

**The London School of Economics and Political  
Science**

*The Double Crisis: China and the Hungarian Revolution of  
1956*

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A thesis submitted to the Department of International  
History of the London School of Economics for the degree  
of Doctor of Philosophy, London, June 2009

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## **Abstract**

The 1956 crisis in Hungary had a profound impact on China's international affairs and domestic politics. The Chinese Communist Party leadership - party chairman Mao Zedong in particular - had by the end of mid-1950s begun to conceive of "a great Chinese revolution", which would largely take the form of large-scale industrial modernization. At the same time, China's awareness that it could develop into a leading player in the international socialist camp led Mao and his colleagues actively to intervene on the East European scene, posing an implicit challenge to the Soviet dominance in the bloc. The apparent desire of the Hungarian people to break free from Stalinist socialism, and the real risk, as Mao saw it, of the bloc foundering, convinced the Chinese Party that only reverting to a Stalinist pattern of inter-state socialism could keep the camp intact.

In the domestic context, the Hungarian events likewise played a formative role in the evolution of Chinese social policy as top officials critically reviewed the Soviet experience of collectivization. Intellectuals and statesmen began to doubt the efficiency of the party's rule, while Mao rejected meaningful reforms of institutional socialism in favour of "soft" means of conscripting the intellectuals and "remolding" popular thought. Having opened up to party to criticism from outside, Mao cited the risk of domestic opponents fomenting a Hungarian-style crisis in China in terminating the Hundred Flowers campaign and moving to a program of ideological purges and massive economic stimulation. By 1958 China was definitively set on the course of the Great Leap Forward and the break with the Soviet Union.

## Acknowledgements

I am first of all deeply indebted to Prof. Odd Arne Westad, my supervisor, for his direction of this research and helpful comments on the manuscript. I have been truly lucky to be his student for both my M.Phil. and PhD studies, during which time his example helped inspire me to make a career in International History. It would have been impossible for me to complete the task without his help and encouragement.

Many people helped me in completing this thesis, but I would like to single out James Griffiths, who read each chapter, made numerous suggestions for improving phrasing.

I owe a great deal to my husband, Yi Mingdeng, for his gathering Chinese materials for me in the first six months of research and for his encouragement and support over the last four years.

My special acknowledgments go to the International History Department and IDEAS center of LSE and particularly to Mrs. Tiha Franulovic for her generous assistance.

Most of all, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my mother, Liu Yiping, whose love, support, guidance have behind every successful step of my life.

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## Introduction

The idea of Europe as the central battlefield of the Cold War as that face-off took shape between the two great powers has to be revised to take account of the emergence into international prominence of events in Asia in the early 1950s.<sup>1</sup> The Asian region, as an “other side” or front of the Cold War, has now started to enter into historiography with the end of the conflict and declassification of Chinese state documents, whose scrutiny promises to cast cold war history in a new light both globally and regionally.<sup>2</sup> The development of the study of Communist China’s Cold War history has more than any other historiographical development begun to contribute to a more integral and truly global Cold War history.

In Mao Zedong’s words, 1956 was a year of “big events”, both at home and abroad.<sup>3</sup> The “secret speech” delivered by Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev to the Communist Party of the Soviet Union’s (CPSU) Twentieth Congress had, according to Mao, “opened the lid” on the repressiveness of the immediately post-War Soviet regimes, thereby “making a mess” in ideologically inspiring a wave of de-Stalinization marked by massive demonstrations in Poland and Hungary. These mass movements demanded from their governments the improvement of their countries’ living standards and the safeguarding of national independence and political rights in the teeth of the Soviet Union.<sup>4</sup> The Hungarian events, in particular, were more complicated than either a populist anti-socialist protest or a form of proto-nationalist agitation, and the Chinese leaders exerted great effort in trying to apply the lessons of Hungary to their own domestic situation.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> On Europe as the origin and central battleground of the Cold Wars, see Antonio Varsori, ‘Reflections on the Origins of the Cold War’, in Odd Arne Westad ed., *Reviewing the Cold War: Approaches, Interpretations and Theory* (London: Frank Cass, 2000), 281-302.

<sup>2</sup> See the back cover of John Lewis Gaddis, *We now Know: Rethinking Cold War History* (New York: Oxford, 1997).

<sup>3</sup> Liu Congwen, Chen Shaotao et al., *Liu Shaoqij nianpu, 1898-1969* [A Chronological Record of Liu Shaoqi] (LSN), 2 vols., (Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian, 1996), 809.

<sup>4</sup> See Wu Lengxi, *Shinian lunzhan, 1956-1966: Zhongsu guanxi huiyilu* [Ten-Year Polemical Debate, 1956-1966: A Memoir on Sino-Soviet Relations] (Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian, 1999), 6. Wu Lengxi was then director of the ‘New China News Agency’ and editor-in-chief of ‘People’s Daily’, and he attended several Politburo Standing Committee meetings discussing the de-Stalinization issue. Mao repeated the same claim later on several occasions. Mao repeated the same claim later on several occasions. Also see Chen Jian, *Mao’s China and the Cold War* (Chapel Hill, London: The University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 64.

<sup>5</sup> See Bo Yibo, *Ruogan zhongda juece yu shijian de huigu* (xiajuan) [Review on a Certain Number of Crucial Decisions and Events, vol. 2, thereafter *huigu*] (Beijing: Remmin, 1997) 597-599.

The purpose of this thesis is to make sense of the inner connection between China's political and diplomatic involvement in the Hungarian crisis and the influence this crisis had on China's domestic policy from late 1956 to 1957. In this short but very crucial period of time, Chinese domestic politics changed dramatically from the rhetorically inclusive and pluralistic "rectification" and Hundred Flowers campaigns (HF) to the repressive and authoritarian Anti-Rightist campaign, changes in which Chairman Mao's interpretation of the Hungarian Crisis of 1956 played an essential role.

This thesis takes advantage of the wealth of newly available archival material in opting for a domestic-centered method in studying the relations between China and the Hungarian crisis of 1956. Its particular focus lies with how the crisis prompted Mao to adopt a more aggressive agenda in promoting the "socialist revolution and [effort of] reconstruction" at home, at the same time as emphasizing the necessity to keep hierarchical order within the Communist camp against the background of the Cold War. This attention, while centrally devoted to China, nevertheless captures an international dimension of the Hungarian crisis to which insufficient attention has as yet been paid.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Up to 1990s, the books and articles on the Hungarian Revolution of 1956 either written by the Hungarian scholars or western researchers rarely touch upon Chinese diplomatic and political involvement in the process of the events, let alone seeking to assess the impact of the October Revolution on the Chinese domestic scene throughout late 1956 to late 1957. János Rádványi, a senior official in the Hungarian diplomatic service in 1956, published an article in 1970 recollecting his observation of the Chinese role in the 1956 Hungarian Crisis. Rádványi provides us with important information on the Chinese embassy's role, that of ambassador Hao Deqing in particular, in Beijing's final judgment of the nature of the Hungarian events, as may now be confirmed by newly declassified Chinese Foreign Ministry Archives. See Rádványi, "The Hungarian Revolution and the Hundred Flowers Campaign," *The China Quarterly*, no. 43 (Jul.-Sept., 1970): 121-129. Fortunately, several noteworthy Chinese and foreign scholars have applied themselves to this archive, gradually unveiling some of the interconnections between China and the Hungarian Crisis of 1956 after the 1990s; see Chen Jian, "Beijing and the Polish and Hungarian Crisis of 1956," in his *Mao's China and the Cold War* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 145-162, which is based on a paper with the same title delivered at an international conference on "Cold War and Sino-Soviet Relations" in Beijing, 1997. As far as this author knows, Chen is the first Chinese American scholar to write on the relation between China and the Hungarian October events. Hu Bo in the final chapter of his PhD dissertation dealing with the Hungarian Revolt and the Cold War concludes less promisingly that China's role in the Hungarian events was "secondary". See his *Lengzhan Yinying xia de Xiongyali Shijian* [The Hungarian Crisis under the Shadow of the Cold War], (PhD diss., East China Normal University, 1999), 118-127, a line expanded in the book emerging from his PhD dissertation, *Lengzhan yinying xia de Xiongyali shijian: daguo de yingce yu hudong* [The Hungarian Incident in the Shadow of the Cold War: Great Power Reactions and Interaction] (Beijing: Shehui Kexue, 2004) 231-244. Mercy A. Kuo, meanwhile, argues: "...the PRC's involvement in the Hungarian events can be seen as sealing of Beijing's equal footing with Moscow" in her book *Contending with Contradictions: China's Policy toward Soviet Eastern Europe and the Origins of the Sino-Soviet Split, 1953-1960* (Maryland: Lexington Books, 2001), 95-111. Shen Zhihua has published two essays in recent years discussing China's role in the Polish and Hungarian events in 1956 and the October Crises' impacts on China's domestic politics up to 1957; see his "1956 nian shiyue weiji: zhongguo de juece he yingxiang --boxiongshijian yu

The nature and sequence of the Hungarian Revolution of 1956, a major historical episode in the Cold War, continues to be debated, with these considerations playing to current attempts to redefine Cold War history more inclusively, pulling to focus interactions between the Great Powers and local politics. In Hungary, the majority of archival sources on the 1956 Hungarian Revolution are now available to scholarship, joining the post-90s declassification of many other depositories around the globe. In 1989-90, an institute for the history of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution was established aiming to draw the attention of local and international historians.<sup>7</sup> Similarly, a number of Polish, Czechoslovak and Yugoslav archival documents have been discovered and released.<sup>8</sup> Even some Soviet sources, which are of utmost importance in understanding Soviet decision-making and action during the crisis, have gradually been opened to scrutiny.<sup>9</sup> As a result of declassification trends in East-Central Europe, as well as the release of numerous Western sources on 1956 during the latter part of the 1980s, historians have already produced books and articles presenting hitherto unknown data, important evidence and various interpretations.<sup>10</sup>

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zhongguo yanjiu zhiyi' [China's Role and Influence in the Revolts in Poland and Hungary in 1956: Studies on Polish and Hungarian crises and China, part 1], *Lishi yanjiu* [Historical Studies] 2 (2005):119-143; "Zhongguo dui dongou shiyueweiji de fanying he sikao-'boxiongshijian yu zhongguo' yanjiu zhier" [On the October Crises in Eastern Europe: China's Reaction and Reflection – A Study of the Polish and Hungarian Incidents and China, Part 2], *Shixue Yuekan* [History Studies Monthly] issue 1 (2007):75-89. For the argument that China played no decisive role in Soviet decision making for the second intervention to Hungary, see Péter Vámos, "Evolution and Revolution: Sino-Hungarian Relations and the 1956 Revolution," *CWIHP Working Paper*, no.56 (November 2006): 38. Lorenz M. Luthi concludes that regardless of the actual influence the Chinese side had on the Soviet decision making process in late October 1956, the CCP leadership's self-confidence was enhanced after Polish and Hungarian events. More meaningfully, Lorenz explores Chairman Mao's rejection of Khrushchev's de-Stalinization and peaceful coexistence policies in the wake of the Polish October and the Hungarian Revolution. Lorenz further examines the Eastern bloc crises' impact on Chinese domestic politics up to the summer of 1957. See Luthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split: Cold War in the Communist World* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University, 2008), 57-74.

<sup>7</sup> For further information on the Institute for the History of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution, see <http://www.rev.hu>

<sup>8</sup> In Hungary, most archival sources on 1956 can be found in Magyar Országos Levéltár (MOL) [the Hungarian National Archive]. Besides the Hungarian National Archives and archives in Russia, Cold War historians can also find useful materials on the Hungarian Crisis of 1956 from documents reserved in the Czech Republic, Poland, former East Germany and the United States, for example, the Military History Archive and Central National Archives of the Czech Republic; der DDR im Bundesarchiv (SAPMDB) [Eastern Germany Communist Archive] in Berlin and the National Security Archive in Washington D.C. For a collection of documents translated into English on 1956 Hungary whose historical materials derive mainly from Russia, Hungary and Western democratic countries, see Csaba Békés, Malcolm Byrne, and János Rainer eds., *The 1956 Hungarian Revolution: A History in Documents* (Budapest and New York: Central European University Press, 2002).

<sup>9</sup> For article introducing these archives from the Russian side, see Csaba Békés, "New Findings on the 1956 Hungarian Revolution," in *CWIHP Bulletin*, Issue 2 (1992):1-3.

<sup>10</sup> Alexander Stykalin, "The Hungarian Crisis of 1956: the Soviet Role in the Light of New Archival Documents," *Cold War History*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (October 2001):113-144; On Soviet decision-making process as illuminated by Russian

In the introductory essay to his authoritative translation and annotation of the so-called "Malin Notes" of key Kremlin meetings during the crises, Mark Kramer of Harvard University examines how the Soviet leadership responded to the implicit threat of the dissolution of the communist empire during the 1956 crises.<sup>11</sup> In his analysis of the Soviet decision-making processes before and during the October crises, Kramer found that although the Soviets had made advance preparations in military terms to maintain, defend or even restore the socialist order in the Eastern European states, the Kremlin leadership became more and more reluctant to use armed force without the utmost certainty that such a course was necessary.<sup>12</sup> In fact, it was Moscow's hesitation over using military means in Hungary that gave Beijing the chance to maneuver the Kremlin leadership into admitting the inequality in Soviet-satellite relations. In doing so, the Chinese side aimed to dent Soviet prestige and power inside the bloc and thus to enhance its own authority and influence internationally.

A range of new findings and interpretations of Hungarian scholars of the 1956 incident can be found in two essay collections published in the late 1990s.<sup>13</sup> *Soviet Military Intervention in Hungary 1956* discloses valuable new material on the organization, command, strategy, and tactics of the Soviet armed forces, which invaded Hungary in 1956. On the basis of study on the former Soviet archives, this book has, among other points, helped explain the scale of military operations, precisely documenting the irrationally large size of the forces. Csaba

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archives, see Mark Kramer, "Hungary and Poland 1956: Khrushchev's CPSU CC Presidium Meeting on Eastern European Crises, 24 October 1956", *CWIHP Bulletin*, Issue 5 (1995), pp. 1, 50-56; Kramer, "New Evidence on Soviet Decision-Making and the 1956 Polish and Hungarian Crises," *CWIHP Bulletin*, issue 8-9 (1996/1997), 358-384. For a detailed introduction to Hungarian scholars' interpretations and the policies and impact of Western powers on the 1956 Hungarian Crisis, see Terry Cox ed., *Hungary 1956 - Forty Years On* (London: Frank Cass Publishers, 1997); Jenő Györkei and Miklós Horváth ed., *Soviet Military Intervention in Hungary 1956* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 1999).

<sup>11</sup> V.N. Malin, head of the CPSU General Department, attended the Soviet Presidium meetings in the fall of 1956 taking notes, which "constitute[] the only known contemporaneous record of the key sessions of late October and early November at which Kremlin leaders went back and forth over whether to pull out from Hungary or reintroduce new troops". See *CWIHP Bulletin*, issue 8-9 (1996/1997), 356.

<sup>12</sup> Mark Kramer, "Hungary and Poland 1956", *CWIHP Bulletin*, Issue 5 (1995):1, 50-56; Kramer, "New Evidence", *CWIHP Bulletin*, Issues 8-9 (1996/1997): 358-384; Kramer "The 'Malin Notes' on the Crises in Hungary and Poland, 1956" *CWIHP Bulletin*, Issues 8-9 (1996/1997): 385-410.

<sup>13</sup> See Terry Cox ed., *Hungary 1956 - Forty Years On* (London: Frank Cass Publishers, 1997); Jenő Györkei and Miklós Horváth eds., *Soviet Military Intervention in Hungary 1956* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 1999).

Békés in his article "The 1956 Hungarian Revolution and World Politics" has attempted to re-examine the reaction of the big powers to the Hungarian crisis, prising open newly accessible West European and former Soviet archives to illuminate their high-level decision making processes, especially as these bore on considerations of international diplomacy.<sup>14</sup> In his recent biography of János Kádár, Huszár Tibor has reinterpreted the Hungarian Crisis of 1956 from 23 October to 4 November by emphasizing Kádár's personal role in the Kremlin's reorientations of view with regard to the riots in Hungary. Tibor's book was enabled by interviews with former diplomats, and the memoirs of diplomats and top-party officials, which taken together recontextualize the 1956 revolution through focusing on the influence of a particular Hungarian leader.<sup>15</sup> Further, relevant articles and documents have been published by the Institute for the History of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution and in the Cold War International History Project Bulletin.<sup>16</sup>

Exploiting previously unavailable primary source material from multiple East Bloc countries and new evidence from U.S. sources, Johanna Granville in her latest volume paints a complex picture of the interaction of internal and external factors in shaping the Hungarian Revolution as it played out beyond the confines of Hungary and the Soviet-aligned bloc. As she points out in the foreword of her book, the Hungarian Revolution was the first large-scale rebellion opposing the Soviet Union within its own Communist camp: "the first war" between socialist states and "the first domino" in a process that resulted ultimately the Soviet Union's loss of hegemony over East Europe in 1989. Granville argues that the Khrushchev leadership was by no means a rational actor in regard to its decision-making during the crisis. In addition, despite the dominant position of the Soviet Union, the East European communist states to some

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<sup>14</sup> See Csaba Békés, "The 1956 Hungarian Revolution and World Politics" *The Hungarian Quarterly* 36 (1995): 109-121.

<sup>15</sup> Huszár Tibor, *Kádár János Politikai Életrajza* [A Political Biography of Kádár János] (Budapest: Szabad Tér Kiadó-Kossuth Kiadó, 2001), 300-310.

<sup>16</sup> Csaba Békés, "New Findings on the 1956 Hungarian Revolution," in *CWIHP Bulletin*, Issue 2 (1992):1-3; Mark Kramer, "Hungary and Poland 1956: Khrushchev's CPSU CC Presidium Meeting on Eastern European Crises, 24 October 1956," *CWIHP Bulletin*, Issue 5 (1995):1, 50-56; Mark Kramer, "The 'Malin Notes' on the Crises in Hungary and Poland, 1956," *CWIHP Bulletin*, Issues 8-9 (1996/1997): 385-410; Vladislav M. Zubok: "Look What Chaos in the Beautiful Socialist Camp!" *Deng Xiaoping and the Sino-Soviet Split 1956-1963* *CWIHP Bulletin*, Issues 10 (1998):150-155.



extent and at various times were able to manipulate or influence their boss in the Kremlin.<sup>17</sup> After Poznan, the Polish leadership took the initiative of seeking to forge closer political contacts with the Chinese, soliciting Beijing's support for their efforts in trying to wrest a greater measure of national self-determination from the Soviet Union in domestic affairs. Before the Chinese leadership came to the conclusion that the nature of the Hungarian Revolution was "counterrevolutionary" by the end of October, Mao and his colleagues had identified Poland and Hungary's requirements for internal autonomy as a good opportunity to contest the Soviets' unquestionable authority in the Eastern bloc.

However thoughtful and resourceful much historiographic work on the Hungarian Crisis since the end of the Cold War, few studies from the present period have dealt with the inner connection between China's political and diplomatic involvement in the crisis and the crisis's knock-on effects on CCP domestic policy thereafter. This deficiency doubtless owes to the extremely rigid criteria governing the release of party and state documents in China. Moreover, most Chinese scholars and historians seem reluctant to touch upon the Polish-Hungarian crises, the latter in particular, with discussions of the subject in relation to Chinese domestic politics remaining virtually taboo even in the 1990s.<sup>18</sup>

To begin to get a sense of work in this field, in his essay "Beijing and the Hungarian Crisis of 1956" delivered during the 1997 Beijing conference on the Cold War and the Sino-Soviet relations (later revised as a chapter of his influential book *Mao's China and the Cold War*), Chen Jian makes the tantalizing suggestion that the Crisis of 1956, and Beijing and Moscow's handling of it, exposed profound contradictions between communism as a set of utopian ideals and as practical human experience. The momentum of international communism faltered after Budapest, against Mao's deepest-held beliefs, which had been to advocate and defend Soviet

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<sup>17</sup> Johanna C. Granville, *The first domino: International Decision Making during the Hungarian Crisis of 1956*, (Texas: Texas A&M University Press College Station, 2004). This is the first English monograph on the Hungarian Crisis of 1956 drawing on new archival collections from multiple Eastern bloc countries. For a comparison of the Polish crisis and Hungarian Crisis, see Granville, "1956 Reconsidered : Why Hungary and Not Poland?" *The Slavonic and East European Review*, vol. 80, no.4 (2002): 656-687.

<sup>18</sup> The Chinese official definition of the Hungarian revolution during Mao's era was that the episode represented a "counter-revolutionary" event. For the limited amount of materials or studies on Hungary in history studies in China, see Shen Zhihua's paper "1956 nian shiyue weiji: zhongguo de juece he yingxiang", *Lishi yanjiu*, 119-143.

military intervention.<sup>19</sup> Shen Zhihua's essay, "China's Role and Influence in the Revolts in Poland and Hungary in 1956," draws primarily on Soviet archival sources together with the author's interviews with the former Chinese diplomats to Hungary and East European states in the 1950s, to illuminate Chinese involvement in the Hungarian Crisis in October 1956 from the inside, as it were. Shen reaches the view that "China played a dominant role in both pulling the Soviet troops out of Budapest and subsequently bringing them back."<sup>20</sup>

As Chen Jian has indicated, as far as China's domestic situation was concerned, Beijing's attitude toward the Hungarian crisis reflected Mao's persistent belief that "class struggle continued to exist in a socialist country": in other words, the establishment of a socialist party state did not extinguish such struggle, which demanded a ceaseless effort of engagement and structural transformation, or "continuous revolution", on the party as it worked in the fields of politics and ideology.<sup>21</sup> Chen further suggests that the crises in Poland and Hungary also enhanced Mao's and the CCP leadership's consciousness of China as a global exemplar of a large-scale proletarian revolution that had been actually carried through, unlike the apparently incomplete projects in Europe. Promoting a self-defined concept of "equality" with other nations and polities, Beijing sought to displace Moscow from its central position as embodying the archetypal proletarian revolution.<sup>22</sup>

As far as China's diplomatic and political involvement in the Hungarian Crisis goes, Shen's essay views China's involvement in the Soviet decision to "suppress the reactionary elements in Hungary", as the CCP leaders so cast them, as highly significant, even decisive. By 'decisive', Shen means less that China tipped the U.S.S.R.'s hand in directing its intervention than that the Chinese Communist Party was able to use the Polish and Hungarian crises as bargaining chips in return for Soviet acknowledgment that the preeminent state had blundered in the past in its conduct of Soviet-East European relations. Once the Chinese formed the view

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<sup>19</sup> Chen Jian, *Mao's China and the Cold War*, 160-162.

<sup>20</sup> Shen Zhihua, "1956 nian shiyue weiji: zhongguo de juece he yingxiang –'boxiongshijian yu zhongguo yanjiu zhiyi' [China's Role and Influence in the Revolts in Poland and Hungary in 1956: Studies on Polish and Hungarian crises and China, part 1]", *Lishi yanjiu* [Historical Studies] 2 (2005):119-143.

<sup>21</sup> Chen Jian, *Mao's China and the Cold War*, 161.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 148, 161-62.

that there was a real danger of Hungary renouncing socialism and withdrawing from the Communist camp, Mao and his colleagues swung behind the Soviet military incursion and helped the Kremlin restore hierarchical bloc unity.<sup>23</sup>

While duly examining China's involvement in the Soviet leadership's final decision to suppress the Hungarian Revolt, my analysis in this study is more concerned to offer a critical evaluation of Maoist China's inter-bloc policies in the period from the fall of 1956 to the end of 1957. My argument is that Beijing's advocacy of equality and internal autonomy against the Soviet "big power chauvinism" in the Communist camp, and call for a movement away from a pattern of Stalinist dependency in inter-state relations, represent strategic expedients on the part of Chairman Mao to weaken the USSR's prestige and ultimately accede to leadership of world communism himself. The apparent desire of the Hungarian people to break free from Stalinist rule led the Chinese most immediately to support the Soviets' military putsch. Chinese efforts to help the Soviets restore bloc unity after Hungary clearly demonstrate Mao's perception that communist camp integrity had to be guaranteed by relations of dominance, with the strongest state framing definitions of communism and providing a general pattern of development, which would remain Stalinist in essence. It is conceivable that Mao saw China in the place of this preeminent country. There is no evidence, meanwhile, that the Chinese Chairman ever seriously considered that equal interstate relationships were applicable to the Communist world. On the contrary, as Mao understood it, the splintering effect the Hungarian Revolt had on bloc unity reaffirmed the essential truth that some kind of Stalinist interstate system was a necessity inside the camp.

Chinese domestic politics from late 1956 to the end of 1957 was a period of extreme ideological turmoil in which the CCP's policy underwent changes of direction with a frequency unknown in the late Forties and early Fifties. The motives for Mao's many changes in policy over these two years can be hard to make out. Some have accused the leader of "a kind of despotic capriciousness and arbitrariness" in seeking to open up the CCP to new influences, judging that Mao was mostly playing a power game involving the balancing of various

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<sup>23</sup> Shen Zhihua, "1956 nian shiyue weiji: zhongguo de juece he yingxiang", 119-143.

factions.<sup>24</sup> In this study, I shall argue that Mao's private analysis of Hungary, whatever his internal factioneering, was highly critical of the Hungarian state, and particularly of Mátyás Rákosi's, its previous leader's, inflexible tactics of using coercive means to solve domestic "contradictions" after Hungary's transition to state socialism. Mao further adjudged that this error arose naturally in the context of any Stalinist state-party governance. Looking back to the Chinese Communist strategies of bringing together a majority to secure certain political goals formulated in Yan'an era, Mao opted for "soft" methods, such as party rectification and the Hundred Flowers, as putative solutions to domestic problems. With all due respect to Mao's foresight, there is no evidence that he anticipated the undesirable consequences of the Hungarian Revolution, that it would in effect induce leading Chinese statesmen and intellectuals, together with students, to consider the reform of Stalinist economic and organizational patterns, going as far as mooted the overhaul of the means of governance and political system. It turned out that the Chinese Chairman could barely tolerate such internal views or their external sources. The way was thus clear for Mao to give up his previous plan of building a socialism with Chinese characteristics through cooperation with the intelligentsia, instead turning to the more doctrinaire and technical production plans of the Great Leap Forward and to long-term campaigns to "remold thought", placing any potential dissident intellectual firmly under the thumb of the Communist regime.

