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**THE SOVIETS' BEST FRIEND IN ASIA:  
THE MONGOLIAN DIMENSION OF THE SINO-SOVIET SPLIT**

Christian Ostermann,  
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**Sergey S. Radchenko**

**Working Paper No. 42**

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The Sino-Soviet split produced a powerful ripple effect in Asia where socialist states, that had previously enjoyed the dividends from the great alliance, now had to choose sides. North Korea and North Vietnam rallied to the Chinese case of “Afro-Asian solidarity,” becoming virulently anti-Soviet by 1963. Thus the Soviet position in Asia would have been rather precarious were it not for Moscow’s reliable ally, the Mongolian People’s Republic (MPR), which in spite of tremendous political and economic pressure from China unequivocally sided with Moscow. In 1966 the Soviet Union and Mongolia signed a treaty of friendship, co-operation and mutual assistance, which promised to use “all means, including military [ones], to safeguard the security and independence of both countries.”<sup>1</sup> Beijing could not help but eye this treaty with suspicion, particularly after a large number of Soviet troops were stationed along the Sino-Mongolian border, leaving no doubt that the real purpose of the treaty was the containment of the Chinese threat.

From the beginning of the Sino-Soviet rift, Mongolia sided with Moscow, lobbying for Soviet interests, trying to convince the doubting ranks in the international communist movement of the good intentions of the Soviet Union, and unquestionably supporting all Soviet initiatives. The Sino-Soviet rift was, among other things, a struggle for the loyalties of the socialist camp, for the hearts and minds of all communists. In retrospect, Beijing lost the Mongolian battle before the first shots were fired through no particular effort on the part of Moscow—the Mongolian leadership itself decided to lean to one side.

This is not surprising: the Mongolians treated Beijing with profound, deep-rooted mistrust, conditioned by China’s colonial legacy in Mongolia and the long history of the Sino-Mongolian confrontation. In the words of a prominent Mongolian scholar and politician Baabar, “China’s sedentary civilization and the northern nomadic culture had little in common except mutual hostility.”<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Sovetsko-mongolskie otnosheniya (1921-1966)* [Soviet-Mongolian relations (1921-1966)], Moscow, 1966, p. 321.

<sup>2</sup> Baabar, *Twentieth Century Mongolia*, White Horse Press, 1999, p. 9

The 1950s, however, saw the high point in Sino-Mongolian relations. As the Sino-Soviet friendship blossomed, political and economic cooperation between the People's Republic of China (PRC) and Mongolia intensified. The first trade agreements were signed in the early 1950s. China provided funds and a workforce to the Mongolian government to build factories, infrastructure and housing. For instance, the construction of paper, glass and brick factories, the central Ulaanbaatar stadium and the Sports Palace were all financed by a grant of 36 million rubles, extended by the Chinese government in 1956.<sup>3</sup> Only Vietnam and North Korea received more cash from the Chinese comrades. Mongolians reciprocated with odes of praise: in the words of C. Lhamsuren,

“Friends of the Russian and the Chinese people – ...  
the Mongolian herders, workers and intelligentsia  
are saying: long live Mao Zedong!”<sup>4</sup>

But beneath the friendly façade of the Sino-Mongolian relations hid an icy reality.

### **Mongolians suspect their new communist neighbour of non-communist ambitions**

Mongolia had initially proclaimed its independence in 1911, taking advantage of the Republican Revolution in China (1911-12). It immediately sought Russian guarantees to make sure that the Chinese would not try to come back. But in the wake of the Russian Revolution of 1917 that weakened its mighty neighbor, Beijing forced the Mongolians to renounce their independence. Then, in February 1921, the Chinese were again chased out of the Mongolian capital by a White Russian adventurer, Baron Ungern, who, in turn, suffered a defeat at the hands of the Red Army. Nineteen twenty-one saw the signing of the first Soviet-Mongolian treaty, a guarantee of Mongolia's independence. In 1924,

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<sup>3</sup> "On the PRC's aid to socialist countries", a report by the Scientific Research Conjecture Institute under the Ministry of External Trade of the USSR (28.05.66), AVPRF: fond 0100, opis 59, papka 529, delo 37, p. 33.

<sup>4</sup> *Mao Zedong Tum Naslah Boltugai* [Long Live Mao Zedong], State Publishing House: Ulaanbaatar, 1953, p. 32. Many more poems and books of similar content were later confiscated throughout Mongolia and either destroyed or piled up at the State Security sites (interview with D. Tod, former head of the Mongolian State Security archive).

however, the Soviet government compromised Ulaanbaatar's position when it moved to establish relations with the Republic of China. The first Sino-Soviet treaty relegated Mongolia to a position of "autonomy" within the Chinese state, dazzling the Mongols. Nevertheless, Soviet-Mongolian cooperation intensified, and the "Japanese threat" of the 1930s further strengthened relations between Moscow and Ulaanbaatar. At this stage, as Elena Boikova points out, "the Soviet government's primary goal was to use the MPR as a buffer state to demilitarize and protect the USSR's lengthy border with China."<sup>5</sup> The issue of Mongolia was raised in the course of the Sino-Soviet negotiations that took place from June to August 1945. Soviet leader Josef Stalin turned down Chinese Nationalist leader Chiang Kai Shek's request to return the Mongolians to the Chinese sovereignty. At the same time, he tried to dispel Chinese fears about Soviet intentions with regard to the MPR. As he told Chiang's representative at the talks, T.V. Soong, "we will respect the independence and territorial integrity [of Mongolia] so that you don't think we will annex [it]". To this T.V. Soong replied, "You don't need to [annex it], you are on such good terms."<sup>6</sup>

With the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949, the issue of Mongolia emerged again. In a telegram to Chinese Communist leader Mao Zedong in early 1949, Stalin wrote: "we do not think that Outer Mongolia would renounce its independence in favor of autonomy within the Chinese state, even if all Mongolian regions were joined into one autonomous unit. Clearly, the decisive voice here belongs to Outer Mongolia itself."<sup>7</sup> Mao apparently agreed: as he told Soviet envoy Anastas Mikoyan who visited China on a secret mission in early 1949, "they [the Chinese] were not, of course, defending the chauvinistic policy of greater China and they will not raise

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<sup>5</sup> Boikova E., "Aspects of Soviet-Mongolian relations. 1929-39" in Kotkin S. & Elleman B. (eds.), *Mongolia in the 20<sup>th</sup> century: landlocked cosmopolitan*, M.E. Sharpe: New York, 1999, p. 118.

<sup>6</sup> Elleman B., "The final consolidation of the USSR's sphere of interest in Outer Mongolia" in Kotkin S. & Elleman B. (eds.), *Mongolia in the 20<sup>th</sup> century: landlocked cosmopolitan*, M.E. Sharpe: New York, 1999, p. 130. Elleman's source is the "Notes taken at the Sino-Soviet conferences", Victor Hoo Papers, Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford University.

<sup>7</sup> "Mikoyan's note to the CC CPSU Presidium about his trip to China in January-February 1949" reprinted in Ledovsky A. (ed.), "Mikoyan's secret mission to China", *Problemy Dalnego Vostoka* 1995(2), p. 107.

this question about unification of Mongolia.”<sup>8</sup> The new Sino-Soviet treaty, signed in 1950, included a specific provision, which guaranteed the independence of Mongolia.

