

# The Soviet Union and Taiwan, 1943-1982

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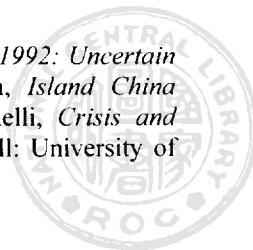
## Introduction

The island of Taiwan formed a fortress in the Asian front in the west's struggle against Communism during the Cold War. Once only an outlying province, first of China and then of Japan, Taiwan became a refuge for the Nationalist Chinese government when it was driven from the mainland in the summer of 1949. Taiwan took on crucial political, geographical, and ideological importance for the west. However inaccurately in reality, on a symbolic level, politically, ideologically and economically, Taiwan represented democracy and the free market (capitalism) in the world contest against totalitarian Communism. Geographically Taiwan guarded the crucial sea routes leading from Northeast to Southeast Asia, and was roughly equidistant from Korea and Vietnam, two nations where the Cold War became hot. Taiwan often served as a base for covert military operations against the People's Republic of China (PRC) just across the narrow Taiwan Straits, as well as against Communist forces in farther away Indonesia and Indochina. The United States used Taiwan as a major base to gather intelligence material on the PRC. Due to its symbolic and strategic importance, the United States was determined to deny Taiwan to the Soviet Union or any country allied with it.

Historians and political scientists have fully examined American policy and activities in Taiwan.<sup>1</sup> They have noted how Taiwan very cleverly utilized the American obsession against Communism to obtain billions of dollars in American economic and military assistance. The Nationalist Chinese government also obtained military guarantees, in the form of a treaty signed

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<sup>1</sup> Nancy Bernkopf Tucker, *Taiwan, Hong Kong and the United States, 1945-1992: Uncertain Friendships* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1994); and Ralph Clough, *Island China* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1978); and Robert Accinelli, *Crisis and Commitment: United States Policy Toward Taiwan, 1950-1955* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996).



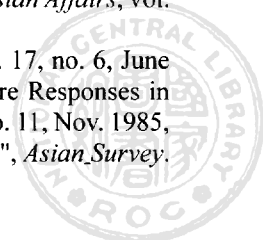
between the two states in 1954, pledging American protection in case of an attack by PRC military forces. If American began to falter, a large and powerful "China lobby" sprang into action. However, Taiwan was ill-prepared and very surprised by first the Nixon and Kissinger visits to China, which resulted in the Shanghai Communique in 1972, and then by the full normalization of relations between the United States and the People's Republic at the end of 1978.<sup>2</sup> Taiwan's response to these devastating developments was to continue its path to economic prosperity and democratization.

While a great deal has been written on Soviet relations with the People's Republic of China, very little has been written on Soviet relations with Nationalist China, particularly after 1949. What little has been written has tended to be speculative, based on Soviet and Taiwanese newspaper accounts.<sup>3</sup> In fact, Reinhard Drifte stated "all discussion of the Soviet perspective on Taiwan must be based on conjecture." He further wrote that no trade took place between the Soviet Union and Taiwan after 1949. All accounts agreed that Soviet ties with Taiwan only developed in response to the growing rapprochement between the People's Republic and the United States in the early 1970's. Then Soviet newspapers, for the first time, wrote favorably of Taiwan, and the Taiwanese likewise had kind things to say of the Soviets, differentiating, for example, between Soviet and Chinese Communism. Officials from each country visited the other. Taiwan hoped that talk of closer Soviet-Taiwanese relations would discourage growing links between the PRC and the United States. The Soviets believed relations between their country and Taiwan could prevent Sino-Soviet relations declining yet further. Yet both sides put limits on their involvement. Taiwan denied any interest in a close association, insisting its national policy would be always staunchly anti-Communist. From the Soviet standpoint, close ties with Taiwan would carry a

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<sup>2</sup> Thomas J. Bellows, "Normalization: A Taiwan Perspective", *Asian Affairs*, vol. 6, no. 6, July/August 1979, 339-358; and John Franklin Cooper, "Taiwan's Options", *Asian Affairs*, vol. 6, no. 5, May/June 1979, 282-294.

<sup>3</sup> Arnold L. Horelick, "Soviet Policy Dilemmas in Asia", *Asian Survey*. Vol. 17, no. 6, June 1977, 499-512; Reinhard Drifte, "European and Soviet Perspectives on Future Responses in Taiwan to International and Regional Developments", *Asian Survey*. vol. 25, no. 11, Nov. 1985, 1115-1122; and John W. Garver, "Taiwan's Russian Option: Image and Reality", *Asian Survey*. vol. 18, no. 7, July 1978, 751-766.



substantial price tag, namely increased tension between the PRC and the Soviet Union, which would preclude any possible reconciliation between the two countries. Thus, academic specialists concluded that while relations between Taiwan and the Soviet Union might have been mutually advantageous, for ideological reasons, significant ties never developed.

Recently Russia has granted limited access to its archives to foreign specialists, so that we can now examine the actual documents, and determine more accurately what ties actually developed between Taiwan and the Soviet Union, and why. During the Chinese Civil War Stalin hesitated, uncertain whether to support the Communists or Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalists. All hesitations were gone by 1950. In fact, the Soviet Union was the first country to recognize the People's Republic on October 1, 1949. Since that date, the Soviet Union never officially recognized Taiwan's independence from the mainland. On the surface, during the next decades, there was little change in Soviet policy, which recognized the existence of only "one China", the PRC. Thus, there were no diplomatic relations between Taiwan and the Soviet Union from 1949 until the present.

Yet below the surface many changes occurred after 1958. There were contradictory attitudes at different levels. For example, the principle of "one China" was not as strictly maintained at lower unofficial levels as at the highest official ones. Surprisingly, the accelerating deterioration of Sino-Soviet relations from the late 1950's, through the 1960's, hardly affected the Soviet attitude toward Taiwan. However, growing ties between the PRC and the United States during the 1970's led some individuals in both Taiwan, and the Soviet Union, to believe they could establish, if not full-scale diplomatic relations, at least some contacts between the two states. The Taiwanese side made the first step in 1972 soon after the visit of the American President Nixon to the PRC. Invariably the Taiwanese leadership should itself more flexible than the Soviet leaders, since Nationalist Chinese politicians essentially had nothing to lose once their ties with the United States cooled.

