

**THE SINO-SOVIET ALLIANCE AND
CHINA'S ENTRY INTO THE KOREAN WAR**

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In February 1950, the People's Republic of China (PRC) and the Soviet Union signed a strategic alliance treaty in Moscow. Only eight months later, China entered the Korean War to "resist America and assist (North) Korea." How was the Sino-Soviet alliance made? Was the Sino-Soviet alliance related to the coming of the Korean War? What role did the Sino-Soviet alliance play in China's decision to enter the war? In what sense did China's entry into the Korean War, in turn, influence the foundation and future direction of the Sino-Soviet alliance? These questions, certainly relevant to a deeper understanding of Communist China's foreign policy as well as the Cold War in Asia, have not been properly answered in the past largely (but not exclusively) because of the scarcity of Chinese source materials.

With the support of recently-released Chinese sources, this paper will try to shed some novel lights on (1) the making of the Sino-Soviet Alliance, (2) the Sino-Soviet connection with the outbreak of the Korean War, and (3) contacts between China and the Soviet Union during the days when the CCP leadership made the final decision to enter the Korean War.

I

In the late 1940s, when the Cold War escalated with the development of the Soviet-American confrontation, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) openly allied the new China with the Soviet Union. On 30 June 1949, Mao Zedong, chairman of the CCP Central Committee, issued his famous "lean-to-one-side" statement:

Externally, unite in a common struggle with those nations of the world which treat us as equal and unite with the peoples of all countries. That is, ally ourselves with the Soviet Union, with the People's Democratic countries, and with the proletariat and the broad masses of the people in all other countries, and form an international united front.... We must lean to one side.¹

Why did Mao decide to issue such a statement at this particular moment? What was the background as well as the real nature and practical meaning of the CCP's "lean-to-one-side" policy? How did it affect the CCP's foreign policy framework in general and the CCP's policy toward the United States in particular? An answer to these questions will contribute to our comprehension of the environment in which the CCP leadership finally decided to involve China into a direct military confrontation with the United States in late 1950.

Placing the CCP's policy behavior into the international background, it is easy to see that Mao's "lean-to-one-side" statement was a logical outgrowth of the CCP's long-time revolutionary policy of attaching itself to the international progressive forces led by the Soviet

¹ Mao Zedong, "On the People's Democratic Dictatorship," 30 June 1949, *Mao Zedong xuanji* (Selected Works on Mao Zedong, hereafter cited as *SW*), Beijing: The People's Press, 1965, IV, 1477.

Union. By the late 1940s, CCP leaders had firmly perceived the postwar world order as divided into two camps, one headed by the Soviet Union and the other by the United States. They viewed their revolution as an inseparable part of the Soviet-led international proletarian movement and excluded the possible existence of a middle ground between the two camps.² It is evident that Mao's "lean-to-one-side" statement was consistent with this comprehension of the postwar world structure. The political implication of Mao's decision was straightforward: in the international confrontation between the Soviet-led progressive camp and the American-led reactionary camp, the CCP had no choice but to ally itself with the Soviet Union against the United States.

Mao's "lean-to-one-side" approach also grew out of the CCP's assessment of the serious nature of America's threats to the national security interests of Communist China. In early 1949, as the CCP neared final victory in China's civil war, CCP leaders became very concerned about the prospect of direct American intervention in China. During an enlarged politburo meeting in January 1949, American intervention became one of the central topics. "The Current Situation and the Party's Task in 1949," the conference paper drafted by Mao himself, stated: "When we make war plans, we have always taken into our account the possibility that the U.S. government may send troops to occupy some of the coastal cities and fight us directly. We should continue to prepare for this now so as to avoid being taken by surprise if it really occurs."³ In March and April 1949, when the Communist forces prepared to cross the Yangzi (Yangtze) River, their military deployment was largely based on the assumption that the Americans might interfere on behalf of the Guomindang (GMD) regime.⁴ Although the anticipated American military intervention had not occurred, the CCP leadership, given their belief in the aggressive nature of U.S. imperialism and following the "worst case assumption," continued to view the United States as their most dangerous enemy. Mao and the CCP leadership preferred to believe that "after the founding of the new China it was possible for those imperialist countries, which were unwilling to see their failure in China, to make military intervention in China's affairs, just as what imperialist countries did to the Soviets after the Russian Bolshevik revolution."⁵ In the eyes of Mao and the CCP

² Lu Dingyi, "Explanations of Several Basic Problems Concerning the Postwar International Situation," *Jiefang ribao* (Liberation Daily), 4 January 1947; Mao, "The Present Situation and Our Task," *SW*, IV, 1258-59; Liu Shaoqi, "On Internationalism and Nationalism," *Renmin ribao* (People's Daily), 7 November 1948.

³ Mao, "The Present Situation and the Party's Task in 1949," *Mao Zedong junshi wenxuan* (Selected Military Papers of Mao Zedong), Beijing: Soldiers' Press, 1981, 328-29.

⁴ Department of Military History under the Chinese Academy of Military Science, eds., *Zhongguo rein jiefangjun zhanshi* (The War History of the People's Liberation Army), Beijing: The Press of Military Science, 1987, III, 323-334; Ye Fei, *Ye Fei huiyilu* (The Memoirs of Ye Fei), Beijing: The Press of the People's Liberation Army, 1988, 539-540.

⁵ Mao, "Cast Away Illusion, Prepare for Struggle," *SW*, IV, 1487-93.

leadership, "it was the possibility of military intervention from imperialist countries that decided the necessity of China allying itself with socialist countries."⁶ By allying China with the Soviet Union, Mao and the CCP leadership hoped to be in a stronger position to face a hostile America.

The CCP's "lean-to-one-side" decision was also closely related to China's domestic politics. According to materials now available, different opinions concerning the direction of the new China's domestic and foreign policies existed between some members of pro-communist "democratic parties" and the CCP. Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai, vice chairman of the CCP Central Committee and the PRC's first premier and foreign minister, argued that these people "still had illusions of U.S. imperialism," hoping that the new China would be able to maintain a middle path, which was not so radical, in international politics.⁷ The opinion of General Zhang Zhizhong, a former close associate of Jiang Jieshi (Chiang Kai-shek) who had just joined the Communist side, was typical in this regard. In a discussion with Mao, Zhang suggested that the new China, while uniting with the Soviet Union, should seek accommodation with the United States and other western countries. He believed that such a policy would be in the interests of the Chinese nation. Mao disagreed, arguing that the attempt to pursue the "doctrine of the mean" [zhong yong zhi dao] in international politics would be dangerous to the cause of Chinese Communist revolution because it would weaken the inner-dynamics of the Chinese revolution and blur the distinction between revolution and counter-revolution.⁸ In order to promote the Chinese Communist revolution at home, Mao believed it essential for Chinese foreign policy to "lean to one side."

As a practical policy choice, Mao's "lean-to-one-side" decision has to be understood within the context of the CCP's efforts to adjust relations with the Soviet Union during the last stage of China's Civil War. When Mao issued his statement on 30 June 1949, he must have had in mind the fact that a high-level CCP delegation, headed by Liu Shaoqi, would travel to the Soviet Union in two days.⁹ Considering the frequently unpleasant history of CCP-Soviet

⁶ Han Nianlong et al., *Dangdai zhongguo waijiao* (Contemporary Chinese Diplomacy), Beijing: The Press of Chinese Social Science, 1988, 4.

⁷ Mao, "Cast Away Illusion, Prepare for Struggle," *SW*, IV, 1487-94; see also Bo Yibo, *Ruogan zhongda jueche yu shijian de huigu* (Reflections of Certain Important Decisions and Events), Vol. I, Beijing: The Press of the CCP Central Academy, 1991, 38.

⁸ *Zhonggong dangshi tongxun* (The Newsletter of CCP History), No. 24 (25 December 1989), 4.

⁹ Liu's secret visit to the Soviet Union has been unknown to researchers both in China and the West until recently, so historians have missed the connection between this visit and the timing of Mao's "lean-to-one-side" statement. The date for Liu's leaving for the Soviet Union followed the memoirs of Shi Zhe, who was Liu's interpreter and accompanied Liu to the Soviet Union (Shi Zhe, "I accompanied Chairman Mao to the Soviet Union," *Renwu* (Biographical Journal) No. 2, 1988, 6). But Bo Yibo, a member of the Central Committee of the CCP at that time, mentioned in his memoir that Liu arrived in Moscow on 26 June and had his first meeting with Stalin on 28 June (Bo, *Ruogan zhongda jueche yu*

relations, Mao hoped to send a strong signal to Stalin to show his willingness for friendship and cooperation.

During the long course of the Chinese Communist revolution, the development of the CCP-Soviet relationship had been tortuous. In the 1920s and early 1930s, the CCP, as a branch of the Soviet-controlled Comintern, had to follow Soviet instructions from time to time. Among the party leadership, sharp disagreements existed between the native section headed by Mao and the international section headed by Wang Ming (Chen Shaoyu), a Soviet-trained orthodox Communist. For a long period, Mao had been stifled by the international section which was supported by Stalin and the Soviet Party. Mao never forgot this experience. After Mao emerged as the top CCP leader in the late 1930s, he continued to face pressures from the Comintern and the Soviet Union in several occasions. In 1940-41, when Mao refused to follow the Soviet order to use the CCP's military forces to attract the main formation of Japanese troops in China "to protect the Soviet Union," Mao and the CCP leadership were severely criticized by the Comintern.¹⁰ In the early 1940s, the CCP's rectification campaign, a political movement designed to consolidate Mao's leading position in the party, was viewed with suspicious eyes by the Soviet Party and the Comintern, which suspected that the campaign represented an attempt to suppress the pro-Soviet section within the CCP.¹¹ Even after the dissolution of the Comintern in 1943, the CCP continued to find its policies, especially its management of the united front with the GMD, from time to time the target of Moscow's criticism.¹² At the Yalta Conference of 1945, Stalin promised to FDR that he would not support the CCP in the internal conflict in China in exchange for FDR's agreement on the independence of Outer Mongolia and other concessions in China. This was obviously a severe offense to the CCP.¹³ During the course of the 1946-1949 civil war, CCP-Soviet relations were again inharmonious. While contingently offering the CCP assistance in its confrontation with the GMD, especially in the Northeast area (Manchuria), Soviet leaders generally doubted

shijian de huigu, 37). In any case, the timing of Mao's "lean-to-one-side" speech had a close connection with Liu's visit.

¹⁰ Yang Yunruo and Yang Kuisong, *Gongshan guoji yu zhongguo geming* (The Comintern and the Chinese Revolution), Shanghai: Shanghai People's Press, 1988, Chapter 5; Liao Ganlong, "The Relations between the Soviet Union and the Chinese Revolution during the Last Stage of the Anti-Japanese War and the War of Liberation," *Zhonggong dangshi yanjiu* (Study of the CCP History), Supplementary Issue on the Relationship between the Soviet Union and the Chinese Revolution, 1990, 2-4.

¹¹ Liao, "The Relations between the Soviet Union and the Chinese Revolution during the Last Stage of the Anti-Japanese War and the War of Liberation," 4.

