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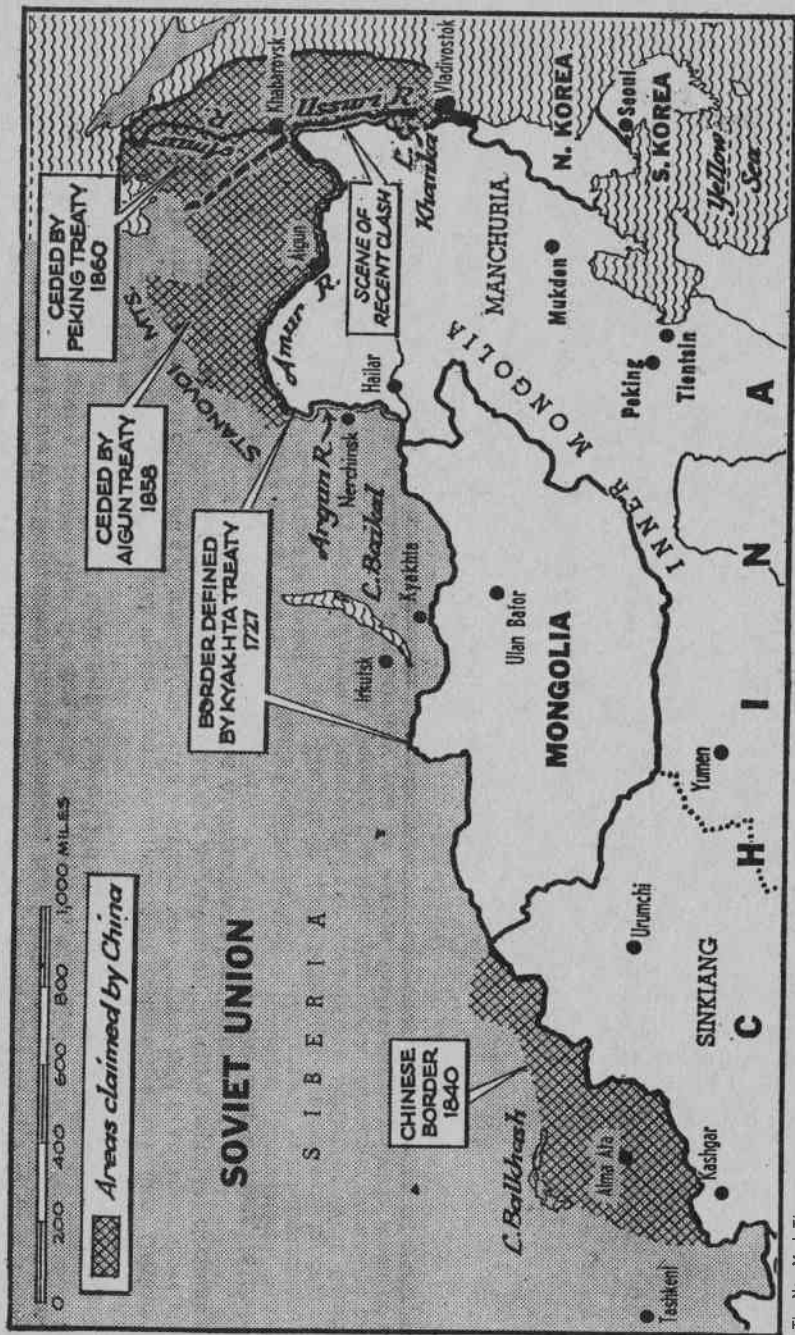
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THE SINO-SOVIET USSURI RIVER BORDER CLASH

The Historical Background And Current Implications

By Maud Russell





March 12, 1969

The New York Times

THE SINO-SOVIET USSURI RIVER BORDER CLASH
THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND CURRENT IMPLICATIONS
 Maud Russell

Where The Clash Occurred

On March 3rd 1969 announcements from the Chinese and Soviet Governments told of a frontier border guards clash on the Ussuri River on the night of March first-second.

The island, Chenpao, as the Chinese call it (or as the Russians call it, Damansky) is a minor disputed area, one of the many islands created by the meandering of the Ussuri River, a river which has changed its course many times since the frontier between Manchuria and the Russian Maritime Territory was delineated in 1860.

"The scene of the Soviet-Chinese clash last Sunday was the swampy, forested banks of the frozen Ussuri River, which forms part of the frontier between the two countries. The river, about half a mile wide in the area of the Soviet frontier post of Nixhne-Nikhailovka, where the incident took place, meanders north and through a sparsely populated broad flood plain between ranges of low hills. In the spring, after the break-up of the ice, the river regularly floods its low-lying banks, shifting its channel, abandoning old river areas and forming sandbanks and larger islands that change the configuration from year to year. The Ussuri River became the border between Russia and China under the Peking Treaty of 1860 in which the Chinese Empire ceded all the land east of the river to the Czars. Peking contends that this accord, like other treaties concluded in the latter part of the 19th century between Chinese and Western powers, was signed under duress...Boundary lines that serve an international frontier are generally drawn along the middle of the main channel, known technically as thalweg in international law." (NYT 3/5/69)

Historical Background of the Sino-Russian Frontier

"The territorial interests of the two great powers of Asia began to clash in the 17th century as Cossack adventurers and Russian fur traders swept east through Siberia to the Pacific Ocean. The northern frontiers of the Chinese Empire were not precisely defined and hostilities broke out when the Russians began to encroach upon Chinese interests along the Amur River in the Far East.

