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Speeches, Chinese-Russian Convergence in Asia

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STATEMENT OF SENATOR MIKE MANSFIELD (D., MONTANA)

CHINESE-RUSSIAN CONVERGENCE IN ASIA

Mr. President:

There are obvious reasons of health and skyrocketing costs of armaments which provide common or parallel motives for the Soviet Union and the United States to have sought the Test Ban Treaty. Beyond the obvious, other interests have undoubtedly entered into the search for agreement by each nation. These are not necessarily shared interests but nevertheless they are a part of the calculations of the balance of benefit on which the Treaty rests.

It seems to me that the Senate should explore all of these factors in an effort to understand fully what is at stake in the act of ratification. Reference, for example, has already been made in the hearings before the Foreign Relations Committee to the growing estrangement between Russia and China. That the question has been raised suggests an awareness of what may be a most significant factor in the Soviet position on the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty. Yet our knowledge of the Russian-Chinese estrangement is too limited to permit a full comprehension of its implications either for Soviet policy or our own. For one thing, our reportorial coverage of the U.S.S.R., particularly east of the Urals, is extremely limited and spasmodic. For another, our knowledge of what is transpiring in China comes to us largely second- or third-hand.
It is understandable, therefore, that the Sino-Soviet estrangement has been analyzed in the press and elsewhere largely in theoretical terms. Scholars, journalists and intelligence technicians pore over the documentation and statements and reports which emanate from Russia and China. And in this fashion, the estrangement is interpreted to the nation almost wholly in terms of ideological differences and the struggle to claim the high-priesthood of orthodoxy in the international Communist movement and with it, I suppose, the right to preach the eulogy at the burial of Capitalism.

These ideological factors are undoubtedly deeply involved and I would not for a moment underestimate them. But if I may be so bold as to suggest it, it seems to me that the great emphasis which is given to them in the information which reaches the government and the public may produce a serious distortion of our concept of the actual situation. We may see the problem largely as a clash of Marxist theories or Communist personalities which is destined to disappear as soon as the theories are straightened out or the present leaders, in time, go the way of all leaders.

I should like to suggest that other, more mundane and enduring considerations are involved in present Sino-Soviet difficulties, considerations which will not easily be exorcised either by new theories or new leaders.

It is to one of these considerations that I direct the attention of the Senate today. It may well be the most significant factor, in the Russian-Chinese estrangement, largely overlooked in the overwhelming emphasis which has been given to the ideological differences between Moscow and Peking. I refer to the geographic and cultural convergence of Russia and China in the inner recesses of the Asian continent.
This convergence, Mr. President, has been a source of intermittent friction between the two countries for a very long time. It has persisted irrespective of the ideological inclinations of Moscow and Peking at any given time in history. It long predates the advent of Communism in China and even Russia. Indeed, it predates the birth of Karl Marx by at least a century.

The first recorded clashes between Russians and Chinese go back to the 17th century. Three hundred years ago, Russian traders and Cossacks first made contact with the outposts of Chinese-Manchu imperial power in the region north of Manchuria. The early zone of Russian influence and authority in this desolate northeast corner of Asia, as against China, was established by a series of treaties beginning with that of Nerchinsk in 1689, and followed by Pur and Kiakhta in 1727, Kiakhta in 1768, and the Kiakhta protocol in 1792. A half-century later the Russian press southeastward was resumed under Count Nikolai Muraviev-Amursky, the Governor General of Eastern Siberia, and his chief military aid, Captain Gennadii Ivanovich Nevelskoi. Again there followed a consolidation of the Russian position, in the Treaty of Aigun of 1858. This agreement brought into Russian possession large areas of Northeast Asia which had previously been under Manchu control.

Subsequently, Russia as well as other European powers and Japan exacted by guile, bribery or naked power, special economic privileges and territorial concessions from weak and corrupt imperial officials of China. By this process, the Russians penetrated south into Manchuria, establishing themselves at Dairen and Port Arthur on the Yellow Sea by the end of the 19th century and penetrating Korea which had been for a long time in a tributary relationship with Peking.
Since that high-water mark, Russian influence in Northeast Asia at the expense of China has fluctuated. In the face of a Japanese advance and the weakness of the early Soviet state, it receded. Under the Communism of Stalin it advanced once more at the end of World War II. And under the Communism of Khrushchev it receded once more after the Chinese Communists came to power in Peking.

Our sources of information are insufficient to provide a clear delineation of where the present line of convergence may lie, as between Russian and Chinese influence in Northeast Asia. We are not even sure of what the precise situation in this connection may be in Korea where we are deeply involved, let alone in Manchuria, of which we know very little. One thing is reasonably certain, however, the actual Russian-Chinese conversion does not bear much relationship to the border-demarcations as shown on ordinary maps. It is also clear, in any event, that the convergence in the Northeast is still much further south and east of any line which would have been recognized by a Ching emperor of the Manchu Dynasty in the 17th century, the 18th or early 19th century.