¹² *Ibid.*, 4-5.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 5-6; see also Wang Tingke, "The Impact of the Yalta System upon the Relationship between Stalin and the Soviet Union and the Chinese Revolution," *Zhonggong dangshi yanjiu* (Study of the CCP History), Supplementary Issue on the Relationship between the Soviet Union and the Chinese Revolution, 1990, 12-21, especially 15-16.

the CCP's ability to win. In spite of the fact that the GMD insistently took a pro-American stand as the Cold War intensified, the Soviet Union remained neutral in the CCP-GMD conflict. Stalin even pressured the CCP to compromise with the GMD, and Soviet media kept a strange silence as CCP forces won a series of crucial military victories.¹⁴ Several Chinese sources point out that in early 1949, Stalin advised Mao and the CCP leadership not to cross the Yangzi River to avert triggering a direct Soviet-American confrontation. Mao firmly rejected this suggestion.¹⁵ As late as late February 1949, after the PLA had forced the GMD government to move from Nanjing to Guangzhou (Canton), the Soviet ambassador remained with the GMD government, transferring to Guangzhou. All this must have made it difficult for the CCP to establish a close strategic cooperation with the Soviet Union.¹⁶

All the above, however, is only one side of the overall picture of the CCP-Soviet relationship. Mao and the the Chinese Communists, in the final analysis, are communists. In the long process of the Chinese Communist revolution, the CCP leadership always kept or tried to keep an intimate relationship with Stalin and the Soviet party. We now know that, except for a short period during the Chinese Red Army's "Long March" from Southern China

¹⁴ Gordon Chang, *Friends and Enemies: The United States, China, and the Soviet Union, 1948-1972*, Stanford University Press, 1990, 28.

¹⁵ Whether Stalin had urged Mao and the CCP leadership against crossing the Yangzi is a question that has widely debated by Chinese researchers in recent years. While Yu Zhan and Zhang Guangyou, two former Chinese diplomats, allege that they found no reliable evidence to prove that Stalin had ever offered such an advice, the opinion of most Chinese researchers, including that of Xiang Qing's, a widely recognized authority in the field of Chinese Communist Party history, is that Stalin did advise Mao and the CCP leadership not to cross the Yangzi River according to materials available now. For Yu Zhan and Zhang Guangyou's opinion, see their article "An Exploration of Whether Had Stalin Advised Our Party Not to Cross the Yang Zi River," *Dangde wenxian* (Party Historical Documents), No. 1, 1989, 56-58. For the opinion of Xiang Qing and others, see Xiang Qing, "My Opinion on the Question Whether Stalin Had Advised Our Party Not to Cross the Yangzi River," *Dangde wenxian*, No. 6, 1989, 64-66; Liao Gailong, "The Relations between the Soviet Union and the Chinese Revolution during the Last Stage of the War Resistance Against Japan and the Period of the Liberation War," 7; Chen Guangxiang, "An Exploration of Stalin's Interference with the PLA's Crossing the Yangzi River," *Zhonggong dangshi yanjiu*, The Supplementary Issue on Relations between the Soviet Union and the Chinese Revolution, 1990, 98-100, 11.

¹⁶ Mao and other CCP leaders were unhappy with the Soviet attitude toward China's Civil War. Mao stressed on several occasions that "the Chinese revolution achieved its victory against the will of Stalin." Zhou Enlai also observed: "The Soviet policy [toward China's civil war] was largely the result of their erroneous assessment of the international relations at that time. The Soviets were worried that the civil war in China might overturn the established sphere of influence set up by the Yalta conference, thus leading to an American intervention and making the Soviet Union suffer. Stalin was also scared by the prospect of the Third World War. The point of departure of Stalin's policy was to appease the United States [in China] so that the Soviet Union would be guaranteed time necessary for their peaceful reconstruction. The Soviet Union had a strong reservation upon our ability to liberate the whole China.... There existed fundamental divergences between us and the Soviet leaders regarding the international situation as well as our ability to liberate the whole China." Mao, "On the Ten Major Relationships," *SW*, V, 286; Liu Xiao, *Chushi sulian banian* (Eight Years as Ambassador in the Soviet Union), Beijing: The Press of Party Historical Materials, 1986, 4-5; see also Wu Xiuquan, *Wangshi cangsang* (The Vicissitude of My Life: Wu Xiuquan's Memoirs), Shanghai: Shanghai Literature Press, 1986, 181.

to Northwestern China, the CCP Central Committee maintained daily telegraphic communication with the Comintern and the Soviet Communist Party. Mao and the CCP leadership kept Moscow well informed of nearly all their important decisions. Even when the CCP leadership strongly disagreed with Stalin and the Soviet Party, they avoided running into any open disputes with Moscow. Mao and the CCP leadership believed that the divergences between themselves and the Soviets were no more than the ones that would sometimes emerge between brothers.¹⁷

When the tide of China's civil war turned to favor the CCP, the CCP leadership began to consider establishing a new government in China and Mao manifested a stronger willingness to seek a closer relationship with the Soviet Union. In September 1948, Mao stated to the CCP's politburo meeting: "In completing the transition from the new democratic stage of our revolution to socialism, the Soviet Union will assist us, first of all, they will help us in economic development." In a report about the CCP's politburo meeting to Stalin, dated 28 September 1948, Mao mentioned that he had a series of questions to discuss with Stalin and the Soviet Party's Central Committee and he planned to visit the Soviet Union in November. Then in another telegram to Stalin on 16 October, Mao further clarified that he would be willing to hear Stalin's opinion about "convening the new political consultative conference and establishing the provisional central government (in China)." On 30 December 1948, Mao informed Stalin that the CCP politburo would have an enlarged meeting to discuss the Party's strategic task of 1949. Mao planned to visit the Soviet Union after the politburo meeting.¹⁸ For whatever reason, however, Stalin was not interested in such a meeting at that time. He cabled to Mao, stressing that as China's civil war was at a crucial juncture, it would be improper for Mao to leave China. Stalin offered to send a politburo member as the representative of the Soviet Party to China to listen to Mao's opinions.¹⁹

From 31 January to 7 February 1949, Anastas Mikoyan, a Soviet politburo member, secretly visited Xibaipo, the location of the CCP headquarter. Mao, together with the other four members of the CCP Central Secretariat, Liu Shaoqi, Zhu De, Zhou Enlai, and Ren Bishi, held three formal meetings with Mikoyan during his stay at Xibaipo. At the beginning of the first meeting, Mikoyan explained to Mao why Stalin had not agreed to receive Mao at

¹⁷ Yang Kui-song, "The Soviet Factor and the CCP's Policy toward the United States," forthcoming in *Chinese Historians*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (January 1992).

¹⁸ Cited from Bo, *Ruogan zhongda jueche yu shijian de huigu*, 36. In Shi Zhe's memoir, he mentioned that Mao planned to visit the Soviet Union as early as in Spring 1948. He stated that in order to concentration the preparation for this visit, Mao stayed at a small village called Chennanzhuang for more than a month, from mid-April to late May (other members of the CCP Central Secretariat were then staying at Xibaipo), see Shi Zhe, "I Accompanied Chairman Mao to the Soviet Union," 4-5.

¹⁹ Shi Zhe, "I Accompanied Chairman Mao to the Soviet Union," 6; Jin Chongji et al., *Zhou Enlai zhuan* (The Biography of Zhou Enlai), Beijing: The Press of Party Historical Materials, 1987, 718.

Moscow earlier. Stalin, according to Mikoyan, did not want Mao to leave his position during a crucial stage of the war, and he was also concerned about Mao's safety and health. So, instead of inviting Mao to the Soviet Union, Stalin decided to send Mikoyan to China. Mikoyan also stressed: "Comrade Stalin asked us to come here to listen to the opinions of the CCP Central Committee and Comrade Mao Zedong, and to report to him after we return to Moscow. We come here only with our ears. We will not take part in the discussion of making any important decision." Mao provided them with a detailed report on the military situation, stressing that it was only a matter of time before final victory. Obviously aimed at easing Stalin's suspicion that Titoism was involved in the CCP's advocacy of the establishment of a coalition government with other anti-GMD democratic parties in China after the Communist victory, Mao emphasized that the government would be Marxist-Leninist in nature. Probably responding to Stalin's suggestion that CCP forces should not cross the Yangzi River, Mao pointed out that crossing the Yangzi was absolutely necessary for the CCP to destroy the remnants of the GMD and to "carry the revolution through to the end." After the formal meetings, Zhou Enlai met with Mikoyan separately. Zhou further explained the plans for the construction of China's political and diplomatic framework and discussed such problems as the recovery of the transportation system and the reconstruction of China's economy after the formation of the new China. He made it clear that the CCP wanted active Soviet participation in China's post-revolution reconstruction.²⁰

Ostensibly Mikoyan's trip to Xibaipo did not produce a major Soviet promise of backing the Communist Chinese; in reality the long-range significance of this visit could not be ignored. As the first formal contact between the CCP leadership and the Soviet Communist leaders in many years, Mikoyan's trip offered the two sides an opportunity to become familiar with each other's stand and created an atmosphere of discussion between equals. Mikoyan's visit had thus served as the first step toward a new mutual understanding and cooperation between the CCP and the Soviet Union, which would finally lead to the formation of the Sino-Soviet alliance.

II

After the PLA crossed the Yangzi River and occupied Nanjing in April 1949, the CCP had final victory firmly in its grasp. While constructing the domestic and international policy framework for the new China, Mao and the CCP leadership wanted to further promote

²⁰ Shi Zhe, "I Accompanied Chairman Mao to the Soviet Union," 6; Jin et al., *Zhou Enlai zhuan*, 742-43; Yan Changling, *Zai dajuezhhan de rizi li* (In the Days of Decisive Campaigns), Beijing: The Press of Chinese Youth, 1986, 222; Zhu Yuanshi, "Liu Shaoqi's Secret Visit to the Soviet Union in 1949," *Dangde wenxian* (Party Historical Documents), No. 3, 1991, 75.

relations between the CCP and the Soviet Union. In early May, CCP leaders decided that the time had now come to send a delegation headed by a top CCP leader to Moscow. Liu Shaoqi and Zhou Enlai were placed in charge of preparations for the visit. Wang Jiaxiang, a senior CCP Central Committee member and former CCP representative to the Comintern in the 1930s, was summoned back from his post as party secretary in Manchuria to assist in planning the visit.²¹

The preparatory work was completed by late June and the CCP Central Committee decided that the mission would be led by Liu Shaoqi, who was authorized to discuss with Stalin all important problems concerning the international situation and Sino-Soviet relations. He would introduce to Stalin the considerations underlying the CCP's policy line (especially the CCP's policy of including non-Communist democrats into the CCP-led People's Political Consultative Conference), convince Stalin that the Chinese Communists were not Titoists, and lead the Soviets to a better understanding of China's situation and the nature of the Chinese revolution. He would also pursue practical Soviet support for the Chinese Communist regime, including a guaranteed Soviet recognition of the new China and Soviet military and other assistance. If everything went smoothly, this mission would open the way for a personal trip by Mao to the Soviet Union in the near future.²²

Mao and the CCP leadership saw Liu's visit as a crucial step in establishing strategic cooperation with the Soviet Union. To guarantee the success of Liu's trip, Mao knew that he had to do something significant and noticeable. So it was not a coincidence that he issued his "lean-to-one-side" statement only two days before Liu's delegation departed. When Mao praised the Soviet Union as the undisputed leader of the international progressive forces, he had sent out an unmistakable message to Stalin: Now Stalin had no reason to suspect that the CCP leadership shared the thinking of Titoism.

During the CCP delegation's stay in the Soviet Union, they held four formal meetings with Stalin and other top Soviet leaders, touching upon a series of crucial themes.

