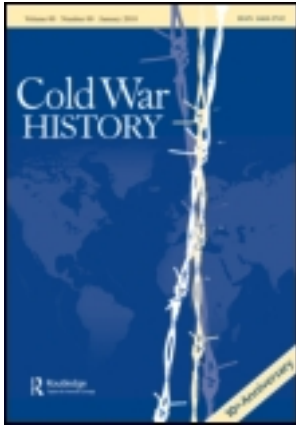


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### Soviet policy in the developing world and the Chinese challenge in the 1960s

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<sup>a</sup> LSE Cold War Conference, April 24, 2009

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# Cold War Graduate Conference Best Paper Prize Winner

## Soviet policy in the developing world and the Chinese challenge in the 1960s

Jeremy Friedman

LSE Cold War Conference, April 24, 2009

The Editors of the journal *Cold War History* have the pleasure to present this paper as the winner of the Best Paper Award at the last Graduate Conference on the Cold War, jointly organised every year by the University of California, Santa Barbara, the George Washington University, Washington DC, and the London School of Economics and Political Science, London. It is not often that a paper, as was the case with this one, won unanimous endorsement from prominent Cold War scholars from all three institutions, present at the Conference. The last Conference was organised in April 2009, at LSE, in London and the host of the next one to be held on 22–24 April 2010 will be the George Washington University. By continuing with the practice we inaugurated last year, we wish to underline our commitment to promoting and encouraging new and substantive research of the Cold War by young scholars.

*As the colonial system collapsed quicker than anticipated in the post-Second World War period, the Soviet Union found itself unprepared, and it hurriedly tried to build the institutions necessary to conduct an active foreign, economic and military policy in the newly emerging states. The development of the Sino–Soviet*

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*split triggered a Chinese challenge to this Soviet push for influence, with Beijing portraying the USSR as another white, imperialist power that valued relations with the West over the cause of national liberation. Moscow was consequently forced to adapt its policy, particularly by taking a more militant approach, in order to neutralise the Chinese threat.*

## Introduction

As the 1960s dawned, the Soviet Union was faced with the unexpected prospect of a world far more open to its influence than it had planned during the tense years of the early Cold War. The trickle of decolonisation which began in the immediate post-war years in Asia had, by the end of 1960, become a flood in Africa, and the world was faced with the collapse of the old world order and the advent of a new one. Ironically, the Soviet Union, whose ideology predicted just such an eventuality and which had openly supported anti-colonial movements going back to the Congress of the Toilers of the East in Baku in 1920, found itself institutionally, ideologically and politically unprepared to deal with the consequences of a world suddenly populated by dozens of freshly minted impoverished new states. It quickly became apparent to the Soviet leadership that these new states would comprise the crucial battleground in the competition between the communist and capitalist systems.

These new states, however, were faced with a dramatic disconnect between the millennial elation and expectation which greeted independence and the desperate economic circumstances in which they found themselves. Low standards of living, weak state structures, lack of capital or infrastructure, and economies oriented towards the supply of raw materials to the developed world on increasingly unfavourable terms complicated efforts at economic development. The juxtaposition between desperate conditions and great expectations required radical new solutions; the long road of development through private enterprise seemed impossible due to the lack of capital, as well as unappealing, because it had been the capitalist system which had come to be seen as responsible for colonialism. The socialist world seemed to present a model of rapid, autonomous development, based on state-led industrialisation and collectivised agriculture which could immediately raise living standards without requiring large amounts of non-existent private investment. Some form of socialism therefore came to be seen as the necessary solution throughout most of the newly decolonised world. 'We consider our goal to be socialism not only because it seems to us appropriate and useful, but because we have no other path to solving our economic problems', declared Indian Prime Minister Jawarhalal Nehru.<sup>1</sup> Even American policy-makers such as Walt Rostow, many of them adherents of modernisation theory, promoted state-led development as the only way to achieve economic progress and avoid the greater evil of state socialism.<sup>2</sup> For Moscow, which had been promoting what seemed to be a very successful state-led development model, the opportunities presented by decolonisation promised to prove that it did indeed represent the future.

However, the Soviet leadership faced numerous obstacles in its efforts to promote its model of development. On an institutional level, it lacked experts with the ability to

engage with the newly independent countries. As late as the 1950s, neither the Foreign Ministry nor the KGB even had a separate department for African affairs. The Soviet Union was at a disadvantage vis-à-vis the West in terms of resources and experience when it came to providing aid and assistance to the former colonies, not least because of the language barrier. The ideological challenge posed by the new geopolitical circumstances was no less daunting. Marxist-Leninist theory did not provide a clear blueprint for building socialism in countries which had been barely touched by industrialisation, often dominated by pre-capitalist social formations and a small or non-existent working class. Nevertheless, a theoretical alternative had to be found to the traditional trajectory described by historical materialism, one which included a practical plan for development as well as an intelligible Marxist framework.

This Soviet effort to adapt Marxist revolutionary theory and its own experience of socialist construction to provide a development model for the countries of the developing world was complicated, beginning in the early 1960s, by the split with the People's Republic of China, which led to a political and ideological battle for leadership of the socialist world. As the Sino-Soviet split deepened, the Chinese leadership saw its opportunity to develop its own international constituency outside the formal geopolitical structure, from which it was largely excluded, and thereby lay its claim to be the true leader of world revolution. Moscow thus found itself simultaneously involved in two competitions in the developing world: one with the West in which it was trying to detach the newly independent countries from their former colonial masters and promote its 'non-capitalist path of development' and another with China, competing for the loyalties of left-leaning political leaders, parties and revolutionary forces still fighting for some form of 'national liberation'.

This competition between the Soviet Union and the PRC for influence in the newly decolonised states in the 1960s is, as yet, largely untreated in the historiography. During the last two decades of the Cold War, many works were produced on Soviet policy in the 'Third World', but these books focused predominantly on the competition with the West and were written primarily by political scientists using public sources trying to predict the future trajectory of Soviet policy in Asia, Africa and Latin America.<sup>3</sup>

Some authors did, however, look beyond the immediate political questions to the ideological inspirations of Soviet policy. Neil MacFarlane in *Superpower Rivalry and Third World Radicalism* wrote about the concept of national liberation, in terms of both the Soviet perspective and how that perspective matched those of 'Third World' leaders such as Sukarno and Nkrumah. Jerry Hough, in *The Struggle for the Third World: Soviet Debates and American Options*, examined the thinking of Soviet academics on the economic development and revolutionary potential of developing countries. Galia Golan provided a close examination of Soviet writing, mostly from the 1970s, on the question of revolution in developing countries.<sup>4</sup> However, none of these authors was able to make a strong connection between policy and ideology because of the lack of archival access and consequent dependence on published sources. Furthermore, these studies saw Soviet ideology through the prism of

competition with the West, rather than within the socialist world, a difference with significant impact on the way Soviet academic literature was to be read.

The post-Cold War environment has, of course, transformed the literature on Cold War competition in the 'Third World', largely by allowing events to be examined on their own terms rather than merely scouring the past to predict the future. Odd Arne Westad's *Global Cold War* provides the most comprehensive overview of the battle between capitalist and communist systems yet through the end of the Cold War. Westad's analysis goes beyond the older Cold War policy analysis model by incorporating a broader view of the ideological agendas of the United States, the USSR and key developing states previous to and beyond the Cold War period. Other authors have begun to look at third countries and their roles in global politics at the time, with Piero Gleijeses's work being an excellent example.<sup>5</sup> The literature thus far, however, on the competition in the developing world has still focused on the battle between East and West, rather than those between the various pretenders to leadership of the 'Third World' among socialist states such as Cuba, Yugoslavia, Romania and, first and foremost, the Soviet Union and China.

