THE SINO-SOVIET SPLIT

Ania Freymond
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In October 1949, <u>Mao Zedong</u> and his followers declared victory in the Chinese Revolution and proclaimed the formation of the People's Republic of China. With more than a half-billion people, China replaced the Soviet Union as the world's most populous socialist state.

By rights, the People's Republic and Soviet Russia should have been close allies for the duration of the Cold War. Both shared large populations, a commitment to Marxist socialism, turbulent revolutions and difficult transitions into socialism. Both were also surrounded and confronted by Western opposition and <u>military alliances</u> (NATO in Europe, SEATO in the Asia-Pacific).

Despite these similarities, the relationship between communist China and the Soviet Union was complex and changeable. In the 1960s, the two powers began to drift apart – and by late 1968 they had reached the brink of war. The Sino-Soviet split, as it became known, was a critical development in the Cold War.

Sino-Soviet connections

The links between Chinese and Russian communists dated back to 1919 and the formation of the Communist International, or Comintern. This Moscow-based agency was formed to promote, support and offer guidance to socialist revolutionaries around the world.

The Comintern played an important role in the formation and direction of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). In line with Marxist theory, most members of the Comintern believed that China was not yet ready for a socialist revolution.

Sino-Soviet cooperation 1949-1957

Signed bilateral Sino-Soviet treaty of friendship in 1950 (Mao had to agree Mongolia remained in Soviet sphere of influence, a 30-year military assistance etc.)

- To Stalin, alliance strengthened its Soviet strategic position with the USA.
- For Mao, the massive economic and military aid provided by the Soviets was vital for the construction of New China.

GOLDEN YEARS 1953-1957

After Korean war, China's priorities shifted to domestic development, but it required a peaceful environment. By mid 1950s, Chinese leaders agreed w/ diplomacy of peaceful coexistence.

Signs of strain

Yet despite this successful collaboration, there were also signs of strain.

KOREAN WAR:

In mid-1950, Mao committed forces to the Korean War, believing that Stalin would follow suit and commit Soviet forces and provide men, machinery and weapons. BUT Stalin preferred not to be drawn into an open conflict with the United States. He confined Soviet involvement in Korea to providing air support and supplying aircraft, weapons and munitions (for which he charged Mao's government full price).

→ Consequently, heavy economic costs for Chinese. Mao felt exploited and betrayed by Stalin, who had failed to honour his earlier assurances.

Khrushchev and De-stalinization

- After Stalin's death in 1953, Mao began to imagine himself as the world's senior communist leader. In the Soviet Union leadership passed to Nikita Khrushchev. In 1956, Khrushchev delivered his famous 'Secret Speech', in which he condemned the personality cult, despotism, show trials, purges and violence that occurred under Stalinism.

→ Placed Mao in an awkward position. While Mao distrusted Stalin in private, in public he had always praised Stalin is a brilliant socialist leader. Mao had also replicated Stalin's cult of personality within China.

→ For Mao, Khrushchev's 'Secret Speech' was a betrayal of Stalin's legacy, INCREASED TENSIONS BETWEEN COUNTRIES.

- Khrushchev's softer line toward the West. While Mao had always attacked the United States as an imperialist bully to be feared and resisted, Khrushchev suggested that "**peaceful coexistence**" with the US was possible.

- POLITICALLY: Mao blamed de-Stalinization for unrest in Eastern Europe

IDEOLODIGAL DIFFERENCES

USSR disagreed with Mao's assertion that a proletarian revolution could be peasant based.

Further Conflicts indicating Sino-Soviet Split

- Taiwan Crisis

Mao launched the attack shortly after Khrushchev had left Beijing.

→ Mao was trying to prove his independence from the USSR.

→ Test the USSR's support for China; testing the US commitment to Taiwan.

→ Khrushchev argued that he was unwilling to put the USSR at risk by 'testing the stability of the capitalist system'

→ USSR withdrew all its technical and scientific advisors from China in 1959

- Nuclear Issue 1963-1964

→ USSR only agreed to give China a nuclear deterrent if China allowed the USSR to control its use.

→ USSR and USA signed the Test Ban Treaty which suspended the atmospheric testing of nuclear bombs.

→ Betrayal of the USSR, an attempt to ensure that China could not develop its own weapons.