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## **After the Split: An Analysis of Sino-Soviet Military Poster Propaganda**

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The University of Southern Mississippi

After the Split: An Analysis of Sino-Soviet Military Poster Propaganda

by

Hannah Celia Berman

A Thesis  
Submitted to the Honors College of  
The University of Southern Mississippi  
in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirement for the Degree of  
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in the Department of History

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## Abstract

My research argues that commonalities in Soviet and Chinese military posters show that these communist superpowers shared deeply embedded cultural connections that persisted even after the Sino-Soviet Split, an acrimonious diplomatic breakdown between these states that occurred during the 1960s and 1970s. I argue against other historians' interpretations of the Sino-Soviet Split period by comparing Soviet and Chinese Communist military poster propaganda within a historical context that explains their complicated and unexpected political and cultural interrelationship. I argue that the Soviet Union and Communist China, on a cultural level, continued their close interaction under the divisive rhetorical surface of the Sino-Soviet Split and even during the xenophobia of the Chinese Cultural Revolution.

Key Words: Cold War, Sino-Soviet Split, Socialist Realist Art, poster propaganda

## Dedication

For my family and especially my father, Dr. Mitchell Berman:

Thank you for the inspiration and all the encouragement.

"Our greatest glory is not in never falling,  
but rising in every time we fall...."

- Confucius

## Acknowledgments

I would like to thank my thesis advisor, Dr. Brian LaPierre, for his valuable insight and diligent guidance of this work. He has been my professor, undergraduate adviser, and thesis adviser throughout these years. I would like to thank him for his patience and helping me take the next step towards my graduate career.

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## Table of Contents

List of Figures	viii
List of Abbreviations	ix
Introduction	1
Literature Review	3
Methodology	9
History	11
1949-1955	12
1956-1969	16
1970-1976	18
Content Analysis	19
Army Posters	24
Navy Posters	29
Air Force Posters	33
"Women hold up half the sky" – Mao Zedong	36
Conclusion	39
Bibliography	42



## List of Figures

Figure 1: Joining the army to protect the nation is the people's duty	22
Figure 2: Protecting the great mother country	22
Figure 3: Anti-aircraft and combat training	25
Figure 4: Long live the great Chinese People's Liberation Army	26
Figure 5: Heighten vigilance to protect our motherland	26
Figure 6: Promote revolutionary traditions and strengthen war preparation and training	27
Figure 7: These years' glory will not cease!	27
Figure 8: Be vigilant!	28
Figure 9: Glory to warrior-liberator!	28
Figure 10: To protect the won world and the creative work of the Soviet people vigilantly, to be a reliable support of interests of the Soviet Union. I .Stalin	28
Figure 11: Work to build a powerful navy	30
Figure 12: Salute the fighters of the Xisha islands in the South China Sea	30
Figure 13: Be ready to bury our enemies under the sea at any time	30
Figure 14: Long live the friendship between the peoples and armies of China and the Soviet Union, early 1950s	31
Figure 15: Multiply glory of the fathers! Keep the traditions of the fleet	31
Figure 16: Become a member of DOSFLOT! (the Society for Voluntary Support of the Soviet Navy)	32
Figure 17: Stalin raised us to be faithful to the Soviet people!	32
Figure 18: Long live the Stalin airforce!	33
Figure 19: To fly higher than all, father than all, faster than all!	33
Figure 20: Glory to Stalin's eagles!	34
Figure 21: Train ceaselessly to prepare to annihilate the invading enemy	34
Figure 22: Our Motherland's airspace is inviolable	35
Figure 23: Invaders will be wiped out!	35
Figure 24: Train hard to increase combat efficiency, be always prepared for war	37
Figure 25: We are all sharpshooters	37
Figure26: Bombard the "Classic of Women"	38
Figure 27: The army and the people drill together	38
Figure 28: On the battlefield of coastal defense	38
Figure 29: Military training in the snow	39
Figure 30: Women's militia	39

## List of Abbreviations

CAFA	Central Academy of Fine Arts
CPC	Communist Party of China
GMD	Guomindang
PRC	People's Republic of China
SSTFA	Sino Soviet Treaty Friendship of Alliance
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

## **Introduction**

My research argues that commonalities in Soviet and Chinese military posters show that these communist superpowers shared deeply embedded cultural connections that persisted even after the Sino-Soviet Split, an acrimonious diplomatic breakdown between these states that occurred during the 1960s and 1970s. I argue against other historians' interpretations of the Sino-Soviet Split period by comparing Soviet and Chinese Communist military poster propaganda within a historical context that explains their complicated and unexpected political and cultural interrelationship. I argue that the Soviet Union and Communist China, on a cultural level, continued their close interaction under the divisive rhetorical surface of the Sino-Soviet Split and even during the xenophobia of the Chinese Cultural Revolution.

My research also challenges the view that the Soviet Union controlled China as a part of a monolithic and homogenous Communist bloc. In order to ensure its security, the Soviet Union certainly wanted to construct a monolithic and Kremlin-controlled communist alliance system that would serve as a territorial buffer against outside aggression. Although Stalin may have wanted a monolithic bloc, different visions about communism among communist leaders, however, caused conflicts to emerge within this supposedly homogenous Communist camp. Instead of a harmonious or cooperative bloc of nations under Soviet control, the Soviet alliance system was marked by differing periods of cooperation, exploitation, antagonism, and mutual dependence. The USSR (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) and PRC (People's Republic of China) had such a complex relationship, which experienced periods of cooperation in addition to periods of antagonism throughout the 1960s and 1970s.

The political breakdown of the Sino-Soviet Split resulted from Mao Zedong and Nikita Khrushchev's inability to reach an agreement about the Chinese reform process, as well as differences in foreign policy towards the United States. Following this disagreement, Mao publically declared a diplomatic break from the Soviet Union. My evidence shows that the relationship after the Sino-Soviet Split was more complicated than previously thought. My primary sources, Chinese and Soviet military poster propaganda, show commonalities that should not appear during this time, when the PRC made efforts to remove itself from Soviet influence. I argue that these commonalities demonstrate that the 1960s Sino-Soviet Split did not hinder the transference of Soviet inspired culture into China. In order to understand the complicated relationship between the PRC and USSR, my timeline begins in 1949 and ends in 1977, shortly after the death of Mao Zedong.

I chose the USSR and the PRC for my honors thesis because of their controversial and puzzling political and cultural interactions. Half of my thesis is based on historical research while the other half comes from a qualitative analysis of Chinese and Soviet military poster propaganda. My historical research investigates the cross-cultural and political relations between the PRC and the USSR throughout the 1920s and 1970s. My study demonstrates how the changes in political and cultural exchanges between the USSR and PRC affected the qualities of Chinese Communist military poster propaganda.