A proposal in 1972 for economic cooperation, made by a Taiwanese company to the Soviet Ministry of Foreign Affairs, could have been a first step toward a deeper development of Taiwanese-Soviet relations had the Soviet authorities understood it correctly. While that proposal for direct trade between

Taiwan and the Soviet Union was rejected, trade developed as long as it was conducted through third countries, such as Hong Kong or Japan. Growing and extensive commerce was conducted between the Taiwanese and the Soviet Union's Eastern European allies. The Soviet Union was able to trade through its allies in Eastern Europe, or through several private companies in Western Europe, such as one in the German Federal Republic. As relations between the Soviet Union and the People's Republic deteriorated, Taiwan became a good source of information for Moscow about developments on the mainland, such as the Cultural Revolution. When the Soviet Union began its economic reforms, it came to view Taiwan as a successful example of the market economy, one of East Asia's "little dragons". Thus, while officially there were no relations between Taiwan and the Soviet Union, unofficially there were significant and growing economic ties, as well as political, military and even cultural relations.

This paper will examine Soviet and Taiwanese ties from 1943 until 1982, covering events that followed the full normalization of relations between the United States and the People's Republic. The paper will focus on the following issues: 1. United Nations membership and the "two China" issue, 2. The impact of the Sino-Soviet dispute on Taiwanese-Soviet relations, and 3. The effect of normalization of relations between the People's Republic and the United States in the 1970's on Soviet-Taiwanese relations. This essay is based on two archives: documents from the Foreign Ministry Archive, (AVP RF) from 1943 until the early 1950's and again from 1969 until 1982, as well as documents from the Central Committee of the Communist Party Archive (TsKhSD) from the mid-1950's through the early 1960's. These documents complement each other, giving a fairly complete picture of Soviet and Taiwanese relations during the past half-century. These documents also reveal the value of these ties to each party. During the alliance period between the PRC and the Soviet Union, 1949 through 1955, the Soviets gathered most of their information on Taiwan directly from the Chinese, without editorial comment, through the Soviet embassy in Beijing and their consulates in Shanghai and Canton. Every year the Soviet embassy in Beijing filed detailed reports on the situation in Taiwan to the Foreign Ministry, covering domestic and foreign policy developments. Their main sources were press accounts,

Chinese military intelligence reports, and diplomats' views. As relations deteriorated between the Soviet Union and the PRC, the Soviets were forced to compile independently information, mostly only newspaper accounts, about Taiwan from Soviet embassies in Japan, Thailand, Singapore, and elsewhere.

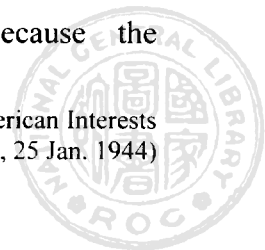
### **A Period of Minimal Contact, 1943-1965**

As a result of the Treaty of Shimonoseki in 1895, China ceded Taiwan to Japan, which made it into a colony. During World War II the allies treated Taiwan as an occupied territory. Economically, Taiwan was important to Japan as a major source of sugar and rice. Strategically Taiwan dominated the Central China Sea, and the northern approaches to the Philippines, and the entrance to the South China Sea. In 1943 the United States conducted a secret study on Taiwan's post-war fate. The Soviet embassy in Washington obtained a copy of the document and sent it to Moscow, where the Foreign Ministry translated it into Russian. Seven options were listed for Taiwan. The first, its return to Chinese sovereignty, was the preferred solution in the American report. Taiwan could then provide rice to China, while its return to China would meet the demands of the Chinese government for the restoration of its sovereignty. "The predominantly Chinese character of its population and its strategic threat, if left to Japan, to China and the countries of southwest Pacific, gave adequate justification for its retrocession to China."<sup>4</sup> The Americans preferred other options which, while they would have returned Taiwan to China, would also have required the Chinese government to grant either the United States or the United Nations the right to establish air and naval bases.

As the Soviets noted, the Chinese would not officially agree to any restriction on their sovereignty, but would unofficially allow the Americans to establish bases on Taiwan. The American report did not consider independence a viable option for Taiwan. Even though the Americans conceded Taiwan could develop a viable economy on its own, "there is little likelihood of an independence movement developing because the

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<sup>4</sup> AVP RF, F. komissiya Litvinova, op. 7, d. 6, (Sept.-Oct. 1943)--Study of American Interests in the post-war world regarding Taiwan: Secret #88-44, Sept. 1, 1943, (Vzh. 26, 25 Jan. 1944) 2.



predominantly Chinese composition of the population has led its people to favor the cause of China."<sup>5</sup> Nor was the internationalization of Taiwan as a trustee territory of the United Nations seriously considered, because this too would have run counter to the wishes of the Chinese population and government. A revision of this report six weeks later did not even mention the options of either internationalization or independence. Like the first report, it too gave the return of Taiwan to full Chinese sovereignty the preferred solution. It was assumed the Chinese would grant the Americans naval and air bases, but that the cession of bases to the Americans would not be enshrined in any treaty since China would object to any formal prior assignment of bases as a "return to the old policy of unequal treaties."<sup>6</sup>

The second document was much shorter omitting all discussions from the different subcommittees present in the first document. The Soviets made no comment on either document. However, the fact the Soviets photocopied and then translated both documents indicates their interest in American thinking on Taiwan's future. Consequently, there was no opposition to the return of Taiwan to the Chinese Nationalist government by any of the great powers. Franklin Roosevelt, Winston Churchill, and Chiang Kai-Shek agreed to return Taiwan to China at the Cairo Conference in December 1943. Stalin accepted their decision at Teheran soon afterwards, and as the war ended the participants reconfirmed Chinese control of Taiwan at Potsdam in July 1945.

The first mention of Taiwan as a possible asylum for Kuomintang armies came in a Tass report on August 18, 1949.<sup>7</sup> After the declaration of the PRC in the autumn of 1949, the Soviets noted Taiwan lacked strategic importance to the Americans as a home for the Nationalist Chinese. Rather the Americans feared Taiwan could be used as a Soviet base should the Communists capture the island. Taiwan was not included in the American line of defense, which ran from Japan through the Philippines, but excluded Taiwan itself.<sup>8</sup> The Soviets strongly supported Chinese Communist efforts to take the island. Their archives confirm they stationed military advisors and specialists, who manned

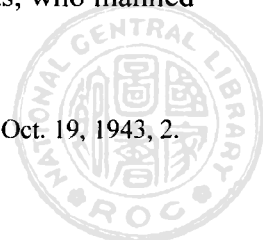
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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>6</sup> AVP RF, F. komissiya Litvinova, op. 7, d. 6, #348 (secret), H-44 (revised) Oct. 19, 1943, 2.

<sup>7</sup> AVP RF, F. 56-B (press section), op. 16, d. 227 (1950) 123.