"Under the treaty of Nerchinsk, negotiated in 1689, Russia withdrew from the Amur Valley northward to the Stanovi Mountains, leaving the entire Amur-Ussuri basin to China. A second Chinese-Russian treaty, signed at the frontier town of Kyskhta in 1727, defined a large section of the border, most of which is now the boundary between the Soviet Union and Mongolia. Relations between China and Russia remained essentially unchanged until the mid-19th century when Russia joined Britain, France and other Western powers in wresting territorial and other concessions from the Chinese. Russian forces gradually reentered the Amur Valley and, in 1858, exacted from the Chinese the first of the two major treaties that are now being contested by Peking.

"The accord signed at the Amur River town of Aigun in May 1858 gave Russia sovereignty over 230,000 square miles on the northern bank of the Amur River as far east as the mouth of the Ussuri, the Amur's principal tributary. The treaty also placed 150,000 square miles of territory west of the Ussuri River under joint control. Two years later, by the Treaty of Peking, signed in November 1860, Moscow pressed its advantage and incorporated the jointly controlled territory into Russia. The present frontier was defined by a series of agreements between 1864 and 1895." (Shabad NYT 3/12/69)

There is a 4150 mile-long boundary between China and the Soviet Union. "The Chinese Communist Government, like the Kuomintang Government that preceded it, harbored resentment over a frontier shaped a century ago by Czarist advances into territories in Central Asia and Eastern Siberia claimed at that time by Imperial China. But the Chinese Communists chose not to ruffle the socialist unity

by seeking a demarcation of boundaries. In fact, Communist China entered into extensive cooperation with the Soviets along their common border. The Amur, marking the North Manchurian border, became the "River of Friendship" and an ambitious project was drawn up in 1956 for its joint exploration and development by Chinese and Russians. Sino-Soviet treaties signed in 1951 and 1957 aimed at regulating shipping on the river. Joint Sino-Soviet trusts exploited oil and non ferrous metals in Sinkiang. Peking seemed to accept the Soviet-oriented status of Outer Mongolia, detached from Chinese domination by the Soviets themselves. But in the late 1950's ideological, economic and great-power divergencies developed...and earlier mutual toleration gave way to suspicion and eventually open hostilities. Clashes and frontier violations began to occur on the Sinkiang and Manchurian borders. Frontier tensions have especially increased during the last two and a half years....In 1964 China first openly raised the question of readjustment of boundaries...China talked of Outer Mongolia as 'Chinese soil' and of 'presenting an account' to Russia for lost territories; the Chinese and the Russians formally discussed boundary differences for the first time but reached no agreement. In the 1964 negotiations with the Russians the Chinese took the position that although the treaties relating to Soviet boundaries were imposed on China and therefore 'unequal', Peking was willing to accept them as a basis for renegotiating the entire alignment along the Sino-Soviet frontier and for settling smaller questions of incursions across treaty lines by forces of one country or the other. The Russians rejected the Chinese position." (Durdin NYT 3/16/69)

In a statement issued March 10th 1969 by the Chinese Foreign Ministry China pointed out that "Even according to the unequal 'Sino-Soviet Treaty of Peking', Chenpao Island is indisputable Chinese territory. The Sino-Russian Treaty of Peking stipulated 'from the estuary of the Ussuri River southward to the Hsingkai (Khanka) Lake, the boundary line runs along the Ussuri and Sungacha Rivers. The land lying east of these rivers belongs to Russia and the land west of these rivers belongs to China.' According to established principles of international law, in the case

of navigable boundary rivers, the central line of the main channel determines the ownership of the islands. Chenpao Island and the nearby Kapotze and Chilichin islands are all situated on the Chinese side of the central line of the main channel of the Ussuri River and have always been under Chinese jurisdiction. Chinese frontier guards have always patrolled these islands and Chinese inhabitants have always carried on production on these islands. During the Sino-Soviet boundary negotiations in 1964 the Soviet side itself could not but admit that these islands are Chinese territory.

"On September 27th 1920 the Soviet Government led by Lenin declared, 'All treaties concluded by the previous Russian Government with China are null and void, and it renounces all seized Chinese territory and all Russian concessions in China and returns to China gratis and forever everything the Czarist Government and the Russian bourgeoisie seized rapaciously from her.' This great testament of Lenin's failed to come true because China was then ruled by a reactionary government."

The Chinese statement continues, "After the founding of the People's Republic of China the boundary question between China and the Soviet Union could have been reasonably settled. The Chinese Government consistently holds that boundary questions left over by history should be settled through negotiations and that, pending a settlement, the status quo of the boundary should be maintained. The Government of China has in succession satisfactorily settled complicated boundary questions left over by history with her neighboring countries Burma, Nepal, Pakistan, the People's Republic of Mongolia and Afghanistan. But the boundary question between the Soviet Union and China and between China and India have remained unsettled. The Chinese Government repeatedly held negotiations with the Indian Government on the Chinese-Indian boundary but they were disrupted by the Indian reactionaries.

