
Introduction

Okay, so I've done a little work on Draft 3 already:

World War III, which had been in making virtually since the end of the Second World War in 1945, began in October 1996 with the invasion of the German Democratic Republic (DDR) by the armed forces of the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG). Within two years the face of Europe and most of the rest of the world would be altered virtually beyond recognition by the use of nuclear armaments and other weapons of mass destruction.

Some historians prefer to label the beginning of the Sino-Soviet War in August 1995 as the beginning of the Third World War. This idea has a compelling logic, in that this was the first full-scale war between two nuclear-armed combatants (China and the USSR) in the world's history. The first nuclear weapons use of the war was in the Far East several months after NATO got involved in Europe. Also, the manpower and materiel demands of the Soviet Far Eastern TVD (Theater of Operations) drew Warsaw Pact forces away from Eastern Europe and created the opportunity in East Germany that the West Germans sought to exploit.

However, this author prefers to see the early stages of the Sino-Soviet War relating to the Third World War in much the same way as the Spanish Civil War and the Japanese aggression in China relate to the Second World War. The Sino-Soviet War, Spanish Civil War, and Japanese invasion of China in the 1930's were preludes to the larger conflagration that did not lead directly to a more general conflict. Indeed, the Spanish Civil War was really more of a dress rehearsal for World War II than an actual part of the greater war. Had the Bundeswehr--the Army of the FRG--not crossed the Inter-German Border in October 1996 in an attempt to reunify Germany by force, there is every reason to believe that the Soviet Union and China eventually would have come to terms, thus sparing the world a nuclear holocaust. But the West Germans did cross the border, and the global civilization descended into twilight.

In 1996, the West Germans were attempting to accomplish by force of arms what patience and restraint had failed to accomplish in the years. Following the defeat of the Third Reich in 1945, Germany was fragmented. The Austro-German union forged in 1938 was sundered, and Austria became a separate nation under the joint occupation of Allied and Soviet forces. East Prussia and Germany east of the Oder-Neisse River line were seized by the USSR. Much of East Prussia and the western districts of Poland were annexed by the Soviet Union. German territory east of the Oder-Neisse was awarded to Poland. The remainder of Germany was divided into four occupation zones with the Soviet Union, United States, United Kingdom, and France each controlling one zone. Berlin was similarly divided amongst the victors.

Virtually from the moment the guns fell silent in Europe, the relations between the former Allies cooled. Stalin, his totalitarian Soviet Union triumphant but very badly

damaged by four years of brutal warfare, installed Communist regimes through Eastern Europe. He set about turning Eastern Europe into Soviet satellite states that could be used to bolster the Soviet economy and provide a buffer against any future invasion by the West. Throughout the world in the immediate post-war period, the Soviet Union engaged in a variety of activities designed to increase the power and security of the Soviet state—apparently at the expense of Western interests. Despairing of any meaningful cooperation with the USSR in Europe, the Western Powers helped establish an independent West Germany in 1949.

For the next forty years, the division of Germany into a capitalist, republican West and a communist, totalitarian East appeared permanent. Through a series of crises that never quite boiled over into war, the West and the Soviet Union settled into a hard-eyed staring match across the Inter-German Border that effectively marked the boundary between the Soviet-dominated Eastern Bloc and the US-led Western Alliance. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) was formed to coordinate the military might of the Atlantic powers, along with Turkey, Greece, and Italy. The Soviet Union formed the Warsaw Pact, which included most of the Communist states of Eastern Europe.

By the mid-1980's, West and East Germany had formed distinct identities. The FRG had become an economic powerhouse. Its military was powerful, possessing a first-rate military tradition and top-notch equipment. East Germany, though a success by Communist standards, was impoverished next to its capitalist half. The population and military were both smaller and significantly less capable.

Throughout this period, both halves of Germany were hosts to major foreign military establishments. The United States, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Belgium, Canada, and France all maintained significant forces inside the FRG to defend their NATO partner from Soviet invasion. For their part, the Soviet Union maintained a massive military establishment in the DDR. Though by the 1980's there was probably little risk of an outright Soviet invasion of West Germany, both sides maintained a high state of readiness.

Germans on both sides of the border hoped for eventual reunification. The West Germans were more vocal about it. It was difficult to see, however, when that might happen. In 1989, Hungary began to open its borders with the West. Soon afterwards, other Eastern European nations began to allow increased traffic with Western Europe. Gorbachev, President of the Soviet Union, did nothing. Then, in December 1989, an amazing thing began to happen. The Berlin Wall, which had divided Communist East Berlin from capitalist West Berlin since the early 1960's, began to fall. It seemed that the Cold War was on the verge of ending. After forty years, the dreams of German reunification were about to be realized.

As West Berliners and East Berliners danced on the Wall, hard-line Communists in Moscow made their move. In a violent coup, the Gorbachev regime was toppled. The new government, led by former KGB man Dmitri Danilov, immediately set about restoring the Communist situation in Eastern Europe. Soviet troops restored the Berlin

Wall with no small amount of bloodshed. Throughout Eastern Europe, the KGB and the Soviet Army reversed the liberalizing trend of the satellite states and reconfirmed Soviet hegemony. Tens of thousands were killed, tortured, or imprisoned.

Despite the outcry of many West Germans, NATO stood by and watched helplessly. It was a signal moment for the West German psyche.

In 1995, the Soviet Union invaded the People's Republic of China. Despite capturing vast swaths of territory in Manchuria and inflicting terrible losses on the military forces of China, the Soviets were unable to achieve a clear-cut victory. The war did not turn nuclear, but neither did it end. In 1996, the Soviets launched another offensive that bogged down before achieving its goals.

Desperate for manpower but yet unwilling to go to full mobilization, the Soviet Union began to transfer forces out of Eastern Europe for use on the Far Eastern Front. The West Germans watched carefully. By this point, many West Germans had concluded that East and West could only be reunited by force. Until then, the West Germans could not hope to bring off a liberation of the DDR by themselves; and the other NATO allies had made it plain that they would not intervene. However, by the middle of 1996 the Soviets had withdrawn sufficient forces from the DDR and elsewhere in Eastern Europe that a coup de main might just be possible.

On October 7 1996, the West Germans made their bid for German reunification by force. War had come to Europe once again.

The Cold War, Chapter 1

I'm on a roll. Here's the first chapter of Draft 3 of The Storm in Germany. Most of you guys know this history already, but I can't very well have The Storm in Germany be a recitation of troop movements. The whys and wherefores are an integral part of the story. Aside from simply recapping Cold War history everyone should know, I'm trying to bring the reader up to point where v1 Twilight: 2000 history diverges from the real world.

The Third World War was a creature of the 1990's, but it had its roots in the East-West rivalry that had dominated the world stage since 1945. World War III was the culmination of an often-virulent competition between rival ideologies. Though many in the West saw the contest as being between totalitarian communism and representative democracy, in fact many of the Western states and their allies throughout the Cold War period of 1945-1995 were not democratic at all. Fascist states like Portugal and South Vietnam, along with fundamentalist monarchies like Saudi Arabia, were an integral part of the anti-Communist network of nations. The competition, then, was between rival economic structures, with political systems playing a secondary role in the conflict.

In a sense, the world arrived at the doorstep of war because of the success of the free market system over the centralized planning system. This success was not always apparent throughout the Cold War. In the years immediately following 1945, the

economies of the capitalist states of Western Europe teetered on the brink of collapse. With considerable American aid, Western Europe managed to pull itself out of the mire. However, by this time wars of liberation had engulfed much of the Third World as the colonies tried to gain their independence from their former (mostly European) colonial masters. Into this situation stepped the Soviets and the newly Communist Chinese as so-called champions of freedom. Their purpose was to deny the assets of the often resource-rich colonies to the West while securing better access for them.

For the most part, the West handled these wars badly. The involvement of Communists among the colonial insurgents stirred up the West's fear of a worldwide Communist movement directed from Moscow. In fact, most rebels in the African and Asian colonies had no desire to replace one set of masters for another. They were glad enough to accept Moscow's aid, but few had any real interest in becoming Soviet satellites. Nevertheless, the Western powers insisted on seeing the insurgencies as part of an overall Communist scheme. For the wealthy Western interests pushing the American and European powers to retain their colonial arrangements, the effect was much the same. Whether global Communism or garden-variety communists took over a colony, private ownership and profit would be eradicated. Marxist-Leninist rhetoric, which was spilling out of Moscow in torrents in the 1950's and 1960's, did not help the West see things as they really were.

Throughout the late 1940's and the 1950's, the Soviets tightened their grip on Eastern Europe. Though Yugoslavia under Marshal Tito managed to escape Moscow, Poland, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Hungary, Romania, and Bulgaria remained under the Soviet heel. A communist rebellion in Greece during the late 1940's was put down with significant British and American aid. Turkey was brought into the Western fold by American guarantees of aid in the face of Soviet ambitions in the late 1940's. The battle lines in the Balkans and across much of Europe were drawn, and they would stay that way into the 1990's.

The East-West contest turned hot on the Korean peninsula in 1950. Distracted by events in Europe that were closer to their hearts, the US and the USSR agreed jointly to occupy the Japanese colony of Korea after the surrender of Japan. Soviet forces would occupy the country north of the 38th Parallel, while US forces would control the southern part of the country. Efforts to reunify the country went nowhere. The Soviets had built up a Communist state in North Korea and provided copious military assistance after Soviet and US troops pulled out of their respective halves of Korea. When this military machine rolled across the 38th Parallel, the United Nations gave its blessing to a US-led effort to defend the South. After a year of see-saw warfare across the Korean peninsula that moved between Taegu in the southeastern corner of South Korea and the Yalu River on the border with China, and which the introduction of hundreds of thousands of Chinese troops, the war in Korea settled into a stalemate that was to remain an unresolved standoff until 1996.

The North Korean invasion of South Korea convinced the United States that the Soviet Union and its Chinese puppet were bent on world domination by whatever means necessary. As the leader of the free world, the United States would have to contain the

Communists wherever they advanced. This basic premise would guide US policy for the next forty-five years.

Into the 1960's, the Soviet economy boomed as the damage of World War II was repaired. At the same time, Europe was losing its colonies and its captive markets. By 1965, France had lost Indochina, French West Africa, Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco, and Madagascar. The United Kingdom had lost her own possessions in South Asia, Southeast Asia, East Africa, and West Africa. The Dutch East Indies had become Indonesia, and Congo had won its independence from Belgium. Portugal still retained her colonies in Africa, but rebels were active in Angola and Mozambique. Indochina had been broken into four states: Cambodia, Laos, North Vietnam, and South Vietnam. France pulled out of South Vietnam and was replaced by the United States by 1964. Everywhere, it seemed, the West was either retreating or fighting to hold its ground.

The 1970's saw little improvement in the Western position. The United States pulled out of its unpopular war in Vietnam, with the result that South Vietnam collapsed and was conquered by the Communist North in 1975. That same year, Portugal surrendered her African colonies. The West was rocked by two major oil shortages and by competition from the industrializing Third World and Japan. Defense spending in the West was cut at the same time that Soviet defense spending increased dramatically. For the rest of the decade, bad news for the West continued to pour in: Nicaragua's homicidal but Western-oriented Somoza regime fell to the quasi-communist Sandinistas; Muslim fundamentalists seized control of Iran, ending the rule of the pro-Western Shah; revolutionary movements spread throughout Central America, supported by Communist Cuba.

The 1980's were a decade of resurgence for the West. After the economic doldrums of the 1970's, the '80's were a time of rebounding prosperity and confidence for Western Europe, North America, and Japan. It was the decade of Ronald Reagan, Margaret Thatcher, and Helmut Kohl. Under the leadership of these conservative ideologues NATO defenses, which in the 70's had sunk to dangerously low levels of preparedness, improved dramatically.

By the middle of the decade, the United States was throwing off the weariness and disillusion of Vietnam. The US armed forces were receiving new equipment and major budget increases. The all-volunteer force was rapidly growing in quality even as the rosters of the US Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marine Corps were expanding. Reagan had re-energized the anti-Communist zeal of the United States. Communist successes of the 1970's, like the establishment of Communist regimes in Nicaragua, Angola, and Mozambique, were proving essentially meaningless in the big picture. An Arab-Israeli War fought in 1982 seemed to confirm that Western equipment and doctrine were up to the task of defending the West and its allies from conventional attack. At the same time, Soviet-backed regimes were bogged down in conflicts with Western-backed guerillas in Afghanistan, Angola, and Nicaragua.

For the Soviet-led Eastern Bloc, the 1980's were a time of reassessment. Mikhail

Gorbachev came to power in the Soviet Union at the beginning of the decade, inheriting a virtual train wreck of an economy. Centralized planning, which seemed such a boon to the economy in the early 1960's, now was strangling the system. Military spending had gotten completely out of control in the 1970's. Worse, the extraordinary build-up of military might had paid nothing in dividends, as the West had finally started increasing its own military spending to counter the perceived threat from the Soviet Union. Something had to give.

Gorbachev initiated a series of reforms aimed at saving the Soviet system without fundamentally altering it. Certain freedoms and certain rights to private property were instituted. The economic system was altered in ways that would not surrender the basic control of the Communist Party but which would alleviate some of the more onerous aspects of centralized planning.

Two elements of Gorbachev's plan disturbed the primary powers of the USSR—the KGB and the military. By lifting some of the controls on things like private ownership, travel, and economic planning, Gorbachev was essentially limiting the control of the Soviet state over its people. The loss of power over the people of the Soviet Union was, for all intents and purposes, inconsequential. However, the KGB had grown accustomed to absolute control over every aspect of the lives of the Soviet citizenry. Giving up some of that control was anathema to much of the Party and the KGB.

The military was unhappy with Gorbachev's plans for them. Recognizing that a military establishment that consumed half the Soviet GNP was untenable, Gorbachev wanted to make major cuts in military funding. He was interested in demobilizing up to a million men. The military took exception to this idea.

While Gorbachev was attempting to reform the Soviet Union, events were unfolding in Eastern Europe. A failed Polish reform movement in the early part of the decade demonstrated the disaffection of the Eastern Europeans. Faced with the prospect of increasing the Soviet military presence in Eastern Europe to ensure the loyalty of the Warsaw Pact states or allowing additional leeway on the part of the national governments, Gorbachev chose leniency.

Relations between Moscow and the West improved throughout the '80's. The Olympic boycotts notwithstanding, tensions eased somewhat as the West began to appreciate that Gorbachev had no interest in a confrontation with the West. It began to appear that a new détente might be possible.

In the summer of 1989, Hungary made a hole in the Iron Curtain that divided East from West across Central Europe. Western onlookers were astonished. People—refugees, really—began to leave Hungary. First there was a trickle, and then a flood. The borders of Czechoslovakia became more porous, followed by the borders of East Germany.

A group of KGB hard-liners and military men watched with growing apprehension. If the Eastern European states had the power to open their borders to the West, there was no

telling what they might try. In the short run, there would be an enormous loss of specialized talent to the West. It had happened in East Germany in the late 1950's and early 1960's. With the border between Communist East and the increasingly prosperous West of Berlin open, professionals and specialists of every description left the DDR in droves. The Berlin Wall had been erected to keep them in. With the Iron Curtain beginning to look more and more like a sieve, the whole scene would be repeated on a massive scale. The economies of Eastern Europe would be devastated.

That the Eastern European governments could not help foreseeing this confirmed to the cabal of Soviet hard-liners that the Eastern Europeans had lost their minds. They obviously preferred this self-destructive show of resistance to the USSR to their own economic well-being. There were ominous portents about where this might go.

Stalin had conquered Eastern Europe and installed Communist regimes for the principal purpose of providing a bulwark against the West. If a resurgent Germany, allied with the West, wished to invade Russia for the third time in a century, the Germans would have to fight their way through East Germany and Poland before reaching Soviet soil. However, a Poland, which was willing to let any number of its citizens simply pack up and leave, might very well decide to allow Western forces to transit the country rather than participate in the defense of Russia. The hard-liners began to make plans.

In December 1989, the Berlin Wall started to come down. Live television broadcasts showed crowds of Germans on both sides of the Wall partying and attacking the Wall with sledgehammers. East German border guards who were supposed to be shooting East Germans as they tried to cross to the other side were instead helping West Berliners climb onto the wall. Gorbachev did nothing. The hard-liners made their move.

Using mostly KGB troops, the hard-liners assaulted the Kremlin in the dead night. There was a great deal of violence and bloodshed. Within an hour, a KGB official named Dmitri Danilov had assumed the top office in the Soviet Union.

Shortly thereafter, Soviet motor rifle troops pulled up to the Berlin Wall in several sectors. There were no warnings. The troops simply opened fire. Their principal targets were the East German border guards, but a good deal of fire was sprayed into the crowds of East German civilians on the Communist side of the Wall. Camera crews caught it all. Numbers of West Germans were caught on the Wall or even on the wrong side and gunned down. The atmosphere of jubilation instantly morphed into a scene of terror as Berliners attempted to flee. The West Berliners, though panicked into mass flight, at least had the Wall to protect them. Hundreds of East Germans died, and many more were wounded.

Throughout East Germany and Eastern Europe as a whole, the Soviet security apparatus went into action. Overnight, thousands of East Germans, Poles, Hungarians, Romanians, and Bulgarians were seized or assassinated. The Soviet garrisons in Eastern Europe mobilized and moved to take control of key assets. Fighting between Soviet troops and local military units broke out in Poland, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia.

Stunned, the West looked on. Just as there had been nothing they could do in 1956 or 1968, in 1989 the Western Allies were forced to sit on the sidelines and watch as the neo-Stalinists reasserted their control over the nations of the Warsaw Pact. Western public opinion exploded, but the heads of the NATO states were not prepared to invade Eastern Europe to stop the Soviets.

Where necessary, the Soviets simply replaced the rebellious governments of Eastern Europe with more suitable local personnel. Fighting and insurrection spread in Poland, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia. Danilov mobilized a quarter-million troops from the western districts of the USSR and sent them into Eastern Europe to help the restored Communist governments put down restive elements. Purges continued in the governments. Disloyal military units were cornered and destroyed. Partisan movements sprang up and were hunted down by Soviet forces. All the while, the West lodged vociferous protests but otherwise did nothing.

The Western press came to call it the Black Winter. By the time it was over, nationalist tendencies on the part of the Eastern Europeans had been crushed once again. The Iron Curtain had been restored, and the brief thaw in the Cold War disappeared in a bitter frost.

The Persian Gulf War, Chapter 1:

The period immediately after the Black Winter ('89-'90) was one of the most tense in Cold War history. The US President, George Bush, was deeply angered and frustrated by the turn of events in Eastern Europe. Though he was enough of a realist to know that he could not have done much to aid the Eastern Europeans without going to war with the Soviets, it was nevertheless bitterly disappointing to see the Iron Curtain so close to and yet so far from coming down.

Public opinion throughout the West was explosive. One poll in the US found that a majority of Americans were willing to go to war. * The Western press was filled with anti-Soviet vitriol, and vocal leaders in the legislatures of the NATO signatories soundly denounced the Danilov regime. The US Congress drafted and passed a measure to block all shipments of grain and other US products to the USSR. US leaders pressured other Western and Third World nations to follow suit.

[* It is noteworthy, however, that this poll stood out among other similar polls in making no mention of the prospect of nuclear war. Other polls showed that a majority of Americans still believed an outright confrontation with the USSR would lead to a nuclear exchange. Polls that included the nuclear issue showed a much smaller of the United States willing to risk nuclear war to liberate Eastern Europe.]

Behind the scenes, however, the Danilov regime was working to repair the damage to its relations with the West. Even as Soviet intelligence and security forces were locking down Eastern Europe, Soviet representatives were soliciting the United States and other

Western nations for loans, credits, grain, and other products. Though the Eastern Europeans were handled brutally, Westerners caught up in events throughout the region were treated with great care by the Soviets.

Though his first act as leader of the Soviet Union to direct a brutal counter-revolution in Eastern Europe, Danilov was in fact a reformer. He understood why Gorbachev had made changes in the Soviet system. Danilov grasped the single overriding fact of Soviet existence at the beginning of the 1990's: the Soviet Union could survive no longer as it had been operating for more than twenty years. The military budget had imposed a crushing burden on an economy that was much less productive than that of the United States. The pervasive presence of internal security was consuming nation resources at a rate that was small only when compared to the gargantuan military budget. Centralized planning, combined with the essential deceit of the Soviet system, had resulted in a national production situation that produced nothing so much as waste. State-run agriculture was a disaster. The Soviet Union possessed some of the most potentially productive agricultural land in the world, and yet the USSR imported massive quantities of food from the West. Even then, millions of Soviets existed at the brink of starvation.

Unlike many of his cronies in the new Kremlin cabal, Danilov understood clearly that the Soviet Union would implode without significant change. His problem was convincing the hard-liners who had overthrown and killed Gorbachev that some measure of reform was required. Danilov needed to convince his co-conspirators that their best option for holding onto power was to give up some of the immense power of the Party state before the state collapsed under its own weight.

Danilov's initial efforts to restore the Gorbachev-era essence to Soviet-Western relations were soundly rebuffed. Bush and British Prime Minister John Major were under enormous pressure from the respective legislatures to find some means of injuring the Soviets. The West German Chancellor didn't even want to meet with Soviet representatives. The brutality of the Soviet Communists towards other Communist peoples in the Eastern European satellites caused the large socialist segments of the French and Italian political structures to unite with the generally anti-Soviet conservatives of those countries. The smaller members of NATO had neither the resources to supply Soviet needs nor the inclination to buck the leadership of their larger partners.

In May 1990, Danilov sweetened his offers to the United States. He was willing to pay for grain, machinery, loans, and technology with oil. The Soviet Union possessed stupendous petroleum reserves, as well as a massive production capacity. Danilov silenced protests within his own government by pointing out that he was maneuvering the Soviet Union into a position of advantage. If the US (or other Western states) took the oil deal, the USSR would be edging out other vendors of oil. This could only hurt the oil-producing countries that were aligned with the West, like Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Venezuela. Moreover, the US would be further discouraged from military adventures with the USSR by the necessity of keeping the oil supply line open. If initial deals proved satisfactory, the volume of trade could increase. American dependence on Soviet oil

would grow as a result.

Though sorely tempted, the Bush White House refused the deal. The conservatives understood the risks of becoming in any way dependent on Soviet oil. The grain embargo was hurting the Midwest farmers, but the general mood in Congress remained stridently anti-Soviet. The UK and other NATO states refused to deal with the Soviets for the same reasons.

Without outside intervention, this impasse might have kept Soviet-Western relations in a deep freeze for years to come. However, events in the Middle East would affect the situation between the Soviets and the West, as they had so many times before. This time, though, the outbreak of war in the Middle East would serve to bring the superpowers to an understanding.

On August 2 1990, Iraq invaded the emirate of Kuwait. Within days, the elite Iraqi Republican Guard overran the small but enormously wealthy country on Iraq's southern border and stood poised to invade Saudi Arabia.

Saddam Hussein, leader of Iraq, was confronted by a number of problems at home that he hoped to alleviate by conquering little Kuwait. Having seized power in Iraq in 1979, Hussein soon thereafter came to blows with his neighbor Iran. Iran, a long-time US ally, underwent a wracking revolution in 1979. The Shah of Iran was deposed, and a new fundamentalist Islamic government under the Ayatollah Khomeini took nominal control of Iran. At first, Khomeini's grip on the country was shaky. Hussein decided to use this opportunity to settle a long-standing difference of opinion between Iran and Iraq over control of the Shatt-al-Arab, the waterway that was the confluence of the Tigris and Euphrates River and which linked Iraq to the Persian Gulf. Iraqi forces crossed the Shatt-al-Arab, secured the eastern bank, and drove east. Hussein believed that the Iranians would not be able to respond effectively, giving him control over the southwestern corner of Iran.

The Iraqis moved quite slowly, however, while the Iranians responded with surprising energy. Within weeks, the Iranians had driven the Iraqis back across the Shatt-al-Arab. Hussein asked for a truce, but the revolutionary Iranians refused. For the next eight years, Iran and Iraq would engage in a war of attrition that would see widespread (if inept) use of chemical weapons, missiles, and human wave attacks by one side or another. Hussein built the Iraqi Army to more than a million men, with a robust park of tanks, APCs, artillery, trucks, and other materiel for mechanized war. Finally, in 1988 the Iraqis launched a series of counteroffensives that broke the back of the Iranians.

The Persian Gulf War, Chapter 2:

The Iraqi economy was devastated by the war. The national debt was huge, despite considerable aid from other Persian Gulf states that did not want to see Iranian-style revolutionaries increase their power. With the end of the war, the Gulf States wanted their money back. Hussein could not demobilize his million-man army because there were no

jobs for the soldiers. Worse, the price of oil—Iraq's chief export—was going down at the end of the 1980's. Desperate, Hussein turned his attention to Kuwait.

Kuwait was one of the oil-rich Gulf States that provided loans to Iraq during the Iran-Iraq War. The little emirate had not existed until the demise of the Ottoman Empire, at which time the British created the modern map of the Middle East. Under the Ottomans, Kuwait had been a part of what was to become Iraq. Given the very limited access to the Persian Gulf enjoyed by Iraq, the Iraqi state had long coveted Kuwait. The situation under the Ottomans gave Iraq a pretext of ownership, if a somewhat flimsy one. Further, Kuwait was tremendously wealthy.

For Hussein, conquest of Kuwait promised to solve a number of problems. Control of additional oil wealth would help the cash-flow problem. Eradication of the Kuwaiti state would obviate much of the Iraqi debt while bringing billions into the Iraqi coffers. Conquest of Kuwait also might bring the other Gulf States to the table in a much more compliant frame of mind regarding Iraq's debts to them. Iraq would have an invaluable addition to her coastline, plus the port of Kuwait City. It was a promising package. Thus on August 2 1990, Hussein sent his elite Republican Guard across the Kuwaiti border.