The thesis was made possible by the study of materials from several countries and archives, China in particular, including party documents and personal collections, Chinese Foreign Ministry archives (CFMA), leaders' papers, contemporary newspapers and interviews with Chinese diplomats to Eastern Europe in the 1950s and 1960s. From 2004 up to today, the Chinese Foreign Ministry (CFM) has declassified more than 65,000 items from its diplomatic records for the period between 1949 and 1965, including records of top Chinese leaders' conversations with Eastern bloc statesmen before and after the October 1956 crises and communications between the Foreign Ministry and the Chinese embassy in Hungary, which critically informed my understanding of the leading concerns of Chinese Central Party's main

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<sup>24</sup> Benjamin I. Schwartz, 'Thought on the Late Mao-Between Total Redemption and Utter Frustration' in *The Secret Speeches of Chairman Mao: From the Hundred Flowers to the Great Leap Forward* ed. MacFarquhar, Roderick, Timothy Cheek, and Eugene Wu, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989), 19-38.

concerns over Eastern Europe. At the same time, this study also relies heavily on archival materials released in Russia since the early 1990s and on some first-hand Hungarian first-hand documents relaying Sino-Hungarian communications. A large number of Russian archives relevant to the Soviet bloc and the 1956 October crises have been translated into Chinese and have made available in an edited collection on Soviet archives to general readers.<sup>25</sup>

This thesis consists of four chapters, together with an introduction and conclusion. In chapter 1, I examine how a socialist China had been established in the late 1940s and early 1950s under Mao's leadership of Mao largely following the pattern of Stalinist socialism in the Soviet Union and corresponding Eastern European processes of economic Stalinization. This chapter describes in detail certain events in the early phase of the People's Republic of China's (PRC's) transplanting of the Stalinist model to Chinese society, analyzing how Mao made full use of his politically and ideologically dominant status inside the CCP to push forward a radical program of state reconstruction, which largely defied Stalin's own moderate advice based on acknowledging the dominance of the paradigm of People's Democracy in the period following World War II. Attention also is given to Chinese policies vis-à-vis the Eastern bloc during Stalin's final years and after; although the Chinese regime wanted to learn from the socialist transformation in the Eastern European states, Chairman Mao also wished to keep the Soviet bloc at some sort of arm's length both politically and institutionally, preventing outside events from disrupting Chinese socialist transformation. But China's self-imposed distance from the Soviet bloc also, ironically, signaled Mao's view of his country as a future leader of world revolution. Therefore, after years of efforts to catch up with the People's Democracies and the USSR in domestic reconstruction, the basic completion of the socialist form of the state based on a Soviet model by late 1955 meant that, for Mao, the time was ripe for a strengthened China to involve itself more deeply in inner-Bloc matters.

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<sup>25</sup> Shen Zhihua et al., eds., *Sulian lishi dangan xuanbian* [Selected Historical Soviet Archives](hereinafter as *Selected Historical Soviet Archives*), 34 vols. (Beijing: Shehui Kexue Wenxian, 2002); also see Shen Zhihua and Li Danhui eds., *Zhongsu guanxi: eguo dangan fuyinjian huibian* (weikan) [Sino-Soviet Relations: Collected Copies of Russian Archives: unpublished version], kept in the Center of Cold War History Studies, China East Normal University.

Chapter 2 addresses the different effects of Khrushchev's secret speech had on the Soviet Eastern bloc on one hand, and on Mao's Communist China on the other, reviewing the domestic instabilities in Hungary and Poland before and after the CPSU Twentieth Congress, and weighing the forces and circumstances that gave rise to a new program emphasizing a socialism with distinctively Chinese characteristics after February 1956 (however much it may also have been marked with Chinese limitations). This section begins to consider the domestic political dynamics of China's growing involvement in Soviet Eastern bloc affairs in the post-CPSU Twentieth Congress atmosphere. In taking the temperature of the unexpected (and, to the CCP, unwelcome) consequences of the anti-Stalinist and nationalist foment incited by the CPSU Twentieth Congress in both Hungary and Poland, it provides a detailed analysis of the Hungarian leadership's moves to solve the domestic problems through calling in Soviet power, in strong contrast to the Poles' efforts to keep a hand on the tiller themselves, which consigned the country to a state of disorder and uncertainty that incubated insurrection. On the Chinese side, meanwhile, given the considerable degree of ideological and political autonomy the CCP enjoyed from the Soviet Union, the CCP leadership did not feel personally threatened by the Stalin episode but rather saw it as a good opportunity to strike out for a distinctive Chinese socialism aiming to surpass the achievements of the Soviets and to introduce the Maoist experience to the broader international communist community.

Chapter 3 takes up the story from the Chinese diplomatic and political intervention in the Polish and then Hungarian crises in the second half of October, advancing the view that Mao and his colleagues sought to parlay the events into an opportunity to secure a greater measure of equality with Soviet Russia. The events precipitated a series of unexpected policy changes not only on the Soviet side but also on the part of the Chinese largely due to the pace and complexity of domestic developments in Hungary. These investigations assess the special role played by the Chinese in the Soviet decision to pull out its troops from Hungary, asking how and why Beijing shifted its diplomatic policy from "opposing big-state chauvinism" to advocating a Soviet-centered bloc unity in such short order in late October 1956. The chapter next explores why it became so important for Mao to emphasize the ultimate value of the Stalinist pattern of inter-bloc relations as the perception, in Moscow and Beijing, of the

potential unruliness of bloc ideological and institutional diversity without a proper framework of management brought the two major Communist powers closer together.

Chapter 4 turns to the influence of the Hungarian Revolution on the development of Communist China from late 1956 to the end of 1957, a crucial prelude to the famous 1958 campaign of a "Great Leap Forward". It examines the domestic circumstances in which Mao gradually become aware of the potential dangers involved in the call for reforms in both economic and political realms even as the Chairman was vigorously advocating for political relaxations, like the Hundred Flowers, with which he most likely harboured serious misgivings at a time of disquiet among the intellectuals over the Hungarian events. In pursuing these issues I examine the party officials' misinterpretation of Mao's purposes in continuing the Hundred Flower policy and the intellectuals and students' idealistic hopes of the center's top-down reform. Mao justified his speedy truncation of the permission extended to outsiders to criticize party work with the excuse that some "counter-revolutionary" elements had conspired to provoke Hungarian-style revolts in China, though it is more plausible that the key element was Mao's own concern that the legitimacy of the unlimited power and ideological correctness of his leadership would start to be called into question.

In the conclusion, I review the main findings of this thesis, arguing that the idea that China sought to reform the Stalinist pattern of inter-bloc relationships after Khrushchev's denunciation of him is seriously misconceived and fails to square with the actual conduct of Chinese foreign policy in relation to Hungary, as well as with the evolution of Chinese domestic politics between 1956 and 1957. Despite the fact that China's status inside the Soviet bloc had been significantly enhanced with no diminution in the strength of the Sino-Soviet alliance in the immediate aftermath of Hungary, the radical policies adopted by Mao at home and on international front after the failure of the Hundred Flowers provoked a double crisis in China's relationship with the Soviet-led bloc and in China's domestic path of development. There seems little alternative to the depressing summary observation that the Hungarian events taught the Chinese Chairman and his successors that any attempt at political reform was only likely to prompt a collapse of the communist regime.

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# Chapter 1: Communist China and the Communist world

## (1949 -1956)

The final triumph of the Communists in the Chinese civil war in 1949 significantly strengthened their faith in a teleological conception of history promising unprecedented levels of abundance and happiness for China and the world. The communists were confident in their ability comprehensively to restructure not merely their former revolutionary base areas but also society as a whole through a wholesale redistribution of power, wealth and status among China's various social groups. Committed to these utopian principles, as unchallenged top leader of the state and party, Mao Zedong prophesied several months in advance of the founding of the People's Republic of China: "we should not only be capable of destroying an old world; but also be capable of creating a new one."<sup>1</sup>

While the politically successful examples of Soviet socialization and the construction of a basis for socialism in Eastern Europe certainly inspired Mao to frame a Chinese Communist agenda, before the start of the 1950s international pressures and domestic difficulties had constrained the Chairman from taking radical means in aiming to secure revolutionary victory. Externally, Mao believed in the imminence of an imperialist attack on China led by the United States, understanding international relations as he did through the prism of class analysis.<sup>2</sup> Internally, the domestic situation in Mao's view was highly complicated, with the most pressing task for the new government being to recover from the disastrous social and economic dislocation wrought by the war particularly in the big cities, where the Communists previously had little direct experience. To Mao, apart from the unfinished military takeover and unsolved socio-economic problems, the newly liberated areas in the South, together with the cities, posed a political problem insofar as their social structures continued to shelter unreconstructed imperialists or remnants of the GMD, who could conceivably rebel against the regime.

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<sup>1</sup> "Resolution of the Second Plenum of the Seventh CCP CC", collected in *The Rise to Power of the Chinese Communist Party*, (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1994), 1346; see also Feng Xigang, "Maocishuangbi: Yongxueci yu youyongci" [Two: Praise Snow and On Swimming], *Suibi* (Essay), issue 3 (2007): 16.

<sup>2</sup> Westad ed., *Brothers in Arms: The Rise and Fall of the Sino-Soviet Alliance 1945-1963* (Washington: Woodrow Wilson Center, 1998), 167.

Therefore, in the years immediately following 1949, Mao prioritized consolidating party power as a preliminary to the further social transformation that would bring in a Communist society. In line with Mao's caution, the resolution of the Second Plenum of the Seventh CCP CC held in March 1949 proclaimed that "our principles must be firm, and we must also have all the necessary and permissible flexibility to realize these principles." These words sanctioned a long-run programme of social transformation, defining the 1949 victory as "the first step on a March of 10,000 *li*" in which "the road after revolution" was acknowledged as being "even longer and the work even greater and harder".<sup>3</sup>

Stalin's assessment of the "national-democratic" nature of the Chinese revolution, and his advice on the design and construction of the Chinese regime, also played a crucial role in the CCP's adoption of a gradualist line.<sup>4</sup> Stalin's China policy was in fact quite straightforward, in that he presumed that the gradual pattern of political-economic transformation developed in the Eastern bloc in mid-1940s would be applicable to China with certain adjustments (such as a firmer unification with the national bourgeoisies in the Chinese case). In Stalin's mind, China was not ready for socialism *tout court*, not even in the form of the dictatorship of the proletariat. It should first form a multiparty coalition government before establishing an "elected" body that would adopt a written constitution probably with close reference to the experience of the Eastern European countries in founding their states after the Second World War under the guidance of Kremlin. This in turn, Stalin argued, would provide a legitimate basis on which one-party rule could develop.<sup>5</sup> This general pattern was also reflected in Stalin's advice to Mao to settle initially on a relatively moderate economic policy, rather than committing to rapid

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<sup>3</sup> "Resolution of the Second Plenum of the Seventh CCP CC", collected in *The Rise to Power of the Chinese Communist Party* (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1994):1344-1346.

<sup>4</sup> "Liu Shaoqi's Report to the CPSU CC Politburo, July 4, 1949" in Westad ed., *Brothers in Arms*, 304-305, in which Liu clearly conveyed to Stalin that the CCP leadership absolutely agreed with the Kremlin boss's assessment of the nature of the Chinese new democratic state and the new government. Also see "Liu Shaoqi's Report to the CPSU CC Politburo, July 4, 1949", in Niu Jun, "xinzhongguo waijiao de xingcheng jiqi zhuyao tezheng" [the formation of diplomatic policy in China and its characteristics], *Lishiyannjiu* [History Studies], issue 1(1998):28; Liu Jianping, "Sugong yu Zhongguo gongchandang renminminzhuzhuanzheng lilun de quel" [the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the formation of Chinese Communist People's Democratic Dictatorship Theory], *Lishiyannjiu* [History Studies], issue 1(1998):78-96.

<sup>5</sup> Li Huayu, *Mao and the Economic Stalinization of China, 1948 – 1953* (Maryland: Rowman&Littlefield Publishing Group, 2006), 3-4; for a comparison of China's pattern of economic planning in the consolidation years with that of the post-war Eastern bloc states, see Alexander Eckstein, "Conditions and Prospects for Economic Growth in Communist China" *World Politics*, Vol. 7, No. 1, (Oct., 1954): 32.

economic socialization before political conditions were mature.<sup>6</sup> Given CCP leaders' own view of their regime as fragile, Mao and his top colleagues had no reason to buck the practical and ideological importance of "leaning to Moscow" against the background of the Cold War by disregarding the Kremlin's counsel.<sup>7</sup>

The terms in which the People's Republic of China were designated, then, were as a "new democracy", a form of state organization introduced by Mao based on Comintern advice after the beginning of the second phase of the Sino-Japanese war in 1940. This was the same concept formulated in 1945 to define the political identity of the states in East Europe that evolved under Moscow's tutelage. The CCP held back on announcing their intention of establishing a dictatorship of the proletariat, instead stressing a multi-class and multi-party political structure and a mixed economy to bring together all possible resources.<sup>8</sup> In general, the policy of the Chinese Communists in the immediate years before and after the founding of the new state involved much more caution and concessions to the finely balanced situations both at home and abroad than is apparent from the Communist line formally taken from 1952 onwards, despite the party's consistent ideological commitment to "the construction of Communism" and their doggedness in seeking to extirpate their class enemies.<sup>9</sup>

It is perhaps possible to stick one's neck out at this point to venture the necessarily ex post hypothesis that, had the Chinese Communists only been able to adhere to the gradualist

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<sup>6</sup> "Telegram, Stalin to Mao Zedong, April 20, 1948", in Westad ed., *Brothers in Arms*, 298-299.

<sup>7</sup> "Liu Shaoqi's Report to the CPSU CC Politburo, July 4, 1949" in Westad ed., *Brothers in Arms*, 304-305. For the Chinese leadership's efforts in adjusting domestic policies, including party construction and economic planning, in accordance to Stalin's advices for the purpose of establish a real alliance with the Soviet Union, see Andrei Ledovsky, "Migaoyang de fuhua mimi shiming (1949nian 1-2yue [Mikoyan's Secret Mission to China in January and February 1949]", trans. Li Yuzhen, *Dangde wenxian*[Party Documents], issue 6(1995): 81-84; issue 1 (1996):90-96. Shi Zhe, *Zai lishi juren shenbian: Shi Zhe huiyilu* [At the Side of historical Giants: Shi Zhe's Memoirs], rev. edition(Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian, 1996),402-424.

<sup>8</sup> Mao admitted that his "New Democracy" concept had been established on "Stalin's theories" in the 1940s. See Yang Kuisong, "Mao Zedong weishenme fangqi xinminzhuzhuyi – guanyu eguomoshi de yingxiang" [Why did Mao give up New Democracy?—On the Influence of the Soviet Model] on his website <http://www.yangkuisong.net/ztlw/sxsvj/000079.htm>

<sup>9</sup> Mao Zedong "On the People's Democratic Dictatorship"(30 June 1949), collected in *The Rise To Power of the Chinese Communist Party*, 1373-1374. Mao in this article summarized the three main experiences of the party during the past 28 years: 1. "A party with discipline, armed with the theories of Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Stalin, employing the method of self-criticism and linked up closely with the masses"; 2. "an army led by such a party"; 3. "a united front of various revolutionary strata and groups led by such a party".

policies they formulated in the early years, then the Chinese domestic situation in the second half of the 1950s would have been better than that in the Soviet bloc states, which had seen the imposition by force of a Soviet social structure in the Stalin years. As the history of the People's Republic over the course of the 1950s in fact demonstrates, however, the Chinese Communist regime soon abandoned its principles of a gradual transition consolidating "New Democratic" policies, moving instead to a rapid collectivization on the Soviet model. In the second half of the 1950s, the Chinese Communists began to formulate, in their eyes, a better and faster path than the Soviets' towards achieving a decisive socioeconomic and political shift, to which, they believed, the other Communist bloc states would ultimately aspire. If the Eastern European parties effectively found themselves in a Stalinist "dilemma of the one alternative"<sup>10</sup>, the Chinese Communists had greater room for manoeuvre in professing compliance with the Stalinist model while actually developing it according to a more radical pattern justified by a claim for the national distinctiveness of the Chinese revolution.

### ***Mao's Communist China in the making (1949-1953)***

Directed by the cautious and gradualist political line defined by the collective CCP leadership and agreed to by the Chairman, much of the economic and infrastructural work led by Mao's second-in-command Liu Shaoqi and Zhou Enlai's government proceeded in orderly fashion typically overseen by officials with some specialized knowledge of economic issues. Yet by late 1952 these cautious and incremental policies were rejected, with the Chairman coming formally to reassess the "New Democracy" as insufficient to ground Chinese socialism on the Soviet pattern. In order to unite the leadership behind his new thinking, the Chairman launched sharp attacks both on gradualist social-economic development programs and on the leaders advocating and supporting them.<sup>11</sup> Liu Shaoqi and his colleagues came under explicit political attack from the newly promoted Head of the State Planning Commission (SPC) Gao Gang (also recently raised or "elected" to the Politburo) and Party organization department chief Rao

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<sup>10</sup> Zbigniew K. Brzezinski, *the Soviet Bloc: Unity and Conflict* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1960), 167.

<sup>11</sup> Peng Xianzhi, Jin Chongji ed. *Mao Zedong zhuan (1949-1976) shangjuan* [Biography of Mao Zedong 1949-76] (Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian, 2004), 236-268; Jin Chongji et al., *Liu Shaoqi zhuan* [A Biography of Liu Shaoqi] (Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian, 1998), 611-618, 627-635, 686-693.

Shushi. While Mao in the end decided to retain Liu and purge Gao, he successfully leveled a fair amount of criticism against Liu's gradualist policies. The upshot of these disagreements and power struggles was an ambitious "socialist transformation" programme that diverged markedly from "New Democratic" line in bearing close resemblance to the Soviet type of socialization developed by Stalin in the 1920s and 1930s.

How should we account for the dramatic shifts in Chinese economic, and indeed general political policy, in the 1950s from a "realistic" line to one that led to overreaching and catastrophe? On this issue, we should note, first of all (taking Mao Zedong's absolute preeminence in the party into account) the evolution in the Chairman's mind of how a *new* China should be built, as well as over what timescale and under what social conditions.<sup>12</sup> At the same time, without doubting Mao's crucial role, it is important to take the full measure of the diversity of the characters, personal experiences and individual worldviews of the other Communist leaders, who may have shared broad ideological and political commitments but held different practical views on how to create a wealthy and powerful state. Thirdly, contrary to pictures of Mao as a moderate or centrist arbiter of policy disputes in this early period, the Chairman in fact indicated his preferences at the outset of the debates over the pace of socialization, which only served to polarize conflicts within the leadership.<sup>13</sup> In terms of the concrete policy disputes of the consolidation years, areas of debate included the degree to which agricultural production would be reorganized into cooperatives and the proper role of work unions in nationally-owned factories. According to the party's political system, which

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<sup>12</sup> There are several factors that contributed to Mao's absolutely dominant position among his colleagues and the Party: (1) Mao had monopolized power during the Yan'an era by formulating ideological (theoretical) principles stating his own "correct" interpretation of orthodox Marxist-Leninism and offering general guidelines for action programs (i.e. specific policies) oriented by ideological considerations; (2) Mao had got the upper hand in arbitrating the party's internal policy disputes by the end of Yan'an Rectification campaign, which in effect removed him from a sphere in which party institutions could control him; (3) Mao's control of and influence over the army and public security forces was absolute and marked a difference from the Soviet Union, where these sectors were more technically constituted and enjoyed some measure of autonomy. Mao had been the chairman of the Military Affairs Commission for his whole party life and had closely supervised matters of public security; (4) Mao was able to take personal credit both within and outside the party for directing the overwhelming success of the 1949 campaign.

<sup>13</sup> For arguments that stress Mao's moderate centrist position in dealing with party disputes, which see him as smoothing over others' conflicts, see Frederick C. Teiwes, *Politics and Purges in China: Rectification and the Decline of Party Reforms, 1950 -1965*, (M.E.Sharp: New York, 1993), 86-87, and Teiwes, "Politics at the 'core': the Political Circumstances of Mao Zedong, Deng Xiaoping and Jiang Zeming", <http://rspas.anu.edu.au/cc/morrison00.pdf> in which the author states that "With few exceptions, little space was left for bold, unprecedented initiatives, and like his colleagues Mao normally played a game of incremental adjustments."

entrusted large amounts of power to individuals rather than institutions, Mao's perceived wishes were interpreted by hardliners as sanctioning their own bids for power and status, on the thinking that they could then implement the leader's mandate. With his hands full fighting a war in Korea while launching endless campaigns at home, the Chairman redefined the major political tasks of the consolidation years and pressed for policy changes. There was little incentive for his close colleagues to argue against Mao's principles once he had revealed his hand.

Some of Mao's key ideological prescriptions of China's 'proper' socialist development differed from those of his closest advisors. Mao primarily identified himself as a Chinese Marxist-Leninist, that is, an acolyte of Marx, Lenin and Stalin in believing that Communism represented the end of history, holding out the promise of an ideal realization of humans' potential. He further subscribed to the Leninist-Stalinist tenet that the overthrow of capitalism was essential to building a proletariat-dominated society; this at once necessitated the expropriation of the capitalists, the ousting of the bourgeoisie and the dismantling of bourgeois socio-economic institutions. His lieutenants agreed, but what made Mao special among the Chinese Communist nation-builders was his ideological and political rigidity in giving priority to the destruction of the "old" system, mode of production and culture over economic recovery and the development of China's underdeveloped agrarian economy. Fearing the alienation of his base, or rather their drifting into a deplorable "trade-union consciousness", Mao drew on his analysis of Lenin and Yun'an revolutionary experience to urge a thorough transition from the old to the new. The Stalinist model of socialization, in this context, perfectly fitted his aim of eliminating the capitalist mode of ownership in rural and urban settings.<sup>14</sup>

His revolutionary instincts notwithstanding, however, Mao was after all a politician, whose task lay in gauging his strength (or his party and state's power) in mobilizing the political forces necessary to bring about a certain historical phase. The basic indices used by the Chairman to

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<sup>14</sup> For Mao's Marxist-Leninist beliefs and the guiding role of the orthodoxy ideology in Mao's perception of the Chinese revolution and state-building, see Benjamin Schwartz "Marx and Lenin in China", *Far Eastern Survey*, Vol. 18, No. 15, Communist Strategy in China, (Jul. 27, 1949), 174-178; Yang Kuisong, "Mao Zedong weishenme fangqi xinminzhuzhuyi?".

judge the existing political situation and therefore to decide or adjust his tactics in steering toward political goals (or even in changing his direction of travel) were his sense of the strengths of different classes and of the character of the people's political consciousness. Mao's sense of historical necessities and contingencies was political and ideological, rather than strictly economic. As the following treatment demonstrates, when Mao saw that the necessary conditions for rapid societal reconstruction were not mature, he endorsed the moderate "New Democratic" line and left Liu Shaoqi, with his own ultimate say assured, in effective control of party construction and its economic work from late 1948 to the first half of 1951.<sup>15</sup>

The evidence, then, strongly suggests that Mao agreed with Liu's openness to peaceful and moderate economic experiments during the late 1940s without, however, ever acceding to a developed understanding of how and why the "existence and development of urban and rural factors of capitalism" could contribute to national growth. Mao was intellectually formed in the crucible of early twentieth century politics, specifically China's revolutionary struggle, and took his references primarily not from Marxian economics but from Lenin and Stalin's interpretations and especially his reflections on his own experience in revolutionary power-building in remote areas. Neither Lenin nor Stalin set out the economic benefits of capitalism or capitalist contributions to a mixed or generally directed economy.<sup>16</sup> Furthermore, unlike his colleagues Liu Shaoqi, Zhang Wentian, and Zhou Enlai who all studied abroad as young men, Mao chose to stay in China, which provided him with time creatively to adapt the grand theories of Marxist-Leninism to Chinese circumstances and to distinctively Chinese revolutionary forms of praxis. This, though, allowed Mao very limited access to the outside world or to international discussions of Marxism. If one compares Liu's evaluations of economic policies in the late 1940s with Mao's in the same period, one cannot but be struck by the imprecision of Mao's notion of the benefits that a mixed economy could bring to the development of his country.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> LSN, 164-165, 167-178, 192-210, 215-217; Jin Chongji et al., *Liu Shaoqi zhuan*, 613-618, 623-641, 686-707.

<sup>16</sup> See Yang Kuisong, "Mao Zedong weishenme fangqi xinminzhuzhuyi?"

<sup>17</sup> Mao repeatedly stressed the importance, with Liu, of allowing "all elements of capitalism in the cities and the countryside that are no harmful but beneficial to the national economy" to exist and develop. As to the reasons for taking such a policy, however, the clearest answers the Chairman provided in this period typically took two forms: politically, "the Chinese liberal bourgeoisie and its representatives often adopt the position of either participating or

As a result, the rationality or theoretical thoroughness of the economic principles placed before Mao—for instance, the stress on the full development of new productive forces as a prerequisite for transforming backward relations of production—may have determined the thinking of Liu and other top officials but enjoyed relatively little traction with the Chairman.

In retrospect, the Chairman and his key economic planners had arrived at a quite different understanding of the criteria of a “thoroughly prepared” social-economic transformation and of how to adapt the Stalinist economic model to China, a largely agrarian and pre-industrial country. On these questions, Liu Shaoqi in the period of his effective control emphasized the need for China to ramp up its production, seeking to raise people’s living standards if necessary by capitalist means (using capitalist industry and commerce) before the party seriously committed itself administratively to socialist transformation.<sup>18</sup> Planning the rehabilitation and development of agriculture and industry, Liu’s view was to begin with a focus on agriculture and light industry, as the most relevant to people’s livelihoods in the context of preparing for a long-term programme of industrialization and development.<sup>19</sup> Liu’s non-selective and balanced view of economic development (envisaging a cycle of economic activities) distinguished Chinese economic policy from the Stalinist strategy of economic development, which favoured heavy capital-intensive development at the expense of consumption and agriculture, a typical emphasis in the Communist bloc at the time.

Despite sharing Mao’s concern to do things in a gradualist and flexible way, ensuring that every movement was “thoroughly prepared” for, Liu (and other key economic planners) seem to have placed greater store on economic indicators as precursors of socialist development,

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remaining neutral in the people’s democratic revolutionary struggle, owing to the oppression or restrictions of imperialism, feudalism, and bureaucratic capitalism”; while economically, “the still backward situation of the Chinese economy at present” necessitated compromise. Specifically economic words like “commodity”, “business”, “commerce”, “the market” and “light industry” never appeared in Mao’s justification of his new democratic economic policies. See Mao Zedong, “Resolution of the Second Plenum of the Seventh CCP CC (13 March 1949), *The Rise of Power*, 1342-1344,.

<sup>18</sup> “Liu Shaoqi’s Report Made in the North China Financial and Economic Committee Session”, December 25, 1948, *Liu Shaoqi zhuan*, 615-17. Jin Chongji, “Zai Liu Shaoqi Shengping he sixiang yantaohui shang de jianghua” [Speech Delivered at the Closing Session of the Seminar on Liu Shaoqi’s Life and Thoughts, November 23, 1998], *Dang de wenxian* [Party Documents], issue 1(1999): 51-55.

<sup>19</sup> Liu Shaoqi, “Zhongguo gongchandang jinhou de lishi renwu” [The CCP’s Historical Tasks from Now on: made in July 1951] *Dang de wenxian* issue 6 (1989): 18; also see *Liu Shaoqizhuan*, 690-691.



while the Chairman essentially continued to look to political factors and revolutionary consciousness. Mao's fear was that launching rigid socio-economic reforms at this stage might jeopardize the nation's path to socialism, especially if the mass of the people remained "un-awakened" to its prospects. Further, right up until the late 1940s, the Chairman was prejudiced in favour of the view that the creation of a "modern heavy industrial sector" would represent the principal determinant in building up the nation's power. The Chinese economy would pull itself up by its bootstraps, as the Chairman saw it, essentially in increasing its production through modernizing, by which he doubtless meant developing "heavy industry".. Mao's aspirations here clearly aped Soviet developmental design, or more aptly the Stalinist strategy of building socialism.<sup>20</sup> Although it still took Mao time to square his ideal of accelerating economic growth through the application of mass mobilization techniques with his conception of the more doctrinaire Stalinist model, he soon began to feel after the establishment of the new regime that Liu and his economists' model was problematic.