### **China and Mongolia in the 1950s: show of friendship, hidden mistrust**

But Mao Zedong never gave up his plans for Mongolia. For example, he again brought up the question of returning Mongolia to China when he met with Soviet leaders Nikita Khrushchev, Nikolai Bulganin and Mikoyan in 1954. On that occasion, as before, the Soviet visitors replied that “the Mongolians themselves must resolve this question.”<sup>9</sup> After Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin at the 20th CPSU Congress in 1956, the Chinese leaders returned to the Mongolian question. In a conversation with Mikoyan on 7 April 1956, Chinese Communist Party (CCP) Politburo members Zhou Enlai and Liu Shaoqi insisted that Mongolia's independence was “one of Stalin's mistakes.” Liu Shaoqi added that the Chinese people “deeply regret the fact of Mongolia's secession from China” and “consider Mongolia, like Taiwan, a part of their territory.” Mikoyan countered that he thought Stalin was right on the Mongolian question and that Mongolia could not be equated with Taiwan. To this, Zhou and Liu replied that for now they would not raise the question of Mongolia, but “this may be done in the future.”<sup>10</sup> Mikoyan was not happy about these Chinese insinuations. On one occasion in 1956 he advised MPR leader Tsedenbal not to be taken in by the Chinese niceties, such as an offer of 3000 families of Chinese workers who were coming to Mongolia to participate in construction projects. “You should develop your own working class, so that the Chinese do not comprise the majority of your workers,” Mikoyan explained.<sup>11</sup>

The Soviets felt the need to warn Tsedenbal about Beijing's direct and indirect efforts to place Mongolia under Chinese control, but certainly the Mongolians themselves realized the looming danger of China's irredentism. For example, when, by the mid-

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> *Gerel Suuder: Yu. Tsedenbalyn Khuviin Temdeglel* [Light and Shadow: Yu. Tsedenbal's diary], D. Sukhbaatarын нeрeмжит улсын кhevleilyn kоmbinat: Ulaanbaatar, 1991, p. 94.

<sup>10</sup> “On the claims of the leaders of the PRC with regard to the MPR, Soviet Foreign Ministry report” (31.01.64).

<sup>11</sup> Tsedenbal's diary, p. 94.

1950s, the railroad connecting Mongolia and China was about to be completed, the deputy head of the Inner Mongolian government, Namjilsuren, told his Mongolian counterpart S. Luvsan that the border between China and Mongolia should be opened. Luvsan replied that “this is a matter of remote future (communism),” but the Mongolian leadership must have become alarmed when he informed Ulaanbaatar about this incident.<sup>12</sup>

Far from opening the border with China, the Mongolians were ready to do anything to set as firm a border as possible. In 1962 Beijing launched border talks with several neighboring states, including Mongolia. The idea behind these talks was less to set borders straight than to boost China’s international prestige in the context of the sharpening Sino-Indian border dispute. As Zhou Enlai told Tsedenbal on 26 December 1962, “a reasonable settlement of the border question between China and Mongolia will be an example and an encouragement for border negotiations with other countries.”<sup>13</sup> That is, concluding border agreements with most neighboring states was meant to demonstrate China’s reasonable and peace-loving policy and to imply, by default, that the burden of guilt for the Sino-Indian dispute rested exclusively with India’s Nehru. But another, and a more important reason for China to sign a border treaty with Mongolia was to use it as a lever in winning Ulaanbaatar's support for the Chinese position in the Sino-Soviet quarrel.

Zhou Enlai made that much clear in a meeting he had with Tsedenbal on the following day, 27 December 1962. Zhou explained that the Chinese people did not like the fact that the Mongolian press only printed the Soviet side of the polemics and ignored the Chinese statements. If this one-sided attitude continued, Zhou explained, the Mongolians would risk losing China's economic aid up to the point of withdrawal of the 8,000 Chinese workers involved in the industrial construction across Mongolia. “Our states,” he said, “are not ideologically united on all issues, and this affects both inter-state and inter-party relations.” But, along with the stick, Zhou promised Tsedenbal a carrot if

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

Mongolia weakened her friendship with the USSR. “Possibly,” Zhou Enlai speculated ominously, “we will take ideological differences onto our relations with some other countries.” This, above all, referred to the Soviet Union. The antagonistic nature of the Sino-Soviet disagreements, as seen from Beijing, necessitated a drastic reduction on the level of state relations between China and the USSR. But, promised Zhou, “we will not act like this with regard to Mongolia.” In other words, Zhou said, “it could be possible not to deepen [our quarrel],” that is—if Mongolia behaved.

But Tsedenbal turned down Zhou’s offers. “Our party,” he stressed, “will continue to wage a resolute struggle against those who want to split the communist movement. ... No one will manage to undermine the unity of the Mongolian Party and the CPSU.” Tsedenbal dismissed Zhou’s threats of pulling out Chinese workers. “We will not retreat in terms of ideology and will not alter the correct political line of our party because of 8,000 workers,” he concluded. Zhou was visibly annoyed. Shedding diplomatic protocol, he accused Ulaanbaatar of following Kremlin’s leash. “Does this mean,” he asked, “that you are blindly following the CPSU? ... Did you do this during Stalin’s personality cult as well? Did you loyally follow Stalin?” Since Tsedenbal refused Zhou’s approaches, the conversation became very tense. Indeed, as Mongolian Ambassador Dondogyin Tsevegmid recalled, he “thought at times that the barriers would be broken and that they [Tsedenbal and Zhou Enlai] would get into a fist fight.”<sup>14</sup>

Despite the tense atmosphere of the Zhou-Tsedenbal encounters, the Mongolian government enthusiastically welcomed the conclusion of the border talks, which served as an additional guarantee of Mongolian independence. With this, however, the border question did not vanish from the agenda of Sino-Mongolian relations. In July 1964 Mao Zedong told a visiting delegation of Japanese socialists:

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<sup>13</sup> “Conversation between Tsedenbal and Zhou Enlai” (26.12.62), *Cold War International History Project Bulletin*, 8-9 (Winter 1996-97), p. 266.

<sup>14</sup> “Conversation between Yumjagyn Tsedenbal and Zhou Enlai” (27.12.62), AVPRF: fond 0100, opis 56, papka 495, delo 7, pp. 3-14.

"About a hundred years ago the area east of Baikal became Russian territory, and since then Vladivostok, Khabarovsk, Kamchatka and other points have become territories of the Soviet Union. We have not yet presented the bill for this list."<sup>15</sup> The Chairman's words had a thunder bolt effect on Moscow, convincing Khrushchev of Mao's "nationalism," "chauvinism" and "great power aspirations."<sup>16</sup> The Mongolians were completely stupefied: Mao's "unsettled bill" covered their entire country! Later, in a conversation with Albanian Defense Minister Baluku, Mao reportedly admitted that he was simply "firing empty cannons" and had no plans of reclaiming the "lost" territory.<sup>17</sup> However, in the summer and fall of 1964 Mao's statement created serious diplomatic complications for the Chinese government.

When the Mongolian delegation headed by the Deputy Premier S. Luvsan arrived in China in September 1964 on the occasion of the PRC's national holiday, the Chinese diplomats were badly embarrassed and they tried to make up for Mao's blunders with warm reception. According to Ambassador Tsevegmid, Foreign Minister Chen Yi and other Chinese officials "tried to create an atmosphere of exceptional warmth: [they] hugged, kissed and so on."<sup>18</sup> Chen Yi went out of his way to convince Luvsan that Mao Zedong had not really meant what he had said and that the Western and Japanese media had published "confusing" reports that "had raised a lot of noise" over Mao's words.<sup>19</sup> Chen told Luvsan that as "our two states have already established a border ... we will be friendly henceforth."<sup>20</sup> But by the mid-1960s, Sino-Mongolian relations were very far from "friendly." The Mongolian government's eager support of Soviet foreign policy brought it into a sharp conflict with Mao Zedong on ideological and practical matters,

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<sup>15</sup> Pravda (02.09.64), p. 2.