Worldwide condemnation was immediate. The United States demanded that the Iraqis withdraw from Kuwait and began immediate deployment of the 82nd Infantry Division (Airborne) to Saudi Arabia, which now appeared to be under threat of imminent invasion. The US Central Command (CENTCOM) was now faced with the war in the Persian Gulf for which they had trained and prepared for more than a decade.

Although the United States and France both did business with Iraq, the principal supplier of Iraqi military hardware was the Soviet Union. Soviet advisors and technicians were to be found throughout Iraq, and relations between Baghdad and Moscow were cordial. In the West, the initial assumption was that the new hard-line Soviet government was behind the invasion of Kuwait. Comparisons with the Korean War were on the airwaves and in the halls of power throughout the West before the Iraqi Army had reached the southern border of little Kuwait. If the heavy divisions of the Republican Guard did strike into northeastern Saudi Arabia, they would grind the light troops of the US 82nd Airborne into the sand. By the time the first elements of the 82nd Airborne Division were winging their way to the Gulf, the only real question seemed to be whether the Soviets would direct Hussein to invade Saudi Arabia, thereby bringing the majority of the world's petroleum reserves into Soviet hands.

In fact, the Soviets were as surprised as anyone by this turn of events. Hussein had neither sought nor received approval from the Kremlin for an invasion of Kuwait. He ignored Soviet attempts at communication during his two-day operation in Kuwait. Only when the US began deploying CENTCOM did Hussein respond to Moscow's calls.

Now, with the Iraqi Army in firm control of Kuwait, the Kremlin faced a dilemma. How to make the most of the situation?

The Kremlin had ears, and Danilov knew the Americans thought the Soviet Union was behind the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. Indeed, it was hard to see how the Americans would believe otherwise. The US had persisted in seeing every Communist action around the world as a part of a grand scheme directed from Moscow long after it should have been obvious that this was not the case. The Americans blamed the Soviets for Korea. To a lesser extent, they blamed the Soviets for Vietnam (despite the fact that the majority of aid for North Vietnam came from China). In the Gulf in 1990, the US was presented with a worst-case scenario of a Soviet client invading an important oil-producing state that was friendly to the West. How could the Americans not see it something done to Soviet advantage?

Many of the Kremlin hard-liners argued the very same thing. Though they had not instigated the Iraqi action, the Soviets stood to gain enormously from it. With no effort on their own part, the Soviets were looking at a situation that could deny the West some of the Gulf oil upon which it was dependent. With a little more urging and a guarantee of Soviet protection, Hussein could be moved to take northeastern Saudi Arabia and most of the Saudi oil fields. With the majority of the world's oil reserves in Soviet hands, the West could be leveraged into providing food and loans to the USSR. A Soviet nuclear guarantee to Iraq would prevent the Americans from using nuclear weapons against Iraq, while a steady supply of Soviet parts and equipment to Iraq would be more than sufficient to offset whatever forces the American could get to the Gulf over the next few months.

Danilov and a few of his more visionary allies saw things differently. The hard-liners were right that Iraqi seizure of the Saudi oil fields would put the West in a bad situation. An Iraqi invasion of Saudi Arabia was likely to backfire. While it was true that the heavy divisions of the Republican Guard would destroy the 82nd Airborne, the United States hardly could be counted on to take this lying down. CENTCOM would continue to deploy to Saudi Arabia—to whatever port could receive the American equipment. The Iraqi Army lacked the troops and the logistical capability to occupy the ports of Saudi Arabia on the Persian Gulf and Red Sea, plus the ports of the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, and Oman. The United States would base air and ground units in whatever portion of the Saudi Peninsula was available to them, then open operations against Iraq. The result would be a massive US expenditure, a general Western shift to non-Gulf sources of oil and an overall lessening of consumption, and an heightened American enmity with the USSR that would last for years to come.

The Kremlin hard-liners countered that the United States had no stomach for a protracted war in the Gulf. With the aid of Soviet submarines and other naval power, the ports ringing the Saudi Peninsula might be closed to the Americans. Faced with the prospect of fighting their way into Omani or Saudi ports, followed by a campaign over long stretches of desert against an opponent using modern Soviet weapons, the Americans would concede the point. The fact that intense fighting in northeastern Saudi Arabia and Kuwait would ruin the very oil wells the US wanted to control would only make the option of bargaining with the Soviet Union that much more attractive.

Seeing that the Kremlin was deadlocked on the issue of whether the Americans would continue to fight in the Gulf once the 82nd Airborne had been smashed, Danilov changed tactics. He asked his fellow top Communists, who sets policy for the Soviet Union? Regardless of the potential usefulness of current development in the Gulf, the fact remained that Hussein had not obtained Soviet permission before starting his adventure in Kuwait. As a result, the Soviet Union was thrust into a situation in which could not plan, only react. Supporting Iraq now would set a very bad precedent. Other Soviet client states might take unilateral action for their own reasons in their parts of the world, thereby dragging the Soviet Union into one confrontation with the West after another. Sooner or later, the Americans would fight. More to the point, Moscow was supposed to set policy for the client states, not the other way around.

In the light of the current situation, Danilov and a few of his supporters did not agree that the West could be extorted into trading food for oil. More likely, the West would be so incensed and threatened that they would refuse to trade. Non-Arab members of OPEC, as well as non-OPEC oil producers like Mexico and Norway, would be glad to make up the difference in global oil production and reap the profits of higher oil prices.

There was another factor to consider. Hussein had invaded Kuwait because his economy was ailing. Even with Kuwait under his control, Hussein owed billions to other countries. Defaulting on that debt or even conquering the other Gulf States (a feat which the Soviet advisors in Iraq did not think was possible) would not solve all of Iraq's problems, because Hussein needed hard currency to provide jobs for his million-man army. The Soviet Union could not provide hard currency for Iraq. To obtain hard currency, Hussein would have to sell oil to the West sooner or later, at which point the relationships between the USSR, Iraq, and the United States would become quite complex. Moscow might be put in the position of currying favor with a client state as opposed to the other way around, which again was contrary to the way things were supposed to be.

As the US 82nd Airborne was landing in Saudi Arabia, the United States began assembling support in the United Nations. Most of the UN believed as the United States did that the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait was a Soviet-inspired scheme. Western governments that had rebuffed Danilov's efforts to obtain grain, credits, and machinery saw the invasion of Kuwait as a Soviet response. Given the events of the Black Winter, the United States had a certain currency in its efforts to build a coalition of nations to oppose the Iraqi action.

The US ambassador to the UN issued a thinly veiled accusation that the USSR had masterminded the invasion. Naturally, the Soviet ambassador denied any wrongdoing.

At this point, the Soviet Defense Minister, who previously had supported getting Hussein to invade Saudi Arabia, changed his argument. If a US-led alliance did assemble forces in Iraq, as appeared likely, the enemy would be providing the Soviet Union an excellent chance to see the Western powers fight. The mood at the UN made it seem like the Americans were going to fight after all. Those being the case, and given that Hussein had not sought permission for his actions, why not let Iraq stand on its own? If Hussein did

not quickly give up Kuwait, the US-led alliance would have to attack. This would be a superb opportunity to observe the state-of-the-art in American war fighting without any risk to the USSR. At the same time, the USSR could send the message to the other client states that if they acted on their own, they would be hung out to dry. The Soviet Union would not be dragged into regional conflicts without prior consultation.

With the support of the Defense Minister, Danilov made his policy choice. He invited Bush to an emergency summit meeting in Switzerland in the second week of August. There, he and Bush came to terms. In two days of meetings that were often one-on-one, Danilov made it clear to Bush that the USSR had nothing to do with the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and that the Soviet Union wanted no confrontation with the West. Bush told Danilov that he wanted Moscow to order Baghdad out of Kuwait. Danilov replied that he didn't believe Hussein would respond to that, but he promised to give the strongest advice he possibly could.

To further impress Bush with his desire to normalize relations with the West, Danilov offered to issue a public proclamation condemning the Iraqi invasion. Soviet military aid would cease until Iraq pulled out of Kuwait. Perhaps most importantly, the USSR would support a UN resolution demanding an Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait backed by military action if Hussein refused. Further, the Kremlin would line up as many of its clients as possible to support the US-led effort in the UN.

Bush returned to Washington and waited for the Soviets to play their part at the UN. When Danilov proved good to his word, Bush had the grain embargo lifted. When some members of Congress protested, Bush made it clear that he felt the Danilov regime was one the US could work with "under certain conditions."

Hussein refused to give up Kuwait. He was certain the West would bargain with him for the oil. He was equally certain that the USSR would back him again if he could score a battlefield success. Also, successful resistance on the part of the Iraqis would put Hussein in the forefront of the Arab world. This would make him impossible for the superpowers to simply manhandle. The Iraqi Army began to dig into Kuwait.

By the time the US XVIII Airborne Corps had finished its deployment to Saudi Arabia, it was obvious that Iraq was not going to invade Saudi Arabia. It was equally obvious that the US-led Coalition was going to have to eject the Iraqis from Kuwait. With the support of the Soviet Union, the Coalition had brought nations like Syria into the fold. To liberate Kuwait, the US was going to need more forces and additional diplomacy.

At a second summit, this one in Reykjavik, Bush and Danilov talked candidly about their desire for good relations. Notes written by Bush during the meeting indicate that Danilov told him a good deal more about his thinking than even people in the Kremlin knew. Danilov believed that the United States and the Soviet Union would always be rivals, but they need not be enemies. He told Bush he believed the military competition between East and West was no longer a viable option. He told Bush that while the Party fully intended to retain power in the Soviet Union, he intended to introduce reforms. He would

have to do so in a more gradual manner than Gorbachev had done, or the remaining hardliners would purge him as well. However, he hoped that over the course of the next ten years the US and USSR could agree to a 25-50% reduction in nuclear weapons and a 25-30% reduction in conventional forces. Beyond that, he hoped that the US and USSR could enter into trade agreements that would satisfy both their needs and give Danilov the political capital he would need to further advance reforms.

Danilov promised to back a US-sponsored resolution authorizing the Coalition to use force to liberate Kuwait. He told Bush that the Soviet ambassador would approve verbiage that enabled Coalition aircraft to use Iraqi airspace and Coalition ground forces to use Iraqi territory to the degree that said usage supported the goal of Kuwaiti liberation. However, Danilov stipulated that Iraq otherwise was to remain intact. Hussein was to remain in power in Iraq. Destruction of Iraqi equipment and personnel pursuant to the liberation of Kuwait was acceptable to the Soviet Union. Destruction of Iraqi equipment and personnel pursuant to the destruction of the Hussein regime was not.

Bush understood what Danilov was saying readily enough. The USSR would keep its clients essentially intact, though the clients were not free to do as they pleased. Back in Washington, the Bush Administration argued the virtues of being bound by such an agreement with the Soviets. If the US complied with the Soviet demand for a continuing Hussein-led Iraq that kept all its territory, there would be a de facto policy of detente. Had not the Reagan Administration built up US military might for a more aggressive policy? How would American clients feel about a policy that guaranteed that Soviet clients on their border would be assured their political survival (and likely rebuilding) by the proposed Iraq deal?

Voices of realism pointed out that agreeing to Danilov's condition was nothing more than the policy of containment the US had been applying for decades. Not since the Korean War had the US attempted to liberate or conquer a Soviet client by force of arms. There did not appear to be any good opportunities for that on the horizon, either—even if future US leadership felt inclined to go that route. Danilov was giving the US his permission to do what was necessary to liberate Kuwait without any threat of Soviet involvement. This represented an opportunity to put the US armed forces through their paces without risking an all-out war with the Soviet Union. The deal was too good to pass up.

The Persian Gulf War, Chapter 3:

The US military wanted to use some of its European formations in the effort to liberate Kuwait. The experience would be invaluable in any future European conflict. The Army tapped VII US Corps with two heavy divisions and an armored cavalry regiment. Not yet ready to trust the Soviets completely, the Army moved two divisions and an armored cavalry regiment from CONUS to Europe before moving VII US Corps to Saudi Arabia.

*

[III US Corps moves to Europe along with 5th ID(M). Two National Guard formations, 35th ID(M) and 116th ACR are called up and deployed to Europe to take over the duties

of VII US Corps. 4th ID(M), which is supposed to transit by air to Europe to draw POMCUS equipment, remains on alert at Fort Carson, CO. 1st CD, 2/2nd AD, and 3rd ACR, all of which are slated for deployment to Europe, are replaced by 49th AD (TXNG), 194th Armd Bde (sep), and 278th ACR (TNNG) as CONUS-based reserves for air deployment and drawing of POMCUS equipment. The USMC activates 4th Marine Division to take the place of 1st Marine Division at Camp Lejeune, which is deploying to Saudi Arabia.]

The Coalition build-up in Saudi Arabia continued through the end of 1990. Eventually, twenty-seven nations would provide ground, air, or naval combat forces, with another twelve nations providing non-combat support units, financial support for the war, or significant humanitarian support. The main combat power of the Coalition came from the United States, which had five heavy Army divisions, two light Army divisions, two armored cavalry regiments, two Marine divisions, plus separate Marine brigades in its ground forces. Air elements included more than 1300 combat aircraft, while major naval elements included eight aircraft carriers and two battleship groups. Contingents of division size or greater came from Egypt, France, Kuwait, Pakistan, Syria, Saudi Arabia, and the UK. Contingents of brigade size came from Oman, Qatar, the UAE, Bahrain, and Bangladesh.

UN Resolution 678 stifled ongoing objections from hawkish anti-Soviets in the Bush Administration regarding the fate of Iraq. Passed on November 29 1990, the resolution authorized the US-led Coalition to liberate Kuwait. The overthrow of the Iraqi government and/or conquest of the Iraqi state were not included among the authorized actions. The Soviet Union deliberately stayed on the sidelines in the formulation of the resolution. Bush pointed out that this was evidence that détente was in the international interest and that the United States would reap the greatest benefit from respecting international opinion on the matter.

The Coalition opened its air offensive against Iraq on January 17, 1991. In an extraordinary display of technical prowess and fighting skills, the Coalition air assets literally annihilated one of the densest air defense networks in the world, and then severed the logistical links between the Iraq and the Iraqi forces in the Kuwait Theater of Operations (KTO). Aerial bombardment had robbed the Iraqi forces in the KTO of fifty percent of their combat power by the time the Coalition ground offensive got underway a month later.

At the start of the ground offensive, the Iraqi Army had approximately thirty-seven divisions in the KTO. Somewhat more than half of these were non-mechanized infantry divisions occupying extensively prepared defensive positions. Backing these divisions were eight armored and mechanized divisions of the regular Iraqi Army; still further back were six divisions of the elite Republican Guard. This daunting assembly of conventional forces was overrun, routed, and destroyed by Coalition ground forces in a sweeping mechanized offensive that lasted four days. Losses to the Iraqi Army included more than 2,500 tanks, comparable numbers of APCs and IFVs, huge quantities of other equipment, and more than a quarter-million men wounded, killed, or captured.

True to his agreement with Danilov and the letter of the UN resolution authorizing the use of force in Kuwait, Bush stopped the Coalition forces south of the Euphrates River. The Americans pulled back, and Saddam Hussein was left in control of Iraq.

The results of the Second Gulf War (the First Gulf War was fought between Iran and Iraq) were far-reaching. The emirate of Kuwait was liberated. The oil-rich Gulf States of Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, and Oman were more closely tied to the West than ever before. The United States had put its forces and doctrine to the test, resulting in the most one-sided victory in the recorded history of warfare. It was a sea change in the global perception of the balance of power.

Danilov had scored a major victory over the hawks in his own government. Most of them were forced to admit that the United States would have destroyed any Iraqi invasion of Saudi Arabia that did not involve massive quantities of Soviet troops. By staying on the sidelines, Danilov had secured fresh grain shipments and a measure of East-West good will that would have been difficult to imagine a year prior. The Soviet Union had shown a willingness to respect international law outside its existing sphere of influence. The other Soviet client states were effectively reined in by the example of Iraq. And the Soviets now had a sobering idea of the capabilities of the United States. Danilov had accomplished all this with virtually no cost to the USSR.

In the West, Bush was able to partially redeem himself in the eyes of a public who still ridiculed him for inaction during the Black Winter. This was unfair to Bush, who had no good options at the time. Unfortunately for Bush, the stigma of the Black Winter weighed more heavily against him than his success in the Gulf, even though the results of the Second Gulf War were far more important for the United States. Bush would be voted out of office in 1992.

When the guns had cooled in Iraq and Kuwait, all parties moved quickly to establish themselves in the new order. The USSR offered to rebuild the Iraqi Army in exchange for oil. In the wake of the war, the USSR found willing Western and Third World buyers for its oil; the Soviets accepted Iraqi oil as payment in kind, and then sold the oil on the international market for hard currency. Hussein readily accepted the Soviet offer, despite the fact that his sponsors had abandoned him so completely. The Western-aligned Gulf states established a new defensive alliance. Gulf Cooperative Council (GCC) forces were stationed in Kuwait to discourage further Iraqi adventures. The United States left a single heavy brigade in Kuwait and pre-positioned the equipment for the balance of a heavy division. Iraq rapidly began rearming. The GCC girded for a likely second round of conflict with Iraq, not trusting the apparent agreement between the US and USSR.

The stage was set for further conflict. For the time being, however, Danilov could get on with his program of reform.

Chapter 3, Soviet Reforms:

Though most national governments are historically resistant to reform, the Soviet Union was a special case. State ownership of virtually everything worth owning was not enough for the early Bolsheviks. Neither was central planning of the economy sufficient. The CPSU (Communist Party of the Soviet Union) required absolute and unmitigated control over every aspect of the lives of the people of the Soviet Union. Thus, power that in even the worst fascist state is divided between two or more groups was concentrated solely in the hands of the Party. It was for this kind of arrangement, in which the nation's political, economic, and military power are concentrated into the hands of a single group that the term totalitarian was coined.

Dmitri Danilov and his regime took control of a nation brought to its knees by totalitarianism. They had overthrown and executed a reformist premier, Mikhail Gorbachev, because they felt his programs were going too far. However, at the beginning of the 1990's, they faced exactly the same problems as Gorbachev had faced a decade earlier. For Danilov, restoring the USSR to good health would mean walking a tightrope between doing too little to reform the country (thus causing a disastrous collapse of the Soviet economy) and doing too much (thus getting himself replaced and killed by the very hard-liners who had brought him to power).

Danilov's most pressing troubles had started in the late 1960's. At the time, two of the major power blocs within the Soviet system were at odds with each other. The KGB was the smaller of the two and doubtless more sophisticated. The armed forces were larger and had the ability to put whoever they wanted in the Kremlin. The KGB essentially bought the military off by promising the generals priority on national resources in return for loyalty to a KGB-run state. The military agreed, and the Soviet coffers were opened. There were other factors involved, like the state of relations with the United States. However, the build-up of Soviet conventional forces in the 1970's was due in large part to the blank check written for the military by the KGB.

Underlying the problem of out-of-control military spending was the very nature of the Soviet economic system, which was itself tied to Soviet social thinking. State control over economic activities had to be absolute. As a result, critical small businesses and artisans—plumbers, cobblers, tinsmiths, and so on—were forced out of operation and replaced, in some instances, by gruesomely inefficient centralized operations. Farms were collectivized with the result that a nation with some of the best agricultural land and farming talent on the planet lost the ability to feed itself. Consumer goods were eschewed in favor of heavy industry whose sole purpose seemed to be to create more heavy industry. Even cottage industries like the crafting of woolen goods in the homes of Soviet peasants during the winter months were attacked and destroyed because they did not lend themselves to state-run planning.

Ever suspicious of malcontents and rivals to their power, the CPSU created a machine for internal security unlike anything seen before. Armed and ruthless security forces were everywhere in Soviet life. They had the power to do anything they wished to whomever they wished. By the 1980's, tens of millions of Soviet citizens had been sent to prison camps in the distant quarters of the USSR to toil their few remaining years in service to

the state that had imprisoned them. The security apparatus existed in multiple echelons and in parallel and competing organizations; if any group within the security apparatus proved disloyal, another Party-controlled group could be deployed against the disaffected. Even without the drain of the military on the Soviet economy, the state security apparatus would have been a tremendous burden.

Since the Party was the only means of advancement in the Soviet Union, the ambitious had to play by certain rules. Verbal adherence to an ideology few believed in by the 1970's, combined with the ever-present threat of security informants, led to a culture of deceit and cynicism difficult for most Westerners to comprehend. There were very real economic consequences for this.

Production figures set by the central planning committees often were not tied together in any meaningful way. As a result, resources were wasted at every level of production to a degree unthinkable in the West. For example, a timber extraction collective might find that having cut its assigned number of board feet of forest, it had no funds for shipping those trees to the mill. Moreover, the measure of success was not based on delivery of the product to the mill but on board feet cut. And so, as a consequence of it all the restrictions, the timber collective would just bury the trees whenever possible.

Without any particular incentive to achieve and with a great stock of anger towards the state that owned everything, Soviet workers took out their frustration on the assembly lines and other spheres of state-run production. Quality control was abysmal. Sabotage and theft were rampant. At any time in the mid-1980's, fully a third of Soviet production machinery was down for maintenance. The Soviet manufacturing capability literally was idling in the repair shops.

Cynicism and failure to perform led to more deceit regarding production figures. The same was true of agriculture and electricity. Despite its pervasive presence in Soviet life, the state simply could not check every report and statistic enough times to overcome the sheer corruption and deceit that so characterized Soviet industry and agriculture. The senior leadership often did not even know what was really happening in the country, despite the ruinous expenditures on the security apparatus.

On top of this situation was laid the costs of the 1970's build-up. It was simply too much. The Soviet system was losing its ability to sustain itself. It had to either reform or collapse.

Danilov appreciated this fact as very few did. In the mid-1980's he used high-level loyalists to gather reliable information on what was happening much further down the economic chain. The results, though far from giving a complete picture, were dismaying.

The irony, as Danilov saw it, was that the very needs of the all-pervasive state were destroying the ability of the state to sustain it. Somehow, the Soviet system had to evolve so that its ability to produce economic activity came into line with its economic requirements.

Danilov had no illusions about the hard-liners' attitudes towards reducing the presence of and consequent appetite of the Party security apparatus. He was not very keen on the idea himself. Aside from the visceral distaste he felt for giving up power, there was the ever-present danger of unrest. Malcontents were everywhere. There was no telling what the people of the Soviet Union, so long repressed and denied basic rights, might do if the control of the security apparatus diminished somewhat. This was constantly on the minds of the hard-liners, who tended to see internal threats as an even greater danger than the many external threats facing the Soviet Union.

Drawing down some of the military demands on the economy was a somewhat more palatable idea to certain of the arch-conservatives. However, the military would not favor the idea at all. And unfortunately, the military had the ability to make or unmake the Soviet leadership. It was for this reason that political officers were assigned to all major commands. Nevertheless, a strong enough reaction in the military to a perceived threat to their position of privilege could cause the generals to decide that they needed to re-define the old agreement with the KGB.

The other obvious solution to the economic problem was to offer more incentives to the workers themselves. In short, the Danilov might move the USSR away from totalitarianism and towards fascism. Gorbachev had tried this, and he had been destroyed for it (in part). Nevertheless, this approach offered Danilov his best chance for meaningful reform.

After the conclusion of the Second Gulf War in early 1991, Danilov had a few other tools available. Based on his cooperation with the West, Danilov had been able to obtain grain shipments again. Working through third parties, he was able to sell Soviet oil to the West to pay for the food shipments. In addition, the Soviets suddenly discovered that Western sources for machinery and other industrial goods were open to them. At a price, Danilov could sidestep some of quality problems that were plaguing his efforts to rebuild Soviet industry with Soviet products.

Gorbachev had made efforts to lift the ban on cottage industry in the USSR. Danilov accelerated these efforts, despite the protests of some of the more conservative members of his cabal. Henceforth, the Soviet people would be able to knit woolens and create other basic consumables that were so chronically short in the Soviet system. At the same time, he increased the amount of private land that could be used by the Soviet people to provide for their own subsistence. In effect, Danilov was legitimizing the existence of two Soviet economies: the state-run industrial and agricultural economy and the private economy of small-scale industry and gardening.

The Soviets were stunned and appalled by the results of Operation Desert Storm (the offensive component of the Coalition's operation). The implication of American superiority over Soviet systems was an awful prospect for the Soviet planners to contemplate. The hard-liners in the Kremlin, though now grudgingly appreciative of the stance Danilov had taken, now began to wonder whether or not a similar fate awaited

Soviet forces in Europe and elsewhere. Senior-level military men immediately undertook to learn the lessons of the war and their application to Soviet forces.

Soviet analysts quickly determined that the American victory was largely the result of several factors which were unique to the Gulf battlefield. US technological superiority over the Iraqi Army was a key factor. Though the Iraqis had been using Soviet-built systems, most of the Iraqi arsenal was a generation behind the equipment being used by the United States and its Western allies. Much of the Soviet arsenal was similarly out-of-date, but the front-line divisions and aviation regiments used equipment that was comparable to Western models in overall technical capability.

The Coalition air power had seized control of the skies over Iraq virtually from the onset of active operations. Dovetailed into the technological disadvantage of the Iraqis vis-à-vis the Coalition was the fact that Iraqi Air Force was badly overmatched before the contest even started, both in quality and in quantity of airframes and personnel. If anything, air operations during Desert Storm indicated the dangers of allowing an enemy air force to operate unchallenged by friendly fighters and interceptors. Fortunately, the USSR possessed a numerical superiority in numbers of airframes versus the Western powers. Though the Western pilots practiced more and were therefore likely to be better in some areas, Soviet numbers could be expected to offset this advantage in any future war.