First, to the surprise and satisfaction of Liu and his comrades, Stalin apologized for failing to give sufficient assistance to the CCP during the civil war. According to Shi Zhe's recollection, Stalin asked Liu in the second meeting: "Have we disturbed you [in China's civil war]?" Liu replied: "No!" Stalin answered: "Yes, we have been in the way of hindrance to you because our knowledge about China is too limited."²³ Although Stalin's apology came in a private meeting, Mao and the CCP leadership were deeply impressed by it. Most important of all, CCP leaders viewed this as a clear sign of Stalin's willingness now to treat his Chinese

²¹ Shi Zhe, "I Accompanied Chairman Mao to the Soviet Union," 7.

²² Ibid, 7; Zhu, "Liu Shaoqi's Secret Visit to the Soviet Union in 1949," 76.

²³ Shi Zhe, "I Accompanied Chairman Mao to the Soviet Union," 8.

comrades as equals. Later, many top CCP leaders, including Mao, Liu, and Zhou, mentioned Stalin's apology on different occasions, using it as a strong justification for the CCP's "lean-to-one-side" approach.²⁴

Second, the discussion focused on Soviet support of the newly-established Chinese Communist regime. Around the time of Liu's visit, CCP leaders were concerned about the problem of international recognition of the Communist regime in China. While deeply convinced that the United States and other Western countries would not offer quick recognition, Mao and the CCP leadership were not sure if Moscow and the "new democracies" in Eastern Europe would give immediate recognition to the new regime. Liu spent a lot of time explaining to Stalin the CCP's domestic and international policy, emphasizing that the system of people's political consultative conference, which the CCP would adopt for the new China, followed China's specific situation. In no circumstance would the CCP give up its leadership in post-revolution China. Stalin's response was again very positive. When Liu told Stalin that the CCP planned to establish a central government on 1 January 1950, Stalin believed that the Chinese should do this even earlier, stressing that "a long-time anarchic status in China should not be allowed." Stalin had actually sent to the Chinese here a clear signal of his unconditional support to the new China. Encouraged by Stalin's attitude, the CCP leadership decided to accelerate steps to form the central government and the psychological distance between the CCP leadership and the Soviets, if any, shortened.²⁵

Third, Liu's visit produced a CCP-Soviet cooperation on the settlement of the Xinjiang (Sinkiang) problem, which was an important and substantial achievement for the CCP. As a strategically important region located in Northwestern China, next to Russian Kazakh, Xinjiang, its northern part in particular, had long been viewed by the Russians as their sphere of influence. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, several bloody disputes emerged between China and Russia in Northern Xinjiang. After the triumph of the Bolshevik revolution in 1917, V. I. Lenin's Soviet Russia acknowledged China's sovereignty over Xinjiang, but the Soviet Union had never fully given up its claim of interests there. In November 1944, a pro-Communist rebellion backed by the Soviet Union erupted in Tacheng, Ili, and Ashan, three northern most counties in Xinjiang, and had since controlled that area. When the CCP achieved decisive victory against the GMD in China's civil war in 1949, Xinjiang became one of few regions still controlled by the GMD. During Liu's visit to the Soviet Union, Stalin told Liu that according to Soviet intelligence reports, the United States was planning to help

²⁴ See Wu Xiuquan, *Zai waijiaobu banian de jinli* (My Eight Years Experiences in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs), Beijing: New World Press, 1984, 4-5; Han et al., *Dangdai zhongguo waijiao*, 21-22.

²⁵ Shi Zhe, "I Accompanied Chairman Mao to the Soviet Union," 9-10.

Muslim GMD forces in northwestern China establish an independent Islam republic in Xinjiang, which, he believed, would be extremely harmful to both the CCP and the Soviet Union. He offered to use the Soviet-supported revolutionary forces in Northern Xinjiang to check the GMD so that it would be easier for the PLA to enter Xinjiang.²⁶ Then Moscow helped the CCP Central Committee to establish direct contact with the revolutionary forces in Northern Xinjiang by assisting Deng Liqun, the CCP Central Committee's liaison person, to travel from Moscow to northern Xinjiang. Before the PLA finally took over Xinjiang in October 1949, the Soviet Union and Outer Mongolia became the central linkage of communications and transportations between the CCP Central Committee and CCP agents in Xinjiang.²⁷

Most important of all, in their meetings Liu and Stalin touched upon problems concerning the international situation and the division between the Chinese and the Soviets of responsibility in promoting the world revolution and Asian revolution. Stressing that a new world war was quite impossible in the near future and that the world revolutionary forces were marching forward and were much stronger than ever before, Stalin expressed the hope that the CCP would play a more important role in pushing forward the rising tide of world revolution, especially in East Asia. He made it very clear that he hoped to see the Chinese and the Soviets divide their spheres of responsibilities within the international Communist movement: while the Soviet Union would focus on the West, China would take more responsibilities in the East. Stalin stressed that he was not flattering the Chinese, but telling the truth. As the Chinese, Stalin believed, had greater influences upon colonial and semi-colonial countries in the East, it would be easier for China to help promote Eastern revolution than for the Soviet Union. Liu, on the other hand, emphasized to Stalin that the Chinese viewed the Soviet Union as the undisputed leader of the progressive forces of the world. He seemed very cautious in acknowledging before Stalin that China would become the center of the Eastern revolution (In Shi's memoirs, he mentions that when Stalin suggested to toast for "the center of revolution moving to the East and China," Liu refused to make response). But Liu agreed that Communist China would try to contribute more in promoting revolutionary movements in Asia.²⁸ We may fairly conclude that Liu's conversation with Stalin had produced a crucial

²⁶ Zhu Peimin, "The Process of the Peaceful Liberation of Xinjiang," *Kashi shiyuan xuanbao* (The Journal of Kashi Normal College), No. 4, 1989, 14-15; Deng Liqun, "Before and After Xinjiang's Peaceful Liberation: A Page of Sino-Soviet Relations," *Jindaishi yanjiu* (Studies of Modern History), No. 5, 1989, 143-144.

²⁷ Zhu, "The Process of the Peaceful Liberation of Xinjiang," 16-17; Zhu, "Liu Shaoqi's Secret Visit to the Soviet Union in 1949," 79; Deng, "Before and After Xinjiang's Peaceful Liberation," 144.

²⁸ Shi Zhe, "Random Reflections of Comrade Liu Shaoqi," *Geming huiyilu* (Revolutionary Memoirs), supplementary issue, No. 1 (October 1983), 110-111; Shi Zhe, "I Accompanied Chairman Mao to the Soviet Union," 10.

consensus: while the Soviet Union would remain the center of international proletarian revolution, the promotion of Eastern revolution would become primarily China's duty.

There is no indication in Chinese sources available today that the Korean problem was involved in Liu's talks with Stalin. Several GMD and South Korean sources mentioned that during the spring, summer and fall of 1949, China, North Korea, and the Soviet Union conducted a series of secret exchanges on military cooperations between them in Northeastern China (Manchuria) and Korea. The CCP and North Korea, these sources alleged, signed a mutual defense agreement in March 1949, after the North Korean leader Kim Il-sung's visit to the Soviet Union, according to which the CCP would send PLA soldiers of Korean nationality back to North Korea.²⁹ No Chinese sources can prove the existence of the alleged March 1949 agreement. In my interview with Yao Xu, a Chinese authority on the history of the Korean War, he firmly denied the possibility of such an agreement.³⁰ But we do know now that in July and August of 1949, right around the time when Liu Shaoqi was in the Soviet Union, the 164th and 166th Divisions of the PLA's Fourth Field Army, the majority of whose soldiers were of Korean nationality, were sent back to North Korea.³¹ Considering the fact that a close relationship existed between the Soviet Union and Kim Il-sung's North Korean regime and that the problem of promoting revolutionary movements in East Asia was one of the central topics of Liu-Stalin conversations, we have no reason to exclude the possibility

²⁹ *Zhongyang ribao* (The Central Daily, official newspaper of the GMD government), 5 May 1949; Piao Doufu, *Zhonggong canjia chaozhan yuanying zhi yanjiu* (A Study of the Cause of the CCP's Entry into the Korean War), Taipei, 1975, 60-61; see also Robert R. Simmons, *The Strained Alliance*, New York: The Free Press, 1975, 32; Bruce Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War*, Vol. II, "The Roaring of the Cataract, 1947-1950," Princeton University Press, 1990, 359.

³⁰ Yao Xu, a former intelligence officer of the Chinese Volunteers in the Korean War, is the author of *Cong Yalujiang dao banmendian* (From the Yalu to Panmonjum, Beijing: The People's Press, 1985), the first Chinese monograph on China's participation in the Korean War, and many other articles about the Korean War. In my telephone interview with him on 27 May 1991, he stated that he had never heard of the existence of this agreement; he also pointed out that Zhou Baozhong, one alleged participant of the discussion leading to the agreement according to GMD sources, was then not in the Northeast but in the South (By checking other sources, however, I find Zhou did not leave the Northeast until September 1949).

³¹ Both South Korean and American intelligence sources have long alleged that about 30,000-40,000 Korean nationality PLA soldiers were sent back to Korea in the period from July to October 1949 (for a good summary of South Korean and American sources covering this movement, see Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War*, II, 363, 838, n. 33). One official Chinese source confirms that the 164th and 166th divisions of the PLA were sent back to Korea in July 1949, see The Military Library of the Academy of Military Science eds., *Zhongguo renmin jiefangjun zuzhi he geji lingdao chengyuan minglu* (A List of the Historical Evolution of Organizations and Leading Members of the People's Liberation Army), Beijing: The Press of Military Science, 1990, 878. In my interview with Chinese military researchers who have accesses to archival materials in May 1991, they confirmed that the 164th and 166th divisions of the PLA's Fourth Field Army were sent back to North Korea in the fall of 1949 after "the leaders of the two sides easily reached an agreement." The PLA general staff, according to them, keeps detailed records of PLA units sent back to Korea in 1949 -1950. Unfortunately to researchers, however, these records are now still listed as top classified materials.

that the Chinese and the Soviets had discussed such matters as China's support of the Korean revolution and sending PLA soldiers back to Korea during Liu's visit.

As the conversations between Liu and Stalin progressed smoothly, the CCP and the Soviet Union quickly entered discussions for establishing military and other cooperations between them. On 26 July 1949, the CCP Central Committee cabled to Liu, instructing him to explore with Stalin if the Soviet Union would be willing to supply the Chinese with 100 to 200 Yak fighters and 40 to 80 heavy bombers, to help the Chinese train 1,200 pilots and 500 technicians in Soviet air schools, and to send air force advisors to China. If the Soviets agreed to the first two inquiries, the CCP Central Committee stated, Liu Yalou, the commander-in-chief of China's newly-established air force, would visit the Soviet Union immediately to work out the details.³² Following the CCP Central Committee's instruction, Liu Shaoqi met with Stalin and other Soviet leaders the next day to discuss these CCP demands. The Soviets responded positively. They even offered, instead of accepting Chinese trainees in the Soviet Union as suggested by the CCP, to assist the Chinese in establishing pilot schools in Manchuria. They also agreed to receive Liu Yalou in Moscow for a more detailed discussion. Liu Shaoqi reported this to the CCP Central Committee immediately in a telegram of 27 July.³³

After receiving Liu Shaoqi's report, the CCP Central Committee decided at once to send Liu Yalou to the Soviet Union. Mao Zedong, Zhu De, Zhou Enlai received Liu respectively before his leaving, instructing him to pursue Soviet support in establishing the new China's air force which would take the United States and the GMD as its primary enemies.³⁴ Liu Shaoqi was originally scheduled to return to China in early August. To await the Chinese air force delegation and introduce them to the Soviets in person, Liu stayed in Moscow until 14 August. Liu Yalou and four other Chinese air force officers arrived in Moscow on 9 August. On 13 August, led by Liu Shaoqi and Wang Jiaxiang, they met with Marshall Aleksander Mikhailovich Vasilevskii, the minister of armed forces of the Soviet Union. The Chinese side, introducing the Soviets the details of their own plans, requested the Soviets to help them establish an air force composed of 300-350 planes within one year. Marshall Vasilevskii made it clear that Stalin had already ordered the Soviet air force to do its best to assist the Chinese. This meeting concluded with an agreement that further details for

³² Lu Liping, *Tongtian zhilu* (The Path to the Sky), Beijing: The Press of the People's Liberation Army, 1989, 137.