"In 1964 the Chinese Government held boundary negotiations with the Soviet Government during which the Chinese side made it clear that the 'Chinese-Russian Treaty of Aigun', the 'Sino-Russian Treaty of Peking' and other

treaties relating to the present Chinese-Soviet boundary were all unequal treaties Czarist Russian imperialism imposed on China when power was not in the hands of the peoples of China and Russia. But, prompted by the desire to strengthen revolutionary friendship between the Chinese and the Soviet peoples, the Chinese side was willing to take these treaties as a basis for determining the entire alignment of the boundary line between the two countries and for settling all existing questions relating to the boundary. However, the Soviet side refused to accept the above-mentioned reasonable proposals of the Chinese side. It refused to recognize the treaties relating to the present Sino-Soviet boundary as unequal treaties and obstinately refused to take these treaties as the basis for settling the boundary question."

Continuing, the Chinese statement says, "The Chinese side will have to reconsider its position as regards the Sino-Soviet boundary question as a whole...It is absolutely impermissible for anyone to violate China's sovereignty and territorial integrity. We will not attack unless we are attacked; if we are attacked we will certainly counter-attack..." (NYT 3/12/69)

The New York Times pointed out: "This seems to be paving the way for Communist China to lay formal claim to territories Russia obtained through 'unequal' treaties, something which it so far has not done." (NYT 3/16/69)

It must be noted that almost all of China's pre-Liberation (1949) boundaries were set by imperialist powers. When China's neighbors became free of Czarist imperialism in the second decade of the 20th century and free of British imperialism in the fourth decade there was general and mutual recognition that the questions of boundaries would be examined and readjusted. In every case, China, on her part, asked for negotiations, saying that she did not want a military settlement. Negotiations succeeded in settling her boundaries with Burma, Nepal, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Outer Mongolia. In at least two cases - Burma and Pakistan - China gave up territory that originally had been rightfully claimed as Chinese. India has resisted

finalizing the boundary discussions, finding it to her political advantage (domestically and internationally) to keep this "question" open as an "issue". *

The day is two decades past when the Chinese are unable to protest against invasions of its territory; as Deputy Foreign Minister Chi Peng-fei warned: "The Chinese people are not to be bullied and the violation of China's territory is absolutely impermissible." (Agence France Press NYT 3/4/69)

"The skirmish has once again put at the center of Chinese and world attention that much of Soviet Siberia was stolen from the Manchu Empire little more than a century ago. China has never reconciled herself to that territorial conquest." (Editorial NYT 3/8/69)

Some Pertinent Questions.

1. Why has there been no Russian documentation and maps of the disputed area?

"Observers here (Moscow) have been struck by the failure so far of the Soviet authorities to publish documentation of their contention that the disputed island is Russian. So far the Soviet Union has published no detailed maps to match the one put out last week by the Chinese Foreign Ministry that contends the island is in Chinese territory." (Gwertzman NYT 3/19/69)

It was not until March 16th that the Russians "for the first time accused the Chinese of an invasion aimed at seizure of Soviet territory...The Tass account of the latest fighting (on March 15th), in contrast with the Soviet reporting on the incident of March 2nd, involving the same Far Eastern island, bluntly accused China of seeking to capture the disputed area..." (Kamm NYT 3/17/69)

2. What about the films the Russians are distributing?

It is puzzling to note that the films being shown by the Soviet Union of clashes are not of the March 2nd incident, but of "last winter". Pictures released

by the Soviet Union were published in the New York Times and in the Christian Science Monitor. The film released by the Soviet Union was shown on the "Today" show of Channel 4 on March 19th. Neither pictures nor the film showed fighting.

"Soviet television showed a film of a previous border clash in which Soviet and Chinese troops scuffled with each other." (Gwertzman NYT 3/9/69)

"Soviet television broadcast showed films of earlier border incidents in which Chinese border troops were seen rushing toward the Soviet line in the middle of the frozen Ussuri. The incidents took place last winter. The Chinese were shouting Maoist slogans and waving their little books of the thoughts of Chairman Mao. They were met by a skirmish line of Soviet troops and prevented from going further. In some of the incidents shown the soldiers exchanged blows, but no use of weapons was seen. In other views, the Soviet soldiers, their backs turned stoically to the excited Chinese, linked arms and formed a human barrier against which the Chinese pushed but could not penetrate." (Kamm NYT 3/9/69)

3. The atrocity stories published by the Soviet Union

"Moscow opened up a classic atrocity campaign." (Kamm NYT 3/8/69) "The virulence of the present Soviet anti-Chinese position exceeds anything previously seen in the last decade. Soviet leaders are now deluging their citizens with another propaganda of the goriest sort." (Editorial NYT 3/16/69) "The campaign is replete with every possible appeal to the emotions of the nation. It features gory descriptions of Chinese atrocities and tales of mothers kneeling over their sons' mutilated bodies and of fathers of slain soldiers pledging their surviving sons to the same cause..It all adds up, in the view of experienced observers, to the closest thing to the anti-German propaganda of World War Two days." (Kamm NYT 3/16/69) To support the atrocity charges Mr Zamyatin, the Foreign Ministry spokesman, circulated photographs showing naked bodies bearing signs of mutilation. The photos were

cleared for transmission abroad and were shown on television here (Moscow)." (NYT 3/8/69)

It strains one's credulity to picture weeping mothers on that far-away isolated frontier post and naked bodies on the frozen soil. Of course skirmishes on which there is point-blank firing and hand-to-hand struggle can produce mutilated bodies.

4. The discrepancy in the Russian reporting of the figures of Chinese involved on March 2nd

The Russians issued reports of the March 2nd clash on March 3rd, 4th, 5th, 7th and 8th. In the first three reports the figure was "200 Chinese soldiers"; in the fourth report the figure had grown to 330; by the 5th report on March 8th the figure had risen to 530.

