O. 11652  
exemption category 58(1),(2),(3)  
Automatically declassified on  
Date impossible to Determine

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

This report has been  
approved for release through  
the COMINT REVIEW PROGRAM of  
the Central Intelligence Agency.

Date 1/31/94

HRP

94-3

NIE 11/13/6-73

POSSIBLE CHANGES IN THE  
SINO-SOVIET RELATIONSHIP

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

## CONTENTS

	Page
PRÉCIS .....	1
THE ESTIMATE .....	3
I. THE ROOTS OF CONFLICT .....	3
II. THE CONFLICT AS AN ELEMENT IN INTERNATIONAL POLITICS .....	5
III. THE FUTURE OF SINO-SOVIET RELATIONS .....	8
IV. WORLD IMPLICATIONS OF POSSIBLE CHANGES IN SINO-SOVIET RELATIONSHIP .....	13
War .....	13
Rapprochement .....	14
Limited Improvement in Relations .....	15

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

## POSSIBLE CHANGES IN THE SINO-SOVIET RELATIONSHIP

### PRÉCIS

*Significant improvement in Sino-Soviet relations is unlikely in the next year or two—particularly if Mao survives.* A central element of the impasse at this stage is the absence of any visible inclination in Moscow to reduce its military forces along the Chinese border.

*War between Moscow and Peking is a possibility, but we rate the odds as low—no higher than 1 in 10.* China, clearly the weaker party, would not attack. The USSR would mainly be deterred by: China's strategic missile capability, however modest; the chance of becoming bogged down in a protracted ground war; concern over the potential impact on its economic relations with the West; and, uncertainty as to the nature and scope of US reactions.

Military action against China—particularly a disarming nuclear strike—may continue to have a certain appeal to some Soviet leaders, and arguments for a disarming strike would probably gain strength if the US appeared to move toward an anti-Soviet alliance with the Chinese. Even in this contingency, however, the counter-arguments would seem far more compelling. Thus, it is likely that Moscow will hold to a more measured course, one which does not foreclose the possibility of some accommodation over the longer term.

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

[DIA and Air Force would differentiate between a large-scale invasion and a disarming strike, rating the likelihood of a disarming strike as markedly greater than that of an invasion.]

*Indeed, the longer the Sino-Soviet peace is maintained, the better the chances for a reduction of tension in the relationship.* Mao's death, for one thing, should ease the way toward accommodation for both sides. Soviet or Chinese disappointments in dealing with the US might provide other incentives to bury the hatchet. So would the growth of Chinese nuclear strength and overall self-confidence in dealing with both superpowers. There are also the cumulative costs of years of tension and military preparedness, which may dispose both sides toward less risky, more controlled forms of competition—a new relationship in which differences are muted and third parties prevented from exploiting Sino-Soviet cleavages.

*But movement beyond limited accommodations toward a genuine and durable rapprochement—broad collaboration and perhaps a new alliance—seems highly unlikely, even through 1980.* National antagonism and basic clashes of interest run too deep.

\* \* \* \*

A long-term improvement in the tone of Sino-Soviet relations would not necessarily mean communist unwillingness to do business with the West. There would still be strong interest in a continuing interchange of trade and technology. But there would be adverse effects. The Chinese would be less interested in improving relations with the US and less tolerant of the US military presence in the Far East. The Soviets would be less concerned with détente in Europe and more willing to compete with the US globally. Japan would have less room for maneuver between Moscow and Peking, both of which would oppose the growth of Japanese influence abroad.

The most significant result of any major reduction in Sino-Soviet strains might well be a general fear in the West and in the Third World that something like full-scale rapprochement was in the wind. This would stimulate interest in regenerating alliances with the US and could, in certain circumstances, increase resistance to further détente efforts among Western leaders.

~~SECRET~~

## THE ESTIMATE

### I. THE ROOTS OF CONFLICT

1. *Background.* The Sino-Soviet dispute owes as much to old national rivalries as to the ideological battles of the last decade or so. Before Mao won control of the Party in the mid-1930s, however, the relationship of the Chinese communists with the Soviets resembled that of pupil and teacher. But even then, the Chinese found Soviet advice inappropriate and often hazardous, and the efforts of Moscow to control the Chinese Communist Party created a lasting mistrust and resentment. After the Chinese communists won their civil war, Mao's 1949 pilgrimage to Moscow was marked by lengthy and tough negotiations over the Sino-Soviet Treaty of Friendship, Alliance, and Mutual Assistance. Stalin was concerned that Mao might become a new Tito, and was quick to take exception to Chinese claims for Mao's doctrinal originality.

2. With this inauspicious beginning, it is surprising that the Sino-Soviet honeymoon lasted as long as it did. During the 1950s, the Korean War and its lingering effects on attitudes in Peking and Washington, and China's urgent need to develop and modernize its economy, tied Peking to Moscow. All the

while, of course, Peking hoped to become self-reliant and feared that Soviet aid might freeze China in a permanent state of dependence and inferiority. In a poorly executed attempt to achieve an economic breakthrough, Peking launched its Great Leap Forward and commune system in 1958; the Soviets saw it as an ideological challenge as well as a misuse of their technical aid.