³³ Lu, *Tongtian zhilu*, 137; Bo, *Ruogan zhongda jueche yu shijian de huigu*, 37; Han Huaizhi and Tan Jingjiao et al., *Dangdai zhongguo jundui de junshi gongsuo* (The Military Affairs of Contemporary Chinese Army), Beijing: The Press of Chinese Social Science, Vol. II, 109.

³⁴ Lu, *Tongtian zhilu*, 144-146.

Chinese-Soviet cooperation in establishing China's air forces would be worked out by air force officers of the two sides.³⁵

Liu Shaoqi left Moscow on 14 August. He was accompanied by 96 Russian experts to assist China's economic reconstruction and military buildup.³⁶ A joint committee, headed by Mikoyan on the Soviet side and Liu Shaoqi and Gao Gang on the China side, was established to handle Soviet loan and material assistance to China.³⁷ The negotiation between the Chinese air force delegation headed by Liu Yalou and the Soviets also developed without difficulty. The two sides reached an agreement on all details of Soviet assistance to China to establish the air force on 18 August, according to which the Soviet Union would sell 434 plans to China. The plan was finally approved by Stalin in early October.³⁸ On 15 October, the first group of Soviet-made Yak-12 planes were delivered to China. By the end of 1949, China had received 185 different types of planes from the Soviet Union.³⁹

In late September, another Chinese delegation, headed by General Zhang Aiping, came to Moscow to work out the details of establishing China's navy with Soviet assistance. They quickly reached an agreement with the Soviets too. The Soviet Union would now take the responsibility of assisting the new China's naval construction. In October and November of 1949, the first group of 90 Soviet naval advisors arrived in China.⁴⁰

Less than two months after Mao's issuance of the "leaning-to-one-side" statement, Liu Shaoqi's visit to the Soviet Union had brought to the CCP substantial Soviet support. The framework of the Sino-Soviet strategic cooperation had been established. Mao and the CCP leadership, knowing Stalin's attitude, became more confident in dealing with the United States and other "imperialist" countries. To further change the "leaning-to-one-side" approach from rhetoric to reality, the CCP leadership now had every reason increasingly to base the CCP's foreign policy on a strategic alliance with the Soviet Union.

III

³⁵ Ibid., 155-156.

³⁶ Han and Tan, *Dangdai zhongguo jundui de junshi gongsuo*, II, 11; Bo, *Ruogan zhongda juece yu shijian di huigu*, 38; Nie Rongzhen, acting chief of staff of the PLA at that time, also recalled in his memoirs that large number of soviet advisers, especially military advisers, arrived in China after Liu's visit to the Soviet Union, see Nie Rongzhen, *Nie Rongzhen huiyilu* (The Memoirs of Nie Rongzhen), Beijing: The Press of the People's Liberation Army, 1984, 730.

³⁷ Zhu, "Liu Shaoqi's Secret Visit to the Soviet Union in 1949," 79.

³⁸ Lu, *Tongtian zhilu*, 156-169; Han and Tan et al., *Dangdai zhongguo jundui de junshi gongsuo*, II, 160-161.

³⁹ Han and Tan et al., *Dangdai zhongguo jundui de junshi gongsuo*, II, 161.

⁴⁰ Lu, *Tongtian zhilu*, 165; Yang Guoyu et al., *Dangdai zhongguo haijun* (Contemporary Chinese Navy), Beijing: The Press of Chinese Social Science, 1987, 48.

On 1 October 1949, the People's Republic of China was formally established. The same afternoon, Zhou Enlai, in the name of foreign minister of the central people's government, notified foreign governments of the formation of People's China. The next day, the Soviet government informed Zhou Enlai that it had decided to establish diplomatic relations with the PRC and to end all relations with the GMD.⁴¹ A pleased Mao personally wrote for the Xinhua News Agency the news report of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the PRC and the Soviet Union.⁴² Accordingly, CCP leaders decided to establish diplomatic relations with all "new democratic countries" as soon as possible.⁴³

As a central step in the continuous construction of Communist China's "lean-to-one-side" diplomatic framework, the CCP Central Committee decided that it was time for Mao to travel to Moscow. Preparations for the visit started immediately after the establishment of the PRC. On 20 October, Mao wrote to Stalin announcing the appointment of Wang Jiaxiang, deputy minister of foreign affairs in charge of relations with the Soviet Union and East Europe, as the first ambassador to the Soviet Union. Mao pointed out to Stalin that Wang, as a member of the CCP Central Committee, would not only be responsible for "general affairs concerning those new democratic countries in East Europe" but would also represent the CCP Central Committee "to contact with you and the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party for affairs between our two Parties." The choice of Wang Jiaxiang to be the Chinese ambassador to the Soviet Union was another sign of Mao's determination to promote cooperation with the Russians.⁴⁴

Mao hoped that his visit would bring about a new alliance treaty with the Soviet Union, which would replace the 1945 Sino-Soviet treaty between the GMD and the Russians. This, as Mao saw it later, "would place the People's Republic in a favorable position by forcing those capitalist countries to fit themselves to our principles; foreign countries would be forced to recognize China unconditionally as well as to abolish those old treaties and sign new treaties with us; and those capitalist countries would dare not to take rash actions against us." A new alliance with the Russians was Mao's first priority.⁴⁵

As he planned for the visit, Mao considered bringing Zhou Enlai with him if a treaty could be negotiated. Mao decided to let Stalin determine if Zhou should come, probably with

⁴¹ *Zhonghua renmin gongheguo duiwai guanxi wenjianji, 1949-1950* (Documents of Foreign Relations of the People's Republic of China), Beijing: The Press of World Affairs, 1957, 5-6.

⁴² *Renmin ribao*, 4 October, 1949; see also *Jianguo yilai Mao Zedong wengao*, (Mao Zedong's Manuscripts since the Founding of the People's Republic, hereafter cited as *Mao Zedong wengao*), Beijing: The Central Press of Historical Documents, Vol. I, 1987, 17-18.

⁴³ Han et al., *Dangdai zhongguo waijiao*, 5-6, 8-9.

⁴⁴ Mao Zedong to Stalin, 20 October 1949, *Mao Zedong wengao*, I, 81.

⁴⁵ Mao Zedong to the CCP Central Committee, 3 January 1950, *Mao Zedong wengao*, I, 213; Han et al., *Dangdai zhongguo waijiao*, pp. 24-25.

the intention of sounding out what Stalin had in mind. On 9 November, Mao cabled Wang Jiaxiang, asking him to inform Stalin that he planned to leave Beijing in early December. He stated: "As to if Comrade [Zhou] Enlai should come with me or not, or should his coming or not be decided after my arrival in Moscow, please ask Stalin to make a decision." Stalin probably did not understand the implication of Mao's request because instead of saying anything about Zhou Enlai, Stalin only reaffirmed his invitation for Mao. On 12 November, Mao cabled to Stalin informing him that he would leave Beijing for Moscow in early December without mentioning concrete plans for the forthcoming visit.⁴⁶

Mao left Beijing by train on 6 December 1949. After a ten-day long journey across the Euroasian continent, he arrived at the central train station of Moscow on 16 December, where he was warmly welcomed by V.M.Molotov, Nikolai Bulganin, Andrei Gromiko, and other Soviet leaders.⁴⁷ The same evening, Stalin and nearly all members of the Soviet party politburo received Mao at the Kremlin. This clearly demonstrated high respect to Mao. According to Shi Zhe, the translator for Mao, immediately after the greetings, Stalin said to Mao: "Great! Great! You have made tremendous contributions to the Chinese people. You are their good son. I wish you good health." Mao replied: "I have been oppressed [within the Party] for a long time. I even did not have a place to complain..." Before Mao could finish, Stalin said: "Now you are a winner, and a winner should not be criticized. This is a common law." He also observed: "The victory of the Chinese revolution will change the balance of the whole world. More weight will be added to the side of international revolution. We wholeheartedly congratulate your victory and wish you to achieve greater victories."⁴⁸ Stalin expressed a strong interest in developing a new relationship with China.

During their first meeting, Stalin cautiously asked Mao his goals for the trip and what he wanted from the Soviets. Mao gave a subtle reply: "For this trip we hope to bring about something that not only looks nice but also tastes delicious." A cautious Mao wanted a new Sino-Soviet alliance, but he intentionally remained ambiguous to see the Soviet response. Shi Zhe further explained in his translation of Mao's remark that "looking nice meant something with a good form and tasting good meant something substantial." Stalin and other Russian leaders, however, did not understand Mao's meaning. Shi Zhe recalled that Lavrenti Beria, a Soviet politburo member, laughed at Mao's expression. Stalin may have sensed Mao's real

⁴⁶ The CCP Central Committee to Wang Jiaxiang, 9 November 1949, *Mao Zedong wengao*, I, 131; Mao Zedong to Stalin, 12 November 1949, *Mao Zedong wengao*, I, 135.

⁴⁷ Shi Zhe recalled that the Russians meticulously arranged it so that Mao's train arrived at the station exactly at noon so that Mao was welcomed by the ringing clock of the station. Mao's reception by so many high-ranking Soviet official revealed that the Russians wanted to please him. See Shi Zhe, "I Accompanied Chairman Mao to the Soviet Union," 12; for a Soviet version of Mao's visit to Moscow, see Nikola Fedorenko, "The Stalin-Mao Summit in Moscow," *Far Eastern Affairs* (Moscow), No. 2, 1989.

⁴⁸ Shi Zhe, "I Accompanied Chairman Mao to the Soviet Union," 13.

purpose, but he did not want to take the initiative until Mao clarified himself. So, when Mao asked if Zhou should be called to join him in Moscow, Stalin relied: "If we cannot make certain what we really want to work out, what is the use to call Zhou to come here." Mao, again, made no direct answer.⁴⁹

Mao's attitude confused Stalin. What made the situation further complicated was that on 24 December 1949, I. V. Kovalev, the chief Soviet advisor to China who accompanied Mao to visit the Soviet Union, sent a written report entitled "Several Policies and Problems of the CCP Central Committee." This report, according to the memoirs of Bo Yibo, pointed out that some CCP Central Committee members, who had been anti-Soviet and pro-America in the past, were now backed by top CCP leaders; that Liu Shaoqi organized groundless criticism of Gao Gang, a pro-Soviet CCP leader in the Northeast; and that non-Communist "democratic figures" possessed many important positions in the Central People's Government of the PRC, making the government virtually a united association of different political parties. Influenced by this report, Stalin's attitude toward Mao became dubious. Only after Mao made open complaints to the Soviets did Stalin decide to hand this report to Mao.⁵⁰ But a psychological gap between the Chinese and the Soviets had been created.