The recent history of the Chinese-Russian convergence in Northeast Asia has been affected, of course, by the appearance of Communist ideology in Russia and China. But sufficient experience is now accumulated to suggest that the future history of the region will hardly be dominated by this factor.

And the history of the Northeast, a history of Russian advance and recession and advance—sometimes warlike and imperious and sometimes peaceful and conciliatory—finds parallels elsewhere in Central Asia. During the last century, for example, Mongolia was entirely under nominal Chinese sovereignty. It was largely the efforts of Russians under the Czars coupled with the weakness of the later Manchu-Ching emperors which
brought about a loosening of Chinese control over the vast stretches of land now identified as the Outer Mongolian People's Republic. And it was largely the same combination of Soviet strength and Chinese weakness under the Chinese National Republic which resulted in 1922, in the establishment of an Outer Mongolia, not only independent of China but brought progressively into a relationship, apparently in the nature of a protectorate, with the U.S.S.R.

South and west of Outer Mongolia we find in Sinkiang the same flow, ebb and flow of Russian influence. Here, as elsewhere there was for centuries a tradition of Chinese suzerainty over small principalities of tribal peoples. But here as elsewhere this suzerainty has been quite devoid of significance in the absence of strong Chinese central power to assert it. Thus, in the last century, the Southwest edges of Sinkiang were chipped away and added to what is now the contiguous territory of the U.S.S.R. And even as recently as World War II the Russians exercised for a time something close to indirect domination over principal trading centers and caravan junctions in Sinkiang.

Especially, since the advent of Chinese Communist control over the mainland, the line of convergence as between Russia and China in the Sinkiang area has apparently been pushed back westward once again. But how far and how firm this recession of Soviet influence has been, we do not really know with any degree of accuracy.

To recapitulate, Mr. President, I have sought to point out to the Senate, that, historically, there has been not a fixed but a shifting and uncertain line of convergence between Russia and China in the inner recesses of the Asian continent. This line, Mr. President, is not necessarily the border as shown on contemporary maps but rather the changing extremity of
the eastward and southward reach of Russian influence and the westernmost and northernmost extension of enforceable Chinese control.

Further, history indicates that while there have been periods of stalemate and recession, the over-all pattern in the region for several centuries was that of Russian advance. It was an advance which paralleled roughly the spastic but steady decay of the Manchu-Ching dynasty through the reigns of a number of emperors. And it drew strength from the debilitation of the successor Chinese Republic in World War II and the collapse of the Japanese intrusion on the Asian mainland in that conflict.

What prompts me to make these observations at this time, Mr. President, is that they may be of more than historic interest in the light of the present Sino-Soviet estrangement. This break comes at a time when there has emerged in Peking once again, a strong centralization of Chinese power. To be sure, the government which wields this power proclaims its Marxism. Indeed, it claims to be more Marxist than Moscow. Yet insofar as Chinese Marxism is expressed in practice on the borders of China, it appears to bear a remarkable resemblance to classic Chinese dynastic policy.

There are strong indications, for example, that the present Chinese government is not disposed to regard any of its borders—except one—fixed after the time of the advanced decay of the Ching Dynasty—as permanently constricting on the outward extension of its power. That such is the case is indicated by the Chinese assertion in Korea, in Viet Nam, in Laos, in Tibet and beyond Tibet into Ladakh and the Northeast Frontier Agency at the two extremities of the Indian sub-continent.

What, then, of the Sino-Soviet border regions? Are these, too, to be affected by the reassertion of Chinese power? I have already referred to the recession of Soviet influence in Manchuria and Sinkiang, although
to what extent and how voluntarily it has occurred, we do not know with any
degree of precision. But whatever its extent, it would be a relatively
minor recession should the Chinese assertion against the U.S.S.R., in time,
parallel its policies with regard to Korea, Southeast Asia and the Chinese-
Indian border region. If there is this parallel then the Chinese claim
against the U.S.S.R. could conceivably extend out of Sinkiang, through the
Soviet Pamirs to Afghanistan. It could also embrace all of Outer Mongolia
and the Soviet Maritime Provinces along the Pacific. For these areas fell
within the reach of Manchu China in the heyday of the dynasty.

It is interesting to note in this connection, Mr. President, that
when Mr. Khrushchev, late last year, taunted the Chinese Communists for
accepting the presence of colonialists in Taiwan, Hong Kong and Macao while
urging him to act against the United States, he was answered in an editorial
on March 8 in the Chinese People's Daily and Red Flag which reads in part
as follows: "During the hundred or so years preceding the victorious
Chinese Revolution, the colonial and imperialistic powers--the USA, Great
Britain, France, Czarist Russia, Germany, Japan, Italy, Austria, Belgium,
the Netherlands, Spain and Portugal--became unreservedly engaged in a
campaign of aggression against China. They imposed on the various regimes
of the old China numerous unequal treaties: The Treaty of Nanking in 1842;
the Treaty of Aigun in 1858; the Treaty of Tientsin in 1858; the Treaty of
Peking in 1860; the Treaty of Ili in 1881; the Convention for the Extension
of Hong Kong in 1898; the Treaty of 1901; etc.... By virtue of these
unequal treaties, they annexed Chinese territory in the North, South, East
and West; or they caused territories to be ceded to them on lease along
the coast of China and even in the Chinese hinterland.... When the People's
Republic of China was founded in 1949, our Government clearly stated its
intention of eventually re-examining all the treaties concluded by previous Chinese regimes with foreign governments and, according to their respective texts, either recognizing, denouncing, revising or renegotiating them at the appropriate time."

