

Consider the following essay questions as you read this chapter:

- How far were relations between the PRC and the USSR affected by differences over ideology?
- What were the turning point events that kept relations between the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China hostile for over 20 years?
- Why was there a thaw in Sino-Soviet relations at the end of the 1980s?

China becomes a Communist nation

Mao Zedong, the Chairman of the victorious Chinese Communist Party (CCP) proclaimed the People's Republic of China (PRC) in Beijing on 1 October 1949, saying:

Our work will be written down in the history of mankind, and it will clearly demonstrate the fact that the Chinese, who comprise one quarter of humanity, have from now on stood up ...

Chairman Mao Zedong

Chairman Mao proclaiming the People's Republic of China in 1949.



Background

China and Russia had experienced a troubled history, mainly as a result of their shared 4500 mile border. During Russian Tsarist times there was much tension along the border, and in the 19th century China lost territories to Russia, amongst others, while it struggled against Western domination. The failure of the ruling Manchu Dynasty in China to resist Western exploitation ultimately led to its downfall in the nationalist revolution of 1911. The new regime in China quickly got itself into difficulty attempting to consolidate control over the whole of the country. It was unable to cajole the Western powers into giving back the territories and rights that they had taken from the Manchu in what were known as the 'unequal treaties.'

China was impressed and grateful when the new Bolshevik regime, in what was now known as the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, suggested that it would give up all claims to the former Tsarist empire outside Russia. However, a year later, the Bolsheviks seized Outer Mongolia; at the end of World War Two, the Soviets stripped \$2 billion of equipment and machinery from Manchuria.

Civil war in China

Encouraged by the apparent success of the Bolsheviks in the new USSR, the Chinese Communist Party now grew in China. Some of their principal aims for China had similarities with another political group, the Guomindang (GMD), or Nationalist Party. Both wanted to unify China and redress the humiliation it had endured.

The ruling GMD, led by Chiang Kai-shek, came to see the CCP as its key internal political enemy and waged a campaign to wipe it out. This continued throughout the 1930s until an uneasy truce between the GMD and the CCP was agreed on in order for the Chinese to unify against wartime Japanese invaders. When Japan withdrew from China at the end of World War Two in 1945, the GMD and the CCP once again turned on each other, and a brutal civil war ensued. It was not until October 1949 that Mao Zedong, the leader of the Chinese Communist Party, emerged victorious.

Stalin and Mao: 1945–1953

The key differences between the USSR and the Chinese Communists were ideological. Josef Stalin felt that Mao's interpretation of Marxism, using peasants as the basis for revolution, could not be genuine revolutionary Marxism, which should feature workers leading an urban-based class war.




Mao with Stalin in 1949 at the celebrations in Moscow for Stalin's 70th birthday.

From the infancy of Chinese Communism, Mao's contact with Moscow was neither pleasant nor gratifying. His unorthodox method of revolution, based on peasant mobilization in the countryside, was tolerated by Moscow as legitimate only because all other types of Communist insurrection in China had failed. Mao's approach was never endorsed by Stalin as proper for revolutionizing China.

Immanuel Hsu, *The Rise of Modern China* (OUP, 1999) p.671

However, this ideological difference was not the only reason Stalin failed to give support to the CCP in the Chinese civil war. Stalin also:

- feared Mao as a rival for the leadership of the Communist world
- did not want the Cold War to spread to Asia
- knew that Chiang's GMD would recognize Soviet claims to the disputed border territory along frontiers in Manchuria and Xinjiang
- underestimated the CCP and believed the GMD to be the stronger party. He urged the CCP to unite with the GMD, even in the late 1940s when CCP victory was looking inevitable.

Mao became convinced that Stalin wanted a divided and weak China to leave the USSR dominant in Asia. He saw Stalin's policies as rooted in self-interest, rather than true revolutionary doctrine. Mao later said that in 1945 Stalin refused China permission to carry out a revolution and that he had told them, 'Do not have a Civil War: collaborate with Chiang Kai-shek. Otherwise the Republic of China will collapse'. Mao, therefore,  believed that Stalin saw him as another **Tito** (see Chapter Sixteen), rather than a true revolutionary.