<sup>8</sup> AVP RF, F. 56-B (press section), op. 17, d. 343 (1950) 18.



anti-aircraft defenses, opposite Taiwan on the mainland in Fujian Province. Furthermore, the Soviets helped establish an office of the Taiwan League for Democratic Self-Rule, a Communist front organization pledged to recapture Taiwan, in Port Arthur, still the site of a major Soviet navy base.<sup>9</sup> Despite the wishes and hopes of both the Soviet and PRC governments, the Communist military lacked the naval ability to launch the necessary amphibious expedition to capture Taiwan. Nevertheless, contemporary American military and intelligence assessments at the time argued that without massive American military intervention, Taiwan would fall to a Communist assault. Hence in January 1950 President Truman placed Taiwan outside the United States defense perimeter, though stating that it might rely on the United Nations for its defense.<sup>10</sup>

The outbreak of the Korean War in June 1950 enhanced Taiwan's strategic significance to both sides. The United States ordered its Seventh Fleet to patrol the Taiwan Straits to prevent any Communist attack. When PRC military forces captured Hainan Island off the coast of southeast China, morale in Taiwan plummeted, as most people believed their island would be next.<sup>11</sup> In September 1950 the Soviet Union demanded the inclusion of Taiwan's status on the agenda of the UN Security Council. The Soviet delegate Jacob Malik proposed inviting a PRC representative to the Security Council to participate in these discussions. His request was turned down. During the debate, Malik formally proposed to the Security Council that since "Taiwan is part of China", all-American military forces stationed in and around Taiwan be withdrawn immediately. He recalled that at the Potsdam Conference the United States, Great Britain, and the Soviet Union had formally declared that Taiwan should be returned to China. Malik then asked the Security Council why this had not been done?<sup>12</sup> Later in September, the Soviet Union once more used the United Nations forum to condemn alleged American aggression against the PRC, namely its support for Taiwan in sending US military and naval forces there. The UN Security Council voted against including the PRC representative in its

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<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 50, and 107.

<sup>10</sup> Tucker, *Taiwan, Hong Kong and the United States*, 30.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 30-35.

<sup>12</sup> AVP RF, F. 56-B (press section), op. 17, d. 344: 87 and 104.



debate. All Soviet accounts used pejorative terms to describe the Taiwan government as "lying", "Kuomintang remnants", "terrorists", and the like.<sup>13</sup> Nancy Bernkoff Tucker argues that the Soviet Union did not really support PRC inclusion in the debate because the Soviets wished to keep the PRC dependent on Moscow, but provides no evidence to back up her thesis.<sup>14</sup>

In 1954, after the Korean War ended, the United States and Nationalist China signed a Treaty of Mutual Defense, which formally obligated the US to defend Taiwan against an attack from the mainland. Marshal Klementi Voroshilov, Chairman of the Presidium for the Soviet Communist Party, strongly denounced this treaty as an attempt by the United States to restore its dominance over all China. "The Americans do not understand that Chiang Kai-shek forces represent the past in China. I am sure 100 million Chinese are prepared to liberate Taiwan." Voroshilov concluded his report by declaring all the lands of China must be liberated (reunified) in order for peace and security to return to the Far East.<sup>15</sup> Hoping to dissuade the United States from implementing the Mutual Defense Treaty, the PRC began shelling the two clusters of Nationalist Chinese controlled offshore islands. Hence the region faced the first of what would be three Quemoy-Matsu Crises. Finally realizing its shelling only bolstered American support for the Taiwanese, the PRC finally ended the crisis several months later.

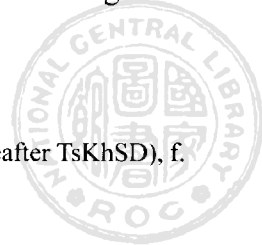
Chiang Kai-Shek refused to abandon these offshore islands, which he viewed as steppingstones for a possible invasion of the mainland, despite the views of most military specialists that these islands were indefensible. Chiang placed 100,000 troops on the two island clusters. Furthermore, the PRC strongly objected to American attempts to follow a "two China" policy. Both the PRC and the Soviet Union thought the Americans would not strongly defend the Taiwanese should a confrontation occur between the PRC and Taiwan. On April 5, 1958 Soviet Ambassador Pavel Yudin met Chou En-Lai at the Beijing airport. There they discussed the recent visit of American Secretary of State John Foster Dulles to Taiwan, and Dulles' meetings with Chiang Kai-

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 167-168.

<sup>14</sup> Tucker, 34.

<sup>15</sup> Archive of the Central Committee of the Communist Party after 1952 (hereafter TsKhSD), f. 2, op. 30, d. 51, December 29, 1954, 14-15.



Shek. They noted that Dulles spent less than two hours in Taiwan, which they believed was too short for substantive talks. Furthermore, Chiang seemed nervous during these short talks. Yudin and Chou concluded that Chiang believed American support for Taiwan was diminishing.<sup>16</sup> The PRC also sought to distract its population from domestic problems resulting from sacrifices to promulgate the Great Leap Forward policy, as well as a political crackdown, that followed the One Hundred Flowers Bloom campaign. Consequently, the PRC started shelling Quemoy and Matsu once again during the summer of 1958, the beginning of the second Quemoy-Matsu Crisis.

The Soviet Union followed this crisis very carefully. The Soviet embassy in Beijing filed reports almost monthly to both the Foreign Ministry and the Soviet Communist Party's International Department. Unlike prior reports, which were simply Russian translations of Chinese reports, these dispatches contained substantial editorial comment and analysis. For example, in September S. F. Antonov, Acting Ambassador to Beijing, filed a detailed report to Moscow outlining the crisis.<sup>17</sup> The Soviet Union also clipped relevant articles from Taiwanese and Hong Kong newspapers. For example, a translated article in the Taiwan press noted that Vice Admiral Doll, Commander of US Defenses in Taiwan, assured his Taiwanese audience that the United States had nuclear tipped missiles that could travel 600 miles. They could and would be used at any time to defend Taiwan from a Communist attack.<sup>18</sup> Thus, the Soviets were very much aware of the presence of American missiles in Taiwan, directed at the mainland.

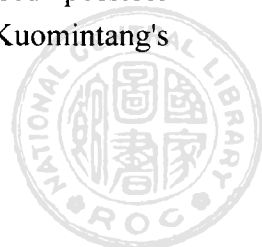
That same month Yuri Andropov, then the member of the Central Committee responsible for Soviet Communist Party relations with foreign Communist parties, filed a detailed report on Taiwan. Andropov's report, based on information provided by the PRC Foreign Ministry, mentioned problems in relations between the United States and the Nationalist Chinese. The report contended that the United States was supporting the most hardline element within the Kuomintang, and the Kuomintang feared possible negotiations between Taiwan and the PRC. To toughen the Kuomintang's

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<sup>16</sup> TskhSD, f. 5, op. 49, d. 131-133, 78.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., d. 131, September 23, 1958.