The relative ineffectiveness of the Soviet-designed ground-based air defenses of Iraq was disturbing. However, here too the Soviet analysts were able to identify the culprit. The lack of fighter aircraft and airborne radar meant that the Coalition had enjoyed the ability to approach its targets at very low altitudes or at high altitudes. The Americans possessed electronic warfare (EW) capabilities much superior to anything the Iraqis had been using. This served to neutralize the SAM defenses while the American fighter-bombers went after the Iraqi radar and command-and-control assets. The best Soviet EW was a generation ahead of what the Iraqis had been using, and the Soviets had more flexibility in its application. Therefore, there was no reason to assume an American attack in Europe would achieve the same results.

American cruise missiles proved to be every bit the problem the Soviets had feared they would be. There was no easy answer to this problem, except to tighten low-level air defenses. However, it was known that the Americans had limited numbers of these missiles. Given the much denser and much more capable Soviet air defenses in Europe, attrition of the American cruise missiles should be much higher. Damage would be done, but the Soviet system should be able to tolerate it. Certain redundancies, already a strong component of the Soviet military system, would help compensate for the losses.

On the ground, the Coalition had given an effective performance. However, it was important to remember that the Coalition had every advantage possible going for it when ground operations started. Coalition air power enjoyed air supremacy. The Iraqi defenders had been heavily invested from the air for a month before the ground offensive started. The Coalition troops were fresh and well fed at the beginning of the offensive, whereas the defenders were subsisting on short rations and had been under bombardment

for weeks. The Coalition had control of the electronic battlefield, badly hampering Iraqi efforts to respond to developments on the battlefield. Navigational technology allowed the Coalition to move in the desert, as the defenders could not. Half of the Iraqi defenders were light infantry who were fixed in position once the offensive started. The Coalition forces, on the other hand, were largely mechanized. The best Iraqi units, the Republican Guard, were using T-72 tanks, which admittedly were not quite equal to the M1A1 of the Americans or the Challenger of the British. However, with modern Soviet ammunition there was not any reason to believe the T-72 could not kill the best Western tanks. The non-Republican Guard units fielded tanks like the T-55, which were not meant to go head-to-head with an M1A1. However, even here better tank handling would yield kills of Western tanks. Even the weather worked against the Iraqis. In sandstorms, the optics of the Western tanks outperformed the optics of the Iraqi tanks. State-of-the-art Soviet tanks possessed better optics than what the Iraqis had been using. Finally, the terrain played to Western strengths. In the open desert, the long-range guns of the American and British tanks operated at advantage. In the more restricted forest and urban terrain of Europe, the range advantage enjoyed by the Westerners would be nullified.

Having heard this assessment, Danilov proposed to draw down some twenty-five divisions of the Soviet Army, as well as making further reductions in the manpower of the reserve divisions. Similar cuts would be made to the Air Force, Navy, and Strategic Rocket Forces. The military chiefs were aghast. In answer to their vehement protests, Danilov explained that he wanted to get rid of some of the dead wood. Mobilization Only divisions, which represented the bottom of the barrel in reserve strength for the Soviet Army, were mostly made up of over-aged reservists who would need six months or more of refresher training before they would be ready to use their antiquated equipment—equipment that was generally in the state of the Iraqi machines so recently dispatched at such a low cost to the Coalition. Maintaining this old equipment was a major burden on the Soviet logistical system that did not seem likely to yield results on the battlefield commensurate with the price the Soviet Army paid in man-hours and spare parts. Getting rid of twenty-five of these divisions would actually increase the effectiveness of the Soviet Army by freeing up large numbers of depot maintenance personnel to work on the equipment of better units. In addition, the equipment of the disbanded Mobilization Only divisions could be sold to Third World clients, the performance of Western tanks in the Gulf notwithstanding.

Danilov went further to outline a scheme to reduce the Army's active-duty head count by 200,000. Reserve divisions would be manned at lower levels. As a nod to the senior Army leadership, no divisions would actually be disbanded to achieve the other half of the cost-savings scheme. The generals and colonels would keep their jobs and positions of privilege, while 200,000 men would be released to agriculture and industry. As a further incentive, Danilov offered the split the cost savings with the military. The equivalent cost of 100,000 active-duty men would go back into the military coffers, while the state would use the rest for other projects. Similar schemes were drawn up for the other services.

Though here again there were those who protested, the majority of decision-makers

within the military found Danilov's plan acceptable. By the end of 1991, the Soviet military was undergoing a significant reduction.

Western intelligence soon caught wind of the Soviet reduction in force. It was not hard to track the quantities of T-55s, MiG-17s, and other old materiel being sold around the world. East-West tensions eased further, such that additional business was possible.

Overall, 1991 was a highly successful year for the Danilov regime. The damage done to Soviet-Western relations during the Black Winter had been repaired by the Kremlin's action—or inaction—during the Second Gulf War. Credit drawn on Western banks was more available than it had been under Gorbachev, and critical machinery was on its way to Soviet ports. Imported North American and Western European grain erased the scarcities of the previous year. In fact, food was more available in the Soviet Union at the end of 1991 than it had been for years. Already the military draw down had released tens of thousands of soldiers, while the military remained relatively content and loyal. The Soviet people could look forward to an increased availability of consumer goods. Though enormous problems remained, Danilov had reason for optimism that the next few years would see real progress.

1992 as well proved another good year for Danilov. During 1992, Danilov began to outline a general philosophy for the direction of the Soviet Union and a means for getting there. The initiatives of 1991 were shaping up nicely, and he was able to parlay his success into support—not always enthusiastic—for further efforts.

Danilov wanted an end to the Cold War. The ever-escalating arms race had made a mockery of Communist promises to improve the lives of the people. This fact in turn made it necessary for the Soviet leadership to keep itself in power with a security apparatus that would be insufficient at any level of funding. It was a cruel trap, and according to Danilov the only way out was to bring an end to East-West hostilities.

The Kremlin boss also badly wanted to reform Soviet industry. Though not obliged to compete directly with the West in the global marketplace, the Soviet Union nevertheless was in competition with the West for global resources. While the Soviet Union made virtually everything that industrial societies manufactured, important raw materials and agricultural goods were available elsewhere in the world. For the USSR to compete with the West on anything like an equal basis would require the ability to successfully export those items the USSR possessed. Oil wealth, though useful, would only go so far.

The first step to controlling the East-West arms race was genuine détente. The resulting thaw in Soviet-Western relations following the Gulf War was very promising. Danilov's unilateral drawdown of 200,000 active-duty troops gave the United States some reason to believe that the Soviets meant what they said about changing the relationship between the US and the USSR. This made it possible for Bush and Danilov to meet in Vienna in the middle of 1992.

In Vienna, Danilov outlined a startling plan to Bush. The Soviet leader wanted to reduce

the nuclear arsenals of the superpowers, both in numbers of warheads and numbers of launchers, by half. He rightly pointed out that the strategic arms possessed by the superpowers were gratuitously in excess of anything that could be called necessary for security. Eliminating half the launchers and half the warheads would change nothing in either the strategic balance or the ability of either nation to destroy the world at will. Both sides needed the resources being wasted on nuclear competition, and both sides could profit from the demonstration of good will.

Bush was wise enough to take Danilov's offer seriously. The President was up for re-election in the Fall, and he was suffering in the polls as a result of a recession that had been nagging the US economy for nearly two years. An arms deal with the Soviet Union might be just what the doctor ordered.

There were other problems that would not be so easily solved, however. Soviet activity in Africa increased sharply in 1991. Cuban troops returned to Angola in 1992. The sale of obsolescent Soviet arms to the Third World did not greatly concern the Bush Administration. The sale of state-of-the-art fighters, missiles, and ground combat systems was another matter. Here, Bush pressed Danilov for some sort of an agreement.

For his part, Danilov was not strongly motivated to curb either the renewed activity in Africa or the sale of advanced military technology around the world. Events in Africa following the Gulf War had opened the door for the USSR to redraw the lines of influence south of the Sahara. Control of the vast mineral resources of sub-Saharan Africa through African client states was too good a prospect for Danilov to forego.

In terms of arms sales, Danilov pointed out to Bush that the United States was now the world's leading arms exporter. Moreover, the US held a commanding lead in the sales of high technology items like fighter aircraft. Unless the United States was willing to enter into an arms export limitations agreement, the Soviet Union could hardly be expected to stand by while the US scooped up all the potential customers. Congress and the Democrats would use this issue to nullify the gains Bush otherwise would have realized from an agreement on strategic arms reduction.

Danilov also wanted to redefine relations with Eastern Europe. His crackdown during the Black Winter was less an effort to shut down Eastern European nationalism than to manage it. Danilov knew that the Soviet Union could not maintain control of Eastern Europe ad infinitum. Yet the need for a strategic buffer between the West and Russia—specifically, between Germany and Russia—remained an imperative. The answer, Danilov believed, was a series of neutral Eastern European states that would be kept out of NATO and the European Community by treaty agreements. He wanted to go there in a series of carefully-considered steps that would demonstrate to the West and to his own government that Dmitri Danilov was calling the shots, and that a pell-mell tumble towards Eastern European independence would not be tolerated.

To this end, Danilov held a summit with the other Warsaw Pact leaders. He outlined a plan by which the Soviet presence in Eastern Europe might be gradually scaled back. At

the same time, modest reforms in the Eastern European economies would be permitted. Modest increases in contact with the West would be permitted. Ideas on improving state-run industries would be welcomed. Naturally, the Eastern Europeans were dubious. However, they were willing to act within the boundaries laid out by the Danilov regime.

At home, matters progressed for Danilov. While the state-run agricultural apparatus creaked on towards general collapse, the private plots fed the nation. By the end of the 1992 growing season, private plots using about three percent of the tilled land in the USSR produced about sixty percent of the food. Hard-line Communists grumbled that people were allowed to spend too much time and energy on their own gardens. Were they forced to invest themselves fully in the state-run system; the results would be better, argued the Stalinists. Danilov maintained that if this approach were going to work, it would have done so at some point over the last sixty years. The hard fact was that the state-run agricultural system was not capable of feeding the Soviet Union, regardless of what the ideologues might have preferred. Agricultural reform would continue for the duration of Danilov's stay in the Kremlin, with commensurate gains for the food situation in the USSR.

The energy with which the Soviet peasants launched into their cottage industries amazed the CPSU officials. In actuality, this sort of thing had been going on for decades. The black market economy had been providing for low-end consumer needs for some time. Now allowed to operate with official sanction, the Soviet people demonstrated a remarkable ability for what could only be called micro-capitalism.

At the end of 1992, however, events in the United States were to have a significant effect on the long-term prospects for Danilov's reform efforts. Arkansas governor William Clinton was elected in November 1992 as a result of general discontent with the domestic state of affairs in the United States. As the election unfolded, it became clear that the American voting public interpreted Soviet actions during the Black Winter and Desert Shield/Desert Storm as a sort of my-side/your-side philosophy on the part of the Soviets. The USSR would not intervene militarily outside their existing sphere of influence, while the US would decry Soviet actions behind the Iron Curtain but not interfere. Even the strategic arms reductions talks were credited more to a changing overall scheme of US-Soviet relations than to Bush personally. As a result, the American voters were more concerned with the US economy than with foreign politics. Bush was blamed for the recession, and he was voted out in favor of someone who talked a better game.

Clinton was interested in trade and better relations with the USSR. However, he harbored a deep-seated resentment over the Black Winter that would not become apparent until later. This would have a critical effect on world history.

The new President embraced strategic reductions. He embraced trade with the USSR. However, he refused to make any changes in the conventional strength of the United States. He had undercut Bush's accomplishments in managing the arms race partly by promising to keep America strong enough to meet any challenge anywhere in the world.

The conventional forces of the US thus would be maintained at roughly the same level as they had enjoyed at the end of the 1990's.

For most of the next three years, Danilov pursued a vigorous reform policy. He moved along parallel tracks: making real changes to the nation's industry and agriculture to improve the long-term health of the USSR and making immediate short-term changes to convince the Soviet citizenry that things were going to get better.

The latter policy struck many Soviet apparatchiks as odd. The master of the Kremlin, indeed the CPSU as a whole, did not require the approval of the people. Traditional Soviet thinking held that the Russian people (and therefore all Soviet people) would live with whatever was given them. Danilov questioned the apparent contradiction in this mode of thinking. If the Soviet people could be relied upon to put up with whatever was given them, why did the Soviet state require such a massive security apparatus? Why were hundreds of thousands detained and shipped to gulags every year? Why were sabotage and theft so rampant that Soviet industry was practically on its knees? Why did a level of thuggery unimaginable under the last tsar prop up the Soviet government?

Danilov needed real gains in national productivity to stay in power and to move ahead with his reform program. By the end of 1992, the grumblings of the hard-liners both within Danilov's cabal and throughout the Soviet government were becoming louder. Never mind that Danilov was doing exactly what the cabal had agreed needed to be done to save the Soviet Union. Never mind that relations with the West were as good as they had been at any time since the end of the Second World War. The iron grip of the state appeared to be softening, producing an intestinal discomfort among the Stalinists. Danilov needed progress to keep them at bay. To get this, he needed greater productivity in the economy. To get this, he needed to bring the theft, sloth, sabotage, deceit, and corruption under control. To accomplish this, he needed to make the Soviet citizenry believe that the Party was at long last going to deliver on its promises to improve their lives. Major reform in the operations of the centrally planned economy was going to take time. In the interim, Danilov sought an internal propaganda victory.

Housing in the Soviet Union was chronically short. Danilov started a major housing initiative. Despite the newfound sufficiency of food in the USSR, the Soviet diet was bland. Danilov strove to bring in fruits, vegetables, and spices from other parts of the world to add color to the Soviet markets. The Soviet premier also increased the meager allocation of Soviet resources to consumer goods by twenty percent.

The moderate Party officials were ecstatic. The ultra-conservatives were tight-lipped. From the standpoint of the latter group, Soviet security came at the point of a gun. Spending on housing, imported vegetables, and consumer goods could only come at the expense of security. Indeed, Danilov appeared ready to move ahead with a unilateral reduction in the Strategic Rocket Force regardless of what the new American president did.

However, the ultra-conservatives could do little as yet. Danilov was a KGB man, and he enjoyed wide support within the organization. The premier had done nothing to affect the power or funding of the internal security groups. The military chiefs had lost little and gained appreciably as a result of Danilov's draw down. And the fact remained that things were better in the Soviet Union than they had been for a long time. Until Danilov made some mistake, he was not going to be vulnerable.

Between 1992 and 1995, the Soviet Union made remarkable progress towards recovering the vitality it had enjoyed in the 1960's. Oil exports grew dramatically, bringing in much-needed hard currency. The availability of housing, which had seen moribund growth in the 1980's, increased nearly ten percent in three years. Industrial productivity jumped significantly. Agricultural output rose as private plots came to account for four percent of the tilled land in the USSR and a staggering seventy percent of the output. The cottage industries, now out in the light of day, rapidly gained in efficiency and effectiveness. The Soviet GNP, long stagnant or in decline, grew by more than five percent in 1993 and 1994.

In Eastern Europe, the Warsaw Pact countries accelerated their own experiments with liberalizing their economies. Though Communist control of the political sphere remained firm, the economic sphere began to diversify and pluralize. The Pact countries remained tied to the Soviet Union for the time being. However, by the end of 1994 there appeared to be no risk of a repeat of the Black Winter. Led by Poland, the countries of Eastern Europe were beginning once again to chart their own courses.

All was not roses, however. For one thing, the economic health of the USSR remained well below that of most Western countries. Key indicators like life expectancy, calorie consumption, infant mortality, and per capita income remained much lower in the Soviet Union than in Western Europe, North America, or Japan. Though improved, Soviet industry was essentially the same creature it had been at the end of the 1980's: antiquated, labor-intensive, and inefficient. The success of the private agricultural initiative raised real questions about the fate of the state-run system—questions that were keeping the hard-liners up at night.

Nor had any of the problems facing the Soviet Union in 1990 really gone away. Military spending continued to consume personnel and resources far out of proportion to the militaries of Western nations. Indeed, whereas the best and brightest of the Western nations were going into the capitalist economy or academia, the best and the brightest of the Soviet Union continued to go to the military or the security apparatus. In terms of raw funding, something more than a quarter of the Soviet GNP still was going to the military or directly-related programs. In the West, the figure varied between four and twelve percent. The situation could not remain as it was, but Danilov had made most of the easy cuts.

Housing, though more available than it had been, remained deplorably short and in deplorable condition. The very success of the cottage industries was causing ripples. Having learned that they could manage some of their own affairs, the Soviet citizenry

was showing an increasing and dismaying tendency towards self-expression. At the same time, Danilov had started to lift the thumb of oppression on the people. Questioning the Soviet system—and indeed the whole CPSU philosophy—became more permissible and consequently more widespread. The Soviet people, so long repressed, generally were not particularly grateful to Danilov for the changes he had made. Rather, many called for more dramatic changes.

The Soviet Union remained an uneasy conglomerate. Though conventionally called a nation, the Soviet Union was really more the modern Russian Empire. The fourteen other republics had varying mixes of Russian and non-Russian people and various histories of independence. In the western part of the USSR, Belarussia and the Ukraine were the most closely tied to Russia in terms of language and culture. The Baltic States had enjoyed a brief period of independence following the Russian Civil War that they had never forgotten. Though mostly Slavs, the Baltic peoples were distinct from the Russians. Distinctly non-Russian groups who had been part of Imperial Russia at the end of the 1800's peopled the Transcaucasus Republics—Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Armenia. Though the Russian Civil War brought the Transcaucasus independence, the Soviets had re-conquered the region by the 1930's. The Central Asian Republics—Kazakhstan, Kyrgistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan—were the most troublesome. Peopled by Asiatic tribes, the Central Asian components of the Soviet Union were the most inclined towards rebellion and the most obviously resentful of Russian dominance of their lives.

All along the border of the empire were states and people long hostile to Russia and by extension the Soviet Union. In Europe was the old bugbear Germany. Twice since 1900 had Germany fought Russia. Both occasions resulted in calamity for Russia. Since then, the bulk of Soviet defenses had been arrayed towards Europe. With Germany divided into three parts—a neutral Austria, a NATO-bound West Germany, and a Pact-bound East Germany—there appeared to be little immediate threat from Germany. Nevertheless, West Germany had become a major economic power by 1990. The Germans never could be trusted fully, so it was vital to maintain both great military strength in the area and a buffer zone in the form of the Eastern European states.

Along the southern edge of the Soviet Union were various Muslim states that were antipathetic towards the USSR. These nations included Turkey, Iran, and Afghanistan. Though incapable of invading the USSR outright, each of them was perfectly capable of supporting dissident movements of Muslim peoples inside the Soviet Union. In the event of a major distraction for the Soviet Union, Turkey and Iran could become quite dangerous.

In the Far East was the People's Republic of China. Since the Sino-Soviet break in the 1960's, the two great Communist powers had been at odds. Each strove to be the leader of the Communist world. Where once the friendship between China and the USSR had been deep, their rivalry was now intense. It was here that the hard-liners within Danilov's cabal, now led by Defense Minister Ivan Sauronski, sought their opportunity.

Since the death of Mao, China had moved along a road of increasing economic liberalization. While maintaining control over the political arena, the Chinese Communist Party had encouraged the Chinese to use their entrepreneurial talents. The result was a dramatic increase in the Chinese GNP throughout the late 1970's and 1980's. In the first half of the 1990's, China's economy continued to boom. The situation was an embarrassment to the Soviet Union.

The Chinese situation threatened to change the balance of power in Eurasia and beyond. Possessed of more than a billion people, China had only to achieve half the per capita income of the USSR for the Chinese GNP would dwarf that of the Soviet Union. At that point, the relative power of the Soviet and Chinese militaries would come to a reckoning.

Moreover, China was expansionist. She had no choice. China was critically short of a number of key strategic resources. Compared to the global average, China had less arable land, forest, grassland, fresh water, native coal, and native oil per person. China's massive and growing population put tremendous pressure on her leadership to take some kind of action to secure new land and new resources.

For decades, the Soviets had known that China cast covetous eyes at the vast tracts of Siberia. Soviet Siberia was under-populated while possessed of tremendous reserves of petroleum, minerals, and timber. The USSR did not have the people to fill and exploit Siberia properly, but China did. The Soviet hard-liners were convinced that the Chinese would have to make a move on Siberia sooner or later.

Adding to the Soviet problem with China was the example the Chinese set for other Communists around the world and even within the Soviet Union. Danilov's reforms notwithstanding, the Chinese economy offered more promise than the Soviet economy. By the 1980's, the Chinese vision of Communism was offering real competition to the Soviet vision. Throughout the 1990's, China continued to challenge the Soviets throughout the Third World and even in Eastern Europe. Something had to be done.

Worse, the Chinese were appealing to the Turkic peoples of Central Asia. Turkic-speaking tribes lived in far western China and throughout Soviet Central Asia. Though Danilov's actions offered some hope, the Chinese unfortunately continued to offer a brighter future for some of Soviet Central Asians through their Turkic cousins. Separatist movements were showing increasing signs of activity.

Led by Defense Minister Sauronski, a faction within Danilov's government began to see a possible solution to several of their problems. On the one hand, Danilov was getting out of control. He was reforming the economy, but he was also fostering a dangerous instinct for self-determination among the Soviet people. Danilov continued to seek cuts in the military budget, which would bring the state and the military into conflict with one another sooner or later. He continued to build trade with the West, which would give the West more leverage in its dealings with the Soviet Union. And he was permitting Eastern Europe to loosen its ideological, political, and economic ties to the USSR. Taken together, these acts might bring down the Soviet Union. Unfortunately, things were going

rather well for the moment. Support for Danilov throughout the Party was simply too high for the Sauronski crew to overthrow him.

On the other hand, there was China. Everywhere the Soviets looked in the Communist world, the Chinese were there competing with them. Even the Eastern Europeans were beginning to use Chinese ideas for controlling the body politic while allowing a semi-capitalist economy to flourish. Something had to be done about the other great Communist power.

By the end of 1994, the hard-liners at the top of the Soviet government had decided to force a war with China.

Chapter 4, The Sino-Soviet War:

Many have asked why the Soviet invasion of the People's Republic of China ultimately failed. Almost as many have put forth various hypotheses explaining the Soviet failure. These range from real contributing factors, like the low quality of Soviet small units, to the absurd, such as supposed covert battlefield aid given to the People's Liberation Army (PLA) by Shaolin monks. This author believes, however, that the root of the Soviet failure is the small size of the initial invasion force. The Far Eastern TVD committed fewer than thirty divisions, including separate regiments, to the initial invasion of Manchuria. The war in China became a massive expedition—an adventure intended to inflict a limited defeat on the PLA and on China.

The Chinese did not see things this way. The Soviet invasion presented China with a crisis of the first order. Manchuria was the heart of Chinese industry. The national capital at Beijing was at immediate risk. If the Soviets captured Manchuria and Beijing, it would not simply be a humiliation for the Chinese Communists. In all likelihood, it would be the end of their rule. Even if China could reclaim most or all of Manchuria in post-war negotiations, the destruction of industry and infrastructure in richest and most well-developed part of the People's Republic would set back China's ascension to superpower status by at least a generation. As a result, the Chinese threw virtually every tank and every rifle into the Northern War, as they came to call it.

The Soviets compounded their initial error by failing to either reinforce their forces in Manchuria or withdraw. Fresh divisions sent to the Far Eastern TVD through November 1996 amounted to about eight Soviet divisions. Additional numbers of Warsaw Pact divisions were sent—the equivalent of nine divisions. Although these reinforcements increased the Soviet presence in Manchuria by about sixty percent, it was only enough to stave off disaster—not to bring victory.

The Soviets might have achieved success in 1996. Unlike the Nazis in the Great Patriotic War, the Soviets were moving in the right direction. If they had captured Manchuria and Beijing, there is little reason to doubt that the Chinese government would have fallen. In any event, whether the new regime was Communist or otherwise, they probably would have come to the bargaining table. Of course it is impossible to say with certainty what

would have happened in China had the Soviets captured Manchuria and Beijing because they failed on both counts. Again, the Soviets failed to build their forces in Manchuria to the level required for victory.

The most obvious reason for this is the division in the senior leadership of the Soviet Union. As a reformist premier, Dmitri Danilov was concerned predominantly with rebuilding the economy. Fighting a preventive war with China ran absolutely contrary to Danilov's goals. Danilov was forced into war by a sub-set within his government led by Defense Minister Ivan Sauronski. Danilov could not stop a large majority in the Politburo from supporting Sauronski's drive for war. However, Sauronski was hindered by Danilov's determination to save some aspects at least of his hard-won economic progress. Danilov refused to go to general mobilization, and he was able to convince a majority of the Politburo that doing so would ruin the Soviet Union. And so the war in the Far East could neither be won with the forces neither committed nor abandoned as a bad idea.

The spark that ignited the Sino-Soviet War was a small-scale clash between a KGB Border Guard unit and a Chinese border defense force near the city of Khabarovsk on the Amur River on June 16, 1995. The tinder and fuel had been laid well in advance of the actual fighting by the arch-conservative elements of the Soviet Politburo. As a result, the fire spread quickly and became a major conflagration.

Led by Defense Minister Ivan Sauronski, a segment of the Danilov government had become disaffected with the reform policies of Premier Dmitri Danilov. Danilov had been selected as the front man of a hard-line Communist coup in 1989, replacing Mikhail Gorbachev. Over the next five years, Danilov demonstrated that he, too, was a reformist. Sauronski and his supporters began to worry that increasing liberalization of the Soviet economy would have grave effects on the Soviet political scene. Since coming to power, Danilov had made significant reductions in military funding while moving to cut the Soviet strategic arsenal in half. Thus far, Danilov had managed to keep things in hand—far better in hand, in fact, than Gorbachev had or than the Sauronskiites wanted.