I chose to analyze poster propaganda because both regimes saw it as essential for spreading communist ideology to the illiterate or undereducated masses. Some questions I used to frame my research are: Where and how does Soviet influence appear in Chinese military poster propaganda during the Sino-Soviet Alliance, the Sino-Soviet Split, and the

Chinese Cultural Revolution? How similar and different are different elements of the poster artwork shown by the Chinese and Soviets? By analyzing these posters and posing these questions, my research provides insights that contribute to changing historical perspectives on the Sino-Soviet political and cultural relationship.

### **Literature Review**

For my research, I examined other studies of Chinese propaganda and its relation to Soviet cultural influence from the same period. Some of this literature is on the reception and diffusion of Soviet propaganda and Soviet ideology in Communist China. The other literature included in this review explores various views on the Sino-Soviet Alliance and Sino-Soviet Split, and the Chinese Cultural Revolution. In this section, I situate the general ideas of Soviet-Chinese Communist ideology within the specific history of their relationship. In this way, my thesis can provide an encompassing lens that explores all aspects of the relationship between the USSR and PRC, both cooperative and antagonistic. Briefly stated, my thesis shows the complexity of the Sino-Soviet relationship and the underlying cultural commonalities that united them.

The Soviets, from the creation of the USSR until its collapse, utilized various forms of media to indoctrinate the masses. Frederick C. Barghoorn, author of *Soviet Foreign Propaganda*, emphasizes the importance of propaganda to the Soviet project: "Communists know it is their duty to master the legacy of Lenin, who, like other successful propagandists, taught that the success of a social movement depended as much on use of the art and strategy of persuasion as on firmness of convictions...."<sup>1</sup> He further

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<sup>1</sup> Frederick C. Barghoorn, *Soviet Foreign Propaganda* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1964), 3.

discusses the Soviet Union's relationship with Communist China in terms of shared ideology: "There is a traditional kind of communist internationalism, which is directed toward some group assumed to be favorable to the USSR—such as 'peace partisans' or 'workers'—or which revives such symbols of international communism as 'proletarian internationalism'...."<sup>2</sup> Barghoorn's research also discusses the spread of Soviet ideology and the Soviet Union's alliances with other communist powers.

*Moving a Mountain*, edited by Godwin C. Chu and Francis L. K. Hsu, discusses the importance of propaganda and integrating communist ideology into traditional Chinese culture. "A major mechanism of change in China is communication, the fundamental social process by which information is shared, sentiments are expressed, and human relations are maintained...."<sup>3</sup> Chu and Hsu argue that the Chinese Communist government, like the Soviet government, skillfully manipulated all forms of propaganda for the purpose of indoctrinating the undereducated masses. Their research demonstrates how the Chinese government utilized a wide variety of propaganda tactics to inculcate the Party's ideology in the masses.

The Chinese Communist government utilized multiple propaganda tactics and mediums, in fact, it utilizes, shrewdly and systematically, such simple channels as hand written *tazupao* or big character posters, blackboards, wall newspapers, streetcorner shows, storytellers, *hsueh-hsi* or study meetings....The Chinese Communists have in a sense transformed all forms of communication into mass media....<sup>4</sup>

Yu Minling's research on the Cold War and Sino-Soviet relations demonstrates that, "In the 1950s, when the CPC [Communist Party of China's] policies of friendship

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<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 37-38.

<sup>3</sup> Godwin C. Chu, and Francis L. K. Hsu, eds., *Moving a Mountain: Cultural Change in China* (Honolulu, HI: The University Press of Hawaii, 1979), 3.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

with the Soviet Union and of 'leaning to one side' [in favor of the Soviet Union] were in full swing, 'learning from the Soviet Union' was at the heart of official propaganda work...."<sup>5</sup> In regards to Sino-Soviet communist mass propaganda and diplomacy, the CPC utilized a combination of mass activities, study sessions, and conventional mass media to promote the early Sino-Soviet relationship among the Chinese masses."<sup>6</sup> She demonstrates in her research how the transition to cooperative Sino-Soviet policies was gradual, as communist propaganda became normalized in China.

Robert Conquest's research discusses how Soviet ideology disseminated into China. He, however, emphasizes the negative reactions of the masses to that process, demonstrating how China and the Soviet Union did not form an absolutely cooperative monolithic bloc: "The Soviet State and Communist Party have used many forms of censorship, including the extreme form of physical 'liquidation' (inside or outside the law) to prevent citizens from learning or expressing thoughts which they consider contrary to their interests...."<sup>7</sup> This censorship affected the information that travelled between the countries and into the hands of their civilians: "Ironically, vigilance has been directed not only towards 'imperialist' countries in recent years, but also towards 'fraternal' China....Frontier incidents occurred during which Chinese citizens possessing 'publications of a character hostile to the USSR whose import into the Soviet Union is

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<sup>5</sup> Yu Minling, "Learning from the Soviet Union: CPC Propaganda and Its Effects," *Center for Security Studies (CSS), ETH Zurich, Switzerland*, <http://www.isn.ethz.ch/isn/Digital-Library/Publications/Detail?ots591=0c54e3b3-1e9c-be1e-2c24-a6a8c7060233&lng=en&id=108649> (accessed September 14, 2012,) 1.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Robert Conquest, ed., *The Politics of Ideas in the U.S.S.R.* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, Publishers, 1967), 43.

forbidden in accordance with Customs laws and regulations in force' were expelled...."<sup>8</sup>

His research focuses on the gradual process of the communist ideological shift in China.

The USSR and PRC shared ideological and cultural commonalities, however, I contrast these commonalities with their political relationship to show the complexity of the Sino-Soviet Split and afterwards. The following literature discusses different causes for the Sino-Soviet Split. Not only do they attribute different causes for the split but also pinpoint the split at different times. This variety of arguments demonstrates the controversy and debate among historians about the Sino-Soviet relationship.

Lorenz M. Luthi's *The Sino-Soviet Split: Cold War in the Communist World* traces an outline of the Sino-Soviet relationship from 1956-1968. He dates the Sino-Soviet Split as definitive in 1966.<sup>9</sup> He argues that the 1966-1968 Mongolian border clashes between Soviet and Chinese troops played a heavy hand in deterioration of the Sino-Soviet relationship.<sup>10</sup> The Soviet-Mongolian Alliance and presence of Soviet troops at China's door prompted the CPC to react with force. The border clashes ended with the Soviets' loss of the Zhenbao/Damanskii island to Chinese troops.<sup>11</sup> The Soviet government threatened China with nuclear attacks, but Mao realized that diplomatic negotiations were necessary to avoid full scale war.<sup>12</sup> However, no "high level" negotiations were concluded regarding the riverine and territorial boundaries between the Soviet Union and China.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 46.