<sup>18</sup> TsKhSD, f. 5, op. 49, d. 131, January 1958, 9.



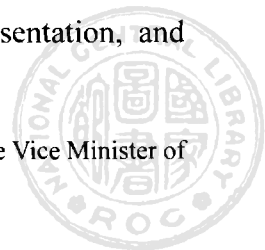
stance, the United States secretly gave assistance to Sen Chiang Bin, a staunchly anti-Chiang Nationalist Chinese leader, who had been in exile in Hong Kong since 1949. In fact, Chiang Kai-shek, together with his supporters, criticized American intervention in Taiwan's domestic affairs. Again, the Soviet Union noted the dispatch of nuclear tipped missiles to Taiwan. Both the Chinese Communists and the Soviets believed relations between the United States and Taiwan would decline in the future, something that did in fact occur, though for different reasons. The Soviets believed that after the aging Chiang Kai-shek died, a power struggle would develop between Chiang's son, Chiang Ching-kuo and Chiang Sen. Finally, the Soviets noted that Taiwan faced major economic problems due to its high military expenditures. Only massive infusions of American economic aid enabled Taiwan to survive.<sup>19</sup> Two weeks later a follow up report filed from the Soviet embassy in Beijing provided more details on Taiwan. The Chinese Communists and the Soviets believed Chiang Kai-shek's control over Taiwan was continuing to weaken, and that, to prop up his regime, the United States had sent more troops, ships and missiles to Taiwan. However, the Soviets also noted the Americans served to moderate Chiang's behavior. For example, his desire to launch a military invasion of the mainland, a move the Americans so strongly opposed, that they reduced their aid to Chiang, which exacerbating the island's economic crisis, and forcing Chiang to increase the excessive defense budget even further.<sup>20</sup>

Officially, the Soviet Union agreed with the People's Republic that there was only one Chinese government, the PRC, which represented all China, and that the Nationalist Chinese government on Taiwan was a usurper, which should be expelled from all international organizations, including the United Nations. For example, anticipating a spring 1958 meeting of UNESCO, G. Shukov, head of the Communist Party's Cultural Division (foreign countries), wrote to the Central Committee: "it should be clear to everyone that activities for UNESCO are very limited without the participation of the 'Great Chinese nation' which played a major role in the development of Eastern culture." UNESCO could not function adequately without PRC representation, and

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., January 20, 1958, Report by Yuri Andropov to the CC CPSU.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., February 5, 1958, Telegram from the Soviet embassy in Beijing to the Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs, N. Fedorenko.



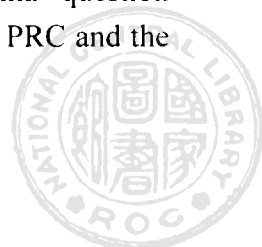
Taiwan was illegally occupying China's UNESCO position. The Soviet delegation emphatically stated there was only "One China", and that without PRC representation in UNESCO, all attempts to implement East-West projects would fail. "The real representatives of the Chinese people (PRC) must be allowed to take part in the UNESCO meetings to properly assess Chinese culture." The representative from the CPSU's Central Committee, S. F. Antonov, wrote to Shukov that the Soviet Union should not even participate in the upcoming UNESCO conference in Paris unless the PRC was admitted in place of Taiwan. To do so "would only risk the implementation of a "Two China" policy which both the USSR and PRC oppose"<sup>21</sup>. Nevertheless, the Soviets were less strongly opposed to a "Two China" policy than were their Chinese colleagues. The Soviet Union decided not to boycott the UNESCO meeting, but instead to propose at the first meeting in Paris that China's representation be switched from Taiwan to the PRC.

During the summer of 1958, the "Two China" question arose again. K. A. Chrugikov, the Communist Party's Vice Chief of International Organizations, talked to Gun Pu Shen, a representative of the Chinese Foreign Ministry, in Beijing in July 1958. They discussed the representation of Taiwan at sporting functions, together with the PRC.<sup>22</sup> The PRC would like to cancel its membership in all organizations where Taiwan was also represented. The Chinese Foreign Ministry asked the Soviets for assistance on several related matters. First, the Chinese wished the Soviets help them organize a meeting, which would include all Communist states, to discuss the "Two China" question. Secondly, they sought Soviet assistance in determining which particular international organizations included Taiwan. Third, the PRC asked the Soviets to persuade UN organizations to stop publishing Taiwan-generated materials. Fourth, China thanked the Soviet Union for its hard line against the "Two China" position, and hoped it would continue to oppose all attempts to recognize Taiwan. Here Gun indirectly implied that the Soviet position was not quite as firm as the Chinese would prefer, and the "Two China" question was becoming a factor in the deteriorating relations between the PRC and the

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., April 19, 1958, Letter to the CC CPSU by G. Shukov: 52 and 54.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., d. 131-133, Diary of K. A. Chrugikov, 171-186.



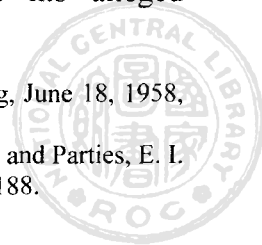
Soviet Union. In an affirmation that relations between the two great Communist powers were strained, the Soviets confirmed that "due to the significant reduction in the amount of work for Soviet advisors in China, the Soviet Union is considering closing its consulates in Port Arthur and Guangzhou."<sup>23</sup> The Soviets sought their Chinese counterparts' opinion on the proposed closing of these two major consulates. The response of the Chinese was simply "we will think about this matter." One may presume their eventual response was affirmative because shortly afterwards the Soviets closed their Guangzhou and Port Arthur consulates.