<sup>16</sup> These became the catchwords of the Soviet propaganda in the fall of 1964. Soviet newspapers were flooded by commentaries such as "Insolent Chauvinism", "Dark Designs" and "Monstrous Pretensions of the Chinese Splitters".

<sup>17</sup> Galenovich Yu., *Granitsa* [The Border], Izograf: Moscow, 2001, p. 102.

<sup>18</sup> "Conversation between Tsevegmid and Stepan Chervonenko" (07.10.64), AVPRF: fond 0100, opis 57, papka 508, delo 7, p. 25.

<sup>19</sup> "Conversation between Chen Yi and Luvsan" (30.10.64), Mongolian Central Government Archive: fond 1, tov'yog 16, kh/n 299 (1965), p. 94.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 97.

and as Mao decided to pursue his “revolution” towards the complete disintegration of the Sino-Soviet alliance, the Sino-Mongolian confrontation intensified.<sup>21</sup>

### **Siding with Moscow**

One of the first signs that Mongolia was taking the Soviet side in the emerging Sino-Soviet rift was Ulaanbaatar's attitude to the border conflict between China and India. In 1959, after the first border clashes between the two countries in the remote Himalayan region, the Soviet news agency TASS published a statement, expressing regret that fraternal China and friendly India were fighting over useless scraps of territory. Moscow's neutrality was taken by the Chinese leaders as a sign of hostility towards the PRC; they took for granted Moscow's support for China's conflict with a non-socialist country. In 1962 the Sino-Indian border situation deteriorated again. Zhou Enlai was interested in Tsedenbal's position when he met the Mongolian leader in December of that year. Tsedenbal, however, failed to show support for China's stand, saying merely that “this conflict between two Asian great powers and the disturbance of friendship between them is disadvantageous both for the peoples of both countries and for the maintenance of peace in general.”<sup>22</sup> He even tried to convince China to accept some of Indian leader Jawarhal Nehru's demands, knocking Zhou completely off-balance. The Chinese premier somewhat nervously advised him to “examine again the literature that we have provided for the Asian and African countries.”<sup>23</sup> The conversation left no doubt that, in case of disagreements with the Soviets, China could not count on Ulaanbaatar for support or neutrality in the same way it relied on the North Koreans and the Vietnamese.

As the Sino-Soviet rift grew wider, Mongolian criticism of Beijing's policies became more pronounced and spread to other issues. Usually, Mongolian moves closely

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<sup>21</sup> See Chen Jian's *Mao's China and the Cold War* for an excellent account of the “continuous revolution” argument.

<sup>22</sup> “Conversation between Tsedenbal and Zhou Enlai” (26.12.62), p. 267.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 269.

followed winds from Moscow. The December 1963 Plenum of the Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party (MPRP) declared that Mongolians

“decisively reject and condemn the awkward attempts of the Chinese leaders, who are trying by means of putting us under all sorts of pressure, to impose an anti-Marxist line upon our party, to pull it away from the world communist movement and its tried vanguard, the CPSU, and to lead our people away from the correct road of eternal union and friendship with the great Soviet people and people of other socialist countries.”<sup>24</sup>

This powerful condemnation echoed similar pronouncements at the December 1963 Plenum of the Soviet Communist Party where Boris Ponomarev, among other leaders, argued that the Chinese were “blinded by nationalist arrogance” and that they were “obsessed with the great-power, hegemonic aspirations.”<sup>25</sup>

As Sino-Soviet relations deteriorated day by day in the spring and summer of 1964, Moscow and Beijing exchanged letters, accusing each other of violating Marxism-Leninism and betraying the cause of the socialist camp. The Mongolian leadership needed no prodding to support the Soviet cause. On 12 June Tsedenbal authored his own letter to the Chinese leaders, demanding that they abandon their great power nationalism and pointing out that the MPRP would always support the Soviet Communist Party, the recognized vanguard of the international communist movement. Tsedenbal asked the Mongolian Ambassador in Beijing, Tsevegmid, to show the letter to Soviet Ambassador Stepan Chervonenko and to get his approval. Chervonenko promptly approved. On 25 June Tsevegmid presented the letter to Wu Xiuquan, the Chinese party official responsible for relations with the socialist countries. Wu was annoyed:

"This letter," he said, "is nothing new, all the questions are known... You write that the CCP will return to the correct path one day. But the CCP was and remains on the correct path... Therefore, if we are to ask who must return to the correct path, this must be the CPSU and other revisionist parties, including the Mongolian

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<sup>24</sup> *Unen* (13.06.64), Ulaanbaatar.

<sup>25</sup> “Boris Ponomarev’s speech to the December (1963) CC CPSU Plenum” (12.12.63), RGANI: fond 2, opis 1, delo 676, pp. 116 & 120.

People's Revolutionary Party... We respect the MPRP—continued Wu—but all the documents show that your party repeats whatever the CPSU says."

Wu soberly concluded that "the leadership of your party follows in its activities the baton of the revisionist leadership of the CPSU."<sup>26</sup>

On 30 July 1964, the CPSU sent an open letter to the world communist movement, which called for a new meeting of world communist and workers' parties sometime in 1965 and proposed to hold preparatory talks ahead of this meeting on 15 December 1964. Khrushchev intended for these meetings to strengthen unity within the international communist movement, that is: to isolate China. The Chinese leadership was utterly opposed to having such a meeting. For the next several months, the necessity and the timing of these meetings were the hottest issues in Sino-Soviet polemics. The Mongolians were quick to support the new Soviet proposal. On 1 September, the MPRP Central Committee Politburo passed a resolution, which "completely agreed" with the Soviet letter, condemned the Chinese for their "retreat from the general line worked out jointly by the world communist movement" and entrusted the party ideology department to "carry out propaganda work in order to expose and explain among the working people the great-power, arrogant policies of the Chinese leaders [and] their rude slander."<sup>27</sup> When Luvsan met with Chen Yi in September 1964, he tried to convince the Foreign Minister that this meeting should be held in order to "discuss the questions of difference and root out the arguments," which was "very important for mutual understanding and for the strengthening of unity."<sup>28</sup> But Chen Yi did not like the idea.

Three months earlier, on 30 June 1964, the head of the CPSU Central Committee Ideology Department, Leonid Ilyichev, sent a special report to Central Committee, which declared that his department would "develop a complex of propaganda measures for some countries and regions of the world, especially those where the Chinese leadership

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<sup>26</sup> "Conversation between Tsevegmid and Stepan Chervonenko" (25.06.64), AVPRF: fond 0100, opis 57, papka 508, delo 6, pp. 227-229.

<sup>27</sup> "Resolution of the MPRP CC Politburo regarding the June 30 letter of the CPSU Central Committee" (01.09.64), Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party Central Committee Archive [MPRP]: fond 4, dansny 30, kh/n 19, pp. 38-42.