The Sino-Soviet Treaty of Alliance

Nevertheless, once the CCP had won the civil war, Mao was invited to visit Moscow in 1950. This trip produced the Sino-Soviet Treaty of Alliance, the first treaty between the USSR and China. The USSR became more enthusiastic about the CCP after its victory, and the Soviet press poured praise and admiration on Mao and the new PRC. However, Mao later said of the agreement, 'This was the result of a struggle. Stalin did not wish to sign the treaty; he finally signed it after two months of negotiating.' The U.S. State Department referred to the alliance as 'Moscow making puppets out of the Chinese'. The Treaty offered the PRC the promise of Soviet expertise and low-interest aid:

Each contracting Party undertakes, in the spirit of friendship ... to develop and consolidate economic and cultural ties between China and the Soviet Union, to render the other all possible economic assistance.

The Sino-Soviet Treaty of Alliance

However, the Chinese were offended by the rather 'unfriendly' treatment they received. The Soviets had been superior in their dealings with PRC officials and had not bothered to put on any entertainment for their guests, and Mao thought the accommodation given to the Chinese was poor. In fact, Nikita Khrushchev later said of the Treaty, 'It was an insult to the Chinese people. For centuries the French, English and Americans had been exploiting China, now the Soviet Union was moving in'. Indeed, it was soon clear that the USSR wanted to exploit the treaty in its own favour – Soviet aid would be loans and the Chinese would have to repay with interest.

Nevertheless, Soviet planners and engineers initially developed 200 Chinese construction projects in the 1950s. Traditional buildings were pulled down for Soviet-style constructions. Soviet scientific technology was prioritized in China over Western technology. Socialist science was seen as best, even if it was far less effective. The PRC also accepted that Soviet military assistance was necessary, at least until they had their own nuclear programme.

STUDENT STUDY SECTION

Review question

Why was Stalin reluctant to support Mao and the CCP?

The USSR, the PRC and the Korean War: 1950–1953

When American forces, under the UN flag, came close to the Chinese border near the Yalu River, Stalin encouraged the PRC to send troops into Korea. The Soviets gave material assistance to the one million Chinese troops engaged in battle.

Despite this support for PRC intervention in the Korean War, Mao bitterly complained when the Soviets demanded that China pay for all weapons and materials the USSR had supplied.

The cost of Stalin's 'trust' was high: China sent a million 'volunteers' to intervene in the Korean War and had to pay the entire \$1.35 billion for the Soviet equipment and supplies necessary for the venture, and Mao lost a son in the war.

Immanuel Hsu, The Rise of Modern China (OUP, 1999) p.675

Sino-Soviet Relations after Stalin: 1953–1956

Although Mao had some respect for the Soviet leader, there had been tensions and suspicions in the relationship between Mao and Stalin. It has even been suggested that Stalin deliberately delayed the end of the Korean War in order to exhaust the PRC. Therefore, when Stalin died in 1953, it was possible that relations would improve. A truce was signed in the Korean War soon after Stalin's death and, to a certain degree, there was a relaxation in tension, referred to by historian Michael Lynch as something of a 'honeymoon' period. The new Soviet leaders appeared willing to supply further loans and technology to China, they attempted to make their treaties more equal and facilitate easier credit for the PRC.

Mao, Khrushchev and 'the split': 1956–1964

Despite the chance for improved Sino-Soviet relations during the leadership years of Nikita Khrushchev, three key issues undermined the potential for easing tension between the PRC and the USSR:

- The 'Secret Speech' by Khrushchev in Moscow in October 1956 attacking Stalin's crimes against the party, including comments about the 'Cult of Personality' (see also Chapter Sixteen), which Mao saw as an attack on his own style of leadership.
- The crushing of the Hungarian uprising. Mao saw this and Soviet problems in East Germany and Poland as failures by the USSR to contain **reactionary** forces (see Chapter Sixteen).
- Khrushchev's doctrine of 'peaceful co-existence' with the West (Chapter Seven), implying that global revolution could be achieved by means other than armed struggle. Mao saw this as ideological heresy.

Mao and the PRC considered these issues a clear departure from Marxist doctrine and evidence that the Soviet Union was now dominated by '**revisionists**' (a term used to describe those straying from Marxism). Further evidence in support of this view came in the form of the 1955 Geneva Summit and the Austrian State Treaty of 1955 (see page 75).