5. The discrepancy about the nature of the terrain on Chenpao Island

"General Aleksander N Anikushin of the border forces, in an interview with the Novosti press agency, printed in the newspaper Sovetskaya, said there was no farming on the island and no woods." (Gwertzman NYT 3/21/69)

BUT: an early report of the clash reported: "The scene of the Chinese-Soviet clash last Sunday was the swampy forested banks of the frozen Ussuri River" and then went on to state specifically "the Ussuri island, Damansky (or as the Chinese call it, Chenpao) was the site of Sunday's clash." (Shabad NYT 3/5/69) The head of the press department of the Soviet Foreign Ministry, L M Zamyatin, at a press conference on March 7th said, "On the night of March 1-2 two hundred armed Chinese soldiers... crossed over an arm of the Ussuri River to the Soviet island of Damansky. The group... dispersed on the above island in the woods and shubbery..." (NYT 3/8/69. In addition, photographs released by the Soviet Union, appearing in the New York Times on the 8th and on the 20th, showed woods.

THE WHY OF IT ALL

The Soviet Union's Reaction and Treatment of the Incident

"The Soviet Union has apparently decided to exploit the March 2nd clash with China for maximum effect in its relations with China, the world communist movement and possibly the west. While assuming that the clash was the largest of its kind in a decade of troubled relations, diplomatic observers here in Moscow find more significance in the Soviet treatment of the incident than in the incident itself." (Kamm NYT 3/13/69)

There have been quite a number of recent situations and developments in the Communist world that help explain why a clash coming at this particular time could be of use to the Soviet Union.

Soviet's Continuing Effort to Isolate China

There is the Soviet Union's continuing effort to isolate the Communist Party of China. "Why did Moscow decide suddenly to publicize this latest clash and thus trigger all the consequences that have now begun to unfold? Speculations as to Moscow's motives cover a wide range of possibilities. It is conceivable that the Kremlin is trying to prepare the political groundwork for winning general condemnation of China from the international Communist Congress scheduled for Moscow next May." (Editorial NYT 3/4/69) "Moscow reported the clash only a few hours after it occurred. This suggests that the Kremlin was interested in a dramatic portrayal of Maoist 'perfidity' for possible use in expelling Peking leadership from the ranks of loyal Communists. The Russians are still hoping to convene the oft-delayed world Communist conference in May." (Grose NYT 3/10/69)

"In Moscow's relation with the Communist community, at a time when final preparations for the long-awaited Communist conference are being made here in Moscow, the border clash is thought to have come at a favorable time." (Kamm NYT 3/13/69) "The incident came at a time when the Soviet Union

was mounting a campaign to condemn China as an implacable foe."(NYT 3/16/69)

"World Communist meetings were held in 1957 and 1960 in Moscow and compromise declarations were worked out between the Chinese and the Russians. Since then Moscow has tried unsuccessfully to rally a new conference that would succeed in isolating the Chinese. Nikita S Krushchev had planned a meeting for early 1965 but he was toppled from power and the meeting cancelled, as the new Soviet leaders tried to make peace with Peking. Since then, new efforts for a meeting have floundered, principally because of objections from parties in Western Europe and from Rumania and Yugoslavia...Other parties that the Russians have had trouble persuading to come to a conference are the parties of North Korea, North Vietnam, Cuba and some from Western Europe."(Gwertzman NYT 3/3/69)

"The Soviets are pressing hard to mobilize support of other Communist Governments and parties against Peking. But the invasion of Czechoslovakia militates against the Soviet Union. Rumania, Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia itself, and to some extent Hungary and the major non-governing Communist parties, such as the French and Italian, are wary of too close involvement with Moscow's point of view."(Ellis CSM 3/21/69)

Disunity Within the Moscow-Oriented World

The difficulty which the Soviet Union has had in arranging for a conference of Moscow-oriented Communist parties also points up the disunity within the movement, a continuing problem for the Soviet Communist Party leadership.

"Moscow may see in the crisis with Peking an opportunity to conjure up an alternative and more valid hobgoblin from another quarter to make the European Communists huddle more closely and more willingly to Mother Russia's bosom."(Editorial CSM 3/19/69)

The Question of Czechoslovakia

The disunity of the Moscow-oriented Communist world

is evidenced by critical developments in the relations between the Soviet party and the other parties. For one thing "the shock waves of the invasion of Czechoslovakia are still far from receding."(Bourne CSM 2/17/69)

"A stumbling block is the theory of limited sovereignty among Communist states...its introduction has already promoted a greater split of opinion between the Russians and their invasion partners and most of the rest of the parties...A major challenge to the Kremlin is shaping up."(Bourne CSM 2/25/69)

The Austrian Party Congress overwhelmingly demanded the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Czechoslovakia. A meeting between President Tito of Yugoslavia and the Rumanian leader Nicolae Ceausescu reaffirmed the concept of national independence and non-interference. At a meeting of the Italian Party Congress the invasion of Czechoslovakia came in for heavy criticism. The theory of limited sovereignty promoted disunity.

Even within Czechoslovakia, occupied by Soviet troops, there is a surprising expression of resistance to the Soviet Communist Party. The day before the outbreak on the Ussuri River a strong statement about Soviet relations with other Communist parties appeared in the official newspaper of the Czechoslovakia Communist Party. This must have been a particularly strong blow against the kind of "unity" the Soviet Communist Party was trying to forge - a blow whose effect might be lessened by playing up the situation in the Far East.