For the most part, the Sino-Soviet split has yet to become a major subject of research in the years following the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe. An extensive literature was produced on the subject through the early 1980s, though again, primarily with an eye towards the prospects for intensified conflict or Sino-Soviet rapprochement. Donald Treadgold, surveying the field in 1980, distilled the historical aspects of the scholarship into an attempt to answer two fundamental questions.<sup>6</sup> The first was the identification of a 'point of no return' after which the dispute could no longer simply be resolved quietly and both sides were forced to become enemies on the international stage. The second was whether the dispute was essentially ideological in nature, or rather the product of more traditional political and military factors in the relationships between neighbouring Great Powers. Lorenz Luthi, in the first major work on the split to come out using newly available archival material, argues for ideology, as expressed in the issues of the struggle against imperialism, de-Stalinisation and economic development, as the ultimate basis for the split upon which other peripheral issues, such as territorial conflict, were later added. These two questions look different through the prism of Sino-Soviet competition in the developing world. The developing world equivalent to the first question would be: when did it become clear that the ideological conflict within the socialist camp had become a battle for supremacy among non-socialist developing countries? In other words, when did ideological differences create foreign policy rivals? It seems clear that the Soviets were surprised when they discovered that China was competing rather than cooperating in the developing world, partly because, as Luthi argues, it was the Chinese side that was more actively pushing the conflict.<sup>7</sup>

The issue of ideology, however, becomes both clearer and more complicated when examined through the prism of the developing world. Ideology is more clearly central to the story. Despite efforts made by some scholars in the 1970s and 1980s to explain Soviet interest in the developing world through economic or military goals, it seems

that, certainly in the 1960s, the main object of Soviet policy was gaining ideological adherents, both in the Cold War against the West and in the battle to retain its leadership of world revolution against the Chinese. As the split with China demonstrated, Soviet geopolitical influence was ultimately tied to its claim to be the authoritative interpreter of Marxist thought, not military or economic might, and its position could only be restored through a restoration of unity in the socialist camp and other revolutionary forces. The roles that ideology plays in this story, though, are far more complicated. Ideological supremacy required the production of a new model of revolution, one which could fit the demands of the newly decolonised states rather than of the industrialised West. China, as a functioning example of a non-Western former semi-colony which had built itself up seemingly through little more than idealistic mobilisation, presented a compelling model. Marxism-Leninism also provided the structure within which Soviet policy-makers understood events in the developing world, allowing them to try and predict which of the countries that espoused socialism were really following the 'non-capitalist path' and which were merely catering to international fashion. Soviet ideological thought was also transformed in the process of encounters with the interests of actors in the developing world and the pressures exerted by the differing approach of leaders in Beijing. As the competition intensified, Soviet thought and policy were forced to adapt to the changing discourse of world revolution, telescoping the theoretical timetable towards socialism, abandoning certain aspects of the doctrine of Peaceful Co-existence, introduced by Khrushchev in 1956, for a more militant approach, as well as accounting for both the dangers and opportunities presented by nationalism. By the end of the decade, with the collapse of Chinese foreign policy and its international isolation during the chaos of the Cultural Revolution, the Soviets had won the competition, or at least the first round, but only after a change in Soviet theory and policy with profound implications for the future of the developing world and the Cold War.

### **Part I: Initial engagement, 1958–1961**

Despite Lenin's expansion of Marxist theory to include global imperialism and colonialism, the Soviet leadership was taken largely by surprise as decolonisation began to snowball in the late 1950s. The Soviet Union found itself devoid of scholars who understood the culture and history of the new states of Asia and Africa, as well as experts who could be sent out to provide the needed technological and economic assistance that newly independent countries required. According to the Central Committee's Commission on Travel Abroad, from 1955 through 1957, the Soviet Union sent only 48 specialists to underdeveloped countries through the United Nations, as compared with 924 from the United States, 1143 from the United Kingdom, and 683 from France.<sup>8</sup> This dearth of experts 'does not accord with the role and significance of the USSR in international affairs and scale of our dues in the UN fund for technical assistance', according to the committee. Not only were few Soviets being sent overseas, but even the ones that went were often unable to fulfil their tasks.

Most of those sent to other countries had no previous experience abroad or in international organisations. They had little familiarity with the social and political conditions of the places to which they were sent, and a full two-thirds of the reserve of 352 experts ready for dispatch abroad, created by a Central Committee resolution of 7 January 1959, spoke no foreign languages. In conclusion, the report demanded that 'in the interests of strengthening our position in underdeveloped countries, it is necessary to create a powerful reserve of specialists, with which we would have the ability to exert influence on these countries in the directions we need. We also consider it necessary to organize many-sided preparation of candidates for expertise, included in the reserve, accounting for the particularities of various geographic regions – Africa, Southeast Asia, the Middle and Near East, and also the countries of Latin America.'<sup>9</sup>

Scholarship and knowledge of these regions was nearly absent even at the highest levels of policy-making. According to Karen Brutents, when he was asked to join the newly formed Africa sector of the International Department of the Central Committee in May 1961, there were only two or three Africanists in the entire Soviet Union. (Brutents was probably exaggerating, though only slightly, as the Institute of Africa, established in 1960, had already begun operating by then.) The head of the sector was an expert on Greece and Albania who spoke neither English nor French, let alone any African languages. Brutents himself was put in charge of the formerly British colonies of West Africa, with which he was wholly unfamiliar.<sup>10</sup> An entire scholarly apparatus would need to be created to support Soviet efforts in the developing world.

In 1958, international events provided the impetus for increasing Soviet engagement with former colonial states. The Asian People's Solidarity Organization, created at a conference in New Delhi in May 1955 on the heels of the Bandung Conference and subsequently expanded to include Africa as well, finally held its first conference in Cairo starting on 26 December 1957. The militant tone of the conference concerned the Soviets and Chinese, who were worried that the conference presented a different face of the developing world than Bandung and the principles of Pancha Shila, one which had the potential to alienate European supporters of the peace movement that had been the international focus of the socialist camp since the twentieth CPSU congress in February 1956.<sup>11</sup> The Chinese saw a battle for leadership of the bloc of newly independent states between India, supporter of the principles of Bandung and the Arab countries, led by Gamel Abdel Nasser and more inclined to confront the West, militarily if necessary.

In December 1958, a conference was held in Cairo on the economic situation of Africa and Asia. On the eve of the conference, Soviet Orientalist scholars convened their own conference on aid to the developing world, presenting their proposal to Secretary N.A. Mukhitdinov on the Central Committee. The proposal called for expansion of assistance because 'the widening of economic cooperation of the Soviet Union with underdeveloped countries should enable the strengthening of political and economic influence of the USSR'.<sup>12</sup> The focus needed to be on the weakening of the economic dependency of former colonies on their erstwhile colonial masters, and this was to be done by supporting state-led industrialisation, although the possibility of



cooperation with 'progressive' parts of the national bourgeoisie was not to be excluded. While the proposal called for increasing aid ties to India, Afghanistan, Indonesia and the United Arab Republic (UAR) as the key states of the developing world, it also called for cooperating with members of the national bourgeoisie inclined towards the Soviet Union in key Western-allied states such as Turkey, Iran and Pakistan. They proposed greater concentration on agricultural assistance, through both the Ministry of Agriculture and the State Committee on External Economic Ties (GKES), as well as the training of cadres by the Ministry of Higher Education, GKES and the Academy of Sciences. The speech of the Soviet delegation at the Cairo conference reflected the Orientalists' proposal on many points, including the focus on state-led industrialisation, advocating accumulation of capital through mass mobilisation and liquidation of private capital. However, the Soviet delegation ended by declaring their willingness to provide any kind of aid, unconditionally, because the Soviet Union does not 'seek for itself any advantages, does not need profits, privileges, nor control of stock, nor entry into any bloc, nor change of government, nor change of your foreign or domestic policy. We are ready to offer you aid as brothers, without any conditions, because we ourselves know how hard it is to escape from destitution. Our only condition is no conditions'.<sup>13</sup>

Consequently, Soviet aid did begin to expand rapidly in 1958. The total amount of Soviet economic and technical aid pledged to developing countries nearly doubled from 1957 to 1958, and by 1961 had reached nearly triple the 1958 figure at almost 2.5 billion rubles. The number of countries receiving aid also expanded rapidly from 5 in 1957 to 12 in 1958 and 20 by the beginning of 1961.<sup>14</sup> Early on, Soviet aid was largely focused on Afghanistan, India and the UAR but, by 1961, major recipients of Soviet aid included Iraq, Guinea, Ghana, Indonesia, Ceylon, Cuba and Ethiopia, and new agreements had just been signed with Mali and Pakistan. The form of Soviet economic engagement largely followed the contours of the proposal laid out above as trade was primarily directed through the state sector, except where it was impossible, such as in the UAR where trade in cotton, its major export, was still in private hands. Nevertheless, Soviet pressure had an increasing effect on the structure of trade, causing some governments to set up state agencies for the purpose of trade with the USSR.<sup>15</sup> Soviet aid was concentrated on the construction of large industrial enterprises. Electricity accounted for 23% of Soviet aid projects, metallurgy 21% and machine building 9.5%.<sup>16</sup> By 1961, then, the Soviet Union had become a much more serious competitor for the West in the developing world.

The expansion of Soviet efforts and attention to the developing world was not limited to aid, however. The Academy of Sciences was expanded greatly in the late 1950s and early 1960s to include new institutes such as the Institute of Africa, the Institute of Latin America, and the Institute of World Economy and International Relations. The members of these institutes worked closely with state organisations and departments of the Central Committee. Consequently, parallel organisations were created inside the government and Party structure such as the Africa sector in the International Department and the African and Latin American sections of the KGB. The International



Department in particular had very close relations with the institutes, since, consisting of a mere 300 or so people even at its largest extent who were responsible for coordinating policy with leftist parties around the world, it was more of a clearing house for information produced elsewhere than a producer of information itself.<sup>17</sup> Journals were founded and revamped as well, including *Aziia i Afrika Segodnia* ('Asia and Africa Today') and *Problemy Vostokevedeniia* ('Problems of Oriental Studies'), which became *Narody Azii i Afriki* ('Peoples of Asia and Africa') in 1961. These journals demonstrate the fluid relations between Soviet governmental organisations, party organisations, academic organisations and so-called 'non-governmental organisations' such as the Soviet Committee for Solidarity with the Countries of Asia and Africa (SCSCAA) and the Soviet Peace Committee. *Aziia i Afrika Segodnia*, while published by the Institute of the Peoples of Asia and later the Institute of Africa as well, was seen as the quasi-organ of the SCSCAA, which was constantly pushing for greater focus on current events and for translation of the journal into English and French for distribution abroad. This finally came to fruition in 1976 when Karen Brutents, deputy head of the International Department, became an editor of the journal.<sup>18</sup> Similarly, when the journal *Latinskaia Amerika* was created in 1969, its editorial board included Nikolai Leonov, head of the Latin American division of the KGB. As these and many other career paths demonstrate, the lines between state, party and academe were very fluid, producing an environment in which ideas and information were shared and in which debates over policy often crossed institutional lines.