STUDENT STUDY SECTION

Document analysis

Document A

... more than three years after he started pushing Maoism onto the world stage, ... Mao gave the order to denounce Khrushchev by name as a 'revisionist'. A public slanging match quickly escalated. For Mao, the **polemic** acted as a sort of international advertising campaign for Maoism ...

Jung Chang and Jon Halliday, *Mao: The Unknown Story* (Random House, 2005)

Document B

Khrushchev and Mao had all the prejudices of nationalists, however much they might be Communists ... Mao treated Khrushchev as a superficial upstart, neglecting no opportunity to confound him with petty humiliations, cryptic pronouncements, and veiled provocations. Khrushchev could 'never be sure what Mao meant ... I believed in him and he was playing with me.'

John Lewis Gaddis, *The Cold War* (Penguin, 2005) p.141

Questions

- 1 According to Chang and Halliday in Document A, how does Mao attempt to use to his advantage Khrushchev's departure from Stalinism?
- 2 What does Gaddis mean in Document B when he says that 'Khrushchev and Mao had all the prejudices of nationalists'?

Conference of Communist Parties, 1957

Mao attended this conference of the world's Communist Parties and, as Michael Lynch points out, this was to be the second and last time he ventured outside China. He had hoped Tito would be in attendance, but the Yugoslav leader did not appear. Mao called on the USSR to abandon 'revisionism'. He declared that international revolution could not be supported by working along side 'class enemies', that is, Western Capitalists. In addition, Mao believed that the USSR was initiating détente with the West to further isolate China.

? The Chinese chief spokesperson at the meeting was **Deng Xiaoping**. He was to prove exceptional in putting forward the PRC's ideological stance, and ultimately he was very embarrassing for the Soviets. Deng stated that the proletarian world revolution could only come about through force and that capitalism had to be crushed in violent revolution. He out-argued the leading Soviet theorist, Mikhail Suslov.

This had been a sound international platform to present the PRC as the 'real' leaders of international revolutionary Communism, which is exactly how Mao and the PRC were beginning to see themselves.

Khrushchev's visit to Beijing, 1958

Khrushchev attempted to ease the growing tension between the USSR and China by visiting Mao in Beijing. However, right from the start things did not go well, and Mao apparently went out of his way to make Khrushchev feel uncomfortable.

For example, it was the height of the summer heat in Beijing and Khrushchev's hotel had no air conditioning and was plagued by mosquitoes. Mao arranged one round of talks in his swimming pool, which was fine for Mao who was a regular swimmer, but not so easy for Khrushchev who hated swimming. To add insult to an already difficult situation, Khrushchev had to wear a pair of shorts that were rather too tight for him, and had to be helped to float by a rubber ring!

ToK Time

How far is it correct to assume that different cultures have different truths? Can this be applied to the different interpretations of Marxist-Leninism adopted by the Soviets and the Communist Chinese?

The talks, unsurprisingly, were not productive. Again, Deng used the occasion as an opportunity to attack Soviet policy, stating that:

- the Soviets had betrayed the international Communist movement
- the Soviets were guilty of viewing themselves as the only true 'Marxist-Leninists'
- the Soviets had sent spies posing as technical advisers into China.



▲ Mao Zedong and Nikita Khrushchev in Beijing, 1958.

Taiwan, 1958

As has been explained in Chapter Six, the key issue of the PRC's Nationalist enemies in Taiwan was not resolved. The GMD and their leader Chiang Kai-shek could not be tolerated as an 'independent' state off the mainland by the PRC. It resolutely wanted reunification with Taiwan and was furious about U.S. support for the Nationalists.

The PRC had bombarded islands off Taiwan in the early 1950s (see Chapter Twelve), but had been deterred from further action by U.S. 7th Fleet patrols of the straits between Taiwan and the mainland. In 1958, Mao decided to test the United States' resolve again. Without discussing it with the Soviets, he ordered a build-up of troop manoeuvres in the region, giving the impression that the PRC was preparing for a full-scale attack on Taiwan. The United States responded by preparing for war with the PRC.

However, Mao did not launch an attack. He was unprepared to take on the full might of the U.S. war machine, and he did not have the support of the Soviet Union.