3. On yet another track, the death of Stalin in 1953 encouraged Peking to promote Mao as the top ideologue and senior leader of the communist world. The Soviets made little effort to conceal their contempt for this challenge, though it was after Khrushchev's de-Stalinization speech—at the 20th Congress of the CPSU in 1956—that this facet of the dispute began to intensify. China's interventions in the Polish and Hungarian crises of that year confirmed Peking's new assertiveness in competing with Moscow on matters concerning international communism.

4. Moscow's refusal to provide the kind of nuclear aid demanded by China, coupled with Soviet reluctance to join China in confronting the US in the 1958 Taiwan Strait crisis, further aggravated the deteriorating

relationship. The Soviet withdrawal of technicians from China in 1960 brought the conflict into the open and marked the end of attempts to develop cooperation in economic and technical fields. As the dispute worsened through the polemical exchanges of 1963-1964—and as the Chinese subsequently concluded that the fall of Khrushchev meant no softening of Soviet policy toward Peking—the stage was set for an escalation into military competition. Indeed, the Peking meeting between Mao and Kosygin in February 1965 left neither side in doubt about the depth and enduring nature of their conflict. It probably also served to give final impetus to a Soviet decision to strengthen their military forces along the Chinese border.

5. *Military Aspects.*<sup>1</sup> The military buildup along the Sino-Soviet border since 1965, particularly on the Soviet side, remains the most dramatic and convincing evidence of the deep hostility between the two powers. Soviet divisions near the border in 1965 numbered 13 or 14. Now there are 43 combat divisions which could be used in the early stages of a major conflict with China. In the same period, Soviet tactical air strength near the border has grown from less than 200 aircraft to some 1,150. The buildup has been relatively fast though it appears to reflect a long-range plan for methodical growth. While some experienced Soviet military personnel and some air units have been drawn from the western USSR, no ground units opposite the NATO central region have been used in the buildup. Soviet deployment of new forces to the Sino-Soviet border area appears to have tapered off.

6. For their part, the Chinese made no effort to concentrate additional troops close to the border, though aware of the Soviet

buildup shortly after it began. In the period 1965-1968, China was deeply enmeshed in the Cultural Revolution, which involved the intensive participation of the People's Liberation Army. Peking was also sensitive to the threat posed by US forces in Indochina. China's relative military weakness required that it offer no serious provocation to either the USSR or the US. The chosen strategy was to hold Chinese forces well back from the frontiers—where they might easily be cut off by the superior mobility and firepower of enemy forces—in order to maintain balanced protection of vital centers against all potential threats.

7. Chinese fear of Soviet attack reached its peak in 1969-1970, following the Soviet show of force in response to Chinese-incited border incidents along the Ussuri River. Peking's immediate counter was to impose greater restraint over its frontier units, to agree to border talks with Moscow, to shift some army units northward (though still far back from the border), and to intensify the construction of underground shelters and facilities. Chinese concern over Soviet military intentions was also used at this time to justify phasing out those aspects of the Cultural Revolution that had become increasingly anarchic and troublesome. "Red Guard Diplomacy" was replaced with a new image of respectability and responsibility in the West. Peking's confidence vis-à-vis the Soviets rose dramatically in 1971 with its entry into the UN and the improvement of its relations with the US. While Chinese fears of Soviet attack are real and ever-present, these diplomatic successes—together with China's progress in the deployment of strategic weapons—have reduced their intensity relative to the peaks of 1969-1970.

8. *Current Levels of Contact.* Apparently as the result of a deliberate Soviet decision to intensify the propaganda battle, exchanges

<sup>1</sup> See NIE 11-13-73, "The Sino-Soviet Relationship: The Military Aspects," dated 20 September 1973, TOP SECRET ALL SOURCE, for a detailed analysis of the subject.



between Moscow and Peking have recently reached the highest level of acrimony since 1969. Soviet moves in this latest series of political exchanges have included another offer of a non-aggression treaty to Peking in June (which according to Brezhnev, "China did not even deign to answer"), and an initiative at the Crimean Conference of the Warsaw Pact party leaders in July to provoke discussion of the "China problem." These actions were followed in August by two authoritative Pravda articles which seemed to argue that China had by its own actions and policies removed itself from the socialist community. The Soviets have been moved in all this by their concern over Chinese meddling in both East and West Europe in the midst of MBFR and CSCE negotiations, by their hope to influence intra-Party debate in China, and by their desire to limit China's appeal to the non-aligned states (especially during the non-aligned conference in Algiers in August). The Soviet campaign may also reflect some maneuvering by Moscow vis-à-vis the Sinophilic Romanians and perhaps some preliminary efforts to set the stage for an international communist conference which would denounce the Chinese.

9. The Chinese, reacting to these Soviet efforts to condemn them in the eyes of Eastern Europe, to isolate them politically from the socialist world, and possibly to meddle in Chinese internal affairs, responded with predictable vehemence. In his definitive statement at the Party Congress in August, Chou En-lai left no doubt that Peking considers the Soviets as its number-one enemy. He charged that the "new czars" have restored capitalism, imposed a "fascist dictatorship," and used military force to back their foreign policies; he stated that China should remain on guard against a "surprise attack" by the Soviets. For all his bill of particulars against the Soviet leadership, Chou was careful not

to rule out improved relations—or at least not to leave China vulnerable to a charge of rejecting compromise. As Chou put it, "The Sino-Soviet controversy on matters of principle should not hinder the normalization of relations between the two states on the basis of the five principles of peaceful coexistence." Despite this gesture on Chou's part, the net effect of these exchanges has been to further poison the atmosphere in the bilateral relationship.