The problem for the Sauronskiites was how to engineer a situation in which Danilov would fail, resulting in a loss of face. Unfortunately, he was doing well at virtually everything. The Soviet economy had grown by five percent in 1993 and 1994, outpacing most Western economies. During the first quarter of 1995, the Soviet economy was on track to do even better. Consumer goods, largely produced by cottage industries Danilov had empowered, were more available than they had been in decades. Artisans and small services were providing for needs long neglected by the state-run economy. The gap between Soviet agricultural production and the needs of the nation, daunting during the 1980's, was now within a measurable distance of closing. Indeed, it was possible that by the turn of the century the Soviet Union would be in a position to export food. Fruits, vegetables, spices, and other niceties were available in quantities and varieties never seen before in the USSR. The housing situation was better than it had been in thirty years. Despite a significant draw down, the military was basically content and loyal, due in no small part to Danilov's clever manipulation of the numbers and types of troops to be affected. Relations with the West were quite good, and industrial productivity was up.

Although Soviet citizens were complaining more publicly about their lives than they had in decades, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) supported Danilov and approved of his reforms. Even the KGB was loyal, largely because Danilov had done nothing to interfere with their privileged position.

War with China seemed to offer the Sauronskiites a chance to bring Danilov back under control. There would be a tendency for some of the power and influence inside the Politburo to switch to the Minister of Defense. At the same time, it seemed unlikely that Danilov would be very supportive of war with China. The Sauronskiites could use this situation to rally hard-line sentiment inside the Soviet Union and take effective control of the Soviet government.

Apparently, Sauronski really did not want to unseat Danilov. The former KGB operative still was enormously useful in his intended role as the public face of the regime. The Party liked him, and the West liked him. Sauronski merely wanted to shift the real power in the Kremlin away from Danilov and into his own hands. A short, violent war with China would fit the bill.

There were other potential benefits. China was getting too big for her boots. Chinese arms were competing more and more successfully with Soviet arms on the world market. China obviously was looking to become the dominant power in the western Pacific. Preventive war with China would put the Chinese back in their place and restore Soviet arms and industry to their appropriate place of dominance in the developing world.

Engineering conflict was easy. Border incidents along the lengthy frontier shared by China and the Soviet Union were regular. Chinese nationals crossed into the Soviet Union along the Amur River and points east of the river on a regular basis despite determined efforts by the KGB to keep the Soviet border airtight. An ugly incident or two, followed up by hot pursuit of Chinese “criminals” across the border would set things in motion. This is exactly what happened on June 16, 1995.

Ordinarily, local commanders would make an effort to cool things down. Instead, under the covert direction of the Soviet Minister of Defense, the local Soviets kept the pressure on. The battle quickly swelled to involve regimental-sized forces. For the next several days, fighting raged in the Khabarovsk region. On the 21st, the Soviets backed away.

Danilov attempted to get control of the situation. He contacted the Chinese premier, Zhu Rongji, in an effort to back both sides away. However, events had taken on a life of their own—aided, it must be admitted, by MVD (Soviet internal/border defense) actions. Cross-border artillery duels and even small-scale air raids continued as the two premiers talked.

Neither premier was interested either in war or in brinkmanship. Both were more interested in pursuing their own economic development. This is not to say that the premiers were terribly interested in extensive cooperation. They continued to see each other as rivals, especially in Africa and Asia. However, Danilov and Zhu both saw the

rivalry as non-belligerent in nature.

On both sides of the border were Politburos more interested in keeping the temperature high, however. While the Sauronskiites already had decided on war with China as a matter of policy, important players in the Chinese Politburo were equally determined not to back down from Soviet provocation. They viewed war with the Soviet Union as unlikely. The conventional balance of power was more favorable to China than it had been since Mao took control of the country. If the Soviets did invade, international condemnation of the Soviet Union would destroy the relationships Danilov had labored to build since 1990. The Soviets could rattle their swords, but they could not believe themselves capable of defeating the PLA in even a limited war.

This type of thinking frustrated UN efforts to bring some sort of settlement to the region throughout July and the first half of August. Despite the desire of both premiers to find a solution, their governments were bellicose. Forces on both sides of the border went to a higher state of alert, while supplies, air power, and fresh forces arrived from elsewhere in both countries.

The international community watched with growing apprehension. War between the Soviet Union and China would be the world's first direct confrontation between nuclear powers. No one could say what would happen, but the results could very well be catastrophic for the entire globe. Representatives from virtually every nation begged whoever they could reach in the Soviet and Chinese governments to come to some accommodation. Neither side was interested; convinced they could get what they wanted on the path they were taking.

On August 19 1995, the first echelon of Soviet forces in the Far Eastern TVD (Theater of War) crossed the border into China. The clash of the titans had begun.

In the summer of 1995, the forces available to the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics were lesser in number than the legions available in 1989. Nevertheless, the USSR still disposed awesome combat power. As a result of the draw down in the early 1990's and the ongoing modernization efforts in every branch of service, the Soviet conventional forces arguably were better equipped and more effective than they had been in 1989.

The Soviet Army disposed 3.5 million men organized into the equivalent of 185 divisions, not including separate tank regiments held at army level and above. The overwhelming majority of these divisions were heavy—either tank or mechanized (motor rifle). Only a fraction normally was maintained at full readiness, but replacements could be drawn from all the reserve formations.

The Soviet Army retained the basic characteristics that had marked it a decade before: balance in combined arms, a high degree of mechanization, a tremendous strength in artillery, a respectable combat support capability, and a highly professional officer corps. The Soviet fighting concept emphasized the operational level of planning and execution, with the army being the centerpiece of action. Offensive action was at the heart of Soviet

thinking, combining speed, shock, fire, and maneuver into a doctrine designed to bring Soviet forces to their assigned stop line within a very short period. At the same time, the Soviet Army retained significant weaknesses from the 1980's: a logistical capability that was much less than what was required, an inflexible battlefield behavior stemming from the operational-level mindset, and poor quality among the enlisted personnel of all ranks.

Soviet equipment was of mixed quality and characteristics. At the top end of the scale were excellent fighting vehicles like the T-90 and late T-80 MBTs. The most advanced Soviet anti-tank missiles were capable of defeating any tank in the Chinese inventory. The latest self-propelled artillery enjoyed long ranges, a high rate of fire, and good accuracy. Soviet electronics had improved significantly since the 1980's, and the Soviets enjoyed a clear advantage over the Chinese in the electronic warfare arena. In the early 1990's, the Soviet Army undertook a major reorganization to bring divisional equipment issue in line with existing inventories and doctrine. The best Soviet tanks were also the ones in the shortest supply. The same was true of almost every other major end item. In order to maximize the ability of the tank forces to strike deeply and decisively into the enemy rear, tank formations were given the best hardware available within their mobilization category. T-90s, T-80s, late-model T-72s, and T-64s were stripped from the motor rifle divisions and given to tank formations that were not considered to have adequate numbers of the most modern tanks. Next in priority were the motor rifle divisions attached to tank armies. Last in priority were motor rifle divisions assigned to combined arms armies and those in reserve. In the same fashion as tanks, other armored fighting vehicles, transportation, electronics, and the rest of the panoply of war was redistributed among the armies, divisions, and separate regiments of the Soviet Army. As a result of the reorganization, the Soviet divisions invading Manchuria possessed some of the most modern equipment in the Soviet arsenal, which gave them a substantial advantage over the Chinese defenders.

The Soviet Air Force of mid-1995 was somewhat smaller than it had been in 1990. Frontal Aviation and the Air Defense Force between them disposed slightly less than 7000 fixed-wing and rotary-wing combat aircraft in 1995, versus 7700 in 1990. However, combat power was actually increased vis-à-vis the maintenance load. The Soviets had decided to completely retire and sell off their Su-15 inventory, removing from service about 520 aircraft of dubious combat value. Half the 1990 inventory of Su-17 was removed, taking another 500 obsolescent aircraft out of service. Substantial numbers of MiG-21s, along with some MiG-25s and other aircraft, were taken out of service. Replacing them were smaller numbers of MiG-29s, MiG-31s, and Su-27s. Despite the higher maintenance requirements of the newer aircraft, their presence in smaller numbers served to decrease the overall maintenance hours by about three percent while improving air-to-air and air-to-ground combat performance by about ten percent.

Even more than their counterparts on the ground, the latest Soviet aircraft possessed impressive capabilities. The MiG-31 was one of the finest air superiority weapons in the world. Capable of tracking and attacking multiple aircraft at ranges greater than 30km, the MiG-31 presented a challenge of the first order to Western aircraft, to say nothing of the generally antiquated aircraft of the PLAAF [People's Liberation Army Air Force].

The shorter range MiG-29 capably filled the role of fighter-bomber, playing much the same role in the SAF as the F-16 Fighting Falcon did in the USAF. The Su-27 was another late-model airframe that gave the Soviets a high-performance fighter and attack platform.

Older Soviet aircraft were not nearly as impressive, though most of the airframes in the Soviet inventory in 1995 were very serviceable. The MiG-27 and MiG-23 were the Soviet equivalent of the USAF F-4 in its air superiority and ground attack roles, respectively. The MiG-25, a high-speed, high-altitude interceptor, had no counterpart in any Western air force. Its capabilities, though impressive, largely were wasted against the Chinese, who never attempted a high-altitude penetration of Soviet airspace with bombers. The MiG-21 was a basic fighter design dating from the 1960's but which had seen regular upgrades. Its performance was modest compared to Western designs of the same vintage, but the design represented a modestly capable fighter nevertheless. The Su-24 and Su-25 were attack aircraft comparable to the USAF F-111 and A-10, albeit with somewhat lesser overall capability.

Soviet air operations were characterized by centralized command, generally from the ground. Pilots enjoyed significantly fewer flying hours per annum than their Western counterparts, though their training was in line with what the PLAAF provided its pilots. Soviet pilots were not expected to show much initiative. Operations were planned and controlled centrally, and there was little latitude for pilot interpretation. The emphasis was on massive air battles that would make the most of the Soviet advantage in numbers and result in high attrition of enemy aircraft. Since the SAF enjoyed numerical superiority over NATO and China, the same operational concept would be employed in either theater.

The ground crews were a weakness. Most of the support personnel were draftees serving a three-year term. They required most of that time to become proficient. Thus the SAF was chronically short of experienced support personnel. This would have real effects on the turn-around time and overall availability of Soviet aircraft. Whereas Western aircraft could expect an extended sortie rate of two per day, at the beginning of the invasion of Manchuria the SAF might be able to coax a single sortie per day out of its aircraft over the long haul.

Overall, the SAF had matured greatly since the 1970's. The SAF had become a multi-dimensional air force in the Western sense, capable of providing close air support, reconnaissance at every level of operations, strategic bombing, dedicated air superiority, and the other missions assigned to Western air forces. The best Soviet aircraft were among the best in the world. All Soviet aircraft were robust and capable. Operational doctrine was good. Where the Soviets fell short was in the quality of its air and ground crews.

The Soviet Navy was intended to play a marginal role in the Sino-Soviet War. Though the Soviet Pacific Fleet possessed more than 180 ships--including two 40,000-ton carriers, twenty-two ballistic missile subs, nearly sixty nuclear and non-nuclear attack

subs, and twenty other major surface combatants—the Kremlin did not see much of a role for the Soviet Navy in the conflict. The ability of the Navy to offer direct support to operations in Manchuria was quite limited. Though raids by special operations and naval infantry along the Chinese coast south of Manchuria might have had beneficial effects, Danilov felt that large-scale attacks on Chinese installations and territory outside the war zone might be counterproductive by making the Chinese believe that Soviet war aims were greater than they really were. The tremendous ship-sinking capability of the Pacific Fleet was only useful if the Soviets intended to wage total war on China's economy. Since the war was supposed to be over in ninety days or less, there was no point in bringing international condemnation down upon the Soviet Union by sinking ships engaged in trade with China.

One area that caused concern among the more cautious Soviet planners was logistics. Danilov's draw down in the early 1990's had made literally thousands of trucks available for distribution among the remaining divisions, armies, and fronts. The ability of a modern army to consume supplies—especially fuel and ammunition—had grown so greatly since the Great Patriotic War that some planners felt even the windfall in trucks might not serve to keep the Soviet Army moving forward as doctrine demanded. What use was it for the motor rifle divisions to blast gaps in the enemy's defenses if the tank formations could not exploit them for want of fuel, they asked. However, the prevailing mood at the higher echelons was that the Soviet Army and its comrades in the air were so superior to the People's Liberation Army that any logistics problems could be solved as they arose.

The People's Liberation Army, the ground forces of the People's Republic of China, disposed the equivalent of about 90 divisions in mid-1995. Two million men were organized into seven Military Regions, which were further broken down into twenty-eight Military Districts and three Garrison Commands. The main combat forces included eighty infantry divisions (including six mechanized and nine motorized), ten tank divisions, three artillery divisions, fifty independent engineer regiments, and numerous independent air defense and artillery regiments. In addition, the PLA Air Force disposed four airborne divisions, plus supporting troops.

In the mid-1990's, the PLA was in the midst of remaking itself. Like the Soviets, the Chinese traded mass for quality by drawing down some of their forces in the late 1980's and early 1990's. About a quarter of the divisions on the books in the early 1980's were gone, and nearly a million men had been released as a result.

Man-for-man, the PLA was a better force than the Soviet Army. Though highly politicized, the Chinese troops were somewhat more professional than their Soviet counterparts. The PLA had a much higher proportion of long-term soldiers. However, doctrine and weapons were outdated. There was no recent experience in warfare. The Army had not made the transition from an infantry force oriented towards attrition warfare to a mechanized force trained and organized for mobile warfare. Most of the equipment used by the Chinese was outdated. Though the PLA had an impressive

inventory of tanks (more than 7,500 MBTs, versus about 10,000 MBTs in the Soviet arsenal), few of them were modern tanks like the Type 85. Comparatively little of the artillery was self-propelled. Infantry fighting vehicles and armored personnel carriers, amounting to about 2,000 vehicles, were sufficient to mechanize the infantry in ten tank and six mechanized infantry divisions; however, this meant that the bulk of the PLA's infantry was essentially foot-mobile.

Like the PLA, The People's Liberation Army Air Force (PLAAF) was organized along Soviet lines. The quantity of aircraft was impressive: more than 5,000 combat aircraft of all types. However, most of the Chinese airframes were, in 1995, badly antiquated. Nearly half the force was made up of J-6 fighters, which were essentially Chinese copies of the MiG-19. The J-7 fighter, a MiG-21 clone, made up about a tenth of the force, while about 600 J-8 variants gave the PLAAF its teeth. Roughly the equivalent of an early-model Mirage III, the J-8 was an indigenous design with some promise. However, against the state-of-the-art MiGs and Sukhoi fighters of the SAF, the J-8 was badly outmatched.

Like the SAF, the PLAAF emphasized mass over quality and centralized control from the ground over pilot initiative. The Chinese pilots did not get many more flight hours per annum than their Soviet counterparts. Electronics and missiles generally were as outmoded as the airframes. One area where the Chinese enjoyed an advantage was in ground crew quality. Because retention of first-term technicians was higher, the ground crews supporting Chinese aircraft were markedly superior to those of the SAF.

The People's Liberation Navy (PLAN) had undergone a major expansion in the 1970's and 1980's. The PLAN had more than 800 ships, though the overwhelming majority of them were patrol-craft under a thousand tons. Nevertheless, these ships were generally armed with missiles, torpedoes, or sufficient gunnery to give the Chinese a powerful presence in their territorial waters. China only had a handful of nuclear subs, but the PLAN disposed more than a hundred diesel-electric boats. Here again, long-term service resulted in a significantly higher level of professionalism than enjoyed by the Soviet Navy. Counterbalancing this was the fact that the technology employed by PLAN generally was outdated by Soviet standards.

Overall, the PLA (including its aerial and naval counterparts) was a large force in transition. Professionalism was on the rise, as was the level of mechanization. However, the PLA generally lacked the technology and degree of mechanization of the Soviet Army. Accordingly, the Chinese had a much lesser capability in terms of logistics, mobility, communications, and electronic warfare (EW).

In short, the Soviet plan was to destroy the forces of the Shenyang Military Region, which encompassed Manchuria, as close to the border as possible and then occupy Manchuria. A supporting thrust out of Mongolia aimed at Beijing would tie down the forces of the Beijing Military Region while the main effort was underway in Manchuria. If the Chinese had not called for a cease-fire and negotiations by the time the Soviet Army had secured Manchuria, the Soviet forces in Manchuria would strike southwest and

seize Beijing.

The Far Eastern TVD disposed twenty-three divisions, a tank corps, and four separate airmobile brigades in two fronts, 1st Far East and 2nd Far East. By nightfall on August 18, these forces were more-or-less arrayed along their start lines. 1st Far East Front was the main effort. Seventeenth Army, with one tank and three motor rifle divisions, occupied positions northwest of Vladivostok. Fifth Army, also with one tank and three motor rifle divisions, was deployed southwest of Khabarovsk. Nineteenth Army, disposing one tank and three motor rifle divisions, was in position around Blagoveshchensk. Held under front control was Eighth Tank Corps, comprised of four tank brigades and a motor rifle brigade. Each of the armies also had a separate air assault brigade attached. 2nd Far East Front, with Fifteenth Army and Thirty-Ninth Army under command, was to provide the secondary effort. Fifteenth Army, with two tank and two motor rifle divisions, was standing by just across the river from the Chinese city of Manzhouli. Thirty-Ninth Army, with two tank and two Mongolian motor rifle divisions, was moving southeast from Ulaan Baatar during the night of August 18-19.

Facing the four Soviet armies and independent tank poised to invade Manchuria were the five group armies of Shenyang Military Region, plus several border guard divisions. Opposite Seventeenth Army was Fifth (Mountain) Group Army with four infantry divisions. Arrayed against Fifth Army was Twenty-Fourth Group Army with one mechanized, one motorized, and two infantry divisions. Deployed south of Nineteenth Army was Thirty-Fifth Group Army with one tank, one motorized, and two infantry divisions. In position around Hailar to block any advance by Fifteenth Army along the pre-1905 Trans-Siberian Railroad was Twenty-Third Group Army with one tank, one mechanized, and two motorized divisions. In the center of the ring was First Armored Group Army with two tank and two mechanized divisions, positioned to move in any direction to thwart any Soviet breakthrough. Protecting the national capital of China was the Beijing Military Region, which disposed three tank, seventeen infantry, one airborne, one artillery, and three border guard divisions in six group armies.

The Chinese defensive plan was to combine the combat power of the Shenyang Military Region, which possessed the lion's share of China's armored and mechanized forces, with the traditional Chinese defensive strategy of trading space for time and the use of citizen's militia in the invader's rear areas. The forces in place would give ground as necessary until sufficient reinforcements could be brought up from the vast interior of China to launch a decisive counterattack.

Against the impressive numbers of the Chinese, the forces committed to the invasion seemed inadequate to many in the Kremlin and, indeed, to many in the Soviet armed forces. The Shengang Military Region had a 1.5:1 advantage in manpower over the aggregate of Soviet forces invading Manchuria. The forces available in the Beijing Military Region would give the Chinese a huge manpower advantage. The Chinese enjoyed interior lines of communication, and all they had to do was avoid being defeated.

The Soviets were banking on their superior mobility and air power to overcome their

numerical deficiencies. The four invading Soviet armies had more tanks than the five group armies defending Manchuria, and the Soviet tanks generally were superior to those of the Chinese. The Soviets enjoyed a tremendous advantage in mobility, especially in terms of light armored fighting vehicles and artillery. The SAF was confident that they could take control of the skies over Manchuria quickly and provide decisive support to the ground forces. Sauronski was confident that provided the diversionary attack by Thirty-Ninth Army and air action could prevent the main body in the Beijing Military Region from intervening in Manchuria, the Army could bring the campaign in China to a close quickly and successfully.

In the hours before dawn on August 19, 1995 the Soviets set in motion their invasion of the People's Republic of China. Spetznaz teams attacked critical assets throughout Manchuria. Fighter-bombers and bombers struck targets throughout the Shenyang Military Region and as far away as Tianjin, concentrating their efforts on knocking out the Chinese air defenses. In the pre-dawn gloom, Soviet guns and multiple rocket launchers delivered a frightful bombardment on the Chinese border divisions.

By sunrise, Seventeenth, Fifth, Nineteenth, and Fifteenth Armies were rolling across the border. Preceded by light ground forces and by aerial attack groups, the four armies invading Manchuria smashed through the border divisions of Shenyang Military Region. During the next day, advanced elements of Seventeenth Army came in contact with units of Fifth (Mountain) Group Army quite near the border. CINC Shenyang Military Region had opted to locate this infantry-pure group army further forward than any of his other commands because the light forces were optimized for the rough terrain of the Wanda Shan. Elsewhere, the Soviets advanced against Chinese covering forces.

In the air, the SAF demonstrated its superiority from the start of operations. Attacks on Chinese airfields by strike aircraft and by surface-to-surface missiles carrying persistent chemical agents caused enormous disruption. Despite reasonable precautions, the Chinese had dozens of aircraft destroyed on the ground, while hundreds more were grounded by damage to their runways. Soviet MiG-31s and MiG-29s shot down dozens more in the first few hours of the war. Strike craft and theater ballistic missiles struck radar sites and SAM batteries throughout Manchuria and around Beijing, badly degrading the Chinese ground-based air defenses on the first day of combat. Long-range interdiction and strike missions dropped bridges and attacked logistical hubs throughout southern Manchuria to impede the flow of supplies and reinforcements from the main body of China.

China's response was swift. The Politburo called the nation to full mobilization immediately. Within hours of the initial attacks, Chinese bombers were en route to targets inside the Soviet Union. Plans for resistance movements behind enemy lines were put into effect as Soviet forces began their advance into Manchuria. The movement of reinforcements to the Shenyang Military Region was stepped up as much as possible.

On the diplomatic front, China called for the UN to denounce the Soviet invasion. The Chinese ambassador introduced a resolution calling for the Security Council to guarantee

nuclear support for China. The measure failed, but most Western nations issued stinging rebukes of the Soviets for resorting to force to settle the “border incident”.

There was no use of nuclear weapons at this point, though the nuclear forces of the USSR and the PRC remained at maximum alert. The Soviets saw no advantage in their deployment. Traditional Soviet thinking notwithstanding, the Soviet Politburo concluded that the dangers of Chinese retaliation and of international opinion more than counterbalanced any battlefield benefits that might be derived from the use of nuclear weapons. The Kremlin therefore issued a statement that the Soviet Union would not initiate nuclear warfare, though the USSR absolutely reserved the right to retaliate in kind to any Chinese use of nuclear weapons.

For their part, the Chinese leadership was not keen to escalate to a nuclear contest. China was horribly outmatched in the nuclear arena by the USSR. Even if China launched a successful first strike against the Soviet Union, the Soviets would have more than enough warheads and delivery systems left to destroy China as a nation. Beijing was not about to be the first to cross the nuclear threshold. Publicly, China issued a statement mirroring that of the Soviet Union: though China pledged against first use of nuclear weapons, she would retaliate if the enemy used them.

Over the days immediately following the outbreak of hostilities, 1st Far East Front and Fifteenth Army made good progress. Seventeenth Army, faced with an intransigent defense in restricted terrain by Fifth (Mountain) Group Army, skillfully employed its integral air assault brigade and the 106th Guards Air Assault Division—sent down from theater control for the operation—along with plentiful close air support by Mi-8 and Mi-24 helicopters and Su-24 and Su-25 fixed-wing attack aircraft to split the Chinese defense into three components no longer able to support each other. With Soviet airborne troops in key positions and Soviet aircraft roaming the airspace above Fifth (Mountain) Group Army, the rough terrain turned against the Chinese. Two infantry divisions were shattered in as many days. The remainder of the army fell back in some disorder.

Striking south through the Lesser Khingar Range, Nineteenth Army encountered Thirty-Fifth Group Army in the rough ground near the dividing line of the range. The Chinese were defending two main axes with their light infantry divisions forward and mobile divisions behind them. Making the most of their mobile firepower, the Soviets concentrated the bulk of their artillery on a single axis and broke through the defenses. Though Thirty-Fifth Group Army was able to inflict losses on the attackers, the Chinese were forced to give ground over several days of hard fighting.

Having dispatched the border guard division opposite Khabarovsk, Fifth Army moved through the marshy terrain on either side of the Sungari River. Badly outmatched in tanks and self-propelled artillery, Twenty-Fourth Group Army had been assigned to defend as far forward as possible. The Chinese reasoned that the soft ground would prevent the Soviets from making good use of their mobility. As the only good roads in the area were two single-lane strips along either side of the Sungari, the Chinese intended to force the Soviets to attack down a single heavily-defended slot. Here again, however, Soviet air

power played a crucial role. Fixed- and rotary-wing assets roamed behind the Chinese front lines, attacking command-and-control assets and artillery units. However, Fifth Army was forced to move fairly slowly through a Chinese defense that managed to leapfrog backwards with great difficulty but fair success.

Fifteenth Army advanced through Hailar and towards Qiqihar with minimal opposition. Twenty-Third Group Army was waiting on the eastern side of the Greater Khingar Range. CINC Shenyang MR chose to defend there because Twenty-Third Group Army enjoyed roughly the same level of mobility as Fifteenth Army. A defensive battle just west of Qiqihar would give the Chinese the advantage of shorter lines of communication and additional proximity to friendly air bases.

Fifteenth Army and Twenty-Third Group Army met west of Qiqihar on August 27. Several days of hard fighting and maneuver ensued. By the end of the month, the two forces were deadlocked.

The Chinese were discovering that the combination of mechanized and non-mechanized forces in their group armies was working against them. The attacking Soviets were able to concentrate their forces for decisive local superiorities almost at will. The non-mechanized divisions among the Chinese formations were unable to respond to rapid changes on the battlefield, resulting in many formations being bypassed or surrounded and annihilated. On some occasions, the foot mobile infantry was able to establish static defenses in depth and thus repulse a Soviet attack. However, the Soviet second echelons often found a way around the static defenses. Chinese attempts to use their mechanized forces to intercept the second echelons typically resulted in meeting engagements where the Soviet air superiority and superiority in tanks gave the invaders a significant advantage.