Khrushchev said that he was not prepared to go to war with the United States to 'test the stability' of the Capitalist system, and he accused Mao's regime of being '**Trotskyist**' in pursuing international revolution at any cost. The Soviets also saw this action as evidence of Mao's lack of understanding of political reality, and his tendency towards **fanaticism**.

The effects of the Taiwan crisis were negative for Sino-Soviet relations. The Soviets withdrew their economic advisers and cancelled commercial contracts with the PRC.

STUDENT STUDY SECTION

Document analysis

The second Taiwan Strait crisis was very like the first in 1954-55, which Mao had staged to twist his ally's arm for A-bomb technology ... On 23rd August Mao opened up a huge artillery barrage against the tiny island of Quemoy ... Washington thought Mao might really be going for Taiwan. No one in the West suspected his true goal: to force the USA to threaten a nuclear war in order to scare his own ally - a ruse unique in the annals of statecraft.

Jung Chang and Jon Halliday, *Mao: The Unknown Story* (Random House, 2005)

Question

What reasons do Chang and Halliday suggest for Mao's initiation of the Second Taiwan Crisis?

Sino-Soviet relations and the 'Great Leap Forward'

What was the Great Leap Forward?

The Great Leap Forward (GLF) was initiated by Mao at a meeting in January 1958. The key idea behind the GLF was to develop rapidly China's agricultural and industrial sectors simultaneously. Mao hoped to harness the energy of the vast population of China and by so doing dispose of the need for Soviet aid. He believed that sheer force of will would get around the necessity of importing heavy machinery. In the process, Mao would also create the 'proletarian class' required by the Marxist model. He anchored the GLF in the development of two key areas – grain and steel production. His predictions were very ambitious, suggesting that China could outproduce the UK in steel in just 15 years.

In order to achieve both increased grain and steel production, Mao promoted the construction of small backyard steel furnaces in every commune and in each urban neighbourhood. Peasants and workers set about attempting to produce steel from scrap metal, stripping their local areas of all potential fuel sources to burn in the furnaces. Suspicious of the academic 'intellectuals', Mao ignored their concerns about the economic value of the poor-quality 'pig iron' that these furnaces produced. China's harvests rotted in the fields as peasants focused on making the worthless metal, often out of basic essentials, such as their own pots and pans.

Despite the fact that Mao had seen for himself that high-quality steel could only be produced in proper factories, he continued with the 'backyard furnaces' plan for most of 1959. It is said that behind Mao's reasoning was a desire not to crush the 'revolutionary spirit' of the peasants and workers.

Public works launched during the GLF were also generally unsuccessful, due to the deliberate lack of experienced and expert leadership. As for the broader agricultural picture, on the communes, some 'revolutionary' techniques were experimented with. For example, there was 'close cropping', where seeds were planted very close together (following the false idea that the same crop would not compete with itself), and also the idea of leaving an area of each field fallow to improve fertility.

Failure and starvation

At the Lushan Conference in July 1959, Marshal Peng Dehuai spoke out against the disastrous impact of the GLF. Mao had Peng removed from his post, and used his denunciation to launch a nationwide campaign against the 'rightists' (right-wing elements). From 1959, China experienced a widespread famine. Even though millions were starving in China, Mao insisted that China continue to export grain – he did not want the humiliation of the outside world knowing the results of his great economic plan. Chinese government sources record horrendous weather conditions affecting China from 1958 to 1962, and there is clear evidence of droughts and floods. But the impact of the GLF exacerbated the problems caused by the weather. As a direct result of the GLF policies, millions of Chinese died. In January 1961, the PRC finally decided to end the GLF revolution. No more grain was exported, and Canadian and Australian grain was imported.

The consequence of the Great Leap Forward was total economic disaster for China. The official Chinese records state that 14 million Chinese died in the famine, although some Western sources have estimated that around 30 million perished. Mao stepped down as

State Chairman of the PRC in 1959, realizing that he would be held responsible for the disaster that was emerging; he did, however, keep his position as Chairman of the CCP.

Soviets denounce the GLF

In 1959, Soviets called the rapid industrial change aspect of the GLF 'faulty in design and erroneous in practice'. Mao was personally furious at this criticism. His anger became fuelled by humiliation when it was rumoured that the PRC Chief-of-Staff, Marshal Peng, had given information to the Soviets about the widespread starvation caused by the agricultural methods of the GLF. The Soviet government declared that the concepts and applications used were 'unorthodox', and the Soviet official press revelled in the failure, denouncing Mao.