<sup>9</sup> Lorenz M. Luthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split: Cold War in the Communist World* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010), 301.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 340.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 341.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 342.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.



Kenneth G. Lieberthal's "Sino-Soviet Conflict in the 1970s: Its Evolution and Implications for the Strategic Triangle," report provides insight about how the Soviet Union and Communist China viewed each other from 1969-1978. He gives the foreign diplomacy exchanged from both sides in separate sections, so that the reader can see both sides of the diplomacy. In his report, he explains how, from the time of the Sino-Soviet Split, Mao held a resolute anti-Soviet position.<sup>14</sup> He also explains how the Soviet Union continued to make border negotiation proposals, even though neither Mao nor the CPC responded to those proposals.<sup>15</sup> His report shows that the Mongolian border clashes did not stop the Soviet Union from contacting Beijing—thus, problematizing the notion that the Sino-Soviet Split and border clashes meant no reconciliation efforts were made after 1968 between the two communist states.

Andrew J. Nathan and Andrew Scobell discuss Communist China's foreign policy in *China's Search for Security*. Their chapter, "Life on the Hinge: China's Russia Policy During the Cold War and After," demonstrates how the Sino-Soviet relationship prospered, declined, and was later normalized.<sup>16</sup> In the early 1950s, Mao announced his "leaning to one side" in favor of the Soviet Union. By the mid 1950s, however, he decided that a split was necessary because he perceived Nikita Khrushchev's actions as "traitorous" and suspicious. Khrushchev's "Secret Speech," Khrushchev's diplomatic cooperation with the United States, and Mao's paranoia of Khrushchev's proposals to

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<sup>14</sup> Kenneth G. Lieberthal, U.S. Department of Defense, *Sino-Soviet Conflict in the 1970s: Its Evolution and Implications for the Strategic Triangle*, July 1978, [www.rand.org/pubs/reports/2007/R2342.pdf](http://www.rand.org/pubs/reports/2007/R2342.pdf) (accessed August 11, 2013,) 9.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Andrew J. Nathan and Andrew Scobell, *China's Search for Security* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 65.

install more Soviet military power in China fueled Mao's resentment of Khrushchev.<sup>17</sup>

Nathan and Scobell, in their book, argue that the Sino-Soviet Split resulted from Mao and Khrushchev's inability to work together; yet another factor in the larger picture of the Sino-Soviet relationship.

David Wolff's article, "New Russian and Chinese Evidence on the Sino-Soviet Alliance and Split, 1948-1959," discusses how the Sino-Soviet relationship was strained from the beginning. He talks about Stalin's condescending attitude towards Mao as an example of this strain. He also includes Stalin's disapproval of Tito's independence in Yugoslavia and his suspicions of Mao as an increasingly autonomous leader.<sup>18</sup> Finally, Wolff attributes the early tension between these states to the different plans that Stalin and Mao had for Korea and Tibet.<sup>19</sup> His evidence points to different and earlier factors that deteriorated the Sino-Soviet relationship, in contrast with Luthi and Nathan and Scobell.

For the purpose of this thesis, I combine literature about Sino-Soviet politics and propaganda to create a fuller picture of the Sino-Soviet relationship. However, I primarily focus on the Sino-Soviet Split and its relation to Chinese culture. Many scholars, as seen above, present different ideas about the causes and consequences of the Sino-Soviet Split. After reviewing the variety of explanations, I found that none of them directly affected the continued practice of Soviet style art and literature in China.

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 75.

<sup>18</sup> David Wolff, "One Finger's Worth of Historical Events: New Russian and Chinese Evidence on the Sino - Soviet Alliance and Split, 1948-1959." (Working paper series, The Cold War International History Project, Washington, D.C., August 2000). 2

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

## **Methodology**

The methodology used in my research involves two processes and creates a syncretic and novel piece of historical research. One process compares the stylization of 1930s-1940s Soviet to 1940s-1970s Chinese military poster propaganda. For the second process, I created a historical timeline, from the 1950s until the 1970s, that charts and connects the changing Soviet and Chinese political and cultural relationship during this period. These two processes, when combined, provide a holistic lens for examining the Sino-Soviet Cold War relationship.

The qualitative analysis process depends heavily on access to Soviet and Chinese Communist military poster propaganda. Due to the expense of purchasing physical copies of the poster propaganda, the posters used in this study came from various websites. Some posters came from websites that primarily offer Soviet posters while other websites only offered Chinese Communist posters. Only one of the websites, *chineseposters.net*, provided a poster with a Soviet sailor and Chinese sailor depicted together.

Because of the multitude of Soviet and Chinese Communist poster propaganda on the internet, I used key phrases such as "Soviet military poster propaganda," "Soviet navy posters," "Soviet army posters," "Soviet air force posters," "Chinese communist military poster propaganda," "Chinese communist navy posters," "Chinese communist army posters," and "Chinese communist air force posters," to help limit my search. Once I used all these key phrases and perused several different websites, I saved the images in separate files with different labels for "army," "navy," and "air force." I stumbled upon numerous amounts of Chinese women in military poster propaganda, which were later added as a separate category.

After I collected roughly equal amounts of images for the purpose of consistency in each category, I started my qualitative analysis. In this qualitative analysis, I provide detailed descriptions of the posters to show commonalities between Soviet and Chinese Communist posters in terms of artistic stylization and ideology. The analysis finds various differences and similarities that appeared in the posters, such as the artistic stylization, production date, slogans, uniforms and weaponry, and background imagery. The artistic stylization examines whether or not the Chinese posters followed the Soviet Socialist Realist artistic model. The production date indicates the context of the Sino-Soviet relationship in which the poster was created. For example, was this poster produced during the initial Soviet-Chinese Communist relationship (1930s-1955), during the deterioration of the relationship (1956-1961), or after the final Sino-Soviet Split (1962)? Slogans indicate the message or purpose the poster conveys to the audience. Uniforms and weaponry include the similarity of uniforms, missiles, guns, cars, ships, and planes. Background imagery provides both significant locations and symbols: "Is this poster set in a specific location of historical importance?" "Are there important historical dates in the background?"

My research also utilizes literature concerning Soviet and Chinese foreign diplomacy and the history of the transformation of Soviet and Chinese Communist art. First, I created a timeline that follows the relationship between the Soviet Union and China from the 1920s to the mid- 1970s. Second, I researched ideas and methods used in 1930s and 1940s Soviet artwork and how and when these models transferred to Communist China. By combining both areas of literature, I contrasted the changing Sino-

Soviet political relationship with the cultural and artistic transformations of Maoist China.