Soviet use of chemical weapons was widespread in this phase of operations. The Chinese replied as best they could, using low-flying aircraft, multiple rocket launchers, and short-range ballistic missiles to deliver persistent and non-persistent agents on Soviet troop concentrations. Both sides suffered significantly from chemical use. However, the Chinese generally fared worse because use of persistent agents tended to hamper their foot-mobile formations more than the mechanized formations of the Soviets. Also, civilian casualties were many times those of the military. As one advisor pointed out to Zhu, there could be no citizens' militia in the enemy's rear if chemical weapons killed everyone.

Anxious to find some way of limiting the use of chemical weapons, the Chinese used surface-to-surface missiles to attack railheads and other important logistical sites in Khabarovsk and along the Trans-Siberian Railroad with persistent agents. The effect was two-fold: military traffic was disrupted, and casualties among the Soviet citizenry skyrocketed. Soon thereafter, the Chinese ambassador to the UN delivered an offer to the Soviet ambassador. China would cease its use of chemical weapons if the USSR would.

By the end of August, the Soviets had achieved most of what they wanted through the use

of chemicals. Air bases that had nearly been shut down by use of chemicals in the opening days of the war had been hit repeatedly by more conventional means. Ruined runways and dead repair crews obviated much of the need for an ongoing chemical bombardment of the airfields in Manchuria. After an initial spike of casualties, the Chinese had learned the appropriate protective measures. Chinese losses continued, but they were much less than they had been. The Soviets were losing troops to chemicals, too. More importantly, the overall effect of an ongoing chemical exchange was to slow the tempo of combat. Communications were hampered, and the need for chemical reconnaissance and decontamination was robbing the advance of its momentum. Use of chemical weapons was costing the USSR something on the international diplomatic front as well. For all these reasons, the Soviets accepted the Chinese offer of a mutual moratorium on the use of chemical weapons on August 30.

By August 30, Nineteenth Army had pushed Thirty-Fifth Group Army nearly back to Hailun. The Chinese light infantry was nearly gone, having been left behind during several forced withdrawals. Where possible, the Soviets had bypassed masses of defending infantry and had bottled them up with smaller detachments of motor rifle troops. As a result, Nineteenth Army was in decent shape as it prepared to enter the flatter, lower terrain north of Harbin. Coming up behind Nineteenth Army was Eighth Tank Corps.

CINC Shenyang Military Region decided to use First Armored Group Army to parry Eighth Tank Corps in the Hailun area. He hoped to smash the tank corps, thereby bringing the enemy's penetration in the north to a halt. Then he intended to shift his armored combat power west to Qiqihar, where Fifteenth Army and Twenty-Third Group Army were still tearing into each other.

The Soviets were able to observe the movement of First Armored Group Army with aerial reconnaissance and satellites. With Seventeenth Army now more-or-less in control along its axis of advance, the SAF switched its main attack effort to the area north of Harbin. First Armored Group Army received substantial damage from air attack and SSM attack along its march route.

Nevertheless, CINC Shenyang Military Region threw First Armored Group Army into combat against Nineteenth Army on September 3 and put the much-damaged Thirty-Fifth Group Army on the counterattack. Almost simultaneously, though, Eighth Tank Corps arrived and slammed into Thirty-Fifth Group Army on its left flank. The badly weakened Thirty-Fifth Group Army collapsed under the onslaught of hundreds of late-model T-80s, while Nineteenth Army just managed to hold its own against First Armored Group Army. The fighting continued for three more days, during which time First Armored Group Army inflicted serious damage on Nineteenth Army before being compelled to turn its focus to Eighth Tank Corps. At the end of the third day, First Armored Group Army and the remnants of Thirty-Fifth Group Army were withdrawing towards Harbin.

During the fighting at Hailun, Seventeenth Army changed its axis of advance from Jilin to Harbin. The army detached a single division which drove straight north and into the

operational rear of Twenty-Fourth Group Army. Threatened by envelopment, Twenty-Fourth Group Army fell back before Fifth Army. The mobile formations simply abandoned their light infantry and any broken-down vehicles. Fifth (Mountain) Group Army, straggling back towards Jilin, could do nothing.

Pulling itself together, Nineteenth Army pursued First Armored Group Army south towards Harbin. Eighth Tank Corps moved west to take Twenty-Third Group Army from behind at Qiqihar. The Chinese here began to disengage from Fifteenth Army and head south.

Fifth Army kept up its pressure on Twenty-Fourth Group Army, which was rapidly disintegrating at its retreat westward became a rout. The presence of Seventeenth Army's 95th Tank Division astride the principal line of communication for Twenty-Fourth Group Army threw the group army into a panic. CINC Shenyang Military Region wanted to use First Armored Group Army, now absorbing replacements and resupplying in the Harbin area, to break out Twenty-Fourth Group Army; but the bulk of Seventeenth Army was now approaching Harbin from the southeast. The Chinese opted instead to attack Seventeenth Army with First Armored Group Army and use the PLAAF to help Twenty-Fourth Group Army break out. Harbin's defense would be entrusted to the remnants of Thirty-Fifth Group Army and the recently arrived Ninth Group Army, which had moved north from the Beijing Military Region with its three infantry divisions.

In the event, the PLAAF was unable to give decisive support to Twenty-Fourth Group Army. The SAF had been waiting for just such a move. MiG-31s, MiG-29s, and Su-27s ripped the attacking flights of J-8s, J-7s, and J-6s to shreds. Though some Chinese aircraft were able to deliver their ordnance against 95th Tank Division, the air effort generally was thwarted with heavy losses. The Chinese fared no better on the ground, where the Type 69 tanks used by Twenty-Fourth Group Army were massacred by the late-model T-64s of 95th Tank Division. By nightfall on September 9, Twenty-Fourth Group Army had ceased to exist, and the Soviets would collect a bag of nearly 50,000 prisoners.

Though hit hard by First Armored Group Army southeast of Harbin, Seventeenth Army retained its balance by giving ground. The situation was precarious for the Soviets because their stocks of fuel, ammunition, and spares were low, as was vehicle readiness. Had the Chinese been able to muster more combat power, they might have inflicted a serious defeat on Seventeenth Army. However, First Armored Group Army was itself in poor shape. The Chinese attack ran out of steam in the afternoon of September 10, whereupon the Chinese mechanized force withdrew to Harbin.

Further west, Fifteenth Army and Eighth Tank Corps closely pursued Twenty-Third Group Army as the Chinese withdrew south towards Tao'en. With Soviet columns slashing at them, the Chinese were forced to abandon hundreds of damaged and broken-down vehicles. The group army managed to get across the Tao'er River and establish a defense on the right bank that discouraged the Soviets from pursuing them for the time being.

Having eliminated Twenty-Fourth Group Army and having badly damaged Twenty-Third, Thirty-Fifth, Fifth (Mountain), and First Armored Group Armies, CINC Far Eastern TVD began to tighten the noose at Harbin. First Armored Group Army had withdrawn to Harbin, where Ninth Group Army and the rump of Thirty-Fifth Group Army were in defensive positions. Nineteenth Army was probing the city's defenses from the north. Seventeenth Army was still collecting itself, but the army was capable of swinging to the south and cutting off the enemy's supply lines and escape route from Harbin. Fifth Army, which was still in quite good shape, was mopping up Twenty-Fourth Group Army along the Sungari River northeast of Harbin and would be available for action at Harbin soon. Eighth Tank Corps received orders to begin moving east from Tao'en along the right bank of the Sungari to block the Chinese escape from Harbin.

Recognizing the danger, CINC Shenyang Military Region ordered First Armored Group Army and the remnants of Thirty-Fifth Group Army out of Harbin and across the Sungari on September 12. Ninth Group Army with its three light infantry divisions would remain in Harbin to deny the Soviets use the logistical hub and Harbin's industry. Soviet air power descended on the southward-moving columns like thunderbolts. In a scene strongly reminiscent of the so-called "Highway of Death" from Operation Desert Storm, Soviet aircraft kept up a terrible bombardment of Chinese forces withdrawing along the roads south out of Harbin. Vehicle losses tolled in the thousands. Chinese casualties soared into the hundreds of thousands. Despite a spirited defense by the PLAAF and ground-based air defense units, Soviet strike craft severed the main bridges across the Sungari. Hundreds of vehicles had to be abandoned on the right bank of the Sungari as Chinese troops swam across—many without any weapons or equipment. By September 15, Eighth Tank Corps and Seventeenth Army had sealed off the north bank of the Sungari River. First Armored Group Army had established a weak defense on the left bank of the river, and the Soviets were not at this point inclined to push onward.

On the Beijing front, Thirty-Ninth Army with its two Soviet tank divisions and two Mongolian motor rifle divisions had crossed the Chinese border on August 21. The mechanized invaders made short work of a border defense division in gently rolling terrain that facilitated mobile operations. Thereafter, Thirty-Ninth Army pushed southeast towards Beijing.

The Chinese recognized that this Soviet effort was nothing more than a diversion. However, there was a real danger to the diversion. If the invaders were allowed to get too close to the national capital, a panic would ensue that not even the most ruthless control of information could prevent. Therefore, Beijing Military Region had to meet the enemy as far from the capital as was practicable.

Sixteenth and Thirtieth Group Armies were dispatched to intercept Thirty-Ninth Army. Each of the group armies possessed three non-mechanized infantry divisions and a tank division. Twenty-First Group Army, also with three infantry divisions and a tank division, was retained in reserve around Beijing. Determined to offer some immediate support to the Shenyang Military Region, the Chinese ordered Ninth Group Army and

Fifteenth Group Army, each with three infantry divisions, to Manchuria.

In the generally open terrain west of Zhangziakou, Thirty-Ninth Army met the two advancing group armies. The Soviets used their mobility to the utmost, outmaneuvering the slow foot-mobile Chinese infantry and concentrating their combat power against the Chinese tank divisions in turn. Over the course of a week, Thirty-Ninth Army dealt a series of stinging defeats to Sixteenth and Thirtieth Group Armies. While the 1st Far East Front and Fifteenth Army smashed the withdrawing Chinese in Manchuria, Thirty-Ninth Army steadily whittled away at the Chinese group armies northwest of Beijing.

After September 16, with 1st Far East Front in control of the Tao'er River as far upstream as Tao'en and along the southern length of the Sungari past Fuyu and nearly as far upstream as Jilin, the Soviet advance came to a temporary halt. The respite came none too soon for the Chinese. Twenty-Fourth Group Army and its four divisions were gone. Thirty-Fifth Group Army, having lost its two infantry divisions before the withdrawal from Harbin, had almost nothing left. First Armored Group Army had lost 80% of its soft-skinned vehicles and 70% of its AFVs since first entering combat in August. Fifth (Mountain) Group Army had lost two of its four divisions, though the remaining two had absorbed some replacements and was in decent shape. Twenty-Third Group Army, occupying defensive positions south of Tao'en, was the most combat-ready of the original five group armies of Shenyang Military Region; however, the group army had lost about forty percent of its vehicles and much heavy equipment. Ninth Group Army was isolated at Harbin with little prospect for relief. Already, Nineteenth Army and Fifth Army were pushing spearheads into the city.

The Soviets also had been roughly handled by the Chinese defense. In truth, they had reached their present line wheezing and stumbling. Losses among the infantry had been higher than expected. Though modern Soviet tanks proved superior to the Chinese tanks, losses to mechanical failure had been enormous. Unrecovered, broken-down vehicles languished along the roads all the way back to the Soviet borders. The logistical system had been stretched to its limit keeping the advance going, despite the fact that the spearheads grew smaller the further the Soviet Army advanced. The consumption of every category of expendables was significantly higher than anticipated.

The first phase of the Sino-Soviet War was just about at an end. In an amazing campaign, the Soviets had conquered the northern third of Manchuria in less than four weeks. They had destroyed or badly damaged five Chinese group armies, and a sixth was surrounded and ready to be smashed at Harbin. The Soviets had killed or captured 175,000 Chinese troops. A staggering 1,500 MBTs had been destroyed or captured—a fifth of the entire Chinese tank park. Hundreds of field pieces and mortars had fallen into Soviet hands, along with vast quantities of equipment. Nowhere had the Chinese inflicted a serious reversal on the Soviets.

There were several factors involved in the early Soviet successes. To some degree, the Soviet war fighting theory had been applied and proven beyond doubt. Having seized the initiative, the Soviets were able to apply superior mobility and firepower to concentrate at

decisive points on the battlefield. Soviet tanks, anti-tank missiles, and artillery generally were superior to what the Chinese were using. The Soviet ability to conduct photoreconnaissance and signals reconnaissance was vastly superior to that of the Chinese. The Soviets were had air superiority virtually from the onset of operations, and they were able to develop local air supremacy almost at will.

Some factors deserve more attention because their role diminished in the days after mid-September 1995. The Soviets entered the war with a distinct advantage in the arena of electronic warfare (EW). Soviet capabilities in jamming and direction finding meant that the significant qualitative edge possessed by Chinese soldiers was offset by their inability to communicate. Headquarters and artillery units often received prompt attention from Soviet long-range artillery and aircraft even when they were able to talk to each other. Lack of coordination robbed the Chinese defense of much of its potential. By mid-September, however, the Chinese were beginning to find remedies for their deficiencies in EW. Low-tech methods, landlines, and a more flexible command-and-control system enabled them to restore at least some of their communications ability. Later, Western hardware would level the EW playing field.

Another key factor in the rapid Soviet advance was air power. Soviet intelligence was greatly aided by recon flights; forward-operating ground forces were able to summon close air support (CAS) in a timely fashion; and the Soviet lines of communication generally were kept free of enemy air action. Fixed-wing and rotary-wing assets were equally valuable players. In particular, Soviet Mi-8 and Mi-24 helicopters played a tremendously valuable role in attacking Chinese mobile forces moving behind the front lines. Large groups of helicopter gunships using rockets and cannon slashed supply convoys and truck-mounted infantry units to pieces, while helicopters with anti-tank missiles wrecked havoc among the Chinese mechanized units.

By mid-September, though, the Soviets rapidly were losing their advantage in the air. Deferred maintenance requirements were catching up with fixed-wing and rotary-wing airframes alike. Losses to mechanical failure were growing in number. More and more aircraft were grounded. As a result, the Soviets were losing their ability to attack the enemy from the air and protect their own troops. The fact that the front line had moved so far forward without allowing the air bases to catch up only exacerbated the problem.

For their part, the Chinese were catching on to Soviet operational patterns. In the future, they would thicken the ground-based air defenses accompanying mobile forces. Better use of the existing assets yielded would yield some results as well.

Behind the front lines, the Soviets already were experiencing attacks on their supply lines by Chinese militia and special operations personnel. As of mid-September the problem was little more than a nuisance. The problem would grow.

Though the forces of 1st Far East Front, now including Fifteenth Army, were catching their breath along the Sungari River, the Kremlin already was urging CINC Far Eastern TVD to begin the next stage of the conflict. The Soviet leadership wanted to have its

forces in Shenyang by mid-October, beyond which time they could not count on good campaign weather. Though CINC Far Eastern TVD wanted to give his divisions and air regiments a full week to rest, resupply, and conduct maintenance, he was inclined to move at the urging of the Kremlin. The remnants of the original forces of Shenyang Military Region were located mostly in the Changchun area. If the Soviets moved quickly, they could catch this group and finish them off. The longer the Soviets waited, the more Chinese reinforcements would arrive in Manchuria.

Over the surprisingly vehement protests of the army commanders and the division commanders of 1st Far East Front, the Soviet forces in Manchuria began rolling forward again on September 20, 1995. After a month of heavy fighting and a rapid advance through Manchuria, the Soviet ground forces were in poor condition. Vehicle losses to enemy action and mechanical failure had been high. Between combat and non-combat losses in the truck park of 1st Far East Front and the increasing distance of the front line from friendly territory, the Soviet logistical system in Manchuria already was straining badly. Losses among the infantry were high, and casualties had reached 45,000. The troops were exhausted. (In a portent of what was to come, political officers arrested two divisional commanders and three regimental commanders who refused to send their formations forward without more rest and replacements.) Nevertheless, supported by air and artillery preparation of the Chinese positions on the south side of the Sungari and Tao'er Rivers, light Soviet forces crossed the water on their own to secure bridging locations. At Harbin, Fifth and Nineteenth Armies already had been slogging their way into the city against determined resistance by Ninth Group Army.

The Chinese were horrified. Their forces in Manchuria were in appalling shape. Twenty-Third Group Army, with one tank, one mechanized, and two motorized divisions, was centered on Tao'en. Of the group armies in Manchuria, Twenty-Third was in the best shape. The group army had lost nearly half its fighting vehicles and about as many trucks and support vehicles. Artillery strength was down by a third, and ammunition was in short supply. No combat battalion in the group army had more than seventy-five percent of its authorized manpower; some were down to forty percent.

North of Changchun was First Armored Group Army. The group army had absorbed virtually all the remaining fighting vehicles from Thirty-Fifth Group Army. Thirty-Fifth Group Army also had surrendered many of its (relatively) intact units to rebuild the First Armored. As a result, the First Armored disposed four heavy divisions that were at about sixty percent of their authorized combat strength. CINC Shenyang MR had assigned the group army the mission of holding the line of the Sungari while reinforcements continued to move into Manchuria.

Thirty-Fifth Group Army was in assembly areas around Changchun. Gutted to provide replacements for the First Armored, the Thirty-Fifth was absorbing units arriving in the area. Already an airborne division had arrived from the Beijing MR, and more forces were on their way.

Southeast of Changchun, Fifth (Mountain) Group Army had established defensive

positions based on the rail line running south from Jilin. The Fifth had absorbed a light infantry division from the Beijing MR, and replacements had brought the two surviving original divisions to about eighty percent of authorized strength. The Fifth was assigned to protect the right flank of the main defensive effort anchored in the Changchun region.

The Soviet attack started in the center, based along a road-and-rail system connecting Harbin and Changchun. Seventeenth Army opened the effort with prodigious air and artillery support. Against stubborn resistance, the Soviets established two bridgeheads by nightfall. First Armored Group Army threw considerable combat power into a counterstroke to smash the bridgeheads. At a high price, the Chinese sealed off and destroyed the bridgehead. Soviet artillery and armed helicopters destroyed large numbers of Chinese AFVs as they moved forward.

Further west, Eighth Tank Corps established a bridgehead in the Fuyu area. Heavy units were soon across, and the corps quickly initiated a drive oriented to the southwest on Changchun. The Soviets hoped to fix First Armored Group Army south of the Sungari with Seventeenth Army and envelop the defenders with Eighth Tank Corps.

On the far right flank of 1st Far East Front, Fifteenth Army launched a series of probes against Twenty-Third Group Army. This action was intended to fix the defenders in place and prevent any of the mobile forces from interfering in the action unfolding around Changchun.

With Eighth Tank Corps across the Sungari in strength, CINC Shenyang MR saw that the holding action of First Armored Group Army could easily become a trap. Though he was loathe to give up good positions south of the river, he ordered a withdrawal to Changchun. The Soviets quickly gave chase.

At Harbin, Fifth and Nineteenth Armies had used brute fire to overcome determined resistance by Ninth Group Army. By September 21, Fifth Army had captured the city center. For the next three days, Nineteenth Army mopped up pockets of resistance while Fifth Army was pulled out of the city to support operations further south.

By nightfall on September 21, Eighth Tank Corps was probing Chinese defensive positions northwest of Changchun. Seventeenth Army had re-established bridgeheads across the Sungari and was nipping at the heels of the First Armored as the Chinese mobile forces withdrew. CINC Shenyang MR decided that he lacked the strength to hold Chengchan as things stood, and he ordered First Armored Group Army to pass through the city and hold open a supply route on the south side of the city. Thirty-Fifth Group Army would hold the city as long as possible.

Eighth Tank Corps bypassed Changchun to the west and hit First Armored Group Army on the Chinese left flank. Soviet tanks penetrated the Chinese line and severed the main lines of communication to the south. First Armored Group Army now began to retire towards the road-and-rail junction at Siping, where the newly arrived Eighth Group Army with three infantry divisions was preparing defensive positions.

At this point, the Soviet offensive was on its last legs. The logistical situation had become intolerable, and the manpower situation was not much better. Eighth Tank Corps was fighting south of Changchun without being able to trace a single rail line or major road back to Soviet-controlled territory. The corps was being sustained by airdrops and by the action of medium- and heavy-lift helicopters. The corps chief logistician was reporting that he expected the corps to run out of fuel and ammunition at any hour. The tank battalions were at one-third to one-half their normal strength. The corps would not be able to take Siping if the Chinese offered any serious resistance there; and in any event, Eighth Tank Corps lacked the infantry strength to dig out the Chinese infantry that were clearly digging in at Siping in force.

Elsewhere, the Soviet situation was no better. Seventeenth Army was attacking into Changchun. Both attackers and defenders were exhausted, and the combat seemed to move in slow motion. This favored the defenders, however, who were motivated to hold their position astride the north-south lines of communication running through the city. By September 25, Nineteenth Army had cleared Harbin. The army was in poor condition after more than a month of hard fighting. Fifth Army was in better shape and was moving south towards Changchun to take up the advance. However, fuel shortages plagued the movement of the Soviets.

On September 26, Eighth Tank Corps simply stalled in front of Siping. First Armored Group Army had passed through the city already, leaving a trail of broken-down vehicles behind it. Before Eighth Tank Corps was the dug-in infantry of Eighth Group Army. CINC Far Eastern TVD decided that it would be useless to try to bull through entrenched infantry under these conditions, and the corps lacked the fuel to attempt a major flanking movement. He ordered Eighth Tank Corps to stand in place until Fifth Army could come up to take up the advance again.

In the west, Fifteenth Army had made little progress against Twenty-Third Group Army at Tao'er. Supplies and what replacements were available had been going to the main effort against Changchun. Until the supply situation improved, Fifteenth Army would make no more progress.

Unfortunately, the supply situation did not appear to offer any immediate prospects for improvement. The lengthy supply lines and the conditions of the Manchurian transportation network meant that the existing logistical system was performing at its maximum tempo just to maintain the current level of operations. Building up any stockpiles would require a temporary halt in the offensive.

An additional and growing problem was the action of Chinese special operations and irregulars behind the lines. Though Tiananmen Square had cost the Chinese Communists a good deal of their popular support, a substantial citizens' militia effort had come into being by the end of September. Bridges were blown, and supply convoys were attacked. As a result, what combat power Nineteenth Army still possessed was dispersed throughout the rear area to aid MVD efforts at suppressing guerilla action. Fifteenth

Army also found itself obliged to detach units to guard its own lines of communication.

Northwest of Beijing, 2nd Far East Front (now reduced to Thirty-Ninth Army) also had run out of steam. The army had done its job well, parrying counterattacks by numerically superior Chinese forces while inflicting substantial losses on the enemy. However, there was no real prospect of a renewed offensive against Beijing given the current correlation of forces. Thirty-Ninth Army would have to wait for significant reinforcements or a major re-allocation of air assets, which hardly seemed likely.

Barely a week after the Soviets had renewed their offensive; Far Eastern TVD was stalled with no immediate prospects for renewing the attack.

Pandemonium broke out at the Kremlin. In a fury, Sauronski accused Danilov of sabotaging the offensive by denying Far Eastern TVD the manpower and materiel it needed to bring off the attack in one go. Danilov replied that Sauronski had insisted on starting a war without thinking its price through. After swapping angry words, the two men were able to agree on one point: without more men and materiel, Soviet forces in Manchuria would have to withdraw sooner or later.

Replacement personnel already had been assigned to 1st Far East Front. By the end of September, the call-up of reservists had been increased dramatically. At the same time, the release of men completing their terms of service was frozen. Everyone would be retained until the current emergency was resolved. Category 2 divisions were called up throughout the Soviet Union. Additional Frontal Aviation assets were slated for duty in the Far East. MVD units from European Russia were withdrawn and earmarked for rear area security in Manchuria. Trucks were withdrawn from reserve divisions to bolster the logistics effort in Manchuria.

At the same time, the Soviets tried forcing a settlement on the PRC. In a closed door conference, the Soviet ambassador to the United Nations suggested to the Chinese ambassador that the USSR was willing to accept a cease-fire rather than continue to allow the bloodshed to continue. The Soviets claimed that they had made their point and that further violence was unnecessary.

In fact, there was good cause for China to accept a cease-fire at that time. Nearly half of Manchuria was in Soviet hands. Much of the Manchurian harvest was lost to China or soon would be. Mineral resources and vital industries were in the hands of the invaders. By the end of September, Chinese losses had surpassed 200,000. Losses of MBTs had climbed to 1,800; and the Soviets had captured or destroyed hundreds of light AFVs, field artillery pieces, multiple rocket launchers, and other critical hardware. Aircraft losses, too, were staggering and amounted to more than a third of the national inventory. Some in the Chinese Politburo argued that it was better to cut their losses and accept a cease-fire.

Premier Zhu insisted that China stay in the war. He pointed out that the Soviet offer implied a possible reluctance to go any further. The PLA was certainly badly damaged,

but the Army was not finished. Yielding now would bring about an unacceptable loss of face in the international community. It might also spell the end of the rule of the Communist Party in China. Already, there were rumblings throughout the nation. The Party leadership could not quit now.

Moreover, China still had cards to play. With the kind of labor-intensive effort for which China was famed, the military resources of the PRC had been assembled and moved to the northeastern part of the country with a speed that defied the sensibilities of both Soviet and Western intelligence services. Using ingenuity, stubbornness, and sheer human brawn the Chinese had overcome the obstacles of blown bridges, damaged railroads, and cratered highways to move into Manchuria twelve divisions that had yet to see combat. More were on their way. Divisions arriving in the Beijing MR replaced formations which were sent to Shenyang to prepare for a counteroffensive.