The Question of Yugoslavia

The Congress of Yugoslav Communists in mid-March 1969 highlighted the disunity. Although the Soviet Union boycotted the Congress and pressured its Warsaw Pact allies to do likewise, more than a dozen Communist parties voted against Moscow by sending their delegates to Belgrade; among these were the Communist parties of Italy, France, Rumania, Finland, Chile, Austria, Belgium, Norway, Spain, Venezuela, and several others. (NYT 3/23/69) "Since the Belgrade boycott comes roughly a week after the Sino-

Soviet battle on the Ussuri River, the two front struggle within world Communism is now more intense than at any time since Krushchev's downfall."(Editorial NYT 3/11/69)

Relations Within the Warsaw Pact Nations

Even among the Warsaw Pact nations there is a lack of unity on the question of the Soviet's position on the Ussuri River incident. The Soviet effort, at the March 18th meeting of the Warsaw Pact nations, to create agreement on military action by using the pressure of developments in the Far East was unsuccessful. "Although the meeting was designed to show unity and mutual confidence it started with signs of disunity. The Russians had tried to persuade the others to adopt unanimously a declaration condemning the Chinese as 'aggressors'. The Rumanians were understood to have refused to support the declaration, asserting that the border fighting on the Ussuri River should first be more thoroughly investigated."(NYT 3/18/69)

"The Soviet Union had hoped for a joint expression against Peking to be incorporated in the main declaration issued at the meeting. According to informants in Budapest the Russians asked for economic and military commitment from the alliance to ease the Soviet position in Europe while Moscow became increasingly engaged with China..." (Szulc NYT 3/19/69)

The New York Times headlined its editorial "Defeat In Budapest" - "The Soviet Communist Party General Secretary Leonid Brezhnev and Premier Aleksei Kosygin can hardly be very happy with the results of the recent Warsaw Pact summit meeting in Budapest. The outcome was essentially a political defeat for the Soviet Union, one that provides additional vivid evidence of the erosion of Moscow's control..."(NYT 3/22/69)

"Last week at the Budapest meeting of the Warsaw Pact came a development that Moscow may have considered the most galling of all. At this gathering...the Soviet Union was unable to incorporate into the communique a single word of support for its position in the Chinese struggle." (NYT 3/23/69)

No Solid Anti-China European Communist Bloc

The Soviet Union was having to face the fact that there was no solid bloc isolation of China by the European Communist world.

"In February Peking resumed relations with its former arch-enemy, Yugoslavia. A Yugoslav Government delegation, headed by a deputy federal secretary for foreign trade, is now in China. Chinese diplomats in Europe are also reported to have suggested the resumption of cultural exchanges between the two nations." (CSM Wohn 3/20/69) "Yugoslavia and Communist China signed a new trade and payments agreement last night; the agreement was concluded at the end of a three-week visit by a Yugoslav economic delegation." (NYT 3/19/69)

"In his electoral speech of February 28th President Ceausescu emphasized Rumania's friendship with China and expressed hope of increased cooperation with the Chinese party. It may be no mere coincidence that two days before Mr Ceausescu came out for better relations with China, the Yugoslav delegation reached Peking.

"Albania also has a role in this scheme. The Chinese have displayed not only political and economic, but also military activity in this Balkan country. In November the Chief of the Chinese General Staff, Huan Jun-chen, accompanied by the deputy commanders of the Chinese Navy and Air Force, arrived in Tirana....Yugoslavia too has improved relations with its once violently hostile neighbor, Albania." (Wohn CSM 3/20/69)

"Pro-Chinese" Communist Parties

Two years ago the Monitor was reporting "Pro-Chinese splinter parties have become a major worry for pro-Soviet Communists. About forty are already in existence; they have made inroads into the rank and file of Communist Party members and sympathizers throughout the world... There is practically no country in the world where the pro-Chinese Communists do not operate."(CSM 2/9/67) The Soviet worry over the existence - and the spread - of pro-Chinese parties can well be a factor in the blowing up of the clash on the Ussuri River.

Soviet Problems With Non-Communist Countries

In spite of the Soviet Union's efforts to present China as a pariah, China's relations with the non-Communist nations, commercially and diplomatically, continued and are on the increase. During recent months various Western nations had announced their intention to work toward establishing regular diplomatic relations with China; all of them had for years been trading with China. Political relations are becoming as reasonable as economic relations.

"Nations in the process of redefining their China position are Belgium, Canada, and Japan." (CSM 2/5/69)
"Foreign Minister Pietro Nennie disclosed that the Italian Government has taken steps to give diplomatic recognition to Communist China. He told the Senate (upper chamber) that 'contact has been made and negotiations have opened'." (CSM 2/27/69)

"Latin Americans say they believe that Italy, Canada and Belgium, three NATO allies of the United States, would not have expressed the intention of recognizing Peking had they felt that the United States still was resolutely opposed to recognition.... They share the feeling expressed by numerous delegations that the Peking regime may be admitted to the United Nations before the expiration of President Nixon's term." (CSM Rossi 2/24/69)