10. Apart from these well-known polemics, there is little evidence on the structure and functioning of the current Sino-Soviet relationship. On the governmental level, trade and diplomatic matters (including border talks at the vice-ministerial level) are conducted correctly though coldly. And these governmental channels appear to be the main—if not the only—direct lines of contact between the two countries. There is no indication of any regular liaison between the two communist parties; indeed, it would be remarkable if any direct party link had survived the years of acrimony. However, the diplomatic mechanism is always available for quick and secure contacts. And if the situation should warrant, new channels could be hastily staffed for closer liaison. So long as fundamental disagreement persists, however, both sides are likely to continue to air their differences in public as well as in their private exchanges.

## II. THE CONFLICT AS AN ELEMENT IN INTERNATIONAL POLITICS

11. The rupture of the Sino-Soviet relationship has helped establish the preconditions for new patterns of relations among the powers. The rivalry between Moscow and Peking now affects virtually every aspect of their foreign policies and, on balance, has exacted a heavy price from each of them in their dealings with other nations. Their attention and resources have been diverted from

other problems to deal with what has become a high priority for each—containing the influence of the other. The Soviets fear the considerable boost in economic and military strength which China could achieve over time from the unrestricted import of US and other Western technology. The Chinese fear the isolation and vulnerability that would result from US-Soviet "collusion to achieve world hegemony." Peking and Moscow are sensitive, of course, to the efforts of other powers, particularly the US, to exploit their rivalry; and this makes calculations of balance and advantage among the major powers—including Japan and Western Europe—exceedingly complex. All Chinese and Russian policy decisions must now be weighed in the light of how they might affect the balance of their rivalry.

12. For a few third parties, the Sino-Soviet competition has brought undesired complexities and disadvantages. North Vietnam was able, during the crucial years 1965-1970, to play Peking and Moscow to its own advantage. Hanoi, however, would have preferred the resolute backing of a united communist bloc during this period. And now, Hanoi finds the separate and competing approaches of the Soviets and Chinese to Washington distinctly harmful to its more parochial interests in South Vietnam. For North Korea, a degree of division between Moscow and Peking was for many years welcome; it provided Kim Il-song the opportunity to assert his independence of both these powerful allies. But the intensity of the Sino-Soviet dispute and its profound effect on Soviet and Chinese relations with the US have served to foreclose external support for any North Korean military approach to the unification issue.

13. For most of the world, the present status of the Sino-Soviet relationship brings a greater sense of opportunity and security. Japan now

finds the two communist powers far less hostile as they compete, to a degree, for its favor. Peking is even prepared to accept, at least at this point, a continuing US military presence in Japan. Chinese fears of the USSR are also a major factor in Peking's more moderate posture toward local governments in Southeast Asia and in its current willingness to countenance a continued US presence in that region. These changes in Peking's posture have by no means meant assurance of Chinese restraints on North Vietnam, or Chinese collaboration with the US to achieve a negotiated settlement in Cambodia, or Chinese disengagement from the active communist insurgencies in Thailand and Burma. But the shift has opened the possibility of a less disruptive Chinese role in the area in the future, and even of some collaborative efforts with the US and the local anticommunist states, all designed to serve China's broader strategy vis-à-vis the USSR.

14. Moscow's push for détente in Europe is in part motivated by a desire to improve its ability to deal with the problem of China. Recognizing this, Peking has actively encouraged the nations of Western Europe to ignore Soviet blandishments and to strengthen their ties with Washington. Peking's encouragement of a stronger NATO as a shield against Soviet pressures is helpful to US policy. The Chinese position on MBFR, however, is opposed to that of the US; and Chinese arguments about US-Soviet "collusion" tend to reinforce suspicions of the same in places like Paris. China's relative lack of influence in Europe, though, limits the impact of its views on ongoing substantive negotiations concerning that area.

15. China's effort to shake Moscow's control over the communist parties and the states of Eastern Europe probably represents more of an irritant than a threat to the Soviet posi-

tion there. But the Sino-Soviet conflict has complicated Moscow's dealings with its Warsaw Pact allies, introducing another contentious issue and giving some of them a degree of leverage against the USSR. It has also encouraged a natural tendency among some East European states to seek as independent a foreign policy as possible without inciting Moscow's ire. Romania's ostentatious friendship with Peking and refusal to cooperate in Soviet propaganda against Peking is particularly frustrating to Moscow.

16. China's admission to the UN brought the Sino-Soviet conflict directly into that body, further complicating international efforts to achieve consensus on major issues—e.g., arms control and the Law of the Sea. While Peking continues to oppose US positions in the UN, its most biting attacks there have been directed at the Soviet Union and the "social-imperialist" threat. The US has not been able to take direct advantage of the Sino-Soviet dispute in the UN to secure favorable votes, but Peking's attacks on the Soviets have taken some of the international heat off Washington, long the favorite target for Third World rhetoric. Moreover, with the Soviets and Chinese frequently pulling their clients in different directions, anti-US forces at the UN have had more tactical difficulty mustering support for their positions.