Mao Zedong soon became discontented with his lieutenants' prudence in advancing economic transformation. According to the recollections of Deng Xiaoping, the Chairman, whom Deng addresses respectfully as "*laorenjia* (the grand old man)", "already indicated dissatisfaction with Comrade [Liu] Shaoqi and Premier Zhou [Enlai] in the early post-liberation days."<sup>21</sup> The first ideological clash between Mao and his more economically-minded colleagues came over "the question of forming [Agricultural Producers'] Cooperatives (APCs)." Rather than pitting Mao and Liu directly, ideological differences emerged in the form of different perspectives on the proper pace of agricultural collectivization as put forward by the Northeast Bureau headed by Gao Gang and the central leadership represented by Liu from the end of 1949 to early 1950. Gao Gang advocated a step-by-step collectivization of individual agricultural labors, while Liu

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<sup>20</sup> According to Mao's librarian, the Chairman spoke highly of Stalin's "On a Socialist Economy" while still emphasizing intellectual independence in reading this book when he recommended it to his cadres. See Pang Xianzhi, "Maozhuxi dushu shenghuo wojian wuwen: jiangshu zhenshi de Mao Zedong" [The Reading Life of Mao Zedong: what I saw and what I heard of the real Mao], *Tebie Cehua* [Special Report] (2006): 39-43. For the impact of Stalin's 'History of the All-Russian Communist Party (Bolshevik): Short Course', see Li Huayu, *Mao and Economic Stalinization of China*, 95-116. On the common development design that Communist China shared with the Soviet Union, aptly called by some 'the Stalinist strategy of economic development', during the first Chinese five-year-plan period, see Anthony M. Tang, "Agriculture in the Industrialization of Communist China and the Soviet Union", *Journal of Farm Economics*, Vol. 49, No. 5, Proceedings Number, (Dec., 1967):1118-1134.

<sup>21</sup> Deng Xiaoping, *Deng Xiaoping wenxuan* [Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping] vol.3 (Beijing: Renmin, 1993),293.

insisted that at that moment in time the maintenance of peasant private ownership could increase production and therefore finance industrial development, making it advisable to postpone collectivization until the mechanization of agriculture.<sup>22</sup> There is evidence, however, that Mao became indirectly involved in this early dispute, supporting Gao's proposal to make Manchuria something of a planning laboratory and training ground for the mainland as a whole.<sup>23</sup> In retrospect, these issues of how China could modify the Soviet experience of collectivized agriculture to suit national conditions, and of the relation of technical reform (mechanization) to institutional reform (full nationalization), came to be highly influential for the course of Chinese socialism.

Whatever the differences between Mao and his comrades, the Chairman did not immediately veto the moderate economic policies effected by the central party, still less encourage deviations from the gradualist line.<sup>24</sup> Indeed, the main constraint on Mao's behaviour was not the agitation of vanguard socialists within the Party, whom Mao could easily face down, but the opposition of largely "uneducated" people who betrayed no dissatisfaction with the political and economic pattern of New Democracy. Throughout this period, Mao acknowledged the Soviet Union as a model of socialism, not being moved to probe the ideological limitations or specificity of the Soviet agricultural collectivization by reflecting on the social contradictions of Chinese society. At the same time, however, at no point did Mao's sense of the means and timetable for achieving socialism coincide with Stalin's. It is unlikely that Mao wished to accept

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<sup>22</sup> Liu Shaoqizhuan, 692; Dai Maolin, Zhao Xiaoguang, "Shixi 'Gao-Rao shijian' fasheng de yuanyin" [An Attempt on Analyzing the Origin of the 'Gao-Rao Affair'], *Dangshijiaoxue yu yanjiu* [Party History Teaching and Research], issue 6 (2003): 65-66, 87.

<sup>23</sup> Bo Yibo, *huigu*, vol.1, 207; also see Dai Maolin, Zhao Xiaoguang, "Shixi 'Gao-Rao shijian'", 66. Mao's backing for Gao Gang's radical policies in developing agricultural collectivization soon after the establishment of the regime was not casually given but rather represented a purposeful choice, indicating the Chairman's sense of collectivization as indispensable step in implementing his grand vision of socio-economic transformation emulating Stalin in the 1920s and 30s. "Mao's key contribution to the first session of the critical Senior Cadres' Meetings of 1942-1943 was to rehearse (in a three-day speech) Stalin's twelve conditions for achieving Bolshevism (Seybolt, 1986: 53), that many of the key documents for study in the rectification movement were Stalinist tracts (Compton, 1966: x-xi, xxxix-xlvi)". On this, see Joseph W. Esherick, "Ten Theses on the Chinese Revolution Modern China", Vol. 21, No. 1, Symposium: Rethinking the Chinese Revolution. Paradigmatic Issues in *Chinese Studies*, IV, (Jan., 1995): 45-76.

<sup>24</sup> All over China, party cadres launched a campaign for the suppression of counter-revolutionaries at the end of 1950. Land reform became more radical in most parts of the country; and in the old liberated areas, in Manchuria under Gao's leadership in particular, cadres at provincial levels began moving to upgrade mutual-aid teams and to suppress private labour so as to force the peasants to join collective organizations. Mao however was evidently not enthusiastic in expanding and intensifying the counter-revolutionary campaign until possibly the summer of 1950.

Stalin's moderate policy recommendations for China's socialist state building, preferring rather to appease him and offer support on purely political expedients (for instance, by falling in line with the suggestion of forming a multiparty government and drafting a constitution).<sup>25</sup> To the consternation of his lieutenants, Mao was ruthlessly prepared to discard the theoretical principles of New Democracy and the contemporary gradualist line when he felt new situations required it.

Mao's assessment of the domestic situation changed as China was on the verge of plunging itself into the Korean War. While remaining concerned at the possibility of an American imperialist incursion, the best option for the Chairman in his strategic planning was to avoid confrontation, however much he might prepare for it. With all due respect to Mao's foresight, there is no evidence that he anticipated the Chinese would fight the Americans on the Korean Peninsula.<sup>26</sup> But after yielding to the necessity of fighting in order to save socialism in China and globally, Mao quickly saw in the war an opportunity to shape the thought of the masses at home, for whom the foreign threat became a palpable reality.<sup>27</sup> As one scholar has pointed out, Mao's crisis management in sending troops to Korea aimed not only at safeguarding China and defending the world revolution but also, and more importantly, fomenting a domestic mobilization that would secure the widest possible acceptance for the CCP leadership and its policies.<sup>28</sup> Mao was a professional Communist revolutionary whose avowed goal of transforming the old China in line with his socialist ideals required a degree of flexibility in

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<sup>25</sup>See Li Huayu, "The Political Stalinization of China: the Establishment of One-Party Constitutionalism, 1948-1954," *Journal of Cold War Studies*, no.2 (Spring 2001): 31.

<sup>26</sup> Chen Jian, "The Sino-Soviet Alliance and China's Entry into the Korean War", *CWIHP Working Paper* 1, 23; Yang Kuisong, "guanyu zhongguo chubing chaoxian de yishixingtai yinsu" [On the ideological factors in China's military involvement in the Korean War], [http://www.yangkuisong.net/ztlw/wjsyj/000122\\_2.htm](http://www.yangkuisong.net/ztlw/wjsyj/000122_2.htm).

<sup>27</sup> Mao must have developed a strategy to extend the ethos of war against the Americans into a stronger revolutionary momentum at home during the two months from August to October, since he had already determined that the Chinese should prepare to help the North Koreans in early August. As a result, only two days after the Central Party formally decided to fight the Korean War, Mao had ready a new version of the "Instruction on the Suppression of Counter-Revolutionaries" (also called the "double-ten" instruction as it was issued on 10 October, 1950), which framed the terms for a much intensified political campaign nationwide. See Bo Yibo, *huigu*, vol.1, 43. For a good analysis of the intensification of the Movement of Suppression of the Anti-Revolutionaries after the Korean War and Mao's relevant strategic and ideological thinking, see Yang Kuisong, "guanyu chubing chaoxian de yishixingtai yinsu".

<sup>28</sup> Chen Jian "A Response: How to Pursue a Critical History of Mao's Foreign Policy", *The China Journal*, No. 49. (Jan., 2003):137-142.; For an account of the Chinese Communist experience accumulated in the experiences of mass mobilization during the Yan'an era, see Govind S. Kelkar, "The Chinese Experience of Political Campaigns and Mass Mobilization", *Social Scientist*, Vol. 7, No. 5 (Dec., 1978): 45-63.

patiently accumulating power and launching political offensives at an opportune moment. The Korean War thus presented as much an opportunity as a challenge.

In launching this intense mass mobilization, the Chairman felt the time was ripe to push more radical policy changes on the social front than he had hitherto dared. This led him to detach himself from the gradualist line. In the summer of 1951, the Chairman directly intervened after the Shanxi provincial committee proposal for a rapid formation of cooperatives was rejected by the North China Bureau and the Central Party under Liu Shaoqi.<sup>29</sup> In the early 1950s, the top leaders represented by Liu Shaoqi and Zhou Enlai who continued to advocate the gradualist line thus began to feel implicit political pressure from the Chairman. A two-month long session of “treatments for health recovery” was scheduled for Liu in November 1951 after Premier Zhou had himself been granted time off for two months. When Liu came back to work in January 1952, he found himself deprived of formal authority to lead economic matters, instead being reallocated to head the “Three Antis” and “Five Antis” campaigns.<sup>30</sup>

In the summer, as recommended by the Chairman, the central party decided to transfer the regional top leaders to Beijing. Given Mao’s high evaluation of Gao, he came to be regarded as the preeminent, or literally “the fore horse”, of the five regional leaders called to the centre to contribute to the formation of policy in late 1952.<sup>31</sup> It was not surprising then that Gao Gang was appointed by the Chairman as a Politburo member and chairman of the State Planning Commission (SPC) tasked with preparing the Five-Year-Plan. In the context of Mao’s dissatisfaction with Liu and Zhou, Gao’s enhanced status in the Center undoubtedly broke an

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<sup>29</sup> According to Bo Yibo, the Chairman talked over Liu and other two economic leaders (including Bo) to accept the Shanxi “speeding-up of the formation of cooperatives” plan; see Bo Yibo, *huigu*, vol.1, 198.

<sup>30</sup> Concerning the concrete policy disputes of the consolidation years, apart from the agricultural cooperativization issue, another area of debate entailed whether the work unions in nationally-owned factories still represented the interests of the working class and should as such be differentiated from factory administrations. Deng Zihui supported the idea that even after the establishment of a communist state, these two interests were theoretically separate. Gao Gang took the “party” line that the work unions and working class had formally identical interests, with Liu Shaoqi weighing in with Deng. The Chairman in the formative years of the new regime emphasized the need for a united front and advocated concessions in China’s public factories. But when it came to October 1951, Mao absolutely supported Gao Gang’s position. Therefore, even before the final months of 1951, the Chairman had already clearly expressed his preference for radical policies in both agricultural collectivization and the national manufacture. See *Liu Shaoqizhuan*, 706.

<sup>31</sup> Gao Gang, Rao Shushi, Deng Zihui, Deng Xiaoping and Xi Zhongxun were the five regional leaders chosen by the central party to transfer to Beijing in 1953.

established power balance in Beijing, provoking uncertainty and tension among Mao's subordinate colleagues.

On the international front, Mao successfully parlayed his way to a greater degree of independence in socialist transformation through deferring to Stalin in less important issues (notably, by holding the National People's Congress and drafting the constitution).<sup>32</sup> The Chairman sent Premier Zhou to Moscow in August 1952 with a draft of the Chinese First-Five-Year-Plan (FFYP) to be commented upon and rubberstamped by the Kremlin. When Zhou returned with Soviet endorsement for a programme of carrying out the FFYP on 24 September, Mao immediately announced his determination to "make a transition to socialism within 10 to 15 years", setting this goal in the latter part of 1952 in a central party meeting. His view was accepted with no dissent at the top.<sup>33</sup> In autumn 1952, as Mao began to plan China's "transition to socialism," he instructed Liu to broach the idea of a tightly managed progression with Stalin in Moscow at the 19th Congress of the CPSU in October 1952. Liu delivered to Stalin a letter explaining the rationale for rapidly developing a nationalized economy in China as the CCP's instrument for effecting a socialist transformation in the country through enlarging the zone of state economic control by peaceful means and long-term efforts.<sup>34</sup> Stalin gave his approval to a plan to "carry out the transition to socialism in a gradual manner" as specified in Liu's letter but rejected Mao's follow-up proposal to postpone holding a National People's Congress and drafting a constitution until after 1954, the year Stalin had previously recommended.<sup>35</sup> The difference between the two leaders was that Stalin rigidly insisted on

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<sup>32</sup> Li Huayu, "The Political Stalinization of China: The Establishment of One-Party Constitutionalism, 1948-1954", 31.

<sup>33</sup> According to Bo Yibo's recollection, Mao's opinion was accepted with no contrary voices from the leaders who attended the meeting, that is, Liu Shaoqi, Zhou Enlai, Chen Yun, Deng Xiaoping, Peng Dehuai, Peng Zhen, Chen Yi, Bo Yibo, Luo Ruiqin, Su Yu, An Ziwen, Yang Shangkun, Rao Shushi, Xi Zhongxun and Nie Rongzhen. See Bo Yibo's letter to Tian Jiaying [on the situation of the September 24 meeting], handwritten draft, December 30, 1965, quoted from *Mao zhuan*, 241; Also see Bo Yibo, *Huigu*, vol.1, 221. Although Stalin agreed with the Chinese proposal to carry out the FFYP, he did caution the leadership to be realistic in setting economic-growth rates, advising limiting increases in industrial output from a foreseen 20% to 15%. Mao in fact accepted Stalin's advice on this target rate. It seems that Stalin continued to give counsel as a moderate on the speed of China's industrialization, even as Mao chose to interpret Stalin's overall endorsement of the Chinese FFYP as an opportunity to push for his socialist transition plan at the top. For Stalin's advice on the FFYP and Mao's acceptance, see Li Huayu, *Mao and Economic Stalinization of China*, 64.

<sup>34</sup> *Jianguo yilai zhongyao wenxian xuanbian* [Selected Important Documents since the Establishment of the PRC] (Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian, 1992), vol.3, 367-371, 371 fn.1.

<sup>35</sup> Li Huayu, *Mao and the Economic Stalinization of China, 1948-1953*, 85.

applying his own established formula in terms of the relationship between social-political and economic reform to every conceivable case, as he had urged with the Eastern European Communist parties in the first half of 1940s, while Mao cleaved to the desirability of adopting Soviet-style transformation on the basis of his understanding of the Chinese characteristics.<sup>36</sup> Knowing that concessions had to be made to secure the Kremlin's non-interference in the domestic affairs that were his priority, Mao had little trouble taking on board Stalin's suggestions in the field of the Georgian's 'expertise'.

The evidence suggests that, buoyed by Stalin's endorsement, Mao put the finishing touches to his conceptual framework for China's socialist transition in the period between late October 1952 to late February 1953, before proceeding to southern China on a research trip during which he began to propagandize his "socialist transformation line" among the local party cadres.<sup>37</sup> By early February, Mao's plans to eliminate the capitalist class in a step-by-step manner, while at the same time driving large-scale socio-economic collectivization and nationalization in agriculture, seem to have taken shape. These plans involved the rationalization and state absorption of the handicraft industry, other local forms of consumer-oriented manufacture and commerce.<sup>38</sup> According to Mao's official biography, the Chairman's typical procedure in formulating, then implementing a new policy (such as the later 1955 small leap, or the Hundred Flowers and rectification campaigns of 1956) was to "focus on a very specific problem, thinking about it and at the same time airing his views" initially in his inner central circles, then amongst groups of local cadres.<sup>39</sup> This procedure apparently allowed the Chairman to approximate to 'objective reality' in the rarefied context of policy formation (the danger of course was that middle- and lower-level officials only offered the

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<sup>36</sup> As Li Huayu points out, although Stalin's response to Liu's letter neither stated concrete measures nor broached the question of timing for a socialist transition in China, Mao, in line with the whole CCP leadership, chose to interpret Stalin's reply as supportive of his own plan. See Li Huayu, 88; also see *Mao zhuan*, 242-244.

<sup>37</sup> Up to November 1952, Mao only talked about his idea of transforming the state into an officially socialist organ within 10 to 15 years within the small circle of his central leadership. But Luo Ruiqing, head of public security, publicized Mao's new policy to a wider range of cadres. Once Luo's behavior had been discovered by the party centre, the Chairman not only criticized and punished Luo but also admitted that it was his responsibility to tell his colleagues not to leak the news before everything had been made ready. For Mao's letter to a small circle of central party leaders, November 13, 1952, see *Mao zhuan*, 244-245; For the formulation of the specific political targets and implementing steps of Mao's socialist transition plan in the period, see *Mao zhuan*, 245-268.

<sup>38</sup> *Mao zhuan*, 246-249.

<sup>39</sup> *Mao zhuan*, 245.

Chairman a ready sounding-board for his own views, depriving Mao of the comprehensive information he needed to make plans).<sup>40</sup> In the instance of collectivization, Mao came across local officials passing on peasants' enthusiasm for cooperatives from the very beginning of his tour, very likely emboldening him to step up the campaign nationally. With Stalin out of the way on 5 March, 1953, the Chairman was free to mobilize support among the cadres for his plan and at the same time to criticize "the mistaken views" in the center that differed from his own.<sup>41</sup>

Back from his investigative tour in the South, the Chairman bridled sharply when faced with another problem, the newly announced fiscal principle of placing "public and private [enterprises] ... on an equal footing" in paying taxes, which led to a round of inner party criticism meetings from the summer of 1953, which openly arraigned Bo Yibo while obliquely directing accusations against Liu Shaoqi and Zhou Enlai. A number of factors seem to have come together in goading Mao on the new tax system. Mao's nose was originally put out of joint by the fact that Zhou Enlai, with the party's financial officials, had not consulted him on what they deemed a matter of concrete administration, with the result that he had "only bec[o]me aware of it from reading the newspaper".<sup>42</sup> Moreover, the Chairman soon associated this new tax principle with residual 'New Democratic' thinking among the top, seeing in it the principle that the capitalist class should be continuously reassured during the transitional stage, rather than progressively eliminated even if by gradual means. The policy heightened Mao's circumspection towards Zhou Enlai and Liu Shaoqi, putting in question the socialist orthodoxy of their combined efforts to consolidate the gradualist policies of the early 1950s. In particular, Liu Shaoqi's views on questions like the proper pace of collectivization, the peacefulness of a

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<sup>40</sup> Mao also demonstrated great interest in collecting information on successful examples of joint state-private enterprises during his trip, which meant that he was not only eager to promote collectivization in the rural areas but also was serious about nationalization, though in the first stage via joint state-private ownership, of capitalist industrialization in urban areas. See Li Huayu, *Mao and the Economic Stalinization of China*, pp.128-129.; for a critical study of Mao's "mass line" strategy in pursue of his own ideological and political ends, see Liu Yu, "From the Mass Line to Mao's Cult", ( PhD diss., Columbia University, 2006).

<sup>41</sup> Guo Simin, *Wo yanzhong de Mao Zedong* [Perceptions of Mao Zedong] (Shijiazhuang: Hebei renmin, 1990), 41. See Frederick Teiwes, *Politics and Purges*, p.xvii and ft.7; also see *Mao Zedong zai Hubei* [Mao Zedong at Hubei], (Beijing: Zhonggongdangshi, 1993), 2-4.

<sup>42</sup> Mao Zedong's letter to Zhou Enlai and the others, January 15, 1953, *Mao zhuan*, 251; This new tax system was designed to solve the problem of securing state revenues at a time when ownership was shifting to the state sector; Zhou and the financial leaders regarded it as a concrete government question not requiring the Chairman's attention. Bo Yibo, *Huigu*, 234-35; Frederick Teiwes, *Politics and Purges*, xvii.

new democratic phase and the placation of capitalists seemed to Mao increasingly at odds with the situation as he understood it. Further, Stalin's special fondness of Liu and the latter's obedience to Moscow's moderate line could only compound the Chairman's displeasure. More than three months after the death of Kremlin boss, Mao judged that he could teach his top lieutenants a lesson and further solidify his own authority within the party. As soon as the Chairman began to address this fairly technical policy issue from the perspective of class struggle, the problem to a large extent became a matter of political jostling.<sup>43</sup>

While the story, politically, of the CCP from early 1953 to early 1954 largely concerned Mao's efforts to cement his crypto-totalitarian grip on the party, the origin of these efforts can usefully be traced back to policy differences between Mao and Stalin, as well as between Mao and his highest-ranking executives. Though Mao was far from slavish in his adherence to doctrinaire Stalism, he wholeheartedly applauded Stalin's prescription of speed in the building of socialism.<sup>44</sup> The simultaneous achievement of the two goals of socialization and modernization represented a heady prospect to Mao, who accepted Stalin's nostrums on the possibility of developing socialism independently of the previous existence of heavy industry. With the political mass campaigns extended nationwide after China's involvement in the Korean War, Mao believed that a realignment of the power of China's different classes lay within his grasp and should consequently form the top item on the CCP agenda. Neither Stalin's gradualist advice on Chinese development nor the Chinese central party's early plan of the peaceful and moderate transformation of the mixed economy under the banner of New Democracy any longer accorded with Mao's sense of the political winds. In one sense, the 1953-1954 political struggle as orchestrated by Mao serve to dispel any continued enthusiasm for Stalinist gradualism among the center, bestowing new respectability on Mao's radical line. Mao meanwhile had to manoeuvre Moscow into supporting important domestic policy initiatives, while concealing the heterodoxy in Stalinist terms of both himself and most of his

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<sup>43</sup> For an analysis of personal power as a key factor in determining the Chinese top leaders' goals, see Benjamin Schwartz, "Modernisation and the Maoist Vision--Some Reflections on Chinese Communist Goals", *The China Quarterly*, No. 21, (Jan. - Mar., 1965): 3-19.

<sup>44</sup> For Mao's devotion to Stalinist model as expressed in Soviet texts, especially in Stalin's *Short Course*, see Li Huayu, *Mao and the Economic Stalinization of China*, 95-116, see also Benjamin Schwartz, "China's Developmental Experience, 1949-72", *Proceedings of the Academy of Political Science*, Vol. 31, No. 1(Mar. 1973):17-26



top leadership. Stalin's stroke and the reorganization of power inside Kremlin in the name of "collective" leadership in fact released much of the pressure on Mao's Beijing, significantly freeing the Chairman's hands.

With Khrushchev's gradual rise to the dominant position in Kremlin, both Sino-Soviet relations and Sino-East European relations improved markedly in the period between 1954 and 1955. While Stalin had taken care to hold the independent Chinese Communists at a distance from the Soviet bloc, Khrushchev was much more receptive to the potential role that Mao's China could play in the Communist camp. By making Mao's China an active agent in the politics of international Communism, Khrushchev sought to buttress his power at home and greatly to improve the ideological and constitutional unity of the bloc, while preserving for the USSR an indisputable leading role. Mao and his colleagues were happy to see the improvements in China's relations with the USSR, especially as they fulfilled aspirations towards closer links between the People's Democracies that the Chairman had nurtured since the late 1940s.<sup>45</sup> However, the Chinese prudently refrained from involving themselves too deeply in Eastern bloc issues, since their primary focus in this period was on domestic socialist transition.

### *China's policy towards the Eastern bloc up to the CPSU Twentieth Congress*

Chinese foreign policy in the early-50s followed three principles set out by Mao Zedong: "Lean to One Side" (*Yi biandao*); "Build a New Kitchen" (*ling qi luzao*) and "Sweep the House Clean before Inviting Guests" (*dasao ganjingwuzi zaiqingke*). These three guidelines on the whole expounded the Chinese Communist Party's firm decision both to develop close links with the Soviet-led Communist camp and at the same time take a "close-door" position to the non-Communist world before the consolidation of the new regime. Consequently, the Chinese Communist perspective on external relationships was of necessity a narrow one, focusing on

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<sup>45</sup> On the CCP side, Mao and his colleagues were trying to avail themselves of new-found opportunities for connecting themselves not only with the USSR but also with the People's Democracies in Europe before the final victory over the Nationalists was achieved. For a treatment of this apparent contradiction, see Mao. 'The Current Situation and Our Tasks'. 25 December 1947, *MZDXJ*, vo1.4, 1258-59; Lu Dingyi. 'Duiyu zhanhou guoji xingshi zhong jige jiben wenti de jieshi' [Explanations of Several Basic Problems Concerning the Postwar International Situation], *Jiefang ribao*, 4 January 1947; Liu Shaoqi, 'Guoji zhuyi yu minzu zhuyi' [Internationalism and Nationalism] *Renmin ribao*, 1 November 1948. Andrie Ledovsky (Li Yuzhen translated into Chinese), "Mikoyan's Secret Mission to China in January and February 1949", *Dangde wenxian* [Party Documents], issue 6(1995):82.

its connection with the Soviet Union first and foremost, and then with the Soviet Eastern bloc. The Chinese Chairman's first foreign visit had been to head a delegation to Moscow after the formal establishment of the Communist Party in China. In retrospect, the Communist China-Soviet alliance had been formalized through a new treaty of "Friendship, Alliance and Mutual Assistance" with two subsidiary agreements, notwithstanding any hidden complications. For the CCP, who had just won control over territorial mainland China, the forging of alliances by formal treaties and more importantly through ideological and political association with the Soviet-led Communist camp represented a likely prerequisite of their future international identity in the Cold War, even before taking into consideration the importance of Communist membership on domestic political and security grounds. The Chinese leadership further assumed that integration into the Soviet bloc would establish a more stable regional environment, freeing them to concentrate on the domestic tasks of 'nationwide liberation' and 'economic rehabilitation'.<sup>46</sup>

If sheer facts of geography had been sufficient to block any political or military contact between the Chinese and the East and Southern Europeans for centuries, China's entry into the Communist bloc on the face of it offered a good opportunity for rapprochement. Following the Soviet Union's lead in extending diplomatic recognition the day after the PRC's founding, the People's Democracies in the Eastern bloc (Bulgaria, Romania, Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, GDR and Albania) recognised the CCP between October and November 1949. On the basis of the establishment of formal diplomatic relations with the Eastern bloc states, Communist China signed economic and cultural agreements with these countries in the early 1950s, paving the way for extensive barter trade relationships with the East European members of the Soviet-dominated Council of Mutual Economic Assistance, in which China was granted observer status. Insofar as formal measures were concerned, Communist China and Eastern bloc were then joined as distant relatives inside the international socialist camp.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> For the CCP's leaders' main concern regarding their foreign policy and the international situation see Kuo-Kang Shao, *Zhou Enlai and the Foundation of Chinese Foreign Policy*, (London : Macmillan, 1996), 131-136.