The growth of Soviet influence in the developing world also called for an expansion of the propaganda apparatus. The Novosti news agency, created in early 1961 after the solicitation of advice from Soviet ambassadors abroad, immediately began devoting itself to the propaganda of the 22nd CPSU congress and would subsequently serve as one of the main organs for distributing Soviet books, brochures and journals throughout the developing world.<sup>19</sup> Novosti's work was complemented by the Soviet news agency TASS, which produced a daily bulletin to compete with Western news agencies in providing wire stories for local papers. In addition to Novosti's distribution of printed material, *Mezhdunarodnaia Kniga* distributed everything from Marxist-Leninist classics to the latest Soviet monographs on economic development, while *Soveksportfilm* distributed Soviet films abroad. Following a Central Committee resolution of 29 January 1960, Soviet radio programming abroad was doubled by late 1961, with broadcasts from Moscow in 39 languages including Swahili, Amharic, Tamil, Urdu, Hindi, Bengali, Burmese and others.<sup>20</sup> The expansion of Soviet propaganda complemented the expansion of aid, as an important part of the mandate of these organisations was to publicise Soviet aid projects.

Finally, the Soviet Union expanded its effort to help train the cadres who would lead the political and economic development of the newly independent states. The central element in this effort was the creation of the Peoples' Friendship University in February, 1960 whose governing council consisted of the SCSCAA, the Society of Friendship, which administered friendship organisations with various countries, and the All-Union Central Union of Trade Unions.<sup>21</sup> Training of students from Asia, Africa and Latin

America at this and other educational institutions would form one of the main levers of Soviet influence in the developing world for the remainder of the Cold War.

This massive Soviet effort in the developing world, however, was inconceivable without a new ideological structure which could fit post-colonial economic and political development into a Marxist framework, thereby legitimising and directing Soviet involvement in aid and propaganda along with providing a theoretical blueprint for the political trajectory of developing states. In part due to Chinese pressure on the Soviet Union and international communist movement to take a more radical stance on decolonisation and the 'national liberation struggle', the 1960 Moscow Declaration formally introduced the concept of 'national democracy' as a form of state in the developing world which would lead development along a 'non-capitalist' path. As explained by Mikhail Suslov in his review of the November Moscow Conference at a party plenum the following January, the notion of 'national democracy' was distinct from the term 'people's democracy', which had been applied to the state formations of post-war Eastern Europe because it was not a form of dictatorship of the proletariat or even a state dominated by the working class. Rather, the state of 'national democracy' was to be ruled by a 'wide national front', dominated hopefully by the union of workers and peasants but including the national bourgeoisie and 'democratic intelligentsia' as well. This wide national front, a concept which sounded suspiciously similar to Mao's explanation of the initial period of the PRC, was to 'capture and defend national independence, effect deep democratic transformation, and enable social progress.'<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, 'under fortunate circumstances, and the correct political line and militant activism of all progressive forces headed by the communists, [national democracy] could be for former colonial countries a transitional form to the non-capitalist path of development.'<sup>23</sup> Once this concept found its way into the subsequent party platform adopted at the 22nd CPSU congress, it would be up to scholars at the newly formed institutes to flesh out the concept and determine its practical implications.

Expanding and defending the related concept of 'national democracy' and 'non-capitalist path of development' was not a simple task within a traditional Marxist-Leninist framework. The countries in question often had little that could be labelled a 'working class'. Soviet scholars attempted to alleviate this to a degree by focusing on the formation of a 'peasant proletariat'. This peasant proletariat was said to be in the process of formation due to the increasing commercialisation and mechanisation of agriculture, a process which was ironically accelerated by agrarian reform in certain countries that had only exacerbated class differentiation in the countryside by creating a new 'kulak' class.<sup>24</sup> Meanwhile, Soviet scholars insisted that the working class, despite its small size, still played an important part in the struggle for national independence and that its rapid growth allowed it to assume a central position in the state of 'national democracy', though apparently more-so in Asia than in Africa.<sup>25</sup> However, the idea of 'national democracy' really hinged on the concept of the 'national bourgeoisie', which was distinguished from the 'comprador' bourgeoisie and the 'monopolist' bourgeoisie by having nationalist and anti-imperialist interests due to its competition with international capitalist interests.<sup>26</sup> However, since ultimately the interests of the

national bourgeoisie would not lead to the total elimination of private property, the success of the state of 'national democracy' in instituting the path of 'non-capitalist development' depended upon the class coalition forming the government moving constantly to the left until the national bourgeoisie had been subsumed under a peasant-worker union.<sup>27</sup> However, Soviet policy explicitly discouraged achieving this by violent means; 'the working class and peasantry are deeply interested in building the independent state of national democracy through a peaceful path, without armed struggle'.<sup>28</sup> This still left the problem of the state, however, since the state was supposedly the instrument of the ruling class, and the ruling class in a state of 'national democracy', at least initially, would be the 'national bourgeoisie'. Consequently, Soviet scholars needed to argue that state structures in the developing world had become so complicated that, while they still fundamentally reflected bourgeois interests, they were no longer just naked tools of class exploitation and oppression.<sup>29</sup>

'National Democracies' were also supposed to have a particular international orientation. This chiefly involved neutrality and defence of national interests, with India, Indonesia, Burma, Afghanistan, UAR, Iraq, Guinea, Ghana and Mali as examples. However, it was the existence of the socialist camp which made skipping the capitalist stage a possibility and, consequently, the internal development of 'national democracies' was said to be dependent upon international factors, namely ties to the socialist bloc. 'It is understood, that the state sector will be able to operate on a democratic basis and develop independent of foreign monopolies only in the case in which progressive patriotic forces will be able to offer a certain pressure on the state life of the country, and the state sector itself will cooperate with socialist countries.'<sup>30</sup> However, Soviet scholars insisted that the choice to follow the 'non-capitalist path' was left up to the countries themselves, and they vigorously protested against accusations of 'exporting revolution'.<sup>31</sup>

By 1961, then, the Soviet Union had implemented an expanded aid programme, constructed an academic and policy-making apparatus with a focus on the developing world, expanded its propaganda efforts and developed a theory to structure its policies. However, Soviet policies still faced numerous difficulties. A letter to Frol Kozlov, a Politburo member thought to be a likely successor to Khrushchev, from one expert who had spent four years overseas through the GKES complained that, due to lack of comprehensive planning, Soviet aid was building unnecessary projects such as a metallurgical plant in Ceylon, which had no coal or iron ore, a presidential palace in Guinea, and various other hotels, palaces and stadia.<sup>32</sup> Meanwhile, certain projects built by the Soviets were being run by Western companies or processing raw materials either supplied by Western countries or for export to the West.<sup>33</sup> Furthermore, since aid agreements often required countries to pay for materials, equipment or specialists, the USSR often ended up only covering 20–50% of a given project, which understandably led many projects to remain incomplete.<sup>34</sup> Dissatisfaction with Soviet aid would open the door to Chinese competition, despite the ultimate inability of the PRC to compete with the Soviet Union on a financial basis.