The Soviet position on the "Two China" question led to open dissension when the UN-sponsored International Geology Conference opened in Moscow that same summer of 1958. Taiwan was a member; hence the PRC decided they would neither participate nor send any representatives. The Central Committee of the CPSU examined the issue to decide what position the Soviet Union should take on the question of representation. Pushkov, the head of the Soviet delegation, wrote a letter to his Chinese colleagues asking if they could unite with their Nationalist counterparts, send one delegation, and work together. The Chinese were absolutely furious at this Soviet "duplicity". They quickly turned down Pushkov's request for a joint delegation. Pushkov did not withdraw, but again wrote a letter requesting that the Chinese Communists be reasonable on this issue. At this point the Chinese reminded the Soviet Central Committee that Pushkov was violating official Soviet policy, or perhaps the Soviets were actually supporting a "Two China" solution. The Soviet Central Committee reprimanded Pushkov, reminding him that he had erred in dealing personally with the Chinese.<sup>24</sup> Pushkov, a scientist, not a politician, realized he had entered an unfamiliar world, and should be very careful. Whatever the academic merits of a single delegation, politically this was not possible. Therefore, Pushkov apologized declaring: "I was not right, and I acted like a lonely single person." He further wrote that he was a geologist and did not understand his "Chinese friends" correctly. To mitigate his alleged

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., Diary of P. N. Verashagin, advisor to the Soviet embassy in Beijing, June 18, 1958, 164-165.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., Letter of the CC, CPSU, Vice Chief, Section with Socialist countries and Parties, E. I. Vinogradov to the Vice Chief of Science and Mathematics, D. Kiutkin, 182-188.



unprofessional behavior, Pushkov claimed he had sought advice from the CPSU and the Soviet Foreign Ministry on this question, but neither had responded. After Pushkov's apology was received at the CC, the Soviets and Chinese discussed his behavior; the Soviets assured the Chinese no such further mistakes would occur, while the Chinese intimated their satisfaction with the Soviet resolution of the issue.<sup>25</sup> The Soviet Foreign Ministry then released a formal "Memorandum on the Two China Question", reiterating official Soviet policy that there was only "one China", the PRC, and only the PRC represented China. Despite this memorandum the damage was done. Thus, not only the United States and other anti-Communist nations viewed "two Chinas" as a potential solution to this perennial problem for the United Nations and other international organizations. As early as 1958 the Soviet Union was likewise gingerly exploring the "two Chinas" question, even though relations were then still quite good between the two Communist great powers.

Within three years the dispute between the Soviet Union and the PRC worsened considerably. This time there would be no apologies to the Chinese for any Soviet consideration of a "two China" policy. In a report filed by the Soviet embassy in Beijing to the Foreign Ministry in Moscow, F. Mochulski, an advisor, and the Third Secretary, G. Kireev, flatly wrote that the USSR disagreed with the PRC over the admission of the PRC to the United Nations. China said it would accept UN membership only after Taiwan had been removed from all UN organizations, and all US troops had left Taiwan. For Taiwan loss of UN membership would be devastating, isolating Taiwan, and leading many nations to establish relations with the PRC. Throughout the 1950's Taiwan's membership was protected because the United States was very much involved, and the United States then dominated the General Assembly, which would make the decision on membership questions.<sup>26</sup> The Soviets told Beijing the PRC policy was unrealistic and would not further China's admission to the UN.<sup>27</sup> The Soviets openly considered the idea of "two Chinas", favoring admitting the PRC to the UN, while not removing Taiwan. Their

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid., Pushkov's report, 189-195.

<sup>26</sup> Tucker, *Taiwan, Hong Kong and the United States*, 48-50.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., d. 435, July 5, 1961, Information from the Soviet embassy in Beijing to MID, Moscow, 113-117.



report recognized that more nations (forty-nine) recognized Taiwan than the PRC (thirty-nine). The Soviets believed the admission of the PRC immediately to the UN would further the world position of the Communist bloc in its contest against capitalism. Despite the dispute between the Soviets and the PRC, they were still very interested in China as a partner in the Cold War against the United States. Therefore, they were willing to be practical and accept the idea of "two Chinas" as a reality. The author believes the Chinese, by contrast, had very different aims. They were not very interested in better relations with other Communist states, or even in UN membership. They sought to enhance their power, and bring other areas, especially Taiwan, within its scope. However, in 1962 the UN General Assembly elevated the issue of Chinese representation to the status of a major question, which could only be decided by a two-thirds vote. That preserved UN membership for Taiwan for another decade, until the early 1970's, when the PRC was admitted, and Nationalist China was expelled.

In its annual report to Moscow in 1961, the Soviet embassy in Beijing stated that Taiwan viewed worsening Soviet-Chinese relations as favorable for them. Thus, the Soviets were very much aware of the consequences of the growing Sino-Soviet dispute for the region. In the same report the Soviets mentioned a conference in October 1960 in Hong Kong between representatives of the PRC and Nationalist China, in which the beginnings of a "One Country, Two System" policy were mentioned, when PRC representatives told their Taiwanese counterparts that if Taiwan agreed to the ultimate authority of Beijing, it could keep its own government and maintain significant autonomy.<sup>28</sup> Two decades later, Deng Shau Ping made "One Country, Two Systems" the cornerstone for his policy to promote the return of Hong Kong and Taiwan to the PRC.

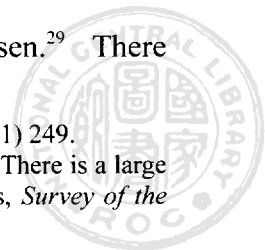
### **A Time of Increasing Contacts, 1969-1982**

During the 1960's Sino-Soviet relations continued to worsen.<sup>29</sup> There

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., Yearly report from the Beijing embassy on Taiwan developments (1961) 249.

<sup>29</sup> The Sino-Soviet dispute is essentially outside the parameters of this paper. There is a large literature on this topic. Some major works are the following: John Gittings, *Survey of the*



were many reasons for the dispute between the two Communist giants: differences over ideology, political views, and culture, as well as border disputes in the Far East. However, one of the most significant factors was the Soviet and Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia in August 1968, and its justification by the "Brezhnev Doctrine". The "Brezhnev Doctrine", which declared that, when the Soviet Union believed the interests of Communism were threatened even by a legitimate allied government, it had the right to intervene militarily and overthrow that government. With reason, the Chinese believed the Soviets could apply the "Brezhnev Doctrine" to the PRC, invade, and try to overthrow their government. In this atmosphere, disputes between the two states intensified steadily, until finally, in March 1969, Soviet and Chinese troops engaged in actual battle along the Soviet-Manchurian border. During the next month, fighting broke out between the two forces, this time further west, along the Singkiang and Central Asian frontiers, though both sides ultimately pulled back from what would have been a disastrous war for both.<sup>30</sup>