## **History**

In order to counter the threat of Western capitalism, Stalin desired to export Soviet-style communism and build alliances and buffer states around the Soviet periphery. As the newest and largest member of this bloc of Soviet-allied Communist states, China was at the center of Stalin's foreign policy interests. Reciprocating Stalin's interest, Chairman Mao presented China as a perfect partner for receiving Soviet assistance because of its lack of modernization, and because of the heavy damage inflicted by the struggle against the Japanese occupation, later, the anti-imperialist sentiment due to the American-supported Chinese Republicans (Guomindang).<sup>20</sup> However, the complex relationship between these two Communist super states, Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China was never purely cooperative and conflict free. Instead, the relationship between these two states offers combined elements of cooperation with feelings of resentment, exploitation, and antagonism. During the more cooperative period, the Sino-Soviet Alliance in 1950, Soviet style communism arrived in China through various forms of financial assistance, military aid, and cultural exchange. However, the Sino-Soviet relationship began to decline by the mid-1950s, spiraling into the period of the Sino-Soviet Split in 1960, and then falling into the Chinese Cultural Revolution of the 1970s. The historical context outlined in this thesis traces the political Sino-Soviet relationship throughout the 1950s and 1970s.

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<sup>20</sup> Luthi, 30.

**1949 – 1955**

At the initial foundation of the PRC, various forms of mass propaganda and public activism aided the new party in rallying support for the PRC and discrediting the Guomindang (GMD).<sup>21</sup> During World War II, the GMD struggled against both the Chinese communists and the invading Japanese. The CPC was a small faction during this war and the Soviet Union advised them to "stage insurrections" against the GMD; these insurrections were costly for the CPC.<sup>22</sup> The CPC during this point of time, in general, rarely fought conventionally against Japanese forces.<sup>23</sup> By the end of the war, the CPC took over the Japanese constructed Manchurian industrial base, giving them power to overrun the GMD.<sup>24</sup> The GMD succeeded against the Japanese with help from the Soviet Union and America, but the GMD were weakened politically and militarily due to the strains of the war. Mao took advantage of their weakness and pushed the Nationalist Party out of power, which relocated to Taiwan. This moment marked the end of the Chinese Civil War and began China's entry into the Cold War period.

After the fall of the GMD, Mao turned towards Stalin and the Soviet Union as his best allies. The early interaction between Stalin and Mao was strained. Some scholars such as David Wolff argue that this contributed to the early onset of a disharmonious Sino-Soviet relationship. On October 1949, a Soviet ambassador who was a former representative to the GMD, visited Mao in Beijing.<sup>25</sup> Mao was furious that Stalin would send such a representative, but chose to overlook this event in order to preserve his

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<sup>21</sup> Minling, 1.

<sup>22</sup> Luthi, 24.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 25.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 29.

<sup>25</sup> Wolff, 3.

ambitions of meeting Stalin.<sup>26</sup> Stalin's birthday, December 1949, was approaching quickly and yet Mao was not invited until the last minute, on December 9 to the celebration in Moscow.<sup>27</sup> When Mao reached Moscow and was finally in the presence of Stalin, the Sino-Soviet Alliance Meeting lasted only one week.<sup>28</sup> Although Mao admired Stalin, Stalin was wary of Mao's rising popularity and did not want another competitor for power, like Tito in Yugoslavia.

Despite this blatant disrespect, Mao needed an experienced "instructor" to teach the newly installed Chinese Communist Party how to structure all levels of Chinese society and build a socialist state. In June 1949, Mao pushed for a policy that favored the Soviet Union, otherwise known as the policy of "leaning to one side."<sup>29</sup> He announced this policy in June 1949, in an article titled, "On the People's Democratic Dictatorship," which publicly demonstrated this early Sino-Soviet political cooperation.<sup>30</sup>

There were several initial reasons why Mao favored support from the Soviet Union. Although the Communists prevailed as the new leaders of the Chinese government, they faced the problem of consolidating control over China's expansive territory, especially in the South and Southeast.<sup>31</sup> In particular, the South still retained GMD troops, who could prove problematic if the troops fomented a rebellion (or worse, called for American assistance) against the new regime.<sup>32</sup> Mao knew that he needed to gain further support among the Southern and Southeastern peasants in order to secure his

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 1-4.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>29</sup> Nathan and Scobell, 67.

<sup>30</sup> Minling, 1.

<sup>31</sup> Nathan and Scobell, 68.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

power. He enacted a series of land-reform campaigns from 1949-1953 to remove wealthy landlords and support poor peasants.<sup>33</sup> He also enacted the "suppression of the counterrevolutionaries," "Three-Anti," and "Five-Anti" campaigns to thwart enemies and potential coups against the communist party, which helped him tighten his grip on the internal affairs of the new state.<sup>34</sup>

Not only did the Party need to reinforce its power on the ground, but it needed supporting assistance and organizational advice from the Soviet Union. In 1954, the CPC used Stalin's 1936 Soviet Constitution as a framework for the Chinese Communist Constitution.<sup>35</sup> The CPC borrowed other Soviet-inspired institutions and instructions, such as:

...how to set up a central party apparatus to run a government rather than a war; how to manage government ministries; how to create a system of courts, procurators, police, and jails; how to embed political security functions into factories, universities, offices, and other work units; how to set up Soviet-style mass organizations; and how to use the network of newspaper reporters around the country as a supplementary intelligence service....<sup>36</sup>

These instructions from Moscow helped the CPC construct a foundation that would help the government and people transition into communism, after recovering from a devastating World War and Civil War. Not only did the Party and people need direction, but the Chinese economy desperately needed vast amounts of aid for recovery. This aid came from the 1950 offer that Stalin negotiated with Mao, called the Sino-Soviet Treaty of Friendship and Alliance (SSTFA). The Sino-Soviet Treaty of Friendship and

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 69.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.



Alliance heralded a thirty-year military and economic alliance between China and the Soviet Union.<sup>37</sup> Under this arrangement, Stalin agreed to provide a five-year \$300 million loan that helped China forge a modernized economy that prioritized heavy industry, defense, and energy production.<sup>38</sup> In addition to monetary aid, the Soviet Union sent approximately ten thousand "planners and technicians to help set up the Chinese bureaucracy and design the [industrial] projects...."<sup>39</sup>

Regardless of this assistance, however, there were disagreements between Stalin and Mao about two major events that occurred in 1950, the Korean War and the invasion of Tibet. Initially, Mao had plans for invading Tibet and incorporating the territory into the PRC.<sup>40</sup> Mao additionally planned to remove GMD forces from Taiwan by the end of 1950.<sup>41</sup> When Mao asked for military and financial support for these endeavors, Stalin was reluctant to provide assistance.<sup>42</sup> Mao's original plans were then stalled by Stalin's and Kim Il Sung's pressure to send troops to support communist forces in Korea.<sup>43</sup> The Korean War ended in a stalemate, and Mao began the invasion of Tibet.<sup>44</sup> Consequently in 1959, Nikita Khrushchev would censure Mao for the Sino-Indian border conflict that resulted from the Tibetan invasion.<sup>45</sup> Although Mao agreed to send troops to Korea and eventually conquered Tibet, the setback of his plans demonstrate early that many Soviet leaders' ideas and Mao's ideas for the communist bloc were not in accord.