The Soviet position in the developing world was made even more tenuous by the enduring suspicion with which it was received. Due to its policy of peaceful coexistence with the West, the Soviet Union's commitment to the national liberation struggle was very much in doubt in many corners of Asia, Africa and Latin America. In conversations with visiting foreign delegations, the SCSCAA found that 'not yet all overseas understand the significance of detente in the international situation for the success of the struggle of the peoples of Africa and Asia. There are incorrect inclinations that detente inhibits solidarity, obstructs the unity of the peoples of Asia and Africa, for it enables the consolidation of the great powers'.<sup>35</sup> The Soviet delegation returning from the second conference of the peoples of Africa in Tunis in January 1960 reported that unnamed 'enemies' were saying that detente was causing the Soviets to lose interest in Africa altogether.<sup>36</sup> Despite Soviet protests, there was a real basis for these charges. A.V. Safronov, one of the SCSCAA's earliest and most prominent members, admitted at a Presidium session in early 1960 that many Africans were approaching the USSR for arms and other forms of military assistance, but they were forced to turn them away empty-handed.<sup>37</sup> Soviet promotion of peaceful coexistence only deepened doubts about where true Soviet loyalties lay – with the struggling peoples of the developing world or with its fellow great white powers. At the Cairo economic conference in 1958, several countries argued that the Soviet Union should not have been invited, since it was not truly an Asian power and it had not participated in the Bandung conference, but it was the PRC that was instrumental in effecting the USSR's continued inclusion. M. Tursun-Zade, chairman of the SCSCAA, reviewing the results of the second AAPSO conference in Conakry in April 1960, identified the problem very clearly: 'they right now relate to all whites with suspicion, and they know very little about the Soviet Union'.<sup>38</sup> Increased knowledge of the Soviet Union, however, did not necessarily dampen these impressions. Africans arriving in the USSR for study or training faced numerous acts of racial intolerance, as evidenced by a report from the KGB detailing an incident in which a Guinean soldier training in Poti, Georgia was attacked over a girl, leading the Guinean contingent there to complain of 'racial discrimination' and ask to be transferred.<sup>39</sup> In Tbilisi, one student announced when an African student entered the dining hall that he could 'no longer eat'. This was not limited to Georgia, however. A member of the SCSCAA declared that such incidents were just as common in Moscow or Tashkent.<sup>40</sup> Clearly, Soviet standing in the eyes of the developing world was tenuous enough that it would be very vulnerable in the event of a large-scale battle for supremacy.

## Part II: The rise of the Chinese challenge, 1961–1963

At first, the Soviets saw the increasing Chinese presence in the developing world as a positive factor in the international competition between capitalist and socialist systems.<sup>41</sup> It was the Chinese who were instrumental in countering objections to the Soviet presence in Afro-Asian organisations, and the SCSCAA worked in close contact with the Chinese Solidarity Committee in the AAPSO as late as 1961.<sup>42</sup> Meanwhile,

Soviet vigilance regarding Chinese propaganda in the developing world was such that the head of radio administration under the Ministry of Communications, in a March 1961 report on the state of Soviet radio propaganda, had to ask that someone in the Soviet embassy in Havana be given the job of listening to the local broadcasts of Radio Beijing.<sup>43</sup> It seems that, despite the deep divisions which had already appeared in the international communist movement in 1960 in Bucharest and subsequently in Moscow, the Chinese broadside against Soviet foreign policy at the World Federation of Trade Unions conference in Beijing that year and the removal of experts by the USSR from the PRC that July, the Soviet Union did not yet see these divisions intruding on Sino–Soviet cooperation in the struggle against imperialism.

By the middle of 1961, however, warnings about the divergence of the Chinese from Soviet policy and hostile Chinese actions were beginning to bubble up from those in more immediate contact with Chinese policy in the developing world. In a report from the Institute of the Peoples of Asia to the deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs V.V. Kuznetsov in July 1961 entitled ‘Development of Economic Ties of the PRC with the countries of Asia, Africa, and Latin America’, despite expressing the hope that increasing Chinese engagement would be a net benefit to the socialist camp, the author discussed the dangers of Chinese aid, which was often offered as either grants or no-interest loans, in contrast to Soviet loans which were offered at a rate of 2.5%. ‘Such forms of economic relations could create the impression of a naked political, propagandistic maneuver, which could be used by anti-communist propaganda . . . together with this, such “generosity” from the PRC could put in a slanderous position the Soviet Union and other socialist countries who offer aid to underdeveloped countries on conditions in great measure tied with the principle of mutual benefit.’<sup>44</sup> Chinese aid agreements, such as those with Nepal and Guinea, specified that the living standards of Chinese experts should not exceed those of their local counterparts, a fact which, considering that the majority of aid money often went to supporting the relatively extravagant lifestyles of Western and Soviet specialists, was greatly appreciated by the local press. A Nepalese paper wrote that because of the difference in personnel costs, Chinese aid was ‘more than the aid of other friendly countries’ and ‘showed how aid from developed countries to underdeveloped countries should be.’<sup>45</sup>

While the terms of Chinese aid made a material case for China being a truer ally of the developing world than the Soviet Union, the centrepiece of the Chinese political challenge was the issue of peaceful coexistence. As mentioned earlier, peaceful coexistence was already causing problems for Soviet claims to be in the vanguard of revolution, especially in the anti-colonial struggle, as early as the late 1950s, among Africans. In the aftermath of the Moscow conference, the SCSCAA began to suspect that the Chinese were attempting to mobilise this sentiment to present themselves as the leaders of the revolutionary anti-imperialist struggle. Initially, the battle over peaceful coexistence was conducted behind the scenes,<sup>46</sup> but the Chinese soon began leading an effort to split the so-called ‘peace movement’, in the form of the World Peace Council (WPC), from the ‘solidarity movement’, in the form of the AAPSO. In a report by SCSCAA member Safronov to the committee’s presidium on the AAPSO

executive committee session in Gaza in December 1961, he described the rather successful efforts of the Chinese to paint the WPC as a European-dominated organisation which was not truly 'an anti-imperialist, anti-colonial organisation'.<sup>47</sup> This position was especially popular among African delegations, and it was again forcefully articulated by the Chinese and others at the Stockholm session of the WPC, where it was used as a way of excluding the WPC from the preparation for a prospective 'tri-continental' solidarity conference.<sup>48</sup>

Chinese-spread fears concerning insufficiently militant Soviet opposition to imperialism did not remain abstract. In particular, in the early years of the AAPSO, the prominence of the Algerian independence struggle made the lack of Soviet support of Algeria and unwillingness to recognise its Provisional Government, in contrast to the Chinese recognition, a major vulnerability. The Chinese managed to cause the Algerian delegation to waver in its affiliations,<sup>49</sup> and to create the impression, even among foreign students studying in the Soviet Union, that the Soviet push for disarmament included the desire 'to disarm peoples fighting for their freedom – Algeria, Angola, etc.'<sup>50</sup> China attacked Soviet positions on Algeria, Angola, Congo, Laos, Israel, Indonesia and Cuba in the wake of the missile crisis, the Limited Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty and, finally and most importantly, on Vietnam. By the second conference of Afro-Asian writers in Cairo in early 1962, this led to the formation of a Chinese-led bloc, which argued that Afro-Asian countries should not accept aid from non-Afro-Asian countries and that the doctrine of peaceful coexistence negated class struggle.<sup>51</sup> By the time of the third AAPSO conference in Moshi, Tanzania in February 1963, the Chinese delegation, confident that it had undermined support for the Soviets in the organisation, bluntly asked the arriving Soviet delegation: 'Why did you come? There is nothing for you to do here'.<sup>52</sup>

For the Soviet Union, the challenge presented by Chinese attempts to use its economic and foreign policy relations with the developing world to undermine Soviet influence was magnified by the ever-expanding Chinese propaganda apparatus. Reports of both Soviet and European communists on travels abroad created an impression in Moscow that Chinese propaganda, in both quantity and quality, was becoming dominant in many corners of the developing world. In January 1962, a proposal from the director of the newly created Novosti on expanding Soviet propaganda in Africa, based on a recent trip of the deputy director to a number of African countries, warned about the increasing efforts of the Chinese to distribute materials from every embassy, consulate and trade mission on the continent, especially cheap ideological brochures featuring Mao's speeches.<sup>53</sup> The director of the press division of the Foreign Ministry, in a report to Central Committee Secretary L.F. Il'ichev based on reports from Soviet embassies in Africa, emphasised the growth of Chinese propaganda on the continent, especially radio broadcasts, and outlined a plan for getting out the Soviet point of view. The report said that 'In view of the activation of Chinese propaganda in Africa', Soviet propaganda needed to 'in a calm tone, gainfully and convincingly explain to African society our point of view on questions of peaceful coexistence, the possibility of the peaceful path to socialism...'.<sup>54</sup> In the



meantime, however, reports of the dominance of Chinese propaganda became more alarming through 1963 and 1964. A journalist from *Kommunist* reported after a trip to North Africa in early 1963 that glossy Chinese brochures were ubiquitous in Algeria, while Soviet printed material was available in only one bookstore in Algiers. Even in that bookstore, Chinese materials were centrally placed and the owner raved that 'the Chinese publish brochures on varied and the most current themes, in beautiful prints, portable formats, and the Algerians gladly (*okhotno*) buy them' (underlined in the original).<sup>55</sup> Idris Cox, a member of the Communist Party of Great Britain, returning from a trip to East Africa in 1964, told Alexei Rumyantsev that he found bookstores filled with Chinese literature while Soviet materials were almost absent. When pressed, progressive activists in Kenya and Zanzibar responded that they wrote to the PRC, USSR and Czechoslovakia right after independence requesting materials, but while the PRC responded within a week, they had still not yet heard from the Soviets or Czechs.<sup>56</sup> It seemed clear that the Chinese were devoting much greater resources to propaganda in the developing world than the Soviets were.