Infuriated, Mao was now determined to strike back at the USSR for undermining the position of the PRC in the eyes of the international Communist community. It would now back any Communist country that dissented from Moscow's lead.

Albania

China got its opportunity to attack the USSR and support a 'dissenting Communist state' over Albania. In 1961, the USSR withdrew aid to Albania. Khrushchev made a speech that year during the Moscow Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, attacking the Albanian regime for its 'Stalinist' doctrines and backward ways. The PRC observer at the Congress walked out in protest. China interpreted this speech as an attack on their system as well. Soon after, the PRC offered to replace Soviet money and technical assistance to Albania. This conflict over Albania led to the final severance of diplomatic relations between the Soviets and the Chinese Communists after more than ten years of growing hostility.

In their war of words, Khrushchev referred to Mao as the 'Asian Hitler' and a 'living corpse'; Mao called Khrushchev 'a redundant old boot'.

STUDENT STUDY SECTION

Document analysis

Document A

By the mid 1950s there were growing problems in the Sino-Soviet alliance. Soviet advisers had caused some resentment in China when their nationalist susceptibilities were ruffled by perceived arrogance. Soviet insistence on payment for material supplied during the Korean War did not help matters. The key to the growing friction was ideology. De-Stalinization and attacks on the cult of personality went down badly in Beijing, as did Soviet critiques of the Great Leap Forward ... Personal relations between the leaders were poor and Mao resented criticism of Molotov and the 'anti-party group' for views that resembled his own.

From Mike Sewell, *The Cold War* (CUP, 2002) p.67

Document B

The relationship to China had been lauded as the ultimate proof of Socialism's applicability to the Third World ... With the alliance in tatters, Moscow had to explain what had gone wrong ... [it was] explained by the wrongheadedness of the 'Mao-clique' ... on the other hand, the combination of immense disappointment and no proper cause for failure led many Soviet leaders to racist explanations: the Soviet effort in China was failing because of the inborn deviousness and selfishness of the Chinese.

From Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War* (CUP, 2007) p.70

Document C

Despite a degree of mismanagement unparalleled in modern history [the GLF] ... Mao survived as China's 'great helmsman'. What did not survive was the Sino-Soviet alliance which had, as far as Mao was concerned, outlived its usefulness. Khrushchev, fearing the implications, tried desperately to reconstitute it right up to the moment he was deposed in 1964, despite repeated insults, rebuffs and even instances of deliberate sabotage from Mao.

From John Lewis Gaddis, *The Cold War* (Penguin, 2005) p.142

Question

How similar are the views in Documents A, B and C on what caused the Sino-Soviet split?

Review exercise

Discuss in pairs/small groups how each of the following led to the split between the USSR and the PRC:

- 1 The Chinese Civil War
- 2 Stalin's attitude to Mao
- 3 Korean War
- 4 Stalin's death
- 5 Khrushchev's new policies
- 6 Mao's response to Khrushchev
- 7 Taiwan
- 8 The Great Leap Forward
- 9 Albania

Attempt to prioritize the events in order of importance. From your discussions, was there a 'turning point' event at which time the Sino-Soviet split became inevitable? Which side seems to be more responsible for causing the split – the Soviets or the Chinese? Remember to support your answers with evidence from the chronology of events and, where possible, the viewpoints of historians.

Examiner's hint:

The document question requires you to look at ways in which sources make similar points about the Sino-Soviet split and ways in which they differ. Remember to use brief quotes from the document to support your answer and to have a brief conclusion summing up how consistent the sources are in the views expressed.

The Sino-Indian War, 1962

Another issue that raised tension between the Soviet Union and China was the war with India. In 1962, fighting broke out on the Tibetan border between China and India. The PRC had invaded Tibet in 1950, an area it wished to bring under Chinese control, and indeed an area it viewed as 'Chinese' and therefore a domestic issue. The continuous brutality of the PRC forces in Tibet aroused international condemnation. The Indian government was also sensitive about troops occupying territory close to its border.