17. Peking has regularly tried to rally Third World countries against the US as well as the USSR, however, and has attempted to warn newly independent nations of the "threat" which close relations with either power represents. Currently, for example, Peking is busily denouncing the US and the USSR for perpetuating tensions in the Middle East at the expense of the Arab cause.

18. The Sino-Soviet rivalry has also caused Peking to greatly reduce its involvements in most revolutionary and guerrilla movements in

recent years, and to devote attention to cementing ties with existing power structures almost everywhere in the Third World. This has contributed to a lowering of tension in various troublespots and to better relations between Peking and many non-communist states important to Washington. China has dramatically improved relations with Iran, for example, hoping to help block the further development of Soviet influence in the Persian Gulf region. In Africa, the Chinese have been aggressively expanding state-to-state relations, in a few cases (e.g., Somalia) in direct competition with the Soviets and virtually everywhere with an eye toward weakening the influence of the superpowers. In Latin America, where Chinese interests are still limited, there has been far less maneuvering between the two communist powers for influence.

19. Peking and Moscow have backed up their competition for influence in the Third World with trade and aid. The USSR provides by far the greater amount and is engaged in a broad-based contest for influence throughout the Third World, against the US as well as China. Peking has perforce been more selective with its aid; and its substantially expanded aid programs appear designed for the most part to counter the Soviets. China has moved aggressively to edge out the Soviets when targets of opportunity arose—e.g., by offering substantial aid to Sudan after its serious rift with Moscow. Peking has also extended generous aid offers to states with which it had little previous contact, as in Zaire, despite the displeasure such initiatives raised in other, less liberally treated, client states like Congo Brazzaville. The Chinese have not abandoned their established allies, of course, and continue—by virtue of their large aid programs—to enjoy far greater influence than the Soviets in states like Pakistan and Tanzania. In fact, in most cases one or the other of the communist powers is in a clearly more

influential position vis-à-vis the other, so that despite the world-wide Sino-Soviet competition, there has not been a wild bidding war between Moscow and Peking for economic influence in the Third World.

20. Peking and Moscow still compete for the favor of selected national liberation and subversive organizations world-wide, but the fervor of their competition has dimmed dramatically in recent years. The seriousness of the Sino-Soviet competition has focused Chinese and Soviet attention on more crucial areas (e.g., Europe and the US), as well as encouraging them to deal with existing governments. In only three areas is there still a significant competition for influence with national liberation groups. In Indochina, both Moscow and Peking, while paying proper deference to Hanoi's leading role, still compete for influence with the liberation forces in Laos and Cambodia. In the two other sectors—among the Arab fedayeen and the revolutionaries of southern Africa—the competition between the two has been low-keyed, with the Soviets generally holding the upper hand without serious challenge. Since the Chinese appear unwilling to commit the resources to oust the Soviets from their dominant position, and the Soviets equally unwilling to up the ante to make the liberation groups more serious threats, the contest for influence seems likely to stay within current parameters.

### III. THE FUTURE OF SINO-SOVIET RELATIONS

21. The fundamental issues and basic clashes of interest which separate the two powers appear so profound as to ensure *the prolongation of a competitive and adversary relationship*. Sino-Soviet antagonisms, rooted in history and cultural differences and nurtured on 15 years of insults, threats, and ideological disputes, have grown deep and strong. Shifts in both Soviet and Chinese

foreign policies in recent years have added new dimensions to their conflict. In particular, the efforts of each country to cultivate better relations with Washington have fed mutual distrust and helped fuel the rivalry. So have the efforts of each to expand economic ties with the West. And neither development seems to be a short-term proposition: the first reflects a belief in both Moscow and Peking that easing tensions with Washington serves their national interests and strengthens their international position, and the second is in both cases the result of basic and probably durable economic needs, especially for protein supplements and advanced technology. The current competition in contiguous areas has also heightened the level of distrust and contention. Chinese efforts to encourage East Europeans to loosen their ties with the USSR provoke Moscow's ire. Moscow's efforts to promote its Asian Collective Security concept have intensified the Chinese conviction that the USSR is determined to isolate China and check its influence throughout Asia.

22. In sum, the Sino-Soviet dispute has by now gained such momentum and has so involved the personal prestige of the leaderships, particularly on the Chinese side, that any significant amelioration seems unlikely in the near term. Thus, for the next year or two—and particularly if Mao survives—it seems most likely that the present level of tension will persist. This is not intended to imply that Sino-Soviet relations are fixed for the immediate future. The tone of the relationship will surely vary from time to time. Border frictions, domestic political needs, or unusual troop deployments could contribute at any time to eruptions in the relationship. The level of propaganda invective will vary in any case. The possibility of war, of course, will remain.

23. The Soviets have shown no inclination to respond to Chinese demands that they pull back their forces along the border. Moscow

clearly feels real concern about security in Soviet territory bordering China and has deployed what it probably considers the minimum force capable of handling any contingency on its frontiers. But the Chinese clearly see this as a disproportionate and unjustified display of strength, and are disinclined to make concessions under what they choose to interpret as a Soviet show of force. At this point, it is doubtful that either side would reduce military forces along the border for fear that this would signal irresolution or lack of staying power to the other side.