The growing awareness of China's propaganda advantage led the Soviets to pay more attention to the forms and tactics of Chinese propaganda. A report from the head of the State Committee on Cultural Ties (GKKS) to the Central Committee in early 1964 wrote that Chinese propaganda was 'distinguished by its operational effectiveness and significant scope'.<sup>57</sup> Chinese radio broadcast more than 700 hours of programming weekly in 25 languages, which was over 100 hours more than the BBC or Voice of America. In addition, the PRC was distributing millions of pieces of literature in at least 16 languages including *Peking Review*, its signature glossy journal, in English, French and Spanish. While China was using conventional means such as official delegations to distribute literature, it was also investing in relationships with small local publishers to gain greater access to local distribution networks and avoid government controls on foreign literature. These efforts were supplemented as well by small pro-Maoist parties, often founded as little more than propaganda outlets, as well as established Trotskyite parties, especially in Latin America.<sup>58</sup> The Soviet embassy in Havana reported that the Chinese were not above using personal connections with officials to circumvent rules censoring foreign criticism of allies, or even resorting to bribery when necessary.<sup>59</sup> In conclusion, the Chairman of GKKS wrote that 'everything above testifies that Chinese schismatics are trying to tie the international communist movement, forces leading the national-liberation struggle, to their mistaken views, elevating this to the level of state policy, they have created a centralised apparatus of foreign political propaganda, through which they actively cultivate social opinion in the majority of the countries of the world; the activity of this powerful apparatus of anti-Soviet propaganda must be constantly considered in the organisation of our foreign political propaganda and foreign propaganda'.<sup>60</sup>

In many cases, Chinese propaganda fell on fertile ground and Chinese success in wresting the mantle of leadership of the 'national-liberation struggle' from the Soviet Union began to seem a very real possibility. In addition to the receptivity of African audiences to Chinese arguments regarding peaceful coexistence, many Asian



communist parties gravitated towards Beijing through a combination of shared historic and cultural experience, ideological affinity, and Chinese tactics of manipulation and intimidation. At various times, the Communist Parties of Japan, North Korea, North Vietnam, Ceylon, Indonesia and others supported Beijing's stances in its conflict with Moscow. As early as January 1962, the less than enthusiastic reception of a Soviet cosmonaut in Hanoi led the Soviet delegation to conclude that 'certain state actors and party activists of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV), as it appears, are under the strong influence of China'.<sup>61</sup> A few months later, talks with representatives of the Communist Party of Japan (CPJ) revealed that, due to the illness of Party chief Nosaka, the new leadership group was leading the Party towards the 'left-sectarian, dogmatic position' of the Communist Party of China (CCP).<sup>62</sup> By August 1964, the Soviet embassy in Jakarta, despite the protests of Party chief Aidit that they were trying to follow a middle line, concluded that 'recently, the positions of the Communist Party of Indonesia and the CCP, on a number of contemporary questions, have merged and become identical', though they did not counsel completely writing off Indonesia just yet.<sup>63</sup> These parties, as well as other Asian parties, often supported the PRC in international solidarity, peace, women's, trade union and youth organisations. The chairman of the Indonesia Committee of Supporters of Peace, who herself supported Soviet positions, nevertheless explained this growing tide by telling the editor in chief of *Pravda* that 'you need to know that the countries of Asia and Africa are on the side of China, because its position is closer to them; they think that national independence must be achieved with force, even to the degree of all-out war'.<sup>64</sup> Compounding the concern in Moscow, attempts to explain the grounds of Sino-Soviet disputes to Soviet citizens revealed a disturbing level of understanding for Chinese positions. In meetings of party organisations on the issue, Soviets citizens raised such questions as 'Are we not in fact compromising with imperialism over West Berlin?' and 'Why did the USSR stop giving aid to China when we still give aid to bourgeois countries such as India, Syria, Iraq, and the UAR?'<sup>65</sup> It seems, then, that relentless Chinese propaganda was seriously undermining Soviet standing as the leader of world revolution, even in its own backyard.

The greatest threat to Soviet claims to be at the forefront of the anti-imperialist struggle, however, was in growing Chinese influence in Cuba and North Vietnam. In the early 1960s, these two countries captured the world's attention as the frontlines in the struggle between East and West, as small, poor countries led by heroic revolutionaries faced with the naked military might of the imperialist colossus, the United States. The Cuban revolution, by its very nature, posed a challenge to Soviet policy because it was achieved through military struggle, in particular Chinese-style guerrilla warfare in the countryside, precisely at the time when the Soviet Union was pushing peaceful coexistence and the peaceful path to socialism, a position enthusiastically supported by most Latin American Communist Parties. In fact, this affinity was openly acknowledged by both Cuba and the PRC.<sup>66</sup> Che Guevara in particular acknowledged Cuba's debt to Mao in the area of guerrilla warfare and the Chinese reciprocated by writing that, following Che's visit to China and meetings with

Mao, Zhou and Chen Yi among others, the Cubans 'are relatively in line with our thinking. They agree with our Party on imperialism, armed revolution, theoretical and practical doctrines such as the countryside surrounding the cities, support our country's general line, people's communes and the Great Leap Forward, affirm Mao Zedong as a great teacher, one who deeply understands Latin America's situation'.<sup>67</sup> Consequently, in 1961 and 1962, the Chinese blanketed Cuba in propaganda. The Bay of Pigs invasion, and in particular the Cuban Missile Crisis, in which Khrushchev removed Soviet missiles from Cuba without even consulting Fidel Castro, provided useful material for the Chinese, who presented the Soviets as cowards, unable and unwilling to defend the interests of world revolution. In the wake of the Cuban Missile Crisis, the chairman of *Novosti* wrote that it had become much harder to publish Soviet materials in Cuba, and that the Cubans had completely ceased publishing Soviet materials related to ideology or foreign policy.<sup>68</sup> The situation improved only after Castro's visit to the Soviet Union in 1963. After Khrushchev's account to the Presidium of his conversations with Castro and the latter's new understanding of Soviet actions, Boris Ponomarev, the head of the International Department, immediately declared that 'this must be widely distributed in all countries, and especially where there are inclinations close to the Chinese'.<sup>69</sup> This was, however, only a mixed victory for the Soviets. While Fidel Castro had come to the conclusion that Chinese support was little more than words and paper while true material support could come only from Moscow, his commitment to armed revolution had not disappeared and would lead to an effort to present Cuba as true leader of the 'Third World', an effort whose crowning moment would come at the tri-continental conference in Havana in January 1966.

As the 1960s progressed, the situation in Vietnam, due to American escalation, began to take centre-stage in the anti-imperialist struggle, and the Chinese presence there would prove much tougher to dislodge. Soviet relations with the DRV, however, had been deteriorating since the Bucharest conference in July 1960. A report of the Soviet embassy in Hanoi from December 1963 chronicled the descent of Soviet–Vietnamese relations through a period of Vietnamese 'neutrality' in 1961, which ended with a decided shift towards pro-Chinese positions in early 1962. This shift was crystallised in the demotion of a number of prominent pro-Soviet Vietnamese at the end of the year. The nadir thus far was seen as the joint PRC–DRV communiqué of 16 May 1963 in which the Vietnamese Workers' Party (VWP) openly supported Chinese positions on a range of issues, began a campaign of popularisation of Chinese positions in the lower ranks of the party, and essentially prohibited the distribution of Soviet propaganda.<sup>70</sup> On the eve of the Gulf of Tonkin incidents, the Soviet embassy reported that 'now, nothing remains of the earlier "middle line", except for small differences between the lines of CCP and VWP on internal problems of socialist construction in each country and certain tactical questions'.<sup>71</sup> On international issues, the VWP supported CCP positions on imperialism, nuclear warfare and the Test-Ban Treaty, the role of the CPSU and USSR, the cult of personality, Albania, Yugoslavia, South Vietnam, and the Sino–Indian border conflict.<sup>72</sup> The VWP even continued to support Chinese claims regarding Soviet 'cowardice' during the Cuban Missile Crisis

after Fidel Castro had publicly supported Soviet actions. The VWP simply claimed that Castro was being 'sentimental'.<sup>73</sup> Consequently, the DRV was instrumental in supporting Chinese positions in the AAPSO, the WPC and other international organisations. By June 1964 Soviet–Vietnamese relations had deteriorated to the point where even Soviet military attachés were no longer being briefed, an action justified by the claim that 'Soviet military doctrine does not suit the conditions of the DRV'.<sup>74</sup> The DRV was increasingly adopting Chinese military strategy and the bureau of the Central Committee of the VWP on military affairs reportedly decided to gradually shift the DRV army from Soviet weaponry to Chinese.<sup>75</sup> At the time of the Gulf of Tonkin incident, USSR–DRV relations seemed to be dangerously perched on the precipice of total collapse.