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<sup>37</sup> Luthi, 31.

<sup>38</sup> Nathan and Scobell, 71.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Wolff, 8.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>42</sup> Luthi, 33.

<sup>43</sup> Wolff, 9.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 13.

**1956–1969**

The Sino-Soviet Friendship Alliance did not last into the 1960s. Many historians attribute the falling out between the Soviet Union and Communist China to Nikita Khrushchev's 1956 "Secret Speech," in which he denounced some Stalinist policies, which threatened Mao's legitimacy and aided the West in discrediting communism.<sup>46</sup> By 1956, many serious disagreements arose over the Chinese Communist government approach to modernization. One major disagreement, the way the Chinese approached education, was criticized by Soviet advisors because the reforms failed to live up to Soviet expectations and standards.<sup>47</sup> In addition, many Soviet advisers criticized Mao's plans for intense agricultural collectivization ("communes") and the quota strains on Chinese factory production. Ironically, the Soviet Union used the same techniques to manage its centrally planned economy.<sup>48</sup> In 1959, in utter frustration, Mao announced that Soviet intentions clashed with Chinese ambitions, which led to the final meeting with Khrushchev.<sup>49</sup> The two leaders could not reconcile and in 1960, Khrushchev ordered approximately 1,400 Soviet advisors stationed in China back to the USSR.<sup>50</sup>

After the first break up of the Sino-Soviet relationship, as a part of Mao's disastrous planning and failure to heed Soviet advice, the Great Leap Forward disaster resulted in the starvation of approximately 45 million people.<sup>51</sup> Because the Great Leap Forward resulted in widespread death and prompted fears of a peasant rebellion, Mao allowed the entry of new Soviet advisors and Soviet food aid in 1962 to help with

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<sup>46</sup> Minling, 4.

<sup>47</sup> Odd Arne Westad, *Restless Empire: China and the World Since 1750* (New York: Basic Books, 2012), 310.

<sup>48</sup> Nathan and Scobell, 75.

<sup>49</sup> Westad, 336.

<sup>50</sup> Westad., 339.

<sup>51</sup> Nathan and Scobell, 75.

recovery.<sup>52</sup> Shortly after recovery, however, Mao publicly criticized the "imperialist" nature of the Soviet Union and its credentials as the leader of the communist world.<sup>53</sup> Mao declared an official split in 1964 from the Soviet Union, and rallied for Chinese independence against the "imperialists," which later served as a focal point of the Chinese Cultural Revolution.<sup>54</sup>

Although Mao declared a political split from the Soviet Union, the Soviet Union continued to pursue territorial negotiations regarding Mongolia and Manchuria and made attempts towards a harmonious partnership from 1965 until 1976. After the fall of Khrushchev, Leonid Brezhnev invested in military reinforcement along the border of China to secure Soviet interests in the East.<sup>55</sup> This seemingly simultaneous coexistence of cooperative and antagonistic exchanges caused a fruitless attempt to reconcile Sino-Soviet differences.

In 1964, negotiators from the USSR and PRC met to settle long held border disputes and mitigate tension between the countries.<sup>56</sup> In 1965, however, the Soviet Union decided to increase its military presence along the border, which was met with military mobilization on the Chinese side.<sup>57</sup> Beginning in 1969, the Chinese intensified their campaign for a military buildup in case of a Soviet strike on the border.<sup>58</sup> In March 1969, Soviet and Chinese troops opened fire at Zhenbao Island, an island that the Chinese

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<sup>52</sup> Westad, 339

<sup>53</sup> Nathan and Scobell, 75.

<sup>54</sup> Westad, 339.

<sup>55</sup> Nathan and Scobell, 76.

<sup>56</sup> Lieberthal, 1.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., xi.

government demanded that Soviet troops evacuate.<sup>59</sup> From October through December 1969, the Soviet Union offered proposals to officially settle the border disputes, improve trade relations, improve cultural exchanges, and diplomacy with the Chinese government.<sup>60</sup> The Chinese government refused to make any immediate settlements with the Soviet Union until after 1978.<sup>61</sup>

### **1970–1976**

The 1970s was a period of intense Chinese militarism and xenophobia directed against foreign and/or Western influence (including anti-Soviet influence). This rise in Chinese nationalism can be seen in the Chinese Cultural Revolution posters presented later in the qualitative analysis of this thesis. Regardless of earlier border clashes, however, the Soviet government continued its policy of restoring cooperation between the Soviet and Chinese governments. In January 1970, the Soviet Union offered islands along the Ussuri and Pamir Region, but the Chinese government did not respond.<sup>62</sup> In 1970, the PRC and USSR exchanged ambassadors and agreed on a 300% increase in trade; this shows mutual economic cooperation between the countries during a time of tension.<sup>63</sup> In 1971, the Soviet government suggested a nonaggression treaty with the Chinese government, without success.<sup>64</sup> In 1972, Brezhnev publicly announced that the USSR would resist any interference in China, but retain control over all other communist states.<sup>65</sup> From August 1973 through September 1976, no new offers were exchanged

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<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 55.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

between the USSR and the PRC.<sup>66</sup> By the time of Mao's death on September 9, 1976, political Sino-Soviet relations had fallen out completely and were not restored until the mid-1980s.

### **Content Analysis**

In my content analysis, I demonstrate how Soviet artistic aesthetics and ideology in military poster propaganda are replicated in Chinese Communist military poster propaganda. Since Soviet artistic aesthetics set the standard for Chinese Communist posters, it is important to understand why the PRC "leaned towards" Soviet propaganda techniques. In a mostly divided capitalist-communist world, the Soviet Union emphasized the achievements that communism provided for the state. Some of these achievements that Soviet poster propaganda depicted were military technology, "...in such fields as nuclear weapons, ballistic missiles, and space vehicles. The propaganda of Soviet achievements is an instrument not only of persuasion but also of intimidation."<sup>67</sup> Modernization, especially technological feats, was an integral part of the rise of China and the shedding of its backward past. Hence, powerful communist technology (such as weaponry and ships) were also a common theme of Chinese Communist military poster propaganda. The intimidation aspect of Soviet propaganda also carried into Chinese Communist poster propaganda, which can be seen in the faces of the characters as they "combat" against the capitalist-imperialist world. The deeply embedded and constantly reiterated undertone of Soviet poster propaganda, also seen in Chinese Communist poster