Indeed, the evidence of changing American attitudes toward China may well influence allies of the United States. "The Nixon Administration has 'new options' in developing policy toward Communist China, Senator Scott declared at a news conference here (Tokyo). These options the Pennsylvania Republican said, lie in focusing the guiding American opinion 'in the direction of broadening negotiations with mainland China.'" (NYT 2/16/69). "The Nixon Administration is studying a proposal to allow limited trade with Communist China, Rep Paul Findley's office says." (CSM 2/15/69) "Five senators, including J W Fullbright, Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, called on the Nixon Administration to...signal the start of a new China policy." (NYT 1/25/69) At a Conference on US-China Relations, in NY City, March 20th and 21st, attended by 2500 students and academic specialists, most

of the speakers lauded Senator Edward Kennedy's speech calling for abandonment of the United States hostility toward the Peking regime." (Grose NYT 3/22/69)

The campaign of the Soviet Union to present China as a pariah, an outcast among the nations, was obviously having little effect on the non-Communist nations. Britain, France, Denmark, Finland, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland had long since established diplomatic relations with China; now other nations - major allies of the United States, as well as the United States itself - were in the process of recognizing China as a member of the modern world of nations.

The changing attitude of non-Communist nations toward China can provide a part of the answer to the question of "why" the Soviet Union was so strenuously blowing up this minor, isolated border incident at this time, when hundreds ("thousands" the Russians say - CSM 3/4/69) of previous incidents had received no publicity.

"The Soviet Union has launched an unprecedented campaign to put its version of the recent border clash with the Chinese before the major non-Communist governments.

"Official sources reported that Soviet Ambassador Valerian A Zorin called at the French Foreign Ministry Tuesday to tell the French Government about the March 2nd clash in the Far East. Similar meetings were held in Japan and West Germany, the Tokyo and Bonn Governments reported." (CSM 3/13/69) Ambassador Nikita Ryjov of the Soviet Union called today on Foreign Minister Pietro Nennie of Italy to brief him on the clash between the Soviet and Chinese Communist forces on their Asiatic frontier." (NYT 3/14/69).

"The Soviet Ambassador Tsarapkin called on the Chancellor of West Germany for the fourth time in three weeks to talk about Communist China, according to an official source, outlining Moscow's views of the gravity of the Soviet-Chinese border clash on the Ussuri River on March 2nd...Recalling Bonn's recent efforts to establish contacts

with Peking, official circles concluded that the Soviet Union wanted to make sure that West Germany would not take advantage of Moscow's present difficulties."(Binder NYT 3/12/69)

Here was a socialist government appealing to Western imperialist countries "not to take advantage" of Russia's Far Eastern involvement. The Soviets were also protesting to these governments about their trade with China.

"Last December Foreign Minister Willy Brandt hinted Bonn's possible readiness to formalize trade with Peking through a trade agreement which might involve an exchange of trade missions...The subject of West German trade sprang into prominence when the Soviet Ambassador Semyon K Tsarapkin visited Chancellor Kurt Georg Kiesinger to explain the Soviet side of the first Sino-Soviet clash on the Ussuri River on March 2nd..."(Ellis CSM 3/20/69) But Foreign Minister Brandt's attitude toward China gave little comfort to the Soviets. Brandt had said in a radio interview on the 9th "We do not intend to make use of a Soviet-Chinese conflict of interests; we maintain a not-at-all insignificant trade exchange with People's China...We have this trade and are naturally interested as a country very much dependent on foreign trade that this exchange develop prosperously. China, the great Chinese people, will play a role, not only in Asia, during the coming years but elsewhere in the world. And we begin from the basic assumption that not too much time should pass before the Chinese Republic finds its place in the organized community of nations. In this respect we include in our considerations aimed toward China a concept of stabilizing prosperous development on the Asian continent..."(Binder NYT 3/12/69)

"Moscow is warning Japan and other nations against closer economic and political ties with Peking. At the same time the Soviet Union is stepping up efforts to gain the maximum possible understanding here in Tokyo for its own version of recent clashes with Chinese border forces along the frozen Ussuri River....It is said the Russians have made known their views to Canada..The Russians are exerting all the leverage they can on Western nations." (Willis CSM 3/22/69)

The Soviets and The Imperialists

"As a new threat of conflict rises ominously on its eastern flank, the Soviet Union becomes increasingly desirous of an accommodation with the West. This is the interpretation placed here in Moscow on the mild-toned appeal issued by the Warsaw Pact leaders...It was temperate toward West Germany. It made no mention of Vietnam or the Middle East. It did not even mention the United States and referred to NATO only in indirect terms...It was without the standard bristling attacks on German 'revanchism' and 'militarism'..."(Saikowski CSM 3/19/69)

The Warsaw Pact nations - defenders of the Communist world - taking no stand against imperialism!

The Ussuri River clash provided a timely way out for the Soviet Union in its dilemma of whether to back East Germany (in its determination to block access to Berlin where the west Germans were determined to hold their presidential election) or whether to get tough with the West. "The Russians suddenly backed down on their threats to the West Berlin access route last Tuesday (March 4th), two days after the Chinese-Soviet frontier clash on the Ussuri River." (Kamm NYT 3/13/69) Thus the clash had provided "one way to get off that limb without excessive loss of face."(NYT 3/9/69)

The Soviets may "get off the limb without loss of face" in relations with their Communist allies; but the deeper significance of the backing down was what it indicates of the Soviet relations with the West.