### Part III: The Soviet response

In the early 1960s, the PRC had nearly succeeded in convincing large parts of the developing world that it, and not the USSR, was the true centre of world revolution. A massive Chinese propaganda effort had been quite successful in promoting the idea that the Soviet Union, as a white, industrialised, imperialist power, was not willing to risk its relations with the West in order to support the cause of revolution in the developing world. It also did not have the appropriate experience of colonial oppression, struggle for national independence and transition from a largely pre-capitalist economy that could provide a model for developing countries, as the PRC did. Chinese efforts had nearly taken over the AAPSO, and the militant Chinese approach to the anti-imperialist struggle had driven the crown jewels of that struggle, Cuba and North Vietnam, away from Moscow's orbit. It was not surprising then when Khrushchev, at a Presidium meeting in September 1963, speaking about anti-Chinese measures, declared: 'This, comrades, is now for us task number one, this is the chief of our foreign policy tasks'.<sup>76</sup>

In the absence of full access to Politburo records it is of course impossible to present a completely systematic account of the Soviet leadership's response to the Chinese challenge, to determine exactly what actions were called for by the centre, at what time and in what proportion. However, it is often possible, through the examination of new elements which appear in Soviet policy, or are given greater or lesser emphasis than previously, along with occasional insights provided by lower-level officials, to gain a rough picture of certain elements that were included in the response. It is also difficult in certain places to determine exactly what role China played in Soviet motivations toward certain policies, such as the expansion of aid programmes or increasing support for North Vietnam, which also served other ends as well, in particular competition with the West. Within the context of the nature of the Chinese challenge, and the explicit Soviet response to the challenge via propaganda organs, it is at least possible to see which policies enacted also served the ends of competition with China, at a minimum.

The most immediate and obvious response to China's attempt to undermine the Soviet position in the developing world was a massive propaganda offensive. Until the collapse of negotiations between the PRC and the USSR in July 1963, the public Soviet response to China was muted, even though it had become quite open and pugilistic in communist forums and international organisations. Once negotiations collapsed, however, Soviet propaganda organs focused intensely on combating Chinese views in late 1963. One of the initial tools in this struggle was the open letter of the Soviet Communist Party to the CCP of 14 July 1963, which *Novosti*, as directed by a Central Committee resolution of 3 August, had printed in 3.2 million copies in 35 languages and distributed abroad in 85 countries by September.<sup>77</sup> *Novosti* would make similar efforts to distribute subsequent anti-Chinese statements of the Soviet government and party, as well as other communist parties, with particular attention focused on Suslov's lengthy anti-Chinese diatribe at the February 1964 Party plenum. In a report to the Central Committee in September 1963 on its anti-Chinese activity, *Novosti* detailed its efforts to publish materials abroad in the foreign press, in its own magazines and in separate brochures, systematically commissioning articles from Soviet scholars, reprinting articles from journals like *Kommunist* and *Aziia i Afrika Segodnia*, with a particular focus on attacking people 'that Chinese authorities present as authoritative representatives of the national liberation movements of Asia, Africa, and Latin America'.<sup>78</sup> Following a Central Committee decision in October 1963, *Novosti* began publishing a new organ, 'Questions of the World Communist Movement', specifically devoted to the conflict with China, in English, French, Spanish and Russian.<sup>79</sup>

Individual Soviet embassies also began devoting considerable resources to anti-Chinese propaganda. The embassy in India, a country where the local communist party was threatened with a split due to the strength of pro-Chinese forces, submitted a report in November 1963 entitled 'On the strengthening in the local country of propaganda of the external and internal policy of the Soviet Union, on explication and examination of the most important documents and materials of the CC CPSU and Soviet government attacking the anti-Soviet, schismatic activity of the Chinese leaders'.<sup>80</sup> The report not only detailed efforts to publish and distribute copies of government documents and journal articles in local languages, but also called for soliciting local Indian writers to write anti-Chinese articles, creating a thematic database of material to be used in local 'progressive' and 'bourgeois' papers alike, meeting with leading editors and journalists of Indian papers no less than two or three times per month, as well as conducting lectures, press conferences and film viewings. Similar reports were submitted by many other embassies in Asia and Africa.

The Soviet propaganda effort to counteract Chinese claims required a re-examination of the ideological issues involved. As A. Rumyantsev, editor of *Problemy Mira i Sotsializma*, the journal of the international communist movement based in Prague, wrote to Khrushchev in early 1964: 'It is impossible to completely expose the mistaken concepts in the realm of practical politics [of the Chinese] without uncovering their theoretical bases'.<sup>81</sup> Rumyantsev noted both the particular attention paid by the PRC to developing countries, and the attraction of Maoist ideology among

those escaping colonialism and seeking to avoid the long, hard slog of 'scientific socialism'. The core issue, however, according to Rumyantsev, was that a certain excessively tolerant attitude had pervaded Soviet thought and policy in the developing world towards the problem of nationalism. He argued that it was excessive, malignant nationalism which was at the core of the Maoist heresy, and that nationalism was the common point between Maoist dogmatism and Titoist revisionism. *Aziia i Afrika Segdnia* concurred, writing in the wake of a Party plenum calling on Soviet orientalists to renew their efforts in the area of ideology in July 1963 that Chinese ideology was 'characterised by a rejection of Marxist-Leninist historical science and the replacement of it with chauvinist nationalist and even racist conceptions'.<sup>82</sup> Soviet scholars, who had developed the theory of the 'national democratic' state which was to pursue the 'non-capitalist path of development' as an expression of popular will through a wide national front, now had to adapt that theory to include the dangers of excessive nationalism.

The centrepiece of the theory of the 'national democratic' state had been the role of the 'national bourgeoisie', whose nationalism had caused them to take the leading role in the independence struggle and whose predominance in national politics caused them to be the crucial element in the wide national coalition. However, given that 'nationalism' now presented the primary danger to the Soviet view of the revolutionary process in the developing world, the 'national bourgeoisie', as the repository of nationalism, came under suspicion from Soviet theorists. G. Kim, writing in October 1964, argued that while initially the 'lower' and 'middle' strata of the 'national bourgeoisie' had been dominant, now the 'great' strata was dominant, and its interests were increasingly oriented towards rapprochement with imperialism.<sup>83</sup> Consequently, the previous concepts of 'People's Democracy' and 'National Democracy' were replaced in the imagination of Soviet theorists with a new concept: 'Revolutionary Democracy'. 'Revolutionary Democracy' was still merely a transitional form of national liberation movement moving towards the non-capitalist path of development, not yet an actual form of socialist revolution, and it was still to be headed by a class coalition, but this time the coalition consisted primarily of the peasantry and what was alternatively referred to as the 'petty bourgeoisie' or the 'middle urban strata'.<sup>84</sup> Given the demotion of the 'national bourgeoisie', the state of 'revolutionary democracy' was meant to be less susceptible to nationalist deviation. Furthermore, Kim acknowledged the still undeveloped nature of the working class in developing countries, asserting that this placed a greater importance on the leadership of the global working class, making the connections between the struggle of world socialism and the global working class to the national liberation struggle even more essential.

While Soviet scholars expounded upon the dangers of nationalism, they nevertheless changed their rhetoric on the issue of armed struggle. Soviet promotion of peaceful coexistence, through the efforts of the Chinese, had hurt them significantly in the eyes of the developing world, and while the Soviet state, party and propaganda institutions continued to promote the slogan of peaceful coexistence along with

specific examples such as the Test-Ban Treaty, they began increasingly to emphasise that peaceful coexistence did not exclude armed struggle in the developing world. E. Alekseev wrote in December 1963 that while most former colonies achieved independence peacefully, this does not mean that the nature of imperialism had changed and 'it does not follow from anywhere that there is only one path to the conquering of national independence – the peaceful one'.<sup>85</sup>

The evident damage done to Soviet support in the developing world, however, required more than just scholarly journal articles. The extent of the damage was evident in a series of KGB reports on international delegations to the World Forum for Solidarity of Youth and Students in the Struggle for National Independence and Peace held in Moscow in September 1964. While the KGB reported on the efforts of the Chinese to turn the delegates against their Soviet hosts, it became clear that the supposed lack of Soviet support for armed struggle in the developing world was the key to Chinese success and that many delegates in fact believed the essence of the Chinese claims. For example, the delegations of Congo-Leopoldville, South Africa, Mozambique, Angola and Guinea-Bissau expressed anger at the lack of attention paid to their struggles at the conference, and began wondering why they had even come, according to the KGB.<sup>86</sup> It was not until a reception at the Kremlin where Khrushchev himself addressed the delegations, explicitly affirming Moscow's willingness to supply arms, that many delegations changed their mind. The Iraqi delegation said that they were in a great mood, because before coming to the Kremlin reception they truly did not believe that Moscow was willing to supply arms. Similarly, the delegation from Dahomey said the speech made an enormous impression, and that they would go back and tell their people that the Soviet Union was on the side of the fighters.<sup>87</sup> Other Soviet organisations began putting struggle above peace in their declarations as a result. The SCSCAA Presidium commented positively on the agenda of the Soviet delegation to a session of the World Council of Peace which put the 'struggle of peoples' at the top, 'in place of questions of peace and friendship – this is very important because arriving in Asia and Africa the first question is certainly not that of disarmament or peace'.<sup>88</sup> As the struggle in Vietnam began to dominate the global consciousness and the centrality of massive Soviet military aid supporting the North Vietnamese and the NLF became known, Soviet practice came to reflect the changed Soviet rhetoric in the eyes of many around the world.