24. *Although we rate the odds of war as low, it is necessary to give serious attention to this possibility.* Because of Chinese awareness of Soviet military superiority, the chances are remote that Peking would deliberately take actions leading to war. But various motivations are conceivable for major Soviet military actions against China. In the improbable event that China engaged in persistent border harassments, the Soviets might move beyond local reprisals and cross the border in considerable strength in an effort to halt such provocations. Larger military operations, involving penetrations of several hundred miles into Manchuria and Sinkiang, might be undertaken to exert pressure on the Chinese leadership in some other context as well. Deeper penetrations, which would require more extensive mobilization of Soviet forces, would have the purpose of solving the more basic "China problem." An opportunity for such action might occur in the unlikely contingency of a China sharply divided by an internal struggle for power.<sup>2</sup> In this case, the Soviets

<sup>2</sup> The idea that China might suffer deep internal divisions and a severe weakening of central authority gained currency outside China during the Cultural Revolution. In retrospect, we can see that there were serious strains; but the more significant fact was the continuing responsiveness to central authority despite deep cleavages within the leadership at all levels.

might intervene with the aim of supporting or imposing a faction more favorably disposed toward cooperation with the USSR.

25. Whatever the circumstances of a Soviet move into China, Soviet leaders would almost certainly expect Chinese resistance to develop and to be stubborn. They would have no assurance that the war could be brought to an end on Moscow's terms nor that Soviet forces would not get bogged down in a protracted and costly struggle. Moscow might foresee being confronted eventually with a choice between withdrawal or the use of nuclear weapons in an effort to end the conflict. The use of nuclear weapons, even if successful, could have far-reaching adverse repercussions for the USSR's position in the world.<sup>3</sup> Moscow would fear that the US would turn hostile, move close to China, and attempt to rally world opinion in favor of a general policy of condemning and isolating the USSR. In any event, Moscow's general policy of détente with the West, particularly its effort to foster economic ties with the advanced Western countries, would be imperiled. Thus, a major ground attack on China, especially one involving nuclear weapons, would involve not only accepting serious new risks, but rejecting an established policy that has reduced conflict on the border with China and promised political and economic benefits elsewhere in the world.

26. While Soviet planners probably recoil at the thought of becoming bogged down in ground actions in China, there no doubt remains the temptation to deal with the more critical aspects of the Chinese threat before it is too late—i.e., to knock out China's still modest but growing strategic capability with

<sup>3</sup> The Assistant Chief of Staff, Intelligence, USAF, believes that the use of nuclear weapons against China might also be viewed by the Soviets as having desirable repercussions, either of a tactical or strategic/political nature.

a disarming nuclear strike. Arguments for this course as the only means of forestalling a basic and unfavorable shift in the world strategic balance would probably gain strength if, in Soviet eyes, the US appeared to move from an even-handed posture between Moscow and Peking toward an anti-Soviet alliance with the Chinese. In this event, it could be argued in Moscow that détente had failed and that a display of naked force which destroyed Chinese strategic capabilities and instilled an abiding fear among the peoples and governments of Asia, Europe, and the Middle East would bring gains that more than offset the damage to the Soviet image.

27. The counter-arguments seem far more compelling. The Soviets could not be certain that some Chinese missiles would not survive the blow or that the Chinese would refrain from launching them against Soviet cities. Nor could Moscow be certain that China would not attempt to engage Soviet general purpose forces in a protracted struggle. As in the case of a ground invasion, there would be much concern about hostile US reactions. As for discounting these reactions and shifting belligerently to a general posture designed to exploit fear of Soviet ruthlessness and power, most Soviet leaders would probably view this as bringing with it all the disabilities of the Stalin era.

28. Our judgment, based on weighing all these and other considerations, is that the chances of a premeditated large-scale Soviet attack on China—while certainly still such as to demand attention—are quite low, say on the order of 1 in 10. While Moscow is prepared to punish the Chinese at any point on the frontier where the Chinese might act forcibly to assert territorial claims, the main Soviet policy to counter China is centered on diplomatic efforts and on activities within the world communist movement. These efforts will not cause the USSR's "China problem"

to go away; and military action, particularly a disarming nuclear strike, may continue to have a certain appeal to some Soviet leaders. But when considered in light of the calculable and incalculable risks of military action, arguments for a more measured course which holds open the possibility of some accommodation and even reconciliation over the longer term are far more likely to prevail within the top Soviet leadership.

29. Most participants in this Estimate feel that the judgment above applies to both a large-scale Soviet invasion and a disarming nuclear strike. While the latter course probably rates more serious consideration by Soviet planners, the chances still seem low that such a course would actually be approved and implemented. DIA and Air Force, however, would differentiate between a large-scale invasion and a disarming strike, rating the likelihood of a disarming strike as markedly greater than that of an invasion.

30. If war does not intrude over the next few years, the odds on this contingency will decline as the Chinese deterrent grows. In the meantime, other factors may emerge to encourage a trend toward reduced levels of tension and a more controlled competition. An unpredictable yet potentially crucial factor affecting the future of Sino-Soviet relations is the post-Mao leadership situation in China. Given his personal involvement in the whole process of the deterioration of the Sino-Soviet relationship, Mao's passing will present an opportunity for both sides to reassess their postures.

31. It is doubtful that any single successor to Mao, even Chou, will be able to command the power and authority that Mao has wielded. A period of persistent pulling and hauling appears likely; there are bound to be disputes on matters of authority, style, pace, and priorities, and these disputes will leave casualties. Rivalries might become particularly intense

if Chou should predecease Mao. And if Mao and Chou were to leave the scene at about the same time, Chinese politics might become seriously unstable and Peking's international behavior—including the course of relations with the USSR—unpredictable.