Note, Mr. President, the reference in this catalogue of unequal treaties to the Treaty of Aigun which fixed the present-day boundaries in Manchuria at China's expense and to Russia's advantage. And note in conjunction therewith this paragraph in the same editorial: "Certain persons (an obvious reference to Mr. Khrushchev) would like us to raise the question of the unequal treaties here and now.... Have they realized what the consequences of this might be?"

The implication is clear, Mr. President. The Chinese regard certain Soviet territories no less than Hong Kong and Macao and Formosa as having been taken inequitably from China and subject, therefore, to Chinese claim.

Now, Mr. President, I do not wish to leave the impression that China is about to embark upon a general war with Russia to bring back into the historic embrace of Peking, certain lands along the inner Asian borders. But I do suggest that the arrow-tips of Chinese influence are already pointed outward from Peking into these sparsely inhabited regions whose predominant population is neither Chinese nor Russian but Mongol and other tribal peoples. Many techniques are already apparently operating to this end including the Chinese aid-programs in Outer Mongolia and the organization of autonomous tribal groupings on Chinese territory. Certainly such limited information as we have with respect to the region hint at the likelihood that the Chinese arrows have begun to prick the Russians in these remote regions.
I would suggest further, Mr. President, that Soviet foreign policy is not formed in ignorance of these recent developments or the history which I have just recounted, or of the actions of the Chinese in Southeast Asia and on the Indian border. And there is no reason to assume that because it is Communist, Russian foreign policy is concerned any less with such considerations than might be the case with the foreign policy of any other nation.

I would suggest, finally, that it is becoming apparent that we have been in error in assuming for so long that the iron-hand of Moscow was so unshakeably fixed on Peking that it had superceded all other factors for all time in the considerations of the Communist leaders in China. Theoretical Communist world unity, whatever its weight, has not replaced certain enduring factors in the relationships of Russia and China as they are indicated to us by history.

And one of these factors, perhaps, the most significant, as I have tried to explain to the Senate today, is the convergence of Russian and Chinese influence in the vast inner recesses of Asia. The problems which are posed by the convergence are not essentially those of Marxist theory. And they certainly are not those of a common border dispute, that is, whether to move the markers a few yards or a few miles in one direction or the other. What is involved is the ultimate disposition and utilization of a reserve of millions of square miles of territory, largely devoid of human habitation.

This land and its contents constitute an enormous and largely unexplored and unexploited resource. Heretofore, it may have been of minor importance because of the inadequacies in techniques of modern development and transportation, particularly in that part of the world. But with the rapid dissemination and multiplication of these techniques, the region
grows rapidly in significance to the two great peoples which converge upon it. And it grows, too, in significance, as the population of China, already in the vicinity of 700 millions, expands explosively and presses ever more heavily on limited resources even for a bare minimum of food, clothing and shelter.

So, Mr. President, if we wish to understand fully the motives of the Soviet Union in seeking a nuclear test ban treaty, we ought not to overlook the factor of the Sino-Soviet convergence, a factor which is clearly indicated by history but which cannot be weighed accurately without a better understanding of what is presently transpiring in interior Asia.

In any event, it would be unwise to dismiss the likelihood of a growth of tension at various points of contact along the thousands of miles of this vague frontier. Some might anticipate with relish the prospects of these clashes, even if they were nuclear. That prospect might be bent and twisted, I suppose, into an argument against the proposed Treaty to ban nuclear tests.

But that, Mr. President, would be a most distorted view of nuclear realities and contemporary international relations. For, if the flames of a great nuclear conflagration are lit, it will matter little who holds the match or where in the world it is struck. Even the vastness of Central Asia would be insufficient to contain the holocaust or to confine it to the two massive Communist powers of Eurasia. No, Mr. President, the probability of increasing tension in the Sino-Soviet convergence, as in the case of all significant international tensions, is one more reason for seeking to bring about rational control over the growth and spread of the immense destructive power of nuclear weapons.
Rather than an argument against this Treaty, then, this probable tension in Sino-Soviet relations is an argument for this nation to seek to improve its comprehension of the actual situation which exists in Central Asia. For that region and what transpires in it is likely to have a most profound significance in a world in which the peace and security of this nation is closely interwoven with that of all others.