While the issue of armed struggle was central to many in the developing world, as time went on and most countries had already gained independence, Soviet political actors realised that questions of economic development were beginning to take precedence in the mind of many over the issue of armed struggle for independence. As the chairman of the Presidium of SCSCAA, M. Tursun-Zade, declared in 1965, 'the most important question is the strengthening of economic independence of liberated countries, their development, and the aid of the socialist camp, as well as the concrete aid of the Soviet Union'.<sup>89</sup> The SCSCAA noticed that, as the utility of peaceful coexistence as a wedge issue began to diminish, the Chinese were increasingly focusing on the discrepancies in the terms and nature of economic aid. Consequently, one



Presidium member pronounced that, ultimately, 'money will decide', and another advocated talking to the Ministry of Foreign Trade in order to improve the terms of trade for developing countries with the Soviet Union.<sup>90</sup> By the mid-1960s, the reality of superior Soviet economic might was being felt in Afro-Asian capitals. In a confidential report passed to the Soviets by allies in North Vietnam, the North Vietnamese delegation to the AAPSO Executive Council session in January 1964 reported back to Hanoi that at the upcoming council meeting in Algiers in April the Soviets would try to make the issue of economic aid dominate the discussion and 'the USSR might achieve success in this, because if the discussion turns on aid to underdeveloped countries, many African countries might agree'.<sup>91</sup>

However, along with this increasing focus on economic development came a repackaging of the Soviet Union. As early as 1959, in the wake of the questions raised regarding the presence of the USSR at the Afro-Asian economic conference in Cairo, the chairman of the presidium of the All-Union Chamber of Commerce, in a letter to Mikoyan, suggested creating a separate Central Asian chamber of commerce, to be located in Tashkent, which would handle Soviet representation at future Afro-Asian conferences.<sup>92</sup> In January 1961, the KGB suggested creating a propaganda centre in Tashkent to publicise the achievements of Soviet Central Asia to the developing world via radio and print, although at the time it was shot down through the combined efforts of the Ministry of Communications, and the International and Agitprop Departments of the Central Committee.<sup>93</sup> However, as the attempt to exclude the USSR from Afro-Asian forums due to Chinese intervention began to gain steam, Soviet organisations came to revisit the notion of using the Central Asian republics to present the USSR as an authentic Asian power. SCSCAA, being on the front lines of the struggle, was unsurprisingly one of the first organisations to adopt this tactic. At a Presidium session in January 1962, the SCSCAA discussed raising the profile of the solidarity committees in each of the Central Asian and Trans-Caucasian republics, increasing their work, as well as having the republican committees invite foreign delegations to visit Central Asia.<sup>94</sup> In subsequent sessions, SCSCAA members would call for ever more activity on the part of republican committees to combat Chinese attempts to kick the USSR out of the AAPSO, and to combat racial prejudices against the USSR.<sup>95</sup>

Along with affirming the Asian-ness of the Soviet Union, Soviet organisations attempted to combat Chinese claims that their experience and economic model were more relevant to the conditions of recently liberated developing countries than those of the USSR. Soviet representatives argued that the USSR, in the immediate aftermath of the October Revolution, was also a feudal, agrarian state, whose initial development tasks were very similar to those being faced by many countries in Asia and Africa. One Soviet orientalist suggested focusing on the trajectory of Soviet development since 'the Soviet people have in practice shown how, in the lifetime of one generation, having taken a course for socialism, for communism, it is possible to take a backward and poor country to the very peak of progress'.<sup>96</sup> In addition to heavy industry, Soviet organisations involved in policy toward the developing world began to emphasise



tasks such as combating illiteracy and feudalism and promoting basic healthcare, relying especially on the experience of Central Asian republics. Combining the new emphasis on economic development with the focus on Central Asia, between 1967 and 1972 the Soviet Union held a series of economic conferences for representatives of developing countries in Baku, Alma-Ata, Frunze and Tashkent.

By the fall of 1965, then, the USSR had introduced an extensive overhaul of its approach to the developing world. It had attempted to change its image from one of an industrialised, white, imperialist power concerned primarily with relations with the West, to a largely Asian country, recently escaped from poverty and underdevelopment, committed to the success of the world revolutionary struggle by any means necessary. This effort was combined with an adaptation of the theory of socialist development and a massive propaganda effort. While the Soviet position in the developing world had improved greatly by 1965–1966, however, it is hard to say how much of this can be attributed to the success of Soviet policy, and how much to the failure of Chinese policy.

### Epilogue

In the fall of 1965, Chinese foreign policy in the developing world suffered two crushing blows: the destruction of its closest and most important ally, the Communist Party of Indonesia (PKI), and the failure to hold a second Bandung conference without the Soviet Union. For the Soviet leadership, these events confirmed the success of their approach. Describing the analysis to be presented at the upcoming 23rd CPSU congress, Brezhnev in a March 1966 plenum speech asserted that ‘the experience of the last years again underlined that success is achieved by those parties which are led by Leninist principles of strategy and tactics, in accordance with the reality of the situation’, a clear reference to the failure of the PKI.<sup>97</sup> The subsequent Chinese turn inwards during the Cultural Revolution cemented the Soviet victory in the minds of many in the developing world. Many countries feared that holding the fifth AAPSO congress as planned in Beijing in 1967 would only end in the destruction of the organisation and so looked for any way to rescind the decision.<sup>98</sup> The Soviet Foreign Ministry reported that while Maoism had been very fashionable in East Africa in the early and mid-1960s as ‘unmitigated anti-imperialism’, the Cultural Revolution had convinced people that China was not capable of leading Africa, and Mao pins and similar paraphernalia had become much less popular.<sup>99</sup> In June 1969, the USSR finally managed to organise the long-sought successor conference to the Moscow conference of 1960, the first such gathering of the international communist movement since the open Sino–Soviet split. While the gathering was attended by only 75 parties, fewer than the 81 who attended the 1960 conference and missing certain key participants, the Soviets saw this as the exclamation of their victory over the PRC. However, this victory was to be short-lived, as the PRC would emerge from the Cultural Revolution with a revamped approach to foreign policy that would present new challenges to the Soviet Union in the developing world.

## Conclusion

While the competition with the West remained the primary factor for Moscow in the countries of the so-called developing world, the challenge presented from within the socialist camp by the PRC succeeded in forcing certain important changes and adaptations in Soviet policy. For a period in the early to mid-1960s, in fact, the PRC perhaps exceeded the West in importance in the calculations of certain Soviet organisations, especially Soviet committees tied to international organisations such as the AAPSO and WPC, which dealt primarily with the 'progressive' and revolutionary forces within the developing world, rather than the state governments themselves. The Chinese challenge was even powerful enough to cause the Soviet Union to risk deterioration of relations with the West by retreating from its stated policy of peaceful coexistence towards a more confrontational approach, especially in Vietnam, which would delay the progress of détente for nearly a decade. The Chinese challenge, unlike the challenge from the capitalist world, threatened the very legitimacy of the Soviet position within its own camp. The Soviet Union found itself fighting to retain the status it thought it had achieved through the blood and sweat of collectivisation, industrialisation, terror and world war when it was identified by Beijing with its imperialist opponents. Consequently, the struggle for the 'Third World' was more than just the struggle for allies. It was a struggle for ownership of the very idea of socialist revolution and, as such, ideology could not help but remain central to the struggle. Changes in material policy, such as military or economic aid, needed to be justified within revised ideological frameworks and it was often the change in rhetoric, as much as the change in practice, that won hearts and minds in the developing world. Soviet scholars also had to develop a theoretical framework which not only justified Soviet policies in terms of Marxism-Leninism, but which explained events in the developing world and provided a compelling revolutionary model for developing world actors themselves, through the activity of Soviet propaganda, diplomats and experts. In an almost dialectical sense, then, the Chinese challenge can be seen as a necessary part of the evolution towards a more effective and appropriate Soviet approach, from the perspective of its own interests of course, to the developing world.