32. Various possibilities could be imagined in the post-Mao environment. There could be a breakdown in central authority as contending factions in Peking formed alliances with regional leaders; in this event, China might cease to play an active international role until unity had been restored. A second possibility is the emergence in Peking of a faction which—with or without covert Soviet assistance—would move China back into close alliance with the USSR.

33. Extreme changes of this sort are unlikely in the light of present circumstances and the history of the Chinese Communist Party. There is a strong commitment to a unified China within the armed services and the Party, and it is likely that the appearance of a regionally based challenge to central authority would serve to unite other contending factions in defense of Peking's authority. As for a "pro-Soviet faction," there is no reliable evidence for the existence of any such group in the Chinese Communist Party since at least the early 1950s, much less information to indicate any significant Soviet capability to manipulate Chinese leaders.<sup>4</sup>

34. This brief discussion does not exhaust the alternatives. But the most likely composition of the leadership after Mao and Chou

<sup>4</sup> Despite allegations concerning Lin Piao and Peng Te-huai, their problems with Mao almost certainly arose from domestic policy and power issues. Foreign policy, including the proper balance of Chinese relations with the US and the USSR, may have become involved in later stages of both affairs; but even if this is the case, there is no evidence to suggest that either Lin or Peng were being manipulated by the USSR or were consciously seeking to advance Soviet interests.

will be some combination of the military leaders, party cadre, and experienced civilian bureaucrats now visible on the scene at national and regional levels. While these men reflect a range of views, the political balance appears somewhat to the right of the revolutionary activists who reached their high point during the Cultural Revolution. While these leaders would undoubtedly offer lip service to the revolutionary ideals of Mao, and almost certainly would persevere in seeking a socialist China, they would nevertheless tend to be more pragmatic than idealistic, more moderate than radical, and more concerned with China's material future than with the world's ideological struggles.

35. A leadership drawn from this group would probably retain an interest in productive relations with the US and the West. But it might also be disposed to place relations with the USSR on a more businesslike basis for a variety of strategic, political, and economic reasons.

36. On the Soviet side, leadership changes do not seem likely to result in major shifts in Soviet attitudes or policies toward Peking. While differences undoubtedly exist on how best to handle Moscow's China problem, it is not possible to discern precisely how these differences will affect decisions on the tone and pace of Moscow's approaches to China. What does seem clear is that the USSR would, at least over the longer term, welcome a less tense and more businesslike relationship with Peking.

37. Should Moscow sense that a leadership similarly disposed had emerged in Peking, it is possible—even likely—that it would take the initiative to explore the opportunities for a more relaxed relationship. The Russians might offer to make certain political gestures. They might suggest a visit to Peking by the USSR's current leader, or extend token concessions indicating respect for Chinese inde-

pendence and doctrinal originality. (There are precedents for both these actions in Soviet relations with Yugoslavia.) The Soviets might also offer to expand trade and to resume economic and, perhaps, military aid. They might even offer to reduce their competition with Peking for influence in Southeast Asia in exchange for similar Chinese restraint in Eastern Europe and the Middle East. Moscow would hope that Peking would reciprocate by suspending its anti-Soviet politicking at the UN and in diplomatic conversations with third nations, or at least quieting its anti-Soviet propaganda, restraining its missionary activities in the communist world, and tacitly accepting the status quo on the territorial issue.

38. Indeed, any genuine reduction of Sino-Soviet tension is difficult to foresee without some sort of concurrent move toward settlement of the longstanding border issue. The problem could be negotiated if China holds to its present position that the current border as defined in the "unequal treaties" of the czarist era is an acceptable basis for a settlement. In such case, the border problem is essentially one of agreement on certain territorial adjustments, in the Pamir region and, most importantly, along the riverine frontiers of Manchuria. It is just such disputed areas—e.g., the strategically important island opposite the Soviet military center of Khabarovsk—however, that Peking is prone to cite when it claims that the Soviets are occupying territory beyond that obtained under the "unequal treaties." Thus, the negotiation remains deadlocked, a casualty of the overall poor tenor of Sino-Soviet relations rather than a result of intrinsically irreconcilable territorial claims.

39. Another set of factors of possible long-range significance concerns Peking's perception of the Soviet threat. The view that the Soviet Union is the principal military threat underlies much of China's current foreign

policy. The Soviets are seen as being in an aggressive, expansionist phase while the US is described as being in a state of decline. As the development and deployment of China's strategic weapons progress, China's concern with the immediate military threat should decline. Further, the mere passage of time without an actual attack should of itself be reassuring to the Chinese. As such perceptions change, a somewhat less antagonistic relationship with the Soviets may appear better suited to China's interests in the eyes of its leaders.

40. Evolutionary trends in the complex Sino-Soviet-American political triangle may also contribute to the amelioration of the Sino-Soviet relationship. Indeed, both Moscow and Peking may one day conclude that the US has gained excessive advantage from communist intramural conflicts. Moreover, in the case of Moscow, a desire for better relations with China might be encouraged by serious setbacks in US-Soviet relations—such as might flow from difficulties in arms negotiations, trouble in trade relations, or problems growing out of third-party conflicts (e.g., in the Middle East). As for Peking, an inclination to move closer to the Soviets might be encouraged by, say, certain developments in US relations with Taiwan or Japan.