The initial defensive effort had failed to repulse the Soviets. However, China might yet seize victory from the jaws of defeat. The Soviets had failed to allocate sufficient resources to their initial invasion to ensure the defeat of the PLA in northeastern China. The result was a deadlock at the front—at least temporarily. Now it would be a race to see who could marshal additional men and materiel and decisively throw them into combat first. Zhu was gambling that China could win this race. There were two or three weeks of good campaigning weather left in Manchuria. China would throw everything she could muster into a single great effort to defeat the Soviets in the field and, at the very least, bring the enemy to the bargaining table on China's terms.

Chapter 5, Operation Red Willow:

During the last few days of September 1995 a curious quiet settled over Manchuria. The Soviets, exhausted and short of men and materiel, paused to re-adjust their lines and resupply their forces. Eighth Tank Corps, which had literally dropped in its tracks in front of the Chinese defensive positions north of Siping, pulled back slightly and waited for Fifth Army to arrive and relieve it. At Changchun, Seventeenth Army was still blasting Thirty-Fifth Group Army out of its bunkers in the city, turning much of the city to rubble in the process. Nineteenth Army had cleared Harbin and was technically free to resume combat duties. However, the army was in terrible condition. In any event, much of its remaining combat power had been dispersed throughout the Soviet rear to assist MVD units in security missions. Ranged against Twenty-Third Group Army in the Tao'en area, Fifteenth Army was still waiting for fresh supplies. Everywhere the Soviets had ceased their offensive and were trying to consolidate their gains in anticipation of a renewed drive in October. Artillery duels continued, as did minor air operations. However, the Far East saw its first extended drop in operational tempo since the start of hostilities.

For their part, the Chinese were glad for the breather. Their surviving front-line forces badly needed the break. More importantly, they were bringing up reinforcements with which to launch a counter-stroke. Throughout September, active-duty divisions were moved from the interior of China to the northeast. Some of them relieved forces in place in the Beijing MR, which then shuffled northeast to the Shenyang MR. Other fresh

divisions deployed straight to southern Manchuria.

The Chinese planned to launch their counterstroke on October 10. Though the local commanders wanted more time to prepare their forces, the national leadership was afraid that time would favor the Soviets by allowing them to ferry fresh troops and supplies into Manchuria. The Chinese would rather attack with their own preparations incomplete than give the enemy any more time to catch his breath.

By the eve of the Chinese counteroffensive, five fresh group armies disposing seventeen divisions between them had been brought into Manchuria. Eleventh Group Army [one tank, one mechanized, and two motorized divisions] had been shipped from western China after being replaced by other forces from the interior. Eighth Group Army [three infantry divisions] had been in Siping since September, but the group army had seen little action. Twenty-Seventh Group Army [three infantry divisions] had been in the Beijing MR at the start of the war but had been replaced by forces arriving from the southern part of China. Fifteenth Group Army [one tank and three infantry divisions] also had been in Beijing and had been reinforced with a tank division in preparation for the attack. Third Group Army [three infantry divisions] was from central China.

Additionally, the remaining original group armies of Shenyang MR had been reinforced. First Armored Group Army had received hundreds of tanks from the national stockpile and thousands of replacements. Most of the tanks were obsolescent Type 59s, but they restored a considerable portion of the combat power of the First Armored. Fifth (Mountain) Group Army received an infantry division, bringing its total up to four again. And Twenty-Third Group Army received copious replacements that made the group army capable of carrying out offensive operations.

The Chinese scheme, code-named Operation Red Willow, was simple and straightforward. Eighth Group Army still held Siping, where they faced Fifth Army. Fifteenth Group Army had been brought up to Liaoyuan on the east-west railroad running east out of Siping. Eighth Group Army would attack north, holding Fifth Army in place while Fifteenth Group Army attacked northwest into the rear of Fifth Army. The partially rebuilt First Armored Group Army would attack through Siping to deliver the coup de grace to Fifth Army.

A second envelopment was planned for Changchun. Fifth (Mountain) Group Army still held the Jilin area. Eleventh Group Army was brought up to Jilin. During the days leading up to the offensive, the Fifth (Mountain) would move through the wooded high ground southeast of Changchun. On October 10, the Fifth would attack Changchun to pin Seventeenth Army while the highly mobile Eleventh Group Army attacked northwest from Jilin to take the Soviets from the rear.

A third attack was planned in the Tao'an area, where Fifteenth Army was defending. Twenty-Seventh Group Army would conduct a massive infiltration along the right flank of the Soviet army and begin an attack coordinated with a counterattack by the partially

replenished Twenty-Third Group Army.

At the same time, attacks by guerillas, citizens' militia, and commandoes in the Soviet rear would rise to a fever pitch. The PLAAF would assist by making an all-out effort to contest control of the air directly over the front lines.

The Chinese leadership recognized that despite the poor condition of the Soviet ground and air forces in and around Manchuria, the invaders still were capable of bringing sufficient combat power to bear to control the situation in any one area. By attacking on three axes and by sowing destruction and confusion throughout the rear area, the Chinese intended to give the Soviets more problems than they could handle. Victory on all three axes of attack would be ideal. Success on two or even one would be a huge boost for Chinese morale and would demonstrate to the Soviets that China was still in the fight.

In fact, Zhu and the Chinese Politburo were taking an enormous risk. The forces they were throwing into battle, amounting to twenty fresh divisions and tens of thousands of replacements for the formations already in Manchuria, represented nearly a quarter of the pre-war manpower pool of the PLA. The PLA already had lost twenty divisions, and several more had been rendered combat ineffective either through direct losses or by providing replacements for divisions at the front. Therefore, the thirty divisions being thrown into the October counteroffensive represented slightly less than half of the PLA. Counting the dozen divisions remaining in the Beijing MR in early October, more than sixty percent of the PLA's available manpower was either in action against the Soviets or in operational reserve. Many of the divisions remaining throughout the country were either still mobilizing or guarding the borders with Vietnam, India, and the Central Asian republics of the Soviet Union. Much of this combat power simply could not be moved, further shrinking the forces available to the PLA for action in the northeastern quadrant of the country. Therefore, a defeat in the upcoming battle would spell almost certain doom for the Chinese Communists. Failure to counterattack would leave the initiative in the hands of the invaders, which would yield the same results. Success was the only option.

By the first week of October, the Soviets knew trouble was brewing. It simply was impossible for the Chinese to move so many men and so much equipment into southern Manchuria unobserved. The Soviets fully expected the Chinese to try to take advantage of the lull to inflict some kind of reversal on them. What they didn't expect was the scale of the Chinese effort. Soviet intelligence badly underestimated the ability of the Chinese to move men and materiel into Manchuria, and they overstated the effects of SAF attacks on the Chinese lines of communications to southern Manchuria. The Chinese demonstrated exemplary application of the art of deception by camouflaging the movement of their units inside southern Manchuria. They also created phantom group armies with bogus radio traffic and dummy equipment to give the Soviets the impression that the PLA was much further behind in its re-deployment effort than was the case. Thus when the blow fell, the Soviets were ready for a brush fire but got a conflagration instead.

On schedule, the Chinese counteroffensive opened in the hours before dawn on October

10, 1995. On all three axes, light infantry had infiltrated the often thinly spread Soviet lines. In surprisingly well-coordinated attacks, the Chinese infantry enveloped isolated strong points and opened the way for tank attacks. The light units had manhandled multiple rocket launchers, 122mm artillery, and even light cruise missiles to within striking distance of the Soviets. The Soviets were stunned by the violence of rocket and artillery attacks hitting at so many places at once.

At Siping, Eighth Group Army quickly drove through the security zone in front of Fifth Army's positions and drove a deep wedge into the Soviet lines. As planned, Fifteenth Group Army drove behind the left shoulder of Fifth Army and onto the main LOC to Changchun.

The Soviets had expected something like this, and they had units of Eighth Tank Corps available for a counterattack. Two Soviet tank brigades drove south and met the Chinese 7th Tank Division thirty kilometers north of Siping. In much fierce fighting, the Soviets repulsed the Chinese armor. However, Fifteenth Group Army did not give up here. Its infantry turned southwest and attacked the right flank of Fifth Army as the tank battle was raging a several kilometers north. Short of manpower, Fifth Army began to strain quickly.

At Changchun, Fifth (Mountain) Group Army performed a masterful infiltration that enabled them to carry the battle into the city in some areas. There the Soviet advantage in AFVs was somewhat neutralized by the restricted urban terrain. Eleventh Group Army struck northwest as planned, coming into contact with the security screen of Seventeenth Army by mid-afternoon. With tanks in the lead, the Eleventh tore through the Soviet security screen and had advanced elements north of Jilin by nightfall.

The attack on Fifteenth Army went more-or-less as planned. Light infantry crossed the Tao'er under cover of darkness. Some of the infiltration groups were discovered and fired upon. Many more reached their pre-assault assemble areas undetected and began their attacks just before dawn. Fifteenth Army was reacting to the danger on their right flank when Twenty-Third Group Army began throwing bridges across the Tao'er along the eastern quarter of Fifteenth Army's positions. The Chinese quickly established themselves on the left bank of the Tao'er and assaulted the left flank of Fifteenth Army.

Attacks throughout the Soviet rear area met with mixed success. However, the disruption was enormous. Due to the scale of the Soviet resupply effort, there was no shortage of targets for the Chinese irregulars. Even a handful of militia with rifles were able to create massive logjams when they attacked truck convoys along the narrow roads of the Greater and Lesser Khingar Ranges. Armed bands attacked trains and the tracks themselves, as well as rail bridges in the northern quarter of Manchuria. In several places, Chinese special forces with man-pack anti-aircraft missiles crept to the edge of Soviet airfields to fire on landing aircraft or aircraft scrambling to respond to the explosion of combat throughout Manchuria. Nearly thirty aircraft were lost to attacks like these and to mortar attacks on airfields. Soviet air operations were noticeably affected at this critical juncture.

In the air, the PLAAF initiated yet another massive air battle. This time, however, the packages moving at mid-level altitudes were almost all fighters and EW support aircraft. The strike aircraft were winging their way to their targets at ultra-low level. The PLAAF was gambling with reducing positive control of their pilots.

Though Red Willow did not take the Soviets by surprise, they were unprepared for powerful simultaneous attacks in so many places. Thorough reconnaissance had provided the Chinese with a very good picture of the Soviets' defensive deployments. Like water running through the cracks in a seawall, the Chinese light infantry avoided the Soviets' strongest defensive positions and overwhelmed lesser ones. Though the Soviet forces in Manchuria had worked hard over the past two weeks to build doctrinaire defenses, the sheer frontage to be covered and shortages of fuel for the engineering vehicles, mines, and other obstacle materials resulted in a line of defense that was far from rock-solid.

Eighth Tank Corps was ordered south to support Fifth Army. Two tank brigades had driven the Chinese 7th Tank Division back into the high ground east of the Changchun-Siping LOC, but the Chinese tanks remained a threat. The two Soviet brigades would risk leaving their left flank open if they moved south to clear the infantry of Fifteenth Group Army off the left flank of Fifth Army. Two more brigades would be required to make short work of the Chinese infantry and to offer solid support to Fifth Army.

However, as the two brigades moved out, CINC 1st Far East Front became aware of the attack by Eleventh Group Army across the Changchun-Harbin LOC. The Soviets had been aware that a mechanized formation was assembling at Jilin, but they thought it was a single mechanized division. The appearance of four heavy divisions northeast of Changchun was a rude shock. Air attacks and the reserves of Seventeenth Army would not be sufficient to stop Eleventh Group Army before the Chinese were astride the supply line for two armies and a tank corps. CINC 1st Far East Front ordered Eighth Tank Corps to move three brigades north of Changchun to parry the Chinese thrust.

By nightfall, the area between Siping and the Sungari was a furious welter of combat. Eighth Group Army and Fifteenth Group Army were strung out like a fishhook along the front and right flank of Fifth Army and two brigades of Eighth Tank Corps. The tanks were keeping the supply line open against energetic probes by the Chinese 7th Tank Division. Fifth Army was firing everything it had to keep the masses of Chinese infantry at bay.

The Soviets attempted to put their contingency plan into action, which amounted to using maneuver and air power to get any threatened forces out of a jam. With the Chinese attacking in so many locations, and with Nineteenth Army essentially dispersed throughout the operational rear, there was precious little left to maneuver. The job fell to the SAF.

The air situation had improved for the Soviets since the end of September. A distinctly lessened tempo of operations had enabled the ground crews to catch up on much-needed maintenance. Supplies and equipment had been brought forward to the occupied air bases

in Manchuria. Response time, turn-around time, and loiter ability all were dramatically improved as a result. However, attacks by Chinese guerilla forces on the Soviet air bases at least partially offset this advantage. A single heavy machine gun firing from outside the perimeter of a Soviet air base could cause delays to the launch schedule until someone dealt with it. Also, the PLAAF was able to attack these forward bases with much more success than they had enjoyed in the first days of the war. Thus the theoretical advantages of having moved many of the Soviet tactical aircraft to forward bases went largely unrealized in the first twelve hours of Operation Red Willow.

The Chinese had taken note of the very effective use of helicopter gunships by the Soviets. Particular attention was paid to moving air defense units into Manchuria, even to the point of stripping air defenses from divisions facing Vietnam and India. The mobile divisions taking part in Red Willow received extra air defense units. At the same time, the availability of Mi-8 and Mi-24 helicopters was much less than it had been in early September. Thus Soviet efforts to use their helicopter gunships to smash the Chinese forces on the move were far less successful than they had been.

Throughout the night of October 10-11, elements of Eighth Tank Corps, Seventeenth Army, and Eleventh Group Army tangled in the woods and fields north of Changchun. By daylight, the Chinese had closed the most direct line of supply to Harbin. Fifth (Mountain) Group Army had most of Seventeenth Army tied down at Changchun.

During the night of October 10-11, First Armored Group Army moved out of its assembly areas south of Siping. Aligned along a railroad linking Siping and Tao'an, the First Armored would use the rail line for resupply most of the way to Tao'en, then strike northeast toward Fuyu on the Sungari. There the First Armored would help Eleventh Group Army close the noose around Fifth Army, Seventeenth Army, and Eighth Tank Corps.

Operation Red Willow included a counterattack northwest of Beijing as well. Reinforced by a tank division and a mechanized division respectively, Sixteenth and Thirtieth Group Armies opened their attacks with mechanized forces. The original tank divisions of each group army had been considerably reinforced with new tanks and artillery. It was here, away from the main concentration of Soviet air power, that the PLAAF was able to operate with the greatest effectiveness. Backed by copious air and artillery action, the two Chinese group armies drove Thirty-Ninth Army back to the rail junction at Jining, then back towards the Mongolian border. With the fighting in Manchuria commanding the attention and resources of Far Eastern TVD, Thirty-Ninth Army was left to fend for itself.

Though the divisions of 1st Far East Front had recovered some of their strength by October 10, they were far from the condition they had been in when the Sino-Soviet War started. By the end of the day on October 11, it was obvious that the Chinese were attempting nothing less than the destruction of four of the five armies of 1st Far East Front. The scheme of envelopments south of the Sungari River made it impossible for the Soviets to hope to hold a supply line open to Fifth Army if the army stayed where it was. Fifth Army was ordered to withdraw to Changchun.

At this point, the Kremlin intervened. In an act strongly reminiscent of Hitler's behavior during the Second World War, Sauronski ordered the armies of Far Eastern TVD to hold their ground. He believed that any sort of withdrawal would weaken the hand of Soviet negotiators. He was convinced that if the Soviet forces held their ground, powerful air and mechanized forces could relieve any encircled units. Additional Soviet divisions were already en route, and Nineteenth Army had been ordered to consolidate so it could come to the aid of the front-line forces.

As a result, Fifth Army was stuck where it was, attacked on two sides by a numerically superior enemy. Its LOC to Changchun was held by two brigades of Eighth Tank Corps, and parts of the supply line were under fire from Chinese artillery.

The main body of Eighth Tank Corps clashed repeatedly with Eleventh Group Army between Changchun and the Sungari. The Chinese refused to be pinned down, moving regimental- and division-sized groups throughout the area and slashing across the roads wherever possible. Dismounted Chinese infantry attacked the Soviet tanks and other AFVs from woods and farmhouses. Though the LOCs between Changchun and the Sungari technically were open, it was nearly impossible to move any significant quantities of supplies along them.

To the west, Twenty-Third Group Army managed to get an arm around the rear of Fifteenth Army. The Soviets managed to break open their supply line by committing their reserve, but it was obvious they could not stay where they were.

By morning on October 13, the Soviets were beginning to get themselves together in the air. The air bases had been mostly secured. The pressure of the massive PLAAF effort was lessening. Once again, the superiority of the Su-27s, MiG-29s, and MiG-31s was giving them mastery of the Manchurian airspace. Soviet losses were higher this time than they had been, and the PLAAF had managed a number of low-level, small-group attacks on the Soviet airfields. Nevertheless, after three days of intensive air action the Soviets were beginning to get things in hand. Now they could think about turning their fighter-bombers against the Chinese ground forces.

However, by this time First Armored Group Army had reached the Sungari at Fuyu. Eighth Tank Corps was fighting to keep the LOCs to Changchun open with some help from Seventeenth Army. Fifth Army was just barely holding its own. Most of its tanks were out of action, and the artillery was nearly out of ammunition. For all intents and purposes, Fifth Army was in a pocket. Fifth (Mountain) Group Army had managed to bring every road and rail line passing through Changchun under fire at some point along its length, despite often heroic efforts by Seventeenth Army to push the Chinese out of the city. With Eleventh Group Army contesting every LOC between Harbin and Changchun and with First Armored Group Army ready to slash southeast along the Sungari River virtually unopposed, Eighth Tank Corps and Seventeenth Army were effectively enveloped. Twenty-Third Army had put another group behind Fifteenth Army. Militia and guerilla were everywhere. CINC Far Eastern TVD and his political

officer presented a joint statement to the Kremlin that unless 1st Far East Front were allowed to break out of their respective pockets and fall back behind the Sungari, all would be lost. Danilov ordered his forces to fall back.

Fifth Army began falling back as twilight fell on October 13. Harassed by incessant shellfire, the Soviets abandoned broken down vehicles and many of their wounded. The Chinese managed to throw two powerful blocking forces between Fifth Army and Changchun. Both times the Soviets broke through, but at a high price. Eighth Group Army and Twenty-Seventh Group Army pursued closely.

Pushing their air power to the max, the Soviets attacked First Armored Group Army and Eleventh Group Army throughout the day on October 13 and 14. Eighth Tank Corps punched through to the Sungari River, scattering elements of Eleventh Group Army. The tank force then wheeled west and met First Armored Group Army in a confused mechanized melee south of the Sungari. Though the Soviet tanks were superior to the Type 59s now being used by the First Armored, the superior numbers of the Chinese enabled them to outflank and overrun the Soviet tank units. The shattered remnants of Eighth Tank Corps fell back to the east.

By this time, however, elements of Nineteenth Army had been assembled along the north side of the Sungari. Some of these crossed and took up deep screening positions west of the retreating Seventeenth Army. First Armored Group Army launched a series of powerful attacks, but a combination of aerial firepower, hastily-laid minefields, and determined action by the surviving tank crews of Eighth Tank Corps and Nineteenth Army just kept the Chinese armored force from cutting the line of withdrawal.

Badly damaged by Soviet air action and four days of intense combat, Eleventh Group Army withdrew somewhat to the southeast to reorganize. By October 15, the Chinese once again threw their mechanized forces into action north of Changchun. This time, they hit the beleaguered Fifth Army as the Soviets tried to withdraw through Changchun. 146th Guards Motor Rifle Division and 160th Motor Rifle Division were separated from the rest of the withdrawing Soviets. Caught between Eleventh Group Army to the north and Fifth (Mountain) Group Army and Eighth Group Army to the south, the two motor rifle divisions thrashed about in their small pocket for two more days before disintegrating.

By October 16, all the Soviets who were going to escape were on the north side of the Sungari. First Armored Group Army managed to destroy the rear guard forces at the bridgeheads, but the Soviets dropped the bridges.

To the west, Fifteenth Army broke through the ring of Chinese and headed north. Like other Soviet armies, they left a trail of broken-down vehicles and abandoned equipment behind them as they went. The mechanized forces of Twenty-Third Group Army pursued closely. The Soviets withdrew across the Sungari near Tailai, and the Chinese lacked the strength to follow.

CINC Shenyang MR decided to call a stop to the counteroffensive on October 17. Red Willow had accomplished its basic purpose. A major reversal had been dealt to the Soviets, though at a high price. With fresh Soviet divisions en route to Manchuria, it would be better for the Chinese to husband their existing strength. The efforts of the past week had cost the Chinese dearly, and it would take some time to replace the losses.

For the Soviets, Red Willow was a disaster. The Chinese had turned the tables on the invaders with terrible results. The Soviets had lost nearly 60,000 troops, plus hundreds of tanks, trucks, lighter AFVs, guns, and other materiel. Soviet morale was shattered. It was obvious that the Soviets were in for a long winter.

The Chinese had suffered heavily as well. Losses among the infantry were very high indeed. Tank losses were great, too. The massive firepower of the Soviets had taken a heavy toll of the Chinese attackers, and it would be a little while before the divisions that had taken part in Red Willow were ready for more action. Soviet air attack, artillery fire, and direct fire from fighting vehicles, anti-tank missiles, and dismounted machine guns proved as brutally effective on the defensive as they had on the offensive. The correlation of forces had changed sufficiently for the Chinese to wring victory out of Red Willow, but it was so costly a victory that some observers called it pyrrhic.

Though each side expected the other to renew offensive action before first snowfall, neither did. The Soviets, badly shaken by their intelligence failure prior to Red Willow and by their own losses during the fighting, were more interested in building their forces for possible action after the New Year. The Chinese, who had endured tremendous losses in tanks, artillery, aircraft, and other heavy equipment, wanted to try a Chinese-style war of attrition during the winter to wear down the Soviet willingness to fight.

It would be a long winter.

Chapter 6, International Reaction to the Sino-Soviet War:

No sooner had the first Soviet troops and aircraft crossed the Sino-Soviet border in August 1955 than the diplomats and propaganda machines of both countries launched into a global public relations war second in intensity only to the actual fighting. For the Soviets, the effort was to keep international opinion from swinging in favor of China. The Chinese, of course, spared no effort to make exactly that happen.

The USSR had a more difficult job, relatively speaking. The Soviets were the aggressors, and there was a limit to how far they could minimize the impact of this naked fact. World opinion tends to favor the defender when one nation invades another, and the Sino-Soviet War proved no exception.

The Soviets had given considerable thought to how they would approach the international propaganda effort, though naturally the final application of their strategy would depend a good deal on the circumstances surrounding the actual start of hostilities. In essence, the Soviet strategy was to make the world believe that China had brought the war on herself

through a series of border provocations and other acts. That the Chinese did not appear to be well-prepared for an all-out war could be explained away with the logic that the Beijing Communists were playing high-stakes poker, betting that Moscow would back down before China's supposedly superior manpower and political will. Instead, the Soviet Union had called the Chinese bluff and exposed it as such.

Inside the Kremlin, existing tensions between the various factions of the Soviet leadership became more pronounced after the start of the war. Since the coup in 1989, the highest echelon of Soviet leadership had begun to split into two groups: the Danilovians and the Sauronskiites. The former group, led by Premier Dmitri Danilov, had allied themselves with the latter, led by Defense Minister Ivan Sauronski, for the purpose of deposing and replacing the Gorbachev government. However, the alliance between the two groups was always a shaky one. The Danilov group, smaller and less powerful than the Sauronski cabal, was made up of true reformers. The Sauronskiites were arch-conservative Communists whose principal goal was to hold onto power. The Danilovians needed the Sauronskiites for their control of the military, much of the security apparatus, and the economy. The Sauronskiites needed the Danilovians because Danilov was the only rival to Sauronskiite power in the KGB and because Danilov was much more palatable to the mid-level Communist Party officials and to the international community than any of the Sauronskiites. From the start, the intent of the Sauronskiites had been to use Danilov as a front man while Sauronski and his cohorts wielded the real power in the USSR.

Danilov proved to be a master power broker, however. He spoke the Sauronskiite language fluently. He reminded the Sauronskiites, together and separately, that unless the Soviet economy was fixed, there could easily be another coup attempt. Worse, there might be open revolution. Even a successful counter-revolution on the part of the Soviet security apparatus would further erode the Soviet economy. Grudgingly, the Sauronskiites empowered Danilov to enact most of the reforms he sought.

The first real test of Danilov's ability as leader of the Soviet Union came in 1990, when Iraqi president Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait. Within days of the August 2 invasion, United States airborne troops were on their way to Saudi Arabia. The Western Allies quickly rallied to the American banner.

Defense Minister Sauronski advocated immediate and whole-hearted support for Iraq. Though it was infuriating that Hussein had invaded Kuwait without either seeking permission or consultation, the fact remained that a major Soviet client had scored an impressive victory over Western interests. Kuwait was conquered in little more than three days, leaving the victorious Iraqi Republican Guard standing on the northeastern border of Saudi Arabia. The Persian Gulf coast of Saudi Arabia was the major oil-producing zone of the country, and it was one of the richest areas in the world. On the order of a quarter of the world's proven oil reserves lay between the border of Kuwait and the border of Qatar, and all Hussein had to do was reach out and take it. The Saudi armed forces were still mobilizing, and the only forces the United States could deploy in time to be of any worth were airmobile infantry units and a few Air Force squadrons. With a

Soviet nuclear guarantee, the Iraqis would be free to use their tremendous conventional superiority. It was entirely possible for Iraq to capture the northeast portion of Saudi Arabia, thereby denying the enormous Saudi oil wealth to the West. With some Soviet support and a little luck, the Iraqis might capture the western shore of the Gulf south to Oman.