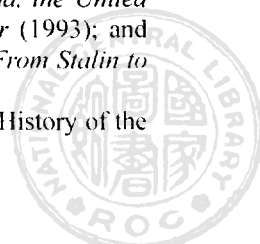
At the same time, political and military relations between the US and Taiwan began to decline. There were several reasons for this development. Finally, American administrations admitted the reality of the Sino-Soviet dispute, and the Communist world's non-monolithic nature. A very practical Richard Nixon, the new US President, believed one could be played off against the other. Nixon and his National Security Advisor (later Secretary of State) Henry Kissinger proposed to use China to reduce Soviet strength and flexibility by confronting Moscow with another hostile front, whose defense would pre-empt scarce funds and troops.<sup>31</sup> Secondly, the United States sought an honorable exit from the Vietnam War, and believed the PRC could help

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*Sino-Soviet Dispute, 1963-1967* (1968); Klaus Mehnert, *Peking and Moscow* (1963); Donald Zagoria, *The Sino-Soviet Conflict, 1956-1961* (1962); Oliver E. Clubb, *China and Russia: the Great Game* (1971); Herbert Ellison, ed. *The Sino-Soviet Dispute: A Global Perspective* (1982); Roy Medvedev, *China and the Superpowers* (1986); Robert S. Ross, ed., *China, the United States, and the Soviet Union: Tripolarity and Policy making in the Cold War* (1993); and Vladislav Zubok and Constantine Pleshakov, *Inside the Kremlin's Cold War: From Stalin to Khrushchev* (1996).

<sup>30</sup> Edward H. Judge and John W. Langdon, *A Hard and Bitter Peace: A Global History of the Cold War* (1996) 210-211.

<sup>31</sup> Tucker, *Taiwan, Hong Kong and the United States*, 99-103.



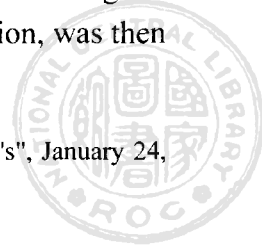
mediate between the United States and North Vietnam. Finally, American businessmen realized the potential of the huge Chinese market. In reaction to the Sino-Soviet border war in 1969, Nixon publicly and privately told both the Soviets and the Chinese the United States would not tolerate a full scale Soviet invasion, particularly one utilizing nuclear weapons, which had been suggested earlier by Brezhnev to Nixon. To show the PRC the United States no longer felt military hostility in November 1969, the US ended operations by the Seventh Fleet in the Taiwan Strait.<sup>32</sup> Thus, approximately simultaneously, two pairs of formerly close allies, the Soviet Union and the People's Republic, and the United States and Nationalist China, began to move apart. While the former break was far more dramatic, the latter was also highly significant.

The obvious issue was how the Soviet Union and Taiwan would interact with each other, since their former allies were moving closer almost daily. Would the Soviet Union and Taiwan establish at least unofficial relations, perhaps even a military alliance, which would have the effect of further containing the PRC? As a partial answer, a Soviet citizen, Victor Louis, visited Taiwan, where he held talks with Chiang Ching-Kuo, Defense Minister and heir to Chiang Kai-Shek, in October 1968.<sup>33</sup> Victor Louis was no ordinary Soviet citizen. He was officially a journalist who worked for the London Evening News, but most observers understood Louis was a KGB (secret police) agent who frequently undertook highly sensitive missions for the Soviet Union. Louis, one of the most colorful characters of the Cold War, married to a British woman, traveled in and out of the Soviet Union, where he enjoyed a very comfortable life, at a time when few Soviets could travel or live well. Chiang Ching-Kuo himself was an unusual Taiwanese leader. He had spent nearly a decade in the Soviet Union during the 1930's, spoke fluent Russian, and had a Russian wife. In fact the Americans already thought that Chiang might be a secret Communist agent, and Louis' visit and meeting only increased their suspicions. The Soviet embassy in Bangkok, Thailand, copied and then translated into Russian the detailed article in the Bangkok Post, describing the Louis visit. The article, both the original and its Russian translation, was then

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 102.

<sup>33</sup> AVP RF, f. Ki-718, op. 56, d. 37, "Taiwan and the Problem of Two China's", January 24, 1969.



forwarded to the Foreign Ministry in Moscow. While no official statement was ever released by either side at the conclusion of Louis' visit, the Post article speculated his mission was to establish some contacts with the Nationalists, and possibly diplomatic and trade relations between the two states. Although Taiwan never officially announced the visit, the news was leaked to Stanley Karnow, then working for the Washington Post, who would be certain to report it. When Louis returned to Moscow, he published several favorable articles on Taiwan for the Soviet press.<sup>34</sup> The Taiwanese and the Soviets used Louis' visit to warn their former allies, the PRC and the Americans, that they can play a similar game. One year later, in 1969, Taiwan's Minister of Education paid a semi-official visit to the Soviet Union, reciprocating Louis' visit.<sup>35</sup>

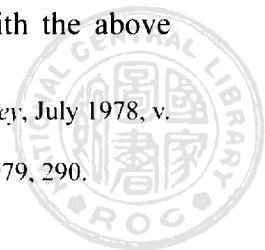
During the next three years the United States and the PRC explored establishing ties. Dr. Kissinger made a series of secret trips to the PRC. The public announcement of a breakthrough in US-PRC relations in 1971 and 1972 completely stunned both the Soviet Union and Taiwan. In February 1972, President Nixon made a state visit to the PRC, meeting Mao Tse-tung and Chou En-lai. At the end of Nixon's visit, the PRC and the US released the Shanghai Communique. That formal document stated the United States recognized there was only "one China", and Taiwan was part of that China. Furthermore, the United States privately pledged it would not support Taiwanese independence. In the fall of 1971 the United Nations voted the PRC in and the Nationalists out. The Nationalists had to adjust to Taiwan's new status, while Taiwan braced for a series of shocks it knew would follow these events.

In November 1971, Taiwan's Foreign Minister Chou Shu-kai stated that Taiwan intended to trade with Communist countries. Specifically, in mid-January 1972 "Consul Industrial Corp., Ltd. requested commercial relations with the following Soviet firms that conduct international trade: "Stankoimport" (mechanical equipment), "Avtoexport" (air equipment), "Soiuznefteexport" (oil), "Soiuzimport" (chemical), "Medexport" (medical), and "Exportkhleb" (grain). Identical form letters were all received in Moscow on the same day, January 7, 1972, all requesting trade ties with the above

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<sup>34</sup> John W. Garver, "Taiwan's Russian Option: Image and Reality". *Asian Survey*, July 1978, v. xviii, no. 7, 755.