<sup>47</sup> Pei Jianzhang, et al., eds., *Zhonghua renmin gongheguo waijiaoshi* [Diplomatic History of the People's Republic of China, thereafter *waijiaoshi*], 2 vols (Beijing: Shijiezhishi, 1994), 44-77. Although Yugoslavia issued a declaration to recognize New China, the Chinese government made no reply to the Yugoslavian side, considering the Soviet-Yugoslavia schism and the China's implicit support of the Comintern resolution on the Yugoslavia question

However, although Mao and his colleagues had been diligent in establishing a direct connection with the People's Democracies before their victory in the revolution, it was Stalin who was in a position to dictate the form of the relationship between China and the European Eastern bloc. The Sino-Soviet deal cutting out a "division of labor" between the nations, as introduced by Stalin to Liu Shaoqi during the latter's trip to Moscow in the summer of 1949, represented one of the informal restrictions that the Chinese side was forced to abide by during the Stalin period.<sup>48</sup> This 'division' marked a clear boundary to the Chinese sphere of influence, which ended in Asia; Stalin was here mindful of the potential parallels between potential Chinese influence on the Eastern European states and that, historically, of Yugoslavia on the more orthodox Balkan nations.<sup>49</sup> As a result, the PRC's relationship with the Eastern bloc states during the Stalin era found itself limited to trade, cultural exchanges and formal diplomatic connections. No significant (party-party) political relations existed affiliating the Communist Parties of China and Eastern Europe.

Stalin's stroke early 1953 did not lead to an immediate development of political contacts between China and the Eastern bloc. 1953 was a crucial year for Mao Zedong and his colleagues, in which the party committee under his direct control had its hands full planning its "general line for the socialist transition period", or the Chinese formal adoption of the 1930s Soviet model in moving towards nation-wide socialization. Despite some obvious erosion of the validity of the verbal deal confining Chinese Communist influence to South and South-East Asia with Stalin's demise, the CCP leadership kept their heads down dealing with domestic political and economic problems, choosing not to offer any views on the troubles afflicting the

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made in 1948. The Sino-Yugoslavia diplomatic relationship was established in January, 1955, almost two years after Stalin's death.

<sup>48</sup> For Stalin's meetings with Liu Shaoqi see Shi Zhe, *Zai lishi juren shenbian*, 410-414; on the interpretations of Stalin's division of labor proposal see Zubok Vladislav and Constantine Pleshakov, *Inside the Kremlin's Cold War: From Stalin to Khrushchev* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1996), 58; see also Chen Jian, *China's Road to the Korean War*, 74-5.

<sup>49</sup> To head off another Yugoslavia, Stalin decided to divide the Communist Commonwealth into two, separating China from the People's Democracies both institutionally and politically. Mao and the CCP could figure in the international roster of Communism as a leader of the Asian revolutionary process under Soviet supervision. On Stalin's suggestion for an Asian Cominform, see Xu Zehao, *Wang Jiaxiangzhuan* [Biography of Wang Jiaxing](Beijing: Dangdaizhongguo, 2006), 302.

other nations in the Soviet bloc. At the same time, uncertainty over the succession of the Soviet leadership probably also encouraged the Chinese leadership to cultivate a wait-and-see attitude towards the events in Hungary and East Germany. It was also possible that Chairman Mao deliberately blocked the news about the partition of Berlin domestically since any news of ongoing problems with socialization in Eastern European states could hardly do any good for the Chinese Revolution. Rather, Mao simply passed on a Soviet interpretation of the Eastern bloc uprisings, blaming a Western “conspiracy” against socialism and thus presenting the events in a political, rather than economic, perspective.<sup>50</sup> Its fraternal ideological connection with the Eastern European socialist states, however, prompted the Chinese government to provide food and material support immediately after receiving a request letter from the GDR government. The Chinese side made it clear in July 1953 that contract terms for this freight could be discussed later, and that the East Germans need not concern themselves with any date of return.<sup>51</sup>

Sino-Soviet relations entered into a honeymoon period with Khrushchev’s ascendancy. Khrushchev was busy deploying both domestic and foreign resources to consolidate a power base. The CPSU First Secretary viewed China as an important player in creating cohesion among the socialist camp nations, believing that greater Communist interstate unity would play into his hands in Moscow. Beijing reacted positively to Khrushchev’s overtures, with Premier

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<sup>50</sup> The CFMA declassified material catalogue has no reports on the East Berlin Crisis, which may suggest that these materials are still classified. In fact, a lengthy report on the June uprising was sent back to Beijing to Beijing via a Xinhua journalist in the form of Inner Circled Information (*Neibucankao*, *Neican* thereafter). See *Neican*, no.213 (September 11, 1953):128-65, quoted from Li Huayu, *Mao and the Economic Stalinization of China*, 42-43. Looking at Chinese propaganda dealing with the bloc from early 1953, Li Huayu finds many expressions of the superiority of the economic systems of the Eastern European regimes, as built on the Stalinist pattern, to their predecessors. Liu interprets these reports as the center’s efforts to convince the common people of the merits of socialism in the run-up to a wholesale social transformation. See *ibid*, 123-124. Xinhua News Agency journalists sent abroad were authorized to submit reports, commonly entitled as *Neican*, on key issues directly to the Party’s Central Committee members, including Mao himself. This type of reports was selected and compiled into an *Inner-circled Information* journal to circulate merely among high-level CCP cadres, whose publication was started in 1949 and ended in 1964. It’s a journal of collected reports from Xinhua News journalists abroad and edited and translated news reports from the Western hemisphere. This type of reports was selected and compiled into an *Inner-circled Information*(*Neican*) journal to circulate merely among high-level CCP cadres, whose publication was started in 1949 and ended in 1964. *Neibucankao* is an inner circled journal on both domestic and foreign events edited by the Xinhua News Agency for reference purpose among the high-ranking CCP cadres only. The author would like to thank Prof. Shen Zhihua for sharing his personal collection of the copies of the journal series, obtained from the China Study Service Center, Hong Kong Chinese University.

<sup>51</sup>Jin Chongqi et al., *Zhou Enlai nianpu, 1949-1976 [A Chronological Record of Zhou Enlai, 1949-1976](ZNP)*, 3vols., (Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian, 1997), 315.

Zhou Enlai inviting the Russian dignitary to a celebration of the fifth anniversary of the Chinese Communist State Establishment, one of the most important events in the Chinese Communist calendar in the 1950s.<sup>52</sup> Khrushchev reciprocated by granting China economic aid and concessions, reversing a Stalinist policy towards the end of his rule.<sup>53</sup> Khrushchev's rhetoric in this period stressed how deleterious Stalin's heavy-handedness had been for Sino-Soviet relations: "Stalin spoiled our relations with China. ... in general he was insensitive to the Chinese," promising far greater conciliation with him at the helm.<sup>54</sup>

Mao and the other high ranking leaders had a range of reasons for backing Khrushchev's climb to the top. First of all, Khrushchev's emphasis on the importance of Communist China diplomatically opened up a prospect for the CCP to be treated as equals on the world stage. Georgi M. Malenkov, by contrast, had leaned towards the West in stating pragmatically the USSR's shared interest with their enemies in averting a nuclear catastrophe; at the same time, Molotov's personal conservatism made him unreceptive to any idea that deviated too far from doctrinaire Stalinism.<sup>55</sup> Khrushchev, the "dark horse" in the race for Soviet pre-eminence, wanted to dispel from Chinese nostrils the bad odour left by Stalin's cynical imperialism, making him a natural choice for Chinese support. Further, the inexperience of the new Soviet elite both in fomenting revolution and constructing socialism encouraged Mao to think that he would enjoy at least a ten-year period of peace and non-interference in implementing his construction plan in China. Mao was keen to inform these projects with a sense of the lessons learned from the Eastern European experience, which he reckoned the Soviets would not be too proprietorial in interpreting.<sup>56</sup> With Stalin out the way, it became much easier for the Chinese to project a socialism with distinctively Chinese characteristics, even if this rested on

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<sup>52</sup> Zubok Vladislav and Constantine Pleshakov, *Inside Kremlin*, 170-172; *waijiaoshi*, 43.

<sup>53</sup> During the Khrushchev's first visit, the Soviets signed a series of agreements with the Chinese, including the return to China of military bases in Lushun, with their equipment; giving up Soviet shares in four Sino-Soviet ventures, providing China with loans totaling 520 million roubles, and offering China technology transfer on 156 key industrial projects for the first FYP of the PRC; for details, see Westad, *Brothers in Arms*, 257.

<sup>54</sup> Nikita Khrushchev, *Khrushchev Remembers: Glasnost Tapes* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1990), 142-143.

<sup>55</sup> Vladislav and Pleshakov, *Inside the Kremlin*, 78-109; For Chinese top leaders' impression of Molotov's stubbornness and inflexibility on foreign policy in dealing with the western powers, see Wu Lengxi, *Shinian lunzhan*, 10-11.

<sup>56</sup> Shi Zhe remembers Mao stating words to this effect on 12 October 1954, see Shi Zhe, *Shi Zhe koushu: Selected Historical Soviet Archives* [Shi Zhe's Oral Recollection: My own experience of the Sino-Soviet relations, *jianzhenglu* thereafter] compiled by Li Haiwen, (Beijing: Dangdai Zhongguo, 2005), 195-196.

the basis of the Stalinist model. Stalin's death also allowed the Chinese and Eastern Europeans to talk to each other without the fear of being overruled by Moscow.

As a result, from 1954 onwards, the Chinese government initiated closer contacts with the Eastern European states. Through these contacts, Mao strove to learn from fellow bloc nations with a view to fine-tuning Chinese socioeconomic reforms; as Mao put it during the process of compiling the PRC's first Constitution, the Party should not be afraid to adopt useful sections of other states' systems so long as it adopted these to Chinese conditions, while also taking heed of the reactionary or unsuccessful aspects of other forms of socialism.<sup>57</sup> After the Geneva conference, Zhou Enlai, China's top diplomat as well as premier, paid visits to the GDR and Poland. Zhou's speech in Warsaw further expressed the CCP's intention of learning from the People's Democracies: "Poland in the fields of the economy and culture is more advanced than China. We should learn a great deal from Poland in these respects."<sup>58</sup> The Chinese delegation was also impressed by the ardour and courtesy of their hosts, who were clearly thrilled to receive high level Chinese guests.<sup>59</sup> The upshot of the Chinese delegation's visit would seem to have been a strengthened willingness on the part of the CCP to cultivate relations with the Eastern bloc states now that China had emerged as a recognized power in the Communist camp.

In September 1954, high-level delegations from the Soviet Eastern bloc states gathered in Beijing on the invitation of the Chinese government for the fifth anniversary of the PRC. Almost simultaneously with the high point in the Sino-Soviet relationship signaled by Khrushchev's first visit to China, the CCP held a series of direct talks with the People's Democratic leaderships of Hungary and Poland in the capital. Briefly meeting the Hungarian ambassador on 22 September, Mao asked about the Hungarian language, particularly its differences from Romanian and German, and the typical features of the Hungarian people. Mao's questions

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<sup>57</sup> Mao had been prepared to draw on a range of sources, from Chinese to foreign, and from socialist and capitalist states, in writing the first Chinese constitution of 1954, see *Mao zhuan*, 317-320.

<sup>58</sup> *ZNP*, 404-405; Pei Jianzhang et al., eds., *waijiaoshi*, 59.

<sup>59</sup> "On Polish Delegation's visit in China", File 109-00403-06, pp.30-36, *CFMA*, Beijing, PRC.

suggest that his knowledge of Hungary had barely advanced since 1949.<sup>60</sup> Yet when he met the Hungarian leaders on 26 September, he took the keenest interest in the progress of socialization in the Central European country, enquiring especially closely into the development of agricultural socialization. After hearing the head of the Hungarian delegation, András Hegedűs's, presentation on the topic, Mao praised Hungary's achievements in this area, which were well ahead of China's. Premier Zhou then introduced Deng Zihui, the head of the Central Rural Work Department for overseeing Chinese agricultural cooperativization as established in early 1953, to Hegedűs, suggesting they could exchange accounts of their experience in agriculture and water conservation. In essence, the Chairman understood the situation in the Eastern European states primarily through the prism of international communism, judging states on the basis of their degree of Stalinist socialization. Preoccupied with the question on how to bring about a rapid agricultural collectivization in 1954, Mao was impressed by the "achievements" in the Eastern bloc states and determined that China's social and economic transformation should catch up and then in time surpass that of the European republics.<sup>61</sup>

One special detail worth noting is that, before the meeting ended, Mao specifically told Hegedűs to send his greetings to Comrade Rákosi, who had been invited by the Chinese government but could not make the trip.<sup>62</sup> As Rákosi later recalled, after the Hungarian delegation returned to Budapest, the head of the delegation (whom Rákosi could not recall, but should by rights have been Hegedűs) passed on Mao's regret that he had not been able to meet the Hungarian top leader in Beijing. Mao actually had met Rákosi in 1949 during his first visit to Moscow, on the occasion of the celebration of Stalin's 70<sup>th</sup> birthday, when the two heads of state had chatted twice during coffee breaks. Rákosi had quickly introduced his country and suggested that Hungarian industry could send some supplies to China. The Chairman had warmed to this suggestion of industrial cooperation immediately, asking Rákosi to put in a

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<sup>60</sup> "Record of Chairman Mao's Meeting with Szikládán, the Hungarian Ambassador in Beijing" File 117-00353-02, pp.1-4, *CFMA*, Beijing, PRC.

<sup>61</sup> "Record of Chairman Mao's Meeting with the Hungarian Government Delegation and the Hungarian Ambassador to China", File 109-00409-01, pp.1-9, *CFMA*.

<sup>62</sup> "Record of Chairman Mao's Meeting with the Hungarian Government Delegation and the Hungarian Ambassador to China", File 109-00409-01, p.9, *CFMA*.

formal proposal.<sup>63</sup> Though the transfer never got further off the ground, the likelihood is that Mao was much interested in any possible cooperation on Hungary's part in China's industrialization, also warming to Hungary's positive disposition towards China.

Thereafter, on 28 September and 9 October, Mao Zedong twice met with the Polish delegation led by Boleslaw Bierut in a similarly fraternal atmosphere. On 1 October, the Chinese side also arranged a meeting between Deng Zihui and Bierut to exchange notes on agriculture.<sup>64</sup> During the first meeting Mao again praised the Polish Party's achievements, suggesting the First Chinese Constitution had in some respects taken the Polish Constitution as a reference. Mao proposed to Bierut a certain formula for the states' prospective cooperation: you first help us with industrialization, then, after we have industrialized, "let us be your aid". The Chinese, that is, professed friendship but (given the current state of their resources) no material aid.<sup>65</sup> Mao's proposal and wording is properly in terms of the Chairman's desire to prove his capacity to build China into a superior socialist power, particularly in the post-Stalin era. The supposed "achievements" in agricultural collectivization of both Hungary and Poland thus lent a significant impetus to Mao's demand for a greater speed of social and economic transformation at home. In all this Mao was seeking faster socialization and economic growth, which could help him to realize his underlying ambition: to be in a position where he could hold up China as a model socialist state, capable of aiding others in Europe and elsewhere.

In retrospect, as a result of the "softer" methods used by the post-Stalin Soviets in managing the international socialist movement and China's growing interest in learning from the Eastern Bloc, relations between China and the Eastern European states towards the end of 1954 were closer and more amicable than ever before. Nevertheless, the Chinese side harboured some degree of reservations about its involvement with the Soviet controlled Eastern bloc organization. According to Shi Zhe, during his long tour around China in 1954, Khrushchev

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<sup>63</sup> "Rákosi's account on Rajk's case and the inner struggle of the Hungarian party", in Shen Zhihua et al., *Selected Historical Soviet Archives*, Vol.26, 193.

<sup>64</sup> "Minutes:Deng Zihui's meeting with Bierut, 1 October 1954", 109-00403-03, pp.11-12, *CFMA*.

<sup>65</sup> "Summary of Chairman Mao's meeting with Bierut, 9 October, 1954", 109-00403-05, part 1, *CFMA*. See also Pei Jianzhang et al., eds. *waijiaoshi*, 60.



mooted the suggestion of inviting China to join the Council for Mutual Economic Associate (CMEA) – the official equivalent to the Cominform established in 1949 as a corresponding entity to the Western European Marshall Plan. Mao's reaction to this proposal, as conveyed by Shi Zhe, was firmly negative, leading to his rebuffing Khrushchev face to face two days later, with the words "it is not at all necessary [for us to join the CMEA] since it would have no significant meaning for the Chinese construction of socialism. On the contrary, it would be problematic for us to get entangled in [the CMEA], which could only hinder the development of [our own socialist] construction". Khrushchev immediately withdrew his plan.<sup>66</sup> Mao's refusal was clearly motivated by a reluctance to subordinate China formally to a Soviet-led organization, especially in view of China's difficult birth pangs as a Communist nation. Mao could also have borne in mind the complicated relations between the Eastern bloc states and the Soviet Union, which had the potentially subversively to redefine state economics, potentially putting into jeopardy China's ability to adhere to its own principles in developing a Chinese socialism.

In general, the improved relationship between China and the Eastern bloc states from 1954 to early 1956 was marked by a development of relations focusing as much on the exchange of experiences in the socioeconomic sphere as by the cultivation of specific political contacts.<sup>67</sup> On the one hand, with the USSR as the leading figure inside the Communist camp, the People's Democracies in Europe were viewed by the Chinese Communists as parallel cases to their own revolutionary enterprise. The Maoist regime had its own internal and external reasons for pursuing closer interstate relations. On the other, despite Khrushchev's endeavour to draw China into closer formal or institutional ties with the People's Democracies under Soviet leadership, the Chinese had insisted on their independence within a post-Stalin interstate system. In regard to domestic politics, the more rapid domestic Stalinization in the Eastern European states urged on the Chinese leadership, Mao in particular, stimulating them to further accelerate domestic socio-economic transformation in the second half of the 1950s. If Mao doubted that Soviet social transformation could be emulated or overhauled over a short

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<sup>66</sup> Shi Zhe, *jianzhenglü*, 200-201.

<sup>67</sup> Pei Jianzhang et al., eds. *Waijiaoshi*, vol.1, 52-77.

period, the degree of collectivization and industrialization in the Eastern bloc states could be taken far more readily as an achievable benchmark. Mao was, after all, acutely conscious of the necessity of building socialism and develop China's economic power in order to enhance his country's stature in the world at large. All this in turn reinforced Chairman Mao's radical view in emphasizing a rapid implementation of social-economic reconstruction supplemented by ideological remouldings and political purges, which he believed would ensure systematic, solid foundations for Chinese socialism.

### ***Small Leap in Socialist Transformation (1955 – 1956)***

1955 was a very important year in the context of China's socialist reform under the CCP's leadership. After completion of the colossal tasks of founding the new state, consolidating political power at home and obtaining recognition and prestige in the Communist camp through its "victory" on the Korean peninsula over the United States, the country entered into a period of accelerating socialization within the framework of (*mutatis mutandis*) a Stalinist model.<sup>68</sup> In the international arena, the Cold War entered a stable and particularly chilly phase after the end of the Korean War, arriving at a point of equilibrium given the success of the Geneva and Bandung Conferences. Mao and the Party proclaimed this stalemate period as the ideal climate for building China's socialist state on a national level.<sup>69</sup>

Socialization progressed quite rapidly after the end of Gao-Rao affair in late 1953, with policy placing agricultural collectivization at the forefront of socialization, while commerce, entrepreneurial forms of capitalism and handicrafts were all incrementally assimilated to socialism according to a defined non-confrontational line. Convinced that the greater

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<sup>68</sup> The Chinese diplomats' impressions of the Communist China's increasing prestige in the Eastern bloc states after the Korean War are based on the author's oral interview with Chinese diplomats in the Eastern bloc states, 17 April, 2004.

<sup>69</sup> The Geneva Conference began on 24 April 1954 on the question of the restoration of peace in Korea and Indochina, chaired by the Soviet Union and Britain, with representatives from the US, China, France, the VIETMINH, South Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, India, Canada and Australia in attendance. With the assistance of the Soviet and Chinese representatives, the conference reached a settlement on the Indochina War of Independence (1946-54). The Bandung Conference held in Indonesia in April 1955 is generally regarded as the first demonstration of the growing diplomatic significance of the Third World. This conference restated China's five principles of peaceful coexistence first set out in the Sino-Indian agreement in Tibet in 1954. See also Chen Jian, *Mao's China and the Cold War*, Chapter Six fn. 36, 337. A so-called 'Bandung' spirit of cooperation among these non-aligned states developed rapidly, allowing the Chinese to see their role in facilitating post-imperial dialogue as that of contributors to world peace.

development of the cooperatives would lead to a rapid rise in production to meet the needs of industrial development, the party center made cooperativization its first priority in 1954. Shortly after conferring with the Eastern European leaders in September, the Central Rural Work Department confirmed a short-term target of 600,000 Agricultural Producers' Cooperatives (APCs) by spring 1955, a twofold increase of the level foreseen in April.<sup>70</sup> The center's ambitious targets for socialization seems both to have galvanized the local cadres and activists, while raising concerns among the peasants over whether their interests would be met in collective production.<sup>71</sup> In early 1955, Deng Zihui, head of the Central Committee's Rural Work Department, pointed out existing problems in agricultural collectivization in some areas, arguing that the movement of cooperativization should at that point be consolidated and controlled. Deng's proposal was soon endorsed by the Politburo, leading to his issuing a circular reining in the cadres to avoid the escalation of rural tensions.<sup>72</sup>

Mao, to some extent, appears to have agreed with Deng in the early months of 1955 on the need to go slow or adjust his policies of agricultural collectivization. Mao took the enthusiasm of the peasants as a crucial, even decisive, indicator of underlying policy faults, though looking to the masses' opinion as a subjective indicator could hardly lead the Chairman to question the essential correctness of his general line. The reported high-handed treatment of peasants by local cadres in forcing them to join collectives and the food shortage in the countryside apparently rang a warning bell for the Chairman.<sup>73</sup> Considering his leaders' opinions, as represented by Deng Zihui in conjunction with the Politburo's leading economic specialist, Chen Yun, as reasonable, Mao in early March explicitly supported the idea of slowing down

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<sup>70</sup> Frederick Teiwes, Warren Sun eds. *The Politics of Agricultural Cooperativization in China: Mao, Deng Zihui, and the "High Tide" of 1955* (New York: M. E. Sharpe, 1993), 33-34.

<sup>71</sup> Many peasants arguably began to manifest forms of passive resistance and foot-dragging over cooperativization. A massive sale and culling of farm livestock followed shortly on the Centre's APC announcement. See "Circular of the CCP Center on Overhauling and Consolidating Agricultural Producers' Cooperatives" (January 10, 1955) document from the CCP Center to the local cadres, in Teiwes, Sun eds. *The Politics of Agricultural Cooperativization in China*, 157-158.

<sup>72</sup> See Roderick MacFarquhar, John K. Fairbank eds., *The Cambridge History of China* (CHOC thereafter), vol.14, part 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1987), 114-115, 167-168; Bo Yibo, *huigu*, 338-346, 353-356, 361-362; for the circular, see Teiwes, Sun eds. *The Politics of Agricultural Cooperativization in China*, 157-160.

<sup>73</sup> For Mao's consciousness of the food shortage in countryside as informed by a letter from non-party intellectual, Huang Yanpei, and on the high handed treatment of peasants by local cadres from a letter written by local people to one of his guards, see *Mao zhuan*, 370.

the pace of collectivization, suggesting a four and a half year suspension of new activities permitting the consolidation of existing collectives. This *reculer pour mieux en sauter* strategy was sloganised as “halt, shrink, develop”.<sup>74</sup>

It was in May 1955 that Mao changed his attitudes towards the collectives and started to criticize the view of consolidation and stabilization that he had supported in the spring. The direct cause of the “Change of May” may have come from Mao’s countryside survey as undertaken from April to May in 1955, in which he saw and reported many apparently positive results in the APCs, registering the local cadres’ enthusiasm for pressing ahead with socialization. It was true that as a result of earlier campaigns, the common Chinese people had thrown themselves into all manner of socialist activities, generally identifying the party with their own prosperity. Nonetheless, problems of ‘egalitarianism’ and bureaucracy in the local Agricultural Producers’ Cooperatives would eventually give the peasants pause on the matter of socialization.<sup>75</sup> Mao’s information on peasant attitudes and on the success of the collectives may have been unreliable insofar as it derived from local government reports and a limited range of inspection.<sup>76</sup> Furthermore, in the Chairman’s view, it was the relatively wealthier peasants who most resisted common ownership, partly since their competitiveness was eroded by the state’s heavy grain purchases. For a rigid Communist revolutionary like Mao, it was both politically and ideologically unacceptable to make concessions to the “backward small-peasant” thoughts he saw as standing in the way of the revolution. After his tour in the latter part of May, Mao drew the conclusion that the masses were in fact crying out for high-speed socialist reform, an inference supported by the evidence of former apparently successful rural campaigns, however contradicted by the report of the Rural Work Department in the spring of 1955.

Thus, as Mao saw it, the most important task after his tour was to adjust policy in the direction of stepping up the pace of nationalization for agriculture, handicrafts, industry and commerce.

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<sup>74</sup> Bo Yibo, *huigu*, 378.

<sup>75</sup> For an Analysis of the reasons for Mao’s “Change of May” see Bo Yibo, *huigu*, 379; Jin Chongji et al., *Liu Shaoqi zhuan*, 781-782 781; *CHOC*, vol.14, 115.

<sup>76</sup> Bo Yibo, *huigu*, 379.

Although Mao was largely successful in shaping a public image as a rational Communist ruler, wisely steering a middle course between “right” and “left”, mediating between Party rivals and relating the utopian demands of the people to pragmatically achievable programs, he was in fact unable to maintain this role of arbiter for most of the first half of the 1950s. From the middle of 1955, Mao undertook a more focused study than ever before of economic questions, gaining greater confidence in expressing positions narrowly phrased within this discipline. Mao came to understand economic development as a spiral process, in which successive increments in material and human resources combine and reinforce one another to propel movement forward.<sup>77</sup> After May of 1955, therefore, Mao launched a new campaign of suppression against the opinion of those with doubts over the rapid expansion of the collectives, whether these were expressed from within the Party or outside. This policy found expression in his July speech in a criticism of “some of our comrades (who are) tottering like a woman with bound feet.” Deng Zihui’s concerns were thus labeled as displaying “rightist” timidity.<sup>78</sup>

Mao clearly identified “class struggle” as his political priority throughout the phase of transition to socialism, since he believed that only after a general elimination of the bourgeois ideology could the Chinese Communist state move on to its next stage of development. Closely related to the formation of a radical Maoist orientation in the transformation to socialism were cultural campaigns against “bourgeois ideology” in art and literature (which took the form of criticizing Hu Feng’s literary views) and a purgative political movement seeking to expel counterrevolutionaries and “bad elements” from within the party, which came to be known as the *sufan* movement of May 1955. Hu Feng, a left-wing writer who had advocated the individuality of literature and the writer’s responsibility to criticize the times in the 1930s and 1940s in GMD -controlled areas, was stigmatized as a leading light of “Hu Feng anti-Party faction” by the center in early May. This Hu Feng affair originated in a long, self-defensive report he wrote on the tension between Party’s tight ideological control and artistic creativity in the period of CCP power, which would have infuriated Mao as the prime mover in the drive to

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<sup>77</sup> *Mao Zedong Unrehearsed: Talks and Letters: 1956-71*, Intro. by Stuart Schram, trans. by John Chinnery and Tiejun, (London: Penguin Books, 1974), 31.