This was a winning position, Sauronski argued. The West would not accept Iraq's control of so much of the world's oil. Even with the loss of her expeditionary force in northeastern Saudi Arabia, the United States and her allies would not sit idly by while Hussein's Iraq controlled the lion's share of the Gulf oil. By herself, Iraq could not hope to win a long-term war against the United States, her Western allies, and whatever Third World participants the US could bring into the picture. Iraq would have to have Soviet backing. That backing would give the Soviets de facto control over Iraq, which would give the USSR de facto control over a critical share of the world's oil. The West then could be made to dance to the Soviet tune.

Danilov disagreed with the Sauronski interpretation of the situation. If the oil really were so critical to the economies of the West, they would fight to regain control of it. The Iraqi Army might be able to get control of the Gulf Coast as far south as Oman in the short term, but how could the Iraqis reasonably be expected to control the whole Saudi Peninsula? Nothing less would do, Danilov opined, since the Western Allies would build up for a counteroffensive wherever they could. If the United States could build her forces in Dhahran, she would. If she were forced to build in Doha or Abu Dhabi or Muscat or Jiddah or Mocha, she would. The only way for the Iraqis to prevent an Allied build-up on the Saudi Peninsula would be for the Iraqis to secure the entire perimeter of the Peninsula—or at least all the ports and all the potential beachheads. Could it really be supposed that the Iraqi Army, Navy, and Air Force were equal to this task? It was highly doubtful that the Iraqis could secure Dhahran and Riyadh simultaneously, much less march the whole length of the Peninsula against the opposition of the Saudi, Qatari, UAE, and Omani militaries, supplemented as they would be by US naval air assets and arriving Army, Marines, and Air Force assets. And even if they actually captured the Peninsula, the Iraqi Navy was completely incapable of securing the coastline against the US Navy and the Allied navies. By the same token, the Iraqi Air Force could not hope to stand against Allied air power operating off US Navy and Allied carriers in the Arabian Sea and Red Sea and Allied air power flying out of Israel and bases in the Horn of Africa. Without control of the air or sea around Saudi Arabia, there was no way for Iraq to secure the Saudi Peninsula in the long term.

Sauronski countered that this was where Soviet support would come in. Soviet Air Force (SAF) regiments could be moved into Saudi Arabia to support the Iraqis. The Soviet Navy possessed the world's largest fleet of submarines. Surely this force would come in handy in preventing Allied landings along the Red Sea and Arabian Sea.

Such overt support for the Iraqis was tantamount to war with the West, Danilov countered. Was the Soviet Union really ready for this? Such a war could drag on for a year or two while the West built the necessary combat power in the areas adjacent to the

Saudi Peninsula. While it might be hoped that the loss of Persian Gulf oil might bring the Western economies to their knees, the fact remained that the West had access to oil from several other sources: Mexico, Venezuela, Norway, Nigeria, and other nations. Some belt-tightening, rationing, and stepped-up production in other oil-producing countries could very well keep the Western economies on their feet—enough so to wage war in the Middle East, at any rate.

There was also the uncomfortable fact that the Soviet Union was highly dependent upon the West for grain. Danilov was openly scornful of the notion that the West could be extorted into selling food to the Soviet Union. Soviet forces might get control of the Persian Gulf, but what would the Soviet people eat during the victory celebration?

Danilov proposed instead that Hussein be left to his own devices. He had invited war with the West without consulting with Moscow. Now the Soviet Union could reverse some of the damage done during the Black Winter by allowing the West to liberate Kuwait. Western grain and loans would continue to come in, and the Soviet Union could set about improving her position for the next time such an opportunity presented itself.

This last argument settled the matter for most of the Sauronskiites, if not Sauronski himself. The Kremlin might be willing to chance defeat on the Saudi Peninsula a year or two down the road, but short-term starvation for the Soviet people would jeopardize the position of the new regime. The change of power was still too fresh in the minds of the Soviet people.

Danilov's deal with George Bush of the United States worked out splendidly for the Soviet Union. Kuwait was liberated, the Iraqi military was savaged, and Hussein remained in power. Hussein was forced back into the arms of the Soviet Union, who quickly undertook to re-arm the Iraqi dictator. The Soviets got a front-row seat to the show, from which they learned that US capabilities were even more advanced than the Soviets had supposed. Danilov's restraint appeared even wiser. Western grain continued to flow to the USSR, as did Western credits. In the end, Danilov gained immeasurably in the eyes of the Party and of the international community.

By 1995, Danilov appeared to Sauronski to be getting out of control. Danilov's economic reforms were showing real progress. Relations with the West were as warm as they had been at any time in the history of the Soviet Union. Industrial productivity was up, and for the first time in her history the Soviet Union was feeding herself. Many luke-warm Sauronskiites were converting to Danilovism. The Soviet people were enjoying more liberties than they had in a generation—more so even than under Gorbachev. And they were demanding more. Just as it had been under Gorbachev, the very existence of the Soviet state as Stalin and Khrushchev had known it was threatened.

Unfortunately, there was only so much Sauronski could do about it. Danilov was terribly popular among the people, the KGB, and most of the Party. His reforms were working, and everybody seemed to be doing better. Simply doing away with him wasn't an option. Sauronski had to find a way to discredit Danilov before replacing him.

War with China seemed the perfect way. By the mid-1990's, it was apparent that China would have to be put in her place sooner or later anyway. A war that dragged out a bit longer than it should have would fit the bill nicely. China would be set back, while much of the economic progress Danilov had made would evaporate. With Danilov out of favor, Sauronski could move to replace him or at least strip him of much of his power. Through a series of carefully orchestrated maneuvers, Sauronski brought the Soviet Union and China to the edge of war, and then let mutual mistrust and the situation on the border take their natural courses.

Exactly how and why Danilov allowed things to evolve as they did is still a mystery. He had much better control over events earlier in his career, when he was technically weaker. It has been suggested that he didn't really believe war would start. It has been suggested that Danilov believed a last-minute deal with Chinese Premier Zhu would head off a war and bring even greater prestige to him. Whatever the reason, by the end of August 1995, Dmitri Danilov found himself in a war he had never wanted.

Selling this war was a painful exercise for Danilov. There was very little he could say to the West that had any meaning beyond the usual propaganda, though he dutifully made his effort at the UN and in Western capitals. For the most part, Danilov was forced to trade in much of the good will he had built in the West to keep economic credits flowing.

Since there was little the Soviets could do to justify the war in world opinion, it was important that they convince the world that the USSR was winning the war. Superiority of Soviet arms and soldiery would be its own justification in the end. As a result, Soviet propaganda efforts initially focused on the excellent progress being enjoyed by Soviet armed forces in Manchuria. Never mind who was right—the Soviets were winning.

By contrast, China found it quite easy to portray herself as the innocent victim. Though the Western media were never given the free reign on the Manchurian battlefields they would have liked, images of smashed Chinese villages and dead and injured Chinese civilians poured back to Western television virtually from the outset of the war. The Chinese Communist Party strove to play up two key images: the suffering of the Chinese people and the heroic resistance of the People's Liberation Army. In this effort they were largely successful.

Beijing quickly moved to exploit the swell of sympathy among Westerners—particularly among Americans. The large Chinese-American community was solicited to provide financial support, political support, and propaganda support for China. Though not successful everywhere, Chinese-Americans answered the call of the motherland in large numbers. Though many conservative Americans were delighted to see the two great Communist powers at war, at least as many Americans were telling pollsters that the gallant Chinese people deserved the support of the United States against the Soviet aggressors. Washington took notice.

Throughout the Western political circles, the initial reaction was one of muted relief.

Despite the warming of Soviet-Western relations during the first half of the 1990's, NATO remained ready to defend against a Soviet invasion of Western Europe. Many were concerned that Danilov's Soviet Union was a more dangerous Soviet Union because her core strength was greater. A Soviet Union with a healthy economy and the ability to feed herself might come under the control of an aggressive militarist. At the same time, the growing economic power of China was causing concern in the West. How long would it be before China's burgeoning economic power translated itself into military power? Already the mid-1990's, the People's Liberation Army was undergoing a significant modernization. With the Soviet Union and China at war, the West appeared to have killed two birds without actually having to throw its own stone.

Naturally, there was some concern about the war going nuclear. This fear was at its most intense during the first few days of the war, when chemical weapons were used on a large scale both on the front lines and in the rear areas. Some Western military analysts feared that whoever got the worst of the chemical exchange might go nuclear as a means of rectifying the situation. Fortunately, the chemical exchange died down without the use of nuclear weapons; however, there were several very tense days at the UN as Western mediators attempted to get both sides to pledge to no-first-use of nuclear weapons. (Despite the fact that both parties to the war already had pledged as much.)

In Europe, there was some alarm over the rapid rate of advance of Soviet ground forces in the opening weeks of the campaign. If the Soviets could make such short work of the PLA, how would they fare against the much-less-numerous Western European ground forces? Speculation was rife that NATO would be incapable of stopping a sudden Soviet sweep to the English Channel. As the Soviet advance ground to a halt, such irresponsible talk died down, though.

World opinion elsewhere varied. India gleefully watched one of her two principal rivals stagger under the heavy Soviet blows. Pakistan issued belligerent statements in support of China, one of her chief benefactors. Without China to counterbalance India, the Pakistani security situation was far more tenuous.

Generally, Soviet clients gave their support for the USSR, while Western clients decried the invasion. Many countries in trouble spots around the globe heightened their military readiness, and some even mobilized additional troops. However, for the most part things settled down in the countries not directly affected by the fighting. Notable exceptions were the two Koreas, Vietnam, and Pakistan.

As the Soviet Army continued to make good progress in Manchuria, Beijing came to realize that the war might not be won in a single campaign season. Modernization was supposed to have given the PLA the ability to win a conventional mechanized war in Manchuria without drawing on the traditional well of Chinese manpower. This had not happened. Even before Operation Red Willow commenced, Beijing had come to accept that the war would last into 1996 at least.

Conventional wisdom held that China would win any extended war on her own soil by

dint of her massive manpower reserves and the willingness of the populace to make frightful sacrifices. However, this might no longer be true in 1995. The staggering ability of the Soviets to cause casualties, combined with the Soviet ability to attack Chinese industry virtually anywhere in China, might knock China out of the war in the short term. China's one-child law meant that much less of the nation's manpower was available for military service than the size of the country's population might otherwise indicate. Moreover, as the number of families who had lost their only son rose, support for the war might diminish rapidly. All this easily could translate into a loss of support for the Communist Party in China. It was no use for China to win the war if the people overthrew the current government. Therefore, China had to have some means of winning the conflict in the foreseeable future: one to three years.

In the mid-1990's, China was running massive trade surpluses with most of the Western industrialized nations. The Politburo decided to cash in on her economic situation by borrowing massively from the West and by placing massive orders for Western military hardware and industrial machinery. China borrowed money from and ordered materiel from the United States in particular.

The official position of the United States at the start of the Sino-Soviet War was neutrality. However, this position did not last long. Political pressure from Chinese-American groups, combined with lobbying by US defense contractors and the banking industry soon brought Congress and President Clinton into decidedly un-neutral support for China. There simply was too much money to be made in China for American industry to forego the opportunity to turn a handsome profit. The trade deficit would be handily reversed, and China would be paying off her debts for years to come. US manufacturing would receive a useful shot in the arm, and the politicians could tell their constituents—especially their Chinese-American constituents—that they were doing something to support China without bringing the United States into the war.

On that point, Clinton and Congress were adamant. They publicly and repeatedly stated that the United States would not get involved in the Sino-Soviet War so long as the territorial sovereignty of the Republic of Korea, the Republic of China, and Japan were not threatened. The US would sell arms to anyone who could pay for them, but the United States would not actually take part in the fighting. Public opinion polls showed that the President and Congress had taken the right position.

Elsewhere in the West, the reaction to China's initiatives was the same. Western banks were delighted to lend the money, and Western defense contractors were delighted to sell arms to China. A few were concerned about getting their money back in the event that China lost the war. For the most part, however, the West initially was convinced that the war would be limited and of relatively short duration. China could not default on her debts if she wanted to sell her own manufactured goods to the West, and so long as the USSR did not push beyond Manchuria the current Chinese government ought to survive.

The level of Western involvement in the Sino-Soviet War nonplused the Kremlin, but there was little they could do. Western economic interests in the Soviet Union were

insignificant next to those in China. The USSR did not have anything like the Chinese line of credit; nor did the Soviets have anything like the Chinese expatriate communities throughout the West.

As autumn turned to winter, the slowdown of operations in Manchuria resulted in an upswing of Western public opinion for China. It appeared that the Chinese had stopped the Soviet juggernaut in its tracks. Now all that remained was for the Chinese to marshal their strength and throw the Soviets back across the border. Once the advanced Western equipment began arriving in China, the outcome was practically inevitable.

With the failure of their initial effort to capture Manchuria, the Soviets now contemplated a winter war in northeast Asia. They were aware that Western military hardware was moving into China; and that its presence would make a Spring 1996 offensive much more difficult to bring off. A change of tactics was required if the Winter War were to favor the Soviets.

Chapter 7, The Winter War:

The Winter War (1995-1996) was something neither the Soviets nor the Chinese expected to fight. There are many parallels to the situation of the Nazis in the Soviet Union during the winter of 1941-1942. The numbers of troops were smaller, but some comparisons can be made.

The first and most obvious comparison between the situation of the Nazis on the Eastern Front and the Soviets on the Far Eastern Front is that neither the Germans nor the Soviets expected they would have to fight a winter war. Hitler invaded the Soviet Union with the intent of forcing a World War One-style stalemate along a line east of Moscow. At no time did he intend to conquer the entirety of the USSR. He intended to render the Soviet Union incapable of meaningful interference in Europe. He believed this could be accomplished in a single campaign season, and so the Wehrmacht was unprepared to fight the winter war when it came.

Divided as they were at the start of the Sino-Soviet War, the masters of the Kremlin were of like mind in that they never contemplated the destruction of China. The war in Manchuria was not even intended to bring about a change of government in Beijing. From the start, the Soviet intent was to force a negotiated settlement on the People's Republic of China by dealing her a swift and solid defeat in the northeast corner of the country. This could be accomplished in a single campaign season—indeed, the victory had to be won in a single campaign season to be accomplished as envisioned. As a result, there were no plans of any consequence for extending the war past October 1995.

Like the Nazis at the end of 1941, the Soviets found that their logistical situation was unsatisfactory, to put it mildly. The further the Soviet armies advanced, the further supplies had to be transported across an infrastructure that was frankly inadequate for the task of moving so many thousands of vehicles and so many thousands of tons of supplies. The Soviets did their best to exploit the existing rail network, and where they could the

supply situation was at least tolerable. However, the Chinese had made a point of destroying the railroads as they withdrew. Worse, the presence of literally thousands of armed partisans throughout Manchuria resulted in frequent attacks on the rail lines themselves and often on the trains bearing the much-needed supplies. The roads, too, were subject to frequent mining, demolition, and attack. Pre-war estimates of how much materiel could be moved over the Manchurian communications network proved optimistic by a large margin. Similarly, estimates of the consumption of fuel and large-caliber ammunition had proved low. As a result, by the end of October the Far Eastern TVD was operating a logistical system using a plan that was largely improvised and utilizing an infrastructure that was in much worse shape than it had been in mid-August, the dedicated work of Soviet Army engineers notwithstanding.

Unlike the Nazis, the Soviets were prepared for winter fighting. The troops were far better equipped for the cold and snow of Manchuria than the Germans had been for the cold and snow of western Russia. Training for winter warfare was far more thorough. The equipment had been designed with primitive conditions and winter conditions in mind. Psychologically, the Soviet troops were better disposed to withstand winter conditions than their German counterparts had been. A not inconsiderable factor in the ability of the Soviets to stand up to the Manchurian winter was the presence of great numbers of vehicles of every kind. Although the high degree of mechanization of the Soviet Army placed demands on the supply and services echelons that dwarfed those of the Wehrmacht [on a per-unit basis], the ubiquity of vehicles provided shelter for the troops if none other was to be had. Although the interior of a BTR-70 in the dead of winter was hardly the same as a cozy fireside spot at home, the soldiers were at least out of the wind and inside a mostly-enclosed space. This was a major boon to the infantry, who typically are the most exposed to winter weather.

Perhaps the greatest difference between the Soviets on the Far Eastern Front and their Nazi counterparts was the decisions made by the leadership. Though Danilov had been dragged into the war reluctantly at best, he now was determined to see it through to its conclusion. Since the start of RED WILLOW, the Chinese ambassador to the UN had offered some settlement terms to his Soviet counterpart that could only be described from the Kremlin's point of view as outrageous. Other efforts at negotiation through secondary channels revealed to the Soviets the intransigence of the Chinese. In the last week of October, it was obvious to Danilov that Beijing, buoyed up by the results of the counteroffensive, would settle for no price he was willing to pay. The war would continue for the foreseeable future, and the first order of business for Danilov was to put his troops on the best possible footing for the fighting to last all winter.

At the start of RED WILLOW, Soviet High Command had sought and received permission to shift a half-dozen combat-ready divisions from Eastern European garrisons to the Far East. It was a move calculated to bring some of the best formations of the Soviet Army to bear in a crisis and also to reduce tensions in Europe. NATO had gone on alert in August, and they were still at a heightened state of readiness. The removal of a few divisions from Eastern Europe was thought to have the added benefit of demonstrating to the Western Allies that the Soviet Union had no designs on Western

Europe.

The divisions from Europe began to arrive as RED WILLOW was winding down. Losses to 1st Far East Front had been so great that the six new divisions were used to replace in-place front-line divisions that were then withdrawn from the front for rebuilding. Though Sauronski wanted to renew the offensive as soon as possible, he recognized that the Far Eastern TVD was in no condition to wage a general offensive, even with the new divisions. Danilov was even less eager to go to the offensive at the beginning of November. CINC Far Eastern TVD had convinced the Premier that the Soviet forces in the Far East needed an extended break to rest, refit, resupply, and receive reinforcements.

Based on all this, Danilov issued a directive that would ensure two things: that the Soviet Army would survive the winter in tolerable condition, and that the Sino-Soviet War would drag on into 1996. Far Eastern TVD was directed to create fighting positions and fortifications that would enable Soviet forces to defend a static front more-or-less along the front-line trace of Soviet formations on November 1, 1995. This gave the Soviets the chance to do their work before the ground froze. With the arrival of the six fresh divisions from Eastern Europe, the danger of a renewed Chinese counteroffensive receded for the time being.

In early November, the Soviet Politburo summoned CINC Far Eastern TVD and a number of other senior generals to Moscow to discuss how to win the war in the coming spring and how to use the winter months to best prepare for the renewed offensive. The generals had some sobering news. Far Eastern TVD would need 75,000 replacements to bring the surviving Soviet Army formations of the original invasion force back up to strength. (The divisions that had been completely destroyed would not be rebuilt.) Only about a quarter of this number would come back from the hospitals within the next thirty days. Slightly less than half of the total number of Soviet troops lost on the Far Eastern Front were POWs who essentially were lost to the war effort. The remaining quarter were troops who had been killed or so seriously wounded that they would not be back within thirty days.

Far Eastern TVD also would require 11,000 AFVs of various types and more than 19,000 trucks to come back up to authorized strength. The number of vehicles in need of spare parts was even greater. Losses in tube artillery, multiple rocket launchers, and heavy mortars exceeded the 6,000 mark. Virtually every other category of equipment from radios to engineering vehicles to machine guns had suffered similar losses.

Also, there was no question of launching a 1996 offensive with the forces in the field—even with the six divisions from Eastern Europe. As of November 1, 1995, the equivalent of thirty-four divisions was assigned to Far Eastern TVD. Even if and assuming that the damaged formations were brought back up to strength, the Soviets could not believe the PLA would fail to reinforce Manchuria massively by the start of the 1996 campaign season.

In fact the PLA, which had lost a quarter of its pre-war manpower, already was training

masses of replacements. The Chinese economy had gone to a full wartime basis. Production of consumer goods had ceased almost entirely, and Chinese industry was being retooled for defense. Three million men had been called into service. Soviet intelligence estimated that the PLA would be able to field between forty and eighty new infantry divisions, ten to twenty mechanized or motorized divisions, and ten to twenty armored divisions by April 1996. Estimates varied based on the amount of equipment produced or purchased, the PLA's decisions in how to allocate the available equipment, and the PLA's standards on what it considered fighting trim for new divisions under the circumstances.

Given the number of Chinese divisions expected to be in the field in the spring of 1996, CINC Far Eastern TVD wanted forty fresh divisions with which to resume the offensive. These forces were on top of the personnel and equipment required to bring the original invasion force back up to strength. In addition, CINC Far Eastern TVD wanted to replace his aircraft losses and increase the number of fixed-wing combat aircraft in the Far East by 1,000 airframes.

Danilov outright refused to countenance the requested increase in Army strength. There was no way to provide the additional troops and materiel without calling up huge numbers of reservists. Forty divisions represented a half-million personnel in divisional formations alone. Army-level, front-level, theater-level, and rear area security troops would represent another 200,000 personnel at least. Although some of this combat power could come from active-duty formations shifted to the Far East from one of the other theaters, both Danilov and Sauronski were loathe to draw down further the existing garrisons in Eastern Europe and elsewhere to fill the requirements of a forty-division build-up. Ground crews and other support personnel to support the increase in air power allotted to Far Eastern TVD would be more manageable, but 1,000 additional combat aircraft were more than Danilov was willing to support. The call-up of so many reservists would have a noticeable impact on an economy that was already flattening. Danilov demanded other options.

The GRU suggested that fewer Soviet divisions would be needed if fewer Chinese divisions were created and introduced into Manchuria prior to April 1996. There was little enough that the USSR could do about the call-up of three million Chinese men to fill uniforms without resorting to weapons of mass destruction employed against Chinese population centers. However, if the Soviets could find a way to reduce or even halt the production of AFVs, artillery, and other materiel, the Chinese would be forced to put a higher proportion of light infantry divisions into the field in 1996. Though light infantry posed its own problems, the Soviet Army was confident that they could handle light infantry so long as the Soviets retained the initiative.

China's defense industry had been dealt a serious blow by the Soviet invasion of Manchuria. The GRU argued that sustained air effort directed against Chinese industry could so delay their efforts to equip new divisions that Far Eastern TVD could make do with fewer troops and less materiel.

Sauronski liked the idea. The Soviets retained a significant advantage in the air. The PLAAF had been decisively defeated during the two months of active campaigning in Manchuria. Although the Chinese were not yet out of the game, the ability of the PLAAF to defend Chinese airspace south of Manchuria was an open question.

Soviet Frontal Aviation and the Air Defense Force had enjoyed even greater success than the Army so far. The exchange rate in air-to-air action dramatically favored the Soviets over their Chinese counterparts; and the Soviets were suffering fewer losses to Chinese ground-based air defenses than the other way around, despite the fact that the Soviets had flown six times as many CAS (close air support) and strike/interdiction missions during the first two months of the war. Long Range Aviation, though a lesser player in the war so far, had demonstrated the ability to penetrate China's air defenses north of the Yangtze River and knock out high-value targets. Together, these forces were anxious to demonstrate that they could achieve (with a little more time) the same kind of results as the USAF and its allies had in the Persian Gulf.

After requesting a few days to plan and make estimates, the Soviet aviators returned to the Kremlin with a bold plan. While the Army dug in and rebuilt its strength, the SAF would take the war to the enemy. Soviet aircraft would attack critical industrial, power generation, and military targets throughout the depth of China's territory. At the top of the list were the factories producing—or gearing up to produce—China's tanks, APCs, and self-propelled artillery; China's fixed-wing and rotary-wing aircraft; China's electronics; and China's air defense, air-to-air, air-to-ground, and anti-tank missiles. Other targets included infrastructure clearly vital to the war effort, major training centers and cantonments, and small arms and artillery factories.

An important benefit of the air campaign was the prospect that China might throw in the towel when her leadership came to appreciate that China's entire defense industry was on the block. If the air campaign hit the Chinese hard enough, the Air Force might succeed where the Army had failed to bring China to the bargaining table under conditions favorable to the Soviet Union. If the air campaign did its job well enough, the 1996 offensive might not be necessary.

Danilov liked the idea. While there were some dangers in expanding the war to include targets well away from Manchuria, he was attracted to the idea of playing to Soviet strengths. China had manpower—seemingly limitless manpower. The Soviet Army already had had a taste of Chinese willingness to trade lives at a very unfavorable exchange rate. Although Soviet mechanization and firepower might prove superior to Chinese numbers, the events of the war to date had demonstrated that victory based principally on the efforts of the ground forces would not come cheaply. In the air, however, the Soviets possessed a firm advantage. He reasoned that the numbers of Chinese riflemen mattered for naught in an air campaign where superior Soviet numbers and quality of airframes could be brought to bear. He gave the SAF the green light to begin its campaign.

On November 14, 1995, Soviet Frontal Aviation began a massive assault on the People's Republic of China aided by elements of Frontal Aviation, the Air Defense Force, and Naval Aviation. The Soviets had decided to overwhelm the Chinese air defenses by opening their main air offensive, code-named TCHAIKOVSKY, with the greatest concentration of aerial combat and support assets that could be mustered. The short-term goal of TCHAIKOVSKY was to destroy or neutralize China's air defenses north of the Huang Ho and establish air supremacy in that area of operations. The long-term goal was nothing less than the systematic eradication of China's industrial capabilities north of the Huang Ho through air attacks on industry, lines of communications, and power plants.

In many regards, TCHAIKOVSKY had more in common with the Americans' Vietnam-era ROLLING THUNDER than with the Americans' DESERT STORM. The latter was principally a military operation intended to pave the way for follow-on action by ground forces. ROLLING THUNDER, on the other hand, was intended to convince Hanoi to stop supporting the NLA in Republic of Vietnam by attacking Vietnamese infrastructure north of the DMZ. Unlike ROLLING THUNDER, TCHAIKOVSKY had no self-imposed limitations on the types of targets to be attacked. Indeed, the Soviets understood that they would have to inflict massive damage on China to convince her leadership that continuing the war in Manchuria was not worth the price to be paid. In this, the Soviets came very close to succeeding and probably would have forced a settlement on China had the West—particularly the United States—not provided copious financial, food, and military assistance.