It has been suggested by some historians that Mao had been planning a war with India for some time. China did not recognize the boundary between the two countries that had been drawn up during the British colonial period. Mao demanded that the border be renegotiated by China and India themselves. However, India did not believe there was anything to negotiate about. Its view was that the border was established and settled, and thus the two countries were deadlocked over the issue.

Clashes increased along this border, and from May 1962, the PRC began to prepare for war with India. Although outwardly aggressive, Mao was worried about triggering a war. One of his key concerns was that the nuclear test site at Lop Nur in north-west China was in missile range of India, even though it was beyond the American range from Taiwan.



Map of India and China/ showing national borders.

The war proper erupted on 10 October 1962 between the Chinese People's Liberation Army and the Indian military. Part of the fallout from the war was that India allowed American U-2s to fly from bases at Charbatia, from where they were able to photograph China's first A-bomb test. In the war, the Soviets were officially 'neutral'; however they gave India MIG fighters. Therefore, when the Soviet foreign minister offered to act as a mediator, Mao viewed this as outrageous hypocrisy.

The war ended on 20 November 1962. The Chinese had taken the disputed areas and unilaterally declared a ceasefire. Although the PRC had emerged victorious this was tempered by the fact that the Americans had been able to gain sensitive intelligence and possible access to bases in India. The Soviets had aided the enemy in this war and the PRC's relationship as a key member of the non-aligned movement (see Chapter Fifteen) alongside Nehru's India was shattered.

The Cuban Missile Crisis, 1962

Sino-Soviet relations reached new depths of division during the Cuban Missile Crisis (see Chapter Nine for a discussion of the key events). Mao was openly disparaging about Khrushchev's handling of the crisis. He seized on this perceived mismanagement as an opportunity to expose to the Communist world the USSR's lack of commitment to the revolutionary cause. Mao attacked:

- the placement of *detectable* missiles in first place
- the 'capitulation' (backing down)
- the negative impact it would have on the struggle against U.S. imperialism.

In his book, *The Rise of Modern China*, Immanuel Hsu claims that 'Mao considered Khrushchev a coward' over his handling of the Cuban Missile Crisis. It could, of course, be

argued that Khrushchev had acted like a 'great statesman', that he had applied his policy of peaceful co-existence and thus averted a nuclear catastrophe. But for Mao and the PRC, the idea of existing peacefully with the non-Communist states went against everything their ideology dictated. It seemed to them that the USSR was betraying the revolution, as well as tolerating the exploitation of pre-revolutionary states by Capitalist powers, such as the United States.

STUDENT STUDY SECTION

Document analysis

Document A

Only after victory in the revolution is it possible and necessary for the proletariat to pursue peaceful co-existence. As for the oppressed peoples and nations, their task is to strive for their own liberation and overthrow the rule of imperialism and its lackeys. They should not practise peaceful co-existence with the imperialists ... It is therefore wrong to apply peaceful co-existence to relations between oppressed and oppressor ... nations.

A statement made by Mao Zedong in 1963

Document B



In this cartoon by Vicky, published in the UK in November 1962, Mao is calling 'Chicken!' while Kennedy and Khrushchev face each other across a precipice.

Document C

We might ask the Chinese comrades, who offer to build a beautiful future on the ruins of the old world destroyed by thermo-nuclear war: did they consult, on this issue, the working class of countries where imperialism is in power? ... What right have you to decide for us questions involving our very existence and our class struggle – we too want socialism, but we want to win it through the class struggle, not by unleashing a world thermo-nuclear war.

The Soviet response to Mao's 1963 statement

Questions

- 1 Explain the propaganda message in Document A.
- 2 How does Document B support the views stated in Document A?
- 3 What are the key points being made by the Soviets in Document C?
- 4 What are the value and limitation of using Document B as evidence of China's response to the Cuban Missile Crisis? (Refer back to Chapter Ten for a discussion on cartoons as evidence.)

Review exercise

Consider and plan the following essay questions:

- 1 To what extent was the Sino-Soviet split caused by the relationship between Mao and Stalin?
- 2 How important was the initiative of 'peaceful co-existence' in the development of Sino-Soviet tension?