<sup>78</sup> Bo Yibo, *huigu*, 346, 356; *CHOC* vol.14, 116.

political and cultural conformity in the Communist regime since the early 1950s.<sup>79</sup> For Mao, as he made clear in the series of party directives and *Renmin Ribao* (RMRB, People's Daily) editorials on the Hu Feng "anti-party faction", the political purge would not only enable the Party to rid itself of all sorts of elements not identified with the objectives of the Communist revolution, but would also strengthen the political consciousness of the masses (the intellectuals and cadres in particular), encouraging them to "remould" themselves by "searching for and revealing hidden counterrevolutionary elements".<sup>80</sup>

Once the center's main criterion for assigning persons to the "people" or "non-people" had been internalized within the mind of the general public, the Party should call upon any lurking "bad elements" to unburden themselves to the party organization, an instrument through which China would become a "real unity" in the political awareness of the populace. As the history of Mao's China in the first half of 1950s shows, this spiritual transformation, whether conducted through force or propaganda, went hand in hand with social-economic change in ensuring the 'purity and thoroughness' of the revolution at home.

In supplanting bourgeois institutions with socialism in China, as Mao understood it, policy had to relate its political and economic objectives to relevant action programs in material and spiritual fields, balancing the development of the country with the more urgent imperative of consolidating Party and sometimes Mao's own personal power. All these factors contributed to Mao's preference for a rapid mass campaign, rather than slower but relatively more stable change. At the same time, the need to deal with Party diehards and rightist holdouts in society at large consumed a good deal of energy, highlighting for Mao the need to further "educate" the public, that is, to internalize Chinese Communist philosophy in the popular mind as another

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<sup>79</sup> Hu's report suggested that the degree of control over artistic and personal expression exercised by the CCP "enervated" people, so that the "formalism" (*gongshi zhuyi*) of Party doctrine made the content less convincing to readers. Mao may have taken this to heart in his Hundred Flowers campaign in the following period, which we shall discuss further in Chapter 2 and 4. See *Mao zhuan*, 299-307; Benjamin Schwartz; Merle Goldman, "Hu Feng's Conflict with the Communist Literary Authorities," *China Quarterly*, 12 (1962): 102-37; Jonathan Spence, "Chinese Revolutionary Literature", *Yale French Studies*, No. 39, Literature and Revolution. (1967): 215-225.

<sup>80</sup> For Chairman's directives and comments on Hu Feng's "anti-party faction" case, which clearly expressed political considerations in escalating Hu's affair into a nation-wide political purge aiming at the reconstruction of the people's political value-system, see *Mao zhuan*, 302-307.

front of a bitter class struggle. In an underlying sense, Mao felt it opportune by the second half of 1955 to inaugurate a thoroughly socialist direction for the country, of which, to his thinking, the socialist upsurge in the countryside would only be the initial movement. Following the high tide of agricultural collectivization, the nationalization of private industry, commerce and handicrafts also made a leap forward between late 1955 and early 1956.<sup>81</sup>

With the basic completion of the institutional reorganization of the Chinese life in socio-economic terms (collectivization in the countryside and nationalization in the cities), Mao took his task of having brought about socialism on the Stalinist pattern in China as fundamentally achieved. He was no doubt bolstered in this estimate by what he assumed was the general acceptance by various groups of people, the intellectual elites in particular, of the “revolution” and “socialist transformation” by the end of 1955. Even compared with the Soviet experience, as Mao recognized, this rapid and stable socialist transformation in China had to be counted a significant achievement in Communist history, lending Mao the vaunting ambition eventually to surpass the Soviets by carrying off another miraculous (if Marxianly inevitable) victory in socialist construction (industrialization), the next objective the Chairman defined for his Party and people. To ensure that “rightist”, i.e. conservative in this case, thinking was purged from the Party, the center pre-established “anti-rightist” guidelines for the projected Eighth Party Congress. From the period between the end of 1955 to early 1956, the Communist Party as a whole was “filled with exaltation”, high on its drive for a faster and better path towards modernization as prescribed by Stalinist orthodoxy. There is little evidence Mao and his colleagues anticipated that Khrushchev’s performance (or anti-Stalin speech) in the forthcoming Twentieth Congress of the CPSU would change their perception of the basic applicability of Stalinist model to Chinese conditions; neither did the leaders inside Kremlin foresee the possible impact of their de-Stalinization on domestic affairs of China.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Up to 1955 October, 38 million peasant households had joined collectives, 32% of the total. Three months later, by the end of December, 1955, this number reached 75 million, 63.3% of the total. See *Mao zhuan*, 407- 408.

<sup>82</sup> Bo Yibo, *Huigu*, vol.1, 526-27,530-31.

## **Conclusion**

The Soviet path to socialism represented a general blueprint for Chinese state reconstruction under the leadership of Chairman Mao; it is impossible to understand China's internal development during the early PRC period without relating Chinese aspirations to the Soviet past and the Soviet and Eastern European present. Despite Mao's repeated emphasis on intellectual independence in adapting Soviet experience to China, he in essence took the Stalinist road to socialism in the 1920s and 1930s as China's own path, in preference to the post-Second World War People's Democracy pattern "suggested" by Stalin. The Chinese Chairman decided as early as in the late 1940s that he had to weigh up domestic and external conditions in judging the moment to transform "quantitative" into "qualitative" changes, that is say, to cement his immediate displacement of the institutions and practices of bourgeois and imperialist life into a revolutionary overthrow of the mechanisms and consciousness of the old China. Unclear on how long it would take him to achieve this objective, Mao played a waiting game and was content to pass himself off as a centrist. It was in this short period that certain un-Stalinist economic formulae in building socialism emerged in the central party, which could have provided the theoretical and practical justification for the CCP to shift their focus domestically from ongoing political struggles to economic development possibly well into the late 1970s. But given Mao's insistence on political orthodoxy throughout this period, it was inevitable he would condemn as "rightist" the idea of leaving bourgeois interests standing in the name of developing a healthier or more productive economy. To appease the Kremlin boss, the Chairman made concessions in areas he considered less crucial only as a way of safeguarding his domestic policies. To borrow another scholar's epigram apropos of the Yugoslavia leaders immediately after 1945, Mao at this stage was ideologically more Stalinist than Stalin.<sup>83</sup>

The significant influence of the experience of Soviet Union on China's domestic socialization notwithstanding, Chairman Mao tightened his hand on the tiller of domestic affairs after Stalin's death. The flow of information between socialist parties had been heavily censored by Mao himself in the early 1950s to prevent outside events throwing any sort of spanner in the works of Chinese socialist transformation. Within such an isolated internal environment, Mao met no

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<sup>83</sup> Brzezinski, *The Soviet Bloc*, 38.



significant impediment in consolidating his power in the center and uniting the Party behind his vision for the country's future. To a large degree, these two purposes were intertwined given that Mao saw himself as the sole creative interpreter of Marxism-Leninism in a new and complex Chinese environment, requiring a maximum of personal power for socialism's realization. The "correctness" of the Party and nation's development thus hinged on Mao's uncontested dominance. These facts make it hard to draw a clear demarcation between the Maoist vision and Mao's personal pursuit of power, especially without a consideration of the specific political context in which Mao exercised himself.

The Chinese involvement with the USSR and Eastern Europe was highly interconnected with the CCP's perception of its status within the Communist bloc. The Chinese Chairman and his colleagues regarded the Soviets and Communists on the European continent as "brothers" in the communist camp, of which Mao's China counted itself an integral member. Based on this assumption of the nature of the intra-bloc relationship, Chairman Mao emphasized the necessity for China and the bloc regimes to help each other by sharing resources, particularly their respective "advanced" experiences of socialization. Notably, this Chinese "brotherhood" interpretation of the intra-socialist relationships is not so different from the Soviet definition of the hierarchical organization of the Communist commonwealth, given that in Chinese culture "brothers" are identified by positions in a family hierarchy. But the Stalinist version took the Soviet leading position in the bloc for granted, while the Maoist indicated a possibility for status change: "the junior may one day surpass the senior".<sup>84</sup> In the first half of the 1950s, even after the death of Stalin, the Chinese Communists held themselves aloof from Soviet bloc events, devoting their efforts to catching up with the People's Democracies and the USSR in domestic reconstruction. After the basic completion of the socialist form of the state on the Soviet model by the end of 1955, the Chinese leadership, particularly Mao, were taken over by a kind of secular zeal in their perception of China's future potential in "socialist modernization", a process they looked for inspiration, both at home and abroad, in hastening by all available means. At the same time, as the following section describes, Chinese leaders became more willing to put their oar in and involve themselves in Eastern bloc affairs.

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<sup>84</sup> Shi Zhe, *jianzhenglü*, 195-196.



## **Chapter 2: China and the East European bloc: after the CPSU 20<sup>th</sup> Congress**

The CPSU 20<sup>th</sup> Congress set in train extensive changes to both inter-bloc relations and domestic developments in Communist China and the East European satellites. Khrushchev's "secret speech," which instigated the process of "de-Stalinization" in the Communist camp, led not to a thaw or revision of socialism but rather to series of largely non-communist insurgent movements in the Eastern European republics. Liberal in character and originating in Hungary and Poland, these movements demanded independence and liberation from the Soviet Union. On the Chinese side, the Soviet critique of Stalin and his dogma coincided with the Maoist push to develop a faster and better path to modernization, aiming to outstrip the Soviets. This domestic objective was closely connected with the Chinese leadership's - Chairman Mao's in particular - ambition to begin exporting the Chinese revolutionary and state-construction experiences to other parts of the bloc, redefining the status of China in the Communist camp. Chinese domestic developments turned on Mao's changing interpretations of Eastern bloc instability, as either pertaining to fundamental contradictions or weaknesses in Communism or rather extrinsic, positive effects associated with the machinations of a few provocateurs. By late 1955 and early 1956, Mao and his colleagues believed that they had cemented a communist state in China and were far more adroit in their management of domestic politics than their Soviet counterparts. At the same time, the problems in the bloc forced Mao and the top CCP leadership to conduct a serious review of their own work.

As the Eastern European states began to angle for a rapprochement with China in the autumn of 1956, Beijing was drawn ineluctably into Soviet bloc affairs. Nevertheless, the European regimes themselves were unable to commit the Chinese leadership into support for the Polish and Hungarian aspirations for domestic autonomy. (It is possible that China would have gone further in backing up other, more competent or stronger leaderships in the U.S.S.R.'s satellite nations). The third part of this chapter, while affirming the Polish Communists' success in drawing Beijing's attention to the problems caused by absolute Soviet rule in the Eastern bloc,

argues that the Chinese leadership never wavered from their own interests and always prioritized bloc integrity in their international diplomacy in the context of the International.

### ***Political developments in Hungary and Poland after the CPSU 20<sup>th</sup> Congress***

In the first year and a half after Stalin's death, the Kremlin's "collective leadership" started to steer a "new Course" economically, moving away from heavy capital-intensive development towards managed consumption and agricultural reforms. A shift of focus to light industry and trade aimed to boost the incomes of collectivized farmers and make available a wider range of goods to customers. In the political realm, however, the Kremlin envisaged restricting adaptations of the Stalinist system to a minimum.<sup>1</sup> Khrushchev, a peasant leader rooted in the Revolutionary age, broadly rejected the "New Course" formula, favoring rather maintaining a programme of development especially kick-starting agricultural productivity. Khrushchev's thaw in domestic politics extended to the rehabilitation of Marshal Tito in Yugoslavia and to fence-mending with other socialist nations. Throughout late 1954 and 1955, Khrushchev's regime loosened Stalinist political orthodoxies, unwittingly opening up a Pandora's box placing Stalin's infallibility in politics and intra-bloc relationships in question.<sup>2</sup>

The signal, even ritual, event in this process of ideological enfranchisement was Khrushchev's so-called "Secret Speech" delivered at the end of the CPSU Twentieth Congress. On the morning of 25 February, as a representative of the CPSU, Khrushchev denounced Stalin's crimes to the party delegates in a closed session, requesting as a final salvo (perhaps not entirely sincerely) that this dressing-down remain private. The speech was read out with deliberate slowness to Eastern European Communist leaders during the night of 25-26

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<sup>1</sup> Hope M. Harrison, *Driving the Soviets up the Wall, Soviet-East German Relations, 1953-1956* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2003), 28; Brzezinski, *The Soviet Bloc*, 156-165. For Khrushchev's interpretation of the political purpose of the "New Course", see Khrushchev, *Khrushchev Remembers: The Glasnost Tapes*, p.163. For Hungarian politics between 1947-1953 see *Magyar századok: Gergely Jenő-Izsák Lajos, A huszadik század története* [Hundred Years of Hungary Series: Jeno Gergely- Lajos Izsak, history of the twentieth century] (Budapest: Pannonica Kiadó, 2000), 306-342.

<sup>2</sup> For an argument treating Khrushchev's rise to power as a recapitulation of the Stalinist experience, see Brzezinski, *The Soviet Bloc*, 168.

February, allowing note-taking.<sup>3</sup> Despite the stunning vigour of its condemnation of Stalin's malfeasance, Khrushchev's speech was careful to single out Stalin's political purges, his extreme personality cult, incompetence during the war and alienation from the people; it did not disavow the state infrastructure of Communism or ideological underpinnings of the Party. Stalin's treatment of the People's Democracies also escaped mention; Khrushchev may have wanted to be a Stalin in one connection at least.<sup>4</sup>

Intentionally or not, Khrushchev's speech shook the power of the already wobbly incumbent Stalinists in Eastern Europe. The Soviet leaders wanted to shore up a revised Communism by enforcing international-bloc unity, thereby constraining changes within the socioeconomic sphere. However, after only one year of the New Course, a head of opposition to state parties and to Moscow's ultimate lead had built up among the rank and file and wider public in the People's Democracies.<sup>5</sup>

In Hungary specifically, as a much-hated Stalinist leader, Mátyás Rákosi's difficulties in facing down widespread public discontent in 1956 were only compounded by Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin.<sup>6</sup> Increasingly trimming to local conditions, Rákosi rehabilitated László Rajk on March 27, 1956, besides making other concessions.<sup>7</sup> Rákosi's belated moderation, however, only got up the hopes of Hungary's youth and intellectuals, who anticipated the more moderate Nagy's accession to the premiership. But when Nagy, an ethnically Hungarian

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<sup>3</sup> The Hungarian delegates had about three hours to listen to sixty reel's worth of the secret speech. "Rákosi's account on Rajk's case and the inner struggle of the Hungarian party", Shen Zihua et al. eds., *Selected Historical Soviet Archives* Vol.26, 196.

<sup>4</sup> Brzezinski, *The Soviet Bloc*, 179; Luthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split*, 48-49.

<sup>5</sup> See Mark Kramer's three-part "The Early Post-Stalin Succession Struggle and Upheavals in East-Central Europe: Internal-External Linkages in Soviet Union Policy Making," *Journal of Cold War Studies* vol.1 no. 2, (1999): 3-38. The Hungarian nationwide disorders, more severe than those in 1953, re-erupted between 1955 to 1956; see Mark Kramer, "New Evidence on Soviet Decision-Making and the 1956 Polish and Hungarian Crises", *CWIHP Bulletin* 08/09(1996/1997), 363.

<sup>6</sup> Rákosi was Prime Minister of Hungary from 14 August 1952 to 4 July 1953. For a brief biography of Rákosi, see *Magyarország miniszterelnökei: 1848-1990*, második kiadás [The Prime Ministers of Hungary: 1848-1990, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition] (Budapest: Cégér Kiadó Kft. 1993), 187-191. Rákosi, Ernő Gerő, József Révai and Farkas Mihály, all ethnic Jews, formed a "gang of four" in the HWP during the Stalin era.

<sup>7</sup> Rajk replaced Nagy to be minister of internal affairs in 1946. In 1949 he fell victim to Stalinist purges orchestrated by Rákosi. For the official announcement of Rajk and his associates' rehabilitation, see *Szabad Nép* [Free People, one of the most influential national newspaper in Hungary], March 27, 1956; the announcement was broadcast by Radio Budapest on March 31, 1956. See Charles Gati, *Failed Illusions: Moscow, Washington, Budapest, and the 1956 Hungarian Revolt* (Chicago: Stanford University Press, 2006), 48-49.

agricultural scientist, became Prime Minister with Soviet blessing, Rákosi remained Party General Secretary, leaving in place a disgruntled rump of opposition to the New Course. Nagy's initial economic reforms began to question Stalinist orthodoxies of social transformation and heavy-handed state violence, both previously areas of Rákosi's political responsibility. It seems that Nagy was too idealistic or naive to sense the discontent in the senior Politburo and Secretariat, surfing rather on a spirit of reformism in the lower party echelons. Rákosi chose his moment to act immediately after Khrushchev announced his neo-Stalinist economic program, denouncing Nagy's deviationist and ousting him in April 1955. In November 1955, Nagy was finally expelled from the party. Khrushchev later censured the Hungarians for not having pre-consulted Moscow on the expulsion, given that the former leader would have been a highly useful figure during the unrest of mid-July.<sup>8</sup> After returning to the citizenry, Nagy involved himself into the life of the common people, maintaining his popularity at an exceptionally high level and retaining the ear of the masses, especially the young. A wishful Marxist-Leninist scientist, Nagy spent his internal exile formulating post-Communist ideas in which Hungary would take up a neutral position in the Cold War.<sup>9</sup>

This intensifying ferment among Hungarians helped the Petöfi Circle, a discussion group originally set up by Rákosi's government in honour of the famous nineteenth-century patriotic poet, to transform itself by June 1956 into a prominent organ of opposition.<sup>10</sup> In close contact with Nagy and emboldened by the thaw in Hungary and Poznan riots, the Circle began to think that civil society could force Rákosi's out.<sup>11</sup> The June 30 Hungarian Workers' Party (HWP)

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<sup>8</sup> Veljko Micunovic, *Moscow Diary*, trans. David Floyd, intro. George Kennan (New York, Garden City: Doubleday & Company, 1980), 88.

<sup>9</sup> For the Kremlin's appointment of Nagy as Hungarian Prime Minister in mid-June 1953, see Bekés Csaka, Malcolm Byrne, and János M. Rainer, eds. *The 1956 Hungarian Revolution: A History in Documents* (Budapest, New York: Central European University, 2002), pp.16. For Nagy's self-conception as a Marxist-Leninist scientist, see Meray Tibor, *Thirteen Days that Shook the Kremlin: Imre Nagy and the Hungarian Revolution* (New York, Praeger:1959), 19; for Rákosi's efforts to stigmatize Nagy inside the Kremlin, see Charles Gati, *Failed Illusions*, 115; for Khrushchev's account for the Hungarians' failing to consult Moscow about Nagy's expulsion, see Micunovic, *Moscow Diary*, 88, backing up "Hao Deqing's talk with the Soviet ambassador on the Hungarian political situation, 16 August 1956", 109-01040-01, pp.49-51, CFMA.

<sup>10</sup> The Petöfi Circle, named after a 19th Century Hungarian poet, was formed in March 1956 as a debating club within the framework of the Federation of Working Youth. The members of this club strongly criticized the crimes and mistakes of the Rákosi regime, greatly contributing to the ferment that eventually exploded in the Hungarian revolt.

<sup>11</sup> The Poznan Uprising of June was a workers' demonstration, whose facing-down cost 53 deaths. See Duncan Townson, *A Dictionary of Contemporary History: 1945 to the Present* (Oxford, 1999), 152; for the Petöfi Circle's response to Poznan, see Brzezinski, *The Soviet Bloc*, 220-221.

Central Committee resolution, Rákosi's last-ditch Stalinist response to the unrest, accused the Petőfi Clubs of "turning the debates into group attacks against the People's Republic", connecting "anti-Party elements" and "a certain group which has formed around Imre Nagy with the intention of making the whole story a 'Nagy conspiracy' ".<sup>12</sup> Rákosi's proposal of suppressing Nagy and his literary outlets, though, was deemed too risky by party commissars more attuned to the public mood than Rákosi himself. Ernő Gerő, a traditional Stalinist allied with Rákosi's faction, went over his leader's head in informing the Soviet embassy that "severe complications could unexpectedly emerge" at the forthcoming plenum of 18 July on account of Rákosi's weakened position and Central Party disunity. Andropov duly cabled Moscow, drawing the Soviets once more into Hungarian domestic politics in lobbying for a clear endorsement of the 30 June resolution seeking to mend rifts in the HWP.<sup>13</sup>

There is little doubt that in the first half of 1956 the entire CPSU Presidium supported Rákosi, notwithstanding Khrushchev's later repudiation of him post-October as someone "lacking the most elementary understanding of what needed to be done" to the extent that "it had been a great mistake to have relied on that idiot."<sup>14</sup> Even before Mikoyan's departure for Budapest, Khrushchev maintained the desirability of alleviating Rákosi's personal situation.<sup>15</sup> Mikoyan began to induce the Kremlin to change its mind after a conversation with Rákosi on 26 June even prior to his arrival in Hungary; Rákosi's was terrified of the masses rounding on him for his show trial of Rajk and the Soviets turning against him for normalizing relations with Tito so cack-handedly.<sup>16</sup> Mikoyan's follow-up meetings with Rákosi, Gerő and other Hungarian top

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<sup>12</sup> Radio Budapest, 30 June, 1956, for English version, see Brzezinski, *The Soviet Bloc*, 221.

<sup>13</sup> "Shifrtelgramma," from Yu. V. Andropov to the CPSU Presidium and Secretariat, 9 July 1956 (Special Dossier-Strictly Secret), in APRF, F. 3, Op.64, D.483, L1. 151-162; Kramer, "New Evidence", 362.

<sup>14</sup> Micunovic, *Moscow Diary*, 135-136, 140; Mark Kramer, "New Evidence", 362. On Moscow's reasons for backing Rákosi in mid-July, see Micunovic, *Moscow Diary*, 87.

<sup>15</sup> The literal translation of Khrushchev's Russian is "there must be an easing of the situation Rákosi", ambiguously caught between "we must alleviate Rákosi's situation" or "Rákosi must alleviate the situation," the second suggesting the Soviets' increasing dissatisfaction with the Hungarian leader. According to Micunovic's diary on 15 July, Khrushchev pledged support before rowing back on that commitment to Tito the same day. The Soviets were wary of growing Yugoslav influence over the bloc and would likely have understated the expedients they had planned for intervening in Hungary. For Malin notes, see TsKhSD, F. 3, Op. 12, D. 1005, L1. 2-2ob, English version trans. and annotated Mark Kramer, "the 'Malin Notes' on Crises in Hungary and Poland in 1956", *CWIHP*, 08-09 (Winter 1996/1997):385-410; see also Micunovic, *Moscow Diary*, 88-91.

<sup>16</sup> "Mikoyan's Report to the CPSU Presidium on 26 June, 1956", in Shen Zhihua et al., eds. *Selected Historical Soviet Archives* Vol.27, 207.

leaders in Budapest convinced him that Rákosi was the problem. Gerő's briefings had laid before the envoy the full extent of the popular ferment, suggesting the central party had to pull together, which they could not do with Rákosi in charge. Perhaps Gerő's here just wanted to unseat his colleague.<sup>17</sup>

Facing a sea of enemies, Rákosi had the presence of mind to defend himself, contending no single Communist had to hand any "fundamental solution". He had not earlier cracked down on the counterrevolutionaries because "the situation [in Hungary] is so intense and complicated that the arrest [of anti-Party elements] won't help things at all. ...after we arrest one group of them, there will be another, and then the third, endless."<sup>18</sup> From the Soviet perspective, these words only betrayed weakness. The Presidium members, Khrushchev especially, had begun to feel that their dissociation of themselves from Stalin had been too abrupt. As a self-exculpatory maneuver, though, the Soviet leadership preferred to attribute the unrest in the bloc to the "subversive activities of the imperialists," meaning that, applying a restrictive understanding of the events, 'when the head ached, they dealt with the head', sacrificing Rákosi for Hungarian Workers' Party's unity.<sup>19</sup>

With Mikoyan's strong sponsorship, Rákosi's first secretary post went to Gerő, and several imprisoned Communists, most prominently János Kádár, were recalled to party positions.<sup>20</sup> Whatever the rebalancing of elements within the HWP, the July solution met international exigencies in appeasing Tito and keeping in power a regime fully committed to the Soviet Union.<sup>21</sup> The Soviet leadership began to posit a common foundation for the Communist Parties, which supposedly rested on the Soviet economic model and were (unlike Tito or Nagy's outlooks) unambiguously aligned with the U.S.S.R. in the Cold War. Far from allowing

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<sup>17</sup> "Summary of Mikoyan's meeting with Rákosi and others, 13 July, 1956" Shen Zhihua et al., eds. *Selected Historical Soviet Archives*, Vol.27, 211.

<sup>18</sup> "Summary of Mikoyan's meeting with Rákosi and others, 13 July, 1956" Shen Zhihua et al., eds. *Selected Historical Soviet Archives*, Vol.27, 211.

<sup>19</sup> For Khrushchev's ideas of the genesis of the Polish and Hungarian turmoil, see Malin notes, TsKhSD, F. 3, Op. 12, D. 1005, LI. 2-20b. English version in *CWIHP Bulletin*, 08-09, 388.

<sup>20</sup> Kramer, "New Evidence", 364 and fn.63: "TsK KPSS," 18 July 1956, Osobaya papka, in APRF, F. 3, Op.64, D. 483, L1. 225-236. On the eve of the plenum, Mikoyan also held talks with key members of the HWP Central Leadership canvassing for Gerő.

<sup>21</sup> Brzezinski, *The Soviet Bloc*, 222.



leeway to intra-party political dissent, this framework, as Mikoyan explained, justified a resumption of party discipline, since “the relaxation of international tensions and the slogan of coexistence [as proclaimed at the CPSU Twentieth Congress] do not presuppose but, on the contrary, exclude ideological concessions and any accommodation to hostile views.”<sup>22</sup>

In fact, Rákosi’s caution that his removal would not avert a meltdown proved correct. Gerő’s appointment, together with unhelpful Soviet suggestions over party management, presided over an intensification of social turbulence aggravated by the central party’s failure to reach “a unified position among the members of the Politburo” by early September.<sup>23</sup> The new First Secretary had unenviably to restore order “without a clear-cut conception of what his policy, even basic assumptions, ought to be”.<sup>24</sup> At his wits’ end, Gerő left for Moscow in September looking for further assistance, inexplicably staying one and a half months in the U.S.S.R. as the domestic situation deteriorated unchecked.<sup>25</sup> The Kremlin, meanwhile, exasperated with the July compromise and feckless Hungarian leadership, all the while coming to an alternative diagnosis of the troubles’ root causes, took up Andropov’s advice to strengthen its contacts with the Hungarians by inviting the leadership to Moscow, while taking credit for refloating Hungarian industry. Meanwhile, Khrushchev arranged a meeting between Gerő and Tito in the Crimea, hoping that a step forward in the process of a Hungarian-Yugoslav rehabilitation would provide a shot in the arm for the beleaguered HWP.<sup>26</sup>

These Soviet efforts, though, only stoked the ant-Soviet mood of ordinary Hungarians. As Gerő told Andropov on his return from Moscow, the Hungarian populace could not now be conceivably reconciled to Moscow; Hungary domestically had become more “complicated and

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<sup>22</sup> “Mikoyan’s Telegram from Budapest to the CPSU Presidium”, *Selected Historical Soviet Archives* Vol.27,233; Kramer, *New Evidences*, ft. 66 and his source is “TsK KPSS,” 18 July 1956, Osobaya papka, in APRF, F. 3, Op.64, D. 483, L231.