In late December 1949, Stalin called Mao twice to urge him to express his plans and intentions. Mao, not knowing exactly how Stalin might respond, remained ambiguous. Mao adopted a tactic common in ancient Chinese diplomacy, "not to release your real intention until your adversary fully expresses his intention." Finally, Wang Jiaxiang sounded out Mao and hinted to A. Y. Vyshinsky, the Soviet foreign minister, that Mao intended to abolish the 1945 Sino-Soviet treaty and to negotiate a new Sino-Soviet alliance.⁵¹ This was exactly what Stalin wanted because this would strengthen the strategic position of the Soviet Union in its deepening confrontation with the United States. Stalin welcomed Mao's initiative and he suggested that the treaty be signed by himself and Mao. Mao, however, believed that the treaty, as a matter between the two governments, should be signed by Zhou Enlai, the Chinese prime minister and foreign minister, and a government head of the Soviet Union. In the end of December, Stalin agreed to invite Zhou to Moscow to work out a Sino-Soviet alliance and related agreements.⁵²

⁴⁹ Wu Xiuquan, *Wangshi cangsang*, 182; Shi Zhe, "I Accompanied Chairman Mao to the Soviet Union," 13-14.

⁵⁰ Bo, *Ruogan zhongda jueche yu shijian de huigu*, 41.

⁵¹ Wu Xiuquan, *Wangshi cangsang*, p. 182.

⁵² Shi Zhe, "I Accompanied Chairman Mao to the Soviet Union," 17; Wu Xiuquan, *Wangshi cangsang*, 182-83; Mao Zedong to the CCP Central Committee, 2 January 1950, *Mao Zedong wengao*, I, 211.

On 2 January 1950, Tass, the official Soviet news agency, published "Mao's interview with a Tass correspondent in Moscow," in which Mao stated: "Among those problems [I have in mind] the foremost are the matters of the current Treaty of Friendship and Alliance between China and the Soviet Union, and of the Soviet Union's loan to the People's Republic of China, and the matter of trade and of a trade agreement between our two countries."⁵³ The same evening, Mao outlined three options to Molotov and Mikoyan:

- (1) We may sign a new Sino-Soviet alliance treaty. This will be very favorable to us. [By doing this], Sino-Soviet relations will be consolidated on the basis of the new treaty; China's workers, peasants, intellectuals, and leftist nationalist bourgeois will be greatly encouraged while rightist nationalist bourgeoisie be isolated; internationally we will have more political strength [zhenzhi ziben] to deal with imperialist countries and to examine all treaties signed by China and imperialist countries in the past.
- (2) We may ask our news agencies to issue a joint communique, only mentioning that our two sides have exchanged views on the old Sino-Soviet Friendship and Alliance Treaty and other problems, and we have reached a consensus on all important problems....
- (3) We may sign an open statement, but not a treaty, to list the principles underlying our relationship.

Mao made it clear that only if the first choice was to be implemented would Zhou be called to Moscow; otherwise, Zhou would not come. Molotov confirmed immediately that he believed choice A was best and Zhou should come to Moscow. Mao then asked if a new treaty would be signed to replace the old treaty. Molotov's answer was again affirmative. Mao decided that it was time for Zhou Enlai to come to Moscow.⁵⁴

Zhou and a large Chinese delegation arrived in Moscow on 20 January 1950.⁵⁵ Two days later, Zhou, joined by Wang Jiaxiang, Li Fuchun, Ye Jizhuang, and Wu Xiuquan, started negotiations with Soviet officials headed by Vyshinsky, the Soviet foreign minister. Zhou paid special attention to making the forthcoming treaty a solid military alliance. According to Wu Xiuquan, one of Zhou's top assistants, Zhou insisted that the treaty should clearly state that if one side was attacked by a third country the other side "must go all out to provide military and other assistance." This persistence paid off as a clause of explicit mutual military commitment was added to the new treaty.⁵⁶ Mao also needed Soviet economic aid to

⁵³ *Renmin ribao*, 3 January 1950; see also Mao Zedong wengao, I, 206. For Mao's description of the background of this statement, see Mao Zedong to the CCP Central Committee, 2 January 1950, *Mao Zedong wengao*, I, 211.

⁵⁴ Mao Zedong to the CCP Central Committee, 2 January 1950, *Mao Zedong wengao*, I, 211-12.

⁵⁵ Not wanting to give the Russians the impression that they were in a hurry to negotiate the treaty, Mao instructed Zhou "to prepare for five days ... and come here by train not by airplane." Zhou followed Mao's instruction and came to the Soviet Union nearly three weeks after receiving Mao's telegram. See Mao to the CCP Central Committee, 2 January 1950, *Mao Zedong wengao*, I, 212; see also Wu Xiuquan, *Wangshi cangsang*, pp. 179-180.

⁵⁶ Wu, *Wangshi cangsang*, pp. 184-85.

reconstruct and to modernize China. In exchange for Soviet support, Mao recognized the independence of Outer Mongolia and allowed the Russians to maintain their privileges in Manchuria, including control of Port Arthur for several more years.⁵⁷ Although the Soviets were somewhat hesitant to make a clear military commitment to China, they ultimately concluded that it was in their interests to do so as they had much to gain and little to lose. After a long and uneasy bargaining process, the Sino-Soviet alliance came into being on 14 February 1950.

On 17 February 1950, Mao and Zhou left Moscow. They returned home with firm Russian support for the Chinese revolution and military commitment to China's national security.⁵⁸ These achievements were not easy for Mao, but he ultimately got them and was satisfied. In his departure speech he noted:

It is plain to see that the unity of the people of the two great countries, China and the Soviet Union, solidified by the alliance treaty, will be permanent and inviolable, and one which cannot be put asunder by anyone. Moreover, this unity will not only influence the prosperity of these two great countries, China and the Soviet Union, but will surely affect the future of humanity and the triumph of peace and justice all over the world.⁵⁹

Zhou Enlai also stated in his departure address that "these treaties and agreements made the Chinese people feel that they were no longer isolated." To the contrary, "they were now much stronger than ever before."⁶⁰ These statements by Mao and Zhou were largely aimed at the enemies of the new China -- with the making of the new Sino-Soviet alliance, Mao believed that Communist China now occupied a more powerful position in an insecure world. Mao's "lean-to-one-side" statement became a real principle underlying the CCP's foreign policy.

Was the Korean problem discussed by Mao and Stalin during Mao's visit to the Soviet Union? Chinese materials available today afford no direct answer to this question. In Khrushchev's memoirs, he mentions that Kim Il-sung visited the Soviet Union around the time when Mao was there. Kim asked Stalin's opinion for his plan of unifying Korea through

⁵⁷ Mao Zedong to the CCP Central Committee, 3 January 1950, *Mao Zedong wengao*, I, 213; see also Wu Xiuquan, *Wangshi cangsang*, pp. 186-88.

⁵⁸ During Mao's visit to the Soviet Union, China ordered 586 planes from the Soviet Union, including 280 fighters, 198 bombers, and 108 trainers and other planes. On 15 February 1950, one day before Mao's leaving for China, he wrote to Stalin, to order another 628 planes. From 16 February to 5 March 1950, a mixed Soviet air-defense division, following the request of the PRC government, moved into Shanghai, Nanjing, and Xuzhou, to take responsibilities of air defense for these areas. From 13 March to 11 May, this Soviet division shot down 5 GMD planes in the Shanghai area, making Shanghai's air defense system greatly strengthened. See Han and Tan et al., *Dangdai zhongguo jundui de junshi gongzuo*, II, 161; Wang Dinglie and Lin Fu et al., *Dangdai zhongguo kongjun* (Contemporary Chinese Air Force), Beijing: The Press of Chinese Social Science, 1989, 78-79, 110; Lin Fu et al, *Kongjun shi* (A History of the PLA's Air Force), Beijing: The Press of the People's Liberation Army, 1989, 53-54.

⁵⁹ *Renmin ribao*, 20 February 1950; see also *Mao Zedong wengao*, I, 266-67.

⁶⁰ *Zhonghua renmin gongheguo duiwai guanxi wenjianji*, 1949-1950, 81.

military means. Stalin was worried about American interference and sought Mao's advice. Mao, according to Khrushchev, believed American intervention unlikely. Stalin had thus endorsed Kim's plan to attack South Korea.⁶¹ In the most recent volume of Khrushchev's posthumous memoir (*The Glasnost Tapes*), Khrushchev further emphasizes:

For many years we insisted that the initiative for starting the Korean War came from South Korea....I'm telling the truth now for the sake of history: it was the initiative of Comrade Kim Il-sung, and it was supported by Stalin and many others -- in fact, by everybody.⁶²

Although no "hard evidence" in Chinese sources available today will either prove or disprove Khrushchev's accounts, I have at least two reasons to believe that Khrushchev's opinions should be given credit. First, Khrushchev's description of other Chinese-Soviet contacts around the Korean War period is consistent with many Chinese sources. For example, Khrushchev also tells the story of Zhou Enlai's secret visit to the Soviet Union after the UN landing at Inchon and his account of Zhou's visit is compatible with recently released Chinese sources even in small details.⁶³ Khrushchev's recollections on the Korean problem should be treated much more seriously than those sections dealing with himself in his memoirs. Second, Chinese sources also suggest that the CCP leadership, since late 1949, had begun to downplay the danger of American intervention in East Asian affairs. As discussed before, Mao and the CCP leadership prepared for direct American military intervention in the mainland in the spring and fall of 1949. After no American military invasion occurred when the PLA mopped up GMD stragglers in China's coastal areas, especially in Shanghai and Qingdao, the CCP's perception of "American threat" experienced intricate changes in late 1949 and early 1950. Convinced now that the prospect of an American invasion of the Chinese mainland no longer existed, CCP leaders also believed that the United States was vulnerable both in strategic and military senses in the Far East. With its strategic emphasis on the West as well as its lack of positive support from the allies in the East, in the opinions of CCP military planners, the United States would require at least five years to be ready to enter major military operations in the Far East. This view was further strengthened in January 1950 by Secretary of State Dean Acheson's open exclusion of Taiwan and South Korea from the U.S. western Pacific defensive perimeter.⁶⁴ If Stalin had underestimated America's intention and capacity in a major military

⁶¹ N. S. Khrushchev, *Khrushchev Remembers*, London, 1971, 367-368.

⁶² N. S. Khrushchev, *Khrushchev Remembers: The Glasnost Tapes*, tran. and ed. by Jettold L. Schecter with Vyacheslav V. Luchkov, Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1990, 143.

⁶³ See *Khrushchev Remembers*, 371-772; see also part four of this paper.

⁶⁴ This view was explicitly expressed by General Su Yu, the person who was assigned by the CCP leadership to charge the Taiwan campaign, in his reports about the Taiwan problem on 5 and 27 January 1950. See He Di, "The Last Campaign to Unify China: The CCP's Unmaterialized Plan to Liberate Taiwan, 1949-1950," *Chinese Historians*, Vol. V, No. 1, 7-8.

involvement in the Far East, the CCP certainly shared Stalin's view before the outbreak of the Korean War.