Sino-Soviet relations and the Cultural Revolution, 1966–1976

Mao's 'Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution' was launched in May 1966. His declared aim was to initiate a revolution at the very heart of traditional Chinese 'culture'. He wanted to eliminate the creeping return of liberal and **bourgeois** thinking and behaviour. Mao believed that this would re-ignite the revolutionary class struggle that had, so he thought, petered out. Most historians agree that this was really Mao's 'relaunch' of himself after the disasters of the Great Leap Forward had forced him to take something of a back seat.

The main tools of the Cultural Revolution were the young, who were encouraged to denounce their elders, teachers and parents, and send them for 're-education'. This was done with much enthusiasm by Red Guards wielding Mao's 'Little Red Book'. Teachers, writers, intellectuals, musicians, older leaders, in fact all who were viewed as representing 'old thoughts,' were attacked. Power struggles developed at both local and national level.

As there were no clear directives from the Party as to how the 'old culture' should be disposed of, many attacks got out of hand. As many as half a million people died. Meanwhile, Mao was able to get rid of his critics and resume supreme control of the PRC. While the excesses of the young Red Guards continued, Mao declared the Cultural Revolution over in 1969. In the hope that society could return to some sort of order from the **anarchy** and chaos that had been unleashed, many of the young Maoists were then sent to the countryside themselves, to 'learn from the peasants'.

Khrushchev left office in 1964. However, there was to be no reconciliation between the USSR and the PRC. The Soviet leadership continued to attempt to isolate the PRC. When Mao launched the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution to eliminate 'revisionists' and China descended yet again into internal crisis, and at certain points to near civil war, the Soviets denounced the revolution as total fanaticism, and criticized Mao for creating a state of anarchy.

The Soviets also took the opportunity to attack the PRC on a number of other propaganda fronts during the Cultural Revolution, including the following: accusations:

- trading illegally with the **apartheid** regime in South Africa
- receiving assistance from West Germany on nuclear research
- developing a worldwide opium trade
- sending supplies to U.S. forces in Vietnam.

Mao responded to these 'false' accusations by calling on other Communist countries to follow the Chinese model rather than the 'revisionist' Soviet system.

China, the USSR and nuclear weapons

A continuing theme in Sino-Soviet relations was the dispute over aspects of military power, particularly nuclear weapons. In 1957, it appeared that the USSR had gained superiority over the USA with the launch of the Sputnik satellite (see Chapter Seven). Mao saw this as a tool to engage the USA in Brinkmanship, and to begin to undermine the United States. Unlike the more pragmatic Soviet Union, Mao did not fear nuclear war, as he actually believed it was now an unavoidable part of the revolutionary struggle.

However, Khrushchev had very different views. He wanted to use the apparent technical superiority as leverage to convince the United States to pursue 'co-existence'. This disagreement between the two Communist superpowers on how to engage their Capitalist enemy intensified over the Test-ban Treaty of 1963. The Treaty was an agreement by the

The Little Red Book

The 'Little Red Book' was a small red book of Mao's thoughts and sayings that became an essential accessory during the Cultural Revolution.

Extreme violence of the Cultural Revolution

Zhongnanhai [where the government leaders lived] had been turned into a torture park. A hundred thousand yelling savages outside, thousands inside the torture halls. The Liu children were compelled to watch Mao's knights drag the half-dead victims onto a stage. Liu and Wang Guangmei were forced into the airplane position. Guards raised Liu up and then dropped him to the floor like a sack of flour. They beat him in the face and head. They kicked and punched him. One soldier yanked Liu by his white hair and pulled his head back while cameras clicked! Harrison Salisburg, *The New Emperor* (Harper Collins, 1992).

USSR and Western nuclear powers to stop atmospheric testing of atomic weapons. Again, Mao viewed this as the USSR abandoning its role as revolutionary leader and instead working with the imperialist powers.

Khrushchev responded to the PRC's criticism of attempts at superpower arms control by accusing the Chinese of wanting to see the USSR and Western powers destroy each other, leaving the PRC as the number one power.

Mao had been angered by the Soviet response to the PRC's request for nuclear technology. The basic circular argument between them was:

China: 'If you are our friend, you should want to help us develop our own nuclear programme.'

USSR: 'As you are our friend, you do not need your own nuclear programme as we will look after you.'

The Soviet position was inflexible. If the PRC wanted help from the USSR in nuclear development then it would have to allow the Soviets to control its defence policy. Typically, Mao stated that this approach betrayed the revolutionary ideal and was also patronizing. He asserted that the Soviets did not view other Communist countries as equals.