Taking advantage of the limited ability of the PLAAF to put up interceptors at night, the Soviets launched TCHAIKOVSKY in the hours before dawn on November 14. More than one hundred bombers participated in the initial attack, launching a variety of missiles at standoff ranges at Chinese air defense assets along the northern arc of Chinese-held territory. The principle targets were China's air defense command-and-control nodes, airfields, radar sites and SAM centers that had survived the August-October period of fighting or had been repaired and rebuilt. Soviet intent was to copy the US scheme in Desert Storm on a grand scale, tearing a series of holes in the Chinese air defense network through which cruise missiles, bombers, fighter-bombers, and their escorts would attack.

The initial attacks mostly were successful. Squadrons of Backfire bombers from across the Soviet Union engaged identified air defense assets from eastern Manchuria to Inner Mongolia with air-launched cruise missiles and standoff AGMs. Huge strike packages supported by the most intensive EW effort the Soviets could muster flew through the gaps that were to have been opened by the initial strikes to attack high-priority targets throughout northeastern China. Although not every gap had been opened as hoped for, the Soviets had accounted for this eventuality. The strike packages of the first wave included generous flak suppression, jamming, and other support. Where necessary, the Soviets would simply smash their way to the target. Throughout the pre-dawn hours, the horizons were alight with missiles screaming into the sky and down from the sky, with flashes of gunfire from Chinese ADA systems, and with the thunderous detonation of Soviet ordnance on the ground along with burning fuel, ammunition, and other

combustibles.

By dawn, the first Soviet attack missions were winging their way home. The stunned Chinese air defense command was trying to pull itself together. The air campaign over Manchuria hadn't prepared the Chinese for this. The Soviets had done a surprisingly good job of identifying SAM defenses prior to the start of TCHAIKOVSKY, and their concentrated missile attacks on the SAM sites along their planned routes of penetration had been thorough and effective. The incoming strike missions flew above the range of Chinese ADA, thus making SAM the only effective response in the hours before dawn. Few of the SAM fired were able to track through the very dense jamming support of the strike packages, while each SAM site firing received the attention of at least one radar-seeking missile. Thus while some of the SAM within range of the Soviet corridors through the northeastern China air defenses had survived the initial onslaught, they were identified and destroyed by the muscular escort of the bomb-movers of the initial strike missions. Much the same occurred along the flight paths of the strike missions.

Damage on the ground was significant. The PLAAF headquarters in Beijing, thus far unscathed, was destroyed by two direct hits from laser-guided bombs (along with several misses). The actual command had long since moved to alternate sites, but the results were demoralizing nevertheless. Other important command-and-control nodes were destroyed or badly damaged. Several important airfields had been hit, their runways cut and saturated with anti-personnel mines. The radar network also had suffered significant damage.

Daylight brought little reprieve. No sooner had the sun come up than the Soviets launched dozens of smaller strikes using two-or four-ship elements executing low-level penetration missions. Without friendly fighter, flak suppression, or EW escort, these smaller packages relied on speed and surprise to reach their targets. It was much the same mode of operation as the PLAAF had recently demonstrated in Manchuria with their Q-5 fighter-bombers. Anticipating that the PLAAF would scramble interceptors as soon as the light allowed them to operate effectively, the Soviets vectored their small-scale missions across intact segments of the Chinese air defense umbrella.

For the next few hours, the frustrated Chinese attempted to repair the damage of the initial attack and chase down the low-level raiders. Then, in early afternoon, the Soviets launched their next major attack. Putting more than 750 aircraft into a single multi-dimensional effort, the Soviets punched through the same air corridors they had used that morning and fanned out into the rear to hit more critical air defense assets. This time, the Chinese sent up as many fighters as they could. However, as in the past the Su-27 and MiG-31 escorts of the Soviet bomb movers savagely handled the Chinese J-4 and J-6 fighters.

For the next seven days, the SAF launched three major attacks every day. The coordination effort was immense, surpassing even the US-led Coalition efforts in the Persian Gulf at the beginning of the decade. Though there were problems, the Soviets managed to master the airspace issues associated with running an air battle involving

upwards of a thousand friendly aircraft of all types stretched across a front of more than 1500 kilometers, moving through a depth of more than 3000 kilometers (in the case of Long Range Aviation assets coming from distant parts of the Soviet Union), and fighting from altitudes of 150 to 10,000 meters. The sheer numbers of EW support aircraft swamped the Chinese air defenses, enabling the strike groups to reach their targets against spotty opposition.

As they had at the beginning of the war, the PLAAF tried to get as many fighters into the air to challenge the Soviets as possible. However, they were unable to realize the potential advantage of operating inside their own airspace and inside their own radar coverage because the Soviet EW support was so very dense. Worse, the Soviets proved capable of hitting PLAAF ground-based command-and-control nodes to a degree not seen during the ground campaign in Manchuria. Despite the best efforts of the Chinese to harden and camouflage their command network, the SAF tore the system north of the Yangtze River to pieces within a few days.

Command-and-control assets south of the Yangtze survived, and the PLAAF attempted to run the defensive air battle from there with limited success. Often, the pieces of the air defense system were unable to talk to each other because the SAF thoroughly attacked the communications hubs and established electronic superiority from the onset of TCHAIKOVSKY. At first, the Soviets tended to transit to their targets above 3500 meters—out of the effective range of almost all the Chinese ADA systems. Whenever SAM engaged Soviet groups passing overhead, the air defense battery would receive the attention of flak suppression units. With sheer numbers and firepower, the Soviets blasted their way through the Chinese ground-based defenses and rained destruction down on their chosen targets.

After ten days, the PLAAF simply started evacuating what aircraft could be removed from airfields north of the Yangtze. Chinese efforts to conduct counter-air operations and fighter-based air defense were being crushed. The PLAAF could not control the airspace over its own bases; much less offer a convincing challenge to the Soviets elsewhere north of the Yangtze. Chinese ground-based systems only survived when they did not offer challenge to the massive Soviet strike groups passing overhead.

Thus the SAF was able to realize success in its opening gambit by practicing the war-fighting elements the Army was supposed to use. Speed, shock, fire, and maneuver were successfully employed as the Soviets concentrated their efforts into a relative handful of attacks conducted on a massive scale. The sheer scope of the Soviet air attacks overwhelmed Chinese response and virtually guaranteed the complete destruction of the assigned targets, be they airfields, radar, control centers, or SAM/ADA sites. Systematically working from one set of targets to the next, the Soviets eliminated the northern Chinese air defenses with ruthless and breathtaking effectiveness.

During the second week of operations, the pace slowed somewhat. The Soviets had managed to launch three major efforts per day by running their aircraft and crews at maximum tempo and by using only a portion of the aircraft on the rosters for each attack.

However, by November 25, maintenance requirements were once again catching up with the Soviets. Determined to maintain the advantages of saturating the Chinese air defenses, the Soviets scaled back their attacks to one massive main effort per day, supplemented by much smaller round-the-clock efforts.

Soviet attacks on Chinese air defenses continued into December. The Soviet air chiefs were given a nearly ideal situation, and they made the most of it. For thirty days, they had huge numbers of aircraft devoted to nothing but missions against the enemy's air defense network. Close air support missions in Manchuria and Inner Mongolia had been handed to the rotary wing elements of Frontal Aviation. Though the use of cruise missiles and other smart weapons had been sharply curtailed after the first several days, the continued degradation of the Chinese air defenses north of the Yangtze had allowed the Soviets to bring in their obsolescent aircraft. Throughout the last few days of November and into December, the Soviets brought MiG-21s, MiG-19s, Su-7s, and Su-19s into the fight employing standard iron bombs and rockets against Chinese ADA positions and other targets. The Soviets were determined to achieve air supremacy over the northeastern quarter of China.

During this time, the Soviets also began to attack PLAAF airfields south of the Yangtze. Determined to maintain at least some ability to challenge the Soviets in the air over Beijing and other northeastern targets, the Chinese fought hard to defend these bases. A formidable ADA presence was established around the front-line bases south of the Yangtze. The Soviets responded to this challenge by using more stand-off weapons and ballistic missiles with conventional warheads. The PLAAF continued to lose aircraft on the ground, and they continued to have aircraft unavailable for long periods because the runways needed to scramble the planes were damaged.

On December 10, 1995 the Soviets shifted their main effort from the destruction of the Chinese air defense network to the destruction of the industrial and communications infrastructure of northeastern China. In approximately thirty days of intensive efforts, they had smashed the enemy's air defenses north of the Yangtze. It was not that the Chinese had no air defenses whatsoever; large numbers of light- and medium-caliber anti-aircraft guns survived throughout the northeastern corner of China. Self-propelled SAM also survived in substantial numbers, although attrition here had been quite high. However, the fixed and low-mobility assets had been torn to pieces. Although some radar continued to operate—especially radar attached to self-propelled SAM—the integrated air defense network had simply ceased to exist as such. Not a single fixed radar was operational anywhere north of the Yangtze, and the high- and medium-altitude SAM network had been rendered nearly useless as an integrated system.

The Soviets now engaged in a deliberate and systematic effort against the entire basis of northeastern China as an industrial society. Within a given area, Soviet air attacks struck every target on a prioritized list that included power plants, rail hubs, bridges, defense industries, petroleum storage, and other factories that had survived the initial onslaught. Instead of destroying power plants on a broad and regional basis, the Soviets attacked every worthwhile target in a much smaller area, starting with metropolitan Beijing.

Although the Soviets did not deliberately target residential areas within Beijing as a whole, they did use residential areas to their advantage. The Soviet attack aircraft widely employed incendiary devices along with high explosives. When an industrial area was hit, adjacent residential neighborhoods would receive attention with incendiary bombs. As a result, relief efforts into the industrial area were badly hampered by the presence of fierce fires between fire stations outside the immediate area and the bombed factories. Deliberate and dedicated attention to the bridges and high-speed lines of communication within Beijing further hamstrung damage control efforts.

The Chinese fully expected attacks on the power plants, petroleum storage, and critical industries. What they did not expect was the systematic destruction of all large-scale industry in greater Beijing. Day after day and night after night, Soviet raiders returned in large numbers to rain destruction on the Chinese capital. The road and rail networks were cut to ribbons. Factories with no relationship to the war effort were razed, as were banks and governmental institutions. Dozens of Chinese pilots lost their lives in vain efforts to stop the procession of bombers flying over their capitol, and still the bombing went on. The destruction was far different than anything seen during the air campaign in Manchuria, and the Chinese were badly shaken.

As Operation Desert Storm had demonstrated, the destructive potential of air power had been revolutionized since the Second World War. Though fewer aircraft were in operation compared to the massive air fleets operated by the Allies in World War Two, both the bomb-moving capability of single aircraft and the ability of the pilots to deliver their ordnance on-target had advanced enormously. Whereas in 1944 as many as five hundred sorties by B-17s might have been required for the Americans to place a single 500 lb. bomb inside a 25-meter circle, in 1995 that number had dropped as low as a single sortie by an F-117. Although Soviet air power had not enjoyed quite the same precipitous rise in effectiveness, it certainly was possible for the Soviets to accomplish the same thing in five to ten sorties.

As a result, the ability of the Soviets to destroy industrial and infrastructure targets in Beijing from the air using only conventional weapons came as a rude shock to the Chinese. The Soviets attacked virtually everything of value, wiping out factories, power plants, rail yards, bridges, and essentially everything that made Beijing a city. Though residential areas were not targeted strictly for the sake of killing civilians, loss of life was tremendous. To make matters worse, the Soviets laid anti-personnel and anti-vehicle mines along avenues of approach to the areas they attacked. Emergency response crews moving to areas that were under attack frequently ran afoul of the mines. On December 22, the Soviets launched an operation to knock down several of the city's most visible high-rise buildings. The collapse of several of them were captured by Western media and rebroadcast around the world.

Through the remainder of December, the Soviets subjected Beijing to a pitiless aerial bombardment. They maintained attacks on other targets throughout northeastern China to forestall significant repair of the Chinese air defense network, but the real focus was

Beijing. Despite the best efforts of the Chinese security forces to keep control of the citizenry, the populace of Beijing streamed out of the city. The Western media captured images of jammed roads and trains leaving Beijing. All over China people managed to see images of their capital being reduced to rubble, the people scattering to the countryside. It was deeply demoralizing.

In Ottawa, the Soviet ambassador to Canada gave the Chinese ambassador to Canada an offer to lift the aerial bombardment at the end of 1995. The destruction of Beijing showed that the Soviet Union did not need to resort to NBC weapons to ruin China. Surely, with the Soviet Union in possession of Manchuria and the capitol of China reduced to rubble, the Chinese Politburo would come to their senses and bring the war to an end. Otherwise, the destruction would go on until China either capitulated or ceased to be an industrialized society.

For Zhu and for Communist China it was a moment of truth. The PLA and the PLAAF appeared to have failed the nation. If the one-sided destruction continued, the Chinese people would turn on the Communist Party—or at least on Zhu and his supporters. Premier Zhu might well have given in at that moment, save for the support of the United States.

By the end of 1995, the People's Republic of China was in an unenviable position. Much of Manchuria was in Soviet hands, denying the PRC a substantial portion of its agricultural base and industrial power. The PLA had been very roughly handled during the Soviet offensive in August and September, losing thousands of fighting vehicles and more than 200,000 troops. Hundreds more fighting vehicles and more than 75,000 troops had been lost during Operation Red Willow, which had failed to achieve its goal of inflicting a major defeat on the Far Eastern TVD. After four months of high-tempo combat against a numerically and technologically superior foe, the PLAAF was a shadow of its pre-war self. The Soviet Air Force had turned its full fury on Beijing in December; the bombardment lifted at the end of the month largely because there was so little left worth destroying. It was clear that the rest of the country was now open to attack from the air. There were no immediate prospects for a counteroffensive in Manchuria. The traditional Chinese advantages of space and manpower were greatly diminished in the context of China's efforts to become a major industrial power; Soviet air power could smash factories without facing Chinese infantry. What was the point of eventual victory if the price meant China's dreams of becoming a superpower were put back two generations? Though China had not been defeated outright, Premier Zhu had very little reason to see hope for the short and medium terms were China to continue the fight with her own resources.

The support that kept China fighting came from the West--principally the United States. Since the start of the Sino-Soviet War, American sympathies had been with China. The large and vocal Chinese expatriate community in the United States had helped turn an American predisposition in favor of China into a remarkable base of support. In general, the American people saw China as an heroic underdog victimized by naked Soviet aggression. Congress and the American business community saw the possibilities

involved with reconstruction in post-war China. Fervent anti-Soviets saw the usefulness of helping China inflict a reversal on Moscow. The stage was set for a major American investment in China's fate.

Within a week of the start of the Sino-Soviet War, Beijing was exploring the possibilities of an extended war. Analysts charged with outlining a worst-case scenario had produced, among others, some models that looked amazingly like what was actually happening in China. By the second week in September, China's representatives in Washington were exploring the possibility of buying large quantities of industrial machinery and defense items. The loss of significant quantities of industrial machinery in Harbin, Shenyang*, and other Manchurian manufacturing centers meant that China's efforts to replace her losses (already major by mid-September) would be badly hampered until she could replace the assembly lines. Though China's manufacturing capacity in 1995 was impressive, much of it was devoted to the production of consumer goods for the West. Like the United States in 1941, China would need significant retooling of her surviving industry before she would be ready to wage all-out industrial war. Whether the PLA was able to liberate Manchuria or not, China would need new machines and machine tools as soon as she could get them. The first most obvious place to look was the United States.

*[Author's note: In keeping with my efforts to upset the canon timeline as little as possible, previous installments of The Sino-Soviet War should be understood to reflect the Soviets' capture of Shenyang prior to the start of Operation Red Willow. However, in keeping with the spirit of a significant Soviet withdrawal as a result of the Chinese counteroffensive, China recaptures Shenyang during the course of Operation Red Willow. The Soviets destroy as much as possible in situ before making their breakout bid.]

The Sino-American relationship in 1995 was a curious one. As undisputed leader of the capitalist, democratic world the United States was an ideological opponent of Communist China. Yet as trade partners, the US and China enjoyed a substantial and growing trade. Differences over ideology and human rights had not prevented the US from running up a trade deficit with China that was estimated at \$45 billion in 1994. Human rights and political freedom issues had done little to slow the proliferation in the US of products bearing the label MADE IN CHINA. The subject of exactly how the United States was going to redress this trade imbalance—i.e., by getting the Chinese to buy more American goods—had become more than lukewarm in Congress. And there was the fact that the PRC was now involved in a war with the real Communist devil, the USSR. As a result, the Chinese ambassador to the United States received an amazingly warm welcome at the White House when he appeared to discuss massive purchases of industrial and defense hardware in September 1995.

The United States was delighted to provide as much industrial machinery as China could purchase. As soon as word got out that China was preparing to go shopping, American industrialists applied the full measure of their influence with Congress to speed a deal through the system. Initially, however, defense purchases proved more of a problem. China wanted to replace destroyed and captured materiel--principally armored fighting

vehicles, soft-skinned transport, aircraft, self-propelled artillery, air defense systems, and electronics. Two problems presented themselves immediately. China's logistical system, crews, and maintenance were adapted to Chinese-made products. From the Chinese standpoint, parts for US trucks, AFV, aircraft, and so on would add another layer of complexity to the already-burdened Chinese logistical and training situation. They wanted the US to provide weapons systems in Chinese calibers, such as 152mm for field guns instead of 155mm. American firms wanted surcharges for retooling costs, and the Chinese initially balked.

The other major issue was American concerns for proprietary knowledge, especially in the area of defense technology. The M1A2 represented the state-of-the-art in battle tank design and electronics. The White House was wary of giving China access to the best hardware and software in use by the American military. These concerns were even more pronounced in the area of aircraft, air defense, and electronic warfare. China wanted the most advanced model of the F-16 in the USAF inventory. The US was willing to part with the airframe, but China would have to settle for a lesser-capable electronics package. China wanted the Javelin anti-tank missile, just coming out of prototype in late 1995. The White House refused, offering instead as many TOW-II as China could carry.

For China, it was hardly optimal to acquire an upgraded but old-model American tank like the M60A4. Though a good tank, the M60A4 was not the equivalent of the Type 85 already in service with front-line PLA formations. The M60A4 was arguably a superior tank to late-model Type 59 and Type 69 tanks that outfitted the majority of the tank units in the PLA. However, bringing in the M60A4 (or its equivalent) would entail numerous additions to the logistics framework, plus retraining for tank crews and maintenance personnel. About the only good point was that the M60A4 was a proven, reliable design firing the NATO-standard 105mm rifled tank round, which China had been manufacturing for several years.

Initially, China's efforts to acquire top-of-the-line US equipment foundered on the two main points of contention. The White House was willing to sell soft-skinned transport, as well as small arms and other low-tech goods, though. Several arms manufacturers came forward with offers to manufacture SKS and AK47 rifles in the United States, as well as machine guns and mortars in Chinese calibers. Retooling would be fairly quick and easy, and China could start receiving Chinese-standard small arms by the beginning of December.

Beijing was not satisfied with the arrangement. China suspended the purchase of industrial equipment and small arms and traveled to Western Europe. Unlike the United States, France proved willing to provide the PRC with whatever hardware China could pay for. France, too, had a substantial trade deficit with China and was eager to reduce the imbalance.

At this point, it became clear to many leaders in the West that a tremendous pot of gold was being offered by China to the nation(s) that offered the best deal in arms. China had tens of billions of dollars to spend, and her credit line was staggering despite the war.

Few in the international finance community believed in mid-September that the Sino-Soviet War would destroy China as an economic power, and so she remained a good credit risk. Zhu and the Politburo shrewdly tied industrial purchases, small arms, and high-tech systems into a single package. As a result, the industrial nations of the West soon began bidding to take the whole prize. The winner would enjoy a comfortable trade surplus with China for the rest of the decade, at least.

However, as China's policy was beginning to have the US reconsider its position on high-tech arms sales, the Soviet advance in Manchuria was robbing the Politburo of their ability to be choosy. By the end of September, 1st Far East Front was in possession of Shenyang. The PLA and PLAAF were in awful condition. Although preparations were being made for the main Chinese counteroffensive (Operation Red Willow), the only guarantee in that regard was that the Army and Air Force would suffer even more grievous losses in the next round of fighting. As the dust began to settle from Operation Red Willow in late October, it became apparent that while the PLA had dealt the Soviets a serious blow, the enemy was far from out of the fight. Barring a political settlement, the Soviet Union would be back for another round of fighting. With so much of her industry and materiel lost, China no longer had the luxury of being coy with the West.

Confronted with the new reality of the Manchurian battlefield, the Politburo changed its tack. Communist China ordered masses of industrial machinery from the United States, Canada, France, the United Kingdom, and West Germany. The Politburo intended to bring set up new factories in southern China, behind the depth of Chinese air defenses. This decision was reached even before Operation Tchaikovsky got underway.

As the guns of Operation Red Willow were cooling, the PLA and the Politburo were refining their plans for the rebuilding of the Army by Spring 1996. It was obvious that China could not produce enough tanks, self-propelled guns, and other mechanized materiel to enable the PLA to take to the field on an equal basis by the time the Soviet offensive was likely to get started. This, too, was obvious even before Operation Tchaikovsky began to hammer Chinese industry south of Manchuria. The PLA had to acquire as much materiel as possible by then, but the bulk of the Army in Spring 1996 would have to be light divisions. China needed the weapons to make her light divisions a more credible force on the battlefield in the face of overwhelming Soviet mobility and firepower. By the end of October, Beijing had arranged to purchase a number of ATGM types from the United States and Western Europe--principally TOW-II, Milan, HOT. Stinger and Mistral would round out the PLA light air defense capability in the short term.

Within days of the start of Operation Tchaikovsky, it was apparent that China's needs were greater than anyone in the West or even in China had imagined. Thousands of shoulder-fired air defense missiles were on their way to China in November, but the PLA and PLAAF would need high-altitude systems, radar, and other electronics to replace the losses being endured daily.

As the northern Chinese air defense network came apart under the weight of Soviet aerial

attack, Chairman Zhu executed a policy that was to keep China in the war through 1996, thus paving the way for direct Western involvement in the Eurasian hot war. Completely abandoning any pretense of having the Western powers bid for the opportunity to sell the high-tech equipment China needed so badly, Zhu and the Politburo mortgaged China. The Chinese obtained as much credit as they possibly could from the West. Beijing borrowed as much money as could be gotten from every Western power with money to lend. Banks in New York, London, Paris, Bonn, and Tokyo lent to their maximum and then obtained funds from other banks to send to China. At first, some lenders attempted to steer clear of what many perceived to be extremely risky lending, given the way the war was souring for the People's Republic of China and the sheer amount of debt China was accumulating in just a few weeks. But as a torrent of Soviet bombs rained on northern China, a river of cash flowed into China's coffers. The borrowing and lending took on a life and a logic of its own that left Wall Street stammering. A quantity roughly equal to one half of one percent of the global GDP moved to China in just under a month.

In Washington, President Clinton's top policy experts quickly deduced what the Chinese were doing. They informed the President that China was attempting to leverage the United States—indeed the capitalist world—into guaranteeing her future. If China or even the Zhu government fell, it was quite unlikely that China's tremendous debt would be paid off. Early in the process, they had advised against restricting the flow of US capital to China because the sheer volume and potential profitability of the Chinese debt was creating its own logic. Banks, and by extension nations, could not afford to be left out of the action. If the United States did not participate directly, the US would participate indirectly by lending money to other Western powers, who would then collect the lion's share of the profit. A Chinese default on the debt would send the entire West spinning into a recession, regardless of which nations lent directly and which ones lent to the lenders. Far from advising caution, however, Clinton's top personnel advised wholehearted support of the process. If Zhu's government remained in power, they could not default on the debt without ruining their access to US markets. China needed to US to pay her debt in the long term, just as she needed to US to survive in the short term. The US certainly could use the additional boost in her arms sales. Equally, it would be most useful to inflict a proxy reversal on the Soviet Union. A Soviet failure in Manchuria would improve the market for US arms—particularly if US materiel was seen as the cutting edge of a Chinese victory. Admittedly, there was some risk in supporting China. However, the potential gains were so great that the Clinton Administration found it impossible to say no. Clinton had been looking for some way to wrest the helm of the nation away from Congress, and this seemed a way to bring both Republicans and Democrats solidly behind him.

Thus, when Communist China was in her darkest hour, the United States was there for her. The funding would flow. Industrial machinery would go to China in US-registered ships under the guns of the US Navy. In addition to the thousands of missiles already being sent, the US would sell HAWK and other systems, along with the radar and command-and-control equipment necessary to use the missiles. Tanks, lighter AFV, and the whole panoply of mechanized materiel would be made available. In a closed-door meeting, Lockheed-Martin convinced the State Department to sell the brand-new Javelin

man-portable ATGM to China, provided the Chinese bought a certain minimum. The profits would be turned directly into the next generation ATGM, keeping the US in the lead no matter how things turned out in China. An ecstatic Politburo signed on to buy 10,000 missiles with an option for 20,000 more. Additionally, the United States would sell fairly advanced aircraft. In the meantime, the US would arrange for a new American Volunteer Group to fly for China while the PLAAF was rebuilding.

Within days of the US announcement, other Western nations were rushing their support to Beijing. Zhu could look on his accomplishment with some pride. Though he had mortgaged China, by ensuring that the West held the deed he had bound the United States and her allies to China's fate.

Thus the Chinese ambassador to Canada was able to reply to his Soviet counterpart that China was not ready to discuss terms of ending the conflict. The Winter War would continue, and it was about to evolve in new directions.