Two other events released by Chinese sources afford further ground for the belief that the Korean problem was at least a topic of Mao-Stalin discussions. When Mao was still in the Soviet Union, Kim Il-sung sent Kim Kwang-hyop to visit China, asking the Chinese to return all remaining Korean-nationality soldiers in the PLA's Fourth Field Army. According to the memoir of Nie Rong-zhen, acting general chief staff of the PLA, the Chinese agreed to this request after discussions between himself and Kim. On 19 January 1950, Kim further asked the Chinese to send these Korean-nationality soldiers back to Korea together with their equipment. Nie felt sympathetic to the request but he had to ask instructions from the CCP Central Committee. He sent off a report for this matter to the CCP Central Committee on 21 January, and the Committee approved the Korean request the next day.⁶⁵ Then, according to Nie, 14,000 Korean-nationality PLA soldiers, together with their equipment returned to Korea in the Spring of 1950.⁶⁶ What should be particularly noticed here is the unusually expeditious approval of the CCP Central Committee's approval of the second Korean request. Since late 1948 and early 1949, Mao had stressed at several occasions that "in diplomatic affairs nothing was small" and everything should be reported to him and the Party's Central Committee.⁶⁷ It is thus unlikely that Nie or even Liu Shaoqi, the person in charge of CCP's daily affairs during Mao's absence, would fail to report to Mao about such a matter which was by no means "small." And if Mao could OK this request in so quick a manner or Liu believed that he could authorize the request by himself, this should be logically taken as an indication that both within the CCP leadership and between China and the Soviet Union there had existed a well defined consensus on the Korean problem.

Another event which needs some discussion here is Kim Il-sung's secret visit to China in April 1950 on his way back home from the Soviet Union. Again, scholars will not be able to find any written account of this visit in Chinese sources available now. Chinese officials and researchers who might have knowledge of this visit generally believe that Kim told Mao only his determination to unify Korea through military means, but not his specific military plan; let

⁶⁵ Nie, *Nie Rongzhen huiyilu*, 743-744.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 744. In my interview with Chinese military researchers who have archival accesses in May 1991, they point out that the total number of Korean-nationality soldiers returned to Korea in Spring 1950 was around 23,000, much higher than what was offered by Nie Rongzhen. These soldiers were mainly from different units of the PLA's Fourth Field Army and later organized as the Korean People's Army's 7th Division. This number is also much closer to what offered by Cumings in *The Origins of the Korean War*, which is based on South Korean and American intelligence sources (see Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War*, II, 363).

⁶⁷ Mao Zedong to the CCP Northeastern Bureau, 18 November 1948, Mao Zedong to the CCP Tianjin Municipal Committee, 20 January 1949, Mao Zedong to Su Yu, 27 and 29 April 1949, originals of these documents are kept in the Chinese Central Archives in Beijing.

alone had he released to the Chinese the date of his action. Kim was relying more on the Soviets than on the Chinese.⁶⁸ Before further materials about Kim's visit are declassified, we can go no farther than what is offered by these sources. What should be emphasized here is that (1) the simple fact that Kim informed Mao of his intention of attacking the South on his way back from Moscow tells us that both the Soviet Union and China had at least some pre-knowledge of North Korea's war preparations; and (2) it is far too premature to conclude that Mao and the CCP leadership did not support Kim's intention of attacking the South, as argued by Hao Yufan and Zhai Zhihai in their generally plausible article on China's decision to enter the Korean War.⁶⁹ Otherwise, scholars will feel extremely perplexed to understand why the CCP decided to send as many as 50,000-70,000 Korean-nationality PLA soldiers back to Korea together with their military equipment from late 1949 to mid-1950. The viewpoints of Xu Yan, a Chinese expert on the history of the Korean War, is noteworthy here: "In accordance with the principles of Marxism-Leninism, the CCP did not want to interfere with the internal affairs of other countries; nor would it fail to support the revolutionary struggles of other peoples. After Japan's surrender, Stalin, for the purpose of averting direct Soviet-American confrontation, hindered the Chinese revolution. The CCP leadership and Mao Zedong, with this experience, would in no circumstance fail to support revolutions in other countries."⁷⁰ Xu's argument definitely makes good sense.

Obviously, it is still difficult to make a conclusive judgment about the extent of China's participation in the preparation of the North Korean invasion. What seems certain, however, is that CCP leaders knew in advance Kim Il-sung's intention, if not his concrete plan, to unify the entire Korean Peninsula through military means. While it is risky to conclude that Mao and the CCP leadership had actively supported Kim's plan, it seems safe to say that they at least did not oppose Kim's intention. And in any case, the CCP's attitude toward Korea had a close connection with the Sino-Soviet alliance treaty.

IV

The Korean War erupted on 25 June 1950. Within seventy-two hours, the United States decided to intervene. President Harry Truman announced on 27 June that the United

⁶⁸ See the description of Kim's visit by Hao Yufan and Zhai Zhihai in "China's Decision to Enter the Korean War: History Revisited," in *The China Quarterly*, 121 (March 1990), 100, which is based on information from interviews. In my interview with Shi Zhe in May 1991, he alleged that Kim's plan to attack the South was only reported to Stalin and was unknown to Mao and the CCP leadership. During Zhou's visit to the Soviet Union in October 1950, according to Shi, he asked Stalin why China was not informed of Kim's plan, Stalin avoided answering this question.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 99-100.

⁷⁰ Xu Yan, "The Tortuous Process of Making the Final Decision to Enter the Korean War," *Dangshi yanjiu ziliao* (Materials Concerning the Study of the Party History), No. 4, 1991, 7.

States would come to rescue South Korea and send the Seventh Fleet into the Taiwan Strait to neutralize this area before the end of the Korean conflict. The Korean civil war quickly changed into an international crisis.

Mao and the CCP leadership acted immediately to cope with the crisis situation created by the outbreak of the Korean War. The CCP leadership quickly decided to postpone the PLA's Taiwan campaign plan to focus on Korea.⁷¹ On 30 June, five days after the outbreak of the Korean War, Zhou Enlai decided to send a group of Chinese diplomats, most of whom were military intelligence personnel, to North Korea to establish better communications with Kim Il-sung as well as to collect first-hand materials on the fighting.⁷² One week later, on 7 and 10 July, Zhou, under Mao's instruction, chaired two conferences focusing on military preparations for the Korean conflict. A crucial decision was made at these conferences: the Thirteenth Army Corps under the Fourth Field Army would be immediately transformed into the Northeastern Border Defense Army (NEBDA) to prepare for "an intervention in the Korean War if necessary."⁷³ By early August, more than 250,000 troops of the former Fourth Field Army had taken positions on the Chinese-Korean border.⁷⁴

When the North Koreans failed to force the UN forces from Korea, the CCP leadership became concerned with a possible reversal of the Korean situation and speeded up preparations for Chinese involvement in the Korean War. On 4 August 1950, the CCP politburo met to discuss the Korean situation. According to the memoirs of Bo Yibo, a member of the CCP Central Committee at that time, Mao made his opinion clear at the meeting: "If the U.S. imperialists won the war, they would become more arrogant and would threaten us. We should not fail to assist the Koreans. We must lend them our hands in the form of sending our military volunteers there. The timing could be further decided, but we have to prepare for this."⁷⁵ The next day, Mao ordered the NEBDA to complete preparations for war operations in early September.⁷⁶ Following Mao's instruction, the NEBDA held a meeting attended by division level officers on 13 August. The meeting, according to the

⁷¹ Xiao Jingguang, *Xiao Jingguang huiyilu* (The Memoirs of Xiao Jingguang), II, Beijing: The Press of the People's Liberation Army, 1990, 26; Zhou Jun, "A Preliminary Exploration of Reasons Why the PLA Failed to Carry Out the Taiwan Campaign Plan after the Formation of the PRC," *Zhonggong dangshi yanjiu* (The CCP History Study), No. 1, 1991, 72.

⁷² Chai Chenwen and Zhao Yongtian, *Banmendien tanpan* (The Panmunjom Negotiation), Beijing: The Press of the People's Liberation Army, 1989, 35-36.

⁷³ Han and Tan et al., *Dangdai zhongguo jundui de junshi gongzuo*, I, 449-450.

⁷⁴ Shen Zonghong and Meng Zhaohui et al., *Zhongguo renmin zhiyuanjun kangmei yuanchao zhanshi* (History of the War to Resist America and Assist Korea by the Chinese People's Volunteers), Beijing: The Press of Military Science, 1988, 7-8; Chai and Zhao, *Banmendien tanpan*, 33.

⁷⁵ Cited in Bo, *Ruogan zhongda jueche ye shijian de huigu*, I, 43.

⁷⁶ Mao Zedong and the CCP Central Committee to Gao Gang, 5 August 1950, *Mao Zedong wengao*, I, 454.

recollection of Du Ping, director of the Political Department of the Thirteenth Army Corps, reached the consensus that the Chinese should "take the initiative, cooperate with the Korean People's Army, march forward without reluctance, and break up the enemy's dream of aggression."⁷⁷ But the meeting also found that the preparation work for entering the Korean War was "too onerous and urgent to be completed in August." Viewing this difficulty, Mao issued another instruction to the NEDBA on 18 August, ordering them to "step up and make sure to fulfill every preparatory work by 30 September."⁷⁸ In the meantime, logistical preparations and political mobilization for entering war operations were carried out urgently under the assumption that China would soon become a participant of the Korean War.⁷⁹ It might be premature, even with all this evidence, to conclude that Mao and the CCP leadership had made up their mind in mid August to send Chinese forces to Korea. It is fair to say, however, that even before the American landing at Inchon, CCP leaders were inclined to enter the war.⁸⁰

Until the Inchon landing, however, China did not take the decisive step to enter the war. This is simply because to prepare to enter the war and to enter the war were not the same thing. In retrospect, Mao's final decision to send troops to Korea was constrained by many complicated factors. First of all, as mentioned before, the Northeast Border Army was unable to complete preparations for entering the war before the Inchon landing, although they had been continuously pushed by Mao. Secondly, Kim Il-sung, as a Korean nationalist, hoped to fight the war with his own forces. He seemed unwilling to request Chinese help as long as he believed the situation was under control, and without Kim's invitation, the CCP preferred to wait.⁸¹ Third, and more relevant to the discussion of this paper, Stalin's cautious attitude formed another restrictive factor for Mao. Several Chinese sources point out that Stalin, who had underestimated America's intention and capacity to intervene in Korea, became more cautious after the outbreak of the Korean War and did not want to involve the Soviet Union

⁷⁷ Du Ping, *Zai zhiyuanjun zongbu: Du Ping huiyilu* (My Years at the Headquarters of the Chinese People's Volunteers: The Memoirs of Du Ping), Beijing: The Press of the People's Liberation Army, 1989, 18-20.

⁷⁸ Mao Zedong to Gao Gang, 18 August 1950, *Mao Zedong wengao*, I, 469.

⁷⁹ Du Ping, *Zai zhiyuanjun zongbu*, 23-30; Li Jukui, *Li Jukui huiyilu* (The Memoirs of Li Jukui) Beijing: The Press of the People's Liberation Army, 1986, 263-266.

⁸⁰ For a more detailed discussion of the CCP leadership's considerations to send troops to China, see Chen Jian, "China's Changing Aims during the Korean War," forthcoming in the inaugural issue (Spring 1992) of *The Journal of American-East Asian Relations*.