<sup>23</sup> Kramer, “*New Evidences*”, 365, fn.67 “Zapis’besedy s Erno Gere, 2 sentyabrya 1956 g.”, 27 September 1956, TsKhSD, F.5. Op.28,D.394, L1.254-256.

<sup>24</sup> Brzezinski, *The Soviet Bloc*, 223.

<sup>25</sup> “Summary of Andropov’s Conversation with Gerő, 2 September, 1956”, Shen Zhihua et al., eds., *Selected Historical Soviet Archives* Vol.27, 258; Kramer, “*New Evidences*”, 365, fn.68 “Zapis’besedy s Erno Gere, 2 sentyabrya 1956 g.”, 27 September 1956, TsKhSD, F.5. Op.28,D.394, L1.256.

<sup>26</sup> “Andropov’s report to the CPSU Presidium, 27 August, 1956”, *Selected Historical Soviet Archives* Vol.27, 246; For the Yugoslav perspective on Khrushchev’s arranging Gerő’s Yugoslavia visit in early October 1956, see Micunovic, *Moscow Diary*, 116-118.

turbulent", with potentially "serious problems" lying in wait "throughout the country." "[A]cute discontent had extended to the workers, not counting those anxious peasants who are demanding the dismissal of the Agricultural Cooperatives." The internment of Rajk's backfired on the party leadership as opposition forces pressed for further concessions; many agitated openly for Nagy's return.<sup>27</sup> Nagy put Moscow in a cleft stick. On the one hand, the HWP was besieged by calls for his reinstatement, which could serve to pacify public unrest. On the other, Nagy's identification with the new nationalist new policies put him beyond the pale of the CPSU Presidium. Gerő maintained that Nagy stubbornly refused to admit error on every point of contention throughout the period of his leadership.<sup>28</sup> To Moscow, Nagy's nationalism was politically toxic, so that the Kremlin never seriously countenanced his return to power. However, Gomulka's ascendancy in Poland and their own evolving gave the Hungarians (especially during Gerő, Kádár, Hegedűs, and even Nagy's Communist sabbaticals) false hope. This tide of discontent reached a critical mark between 15 and 22 October.<sup>29</sup>

Polish restiveness with Soviet domination had in many ways followed a similar course to that in Hungary, with a large number of intellectuals' discussion groups convening as early as 1955. These types of organization rapidly mutated into illegal forms of political assembly weighing up political alternatives. But a significant difference from the Hungarian state of affairs lay in the fact that, provided the regime was not threatened, Polish party members typically welcomed opportunities to diminish Poland's dependence on the USSR, nursing still-fresh memories of the Soviets' forced dissolution of the PCP in the late 1930s. In this atmosphere, Wladyslaw Gomulka, ex-"right-wing" deviationist secretly released from prison in 1954, represented a more palatable option than the Kremlin loyalist Boleslaw Bierut. Not beset either by either

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<sup>27</sup> "Andropov's report from Budapest to the Soviet Foreign Ministry, 12 Oct., 1956", *Selected Historical Soviet Archives* Vol.27, 267; "Shiftelegramma," 12 October 1956, from Yu. V. Andropov to the CPSU Presidium, in APRF, F. 3, Op.64, D.484, L1.64-75.

<sup>28</sup> "Andropov's report from Budapest to the Soviet Foreign Ministry, 12 Oct., 1956", *Selected Historical Soviet Archives* Vol.27, 267

<sup>29</sup> Khrushchev set out the clear view in this session: "We should recruit Nagy for political action. But until then we shouldn't make a chairman of the government." See TsKhSD, F. 3, Op. 12, D. 1006, Ll. 4-4ob, compiled by V. N. Malin. English version see *CWIHP* Bulletin 8-9, 388-389. However, without consulting Soviet advice, the Hungarian Central Committee elected Nagy new Premier in the Plenum held on October 23 as a last throw of the dice to appease domestic anger. See Kramer, "Hungary and Poland, 1956: Khrushchev's CPSU CC Presidium Meeting on East European Crises, 24 October 1956," *CWIHP* Bulletin, Issue 5 (Spring 1995): 52-53.

internal splits or direct Soviet interference, the party could develop a much more gradualist line of policy relaxation than in Hungary. The Twentieth Congress threw everything in the air in jeopardising the ability of the Polish communists to move towards a recognition of the primacy of domestic concerns while consolidating itself and the executive institutions of socialism.<sup>30</sup>

Following Bierut's fatal heart attack in Moscow, Khrushchev backed the Stalinist Edward Ochab. The PCP, for its part, jockeyed for its legitimacy by conceding that living standards had fallen during the Stalin years, whilst arguing that the state political apparatus allowed for economic reform. By the summer, popular ferment had reached the working classes, leading to demonstrations demanding systematic wage reform in Poznan. The army killed 53 deaths and inflicted over 300 serious injuries.<sup>31</sup> The Soviet leadership anxiously warded off fears of a "domino" of insurrection in the Eastern European states by postulating imperialist provocation;<sup>32</sup> at the same time, leaders started to redefine acceptable forms of state socialism around a common core of Soviet doctrine.<sup>33</sup> The Soviets preferred political measures, rather than controlled concessions, as a means of pressuring the Poles to get a grip.

After Poznan and the Soviet strong-arm tactics, the formerly united Polish leadership split over the issues of the Polish-Soviet relations and Gomulka's role in the party. The Soviets had not opposed Gomulka's return to public life, with Khrushchev even suggesting to Ochab that Gomulka might come to Moscow for recuperation. As far as it is possible to reconstruct Khrushchev's motives, it seems he considered that the inclusion of Gomulka in the Politburo in a relatively unimportant role, far from being a threat, could even be of service in appeasing the uprisings. Domestically, Gomulka had increasingly become a national symbol of Polish reconciliation, around whom different interest groups could gather. The final decision to invite Gomulka back to the Politburo, however, was made after Ochab's Beijing visit in September,

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<sup>30</sup> Brzezinski, *The Soviet bloc*, 239-240.

<sup>31</sup> See "Opinions on the Poznan violence, 25 July, 1956", 109-00761-01, pp.1-13, *CFMA*; Townson, *A Dictionary of Contemporary History*, 152

<sup>32</sup> See Khrushchev's wording during the CPSU Presidium meeting held on 12 July, quoted in Kramer, "New Evidence", CWIHPB 08/09, 385; the Public commentaries of the Poznan events see *Pravda* July 1, 1956.

<sup>33</sup> Brzezinski, *The Soviet Bloc*, 245-246; also see *Pravda* July 16, 1956.

during which he told the Chinese leadership that he was minded to bring Gomulka back to the center (the Chinese role in his return is discussed in a later section).<sup>34</sup>

In early October, then, the Polish communist party rehabilitated Gomulka by granting him the position of General Secretary of the Polish United Worker's Party (PUWP). The PUWP under Gomulka's leadership promulgated an alternative line to the CPSU's official assessment of the Polish Uprising, proclaiming the party, not the insurgents, should take the major responsibility for Poznan. In the debate among the party hierarchy, Defense Minister Marshal Rokossowski, a Polish-born Russian citizen sent to Warsaw by Stalin in 1949, lost his place in the new Politburo. The Soviet leaders thus entertained a strong suspicion that Gomulka, if unchecked, would be instrumental in elaborating an independent Polish line. On 19 October, a top-ranking Soviet leadership delegation led by Khrushchev flew into Warsaw without any pre-arrangement with the PUWP simultaneously with Soviet troops surrounding the Polish capital. These dramatic moves could even be seen as portending full-blown Soviet military intervention.<sup>35</sup>

To sum up, although by early 1956 Polish domestic conditions were better than those in Hungary, where the regime was plagued by internal splits and a discontinuity in policy, both largely due to the Hungarian leadership's dependence on Moscow, the anti-Stalinist and nationalist atmosphere produced by the CPSU Twentieth Congress in both countries in effect placed them in a similar position: top leaders had to weigh up their alternatives in considering whether to restore controversial nationalist figures (Nagy in Hungary, Gomulka in Poland) and how to define their role in the center keeping a lid on domestic disturbances. At the same time, both Poland and Hungary had to bear in mind possible Soviet responses to any of their domestic actions, given leaders' personal vulnerability and their de facto semi-subordinate

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<sup>34</sup> For a good analysis on the Polish top leadership's debates on Gomulka's role and relevant Soviet attitudes from late July to mid-October, see Brzezinski, *Soviet bloc*, 242-260; Ochab's recollection : Rozmowa z Edwardem Ochabem ,Teresa Toranska ,*Oni* ,Warszawa ,1989 ,s.217 ,quoted from Shen Zhihua and Li Danhui, "The 1956 Polish Crisis and Sino-Polish Relations: sources from the Chinese Archival Documents and Inside Reports", (conference paper delivered to the "The October 1956 Events in Poland in International Relations" October, 2006, Warsaw Poland). Published Version in *Eluosi yanjiu* [Russian Studies] 3 (2006): 45-48.

<sup>35</sup> Kramer, "New Evidence", *CWIHP Bulletin* 08/09, 360.

status to the USSR. The Polish Central Party moved first to include Gomulka to the regime, then granted him a position of real power. The more independent posture adopted by the Polish center under Gomulka on domestic affairs was soon taken by the Soviets as a threat to their ultimate dominance in Poland and possibly within the camp as a whole. By the second half of October 1956, Polish domestic moves and the Polish-Soviet relationship had thus attracted the attention of the Soviets, the Chinese and other inner-bloc members. Nevertheless, with the necessary help of hindsight, the Hungarian domestic situation was in fact more unstable than that in Poland at this point, as almost no efficient measures had been taken by the local regime to appease the build-up of popular resentment, leaving the whole country in the state of disorder and uncertainty and thereby sowing the seeds of insurrection.

### ***Chinese Domestic Policy Developments after the CPSU 20<sup>th</sup> Congress***

With unrest brewing in Eastern Europe, the Chinese leadership was busy preparing for the forthcoming National Eighth Congress of the CCP scheduled for September 1956. Preoccupied by the problem of how to get industry moving faster on a distinctively Chinese path, Mao Zedong, accompanied by Zhou Enlai (and on occasion by Liu Shaoqi, Chen Yun and Deng Xiaoping) was briefed on domestic developments by "Thirty Four Ministries and Commissions' reports" prepared initially for a draft of a general Political Report to be presented at the CCP's Eighth National Congress. The Chairman spent one and a half months studying working reports on topics mainly focused on Chinese heavy and light industrial development, as delivered by responsible persons from various ministries of the state council.<sup>36</sup> This review can be considered the most thorough survey of the Chinese economic situation since the foundation of the PRC. In Mao's estimation at this point, given that the transformation of private ownership system into socialist public ownership had already been completed by late 1955, the necessity lay with realizing a socialist industrialization of the nation.<sup>37</sup> If we suppose

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<sup>36</sup> Although the Chairman also listened to reports on agriculture and irrigation, his real interest apparently lay with the industrial sections.

<sup>37</sup> Listening to the second mechanical industry ministry officials' report on February 17, 1956, the Chairman said that "the problem of agriculture has already been solved" and the "transformation of capitalist industry and commerce is also not a fundamental issue", making it clear to the top cadres that "we should only focus on industry within these three months." See *Mao zhuan*, 474.

that the major reference regulating the pace of Chinese socialization in agriculture in 1954 was the case of the People's Democracies in Eastern Europe, in the next stage of industrialization, Mao evidently wanted to go faster and perform better than the Soviets through breaking with some of the old Stalinist patterns. He specifically saw his ministerial briefings as a good way to define China's own strategy for a rapid modernization on the basis of reevaluating some of Soviet experiences. The "Ten Great Relationships" report was in fact the result of this Maoist effort, yielding what we can take as guidelines for tinkering with the Soviet model, as we will see in somewhat more detail later. As Mao himself recalled, these briefings provided the economic basis for his influential April speech and document "On the Ten Great Relationships"; without being systematically informed, he claimed, "it would have been impossible to have formulated the Ten Great Relationships."<sup>38</sup> In the process of drawing up these guidelines, the Communist bloc events in early 1956 – the denunciation of Stalin during CPSU Twentieth Congress, the subsequent ideological confusion and political instability among the socialist states in the Soviet bloc- had created an international atmosphere conducive to the CCP's initiative in rephrasing their development policy.

Coincidentally, the Twentieth Congress of the Soviet Communist Party opened on the same day as the inauguration of the "Thirty Four Ministries and Commissions' reports" on February 14, 1956. Beijing had already received word of Khrushchev's secret denouncement of Stalin on February 25 from a telegraph sent back by the Chinese diplomatic mission in Moscow. The Chinese delegates, Deng Xiaoping in particular, had wisely refrained from intervening in domestic Soviet politics while in Moscow. Inspired by the loosening of Stalinist orthodoxies and armed with an unprecedented amount of information on China, Mao determined to devise an overarching framework within which policies pertaining to Chinese socialization could be adjusted, aiming to effect a synthesis of Marxism and Leninism with the Chinese situation.

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<sup>38</sup> Bo Yibo, *huigu*, 499, 501-507; Mao himself admits that the "Thirty-Four Ministries" reports had formed those main thoughts of his speech in April 1956, see *Mao Zedong Waijiao wenxuan* [Selected Works of Mao Zedong on Diplomacy](Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian, Shijie zhishi, 1994), 251-262. Another recollection of Mao's can be found in his speech during the enlarged Politburo meeting held on 18 February, 1958: "How did those Ten Relationships come out? I spent one and a half months in Beijing talking to [the main representatives from] one chief minister per day, altogether I've talked to colleagues from thirty four ministries, which formed the ten items. Without those talks with people [from the chief ministries], [the Ten Relationships] could by no means be formed." quoted in *Mao zhuan*, 470.

Mao's large-scale retheorization would incorporate a systematic critical review of the Soviet experiment and of the seven years' work of the CCP since its inception in 1949.<sup>39</sup>

As a point of fact, the Chinese leadership was by no means unprepared for the Soviet initiative of reevaluating Stalin and his achievements. As early as March 1954, Zhang Wentian, then Chinese ambassador in Moscow, sent a report to Beijing entitled "Changes of expressions around Stalin in Soviet propaganda". In this report, Zhang tracked shifts in the representation of Stalin in Soviet state propaganda since March, noting an increasingly ambivalent note in his portrayal from July onwards. Mao read this report in April.<sup>40</sup> The changing Soviet assessment of Stalin made the reconsideration of the Soviet methods, and the search for alternatives to them, especially in the economic field, increasingly urgent and politically feasible from early 1954 onwards, particularly since the Chinese leaders under Mao's guidance took the view that they should find a way suited to Chinese conditions to establish the Stalinist socialism faster and better in China.<sup>41</sup> As Shi Zhe recalled, it was shortly after Premier Zhou Enlai visited Khrushchev on 12 October, 1954 in the guesthouse in Wanshoulu that Zhou told him: the Chairman had told him "it would be necessary to lift the lid". "Covered and held down by the lid, newly emerging forces and new born things had no way of developing. The lid...thus became a stumbling block and a tiger in the way, hindering progress. [The lid] should be removed, otherwise how could our undertakings move forward?" Zhou further explained that by the "lid", Mao meant the current international Communist leadership, who had arguably reached the limit of their abilities during the initial revolutionary phase. "Newly emerging forces" referred to potential new leaders. Understanding Zhou's explanation, Shi Zhe questioned whether it would

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<sup>39</sup> "On Chinese delegation's participation in the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU" February 25-27, 1956, FMA, 109-00985-01, pp.151-167. According to Zhao Zhongyuan, appointed interpreter of Zhu De, the Soviet side handed over the Russian version of Khrushchev's Secret Speech to the Chinese delegation on February, 26 and the delegation interpreting group translated it into Chinese on that very night. See Zhao Zhongyuan's recollection of his experience during the CPSU Twentieth Congress, *Zhonggong dangshi ziliao* [CCP Party History Materials] issue 2 (2004): 89. After all, up to early March, Chairman Mao and his colleagues in Beijing had not only been informed about the content of the secret speech but also had obtained the translated version, see Shen Zhihua, "Sugong ershida feisidalinhua jiqi dui zhongsu guanxi de yingxiang" [the CPSU Twentieth Congress, De-Stalinization and their Impacts on Sino-Soviet Relations], *Cold War International History Studies*, vol.1, (Shanghai: East China Normal University Press, 2004), 52. Mao mentioned Khrushchev's "opening-lid" speech during the February 25 report hearing, which can prove that he already knew the content of the speech at that point, see following detailed discussion in this section.

<sup>40</sup> *Mao zhuan*, 494.

<sup>41</sup> Frederick C. Teiwes, with Warren Sun, *China's Road to Disaster: Mao, Central Politicians, and Provincial Leaders in the Unfolding of the Great Leap Forward 1955-1959* (New York:M.E. Sharpe, 1999), 56.

be possible for Communist China to free itself from the 'big brother' of Soviet domination only after five years after its establishment. Zhou told Shi Zhe that Mao's idea remained tentative and had not yet hardened into policy.<sup>42</sup> With these ambitions to emerge from out of the Staliniist and furthermore Soviet shadow in the back of his mind, in early 1956 Mao began to lay down broad guidelines for an adjustment of the Soviet model even before Khrushchev's disclosure of Stalin's deviations.

The revelation of fissures within the structure of Soviet state communism encouraged the CCP leadership, Mao in particular, to announce within the party its intention to outperform the Soviets in socialist development, a desire long prevalent in top party circles but which only now began to be voiced more widely inside the party.<sup>43</sup> During his conference with the minister of heavy industry on 25 February, Mao expressed optimism that socialization in China could proceed more quickly than in the Soviet Union, saying "[we should] break with superstition, no matter [whether it originated] at home or abroad. Chinese industrialization absolutely ought to be faster than that of the Soviet Union. We should not be restricted by the length of the earlier Soviet Five-Year-Plans but strive to surpass them". Mao further held that it would be beneficial for the CCP to strike out a new course since Khrushchev had already "opened the lid" on the excesses of Stalinism, giving the Chinese leadership a window of opportunity in which to project a more appropriate, self-determined and possibly indigenous model for "Chinese" socialism.<sup>44</sup> Despite the fact that it was the Chairman who had commanded his party and people to imitate almost everything he thought useful from the superior experience of the Soviet Union in the early years of the regime, Mao at this stage demonstrated a strong confidence, even assertiveness, in his ability to lead his party and country to reassess the Soviet experience and seek a distinctive path to socialism. Given the CCP's apparent success in having implanted the common system of ownership and China's relatively autonomous status within the Soviet bloc, it was not surprising that Mao could advocate the rejection of the shibboleth of the Soviet model and a review of Stalin's so-called "subjective" errors, with little

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<sup>42</sup> Shi Zhe, *jianzhenglü*, 195-196.

<sup>43</sup> The "top level" referred to Standing Committee of the Politburo, upper levels referred to enlarged Politburo Session attendances and then the first Secretaries of the Provinces, cities, autonomous regions.

<sup>44</sup> *Mao Zhuan*, 475.



concern of being accused of being Stalinist, an accusation that most of his Eastern European counterparts found much harder to brush off.

In this light, Chairman Mao presented “On the Ten Great Relationships” in the expanded Politburo meeting held on 25 April 1956, taking great pains to urge the Party and the state to “bring all positive factors into play and mobilize all the forces that can be utilized to achieve greater, faster, better, and more economic results in building socialism.”<sup>45</sup> As Mao later recalled: “the basic idea of the Ten Relationships was to compare [the Chinese socialization experience] with the Soviet [model] and to see whether there were other ways than [solely to follow] the Soviet methods to [develop Chinese socialism] better and faster than in the Soviet Union and Eastern European socialist states.” Its focus on the need to “pay even more attention to light industry and agriculture” by “appropriately” increasing “the proportion of investment in light industry and agriculture in the total investment of industry and agriculture” and to decentralize certain decision-making authorities to the level of provincial and municipal party committees was considered by the Chairman as a corrective to “mistakes made by other socialist countries” and as such constituted an unprecedented critique of the Soviet model of development.<sup>46</sup>

If we closely scrutinise Mao’s April speech, though, we found that while Mao had considered the need to develop light industry and agriculture and agreed with a readjustment of the ratios of state investment in each, he continued repeatedly to stress the primacy of industrial development. The Chairman made it very clear in his speech that “heavy industry is the most important thing, and [we] must give priority to its development; no one disagrees with this. As

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<sup>45</sup> The “Ten Relationships” that Mao discussed were: the relationship between industry and agriculture and between heavy industry and light industry; between coastal industry and inland industry; between economic construction and defense construction; relationships among the state, production units, and the individual producer; between the Center and the localities; between the Party and non-Party elements; between the Han nationality and cultural minorities; between revolution and counterrevolution; between right and wrong; and between China and foreign countries. Michael Y. M. Kau and John K. Leung, eds., *The Writings of Mao Zedong*, vol.2, 45; Mao presented this report again in the Supreme State Council with the same ten topics but with a slightly varied content; Bo Yibo, *huigu*, 499-501; Stuart Schram, *The Thought of Mao Zedong* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 104, in which fn.18 provides a very good explanation about the difference between the original version and the official published version of Mao’s speech.

<sup>46</sup> The record of Mao’s speech during the meeting of the heads of the delegations attending the second session of the Eighth Congress, 18 May, 1958, quoted in *Mao zhuan*, 482-483.

far as the handling of the relationships between heavy industry and light industry and between industry and agriculture is concerned, we have not committed any mistakes of principle.”<sup>47</sup> It seems likely the Chairman acceded to requests to give more weight to the areas of light industry and agriculture on account, first of all, of his awareness of the Party’s lopsided economic planning, which had resulted in falls in households’ standards of living, comparable to those suffered in the Soviet Union and other European Communist nations in the immediate aftermath of the transition to socialism (Mao tended to put to one side the economic factors involved in the Eastern bloc crises during 1953).<sup>48</sup> Possibly encouraged by Mao’s emphasis on a reconsideration of the Stalinist model of development, and at the same time feeling the pressure of funding and resource shortage in achieving industrialization, the CCP’s top economic officials reported to the Chairman an imbalance between capital investment in heavy and light industry, flowing from an unthinking imitation of the Stalin’s economic formula to the Chairman, further seeking to prevail on the center in directing funds away from heavy-duty industrial plants. Mao’s officials cited the examples of Hungary and Czechoslovakia, where the governments’ excessive investment in heavy industry at the expense of consumption and agriculture precipitated the countries’ economic collapse and a sharp decline in people’s standards of living.<sup>49</sup> The Chairman was brought to admit that in order to maximize the contribution of individual producers and peasants, policy had to be tailored to secure their well-being; after all, “some socialist countries may have made mistakes on this issue.”<sup>50</sup> More importantly, Mao was informed by the “Thirty Four Ministries and Commissions’ reports” that “the result [of growth in light industry and agriculture] will be even more and better growth in heavy industry.” Still, Mao reaffirmed that “even with these [premises that more weight be given to light industry and agriculture] we are now proposing, the emphasis in investment remains on heavy industry.”<sup>51</sup> In essence, therefore, the scope and essence of changes called

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<sup>47</sup> Mao Zedong, “On the Ten Major Relationships” (April 25, 1956), Michael Y. M. Kau and John K. Leung, eds., *The Writings of Mao Zedong*, 46; Mao Zedong, *Jianguo yilai Mao Zedong wengao* [Mao Zedong’s Manuscripts since the Founding of the People’s Republic of China, *JMW* thereafter] vol.6 (Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian, 1992), 83.

<sup>48</sup> For Mao’s response and handling of information flow during the Eastern bloc crises and Malenkov’s New Course policy, see Li Huayu, *Mao and the Economic Stalinization of China*, 42-43.

<sup>49</sup> Bo Yibo, *huigu*, 490-491.

<sup>50</sup> Mao’s views expressed on his understanding of the benefits of individual labourers and peasants had to be taken care of; see “On the Ten Major Relationships”, Michael Y. M. Kau and John K. Leung, eds., *The Writings of Mao Zedong*, 50-52.

<sup>51</sup> Chairman Mao was inspired by one point in the ministry reports, which said that “within a single year, the capital

for by Mao in the Soviet economic structure—that is, the relative proportion of heavy and light industries—were not as significant as they might have been. The proposals left intact the basic presuppositions of Stalinist model.<sup>52</sup>

Indeed, it was the decentralization of economic management and administrative power to lower-level party committees that most fully demonstrated Mao's intention of replacing the Soviet hierarchical system with one with "Chinese characteristic". This reform, based on a distinctively Maoist pattern of accelerating economic transformation and development by applying mass mobilization techniques, would become the keystone of Chinese assertions of ideological originality in pushing the Great Leap Forward in 1958.<sup>53</sup> In Mao's understanding, the current "[system of] discipline" that "has come mostly from the Soviet Union" would be "fetter[] the people" if "the discipline is too strict." The Chairman therefore wanted to change the system by delegating certain powers to lower levels so as to "enable the various localities to be creative, spirited, and full of vigour".<sup>54</sup> By giving more decision-making power to lower-level authorities, whom the Chairman found were more enthusiastic and willing to push for a rapid socialization than those at the top, he envisaged a new and possibly unprecedented surge in national construction.<sup>55</sup>

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outlay on a newly established textile factory with 80 thousand spindles can be recouped". Mao then supported the idea of developing light industries since "light industries accumulate funds for state construction, which is very important. so that [we] should develop them as long as we can." *Mao zhuan*, 476. It is true that Mao also mentioned the development of light industry and agriculture as a means of meeting the people's daily needs, but according to what we know about Mao, he cared about these sectors chiefly for what they could contribute to heavy industry. As China moved towards the 1958 Great Leap Forward, the Chairman had already decided to pay any price, including failing to satisfy people's daily needs, for speedier development. Mao rationalized that problems of the shortage of goods and daily necessities would disappear as soon as China was fully industrialized. Mao Zedong, "On the Ten Major Relationships" (April 25, 1956), Michael Y. M. Kau and John K. Leung, eds., *The Writings of Mao Zedong*, vol.2, 43-47; *JMW*, vol.6, 82-109.

<sup>52</sup> For a discussion on the important links between decentralization and the development of small and medium-scale industry (as a result of the Chinese leadership's efforts to modify the Soviet-model) in relation to the Great Leap, see Frederick C. Teiwes and Warren Sun, *China's Road to Disaster*, 54-59. The exaggerated expectations produced by the rapid development of agricultural cooperatives in the summer and fall of 1955, as well as in the atmosphere created by the sharp attacks on rightist conservatism, had fueled the enthusiasm of both central ministries and local cadres that more rapid growth was possible. The story of decentralization was that local officials complained to Mao that their hands were being held from the center, ultimately binding them hand and foot to Mao's personal dictates.