<sup>28</sup> "Conversation between Chen Yi and Luvsan" (30.10.64), p. 97.

managed to obtain influence, including Japan, Indonesia, New Zealand, [Vietnam, North Korea], and some others.”<sup>29</sup> Echoing the spirit of Ilyichev’s report, the MPRP Central Committee Politburo resolved to “provide [Mongolia’s] embassies overseas with information on the arrogant great-power policy carried out by the Chinese leaders against the MPR, their work, rude interference in the internal affairs of our country [and] their pressure on our party and country.”<sup>30</sup>

Yet it is wrong to assume that the Mongolian leaders simply followed in Moscow's footsteps in their policy with regard to China. Ulaanbaatar was often a step ahead of Moscow and even pressured the Soviet leadership to take a harder line on the PRC. Dissatisfaction with the sluggish Soviet performance in the task of addressing the Chinese challenge was already apparent in the statements of the Mongolian Ambassador Tsevegmid to his Soviet colleague in Beijing as early as the fall of 1963—that is, at the time when Khrushchev still contemplated how he should deal with the Chinese comrades. For instance, on 17 September 1963 Tsevegmid told the Soviet Ambassador Chervonenko that "one should not under any circumstances underestimate the CCP leaders as enemies." Tsevegmid went on to say that the Chinese policy is time-tested, thought out and covers for many years of struggle against Moscow. It is true, he continued, that the thrust of the current Chinese offensive against the CPSU is directed at Khrushchev, but even if Khrushchev was done away with, "they would still not cease their struggle with the CPSU, they could perhaps change the form and methods [of this struggle]." Tsevegmid contended that Sino-Soviet confrontation shows clearly the extent of Chinese nationalism. "Under the Heaven," he explained, "there must be only China in the center." All this meant, Tsevegmid concluded, that there was an urgent need "to unveil a massive ideological offensive against the Chinese positions."<sup>31</sup> One should note, however, that the Mongolians were not the only ones prodding the Soviets in the fall of

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<sup>29</sup> “Regarding the explanation of the materials of the February Plenum of the CC CPSU” (30.06.64), RGANI: fond 2, opis 1, rolik 6318, ed. khr. 707, p. 32.

<sup>30</sup> “Resolution of the MPRP CC Politburo regarding the June 30 letter of the CPSU Central Committee” (01.09.64), p. 42.

<sup>31</sup> "Conversation between Tsevegmid and Chervonenko" (17.09.63), AVPRF: fond 0100, opis 56, papka 496, delo 8, pp. 1-3.

1963 to take a more pro-active position on the China. For instance, the East German Ambassador in Beijing, Josef Hegen, complained to Chervonenko that the CPSU's "passivity" in fighting back the Chinese "might disorient the united front ... against the factional policy of the CCP."<sup>32</sup> The Polish Ambassador E. Knote even proposed to re-create an organisation similar to the Comintern to deal with the Chinese.<sup>33</sup> In other words, the Soviet allies were already on the frontlines of struggle against the Chinese "factionalists" while the Soviet leaders contemplated in the rearguard. The Mongolians were certainly among the fastest to join the nascent united front against China.

### **Beijing's struggle to win Mongolia**

Mongolia added its weight to the Soviet front on China, but it, too, came under increasing pressure from Beijing. China asserted its influence in two ways: economic and propagandistic. Mongolia's economic dependence on China stemmed from the better days of the Sino-Soviet alliance when Ulaanbaatar relied on Chinese workers to drive industrial construction and on the revenues from international railroad freight to fill the state treasury. Mongolia's hardships began about 1962, when, as Tsedenbal mentioned to Zhou Enlai, railway traffic between China and Mongolia had "decreased considerably."<sup>34</sup> Tsedenbal speculated aloud that the reason for this might be a recent drought in China,<sup>34</sup> but the MPR leaders knew that the real reason was Mongolia's unequivocal support of the Soviet Union in the growing Sino-Soviet split. Without much subtlety, Zhou Enlai hinted to Tsedenbal that China would render economic assistance to Mongolia "if you follow our policy."<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> "Conversation between Stepan Chervonenko and Josef Hegen" (25.01.64), AVPRF: fond 0100, opis 57, papka 508, delo 6, p. 2.

<sup>33</sup> "Conversation between Stepan Chervonenko and E. Knote" (28.01.64), AVPRF: fond 0100, opis 57, papka 508, delo 6, p. 32. Poland's Wladislaw Gomulka who privately advised Khrushchev on restraint with regard to China, would probably have been outraged by Knote's proposals.

<sup>34</sup> "Conversation between Tsedenbal and Zhou Enlai" (26.12.62), p. 268.

<sup>35</sup> "Conversation between Jagvaral, etc. and delegation of the Venezuelan Communist Party" (1964), MPRP Central Committee Archive: fond 4, tov'yog 30, kh/n 24, p. 7.

On that occasion Tsedenbal first complained that some of the “less conscientious and inexperienced” Chinese workers in Mongolia did a poor job.<sup>36</sup> A couple of years later things only got worse, as the Chinese workers went on strikes, stalling construction and startling the Mongolian leadership. As Mongolian Politburo member Jagvaral told a visiting Venezuelan delegation in 1964, “no socialist country has strikes—only the Chinese comrades.”<sup>37</sup> By October 1963 Chinese workers had gone on strike 18 times on the grounds of low salaries. For their part, the Mongolian leaders complained: “They are doing nothing, but receiving salaries; they are not sick, but they are faking documents to receive payments—this is causing losses to our government.”<sup>38</sup> The Chinese workers often had conflicts with their Mongolian colleagues, and one worker was even killed at a construction site in 1963. In response, the Chinese leaders demanded guarantees of the workers' safety. As the MPR Deputy Foreign Minister Sosorbaram explained to Ambassador Chervonenko,

"The Chinese government demands that the Mongolian government sign... an agreement guaranteeing the personal safety of the Chinese workers. The Mongolian side cannot allow this... moreover, the Chinese workers are not threatened by anything in Mongolia."<sup>39</sup>

Since the two sides could not agree on this point, the Chinese government withdrew the majority of its workers from Mongolia, dealing a tremendous blow to the economic development of the country.

The Mongolian leadership thereby found themselves in a dilemma. On the one hand, getting rid of the Chinese workers was a welcome development as they were becoming a major headache with their strikes and demands. But on the other hand, the Chinese workers were involved in essential industrial construction in Mongolia and who could replace them? For the time being, the Mongolian government mobilized the youth

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<sup>36</sup> “Conversation between Tsedenbal and Zhou Enlai” (26.12.62), p. 268.

<sup>37</sup> “Conversation between Jagvaral, etc. and delegation of the Venezuelan Communist Party” (1964), p. 6.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> “Conversation between Stepan Chervonenko and Sosorbaram” (28.11.63), AVPRF: fond 0100, opis 56, papka 496, delo 8, p. 73.

from the countryside to take over industrial construction, which in turn created workforce problems in the villages.<sup>40</sup>

Under these circumstances the MPRP Politburo charged the Deputy Premier S. Luvsan with the task of getting workforce from China—that is, herders who could replace the mobilized Mongolian youth from the villages. On 3 October 1964 Luvsan told Zhou Enlai that the Mongolian government wanted no less than 10,000 herders from China for three to five years. These herders could be sent from the Chinese province of Inner Mongolia (which could be cheaper and easier, according to Luvsan).<sup>41</sup> Zhou Enlai turned a deaf ear to these pleas. The Chinese Premier told Luvsan that the reason for the withdrawal of original Chinese workers in Mongolia was that the Chinese workers were, “brought up in the spirit of our ideas,” and therefore were bound to clash with the Mongolian workers—“it may even come to widespread killings.”<sup>42</sup>

Zhou Enlai said that in the past the Chinese and Mongolians had had various practical difficulties, but that the Chinese government had paid no heed, “since the ideological positions of both countries were generally the same.”<sup>43</sup> Now, continued Zhou, Sino-Mongolian relations had turned sour, but “the differences will gradually be overcome, good relations will be restored and then the PRC will be able to provide Mongolia with aid. We should wait patiently,” concluded the Chinese premier.<sup>44</sup> Although Zhou tried his best to avoid sharp corners in his talks with the Mongolians, Luvsan got the clear message that Beijing “would be ready to provide a lot of aid if the MPR moved away from that firm and principled position, which it has taken in the course

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<sup>40</sup> One should note that aside from industrial construction, village youths were secretly mobilised into the army beginning in 1964 and moved to the Sino-Mongolian border. The Mongolian government also set up special posts to monitor the Chinese activities on the border. See “Conversation between Stepan Chervonenko and Tsevegmid” (07.10.64), p. 34.