⁸¹ According to materials available now, Kim Il-sung did not ask for direct Chinese assistance until after the Inchon landing, when the North Korean troops began to disintegrate under the pressure of UN counter-offensive. See Chai and Zhao, *Banmendian tanpan*, 77; Hong Xuezhi, *Kangmei yuanchao zhanzheng huiyi* (Recollections of the War to Resist America and Assist Korea), Beijing: The Press of the People's Liberation Army Literature, 1990, 8-9. My interview with Chinese military researchers in May 1991 also confirmed this.

into any complexity which might result in a showdown with the United States.⁸² Although no Chinese sources available now have released any concrete discussions between top leaders of Beijing and Moscow for the period from late June to late September 1950, it is not implausible to believe that the CCP leadership would have maintained close contacts with the Soviets.⁸³ And Mao had no reason not to take Stalin's cautious attitude seriously.

UN forces' successful landing at Inchon on 15 September changed the entire trend of the Korean War. With the gradual collapse of North Korean resistance and the northward march of UN forces, the CCP leadership had to view the development of the Korean War from a new perspective: the safety of China's border with Korea was now severely menaced by UN forces rapidly moving toward it. The CCP leadership acted immediately to step up its preparations for sending troops to Korea. The CMCC decided on 17 September to send a group of military officers to Korea to "get familiar with the general situation, make surveys of Korean topography, and prepare for future battles."⁸⁴ Three days later, Zhou Enlai laid down the principles for Chinese intervention in Korea, which emphasized the importance of carrying out the war to resist America and assist Korea "on the basis of self-reliance."⁸⁵ This implied that CCP leaders were considering sending troops to Korea even without a firm backing of the Soviet Union.

Facing the new situation after Inchon, however, the Soviets seemed willing to do more. When the Chinese discussed with the Soviets about possible Chinese-Soviet cooperation in intervening in Korea, the two sides, obviously following the spirit of the Sino-Soviet alliance treaty, reached a general understanding that if the Chinese land forces entered the Korean War, the Soviet Union would send their air forces to Korea to provide an air umbrella for the Chinese.⁸⁶ Mao, who had been so inclined to send troops to Korea, had now a stronger basis to step forward.

⁸² Yao Xu, *Cong Yalujiang dao banmendan*, 22; Xu Yan, *Diyici jiaoliang: Kangmei yuanchao zhanzheng de lishi huigu yu fansi* (The First Confrontation: A Historical Review of the War to Resist America and Assist Korea), Beijing: the Press of Chinese Broadcasting and Television, 1990, 22.

⁸³ In actuality, we do know, through one Chinese source, that a Soviet air force division, "following the agreement of the Chinese and Soviet governments," arrived in the Northeastern area in August 1950, "to take the responsibility of defending this area." This is a clear indication of Sino-Soviet contacts during the early period of the Korean War. See Wang and Lin et al., *Dangdai zhongguo kongjun*, 78.

⁸⁴ Chai and Zhao, *Banmendan tanpan*, 79.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 80.

⁸⁶ Many Chinese sources mention that before China made the final decision to enter the Korean War, China and the Soviet Union had reached an agreement that if China sent troops to Korea, the Soviets would send air forces there. Few of these sources, however, point out when such an agreement was made. This paragraph here follows my discussions with Chinese researchers in May 1991 and Hong Xuezhi's account in his *Kangmei yuanchao zhanzheng huiyi*, 24-25.

The final decision to send Chinese troops to Korea was made between 1 October and 2 October. Two important events paved the way for the decision. First, on 30 September, the Third Division of the South Korean Army crossed the thirty-eighth parallel. And the next day, General Douglas MacArthur issued an ultimatum to Kim Il-sung demanding an unconditional surrender. The Chinese took these reports very seriously.⁸⁷ Second, Kim Il-sung, his regime at the verge of collapse, turned to the Chinese at last. Late on 1 October, Kim held an emergency meeting with Ni Zhiliang, Chinese ambassador to Korea, and requested that the Chinese send the Thirteenth Army Corps into Korea. At the same time, Kim sent Pak Hon-yong, vice prime minister of North Korea, to Beijing to meet Mao and other CCP leaders in person. In a letter signed by Kim and Pak, they "urgently solicit that the Chinese People's Liberation Army directly enter the war to support us."⁸⁸

On 2 October, Mao convened an urgent meeting of the Party Politburo Standing Committee. Emphasizing the dangerous situation in Korea, Mao made it clear at the beginning of the meeting: "The question now is not whether we should send troops to Korea or not, but how fast we can do this. One day's difference will be crucial to the whole situation. Today we will discuss two urgent questions -- when should our troops enter Korea and who should be the commander." This meeting yielded decisions to enter the Korean War around 15 October and to ask Peng Dehuai to command Chinese troops in Korea.⁸⁹

It is noticeable that right after the meeting, Mao immediately telegraphed to Stalin, informing him that the CCP had "decided to send a portion of our troops, under the name of Chinese Volunteers, to fight the American and [Syngman] Rhee forces in Korea and to aid our Korean comrades." Mao stressed in the telegram:

We think this is a necessary step because if we allow Korea to be occupied by the Americans, the Korean revolutionary forces will be completely destroyed. We will then see the American invaders more rampant, which will be very unfavorable to the whole East.

Mao also noted in the telegram that China's entry into the Korean War might cause the United States to declare war on China; or the United States might bombard large Chinese cities and industrial bases; or the United States might use its navy to attack Chinese coastal areas. Mao believed that if the Chinese forces were able to defeat the Americans in Korea, an American

⁸⁷ Chai and Zhao, *Banmendian tanpan*, 80; Zhang, "Before and After Peng Dehuai's Appointment to Command the CPV in Korea," *Zhonggong dangshi ziliao* (Documentary Materials of the History of the Chinese Communist Party), 31 (1989), 123.

⁸⁸ Zhang, "Before and After Peng Dehuai's Appointment to Command the CPV in Korea," 123-124; for the contents of Kim's letter to Mao, see Ye Yumen, *Chubing chaoxian: kangmei yuanchao lishi jishi* (Entering the Korean War: The True Accounts of the History of Resisting America and Assisting Korea), Beijing: The Press of October Literature, 1990, 39-40.

⁸⁹ Zhang, "Before and After Peng Dehuai's Appointment to Command the CPV in Korea," 123-125; see also Xu, *Diyici jiaoliang*, 22.

declaration of war on China would not be a real problem. So far as China's war aims are concerned, Mao emphasized: "Since we have decided to send Chinese troops to Korea to fight the Americans.... we should be able to solve the problem, that is, we are going to annihilate the aggression troops of America and other countries, and drive them out [of Korea]." ⁹⁰ By stressing both the worst and best prospects facing China, Mao obviously hoped that the Russians would abide by their promise to cooperate with the Chinese so that the best could be pursued.

From 3-7 October, the CCP Politburo held a series of expanded meetings to discuss Mao's decision at Beijing. Mao dominated these meetings. As the person responsible for the decision to enter the Korean War, he clarified the case for intervention and rebutted opposition from his comrades. He and his supporters stated reasons for sending troops to Korea, emphasizing that the Korean problem concerned not only the security of China but also the fate of the confrontation between the socialist camp and the imperialist camp in the East. They also believed that comparing China's situation with that of the United States, China was superior in terms of manpower, moral strength, and support from the people, which would compensate for China's inferiority in terms of weapons and equipment. These meetings confirmed Mao's decision to send Chinese troops to Korea, and Peng Dehuai was selected as the commander-in-chief of the Chinese People's Volunteers (CPV) to Korea. ⁹¹ On 8 October, Mao, as the chairman of the CMCC, formally issued the order to enter the Korean War. ⁹²

Chinese military forces acted immediately. On 8 October, Peng Dehuai flew to Shenyang and established CPV headquarter there. The same evening, Peng met with Park Il-yu, Kim Il-sung's representative in Shenyang, to discuss Chinese troops' entry into Korea. At the same time, Ni Zhiliang, Chinese ambassador to Korea, went to Kim Il-sung's underground headquarters in Pyongyang to inform the latter that the CCP had decided to send Chinese troops to Korea. ⁹³ On 9 October, Peng convened a conference attended by all the army level

⁹⁰ Mao Zedong to Stalin, 2 October 1950, *Mao Zedong wengao*, I, 539-540.

⁹¹ Zhang, "Before and After Peng Dehuai's Appointment to Command the CPV in Korea," 133-136; Yao, *Cong Yalujiang dao banmendian*, 23-24; see also CCP Central Committee, "The Guideline for Interpreting the Current Situation," 26 October 1950, Party History and Party Constitution Institute of the National Defense University, eds., *Zhonggong dangshi jiaoxue cankao ziliao* (Reference Materials for Teaching CCP History), The Press of National Defense University, 1986, Vol. XIX, 211-213.

⁹² Mao Zedong, "the Order to Establish the Chinese People's Volunteers," 8 October 1950, *Mao Zedong wengao*, I, 544.

⁹³ Zhang, "Before and After Peng Dehuai's Appointment to Command the CPV in Korea," 142-145; Chai and Zhao, *Banmendian tanpan*, 84-85; Hu Guangzhen and Bao Mingrong, "Several Factual Corrections of Yao Xu's 'The Brilliant Decision to Resist America and Assist Korea,'" *Dangshi yanjiu* (Studies of Party History), No. 3, 1981, 60.

cadres of the 13th Army Corps, ordering them to complete preparations for battle in days.⁹⁴ At this stage, the Chinese troops, like an arrow on a bowstring, prepared to enter the battle.

The situation suddenly changed, however, at this juncture. At the same time Mao had issued orders to send Chinese troops into Korea, Zhou Enlai, together with interpreter Shi Zhe, had flown to the Soviet Union to finalize details of Chinese-Soviet military cooperation in Korea.⁹⁵ Joined by Lin Biao, a member of the CCP Politburo who went to Russia to receive medical treatment, and Wang Jiaxiang, Chinese ambassador to the Soviet Union, Zhou met Stalin at a villa on the Black Sea on the evening of 9 October.⁹⁶

The meeting was a long one -- lasting from 7 PM on 9 October to 5 AM the next morning. The meeting was supposed to focus on how many fighters and bombers the Soviet Union could send to Korea while the Chinese land forces entered the Korean War, and who should command Soviet air forces there. To the surprise of the Chinese, however, Stalin was now reluctant to dispatch Soviet air forces into Korea. He promised that the Soviet Union would deliver the Chinese military equipment for 20 divisions, but the Soviet air forces would not be sent into Korea because they needed more time to get ready. On learning the surprising Soviet change of heart, Zhou tried his best to change Stalin's mind, but without success. He urgently cabled to Beijing on 10 October informing Mao and the CCP leadership of the Soviet hesitancy and asking them to reconsider the decision to enter the Korean War.⁹⁷

⁹⁴ Zhang Xi, "Peng Dehuai in the War of Resisting America and Assisting Korea," *Xinhua Liaoyuan*, No. 6, 1985, 3; Hu and Bao "Several Factual Corrections of Yao Xu's 'The Brilliant Decision to Resist America and Assist Korea,'" 60.

⁹⁵ Chai and Zhao, *Banmendian tanpan*, 83; Zhang, "Before and After Peng Dehuai's Appointment to Command the the CPV in Korea," 147.

⁹⁶ The date for Zhou's meeting with Stalin here follows the account of Zhang Xi in his "Before and After Peng Dehuai's Appointment to Command the the CPV in Korea," 147. In my interview with Shi Zhe on 22 May 1991, he gave another date -- 6 October, and he insists that his memory be correct. But by checking other sources, Zhou did not leave Beijing until at least 7 October, so I do not adopt Shi's date here.