"The recent Soviet attitude toward West Germany...has been relatively relaxed. The Kremlin, through the intermediary of Soviet Ambassador to Bonn, Semyon K Tsarapkin, appears to be draining the heat out of Soviet-German relations..."(Ellis CSM 3/21/69)

"Perhaps the most extraordinary single feature of these strange events is that three weeks after Moscow was threatening the West Germans, and only a week after the West Germans defied the Soviet threat and held their election in Berlin anyway, the Russians were being 'con-

siderate' of the West Germans. The Soviet Ambassador called personally on West German Chancellor Kurt Georg Kiesinger....It was quickly evident that the Russians had even gone to the point of asking the Germans to refrain from trying to take advantage of Russia's troubles in inner Asia...

"When Moscow asks favors of Bonn something new has been added to the pattern of world affairs!"(Harsch CSM 3/17/69)

The backing down on the issue with the imperialist West, contrary to what the Soviet's Communist ally, East Germany, wanted, was a part of the "something new added to the pattern of world affairs." It indicated that relations with the arch imperialist, the United States, with whom many agreements were in the works, was of most importance for the Soviets.

"Observers say if the Soviet Union's long-range goal is really a broad accommodation with the United States, as many believe it to be, then a much-publicized widening of the gulf between Moscow and Peking could be presented as reassurance to the West that the two principal Communist powers will not compose their dispute and form a mighty anti-Western front....Reports that Soviet Ambassadors in major Western countries are taking the unusual step of putting their side of the case to high officials are believed to indicate that serious efforts will also be made to exploit possible international advantages fully..." (Kamm NYT 3/13/69)

A week later the New York Times produced an amazingly frank article about the "accommodation between the two powers.

"Soviet and United States diplomatic cables flashed back and forth between Moscow and Washington simultaneously today over a new official communication system...The circuits for constant contact...seemed to reflect a benign political mood between the Soviet Union and the United States....Circumstances now seem to allow at least a limited cooperation. On the Russian side

diplomats believe that the sudden flare-up of the tension with Communist China this month argues for a more conciliatory stance toward the West; on the American side the bitterness over the invasion of Czechoslovakia seems to have faded and mutual understanding seems attainable..." The Times goes on to tell of meetings during the past two weeks between Ambassador Dobrynin and the Nixon Administration. "The meetings with the President and Secretary of State Rogers have been publicized. More discreet and therefore more useful, both sides say, have been Mr Dobrynin's frequent conversations with Henry A Kissinger, the White House aide for national security affairs." (Grose NYT 3/20/69)

The Russians raised no objections to President Nixon's decision to deploy a limited anti-ballistic missile system. "Soviet propagandists took a restrained, non-committal position on President Nixon's decision."(NYT 3/20/69) The Russians had been informed of the decision, Mr Nixon said, even before the decision was announced to the American people.

A socialist power raising no objections to an anti-China missile system set up by imperialist!

The "Yellow Peril" Concept Being Used

An unbelievable statement appeared in the New York Times of March 13th: "A West German official, describing Ambassador Semyon K Tsarapkin's presentation to Chancellor Kurt Georg Kiesinger said that the envoy had warned of a 'yellow peril'. The Christian Science Monitor, on the 25th, said, "The Soviets are privately warning the Germans against 'the yellow peril'."

The Times, on the 16th wrote editorially "Moscow is raising the old implications of 'the yellow peril' with the accompanying of 'whites of the world unite', the most regressive of battle cries."

One could not expect such an attitude on the part of a socialist state.

And there are authentic indications that there is building up in the Soviet Union a "yellow peril" concept.

"In Moscow, on March 7th, in a lecture room filled with intellectuals, a man got up to ask the speaker how Russia could possibly defend her borders against the 'hordes of Chinese'." (NYT 3/23/69)

In mid-March the Moscow weekly newspaper Literaturnaya Gazeta published a poem by the internationally acclaimed Russian poet, Yevgeny Yevtushenko - who incidentally recently appeared in lectures and on television in the United States; the poem presented China in terms of Mongol hordes: 'You can see in the murky twilight The new Mongol khans have bombs in their quivers But if they attack the warning bells will ring and there will be more than enough warriors For a new battle of Kulikov' - referring to the battle in 1380 in which Prince Dmitri Donskoi of Moscow defeated the Mongols at Kulikov." (NYT 3/20/69)

The publication in Moscow of the poem indicates the attitude of the Soviet government. "There is no virtually no one who questions the official view that China is being run by a would-be Mongol khan." (NYT 3/20/69)

China's Reaction To The Border Incident

Though there have been many unpublicized border incidents between China and the Soviet Union, China in this instance did not remain silent nor neglect to publish internationally circulated statements.

The boundary issue. The Chinese, of course, see the issue of the clash as an occasion to keep before her own people and the world that there are still "questions left over by history" which must be righted. In this particular case it is the question of China's frontiers with her neighbors and the opportunity to point out that the question of Imperial Russian encroachments is still to be adjusted.

The necessity for continuing revolution is highlighted. For the Chinese the clash emphasizes the need for continued alertness against the dangers of revisionism both from within and from without. The struggle against those who would water down socialism and who would compromise with imperialism is still necessary.