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>67</sup> Conquest, 167.

propaganda, is a common ideology that promotes the glorification of communism and fights against Western capitalism.<sup>68</sup>

In an effort to indoctrinate the masses in Soviet-inspired communist principles, in 1949, the PRC government determined that literature and art "should serve the people, should inspire the political enlightenment of the people, and should encourage the people's enthusiasm for labor..." and sought a new aesthetic standard for Chinese communist fine arts.<sup>69</sup> The Chinese aesthetic standard would involve the incorporation of Soviet artistic models. In June 1950, the First National Higher Education Conference set the stage for incorporating Soviet art models into Chinese fine arts education.<sup>70</sup> In order to train both Chinese instructors and students in Soviet art, Chinese teachers travelled to Moscow and Soviet teachers travelled to Beijing and acquired Soviet textbooks that were translated into Mandarin.<sup>71</sup> One of the most famous Chinese art academies, The Chinese Central Academy of Fine Arts (CAFA), was one of six major art colleges that underwent Soviet reform and sent Chinese students' art to Soviet academies.<sup>72</sup> This period witnessed a heavy substitution or removal of traditional Chinese art forms with Soviet-style art models and products.

During this period, Socialist Realism became the guiding principle of Chinese art.<sup>73</sup> Many scholars attribute the concept of, "Socialist Realism," to Stalin and his ideas about how art should function in a Communist society. Stalin defined socialist realism as

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 123.

<sup>69</sup> Julia Frances Andrews, *Painters and Politics in the People's Republic of China, 1949-1979* (Berkeley: University of California, 1994), 36.

<sup>70</sup> Westad, 308.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Andrews, 136.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 110-111.

"means of reflecting life in art peculiar to socialist society. It demands the true portrayal of reality in its revolutionary development..."<sup>74</sup> Even though Mao initially described Chinese art work as Proletarian Realism, his speech at the "Yan'an Conference on Literature and Art" in 1942 was altered by Hu Qiaomu to show that he supported Socialist Realism.<sup>75</sup> It was later decided that Proletarian Realism and Socialist Realism were the same style. In 1952, further evidence shows that the style of Proletarian Realism used the same methods as Socialist Realism. In that year, Hu Qiaomu, Deputy Director of the Propaganda Department of the Central Committee and one of Mao's personal secretaries told a group of young writers: "they had to study and master Socialist Realism in order to overcome the backwardness of literature and the arts...[Socialist Realism] does not need any explanation, Proletarian Realism is Socialist Realism...."<sup>76</sup> As the officially endorsed and deeply embedded artistic style, Socialist Realism continued from the mid-1950s through the 1970s in Chinese poster propaganda, depicting Communist China in its revolutionary state.

The era of close Sino-Soviet political and cultural cooperation can be seen through changes in poster propaganda. At the macro-level, The Sino-Soviet Friendship Association headquarters and the Communist Party of China were responsible for censoring and approving propaganda produced in China. At the micro-level, however, the production of poster propaganda happened through the instruction of Soviet and Chinese teachers and artists at Chinese art academies. This dramatic transition between earlier

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 119

<sup>75</sup> Lorenz Bichler, "Coming to Terms with a Term: Notes on the History of the Use of Socialist Realism in China," in *The Party Spirit; Socialist Realism and Literary Practice in the Soviet Union, East Germany and China*, eds. Hilary Chung, Michael Falchikov, Bonnie S. McDougall, and Karin McPherson (Atlanta, GA: Rodopi B.V., 1996), 31.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 35.

Chinese poster propaganda (sans Socialist Realism) and Chinese Communist poster propaganda can be seen below. This demonstrates the early and intense cultural interaction that occurred between the artists of the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China.



Figure 1. "Swear to defend the nation to the death,"

*Source:*

<http://chinese posters.net/gallery/e15-687.php>

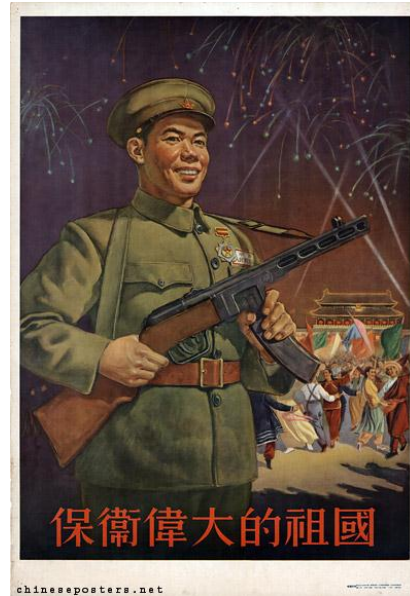


Figure 2. "Protecting the great mother country," *Source:*

<http://chinese posters.net/themes/pla-1954.php>

The style taught for the production of persuasive poster propaganda in Stalin's Soviet Union was referred to as Socialist Realism. Soviet artists catered to the imagery of Stalin's vision of a Soviet-utopia; this Soviet-utopia did not depict the Western definition of "reality" but the future reality after the construction of the glorious communist utopia of the future.<sup>77</sup> The Socialist Realists produced artwork that "romanticized and heroicized

<sup>77</sup> Encyclopaedia Britannica, concise ed., s.v. "Socialist Realism." *Merriam-Webster.com*, <http://www.merriam-webster.com/concise/socialist%20realism> (accessed November 17, 2012).



the state, its leaders, and its instruments (such as the Red Army)..."<sup>78</sup> The posters did not deploy avant-garde techniques, which were often obscure and hard for the undereducated masses to grasp, but instead created a blend of romantic and realistic elements: "...an idealization of the worker and soldier—and leader—emerged from the burgeoning Socialist Realist style...."<sup>79</sup> In both the Soviet and Chinese military poster propaganda that follows, the soldiers are clearly seen as the noble champions and defenders of Soviet and Chinese society. They are repeatedly shown as part of the highest exemplars of the new communist society. These artists were engineers of human souls, educating the new men and women of communism.

Socialist Realism provided a model for Chinese Communist imagery that later developed in poster propaganda. Like the Soviet Union, traditional Chinese images and styles in propaganda disappeared as Mao dictated that the Soviet-inspired Socialist Realism served the interests of socialism in China.<sup>80</sup> By the 1960s, traditional images, such as "...landscapes, birds, and flowers," were removed and, "Much of the content of the new art was drawn from noble qualities and heroic deeds of soldiers and was often produced by the soldiers themselves...."<sup>81</sup>

Soviet and Chinese Communist military poster propaganda share depictions, in terms of Socialist Realist aesthetics, of noble communist soldiers and powerful military technology that carry over through the 1950s-1970s. Even after the Sino-Soviet Split, at a time when Sino-Soviet relations were on the steep decline, the Soviet Socialist Realism

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<sup>78</sup> Steven Heller, *Iron Fists: Branding the 20th-Century Totalitarian State* (New York: Phaidon Press Unlimited, 2008), 163.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 168.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 187.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 187-191.

continued to be the zenith of Chinese poster propaganda. For the content analysis of this honors thesis, I examine various elements of the stylization, production dates, uniforms, and technology of Soviet and Chinese Communist military poster propaganda.