<sup>41</sup> “Conversation between Stepan Chervonenko and Tsevegmid” (07.10.64), AVPRF: fond 0100, opis 57, papka 508, delo 7, p. 30. Tsevegmid later confided to Chervonenko that Luvsan had another aim in mind when raising the issue of herders - “to probe the position of the Chinese on the question of Inner Mongolia”, however unlikely it seemed that the Chinese would renounce its sovereignty over this province.

<sup>42</sup> “Conversation between Stepan Chervonenko and Tsevegmid” (07.10.64), p. 31. The original of the Luvsan-Zhou Enlai conversation is in the Mongolian Foreign Ministry Archive: fond 0,6 ed. khr. 39.

<sup>43</sup> “Conversation between Stepan Chervonenko and Tsevegmid” (07.10.64), p. 30.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 31-32

of the current struggle in the communist movement.”<sup>45</sup> Mongolian Ambassador to China Tsevegmid explained to Soviet Ambassador Chervonenko that the “Mongolian example is very unpleasant to the Chinese in many respects,” hampering their efforts to rally Asian and African countries against the Soviet Union.<sup>46</sup> Tsevegmid cautioned, however, that Mongolia was still too backward, that it needed to develop economically still further so as to “serve as an example of prosperity for the other Asian countries.”<sup>47</sup> In other words, Mongolia needed more attention from the Soviet comrades. In a private report Chervonenko recommended concerted effort to secure Ulaanbaatar’s loyalties, particularly to “bring closer to the CPSU other authoritative, influential Mongolian leaders, besides Tsendenbal ... so that the extent of strength of the Soviet-Mongolian relations depended to a lesser extent on the one or two people who are now in power.”<sup>48</sup>

Complementing economic pressure, Chinese propaganda in Mongolia sought to undermine the influence of the “Soviet revisionists” and to promote Beijing’s role of the new vanguard of international communism. The Chinese workers in Mongolia were the main agents of propaganda. By 1964, over 7,000 of them had gone to the country’s every region and tried “propagate erroneous Chinese policy.”<sup>49</sup> The intensity of these propaganda efforts intensified with the beginning of Cultural Revolution. A top secret report submitted to the MPRP Central Committee in January 1967 determined that most printed materials carrying propaganda were received through cultural exchange and through the diplomatic mail addressed to the Chinese Embassy in Ulaanbaatar. The report noted that: “these materials are reviewed in the Embassy and then sent with the [Embassy’s] own introductions to official departments, universities, professional schools and organizations as presents.”<sup>50</sup> The report proposed to do more to confiscate these

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<sup>45</sup> This is Ambassador Tsevegmid’s observation, “Conversation between Stepan Chervonenko and Tsevegmid”, p. 33.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid, p. 34.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., p. 8.

<sup>50</sup> “Report on foreign press control” (13.01.67), MPRP Central Committee Archive: fond 4, tov'yog 30, kh/n 114, p. 70.

unwanted presents. Chinese propaganda did have some effect on the Mongolian people, mainly on the students. In early 1965 the government determined that many students in Ulaanbaatar were "under the influence of unhealthy sentiments." Students of the Economic Institute, for instance, complained to the authorities about heightened security around the Chinese Embassy and even publicly announced that the Ministry of State Security was using one of the rooms in their institute to watch the activities inside the Chinese embassy compound.<sup>51</sup>

But it would be wrong to exaggerate the impact of these isolated incidents. Chinese propaganda in Mongolia was not exceptional in its character; other countries experienced similar developments. But aside from the flood of "little red books" and the Red Guard gatherings in Ulaanbaatar, there may have been some Chinese efforts to "convert" the Mongolian leaders to Beijing's cause. However, the extent of these efforts remains unclear. In 1964 the Mongolian Central Committee Secretary Lhamsuren admitted that "[the Chinese] are trying to split our party. But our party is firmly united."<sup>52</sup>

Tsedenbal portrayed all discontent within the party as Chinese-inspired conspiracy to sabotage the Soviet-Mongolian friendship. In late 1964 the Mongolian leader was openly challenged at a party plenum by what later became known as the "Lookhuuz-Nyambuu-Surmaajav anti-party group."<sup>53</sup> Tsedenbal's challengers condemned corruption and incompetency within the Mongolian leadership. They hardly even touched on matters of foreign policy. Only Lookhuuz criticized Tsedenbal for over-relying on Moscow. He downplayed the "Chinese danger" and suggested that Mongolia stay out of the Sino-Soviet dispute – "why should we stick our forehead between them two," Lookhuuz asked.<sup>54</sup> This was enough for Tsedenbal to glue the label of "Chinese spies" to his challengers—at the plenum and later, in explanations to the Soviet comrades.

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<sup>51</sup> "Conversation between Stepan Chervonenko and Tsevegmid" (8 & 16.01.65).

<sup>52</sup> "Conversation between Jagvaral, etc. and delegation of the Venezuelan Communist Party" (1964), p. 10.

<sup>53</sup> For a detailed account of the December (1964) Plenum, see my paper presented at a Cold War Conference in Budapest (November 1, 2003), *The Kremlin's Leash, Mongolian Nationalism and the Chinese Connection*.

<sup>54</sup> "Speech by Ts. Lookhuuz at the December (1964) MPRP Party Plenum", provided to the author by D. Boldbaatar, pp. 5-6.

When he gave his account of the attempted coup against Tsedenbal to his Soviet colleague Stepan Chervonenko, Ambassador Tsevegmid suggested that “these people [Tsedenbal’s challengers] came under strong influence of Chinese propaganda in Moscow and may have had direct contacts with the Chinese.”<sup>55</sup> After the defeat of the “anti-party group,” Lookhuuz and Nyambu were investigated closely, but no “Chinese connection” could be confirmed. Tsedenbal’s challengers were ultimately Mongolian nationalists; they did not want to see their country become a Chinese satellite. Nevertheless, if Tsedenbal had been ousted and a more independent-minded leadership had come to power in Mongolia, Ulaanbaatar’s reliance on Moscow might have weakened considerably. Tsedenbal’s triumph over the “anti-party group” secured Mongolia’s pro-Soviet orientation.

### **Moscow wakes up to the danger of losing Mongolia**

Mongolia’s allegiance to the Soviet Union was striking in light of Moscow’s passive attitude towards its most reliable ally in the Far East. After Khrushchev’s purge, on 21 October 1964, the Soviet Foreign Ministry (Nikolai Sudarikov) drafted recommendations for the new leadership’s policies in East Asia. Sudarikov pointed out that “For over 40 years Mongolia had followed the road of socialist construction together with the USSR,” yet it remained one of the few countries never visited by the top Soviet leadership.<sup>56</sup> “Under the current conditions – continued Sudarikov – “at a time of a sharp struggle for unity among the ranks in the international communist movement and at a time of powerful attacks, directed at pulling the MPR away from the Soviet influence.” a visit by the Soviet leadership to Mongolia would be “very important.”<sup>57</sup>

But Sudarikov's proposals came at the wrong time. In late 1964-early 1965 the post-Khrushchev leadership was divided over China policy. Some thought that a Sino-

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<sup>55</sup> "Conversation between Stepan Chervonenko and Tsevegmid" (8 & 16.01.65), p. 5.