41. Less dramatically, China and the USSR might just conclude independently that, in any case, they had gotten all they could out of détente with the West, that there was not much more mileage to be gained by competing with one another for Washington's favors. A shift of this type in China's attitude would be a logical outgrowth of increasing Chinese nuclear strength; as the deterrent grew, Chinese self-confidence would increase, and concessions to US positions would appear less necessary.

42. The main theoretical line in China's current foreign policy—opposition to "super-



~~SECRET~~

power hegemonism"—reflects Peking's nationalist and ideological reservations about leaning to one side and its long-run intention to undercut both Soviet and US influence. At present China's preoccupation with the Soviet threat predominates and dictates the need to lean towards the US. However, as China grows in strength and confidence, Peking's leaders may find it possible, even desirable, to oppose US and Soviet influence internationally on a more equal basis, while not necessarily sacrificing other productive aspects of its relations with the US.

43. *In sum, it appears that the Sino-Soviet relationship, while it will continue to move through varying degrees of tension, is more likely to move toward lessened tension than toward war.* In time, the cumulative cost of years of tension and military preparedness are likely to predispose the leaders in both Peking and Moscow toward less risky, more controlled forms of competition. The basic national antagonism is likely to remain as deep as ever, but rather than remain poised indefinitely on the brink of military confrontation, both parties are more likely to seek a new relationship in which the differences are muted, the virulent debates withdrawn from international forums, and third parties prevented from exploiting their conflict. Peking and Moscow have had many years to assess the potent risk of their rivalry. After Mao, both parties will probably seek to cut the costs and reduce the risks by moving the competition into safer realms.

44. *A move beyond limited accommodations to a genuine and durable rapprochement—one in which there is a renewal of broad collaboration and perhaps reinstatement of the alliance—seems out of the question in the near term and highly unlikely in this decade.* This is so not only because of all the factors which argue for continued contention, but because any major amelioration of the

contest (with its attendant implications of threat for the non-communist world) would jeopardize each side's policies and investments in the West.

45. A fundamental change from the present relationship would be likely only if there were a dramatic turnover in leadership in Moscow or Peking (which is highly unlikely), or if either party or both came to see new and significant threats from the non-communist world. It is difficult at this time to conceive of a threat of such proportions as to cause the communist adversaries to set aside their differences. Presumably, it would have to involve a threatening move by the US and some of its allies or the emergence of a militarized and aggressive Japan. The US action would have to be seen in Moscow and Peking as distinctly warlike; the souring of the present détente would not likely serve as sufficient motivation.

#### IV. WORLD IMPLICATIONS OF POSSIBLE CHANGES IN SINO-SOVIET RELATIONSHIP

##### War

46. War between the USSR and China would, of course, have global repercussions. Assuming the Soviets were the aggressor, initial world reaction would be one of awe at Soviet boldness and ruthlessness, and fear that a process had been set in train which might soon result in severe instability and disruption throughout Europe, the Middle East, and Asia—if not in time in a third World War. The attention of the nations, individually and in concert, would be focused on limiting the arena of conflict and, ultimately, discouraging any Soviet effort to pursue maximum goals vis-à-vis China.

47. In the case of a Soviet disarming nuclear strike, it would be impossible to restore anything resembling the *status quo ante*, hence

~~SECRET~~

difficult to foresee any willingness on the Chinese side to set aside their outrage and discuss a settlement. Thus, there would be the prospect that military action at some level would continue following the initial nuclear strike.

48. Virtually every nation would look to the US as the only possible leader in any effort to restrain the Russians, mollify the Chinese, and halt the shooting war. While China would have the sympathy of much of the world, there would be little sentiment favoring US military intervention on Peking's behalf. But neither would a posture of rigorous neutrality on the part of the US meet approval. Rather, the US would be expected to take a firm line against the aggressor, provide reassurance to other nations against possible Soviet intimidation, and take the lead in mobilizing world efforts to contain and end the conflict. Few nations outside of NATO would care to join the US in assuming a conspicuous posture in opposition to Soviet ambitions; communist leaders in Eastern Europe and East Asia would be especially reticent.

49. If Washington were successful in a peace effort, much goodwill and respect would accrue to the US. On the other hand, even if it ended quickly, the Sino-Soviet conflict would initiate a period of generalized fear and disruption, clearly reversing the present trend toward détente among the powers and preoccupation with economic growth and social change among the smaller nations. The arms race would be given impetus all along the Sino-Soviet periphery. Japan, India, and Israel, among others, would think more seriously about achieving nuclear deterrent capabilities. US allies in East Asia and Western Europe would expend more funds on weaponry and draw closer to established alliances with the US. The US would come under heavy pressure from friends and allies to expand its own military programs.

### *Rapprochement*

50. Global reaction to the hypothesized Sino-Soviet reconciliation would be heavily contingent on its cause. If reconciliation were to come about as a communist response to US policies or actions (initiated perhaps in collaboration with the Japanese) which appeared to menace Russian and Chinese interests, the new Sino-Soviet unity would probably be seen as essentially defensive and probably of limited durability (i.e., subject to rapid erosion once the presumed US threat had receded). But, in the interim, most world leaders would focus on peacekeeping efforts and would try to avoid giving offense to either side, especially if events seemed to be heading toward a dangerous great-power confrontation.