<sup>35</sup> John F. Copper, "Taiwan's Options", *Asian Affairs*, v. 6, no. 5, May/June 1979, 290.



named companies. They described Consul Industrial Corporation as an export import firm that had represented foreign companies in Taiwan for more than twenty-eight years, and had established ties with large and solid European companies. They stated Consul sought to import goods from the above named companies and wished to send them catalogues and information materials. The Taiwanese company promised to send the Soviet companies information on the current market for their goods in Taiwan. The form letter stated in part: "As our two countries do not have diplomatic relations, we would like to establish business ties with you. We should make an agreement based on barter deals through mediators (third countries). We could suggest as a mediator, the West German firm 'Kiling and Company', located in Bremen, which has its own branches in Hamburg, Istanbul, and Zurich."<sup>36</sup> In response, the Ministry of Foreign Trade declared that this was the first time since the promulgation of the PRC in 1950 that any Soviet firms had received proposals from Nationalist China to establish commercial relations. Their response never suggested why this was the case, but one may presume it had been a reaction to the US and the PRC establishing relations, including commercial, with each other. Consequently, "the Eastern Department of the Ministry of Foreign Trade recommended that all Soviet firms, which had received these letters, not respond because the USSR, as far as it is known, regards Taiwan as an integral part of the PRC, and does not have any relations with the Taiwanese regime."<sup>37</sup> Thus, the Soviet Union rejected the opportunity presented by Taiwan, and still refused to open any relations with Taiwan despite the events of the preceding three years, the Soviet Union would not alter its declared policy of only one China, that represented by the PRC.

In a related matter, in a letter to the Soviet embassy in Beijing, also in February 1972, the Far Eastern Section of the Soviet Foreign Ministry told the embassy that at an upcoming conference which Taiwan would attend, the Soviets would announce that "it does not recognize Taiwan is a representative of China. The Chiang Kai-shek group does not represent China. The only

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<sup>36</sup> AVP RF, f. 100 (Chinese Section), op. 59, d. 23, (1972), 8 Feb--11 Dec. Taiwan and the Problem of Two Chinas, 8 pgs.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 6.



representative of China is the PRC."<sup>38</sup> Yet, while refusing to establish ties with Taiwan, the Soviet Foreign Ministry collected reports on the extent of other European countries' trade with Taiwan. Thus, at this crucial period Taiwan reacted to the Nixon visit to the PRC by extending feelers, in this case commercial relations, with the Soviet Union. However, the Soviet Foreign Ministry rejected these feelers, and reiterated its firm support for Beijing's "one China" policy. His failure to establish firmer ties with the Soviet Union forced Foreign Minister Chou Shu-kai to resign in May 1972, and he temporarily became a political pariah, reemerging as a foreign policy advisor when Chiang Ching-kuo succeeded his father Chiang Kai-shek as President in 1975.

Yet, while still precluding official ties, informally Taiwan and the Soviet Union moved closer together. In May 1973 two Soviet warships passed through the Taiwan Straits, and circumnavigated Taiwan,<sup>39</sup> which could never have occurred without the Taiwan government's knowledge and permission. This marked the first time any Soviet ship had passed through the straits since the Nationalist Chinese government moved to Taiwan. However, the Soviet Union feared that overtly open or official relations with Taiwan might bring too many problems, increasing tensions between the PRC and the USSR, whose relations were virtually nonexistent. The Soviet Union did not seek a war with the PRC, a confrontation that would also bring a rupture with the United States. The early 1970's were the beginning of détente, Brezhnev's policy of better relations with the West, a policy Brezhnev did not want to risk destroying. Close ties between the Soviet Union and Taiwan would also make reconciliation between the Soviets and the PRC impossible, since China would regard this as part of an encirclement policy directed against them. From the Soviet perspective, it was preferable to maintain low level and discreet ties. Taiwan was restrained by its suspicions of the Soviets as well as fearful of American disapproval.

For several years American and PRC relations stagnated for several reasons. On the Chinese side, the end of the Cultural Revolution, the arrest of the "gang of four", and the succession to supreme power of Deng Shiao Ping

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>39</sup> Garver, "Taiwan's Russian Option", 757.

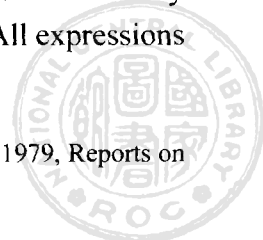


preoccupied politicians. Meanwhile the Nixon and Ford administrations were absorbed in the Watergate scandal, the end of the Vietnam War, and the election of 1976. However, the Carter administration, which came to power in January 1977, was committed to a full normalization of relations, while the PRC, on its part, was committed to reform and opening up to the outside world. Negotiations between the two powers proceeded, and on December 15, 1978, the two countries announced that full diplomatic relations would begin on January 1, 1979. The United States did announce that it would continue its arms sales to Taiwan, as well as unofficial ties. That announcement and the abruptness of the establishment of full relations again shocked Taiwan, whose leaders believed they carried little weight in American deliberations, and therefore began to reshape Taiwan's diplomacy, cultivating broader connections and a greater flexibility. Taiwanese dependence on the United States decreased almost daily, as it placed greater emphasis on publicizing internationally its twin achievements of democratization and prosperity.

Following the establishment of full diplomatic relations between the PRC and the United States, the Soviet Union asked its embassies in various countries to submit reports as to what they believed Taiwan's future would be.<sup>40</sup> The Soviet UN Mission in New York believed that: 1. Taiwan would further develop its economic ties with the USA and Japan, as well as develop some economic ties with the PRC, but not establish direct ties with Beijing. 2. Beijing wanted Taiwan to recognize at least the nominal suzerainty of Beijing over Taiwan, but Taiwan's forcible recovery was not considered a real possibility. 3. In the event of worsening relations between the PRC and Taiwan, Taiwan would seek UN membership. 4. If Taiwan moved toward independence, the United States would inform Taiwan that a declaration of independence would hurt US-Taiwan relations. In a report from its embassy in Uruguay, the Soviets noted the Taiwanese believed that bad relations between the Soviet Union and the PRC would preclude a PRC military invasion of Taiwan. The report from the Soviet consulate in Singapore in February reflected Soviet distrust of Beijing's initiatives toward Taiwan. All expressions

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<sup>40</sup> AVP RF, f. 100 (Chinese Section), op. 66, d. 27, 7 January--29 December 1979, Reports on relations with Third Countries, Far East Section, MID, 1-70.