<sup>56</sup> “List of questions on the development and improvement of relations with countries in the Far East” (21.10.64), AVPRF: fond 0100, opis 57, papka 510, delo ?, p. 214.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

Soviet rapprochement was possible (among them, Alexander Shelepin, Aleksey Kosygin), others (notably, Andrei Gromyko, Anastas Mikoyan, Yuri Andropov) were skeptical. Kosygin tried his luck with Mao Zedong in February 1965 during his stop-over in Beijing, but received a cold shoulder from the Chinese leader who promised to continue the struggle with the USSR for ten thousand years. In the summer and fall of 1965 the Sino-Soviet rift continued to widen until party relations were completely broken off after Beijing refused to participate in the 23<sup>rd</sup> CPSU Congress (March-April 1966). Ulaanbaatar also sent an invitation to the Chinese Communist Party to send representatives to the 15<sup>th</sup> MPRP Congress (June 1966), but Beijing replied that “in light of the fact that your party is turning into a servant of the Soviet revisionists, we cannot participate.”<sup>58</sup>

Thus by early 1966 both Sino-Soviet and Sino-Mongolian relations were so bad as to justify a “formal” Soviet-Mongolian alliance against Beijing. This was done in January 1966, when Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev visited Ulaanbaatar to sign the treaty of friendship, co-operation and mutual assistance, which in the words of Soviet historians, “marked a new stage of the fraternal relations of the people of the two countries.”<sup>59</sup>

### **Ulaan Baatar: Soviet spokesman in the Far East**

At the new stage of relations, as before, Mongolia’s foreign policy was directed towards the realization of Soviet political aims, particularly with respect to East Asian countries, where Ulaanbaatar’s friendly services were most needed. For example, Mongolian leadership attempted to influence decision-making in Pyongyang through the North Korean ambassador in the MPR. In February 1967 the head of the Mongolian Central Committee’s international relations department, Shagdarsuren, met with the

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<sup>58</sup> Chuluuny Dalai & Yrgy Shima, *Otmosheniya mezhdru MNR i KNR* [Relations between the MPR and the PRC], vol. 1, Prague-Ulaan Baatar, 1986 [for closed circulation], p. 127.

<sup>59</sup> Okladnikov A. & Perle Kh. (eds.), *Istoriya Mongoloskoi Narodnoi Respubliki* [History of the Mongolian People’s Republic], Moscow: Nauka, 1983, p. 511.

North Korean ambassador regarding the Red Guard propaganda against Pyongyang, which the ambassador called a “perversion of truth and falsehood.”<sup>60</sup> Shagdarsuren seized the opportunity: “since you, comrade ambassador, also correctly understand the slander and subversion of the Chinese leaders ... I hope you could let your Central Committee and the government know about this.”<sup>61</sup> The ambassador replied that “we will try not to take this to a split,” but clearly incidents like this, used by the Mongolian leadership to demonstrate Beijing’s fallacies and the correct line of the Soviet comrades, influenced Pyongyang’s evaluation of Sino-Korean relations.

Mongolia, like many other socialist states, contributed to North Vietnam’s war effort with material goods (mainly blankets, skins, shoes, etc.), but it did not have any influence on Hanoi’s policies. Even so, the Mongolian government in meetings with North Vietnamese officials never failed to praise Moscow and condemn the Chinese. For example, when in October 1966 North Vietnamese Deputy Premier Le Than Ngi met with the Mongolian leadership, Politburo member Molomjamts told him that “the separate policy of the Chinese Communist Party leaders is of benefit to the enemy and creates difficulties to resolving the Vietnam question.”<sup>62</sup> He mentioned, particularly, the delays in supplies carried by rail to Vietnam through the PRC (frequently, these supplies were looted by the Red Guards in Southern China). Molomjamts made much of the fact that Mongolia herself did all it could to deliver on time war aid from the Soviet Union across its own territory to the Chinese borders. Le Than Ngi, however, did not support Molomjamts’s anti-Chinese position and merely replied that the railroad delays happened “because the road connection between the Chinese and Vietnamese borders fell into disrepair.”<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> “Conversation between Shagdarsuren and North Korean ambassador” (24.02.67), MPRP Central Committee Archive: fond 4, tov’yog 30, kn/n 114, p. 12.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., p. 14.

<sup>62</sup> “Conversation between Le Than Ngi and Molomjamts” (20.10.66), MPRP Central Committee Archive: fond 4, tov’yog 30, kh/n 22, p. 43.

<sup>63</sup> “Conversation between Le Than Ngi and Molomjamts” (20.10.66), p. 51.

But as time went on, the Vietnamese grew more and more disillusioned with Chinese policies. As the Vietnamese ambassador in Moscow told his Mongolian counterpart in April 1967, “it is difficult to understand what is happening in China. ... This is incomprehensible to me.”<sup>64</sup> The Mongolian ambassador, for his part, defended the Soviet Union: “the Chinese leaders are saying that the USSR contrived with the American imperialists and betrayed the interest of the Vietnamese people. I cannot see that this is true. The current internal situation in China is not only harmful for the Chinese people, but it harms the interests and the authority of all socialist countries.”<sup>65</sup>

Thus, Mongolia, despite carrying little in the international politics, argued the Soviet line where it could, illustrated the Chinese policies against the fraternal countries with its own original examples, and used its special relationship with countries in the Far East to steer them away from Chinese influence.

In early 1967, Mongolia, like the Soviet Union, experienced demonstrations of Chinese students demonstrated in Ulaanbaatar, and attacked the Mongolian embassy in Beijing. At the height of the unrest in Beijing, Soviet diplomatic personnel were desperately isolated and had a hard time accurately representing Chinese events back to Moscow. As the head of the Far Eastern department of the Foreign Ministry, Sudarikov, mentioned to the Mongolian ambassador in January 1967, “the current situation in China is difficult to understand ... our embassy personnel doesn’t know what to make of it.”<sup>66</sup> Under these circumstances, the Mongolian charge d’affaires in Beijing, Chuluuny Dalai, did his best to help his Soviet colleagues cope with the situation. He made use of the fact that he looked Asian, put on the “Mao suit” and a “Mao badge” and went around Beijing

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<sup>64</sup> “Conversation between Mongolian and North Vietnamese ambassadors in Moscow” (19.04.67), MPRP Central Committee Archive: fond 4, tov’yog 30, kh/n 114, p. 30.

<sup>65</sup> “Conversation between Mongolian and North Vietnamese ambassadors in Moscow” (19.04.67), p. 29.

<sup>66</sup> “Conversation between Luvsanchultem and Sudarikov” (24.01.67), MPRP Central Committee Archive: fond 4, tov’yog 30, kh/n 114, p. 40.

collecting newspapers, Dazibao, etc., very often providing the Soviet embassy with desperately needed information.<sup>67</sup>

### **Why the Soviets had an easy time with Mongolia**

Why did the Mongolian leadership so consistently support Moscow even in the absence, at least until the mid-1960s, of any serious Soviet efforts to safeguard their influence on Ulaanbaatar's policy-makers? The answer, it seems, lies in the particular psychology of the Mongolian leaders, which, in turn, was rooted in the sentiments of the Mongolian people. The Mongolians feared re-annexation by the Chinese and since the time they proclaimed independence in 1911, they relied on Russia to provide guarantees against Chinese colonial rule. The Mongolian socialist revolution itself was brought on the bayonets of the Red Army, and many a Mongolian revolutionary received training in Russia. Tsedenbal, particularly, had personal ties with Russia, where he got his education and married a Russian wife. At the same time, Tsedenbal never overcame his suspicions of the Chinese. As he wrote in his diary in 1963, "the Chinese are preaching feudal isolation. However, their goal is different. In reality, they want to rule over other countries."<sup>68</sup> Tsedenbal's pro-Soviet line triumphed over the more balanced nationalist views in the mid-1960s, and this, too, can mainly be attributed to the long-standing mistrust of Beijing in Mongolia's ruling circles and in Mongolian society.