## Notes

- [1] Quoted in S. Ogurtsov, 'Razvivaiushchiesia Strany I Sotsial'nyi Progress', *Aziia i Afrika Segodnia* no. 7 (July 1963), 2.
- [2] See, for example, Bradley Simpson, *Economists with Guns: Authoritarian Development and U.S.–Indonesia Relations, 1960–1968* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2008), 62–73.
- [3] See, for example Jerry F. Hough, *The Struggle for the Third World: Soviet Debates and American Options* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 1986), Mark N. Katz, *The Third World in Soviet Military Thought* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982) and *The USSR and Marxist Revolutions in the Third World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), Margot Light, ed., *Troubled Friendships: Moscow's Third World Ventures* (London: British Academic Press, 1993), Neil S. MacFarlane, *Superpower Rivalry and Third World*

- Radicalism* (Baltimore: JHU Press, 1985), Arthur Rubinstein. *Moscow's Third World Strategy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988), Carol R. Saivetz and Sylvia Woodby, *Soviet–Third World Relations* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1985), Joseph G. Wheelan and Michael J. Dixon, *The Soviet Union in the Third World: Threat to World Peace?* (New York: Pergamen–Brassey's, 1986).
- [4] Galia Golan, *The Soviet Union and National Liberation Movements in the Third World* (Boston, MA: Allen & Unwin, 1988).
- [5] Piero Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions: Havana, Washington, and Africa 1959–1976* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002).
- [6] Donald W. Treadgold, 'Alternative Western Views of the Sino–Soviet Conflict', in *The Sino–Soviet Conflict: A Global Perspective*, ed. Herbert J. Ellison (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1982), 325–55.
- [7] Lorenz Luthi, *The Sino–Soviet Split: Cold War in the Communist World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 2.
- [8] RGANI F.5 O.14 d.19, 12–4.
- [9] *Ibid.*, 14.
- [10] Karen Brutents, *Tridtsat' let na Staroi Ploshchadi* (Moscow: *Mezhdunarodnye Otnosheniia*, 1998), 197–8.
- [11] RGANI F.5 O.30 d.272, 43–5.
- [12] RGANI F.5 O.30 d.272, 176.
- [13] *Ibid.*, 220.
- [14] RGANI F.5 O.30 d.371, 40–139.
- [15] RGANI F.5 O.30 d.371, 147–50.
- [16] RGANI F.5 O.30 d.371, 227–36.
- [17] Brutents, 170.
- [18] For discussion on the relationship between SCSCAA and *Aziia i Afrika Segodnia* see for example GARF F.9540 O.1 d.80, 49.
- [19] RGANI F.5 O.33 d.171, 25–92.
- [20] RGANI F.5 O.33 d.175, 82–7.
- [21] GARF F.9540 O.1 d.62, 16.
- [22] RGANI F.2 O.1 d.510, 19.
- [23] RGANI F.2 O.1 d.510, 20.
- [24] See V. Pavlov, 'Soiuz Rabocheho Klassa i Krest'ianstva i Sotsial'nye Preobrazovaniia na Vostoke', *Aziia i Afrika Segodnia* no. 10 (October 1961), 10; G. Kotovskii, 'Sel'skokhoziastvennyi Proletariat v Stranakh Azii i Afriki', *Aziia i Afrika Segodnia* no. 5 (May 1962), 16–8; G. Kim, 'O Gosudarstve Natsional'noi Demokratii', *Aziia i Afrika Segodnia* No. 10 (October 1962), 2–5.
- [25] See I. Potekhin, 'Afrika: Itgoi i Perspektivy Antiimperialisticheskoi Revoliutsii', *Aziia i Afrika Segodnia* no. 10 (October 1962), 14–5; and G. Kim, 'O Gosudarstve Natsional'noi Demokratii'.
- [26] V. Li, 'Dva Litsa Odnogo Klassa', *Aziia i Afrika Segodnia* no. 3 (March 1962), 6–9.
- [27] G. Kim, 'O Gosudarstve Natsional'noi Demokratii', 5.
- [28] V. Li, 'O Nekapitalisticheskoi Puti Razvitiia', *Aziia i Afrika Segodnia*, no. 11, November, 1961, 13.
- [29] V. Pavlov, 'Soiuz Rabocheho Klassa i Krest'ianstvo i Sotsial'nye Preobrazovaniia na Vostoke', 10.
- [30] *Ibid.*, 12.
- [31] V. Li, 'O Nekapitalisticheskoi Puti Razvitiia', 10; G. Kim, 'O Gosudarstve Natsional'noi Demokratii', 2.
- [32] RGANI F.5 O.30 d.371, 162.
- [33] RGANI F.5 O.30 d.371, 228.

- [34] RGANI F.5 O.30 d.371, 165.
- [35] GARF F.9540 O.1 d.60, 39.
- [36] GARF F.9540 O.1 d.62, 3.
- [37] GARF F.9540 O.1 d.60, 35.
- [38] GARF F.9540 O.1 d.60, 117.
- [39] RGANI F.5 O.30 d.369, 105.
- [40] GARF F.9540 O.1 d.109, 97–8.
- [41] AVPRF F.0100 O.48 Papka 203 Por. 37 d.KI-722, 201.
- [42] GARF F.9540 O.1 d.81, 12.
- [43] RGANI F.5 O.33 d.177, 64.
- [44] AVPRF F.0100 O.48 Papka 203 Por. 37 d.KI-722, 201.
- [45] See *Ibid* and AVPRF F.0100 O.47 Papka 197 Por. 45 d.KI-722, 21–2, quoting the Nepalese, paper *Svatantra Samachar*, March 27, 1960.
- [46] GARF F.9540 O.1 d.81, 17.
- [47] GARF F.9540 O.1 d.109, 54.
- [48] *Ibid*.
- [49] GARF F.9540 O.1 d.109, 52.
- [50] GARF F.9540 O.1 d.109, 103.
- [51] GARF F.9540 O.1 d.110, 4.
- [52] GARF F.9540 O.1 d.129, 28.
- [53] RGANI F.5 O.33 d.208, 20.
- [54] RGANI F.5 O.55 d.54, 39.
- [55] RGANI F.5 O.55 d.54, 61–2.
- [56] RGANI F.5 O.55 d.116, 26–7.
- [57] RGANI F.5 O.55 d.116, 7.
- [58] *Ibid.*, 6–25.
- [59] RGANI F.5 O.55 d.116, 92–104.
- [60] RGANI F.5 O.55 d.116, 25.
- [61] RGANI F.5 O.30 d.400, 23.
- [62] *Ibid.*, 38.
- [63] RGANI F.5 O.55 d.116, 453.
- [64] RGANI F.5 O.55 d.56, 149.
- [65] RGANI F.5 O.55 d.1, 135.
- [66] See, for example, a Xina delegation's report on its visit to Latin America in *Waijiaobu Dang'anguan* (PRC Foreign Ministry archive) Doc.111-00274-01, 13.
- [67] *Waijiaobu Dang'anguan* Doc.111-00163-01, 18–21 on Che Guevara's visit to China 11/8–12/1/1960.
- [68] RGANI F.5 O.55 d.58, 73.
- [69] Stenogram of Presidium session June 7, 1963 in *Arkhivy Kremliia: Prezidium TsK KPSS 1954–1964*, ed. A.A. Fursenko (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2004), 722.
- [70] AVPRF F.079 O.19 Por.28 Papka 44, 8–28.
- [71] AVPRF F.079 O.19 Por.30 Papka 44, 60.
- [72] AVPRF F.079 O.19 Por.28 Papka 44, 237.
- [73] *Ibid.*, 171.
- [74] AVPRF F.079 O.19 Por.26 Papka 43, 37.
- [75] AVPRF F.079 O.19 Por.30 Papka 44, 83.
- [76] Stenogram of Presidium session September 10, 1963 in *Arkhivy Kremliia: Prezidium TsK KPSS 1954–1964*, 759.
- [77] RGANI F.5 O.55 d.58, 118.
- [78] *Ibid.*, 124.

- [79] RGANI F.5 O.55 d.58, 155.
- [80] RGANI F.5 O.55 d.54, 346–53.
- [81] RGANI F.5 O.30 d.435, 47.
- [82] ‘Vazhneishaia Zadacha’, *Aziia I Afrika Segodnia*, September 1963, 3.
- [83] G. Kim, ‘Natsional’naia Nezavisimost’ I Sotsial’nyi Progress’, *Aziia I Afrika Segodnia* (October 1964), 4–7.
- [84] *Ibid.*, 6.
- [85] E. Alekseev, ‘Natsional’no-Osvoboditel’noe Dvizhenie – Sostavnaia Chast’ Mirovogo Revoliutsionnogo Protsessa’, *Aziia I Afrika Segodnia* (December 1963), 3.
- [86] RGANI F.5 O.30 d.456, 51.
- [87] RGANI F.5 O.30 d.456, 58.
- [88] GARF F.9540 O.1 d.188, 12.
- [89] GARF F.9540 O.1 d.188, 11.
- [90] *Ibid.*, 16 and 35.
- [91] AVPRF F.079 O.19 Por.28 Papka 44, 106.
- [92] RGANI F.5 O.30 d.307, 85.
- [93] RGANI F.5 O.33 d.177, 2–12.
- [94] GARF F.9540 O.1 d.109, 85.
- [95] See GARF F.9540 O.1 d.154, 13 and 55.
- [96] E. Alekseev, 4.
- [97] RGANI F.2 O.1 d.820, 12.
- [98] GARF F.9540 O.1 d.208, 5–8.
- [99] AVPRF F.100 O.56 Por.36 Papka 240 delo KI-716/3, 42–4.