

imperialism was articulated, one that not only served to legitimize Khrushchev's current policies but which also opened the way for a radically different approach to international politics. During the early Khrushchev years of the mid-1950s, Soviet spokesmen had been rather vague in their occasional references to "sober voices" and "far-sighted" public figures in the West. By 1960, as a consequence of the verbal assault emanating from Beijing, the Soviet leadership moved to clarify its position, to make it more explicit, and to give it a sound doctrinal foundation. It was now argued that a well-defined process of splitting or differentiation (*razmezhevanie*) was occurring within the various capitalist countries, especially the United States. As a result of this process it was no longer correct to speak of only a few isolated sober voices. The ruling elite within individual countries was dividing, and two distinct and radically different groups were emerging.

One group was said to be bellicose and virulently anti-Soviet, while the other was described as being sober, moderate, fully cognizant of the catastrophic consequences of nuclear war, and sincerely interested in improved relations with the Soviet Union. These two very different factions of the ruling bourgeoisie were portrayed as being locked in a sharp struggle for power whose precise outcome was an open question. The final outcome was not preordained and would be decided not just by immutable economic forces, but by the interplay of complex and uncertain political factors as well. There was, according to Khrushchev and his colleagues, a very real possibility that moderate forces would triumph in many of the leading capitalist countries, including even the United States.⁴⁷

This rather unorthodox view had important implications for the Soviet conceptualization of East-West relations. It suggested that there was a real basis for genuine co-operation even between the Soviet Union, the world's most powerful socialist state, and the United States, the leading force in the imperialist camp. Whereas

⁴⁷ See Khrushchev's speech of 6 January 1961, in *Kommunist*, 1961, No. 1, pp. 23-24 and the speech of Otto Kuusinen reprinted in Hudson, *The Sino-Soviet Dispute*, pp. 119-120.