Timeline of Chinese technical development

- 1960 Soviet scientists complete withdrawal from China
China continues with its own research programmes and even uses material from reconstructed shredded documents left by the Soviets
- 1964 China detonates first atomic bomb
- 1967 China detonates a hydrogen bomb
- 1970 China launches its first space satellite

The development of its own nuclear weapons was a huge achievement for China. It not only meant that the PRC would have to be taken seriously as an international power, but it also demonstrated to the USSR that it did not need Soviet support. To push this point the Chinese code-named their first bomb '59/6', which referred to the year and month the Soviet scientists began to pull out of China. Mao explained the positive results of the Soviet departure:

Guided missiles and atom bombs are great achievements. This is the result of Khrushchev's 'help'. By withdrawing the experts, he forced us to take our own road. We should give him a big medal.

Chairman Mao Zedong

Mao appeared not to be as wary of nuclear catastrophe as were the USSR and the USA. Indeed, he suggested that nuclear weapons were a useful tool of diplomacy. He also saw them as the key to China usurping the Soviet Union as leader of the international Communist struggle:

The success of China's hydrogen bomb test has further broken the nuclear monopoly of United States imperialism and Soviet revisionism and dealt a telling blow at their policy of nuclear blackmail. It is very great encouragement ... to the revolutionary people of the whole world.

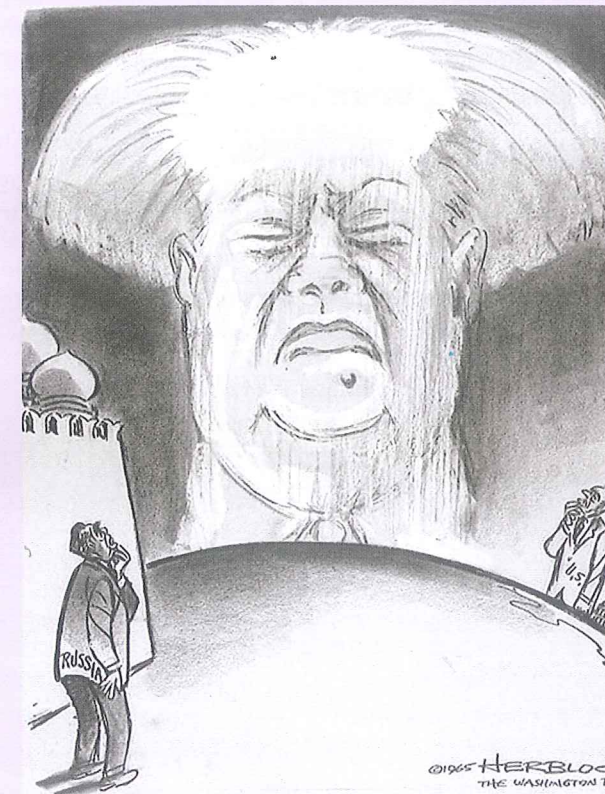
Chairman Mao Zedong

With the launch of the first Chinese space satellite in 1970, the Soviet Union was worried that now the PRC had the potential to develop ICBMs.

STUDENT STUDY SECTION

Document analysis

Document A



'Mushrooming Cloud' by Herblock, 1965.

Document B

Defying the logic of balancing power within the international system, Mao sought a different kind of equilibrium: a world filled with danger, whether from the United States or the Soviet Union or both, could minimize the risk that rivals within China might challenge his rule.

From John Lewis Gaddis, *The Cold War* (Penguin, 2005) p.142

Questions

- 1 What is the message of the cartoonist in Document A?
- 2 What does Document A suggest about China's role in the Cold War at this time?
- 3 According to Document B, why might Mao want to encourage international hostility towards China?

Discussion point

What arguments could the PRC put forward to defend its right to have its own nuclear weapons programme? Consider how these arguments compare and contrast to those made by countries today who want to develop their own nuclear programmes.

The PRC and Leonid Brezhnev, 1968–1982

During his leadership of the Soviet Union, **Leonid Brezhnev** followed a 'Stalinist' foreign policy, and so there was to be no improvement in Sino-Soviet relations while he was leader.