<sup>53</sup> Frederick Teiwes in fact argues that "various policies which became important features of the Great Leap were evolving over the entire period as Chinese leaders began self-consciously to modify the Soviet model." See Teiwes and Sun, *China's Road to Disaster*, 53-82.

<sup>54</sup> Mao Zedong, "Talk at an Enlarged Meeting of the Politburo" (April 1956), Michael Y. M. Kau and John K. Leung, eds., *The Writings of Mao Zedong*, vol.2, 65-70.

<sup>55</sup> Zhou conveyed the spirit of Mao's Ten Great Relationships speech in a State Council meeting held in June. "The central point made by Chairman Mao's speech is to mobilize every possible element to contribute to the construction

This was a fundamentally different type of “decentralization” from the one proposed by the industrial ministers during the “Thirty Four Ministries and Commissions’ reports”. In fact, in the process of delivering their communiqué, officials of the State Council’s Fifth Office, which was responsible for finance, had raised the issue of handing over managerial responsibilities from enterprises’ party secretaries of their on-site managers, a central demand put by provincial, municipal and other key local enterprises and factories in their reports. The central cadres’ responded by proposing a “*Yizhangzhi*” system (of placing economic-managerial responsibility solely on factory and enterprise directors) for these units.<sup>56</sup> Mao repeatedly expressed his disagreement with the recommendation of a “*Yizhangzhi*” mode of management as suggested by his underlings, drawing attention to the properly directional role of the Party and the need for Party leadership: “No matter under what situation, Party’s collective leadership is a principle that can not be abolished. If enterprises were allowed to be special cases, then the Party’s collective leadership would be incomplete.”<sup>57</sup> Mao was only finally interested in forms of decentralization that mobilized the country without entailing, on his part, any sacrifice in leadership or personal potency.

No matter how superficial or pragmatic Mao’s flexibility in considering non-Stalinist economic options, the fact that signed off adjustments to his more hardline radical economic policies pushed Zhou and other chief economic policy makers to take explicit measures to curb the desire for a boost in national construction, which had placed significant pressure on the central planners several months after the launch of a “small leap” in late 1955.<sup>58</sup> At the same time,

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of a socialist state”, Zhou therefore told his fellow colleagues that “with this premise, power decentralization to the localities is adopted for the purpose of encouraging the local cadres’ and that of the broad range of masses’ enthusiasm for socialist construction”. “Don’t worry about [this type of] separation of power. Appropriate decentralization of authority to the localities would just lead to a better centralization of power at the top.” ZNP, vol.1, 591-592. Also see Teiwes and Sun, *China’s Road to Disaster*, 22.

<sup>56</sup> Bo Yibo, *huigu*, 494-495.

<sup>57</sup> *Mao zhuan*, 472.

<sup>58</sup> On April 10, 1956, Zhou summoned a State Council standing session to discuss “the supplementary report on the 1956 arrangement for capital construction planning and on the demand for increasing investment to some extent in capital construction”. It was during this session that Zhou, Chen Yun and other top economic leaders discerned the serious imbalance between the demands of capital construction planning and materials supply. In order to prevent the situation from worsening, on the one hand, they repeatedly emphasized the importance of balance, especially in materials, among the top ministers; on the other, they took specific measures to reduce the existing pressure caused by the imbalance of demand and supply. See ZNP, 563-565; Liu Wusheng, “Zhou Enlai yu maojin, fanmaojin,

food and capital shortages caused by excessive capital construction investment started to come to light from early April. With the Chairman beginning to admit that a short-term rebalancing in development was needed, in a State Council Plenary Session held on May 11, 1956 with provincial leaders present, Zhou declared that "the opposition between conservatism and rightism has been going on for eight to nine months since last August and it shouldn't go on any longer." Further, Zhou's drafted report on "the final accounting of 1955 revenue and expenditure and 1956 budget" warned against the "anti-rash advancement tendencies" at the same time as "opposing conservatism", formally establishing a guideline of opposing both right and "left" deviations with an apparent emphasis on the latter.<sup>59</sup> Quite contrary to the "factional politics" account of the formation of two distinct policy blocs in the centre by the spring of 1956, one "anti-conservative" led by Chairman Mao, and one cautioning against recklessness led by Premier Zhou, Chen Yun and other important economists, no one in the center in this period actually revised any policy against Chairman Mao's will. Understanding the retreat from small leap as a temporary adjustment before again harnessing all national resources to sweeping industrialization, Mao demonstrated enough patience in this period to endorse and even support, however vaguely, his top colleagues' moderate efforts as long as his basic principle and policy authority were not impugned.<sup>60</sup> All these innovations and reassessments in the first half of 1956 made possible the adjustment of the former Anti-Rightist theme of the Eighth National Congress set up by the Chairman in late 1955.

Outside the economic sphere, one finds further evidence of the Chairman's determination to reform the Stalinist formulae of political leadership and governance. In political practice, it was on the question of adjusting the party's relationship with various groups of people within a newly established socialist state that Mao stressed the necessity of learning lessons from the Stalinist abuses during the 1930s, as denounced by the leaders inside Kremlin during the CPSU Twentieth Congress. One very important group of people in question was the non-party

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fanfanmaojin" [Zhou Enlai and Rash-advancement, Anti-rash Advancement and Opposing Anti-rash Advancement], *Zongheng*, issue 5(2004): 6-7.

<sup>59</sup> ZNP, vol.1, 575; Liu Wusheng, *ibid*.

<sup>60</sup> See Bo Yibo, *huigu*, 553, 555-556; Jin Chongji et al., *Liu Shaoqi zhuan*, 790; *Mao zhuan*, 480-482; Teiwes with Sun, *China's Road to Disaster*, 33-34.

people, by whom the Chairman actually meant members of the “democratic parties” and “independent democrats” without party affiliations, whose proper position and role in a changed political situation rose to the top of the Chinese Chairman’s agenda after the Hungarian revolt in 1956.<sup>61</sup> In a meeting with Iudin on 2 May, 1956, Mao stated outright that “the severest mistake” of Stalin was his failure to “make any approaches to Socialist Democratic Party (the SDP, non-Communist minority party in the USSR), which allowed the gulf between the CPSU and the SDP to get deeper,” a blunder from which the Chinese Communists had to learn lessons and find their own solution.<sup>62</sup> In defining a new relationship between the CCP and the non-Communist parties, Chairman Mao therefore advocated in his Ten Relationships speech a more democratic form of accommodation posited in his famous political slogan of “long-term coexistence and mutual supervision”, a formulation that could be interpreted by the audience as a willingness to permit the collective orchestration of policy within the Party, with independent contributors being restrained by an ongoing, benign system of checks and balances.<sup>63</sup> A notable political initiative came out of this newly defined insider-outsider relationship in the form of the Communist Center’s plan to relax its control of several non-Communist party organs, appointing professional pressmen in the democratic parties to take up roles as managers and editors. Although this plan was not put into practice till early 1957, it stimulated many party-outsiders’ enthusiasm for more active political participation via the press.<sup>64</sup> The Chairman in his speech, however, left the enhancement of non-Communist parties’ political position as implied in his “mutual supervision” slogan undefined, absolutely drawing the line at spelling out the terms of the institutionalization of this

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<sup>61</sup> The groups of people in question included national minorities, counterrevolutionaries and non-party members. The democratic parties were non-Communist parties, whose membership was identified by the CCP as belonging to the “national bourgeoisie” class exerting relatively strong influence among the intelligentsia, many of whom had sided with the CCP in forming the multi-class and multi-party government in 1949. See Roderick MacFarquhar, *The Origins of the Cultural Revolution 1 Contradictions among the People 1956-1957* (New York: Columbia University Press; London: Oxford University Press, 1974) 48-49.

<sup>62</sup> Mao’s meeting with Iudin, 2 May, 1956, quoted from Shen Zhihua, “Sugong ershida feisidalinhua jiqi dui zhongsu guanxi de yingxiang”, 56; the Chairman in fact already began to think about making efforts to repair the relationship between the Chinese Communists and the non-Communist minority parties in late April, several days before his formal speech on Ten Great Relationships was delivered. See *Mao zhuan*, 481.

<sup>63</sup> Michael Y. M. Kau and John K. Leung, eds., *The Writings of Mao Zedong*, vol.2, pp54-55.

<sup>64</sup> From June 1956, the CCP Propaganda Department began to discuss the center’s plan to resume non-Communist parties’ ownership of their three organs, namely *Da Gong*, *Guangming Ribao* and *Wenhuibao*, with the democratic party leadership. For leading democrats’ responses to this CCP political initiative, see Zhang Yihe, *Wangshi bingbu ruyan* [The past is not like smoke] (Beijing: Renmin, 2004), 32-37.

new relationship. This prompted growing uncertainty not only among the non-communists but also among the cadres after the Hungarian revolution, an issue that will be discussed in detail in chapter 4.

In contrast with their deliberate imitation of Soviet methods throughout the first half of the 1950s in the areas of education, natural science, literature, and other areas of social and cultural development, from the mid-1950s Mao and his party took great pains to encourage debate, criticism, and a variety of views in both academic and cultural circles to challenge orthodox Stalinism, calling on the intelligentsia to lend their skills to the evolution of a Chinese socialism.<sup>65</sup> Although party policy towards the intellectuals had begun to soften from the last months of 1955 once it seemed that the socialists had carried the country, this trend gained further impetus from Khrushchev's exposure of Stalin's faults, seeing that Mao was keen to learn from Stalin's mistakes and to modify Soviet models in achieving a distinctive theoretical synthesis.<sup>66</sup> Mao shared Stalin's dogmatism, though, on the inevitable question of the persistence of class identities and the threat of contradictions or conflicts between different classes even within a reformulated and largely egalitarian socialist polity. This threat, however, was not to be seen off by oppression or the stifling of dissent, but by its qualified encouragement among intellectuals and science workers, as expressed in the maxim "Let a hundred flowers bloom, let a hundred schools contend".<sup>67</sup>

These two interconnected policies of relaxation (since most of the democratic people were well educated) in fact represented Chairman Mao's effort to replace highly suppressive Stalinist methods of leadership with revised techniques for forming "united front", mild "thought remoulding" and the advancing of a "mass line" based on his review of the peculiarly Chinese

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<sup>65</sup> See Lu Dingyi, *Lu Dingyi wenji* [Selected Works of Lu Dingyi] (Beijing: Renmin, 1992), 843, 494-497; for Mao's initiation and promotion of the Hundred Flower policy, see *Mao zhuan*, 485-491; see further Roderick MacFarquhar, *The Origin of the Cultural Revolution*, vol. 1, 51-56.

<sup>66</sup> "On the Historical Experience of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat", an editorial in the People's Daily, April 5, 1956, states: "Now a few of our research workers still retain their doctrinaire habits, put their minds in a noose, lack the ability to think independently, lack the creative spirit, and in certain respects are influenced by the cult of Stalin." For the details of three steps in processing the relaxation policy, see Teiwes with Sun, *Politics and Purges in China*, 171-173.

<sup>67</sup> For the formation and development of Hundred Flower policy, see *Mao zhuan*, 485-492; see also see Merle Goldman, "Mao's Obsession with the Political Role of Literature and the Intellectuals", in MacFarquhar, Roderick, Timothy Cheek, and Eugene Wu, eds., *The Secret Speeches of Chairman Mao*, 43.

experience of the socialist revolution before 1949. As clearly stated in the early April editorial "On the Historical Experience of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat", the Stalinist formula of governing in the 1930s, namely that "the main blow should be so directed as to isolate the middle-of-the-road social and political forces of the time", was now concluded as inapplicable to Chinese situation.<sup>68</sup> Except for the very function of distinguishing Mao's 'correct line' from that of Stalinist error during the revolutionary years, the CCP's historical review of the mistakes made by other Communist leaders tended to diagnose their faults as stemming from their slavish adherence to orders from Moscow during the 1920s to 1930s; by way of contrast, the Maoist experience of forming political alliances with the national bourgeoisie, democratic parties and unaffiliated democrats in opposition to the GMD regime indicated the Chairman's willingness to take a new approach to "developing the progressive forces, winning over the middle-of-the-roaders, and isolating the die-hards" within China.<sup>69</sup> As the Chairman perceived a fundamental change in the political situation after years of class struggle, with communism's enemies largely sidelined or obliterated, his highest priority in this context came to be wooing the moderate bourgeois nationalists. It seems that, in Mao's understanding, Stalin had badly erred in the 1930s in cleaving to traditional hard-line policies towards suspect or wavering groups, failing to recognize that social unity and political harmony were more needed than ever in a new historical phase in which a proletariat dictatorship and collective economy were already founded and large-scale class struggle won. In pointing out that "subjectivism and one-sidedness" in Stalin's thinking had caused his deviation "from objective reality and from the masses", Mao decided that he had to be rational and flexible enough to modify the Chinese Communist "working style" and unite the majority of social forces to enhance domestic economic development, thus modernizing both his nation's economy and the theoretical exempla of international Communism.<sup>70</sup>

Knowing Mao's determination to modify the Stalinist pattern of ideological control, one is

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<sup>68</sup> Document 7, "On the Historical Experience of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat", *Communist China 1955-1959: Policy Documents with Analysis* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1962), 149-150.

<sup>69</sup> This editorial states: "Experience, gained through practice, proved that this policy of the Communist Party suited the circumstances of China's revolution and was correct." See *Communist China 1955-1959*, 149-150.

<sup>70</sup> *Communist China 1955-1959*, 149-150.



strongly inclined to agree with Benjamin Schwartz that the Chairman to some extent drew inspirations from Hu Feng's "anti-party and anti-people" views expressed in the latter's report on the negative sides of solely relying on "crude ideology" in propaganda and in developing the fields of culture, science and technology.<sup>71</sup> Within a changed context in the early months of 1956, when Mao's confidence over his personal stewardship of China's path to "socialist construction" was overflowing, it became much easier for the Chairman to accept Hu's opinions about the inefficiency of party indoctrination and the consequent lack of intellectual creativity in society, a shortfall Mao could simply blame on the limitations of the Stalinist model and inflexibility of the party bureaucrats. Therefore, in the "On the Historical Experience" article, the Chairman rebuked many of "our propagandists" for their reliance "only on administrative power and the prestige of the Party to instill into the minds of the masses Marxism-Leninism in the form of dogma" within a situation in which general ideological unity had already been achieved at home. Furthermore, Mao pointed out that "not a few of *our* research workers" lacked the ability to think independently, being short of creative spirit and "in certain respects...influenced by the cult of Stalin." Dominant at home as the architect of Socialization, the Chairman Mao felt at ease in reorienting his position from one critical of Hu Feng to one assimilating Hu's views in the context of a Maoist revision of Stalinism. But the sharp contrast between these new policies and the old would soon lead to political and ideological confusion in China after the outbreak of October events in socialist Eastern Europe; further, the changed situation at home in the aftermath of Hungarian crisis would place in doubt the direction of the Maoist reform efforts, something we shall analyze further in the final chapter.

Nevertheless, throughout the period from early 1956 to the CCP's Eighth National Congress convened in September to October 1956, Mao demonstrated a genuine degree of ideological flexibility in tweaking the Stalinist model by consulting colleagues' opinions and absorbing ideas from hererodox sources. Mao's being able to subscribe to theoretical re-assessment of Stalinism allowed him, first of all, to broach the policy of "opposing rush advancement" despite his constant desire for a rapid economic development. The transition to collectivity and industrialization in the second FYP was thus envisaged as being part of a tolerant and

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<sup>71</sup> Schwartz, "Thought on the Late Mao", in *The Secret Speeches of Chairman Mao*, 26-27.

naturally evolving process. Furthermore, the more accommodating posture adopted by the center toward various non-Communist intellectual elites and the mood of Puritanism in Congress against the excesses of individuals, together with Mao's avowals that the Party was open to reform, all delivered a clear message promising change and innovation. Although the Chairman evidently chose to retain some aspects of Stalinism he thought useful, such as an insistence on the centrality of heavy-industrial development to modernization, his priority seems to have been to strike out for a distinctive Chinese socialism aiming to surpass the achievements of Stalin and his successors. By this time, Mao was styling his new course of development as a form of Socialism of genuine global significance and distinctiveness as it played out against the background of the Cold War.

In contrast with their deliberate imitation of Soviet methods throughout the first half of the 1950s in the areas of education, natural science, literature, and other areas of social and cultural development, from the mid-50s Mao and his party took great pains to encourage debate, criticism, and a variety of views in both academic and cultural circles to challenge orthodox Stalinism, calling on the intelligentsia to lend their skills to the evolution of a Chinese socialism.<sup>72</sup> Although party policy towards the intellectuals had begun to soften from the last months of 1955 once it seemed that the socialists had carried the country, this trend gained further impetus from Khrushchev's exposure of Stalin's faults, seeing that Mao was keen to learn from Stalin's mistakes and to modify Soviet models in achieving a distinctive theoretical synthesis.<sup>73</sup> Mao shared Stalin's dogmatism, though, on the inevitable question of the persistence of class identities and the threat of contradictions or conflicts between different classes even within a reformulated and largely egalitarian socialist polity. This threat, however, was not to be seen off by oppression or the stifling of dissent, but by its qualified encouragement among intellectuals and science workers, as expressed in the maxim "Let a hundred flowers bloom, let a hundred schools contend".<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> See Lu Dingyi, *Lu Dingyi wenji*, 843, 494-497; for Mao's initiation and promotion of the Hundred Flower policy, see MacFarquhar, *The Origin of the Cultural Revolution*, vol.1, 51-56.

<sup>73</sup> See ft. 205.

<sup>74</sup> See ft. 206.

These two interconnected policies of relaxation (since most of the democratic people were well educated) in fact represented Chairman Mao's effort to replace highly suppressive Stalinist methods of leadership with revised techniques for forming "united front", mild "thought remoulding" and the advancing of a "mass line" based on his review of the peculiarly Chinese experience of the socialist revolution before 1949. As clearly stated in the early April editorial "On the Historical Experience of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat", the Stalinist formula of governing in the 1930s, namely that "the main blow should be so directed as to isolate the middle-of-the-road social and political forces of the time", was now concluded as inapplicable to Chinese situation. Except for the very function of distinguishing Mao's 'correct line' from that of Stalinist error during the revolutionary years, the CCP's historical review of the mistakes made by other Communist leaders tended to diagnose their faults as stemming from their slavish adherence to orders from Moscow during the 1920s to 1930s; by way of contrast, the Maoist experience of forming political alliances with the national bourgeoisie, democratic parties and unaffiliated democrats in opposition to the GMD regime indicated the Chairman's willingness to take a new approach to "developing the progressive forces, winning over the middle-of-the-roads, and isolating the die-hards" within China. As the Chairman perceived a fundamental change in the political situation after years of class struggle, with communism's enemies largely sidelined or obliterated, his highest priority in this context came to be wooing the moderate bourgeois nationalists. It seems that, in Mao's understanding, Stalin had badly erred in the 1930s in cleaving to traditional hard-line policies towards suspect or wavering groups, failing to recognize that social unity and political harmony were more needed than ever in a new historical phase in which a proletariat dictatorship and collective economy were already founded and large-scale class struggle won. In pointing out that "subjectivism and one-sidedness" in Stalin's thinking had caused his deviation "from objective reality and from the masses", Mao decided that he had to be rational and flexible enough to modify the Chinese Communist "working style" and unite the majority of social forces to enhance domestic economic development, thus modernizing both his nation's economy and the theoretical exempla of international Communism.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> "On the Historical Experience of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat", *Communist China 1955-1959*, 149-150.

## ***Changes in China's policy towards Eastern Europe after the 20<sup>th</sup> Congress***

The Chairman's reservations about Khrushchev's idea of a "peaceful transition" notwithstanding, to a great extent, Mao had from the outset subscribed to the Soviet re-assessment of Stalin. It is no overstatement to suggest that Mao had expected, some day, that the legend of Stalin would be shattered.<sup>76</sup> It was thus an optimal outcome for Mao that the Kremlin had "lifted the lid" on its own initiative. Mao himself saw an opportunity in the speech, since it left China freer to follow its own path within the international socialist camp. Nevertheless, Khrushchev's speech on Stalin astounded Mao and his colleagues in the vigour of its condemnation. Within the top of the CCP, many officials were concerned that the fortunes of Communism could suffer worldwide as a result of Khrushchev's denunciation. The openness of Khrushchev's condemnation of Stalin "made a mess" in the sense of provoking serious ideological confusion within the Communist camp.<sup>77</sup> The Chairman sensed that it was time for the Chinese regime to voice its independent opinions not only on the problem of Stalin but also on a wider range of issues, such as a proper re-evaluation of Chinese revolution history and socio-economic reconstruction. From 12 March up to early April, Mao shifted much of his focus from domestic briefings to the Soviet problem, studying and talking throughout the Twentieth Congress in group meetings and with various individuals.<sup>78</sup> On the upshot of these meetings was Mao's suggestion on 24 March of publishing an article presenting the CCP's own balanced view of Stalin implicitly rectifying the mistakes of the CPSU Twentieth Congress statements and Khrushchev's secret report.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Mao had reservations over Khrushchev's claim that under certain favourable circumstances, socialism might be established by nonviolent parliamentary devices, a conjunction abbreviated under the phrase "peaceful transition" by the Chinese. This "peaceful transition" notion jarred with the Maoist theory and practice of socialist transition, which held that the capitalist class and all its devices and thoughts had to be progressively and decisively crushed so as to pave the way for a new structure. But as Shen Zhihua concludes, in his work on the period, Mao's disagreement with the Kremlin's "peaceful transition" line did not become a major issue at this time, see Shen Zhihua, "Sugong ershida feisidalinhua jiqi dui zhongsu guanxi de yingxiang", 58.

<sup>77</sup> Wu Lengxi, *Yi Maozhuxi wo qinshen jingli de ruogan zhongda lishi shijian de pianduan* [Recollecting Chairman Mao, some parts of the significant historical events I experienced, *Yi Maozhuxi* thereafter] (Beijing: Xinhua, 1995), 4-5.

<sup>78</sup> *Mao zhuan*, 495-496; Wu Lengxi, *Yi Maozhuxi*, 5-7; Chen Jian and Yang Kuisong, "Chinese Politics and the Collapse of the Sino-Soviet Alliance", in Westad ed. *Brothers in Arms*, 260-261.

<sup>79</sup> Since there were no written records of the series meetings held from 18 March to 23 March retained, Wu's recollection of the meetings was the only material serviceable in this connection; see Wu Lengxi, *Yi Maozhuxi*, 7; *Mao Zhuan*, 497.

In the meantime, far from restricting fallout from the Stalin denunciation in China, the Chinese leadership was (perhaps studiously) careless in disseminating the upshot of the CPSU Twentieth Congress and Khrushchev's "secret" words at home. *RMRB* quickly reprinted the CPSU Twentieth Congress documents, including the Mikoyan speech made on February 16 in exposing Stalin's purges during the 1930s. Having obtained notes of Khrushchev's speech, the center had it read to the party members, making the text into pamphlets and delivering it with *Cankao Ziliao* (Reference Materials), a collection of party documents designated for cadres' political studies. At the same time, *Cankao Xiaoxi*, a Xinhua newspaper specializing in international developments available to party cadres, covered a large quantity of foreign responses and reactions to the CPSU Twentieth Congress, airing problems in assessing Stalin current during this period. The foreign language book store in Beijing, well known for its large-scale collection of foreign books and materials, even offered a number of the American Communist journal, "the Worker's Daily", in which a complete version of the original article of Khrushchev's secret report was published. All the papers soon sold out, being passed among college students in Beijing. After years of indoctrination and mass mobilization in support of roughly Soviet models, it is reasonable to assume that the people from various groups in the Middle Kingdom would be taken aback by any criticism of the rationality and efficiency of the Stalinist political project in any form, not least because of its relevance to all forms of socialist transformation and planning at home. Not surprisingly, therefore, the shattering effect of these de-Stalinization materials was so strong that provincial cadres, intellectuals, non-Communist party members and businessmen were said to be "surprised and confused" by the sudden developments, with some even questioning the correctness of translation of these articles.<sup>80</sup>

In light of the Chinese Chairman's emergent idea in this period that rigid approximation to Stalinist models was becoming an impediment to the achievement of Chinese domestic and external objectives, and his positive reception of Soviet efforts to "deconsecrate" Stalin, the CCP's "careless" handling of the congress speeches becomes very meaningful. It has to be remembered that in early 1954, Mao and his top colleagues still took every care to limit

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<sup>80</sup> Shen Zhihua, "Sugong ershida feisidalinhua jiqi dui zhongsu guanxi de yingxiang", 51-53.

information on the Soviets' changing assessment of Stalin to the center, voicing far greater dissent from the Soviet line in private than they were willing, for the time being, to make broadly public. After all, the domestic socialist transformation, which rested on a reprise of Stalinism, was still supposedly in process, meaning it was best for the party to profess strict adherence to the Soviet experience in general to avoid any ambiguity jeopardizing implementation of the master plan. But when it came to early 1956, particularly after the Soviet critique of Stalinism, Mao was apparently more relaxed in having the Chinese public informed of the Stalin's mistakes, especially now that the issue of seeking innovative means to surpass Soviet socialism was top of his political agenda. All this, however, was only possible because the CPSU Twentieth Congress coincided with the announcement of socialist transformation in China, which encouraged the Chairman to advance more ambitious projects yet. Given Mao's historical record in manipulating popular opinion either by controlling or relaxing the flow of information, it seems therefore plausible that the Chairman arranged the leaking of new developments in the USSR to a wider Chinese audience, in the anticipation that the ideological and political confusion in the CCP would soon settle of its own accord. If not, an authoritative statement of the Chinese view on Stalin could be offered to allay both domestic and international concerns.<sup>81</sup>

Once the first draft of this article was ready, beyond circulating the draft within the Politburo, the Central Party asked Chinese embassies and representative offices to report on local media responses to the Soviet denouncement of Stalin.<sup>82</sup> Separate telegrams were sent to embassies in the Eastern bloc (to Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, Albania and Mongolia), urging embassy staff and Xinhua journalists to send feedback by 3 April, two days before the

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<sup>81</sup> Li Shenzhi interpreted Mao as not implacably opposed to the leaking of the Secret Speech through various channels in his article "Mao zhuxi shi shenme shihou jue ding yinshe chudong de [When did Mao decide to draw a snake out of its hole?]", in Niu Han and Deng Jiuping ed. *Liuyexue: jiyizhong de fanyoupai yundong* [Snow in June: remembering the anti-Rightist Campaign] (Jingjiribao: Beijing, 1998), 117. For an example of Mao's manipulation of public responses via information control in the case of the reassessment of Beria and the East German uprising, see Li Huayu, *Mao and the Economic Stalinization of China*, 41-43. For the central party's notice in demanding local party committees lead party insiders and outsiders study the "On the Historical Experience" editorial one day before its formal publication, see Shen Zhihua "Sugong ershida feisidalinhua jiqi dui zhongsu guanxi de yingxiang", ft.137, 68.