Once in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, the Mongolian hordes terrorized the early Russian state and established their rule over China. But centuries later, Mongolia found itself squeezed between its two powerful neighbors, Russia and China. When the two were friends, Mongolia enjoyed the benefits of drawing assistance from both Moscow and Beijing, but when the great alliance began to crack, it had to choose sides. At that time, suspicious of Chinese irredentism, the Mongolian leadership turned to the long-time friends of their revolution, their Soviet comrades. For 30 years Mongolia in effect was a Soviet satellite, eagerly defending Moscow's policies and fully supporting the twists and turns of the

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<sup>67</sup> The author's interview with former Mongolian charge d'affaires in Beijing Chuluuny Dalai, June 2002.

<sup>68</sup> Tsedenbal's diary, p. 99.

CPSU general line. In the early 1990s, Ulaanbaatar abandoned its treasured policy of leaning to one-side and present day Mongolia strives towards balanced relations with its ever-present neighbors, trying to overcome at last the legacy of the Cold War.

## DOCUMENTARY APPENDIX

Document No. 1

**Information Memorandum, “About the Claims of the Chinese Leaders With Regard to the Mongolian People's Republic,” by First Secretary of the Far Eastern Department of the USSR, I. Kalabukhov, 30 January 1964**

TOP SECRET. Copy №1

About the claims of the Chinese leaders with regard to the Mongolian People's Republic (information)

After the 20th Congress of the CPSU, Com. A.I. Mikoyan visited the People's Republic of China and had conversations with the leading comrades of the CCP [Chinese Communist Party]. During the conversation of Liu Shaoqi and Zhou Enlai with Com. A.I. Mikoyan on 7 April 1956, the question was raised that Mongolia was at one time a part of China. Zhou Enlai, having reminded that in 1949, during com. A.I. Mikoyan's stay in China, they [the Chinese leaders] raised before Stalin the question of the possibility of returning Mongolia to the PRC [People's Republic of China] and that then Stalin through com. A.I. Mikoyan gave a wrong answer, asked whether we consider this answer one of Stalin's mistakes.

{{{ Note: In February 1949 during the confidential trip of com. A.I. Mikoyan to Shijiazhuang ahead of the 3rd March Plenum of the CC CCP, Mao Zedong in his conversation with the former, in the presence of Liu Shaoqi and Zhou Enlai, raised the question of uniting two parts of Mongolia. Com. A. I. Mikoyan replied that, taking into consideration the territorial integrity of China, this would not be in China's interests,

because a large part of the country—Inner Mongolia—would break away. Mao Zedong then commented that he had in mind the unification of Mongolia with its accession to China. Com. A.I. Mikoyan declared that the Mongolian people have tasted the fruits of sovereign existence and will hardly agree to abandon independence, in any case this question was the business of the Mongolian people. This note is based on oral report of a referent of the CC CPSU Department [for Relations with Socialist Countries] c. A.N. Katerinich, who has seen the transcript of com. A.I. Mikoyan's conversation. On this trip com. A.I. Mikoyan was accompanied by c. E.F. Kovalev. }}}}

In response to com. A.I. Mikoyan's objection to the effect that he considers that Stalin was right then and that he still has the same opinion, that is—that Stalin gave a correct answer, Zhou Enlai said that formally Stalin really did give the right answer, having said that the Mongolian comrades should be asked about Mongolia's accession to China, because only they can solve this question. But in accordance with party principles, Stalin should have answered differently. Zhou Enlai supposed that Stalin should have expressed his opinion, because at the time that was a conversation between communists, and then he could say that the Chinese should talk to the Mongolians. Zhou Enlai believes that Stalin evaded this question and did not express his opinion. Com. A.I. Mikoyan explained that this answer of Stalin's should be interpreted in the sense that Stalin in effect spoke against raising the question about Mongolia's accession to China, but since he did not want to get into an argument with the Chinese comrades on this question, he suggested to leave the solution of this question to the Mongolians.

During the same conversation Liu Shaoqi added that the Chinese people allegedly are very deeply pained by the fact of Mongolia's secession from China. He noted that when the Soviet Union was celebrating the 300-year-anniversary of reunification of Ukraine with Russia, [some people] said in China that 300 years ago Mongolia already was a part of China and asked the question whether it could be re-united with China. The Chinese, Liu Shaoqi continued, consider Mongolia, like Taiwan, a part of their territory.

Com. A.I. Mikoyan replied that it is wrong to equate Mongolia with Taiwan. The Chinese live in Taiwan, but in Mongolia there is a completely different nation. Mongolia *de facto* was not a part of China even under the tsar. It acquired independent existence as a state after the October Revolution and the Mongolians, having learned the taste of national independence, will now hardly want to abandon it. We, continued A.I. Mikoyan, never had a thought of joining Mongolia to the Soviet Union. When the Japanese occupied a part of China and decided to grab Mongolia as well, we defended it with weapons in our hands. When the danger passed, we pulled out our forces from the MPR [Mongolian People's Republic] and helped the Mongolians create a national army to defend their own country. Moreover, at the time some Mongolian comrades raised the question of joining Mongolia to the USSR as a Soviet Republic. We categorically refused this. Finally, continued com. A.I. Mikoyan, the Chinese communists should not be worried about the existence of regret in the PRC regarding the MPR's secession from China, because the very act of Mongolia's formal secession from China was carried out by Chiang Kai-shek's government, and not by the PRC government, and this act was correct and proceeded from the [actual] situation.

Zhou Enlai and Liu Shaoqi said in conclusion that they are not raising the question of reuniting Mongolia with the PRC, this could be done later, but they considered it expedient to express "the opinion of the Chinese people on this question." In April of the same year, when he was Ulaanbaatar, com. A.I. Mikoyan informed the Mongolian friends about the content of the above-mentioned conversation with Liu Shaoqi and Zhou Enlai. Tsendenbal, on behalf of the members of the Politburo of CC MPRP, declared that they agree with the stated position of com. A.I. Mikoyan and emphasized that they stand for the independence of the MPR.

1st Secretary of the Far Eastern  
Department of the USSR  
/I. Kalabukhov/

N022-dv

31.01.64

[Document obtained and translated by Sergey Radchenko for CWIHP.]

Document No 2.

**Record of Conversation between the Mongolian People's Republic Government  
Delegation and the Deputy Chairman of the People's Republic of China State  
Council, Foreign Minister Chen Yi,  
30 September 1964**

RECORD OF CONVERSATION

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Content: Regarding the meeting between the MPR government delegation and the deputy chairman of the PRC State Council, Foreign Minister Chen Yi.

The meeting took place in the meeting hall of the People's National Congress on 30 September [1964] between 10:25 and 11:00am.