### **Army Posters**

The artistic style of the following Chinese Communist military posters stems from Socialist Realism, because the shading and depth creates a realistic image, unlike former simple Chinese posters or abstract avant-garde Russian art. The perspective of the characters show the soldiers always defensively looking outward at a 3/4 angle. This perspective gives the characters a mixed appearance of pride and determination without appearing barbaric, because the artists wanted to depict the soldiers as the highest exemplars of morality and nobility. With the exception of figure 10, where the soldier is featured in a nearly profile stance, these soldiers are repeatedly depicted holding their guns close to their chest and standing at attention, as if they are ready for war. The soldiers, in particular, are shown from their waist up, and the placement helps draw the viewer's attention to the face and weapon of their soldier. The Socialist Realist strategy that Chinese Communist artists utilized played an important element in replicating similar aesthetics of nobility and heroism of China's People's Liberation Army.

The standardization of the Chinese Communist military and influence of the Soviet military can be seen in these posters. The uniforms are similar where figure 4 and 9 Soviet posters both wear capes, as well as a thick layered green jacket, and buttoned-up shirt. Figures 3, 5, 6, 8, and 10 wear thick collared jackets with red on the lapels. All of the men have short haircuts (a rejection from the Qing queue haircut) and the red communist star is located at the front-center of the hat. The hats worn by the soldiers are

different; the Soviet soldiers, except for figure 7, wear a helmet whereas the Chinese soldiers and figure 7 wear a short-cap. The artists depict both Chinese and Soviet soldiers carrying either an AK-47 or a rifle.

These Chinese Communist posters were produced during the Chinese Communist Revolution, demonstrating that the Socialist Realist style carried over well past the Sino-Soviet Split. In the production date of the Soviet posters, it should be noted that the style of Socialist Realism also continued into the periods of the Sino-Soviet Alliance and the early divergence of the Sino-Soviet relationship. This is significant because it demonstrates that the Sino-Soviet Split was not an absolute rift and that Soviet culture still penetrated Chinese Communist society. This is also true for the posters presented in the navy and air force sections of this thesis.



Figure 3. "Anti-aircraft and combat training,"

*Source:*

<http://www.maopost.com:8000/wcat>

=mao&wlan=en&wreq=posterzoom&  
posterid=0056-001M&type=f



Figure 4. "Long live the great  
Chinese People's  
Liberation Army,"

*Source:*

[http://www.maopost.com:8000/wcat=mao  
&wlan=en&wreq=posterzoom&posterid  
=0025-001M&type=f](http://www.maopost.com:8000/wcat=mao&wlan=en&wreq=posterzoom&posterid=0025-001M&type=f)



Figure 5. "Heighten vigilance to protect our  
Motherland." *Source:*

<http://www.maopost.com:8000/wcat=mao&wlan=en&wreq=posterzoom&posterid=0029-001M&type=f>



Figure 6. "Promote revolutionary traditions and strengthen war preparation and training." *Source:* <http://www.maopost.com:8000/wcat=mao&wlan=en&wreq=posterzoom&posterid=0788-001M&type=f>



Figure 7. "These years' glory will not cease!" *Source:* <http://sovietposters.ru/pages/169.htm>



Figure 8. "Be vigilant!" *Source:*  
<http://sovietposters.ru/pages/053.htm>



Figure 9. "Glory to warrior-liberator!" *Source:*  
<http://sovietposters.ru/pages/045.htm>



Figure 10. "...to protect the won world and the creative work of the Soviet people vigilantly, to be a reliable support of interests of the Soviet Union. I .Stalin." *Source:*  
<http://sovietposters.ru/pages/054.htm>

## Navy Posters

The navy posters below follow the same analysis as the army posters above, except that ships have been added as technology. Socialist Realism is apparent in these posters as well; the characters are depicted with smiling faces, proud of their military service to communism. The same shading and depth appears in all of these posters. With the exception of figures 15 and 17, the characters are depicted at a slightly 3/4 pose, gazing outward with bravery, whereas figure 15 depicts a full frontal position and 17 is shown in profile. All of the posters are shown from the waist or chest upward, focusing mostly on the expression of the sailor. Like the army posters above, Chinese artists utilize the same Socialist Realist perspective and characterization to show the nobility and honor of the Chinese Communist navy.

The uniforms of the navy are noticeably similar in the Soviet, Sino-Soviet, and Chinese posters. With the exception of figure 16, the same communist star appears on the front of the sailors' hats. All of the men wear the same shaped hats, with native language text wrapped around the rim, the Chinese sailors wear the same striped collar with a matching undershirt as the Soviet sailors, and all the men have short haircuts.

A unique Chinese poster depicts a Chinese and Soviet sailor together, and a circle with the Soviet flag and a circle with the Chinese flag overlapping with a dove, symbolizing peace and alliance. In the navy posters, rather than focus on guns, the posters emphasize the power of ships. The placement of ships near the chest or slightly above the chest draws the viewer's attention on them. Navy posters utilize flags as an important part of the background scenery, as seen in figures 11, 12, 14, 16, and 17.



Figure 11. "Work to build a powerful navy,"

*Source:*

<http://www.maopost.com:8000/wcat=mao&wlan=en&wreq=posterzoom&posterid=0123-001M&type=f>



Figure 12. "Salute the fighters of the Xisha islands in South China Sea,"

*Source:*

<http://www.maopost.com:8000/wcat=mao&wlan=en&wreq=posterzoom&posterid=0075-001M&type=f>



Figure 13. "Be ready to bury our enemies

under the sea at any time." *Source:*

<http://www.maopost.com:8000/wcat=mao&wlan=en&wreq=posterzoom&posterid=1731-001M&type=f>





Figure 14. "Long live the friendship between the peoples and armies of China and the Soviet Union, early 1950s," *Source:*

<http://www.maopost.com:8000/wcat=mao&wlan=en&wreq=posterzoom&posterid=0782-001M&type=f>



Figure 15. "Multiply glory of the fathers! Keep the traditions of the fleet!" *Source:*

<http://sovietposters.ru/pages/177.htm>



Figure 16. "Become a member of DOSFLOT! (the Society for Voluntary Support of the Soviet Navy)," *Source:*

<http://ansmagazine.com/Summer05/Motherland>



Figure 17. "Stalin raised us to be faithful to the Soviet people!" *Source:*

<http://ansmagazine.com/Summer05/Motherland>

## Air Force Posters

The analysis of the aviation posters follows the same format as the army and navy posters, except that airplanes are included in the weaponry section. The stylization follows the same pattern as Socialist Realism. The pilots' gaze never focuses directly at the viewer, but does look outward with bravery and nobility like the army and navy posters. The incorporation of the Socialist Realist style in air force posters can be traced as early as 1951, as seen in figure 22. It is notable, however, that the slogans of the Chinese aviation posters grew more aggressive with the rise of Chinese independence from the Soviet Union and the onset of the Chinese Cultural Revolution.