⁹⁷ This paragraph on the Zhou-Stalin meeting from the late evening of 9 October to early morning of 10 October follows Zhang Xi's "Before and After Peng Dehuai's Appointment to Command the Troops to Korea," 147-148. Zhang's account, while the most detailed one about this meeting, is generally supported by several other Chinese sources, such as Chai and Zhao, *Banmendian tanpan*, 83; Hong, *Kangmei yuanchao zhanzheng huiyi*, 25-26. In my interview with Shi Zhe on 22 May 1991, and also in Shi's forthcoming memoirs, he gives another version of the story. According to Shi, Zhou went to see Stalin, on 6 October, to tell him that the CCP Politburo had decided not to send troops to Korea. Stalin, instead of pressing the Chinese too hard, asked them to consider the tremendous American menace to China's security, the northeast area in particular, if UN forces reached the Yalu. Stalin also warned the Chinese that even the task of absorbing Korean refugees could give the Chinese a big headache. Stalin, in defending the Soviet stand, stressed that the Soviet Union could not send troops to Korea because the the Russian border with Korea was too small. Following the decision of the CCP leadership, however, Zhou did not yield to Stalin, and Stalin stated, with emotion, that "that you do not send troops to Korea is your decision, but socialism in Korea would collapse within a very short time." Shi's account, however, is not compatible with several known documentary evidences. First, as other sources prove that Zhou did not leave Beijing until sometime 7 October, it was impossible for Zhou to be in the Soviet Union on 6 October. Second, as shown in Mao's telegram to Stalin on 2

This sudden Soviet change of heart caused serious problems for the Chinese leadership. Mao and other CCP leaders in Beijing now had to decide if they should go ahead on their own without the protection of the Soviet air umbrella. Mao cabled to Peng Dehuai and other leading figures in the Northeast area on the evening of 12 October, ordering the Thirteenth Army Corps to stop all movement. Peng and Gao were ordered to return to Beijing immediately to attend a politburo meeting.⁹⁸

The CCP politburo held an emergency meeting on 13 October to discuss whether China should intervene without Soviet air support. After an overnight meeting, they decided to go on, and Peng immediately called Xie Fang, chief of staff of the CPV, asking CPV units to continue preparation for entering Korea.⁹⁹ After the meeting Mao cabled to Zhou:

... I have consulted with comrades in the Politburo. The consensus is that it is still advantageous to send our troops to Korea. At the initial stage of the war, we can concentrate on fighting the [South Korean] puppet army, for we may cope with the puppet army with certainty. We can establish bases in the vast mountainous areas north to the line between Wonsan and Pyongyang. This will encourage the Korean people. If we are able to eliminate several puppet divisions in this stage, the Korean situation would take a turn for our favor. The above positive policy will be very advantageous to China, to Korea, to the East, and even to the whole world. If we do not send off our troops, and allow the enemy to reach the Yalu River, the enemy will be swollen with arrogance. This will result in a variety of disadvantages to us, especially to the Northeast area. The whole Northeast Border Defense Army will be tied down there, and electric power in south Manchuria will be controlled [by the enemy]. In short, we think that we should enter the war; we have to enter the war. To enter the war will be very rewarding; not to enter the war will be extremely harmful.¹⁰⁰

At first glimpse, it is surprising that the CCP leadership reaffirmed its decision to intervene after the Soviet Union backed out of its commitment to provide air support. According to several Chinese sources, even Stalin himself was surprised, and then greatly moved, when he learned the new decision made by Mao and the CCP leadership.¹⁰¹ Considering Mao's deep commitment to revolution and China's security, however, this was a natural, or even inevitable, development. As Mao made clear in his telegram to Zhou, he believed that Korea's fate was related not only to the vital national security interests of China

October and Mao's order to send Chinese troops to Korea on 8 October, the CCP leadership did decide to enter Korea before Zhou's meeting with Stalin, not after, as alleged by Shi Zhe. I mentioned all this to Shi in our discussion, he still persists in his version, although he is unable to make his account and the aforementioned Mao's telegrams meet.

⁹⁸ Mao Zedong to Peng Dehuai, Gao Gang and others, 12 October 1950, *Mao Zedong wengao*, I, 553.

⁹⁹ Zhang, "Before and After Peng Dehuai's Appointment to Command the CPV in Korea," 150

¹⁰⁰ Mao Zedong to Zhou Enlai, 13 October 1950, *Mao Zedong junshi wenxuan*, 347; *Mao Zedong wengao*, I, 556.

¹⁰¹ Chen Yi's address on 16 April 1964, cited from Yao Xu, *Cong yalujiang dao banmendan*, 22.

but the destiny of an Eastern and world revolution, of which the Chinese Communist revolution was an important part. Given his frame of reference, Mao had to enter the Korean War. This is why even a dramatic shift (such as Stalin's breaking his promise to provide air support) did not alter Mao's resolve.

But the sudden Soviet change inevitably left a stamp on the Chinese approach to intervene in the Korean War. Mao and the CCP leadership, facing the cruel fact that their troops would not be protected from air attack in Korea, were forced to further restrict the scope of their goals in the initial stage of the war. Mao telegraphed Zhou on 14 October, summarizing the CPV's strategy for the initial fighting: The CPV troops were to take a defensive position after entering Korea; they would establish a defensive perimeter, composed of two or three defense lines north to Pyongyang and Wonsan in order to keep bases as the starting point for future offensives. If UN troops attacked the perimeter in six months, they planned to wipe out the enemy before the perimeter; if UN troops did not initiate an offensive, the Chinese would not either. Only after all preparations were completed would they launch a counter-offensive toward Pyongyang and Wonsan.¹⁰²

The Soviet "betrayal" at this crucial juncture made clear to Mao and the CCP leadership the limitations of the Sino-Soviet alliance. The Chinese desperately needed Soviet support in any form at this moment, and Mao had no other choice but to swallow the fruit of the Russian betrayal. Mao, however, would never forgive it. We have every reason to believe that a seed of the future Sino-Soviet split had thus been sowed in the process of China's intervention in the Korean War.

After the CCP leadership decided to keep its original plan to enter the war, Peng Dehuai returned to Shenyang immediately. On the morning of 15 October, Mao cabled to Gao and Peng, instructing the CPV advanced units to cross the Yalu no later than 17 October.¹⁰³ On 16 October, Peng chaired a conference attended by division level cadres from the CPV. He conveyed the final decision of the Politburo, and announced that Chinese troops would move into Korea as soon as possible. He stressed that all units must be prepared for a difficult and protracted war.¹⁰⁴ Some CPV units on the China side of the Yalu received orders to cross the

¹⁰² Mao Zedong to Zhou Enlai, 14 October 1950, *Mao Zedong wengao*, I, 558-559.

¹⁰³ Mao Zedong to Gao Gang and Peng Dehuai, 15 October 1950, *Ibid.*, 564.

¹⁰⁴ Zhang, "Before and After Peng Dehuai's Appointment to Command the CPV in Korea," 153-154; Shen and Meng at al., *Zhongguo renmin zhiyuanjun kanmei yuanchao zhanshi*, 15; Hu Guangzhen, "Brilliant Decisions and Great Achievements: On the Decision to Dispatch Troops to Korea," *Dangshi yanjiu* (Studies in Party History), No.1, 1983, 37; Peng Dehuai, "Address at the Division Level Cadres of the CPV," 14 (?) October 1950, *Peng Dehuai junshi wenxuan* (Selected Military Works of Peng Dehuai), Beijing: The Central Press of Historical Documents, 1988, 320-327. (According to other sources, Peng's address should be given on 16 October, but *Peng Dehuai junshi wenxuan* mistakenly dates it for 14 October.)

Yalu on the evening of 17 October. A regiment of the Forty-second Army even entered Korea on the early morning of 17 October.¹⁰⁵

Influenced by the effect of the Soviet change of heart, Mao's mind wavered again at this moment. In a telegram to Peng and Gao on 17 October, he ordered the advanced units of the CPV to continue "preparing to" enter Korea on 19 October and to wait for a "formal order" which would be issued on 18 October. He also asked Peng and Gao to come back to Beijing again for a discussion.¹⁰⁶ This occurred in the background that Zhou Enlai would come back to Beijing on 17 October, and Mao did not feel totally comfortable to issue the final order until he met Zhou and received a first-hand report about Stalin's stand. Top CCP leaders met again on 18 October. Zhou brought back the message that Stalin promised to supply the Chinese with military equipment and ammunition they needed in the Korean conflict, and Soviet air forces, while not directly entering the Korean War, would provide the Chinese with an umbrella over China's territory.¹⁰⁷ Mao eventually set up the evening of 19 October as the deadline for the CPV to cross the Yalu on . He personally cabled Deng Hua and other CPV commanders (Peng and Gao were then still in Beijing) to inform them of the order.¹⁰⁸ First time in ten days, Mao had a solid sleep.¹⁰⁹ On 19 October 1950, Chinese troops crossed the Yalu.

Let me conclude this long paper with a brief summary of important points I hope to emphasize and problems remaining unsolved at this stage.

The Sino-Soviet alliance served as the corner stone of the PRC's foreign policy in its early years. Strategic cooperations between China and the Soviet Union and communications between Mao and Stalin, though not free from trouble, were generally substantial, comprehensive, and effective. Since Liu Shaoqi's visit to the Soviet Union in July and August 1949, the CCP and the Soviet Union had virtually divided spheres of responsibilities between them, leaving the promotion of revolutionary movements in East Asia primarily as China's duty. While it is still unclear to what extent China was involved in Kim Il-sung's preparations

¹⁰⁵ Xu, "The Tortuous Process of Making the Final Decision to Enter the Korean War," 11.

¹⁰⁶ Mao Zedong to Peng Dehuai and Gao Gang, 17 October 1950, *Mao Zedong wengao*, I, 567.

¹⁰⁷ See Xu, "The Tortuous Process of Making the Final Decision to Enter the Korean War," 11-12. From October to December 1950, the Soviet Union sent 13 air divisions, including 12 fighter divisions and 1 bomber division to Northeastern, Northern, Eastern, and Central-south China, to assist the Chinese in strengthening these areas' air defense and help train Chinese air units. Wang and Lin et al, *Dangdai zhongguo kongjun*, 78-79.

¹⁰⁸ Mao Zedong to Deng Hua, Hong Xuezhai, Han Xianchu, and Xie Fang, 18 October 1950, *Mao Zedong wengao*, I, 568.

¹⁰⁹ Li Yingqiao (Li was the head of Mao's guardians at that time), *Zhouxia shentan de Mao Zedong* (The Mao Zedong Who Was No Longer a God), Beijing: Chinese and Foreign Culture Publisher, 1989, 122-13.

for unifying his country by military means (an answer to this question will depend upon materials to come out in the future), it seems certain that both China and the Soviet Union supported, or at least did not oppose, Kim's determination. And before the outbreak of the Korean War, both the CCP and the Soviet Union had underestimated America's ability and willingness to engage in major military operations in East Asia. China's decision to enter the Korean War, though basically a Chinese decision (or more accurately speaking, Mao's decision), was backed by the perceived support of the Sino-Soviet alliance. Moscow's renegeing on its promise to offer the Chinese an air umbrella in Korea created tremendous difficulties for Mao and the CCP leadership. Mao and the CCP leadership, following their own considerations of serving China's revolutionary commitment and safeguarding China's national security, decided to stick to the decision to enter the Korean War. In the long run, however, the Soviet "betrayal" at a crucial juncture strengthened Mao's belief in self-reliance and sowed a seed for the future split between China and the Soviet Union.

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