51. If the reconciliation had emerged, independently of actions by other powers—i.e., mainly as a consequence of arrangements between Moscow and Peking—world concerns would have a different focus. The geopolitical reality of a unified communist bloc, dominating the Eurasian landmass and far stronger than before, would be intimidating—even if accompanied by bloc protestations of peaceful and beneficent intent.

52. The world would probably return to a form of bipolarity. The US would be viewed as the only possible leader of a reconstituted military and political counterweight to communist power, though Western Europe and Japan, far stronger than 20 years ago, would be much more important components of any rebuilt security structure. While a few Third World countries might seek security from anticipated Sino-Soviet pressures in affirmations of neutrality, many more would move closer to the US and seek its protection. There would be deep concern, especially in Asia and the Middle East, that the US might not be as responsive to the security needs of small

and remote states as it was during the cold war.

53. But whether the world would then turn back into a period of tensions and troubles reminiscent of the cold war at its worst would depend not only on the power and purpose of the renascent communist alliance but also on its needs. Certainly some of the Soviet and Chinese leaders, no longer constrained by their own rivalries, would be drawn initially toward harsh and expansionist foreign policies. They would wish to use the fact of their renewed collaboration—and the image of augmented communist strength—to extort concessions from other powers, especially those on the bloc's periphery. But there would be some sobering second thoughts in both capitals. The actual *strategic* balance between the two opposing sides, East and West, would not necessarily be altered appreciably by the joining of Soviet and Chinese forces in a new alliance. This would depend essentially on when the joining took place—it will be some years before the Chinese can deploy an inter-continental force in any great strength—and what the level of opposing Western forces happens to be at that time. Moreover, some of the imperatives which have brought both Moscow and Peking into postures of *détente*—notably the requirement for high-quality imports from the West—would survive even complete Sino-Soviet reconciliation. Finally, even in the best of circumstances, Sino-Soviet reconciliation would not (*could* not) erase mutual distrust or eliminate the legitimate fear in both capitals that the new confederacy was perhaps destined to be short-lived.

#### *Limited Improvement in Relations*

54. A limited improvement in Sino-Soviet relations, of itself, would not imply a concurrent unwillingness to do business with the West. Particularly in the economic sphere,

Moscow and Peking would remain interested in a continuing interchange of trade and technology with the US, Western Europe, and Japan. In a situation in which the two communist powers were giving less priority to scoring points against the other, it might be possible to conduct debate and negotiations on certain international issues without the disruptive effects of Sino-Soviet polemics.

55. There would be adverse effects. The US might find the Chinese, even if not anxious to reverse courses of action already undertaken, less eager to improve the relationship and less prone to accept the maintenance of the US military presence in the Far East. It might also find the Soviets, reassured about their Chinese flank, more willing to compete with the US and less concerned about *détente* in Europe—feeling freer, perhaps, to raise their price or perhaps to jettison this policy altogether if it were not producing the desired gains.

56. Other powers might find some of the underlying assumptions of their policies subject to erosion as well. Japan would find its room for maneuver between the USSR and China much more limited, and its activities in South Korea, Taiwan, and Southeast Asia opposed by both countries. India and Pakistan would face reduced support from their respective communist patrons. Hanoi and Pyongyang would find it more difficult to play Moscow and Peking off against one another. In short, the premises behind the present alignment of major powers might have to be revised. Indeed, the most significant result of any important reduction of the Sino-Soviet gap might be the apprehensions generated internationally that something approaching full-scale Sino-Soviet rapprochement was in the wind. Such concerns would stimulate interest in regenerating alliances with the US and could, in certain circumstances, increase resistance to further *détente* efforts among Western leaders.

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

## CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

### DISSEMINATION NOTICE

1. This document was disseminated by the Central Intelligence Agency. This copy is for the information and use of the recipient and of persons under his jurisdiction on a need-to-know basis. Additional essential dissemination may be authorized by the following officials within their respective departments:

- a. Director of Intelligence and Research, for the Department of State
- b. Director, Defense Intelligence Agency, for the Office of the Secretary of Defense and the organization of the Joint Chiefs of Staff
- c. Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence, Department of the Army, for the Department of the Army
- d. Director of Naval Intelligence, for the Department of the Navy
- e. Assistant Chief of Staff, Intelligence, USAF, for the Department of the Air Force
- f. Assistant General Manager for National Security, for the Atomic Energy Commission
- g. Assistant Director, FBI, for the Federal Bureau of Investigation
- h. Director of NSA, for the National Security Agency
- i. Special Assistant to the Secretary of the Treasury, for the Department of the Treasury
- j. Director of Central Reference Service, CIA, for any other Department or Agency

2. This document may be retained, or destroyed by burning in accordance with applicable security regulations, or returned to the Central Intelligence Agency by arrangement with the Central Reference Service, CIA.

3. When this document is disseminated overseas, the overseas recipients may retain it for a period not in excess of one year. At the end of this period, the document should either be destroyed, returned to the forwarding agency, or permission should be requested of the forwarding agency to retain it in accordance with IAC-D-69/2, 22 June 1953.

4. The title of this document when used separately from the text should be clas-

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

~~Secret~~  
Controlled Dissem

~~Secret~~