A potential outside military threat is made glaringly evident. China is aware that the Soviet Union and India together control 80% of the Chinese border; neither has responded to China's appeal to settle the border issue by negotiations. Instead, both India and the Soviet Union have shown their military muscle. And in addition to their individual hostility toward China, these two neighbors have cooperated militarily. "Military cooperation between the Soviet Union and India, along with stepped-up arms assistance, is seen here (New Delhi) as a possible outcome of the early March visit to India of Soviet Defense Minister Andrei Grechko. In the event of a Moscow-Peking confrontation, an agreement with India would give the Soviets use of Indian airforce forward bases. These are nearer Chinese military installations in Tibet and southern China than are the Soviet bases in Siberia. Marshall Grechko showed extreme interest in the Indian Air Force during his visit. He stopped off at the IAF base at Chandigarh in Northern India to watch Indian pilots fly their Soviet-built MIG's. According to reports here India has bought 100 MIG-21's from the Soviet Union and plans to build 300 more in India, with Russian technical help....Unofficial figures put the number of MIG squadrons in the Indian Air Force at six. Indications are that the IAF plans to equip another 15 squadrons with these jet interceptors. It has also been reported that India has bought 100 Sukhoi SU-7B close-support fighters, with an option to buy a hundred more...India's needs, in view of the latest Sino-Soviet border clash, were almost certainly discussed with Marshall Grechko during his visit to India, observers maintain." (Weatherall CSM 3/8/69) "Moscow's objective, a number of diplomats and military sources agreed, is to build India's strength to counter-balance China's power in Asia." (Middleton NYT 6/1/67)

There is still another potential hostile cooperation on China's border - the current growing relations between the Soviet Union and Japan. The Soviet Union has granted to Japan air-flight rights over the trans-Siberian short-cut route between Asia and Europe, the first foreign line to have this privilege. The Soviet Union has agreed on Soviet-Japanese mutual exploitation of Siberian resources. One significance of this Soviet-Japan cooperation, so far as China is concerned, is indicated in a Monitor article by David Willis in September 1968: "Jets of Japan's national airline will carry diplomatic as well as tourist significance.. Japanese sources say the Soviet Union evidently wants to keep its diplomatic and commercial ties with Japan as close as possible. Moscow is seen as particularly interested in the foreign exchange that the Japanese flights are expected to earn for the Soviet Union...But in the longer-range context, some Japanese sources also believe that Moscow wants to strengthen links with nations on the borders of China...So, it is thought here in Tokyo they are moving, when they consider it feasible, toward a more relaxed attitude with nations such as Japan, whose sympathy, even if only tacit, might conceivably be gained against Peking at some future time..." Of course, if Japan has considerable commercial and resources-exploitation interests in Soviet territory it is not hard to envision which side she would be on in case of China-Soviet military confrontation in Siberia. The Chinese see indications of actual military 'collaboration between the two countries even now. The New York Times quoted a Chinese press agency charge: "The Soviet's collaboration with Japanese reactionaries in the military field is also becoming quite open...The Japanese have gradually shifted the weight of Japan's military deployment from Hokkaido, which is near the Soviet Union" (it is Japan's northernmost island...ed) "to Kyushu which is near China."(NYT 3/7/69)

The Soviet Union itself threatens the use of military force against China. "The Soviet has been gradually but impressively building up its troop strength and defenses along its eastern frontier with Communist China, according to western intelligence analysts. They say the build-up

has been conducted even at the expense of Soviet preparedness in Central Europe...The quality of the Soviet forces in Europe is believed to have suffered, as some of the best army units were transferred to central Asia and the Siberian frontier."(Grose NYT 3/3/69)

That the Chinese can draw the implication of a military threat from the Soviet Union was provided by an article in Krasnaya Zvezda, the Defense Ministry newspaper, on March 8th. The paper "printed reports from three military districts that apparently were a warning to China that military force would be used if necessary. One article said that the Soviet rocket forces had been in a high state of preparedness for several years...Western analysts said it was the first time that Soviet military deployments in the Far East had been discussed publicly in terms of possible confrontation with China."(Gwertzman NYT 3/9/69)

"The Brezhnev Doctrine, used to justify the invasion of Czechoslovakia, could serve equally well to sanctify aggression against China. With spring around the corner, Peking understandably wants to rouse its people for maximum resistance should China be next on the Soviet invasion list.."(Editorial NYT 3/8/69)

The Soviet Union did issue a direct threat of the use of force against China in "two broadcasts, monitored in London, transmitted by Radio Peace and Progress which uses the facilities of the Moscow radio and describes itself as 'the voice of Soviet public opinion' and says it is sponsored by various non-governmental organizations.

"Moscow broadcasts beamed to Communist China cautioned (that) the Soviet Union's armed forces (are) equipped with nuclear missiles whose 'destructive range is virtually unlimited' and with which they can strike with pinpoint accuracy from land, sea and air.

"The first broadcast cataloguing Soviet nuclear power was on March 15th...'The whole world knows that the main weapons of the Soviet armed forces are its rockets' the broadcast said. 'They are capable of carrying nuclear war-

heads many times more powerful than all the explosives ever used in past wars put together...They can be launched from high-speed atomic submarines deep in the sea. The Soviet air force is also equipped with powerful rockets. It has in its possession aircraft capable of flying at an altitude of 20 kilometers (about 65,000 feet) and at twice the speed of sound..."(NYT 3/21/69)

"MIGHT MAKES RIGHT"?

CONCLUSION

Each reader will have to draw his own conclusions about the significance of the Ussuri River Border Clash. But here is a presentation of facts, of reactions, of relationships and of various aspects of developments the meanings of which have emerged more clearly in the weeks since the March first-second 1969 border incident.

Whether or not the Ussuri River Incident develops into something more serious, these facts, reactions, relationships and developments provide background material for understanding the issues facing the Communist world and the non-Communist world and the struggle between socialism and imperialism.

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