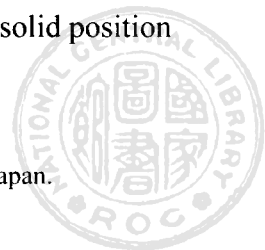
of "good will" and "peaceful initiatives" were put into quotes. The Soviet consulate believed the PRC was acting more peaceably toward Taiwan after establishing relations with the US because the PRC did not wish to alienate the US, who they hoped would serve as a counterweight to the Soviets in East Asia. The Soviet embassy in Japan commented on Taiwan's growing economic prosperity, which it contrasted with the PRC's prevalent poverty noting, for example, that per capita income in Taiwan was ten times that of the PRC. The Taiwanese economy was growing at the rate of 8.5% per year, then one of the highest in Asia. The Soviets also noted Taiwan's extensive and growing trade with various countries in Eastern Europe, including the GDR, Czechoslovakia, Poland, and Hungary, all Warsaw Pact members. The Soviet report from Tokyo also noted how easily Eastern European businessmen obtained visas to Taiwan. One may presume this report's authors believed the Soviet Union should conduct trade and its businessmen should also be able to travel to Taiwan. Upon the receipt of the report from Tokyo in early December, the Soviet Foreign Ministry requested a report by the end of the year on the development of foreign trade between Taiwan and the other Communist countries. The Ministry of Foreign Trade prepared a detailed synopsis, giving statistics for 1970 through 1978.<sup>41</sup>

In 1980 and 1981 the Soviet embassy in Japan sent further detailed dispatches on Taiwan to the Foreign Ministry in Moscow, reports based primarily on newspaper accounts from the Taiwanese and Hong Kong presses. The Soviets noted that the Taiwanese no longer saw the Soviets as a threat, but believed it would be desirable to increase mutual trade and understanding. The report conceded that neither Taiwan nor the Soviet Union had much knowledge of each other.<sup>42</sup> Their report of January 13, 1982 included the full text of a speech by Chiang Ching-kuo from a meeting with his military, in which he stated: "Some people claim within Taiwan and outside that we are having contacts with the Soviet Union. But in fact these rumors are lies spread by the Chinese Communists with the aim to ruin our relations with the 'democratic states'. We hope that they (the democratic states) understand our solid position

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 72.

<sup>42</sup> AVP RF, f. 100 (Chinese Section), op 67, d. 295, 1980, Soviet embassy in Japan.



of no contacts with the Soviet Union. One should not believe in rumors, spread by the Chinese Communists.<sup>43</sup> Later that year, the Soviets quoted Taiwan's Minister of Economy, John Kuan Shi, when he wrote that Taiwan would establish no ties--tourism, cultural, or trade--with the Soviet Union.<sup>44</sup> It is possible that these denials by high-ranking Taiwanese officials indicated either that some such contacts existed, or at least some prominent Taiwan leaders supported them. Alternatively, they may have been intended as a warning to the US government.

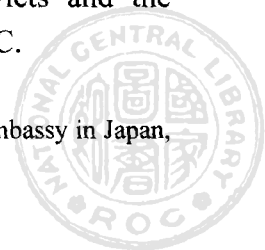
### Conclusions

Soviet policy toward Taiwan, and Taiwanese policy toward the Soviet Union were reactive. During the earlier part of the Cold War the Soviet Union and the PRC were locked in a close embrace, and Nationalist China (Taiwan) and the United States had an equally intimate relationship. Their alliances encompassed ideological and political affinities, as well as military and trade ties. The Soviet-PRC alignment began to disintegrate in the late 1950's, while the American-Taiwanese alliance began to collapse a decade later. The United States and the PRC began contacts in the late 1960's, culminating in full relations a decade later. Nervous over its growing isolation, Taiwan began to approach the Soviets. The Soviets and the Taiwanese only reacted to the changing geo-political circumstances. Had the Americans not essentially jettisoned the Taiwanese, the Taiwanese probably never would have considered closer ties with the Soviet Union. Thus, discussions of relations only began in the late 1960's, with an exchange of official visitors. Then after the US and the PRC signed the Shanghai Communique in 1972, the Taiwanese formally requested commercial relations with several Soviet firms. The Soviets sent two warships into the Taiwan Strait, which then circumnavigated the island. In 1978, after the full normalization of relations, each side again investigated establishing commercial ties. Thus, at each stage, the Soviets and the Taiwanese governments reacted to actions by the US and the PRC.

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<sup>43</sup> AVP RF, f. 100 (Chinese Section), op. 68, d. 9, January 13, 1982, Soviet embassy in Japan, 10.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, September 14, 1982, 137.



Most of the time the Taiwanese sounded out the Soviets. The Soviets rarely acted first. That fact indicates the Taiwanese, conscious of their greater comparative weaknesses usually tended to have a more innovative foreign policy. However, this was not always the case. For example, the Soviets sent a representative, Victor Louis, to Taiwan in 1969 to investigate the possibilities of rapprochement between the two states. During the next year, the Taiwanese sent a government official to the Soviet Union. But this exchange of plenipotentiaries was very much the exception. The Taiwanese asked the Soviets for commercial relations in 1972. After several Soviet firms received the form letter, the Soviets rejected commercial relations. Even though Sino-Soviet diplomatic, economic and military relations were very poor, ideologically the Soviets were unable to reject the PRC completely and embrace Taiwan. Rejecting Communist China for "capitalist" China appeared counter-revolutionary to these life long Communists in the Soviet Politburo. Soviet leaders still hoped the break between the PRC and the Soviet Union was not final, and did not preclude reconciliation. From the Soviet perspective it was better to leave ties discreet and low profile.

Since the 1970's the Taiwanese were very much aware of the Soviet Union's economic problems, problems that were increasing yearly. The Soviets were very much aware of Taiwan's increasing economic power and prosperity, that Taiwan was one of East Asia's "Little Dragons". When economic reforms started in the Soviet Union in the late 1960's, Taiwan became a successful example of the market economy, and Taiwan then played its strong suit, urging the establishment of commercial, though not diplomatic or military, ties with the Soviet Union. The hope was that such ties could and would follow once solid economic relations were established. Each time the Taiwanese offered to establish commercial relations, the Soviets, for largely ideological reasons, rejected their offers. However, we some indirect economic ties existed between the Soviet Union and Taiwan. Eastern European states, such as the GDR, Poland, and Hungary, all close allies of the Soviet Union, traded with Taiwan from 1970 onwards. Their ships visited Taiwanese ports. The Soviets could and very possibly did trade with Taiwan through Eastern European intermediaries and even possibly, Western European firms, such as the West German firm mentioned in the 1972 Taiwan letter.



Direct economic relations would have to wait until the end of the Cold War and the Soviet Union's dissolution in December 1991. Today there are quite extensive, though still unofficial ties, between the Russian Federation and Taiwan.