Figure 18. "Long live the Stalin Air Force!" *Source:* <http://sovietposters.ru/pages/002.htm>



Figure 19. "To fly higher than all, farther than all, faster than all!" *Source:* <http://sovietposter.blogspot.com/2007/08/gotta-jet.html>



Figure 20. "Glory to Stalin's eagles!"

Source:

<http://ansmagazine.com/Summer05/Motherland>



Figure 21. "Train ceaselessly to prepare to annihilate the invading enemy,"

Source:  
<http://www.maopost.com:8000/wcat=mao&wlan=en&wreq=posterzoom&posterid=0172-001M&type=f>



Figure 22. "Our Motherland's airspace is inviolable." *Source:*  
[http://www.maopost.com:8000/wcat=mao  
 &wlan=en&wreq=posterzoom&posterid=07  
 64-001M&type=f](http://www.maopost.com:8000/wcat=mao&wlan=en&wreq=posterzoom&posterid=0764-001M&type=f)



Figure 23. "Invaders will be wiped out!" *Source:*

<http://www.maopost.com:8000/wcat=mao&wlan=en&wreq=posterzoom&posterid=1390-001L&type=f>

### **"Women hold up half the sky" - Mao Zedong**

Another commonality featured in Chinese communist poster propaganda comes in the form of women depicted actively participating in military training. The Socialist Realist aesthetic manifests itself in the artwork below. The Chinese furiously promoted women in the military and egalitarianism, like their Soviet counterpart.<sup>82</sup> During World War II, the Yanan-based Communist party "offered new freedoms to young Chinese women, who could receive a revolutionary education and could participate in the guerilla fighting as soldiers on the front lines or could give support on the home front..."<sup>83</sup> In each poster, women hold various guns and sometimes are accompanied by male instructors. In contrast to the men, the women do not wear formal military uniforms. Perhaps this is because the People's Liberation Army would not formally admit women into the military, or because the uniforms were not practical given the additional domestic duties of Chinese women. Regardless, this style of artwork and propaganda promoted egalitarianism in Chinese communism, encouraging both Chinese men and women to learn from each other and from Soviet style models.

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<sup>82</sup> Rhoads Murphey, *A History of Asia*, 6th ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, Inc., 2009), 392.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.



Figure 24. "Train hard to increase combat efficiency, be always prepared for war," Source: <http://chinese posters . net / themes / women - warriors . php>



Figure 25. "We all are sharpshooters," Source: <http://chinese posters . net / themes / women - warriors . php>



Figure 26. "Bombard the 'Classic of Women',"

Source:

<http://chinese posters.net/themes/women-warriors.php>



Figure 27. "The army and the people drill together,"

Source: <http://chinese posters.net/themes/women-warriors.php>



Figure 28. "On the battlefront of coastal defense,"

Source: <http://chinese posters.net/themes/women-warriors.php>





Figure 29. "Military training in the snow," *Source:*

<http://chinese posters.net/themes/women-warriors.php>



Figure 30. "Women's militia,"

*Source:*

<http://chinese posters.net/themes/women-warriors.php>

## Conclusion

The Sino-Soviet political relationship was like a roller coaster ride. Their diplomacy towards each other twisted and turned unexpectedly and rapidly from 1949 to 1976. Yet despite these jagged and jarring diplomatic turns, Soviet cultural influence carried over uninterrupted into China from 1949 to 1976, as seen in the poster propaganda featuring the Socialist Realist style. Soviet advisers helped develop the hallmark of Soviet art in China, Socialist Realism. The utilization of Socialist Realist stylization is present in Chinese poster propaganda in the early 1950s and continues throughout the Chinese Cultural Revolution. Many Soviet advisers were removed during

the Split, but Socialist Realist art continued to be taught as the pinnacle of Chinese art. The continued application of the Soviet Socialist Realist style into the 1960s and 1970s refutes the view of the Sino-Soviet Split as a complete rejection of Soviet influence; hence, it is imperative to look "after the split."

Currently, the Sino-Soviet literature focuses too much on politics and not enough on cultural exchanges between these two states. This focus on politics and diplomacy risks giving a unidimensional, conflict-ridden portrayal of the relationship between these two communist superpowers. It also risks obscuring the close cultural connections and influences that continued between these states even during an era of increasing diplomatic impasse and aggression. Looking past politics and into the arena of culture gives historians a new perspective on the relations between the Soviet Union and Communist China, one that highlights rich, multidimensional processes of cooperation and mutual influence rather than just one-sided themes of conflict and animosity.

In short, historians need to look at both the political and cultural exchanges of the USSR and PRC in order to understand the complexity of their relationship and how it impacted Chinese culture even after the split. In other words, historians need to think more transnationally. The recent interest in transnationalism encourages scholars to investigate cultural and political influence shared between states. Transnationalism can provide a key to changing our views about the Sino-Soviet relationship and, in general, the Cold War. It can show us the continuities and commonalities that united a diverse and unwieldy bloc of (sometimes bickering) states into a communist bloc with its own unique set of non-capitalist institutions and ideals.

The Cold War was not as black and white as previous historians or politicians thought. For instance, American politicians feared the construction of a monolithic and homogeneous bloc controlled by the Kremlin. Although the USSR wanted a harmonious communist bloc, this was certainly not the case. The Sino-Soviet relationship demonstrates the USSR's inability to dictate terms to another communist state. Stalin's constant suspicions of Tito and the Soviet invasion of Hungary and Czechoslovakia also show how the USSR failed to create a harmonious bloc that the Kremlin could control absolutely.

Yet despite the uncontrollable diversity and divergent agendas of the communist world, a repertoire of commonalities and shared transnational traits linked these diverse states. My paper shows that one such shared transnational tenant was cultural and was expressed in similar modes of constructing and creating visual propaganda. Khrushchev and Mao shared more than they thought. Despite the split that ostensibly separated them, these erstwhile enemies both inhabited a shared world of visual propaganda that made them allies in the shared project of building communism.

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