Participating from the Mongolian side were: head of the delegation S. Luvsan, members of the delegation Jalan-Aajav, Tsevegmid, Dagva, Gurbazar, interpreters Dunger-Yaichil, Gursed; from the Chinese side: deputy chairman of the State Council Deng Zihui, deputy foreign minister Lu Shing Chuan, deputy head of a foreign ministry department Zhan Su Yuan (assistant), section head Huan Shi Wen (assistant), interpreters Baatarsan and Wen Wen Huan.

The conversation between S. Luvsan and Chen Yi was translated by Baatarsan.

When the Mongolian government delegation entered the meeting hall, each person was greeted by Chen Yi, Deng Zihui, Lu Shing Chuan and others who lined up inside the doors and shook hands with everyone, inviting them to take seats.

Chen Yi: Did you rest well?

Luvsan: [We] had a good rest.

Chen Yi: I've been very busy lately. You have been to Beijing before, you know the situation. We express gratitude to the Mongolian Party and the

government, to comrade Tsedenbal for sending their own important delegation to participate in our celebrations.

Tonight at 6 pm Mao Zedong, Liu Shaoqi, Zhu De, Zhou Enlai, Sun Qingling, Dun Biwu and others will receive delegations, which came to participate in the celebrations. Then there will be a state banquet. The main hosts of the banquet will be Mao Zedong, Liu Shaoqi, Zhu De, Zhou Enlai, Sun Qingling and Dun Biwu. You are esteemed guests at the banquet, I will be seating with you; delegations from over 70 countries and 300 organizations will participate in our celebrations. Tomorrow delegations will see a parade and fireworks. On the night of 2 October, you would be interested to see the 3,000-people concert. We have a plan [for you] until 2 October. After that, we will be sending delegations to the countryside as they wish.

How is the health of comrade Tsedenbal and other leaders?

Luvsan: Everyone is fine.

Chen Yi: Grain harvest has been good this year, hasn't it?

Luvsan: This year the rain has been good, currently about 50% of grain has been harvested.  
This year [we] should take a total of 350 thousand tons of grain.

Chen Yi: Then you will have a great harvest.

Luvsan: Every man, every resource and machines are being used in the harvesting, we believe we will take the harvest well. But you are probably aware of the workforce shortage problem.

Thank you for inviting the MPR delegation to the celebrations of the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary since the establishment of the PRC. We are happy to have come to participate in your celebrations. I will convey greetings from you to our Central Committee, government and comrade Tsedenbal. We are happy to participate in your parade, reception and a big concert. We are able to participate in the activities you have planned for until the 4<sup>th</sup>. We intend to go back on the 4<sup>th</sup>. Thank you for your invitation to go and see China's countryside. But now the harvesting works are in full swing, and several people among those of us who came here, participate in the taking of harvest. A delegation led by the 1<sup>st</sup> secretary of our Central Committee, Prime Minister comrade Tsedenbal is going to participate in the GDR celebrations. That's why it is necessary for us to go back fairly quickly. Using the occasion of meeting with you, I would like to convey greetings from Prime Minister Tsedenbal to Prime Minister Zhou Enlai. However, if

I happen to meet with [Zhou Enlai] personally, I will convey them myself. This time let me pass them with you in advance.

Chen Yi: Thank you. I will certainly pass them on. However, today you will certainly meet with Zhou Enlai yourself. As you are all busy, I will not say much. But I would like to talk about one matter. Our two countries are both independent socialist states. With the conclusion of a border treaty between our two countries, this part of the problem has been fully resolved. Recently, awkward questions emerged with regard to territorial aspects. Citations in the Japanese and Western press have caused a scandal. These publications are very confused. We do not understand why the Soviet comrades are raising this question. Not only that, our old friend [Soviet leader Nikita S.] Khrushchev put to us the question of why don't we return Hong Kong and Macao. This is certainly a territorial question. We will get back both Hong Kong and Macao, this temporary problem is connected with England and America. Returning Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Macao is not a matter of one day, we will return them when the time comes. Territory-wise, there is a dispute between us and the Soviet Union. There were Sino-Soviet border talks, but they were not completed successfully (ha, ha – his laugh was forced and false). The dispute emerged, and it will continue, but unity is important. Disputes are not dangerous to human life. This is only a struggle by pen. Our parties and states must be friendly and close. You are participating in our celebrations. We will participate in whatever celebrations you have. The American imperialists are encroaching upon South East Asia. This is a difficult problem to solve. But contradictions between socialist states can be resolved. We are carrying out a policy of peaceful coexistence. However, if the enemy encroaches, we will not sit by idly. Friendship exists between fraternal countries and disputes arise. These arguments are a sign of politeness friendliness. Your country does not want to seize others, our country also does not want to seize others. That's why we must respect each other's independence. We are not giving a written reply on this subject [now]. Soon we will provide you with an official reply.

We have disagreements with the Soviet comrades over some questions since the 20<sup>th</sup> and the 22<sup>nd</sup> [party] congresses. These will probably be resolved. We are happy that the Soviet Union has sent a delegation to our celebrations. It is possible to strengthen friendliness between fraternal countries. Therefore, the contradictions between socialist states should be distinguished from the contradictions between the socialist and imperialist countries.

You left China in 1959?

Luvсан: Yes.

- Chen Yi: Nothing special has happened since then. Please, excuse me. I am very busy. Now I am meeting guests at the airport, so I have to go.
- Luvsan: Excuse me. Since you talked about these things, I can't help but mention one matter. Thank you for finding time to meet with us when you are so busy. Our states are independent socialist countries. We agree with what you said that we have resolved our border questions. However, many overseas agencies published the story about Mao Zedong's talk with the Japanese socialists. It is regrettable that you and we understand these publications differently. When we looked at those things [the words of Mao Zedong?] we were truly amazed and felt regret. You, comrades, did not make clear whether this talk was true or false. You said that an official reply will be given. From your talk we understand that what he said is not true. You said that [our relations] are comradesly and friendly and this needs to be strengthened. We also try hard to strengthen friendship.
- Chen Yi: Right, I will give one answer. We must resolve territorial disputes on the basis of principles of Marxism-Leninism. When I received the German and Polish delegations, they were very surprised by this. It is correct to resolve friendly these questions between the socialist countries. The Japanese newspapers published very confusing things. Afterwards, we will provide an official reply regarding this.
- In terms of the questions raised by Khrushchev regarding Macao and Hong Kong, to this also an answer will be given. For example, whilst returning Taiwan or Hong Kong is extremely difficult, the question with Macao is not too bad. Generally, territorial disputes emerge in relations between countries. These must be resolved on the basis of Marxism-Leninism. For example, our two states have already established a border. Now, there is no question in this regard. We will be friendly henceforth.
- Luvsan: National freedom and independence of states should be respected. You are saying that contradictions between socialist states should be resolved. What you are saying is correct. That's why there should be called at once the preparatory meeting of the 26 parties and the meeting of the communist and workers' party to discuss the questions of difference and root out arguments. We consider that this meeting is very important for mutual understanding and for the strengthening of unity... (he wanted to continue talking)
- Chen Yi: "Right".  
[Chen Yi] smiled and every person who participated in the talks and the support personnel proceeded towards the doors out of the meeting hall and had their picture taken at a specially prepared platform.
- Chen Yi, Deng Zihui, Lu Shing Zhuan and others shook hands, bidding farewell to every

member of our delegation, and with this [the meeting] ended.

Recorded by:

/D. Tsevegmid/

/O. Gursed/

Reviewed by:

/S. Luvsan/

[Signature]

[Mongolian Government Archive, Fond 1, tov'yog 16, kh/n 299 (1965), pp. 92-98,  
Document obtained and translated by Sergey Radchenko for O.A. Westad]