<sup>82</sup> "The Central Party's telegram to Chinese ambassadors and charge d'affaires, requesting them to make reports on the local media's responses to the Soviet denunciation of Stalin during the Twentieth Congress before 3 April, 31 March, 1956", 109-00971-02, p.7, *CFMA*.

publication of the editorial.<sup>83</sup> Through the local media's responses to the Secret Speech, the Chinese leadership possibly wanted to make judgments of various governments' official reactions to the Stalin problem by gauging the tone of their mainstream media editorials. At the same time, information collected by Chinese embassy staff and Xinhua journalists from mainly non-official channels could provide Beijing with a general picture of social and popular responses to the Secret Speech in the camp. With these two types of intelligence, the Central Party could therefore carry out a final revision of its formal announcement based on the investigation of the other socialist states' official stances and an informed sense of the social repercussions of Soviet de-Stalinization. In contrast with the roughness and ambiguity of Khrushchev's secret speech, the Chinese leadership were intent on a comprehensive assessment of Stalin summarizing the historical experience of the dictatorship of the proletariat in the most pellucid theoretical terms. Apparently, the Chinese authors, Mao in particular, had expected to win huge prestige internationally by issuing a more persuasive and clearer statement of Stalin's problems to a wider audience within the Communist camp.

On 5 April, an editorial "On the Historical Experience of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat" came out in *RMRB* with a title annotation specially added by Mao to underline the piece's authority, noting the article was written by *RMRB* staff on the basis of discussions held in an enlarged session of the CCP.<sup>84</sup> The core of this article was an evaluation of Stalin's achievements and mistakes on which Mao himself had expended great editorial effort. Mao insisted on a so-called "seventy-thirty ratio" in balancing Stalin's contributions and faults, obviously eventuating in an affirmative appraisal of Stalin in general. Nonetheless, Mao's specific procedures in framing this seven-three ratio demand further study.<sup>85</sup> In fact, after an opening admission that many mistakes were bound to occur in the process of realizing the proletariat dictatorship, Mao tactically phrased his assessment of Stalin's contribution to

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<sup>83</sup> "The Foreign Ministry and Xinhua News Agency requested the embassies in Albania, Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania and Mongolia to collect information on responses to the CPSU Twentieth Congress by various actors, 31 March, 1956", 109-00971-02, p.6, *CFMA*.

<sup>84</sup> 5 April, 1956, *RMRB*; *Jianguoyilai Mao wengao*, vol.6,59.

<sup>85</sup> It is now possible to read partial of the hidden lines of this article for more information of the sources, and the course of editorial work on this key text was made known nowadays. The meetings held from 18 March to late April left no official records, so Wu Lengxi's memoirs, including *Yi Maozhuxi* and *Shinian luanzhan*, are the major sources to study on the course of editorial work of this article and the Chinese leadership's real intentions. See *Mao zhuan*, 496.

Marxism-Leninism in this way: "The man who showed the Soviet people the way to these achievements was Lenin. In the struggle to carry out Lenin's principles, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, through its vigorous leadership, earned its credit, in which Stalin had an ineffaceable share." Further: "After Lenin's death, Stalin, as the chief leader of the Party and the state, creatively applied and developed Marxism-Leninism."<sup>86</sup> This estimation of Stalin's ideological position in essence did not diverge from the Soviet re-evaluation of Stalin's theoretical contribution, which conceptualised the projection forward of basic Marxist-Leninism into advanced Stalinism. The article also reiterated its statement of the mistakes made by Stalin in the latter part of his career in a way consonant with the Soviet denouncement. In this respect, Mao did agree with Khrushchev's method in destroying Stalin's infallibility.

Nevertheless, the Chairman could not agree with the strictures passed upon the role of a charismatic Communist leader simply on the basis of specific abuses of power carried out by one specific leader, Stalin, in his old age. From Chairman Mao's perspective, it was "utterly wrong to deny the role of individuals, the role of forerunners and leaders" simply because of the personality cult that Stalin had cultivated around himself. Mao concluded that the origin of Stalin's individual cult was a form of subjectivism or one-sidedness, representing a deviation "from objective reality and from the masses". As early as in his famous speech delivered in Yen'an in 1943, Mao's definition of "correct leadership" had formed an integral part of his famous "mass line": "all correct leadership is necessarily from the masses, to the masses". In order to practice this mass line, Mao had persisted in immersing himself in his revolutionary base, traveling nationwide on tours in which he sought to take account of popular views. "When any leader of the Party or the state places himself over and above the Party and the masses ...when he alienates himself from the masses", for Mao, he was bound to make mistakes "even [if he were] so outstanding a personality as Stalin". Mao refused to budge one inch from the orthodox Marxist-Leninist position that leaders play a large role in history, only, as he admitted later, concerning himself with distinguishing "correct" from "incorrect" personal

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<sup>86</sup> "Mao's revisions of and comments on the 'the Historical Experience of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat'", *Jianguoyilai Mao wengao*, Vol.6, 59-67.



cults.<sup>87</sup> However tactical and circumspect Mao's treatment of Stalin's personality cult, his conclusion to some extent parted company with that of Khrushchev: for Khrushchev, Stalin's errors stemmed from his personality and faults incident to human nature, while for Mao they were more a matter of his deviation from objective reality and from the masses. Neither critique fundamentally impugned the Communist system itself insofar as that system depended upon a highly centralized power structure controlled by one party and ultimately one person. Present-day theoretical understandings, both for Western liberalism and within the CCP, have thus advanced upon both the Mao and Khrushchev views.

In engaging with the secret speech, Mao and other Chinese leaders were also concerned to contest what they viewed as improper interference on the part of the Soviet Communist Party in the Chinese Revolution and subsequent Soviet high-handedness towards the Chinese. Notably, Khrushchev's speech contained no references to Stalin's erroneous treatment of China, which the Chinese side certainly interpreted as a serious flaw "in content". Only, it thought, by denouncing Stalin's wrongdoings toward the Chinese Communist revolution could the Chinese party substantially break with Soviet superstition and begin to place more stress on the correctness of a specifically Chinese adaptation of Marxism to China. The integration of the universal truths of theoretical Communism with the actual situation in China, a backward agrarian country, the article claimed, "opened up boundless vistas for the development of Marxism-Leninism."<sup>88</sup> Instead of criticizing Soviet neglect in failing to pick up on Stalin's incorrect treatment of the Chinese revolution, an evidently injudicious course in light of China's strategically "fraternal" relationship with the U.S.S.R., the official article technically underscored the need to sum up the domestic experience of communism in such a way as set its face continuously against dogmatism. Mao himself on several occasions added a review of the CCP's historical mistakes to the article's final draft. The actual purport of this passage was to suggest that the history of the CCP had been one of continuous struggle in trying to take the correct line in the face of "doctrinaires" inside the party and interference from outside. These

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<sup>87</sup> Chen Jian and Yang Kuisong, "Chinese Politics and the Collapse of the Sino-Soviet Alliance", in Westad ed. *Brothers in Arms*, 262; Personal collection of Mao's conversations with foreign delegates "Mao's meeting with Voroshilov" in 1957.

<sup>88</sup> "On the Historical Experience of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat", *Communist China 1955-1959*, 149.

so-called “doctrinarists” indicated “some comrades [who] crudely applied this formula of Stalin’s to China” either directly sponsored by the Soviets or merely enthralled to the Soviet theoretical model.<sup>89</sup>

Another notable aspect of the sanctioned article was Mao’s bold attempt to use the theory of contradiction, whose applicability had previously been restricted to the Chinese experience during the Stalin era, to explain the source of some of the mistakes committed by the leader of a party in any form of socialist society. The basic idea and structure of Mao’s theory of contradiction had already been formulated in his “On Contradiction” in 1937. But while, as a prominent scholar points out, “there [is] to be sure ... substantial continuity in the philosophical core of Mao Zedong’s thought, from 1937 to the early 1960s at least”, Mao initiates a variant here in filling a new bottle with old wine—or rather greatly expanding the scope of his concept of contradiction to apply to the genesis of the socialist state in the broadest terms.<sup>90</sup> Mao’s philosophical generalization of the problems of socialist societies point in several directions. Mao’s basic idea is that, unless particular steps are taken, the leaders of the revolution find themselves in the contradictory position of being alienated from the masses whose interests they supposedly embody; they owe this position merely to their prominence in the party hierarchy. In advancing this diagnosis, the Chinese Communist leaders staked out a new, more confident claim for the superiority of the theoretical pattern of the Chinese Communist movement, which was offered as having certain advantages over those of the other socialist states, including the Soviet Union and, more heavily, the Eastern bloc states. Mao’s growing confidence in this theoretical framework also encouraged him to adapt the theory into forms of political and economic management in attempting to develop a “Chinese model of socialization”, as we will discuss later.

The aftermath of the Twentieth Party Congress subjected the Communist camp to its severest test. Khrushchev’s Secret Speech had different effects on the Soviet Eastern bloc to those it had on Mao’s Communist China. For some of the Eastern European states, such as Hungary

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<sup>89</sup> “On the Historical Experience of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat”, *ibid.*

<sup>90</sup> Stuart Schram, *The Thought of Mao Zedong*, 93.

and Poland, the dissipation of Stalinism occurred at an unfortunate phase in their development – in the immediate aftermath of the most difficult stage of industrialization and collectivization but before new social institutions could take root, meaning that these states' capacity to resist redoubled external and internal pressures came under extreme pressure. Objectively speaking, China was in a stage of socialist transition similar to that of Eastern Europe. Yet, unlike all the other Soviet bloc states, Mao's China enjoyed a considerable degree of ideological and political autonomy from the Soviet Union. In consequence the Chinese leadership did not feel personally threatened by the Stalin episode. The Chairman's emphasis on a socialism with distinctively Chinese characteristics allowed China to escape being tarred with the brush of Stalinism in the fallout from Stalin's death; furthermore, Mao saw the Soviet re-assessment of Stalin and consequent confusion in the Communist camp as a good opportunity for the Chinese Communists to introduce their theoretical articulations to the broader international communist community. Mao's efforts in re-evaluating Stalin's mistakes in the CCP's own language should be viewed as integral parts of a Chinese initiative to take a more leading role, however limited in the ideological and theoretical realm, in the Communist international.<sup>91</sup> Viewing China as an independent and more liberal Communist power within the camp, the East European regimes began to show great interest in China's experience, turning to Beijing for pointers of what they could hope for with the development of local forms of socialism.

### ***China and the Crises in Poland and Hungary to late October 1956***

The Chinese official response followed on from Khrushchev's Secret Speech after an interval of one and a half months. During this period, Khrushchev's policy of undercutting the Stalinist myth, without, however, promoting a clearly defined substitute, had provoked sharp doubts amongst the Eastern Bloc leadership as to their own security and ideological legitimacy. The very ambiguity of the Kremlin's policy towards the Eastern bloc, meanwhile, encouraged a greater scope of independent action and interpretation on their leaders' part, with the result that countries found themselves adopting more diverse perspectives threatening the unity of

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<sup>91</sup> Of course, Mao at this stage still thought it would be wise to camouflage his strong ambitions skillfully, see Wu Lengxi, *Yi Maozhuxi*, 7.

the socialist camp.

At the same time, Yugoslavia was restored to the position of an active agent in the politics of the camp through Khrushchev's efforts in rejecting Stalin's earlier conception of the Yugoslav's role inside the camp and the cooperation of Khrushchev and Tito in the wake of the Twentieth Congress. In order to eliminate any remaining obstacles to Khrushchev's plan of repairing the Soviet bloc into the unity it had before 1948, the Soviet leadership had placed common party bonds between the Yugoslav and other Eastern European socialist states above practical differences in conducting collectivist policies. The failure to settle a number of outstanding historical and diplomatic issues with Yugoslavia threatened many Eastern European Communist regimes, especially as it appeared that the Secret Speech and history in general had vindicated the Yugoslav stance of 1948, which had set its face against the revival of hardcore Stalinism and Eastern Europe, indeed conscripting many de-Stalinizing elements within its own party platform. The East European leaders, essentially still Stalinist, found themselves between a rock and a hard place with a de-Stalinizing Communist movement on the one side and a fractious, dissatisfied citizenship on the other.<sup>92</sup>

Set alongside that of the U.S.S.R. and affiliated European states like Yugoslavia, the Chinese impact on the region was still limited in the period following the Twentieth Congress. Nevertheless, the Chinese Party's detached position amongst the People's Democracies, together with its legendary history of nation-state liberation and autochthonous socialist construction, undoubtedly added luster to the Chinese Communist perspective on international Communist problems, which gained in authority and the appearance of neutrality after Stalin's death. China's successful domestic consolidation and its "victory" in the Korean War further boosted its international prestige. Further, as noted before, Communist China's foreign relations to the Eastern bloc states had broadened after 1954, with the effect of promoting China as a plausible candidate as a socialist role model following the discrediting of

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<sup>92</sup> For Soviet-Yugoslav rapprochement as a result of Khrushchev's efforts to bring Tito and his country back to Soviet bloc after the Soviet leader gradually ascended to the top since 1954 and the Eastern bloc complicated responses to the rehabilitation of Yugoslav in the second half of the 1950s, see Brzezinski, *The Soviet Bloc*, 182-190, 193-203.

Stalinism.<sup>93</sup>

In this troubled context, the People's Democracies were understandably interested to know the formal Chinese response to Khrushchev's speech. The Western media had even ascribed the Chinese reluctance to declare their hand after the Twentieth Congress to their inability to fall in line with the new Soviet position.<sup>94</sup> The Hungarians, ranging from top party leaders to partisans in lower echelons, were reportedly very concerned about the length of the Chinese silence over the Congress.<sup>95</sup> According to Chinese journalist reports from Warsaw, the Poles also took the Chinese statement seriously. In arguing issues of leaders' personality cults and of peaceful democratic-to-socialist transition, many Poles reportedly said that they would hold fire on their opinions until Mao Zedong, the most authoritative world leader on these matters, had delivered his verdict.<sup>96</sup>

Eventually, the Chinese programmatic statement on the Twentieth Congress and Stalin's reassessment came out in April, with an immediate effect on the Communist commonwealth. The Chinese statement was categorical in stressing three factors vis-à-vis Stalin: the issue of the dictatorship of the proletariat, the diagnosis of Stalinist errors and the Chinese's own experience of anti-dogmatism. Had the Poles and the Hungarians been able to read in between the lines of the Chinese statement, they would have been able to see that all three lines of argument bore closely on the question of the legitimacy of the Stalinist regimes, so challenged recently in Hungary and Poland, and also sought to bolster the prestige of the Chinese model in the socialist camp. The Polish and Hungarian reformists, however, instead understood the Chinese communiqué as urging a tacit form of encouragement by virtue of the relative autonomy of the Chinese in the camp and the stress on the indigeneity of their socialism. These factors deepened their impression that the Chinese actually supported their

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<sup>93</sup> For China's growing connection with the Eastern bloc states, see chapter 1, section 2.

<sup>94</sup> "Hungarian Journalist quarters at Beijing on the situation after the Twentieth Congress, 9 April, 1956", 109-01040-01, pp.17-18, *CFMA*.

<sup>95</sup> "Hao Deqing's talk with the Hungarian Foreign Minister on the situation in Hungary after the Twentieth Congress", 109-01040-01, p.16, *CFMA*.

<sup>96</sup> *Neica*, issue.1817, (5 March, 1956): 17-19; (28 June, 1956): 719-720.

de-Stalinist aspirations.<sup>97</sup>

In Hungary, Chinese influence was reflected in the ideology of emerging Hungarian nationalist communists, particularly in Imre Nagy's admiration of China's Five Principles of coexistence. After his removal of 1955, Nagy had grown increasingly certain that the five Bandung principles of international affairs—national independence, sovereignty, equality, noninterference, and self-determination—as promoted by the Chinese, should apply equally to the Soviet camp.<sup>98</sup> It is likely that Nagy misinterpreted the Chinese articles as also tending to this interpretation. Nagy sensed the coming political storm in his forced demission from the party, penning a lengthy thesis titled "In Defense of the New Course" in late 1955 and early 1956. The paper, later published as a book in the West under the title *On Communism*, addressed four major issues: industry, agriculture, political terror, and foreign policy. In the foreign policy chapter, Nagy adopted China's Five Principles of coexistence as the pillars of his theoretical framework defending Hungarian national sovereignty and independence from the Soviet Union, especially through his appeal to the dicta of respecting nations' territorial integrity and signing pacts of nonaggression.<sup>99</sup> The five principles had initially emerged in a communiqué signed between China and India in 1954, being formally proposed by Zhou Enlai at a 1955 Bandung conference in Indonesia as an alternative code of international relations for "Third World" states emerging from the experience of European colonialism. The official Chinese statement of these principles was typically accompanied by the restrictive phrase, "between states of different social systems," intended to allay the noncommunist Asian countries' fear that China would export revolution to their territories, while leaving unclear the title of the Soviet Union or other dominant socialist states to intervene in the affairs of the International. Nagy entitled his foreign policy chapter "The Five Basic Principles of International Relations and the Question of Our Foreign Policy," not only using the Five Principles as the overarching thesis of the chapter but insisting that they "must extend to the

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<sup>97</sup> The Polish and Hungarian perception of China's support to indigenous socialist development can be demonstrated by Nagy's borrowing Chinese initiated five Bandung principles to establish his ideal foreign policy in his country and more evidently by the Polish regime's efforts to pursue Chinese central leadership's understanding of and help to their domestic politics and relationship with the Soviets. See following discussion in this chapter.

<sup>98</sup> Imre Nagy, *On Communism, In Defense of the New Course* (New York : Frederick Praeger, 1957),20-23.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

relations between the countries within the democratic *and* socialist camps."<sup>100</sup>

Meanwhile, Mao's secret speech on the Ten Relationships, together with his "Let a hundred flowers bloom, Let a hundred schools contend" (the Double-Hundred) policy, were interpreted in Hungary and Poland as harbingers of future Communist diversity.<sup>101</sup> On 19 June 1956, several days before the outbreak of Poznan uprising, the Polish side explained their country's intellectual and political relaxation to Chinese delegates by saying "we must not suppress [people's criticisms]; that could only hinder the development of criticism". Instead, the leadership needed to reinforce state control, relying on the provision of balanced information to the masses to quell unrest.<sup>102</sup> It seemed that there was a great similarity between the quasi-democratic atmosphere in Poland and the spirit of latitude in Mao's call for a "hundred flowers," which inevitably lead to the convergence of the Eastern European and Chinese socialist experiences.

Chinese foreign policy in East-Central Europe was marked by three trends preceding the summer of 1956. First, China had sought to establish closer relationships with the People's Republics, expanding economic and cultural exchanges over the head, as it were, of the U.S.S.R. Second, the Chinese leadership had a growing interest in observing political developments in the region, sharpened by the increasing prospect of China's coming to play more of a leading role in the post-Stalin international (however much, at this stage, Chinese insight into Eastern European countries remained limited). Third, China was genuinely open to learning from the lessons of the Eastern European socialist experiences, especially after Khrushchev had called time on the theoretical potential of Stalinism. The latter two trends became much more obvious when the Eastern bloc exploded in a slew of de-Stalinist campaigns after the Twentieth Congress. The violence in Poznan had the initial effect in China

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<sup>100</sup> Yinghong Cheng, "Beyond Moscow-Centric Interpretation: An Examination of the China Connection in Eastern Europe and North Vietnam during the Era of De-Stalinization", *History Cooperative*, <http://www.historycooperative.org/journals/jwh/15.4/cheng.html>; Imre Nagy, *On Communism*, 23.

<sup>101</sup> The Hungarian embassy in Beijing had obtained the 10<sup>th</sup> section: China's relationship with foreign countries in April 1956. See *Magyar-Kinai Kapcsolatok 1956-1969 Dokumentumok*, 40-42.

<sup>102</sup> "Summary of Wang [Binnan] ambassador's visit to the Soviet ambassador [in Warsaw], 6 Jun., 1956", 109-01141-01, pp.18-21, *CFMA*.

of alerting Chinese leaders' attention to political problems in the bloc, beginning first of all with Poland.

The initial Chinese line taken in response to the Poznan strikes in no way diverged from Soviet and Polish public assertions that Poznan represented a foreign counterrevolutionary and internal reactionary plot.<sup>103</sup> A lengthy *RMRB* editorial warning readers to "Guard against Imperialist Intrigues and Domestic Reactionary Activities" flagged so-called "imperialist subversive activities" in the Socialist bloc, which had begun to be visible with the earlier East Berlin and Czech Pilsen crises. Though this article took its inspiration from the Poznan strikes, its main concerns however were with the Chinese domestic situation, in relation to which the piece pointed two distinct lessons: (1) the Party should correctly carry out its work among the masses and in other fields to avoid being "sabotaged" by "enemies"; and (2) that it would be naïve to imagine that class struggle and the antimony between working and owning classes had been definitively superseded by the development of socialism. The Chinese Party's drew these conclusions against a backdrop of uncertainty in terms both of what was actually happening in Eastern Europe and amongst the Soviet leadership. Mao and the Chinese leaders' reflexive belief that "class struggle continues to exist in a socialist country"<sup>104</sup> embodied Mao's persistent sensitivity, sharpened by his Marxist-Leninist formation, to the potential threat posed by antagonists, which was always stronger than his half-skeptical and short-lived acceptance of the idea that "class struggle was withering" in 1956.

It should be noted at this point that decision making on major policy issues, both foreign and domestic, was highly concentrated within Communist China. The 1956 events and riots in Eastern Europe were reserved for the attention of a small group of top leaders, who alone carried responsibility for weighing the risks, merits and practical constraints of alternative courses of action. Mao Zedong, as Party Chairman, continued to call the shots in responding to an evolving situation about which the leaders knew they were only partially informed. Apart from the official reports of other Socialist states and Western news reports, the Chinese Party

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<sup>103</sup> "Guard against Imperialist Intrigues and Domestic Reactionary Activities", *RMRB* June 30, July 1 1956.

<sup>104</sup> Wu Lengxi, *Yi Maozhuxi*, 16-17.



had its own de facto intelligence in the Eastern bloc, which had begun to flow to the Center in the form of Soviet and Polish official analysis, informal exchanges with other socialist leaders and the measurement of mass reaction, from late June.<sup>105</sup> According to currently available Chinese materials, Mao had recourse to three major information channels on Poland: the Chinese embassy in Warsaw; Xinhua News Agency journalist reports and more in-depth information (*Neican*) circulated only to top leaders and western news journalism.<sup>106</sup> From the second half of July up to October 1956 the CCP top leaders gradually came to understand more about the Polish crisis, especially as they were increasingly able to factor Chinese intelligence reports into their estimates.

After Poznan ceased to be an immediate threat, Stanislaw Koryluk, the Polish ambassador to Beijing, admitted to his Chinese counterpart that the workers had held justifiable grievances, briefing China on the background, of economic difficulties and political uncertainties following the Twentieth Congress, that precipitated the strikes. He further explained that the radical Polish response to Khrushchev's Secret Speech arguably had its inception in the humiliating fate in nationalist terms of the Polish Communist Party in 1938. Further, for Koryluk, the disturbances testified to the harmful consequences of doctrinarism, which for instance had enflamed opinion by purging Gomulka; this emphasis, conveniently for the Chinese, agreed with a leading line of the CCP article's analysis of the riots. Finally, Koryluk expressed his appreciation of Mao Zedong's "Ten Guidelines (Ten Relationships)", offering the view that "the CCP was the first [Communist] party to draw conclusions about the problems posed by the Soviet [Twentieth] Congress." He amplified this endorsement by suggesting that of all the national parties, the Chinese was the one that made the fewest mistakes during the Stalinist

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<sup>105</sup> "Some comments on Pozan Incident collected in Poznan, 2 Jul.,1956" 109-01141-01,pp.25-28; "Record of Yu Shen, the charge d'affaires's visit to the Polish Party International Department vice minister, Jun.,1956" 109-00761-04,pp.20-21; "Summary of Wang [Binnan] ambassador's visit to Koryluk, the Polish ambassador to China, 7 Jul., 1956), 109-01018-04, pp.16-17, *CFMA*.

<sup>106</sup> In point of fact, the Chinese government had already begun to expand its intelligence network in the bloc in 1956 by sending Xinhua journalists to some key East European socialist states, including Poland, though not yet to Hungary, for routine and in-depth reports. Wu Lengxi, head of Xinhua at that time, was allowed to sit in on the Standing Committee meetings of the Politburo since 1956, and Mao would usually turn to him for the latest news on crucial international issues. See Wu Lengxi's memoir *Shinian Lunzhan*, 1-91 and Li Shenzhi, *Fengyu canghuang wushinian-Li Shenzhi wenxuan*[Grim and Grave situation for Fifty Years: Selected Works of Li Shenzhi] (Hong Kong: Mingbao, 2003), 107.

era.<sup>107</sup> Kiryluk's words, though probably unrepresentative of the entirety of the inner Polish party, which was split after Poznan, demonstrated an intention on the part of the Polish Communists to draw the CCP into European problems, probably for the sake of claiming financial assistance or diplomatic support. In its situation of detachment from the Eastern bloc, China enjoyed a wide scope of ideological autonomy, which it could conceivably exercise to the benefit of plural strands of international Communism.

The Polish explanation of the origins of Poznan, and of Poland's then difficulties, diverted the CCP's attention away from the subversion of imperialists towards Poland's genuine domestic problems. In responding to the main concerns of the Central Party, both the Chinese embassy and Xinhua reports from Warsaw sent back in-depth analyses of the social roots of the Poznan violence. The two reports came to a similar conclusion that, although in essence the violence had been provoked by imperialist and reactionary agitation, correct analysis should focus on the "serious difficulties and problems" existing within the Polish Party and government.<sup>108</sup> The Chinese inner party always took the violence seriously as indicating the political, ideological and operational weakness of the Polish socialist regime within the bloc. To Mao, as architect of the Chinese model of socialization, certain questions in the wake of the Polish turbulence seemed unavoidable: What were the shortcomings and flaws of the People's Democratic Party and of government in the Eastern bloc? What were the origins of the Soviet bloc's problems? How could the Chinese avoid their mistakes and head off comparable crises in China? Lessons adopted wholesale from Soviet analysis seemed insufficient to answer all these questions, forcing the Chinese to expend great effort on extrapolating the lessons of the Eastern European experience to their own situations, as will be discussed in detail in later chapters.

The Polish message in relation to Gomulka, however, did not receive an immediate response from the Chinese side. Both Chinese embassy and Xinhua reports took the view that the

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<sup>107</sup> "Summary of Wang [Binnan] ambassador's visit to Kiryluk, the Polish ambassador to China, 7 Jul., 1956), 109-01018-04, pp.16-17, *CFMA*.

<sup>108</sup> "On Poznan military riots: edited by the Chinese embassy in Poland", 109-00761-01, pp.1-13, *CFMA*; Xie Wenqing, "On the Origin of the Outbreak of Poznan Military Riots", *Neican*.(28 July 1956):591-604.

Polish leaders had sufficiently recognized the people's legitimate discontent, adopting measures to alleviate public unrest; as they supposed the situation was improving, they neglected to mention Gomulka or any specifically political factors, with the embassy communiqués noting that the CCP article was implicitly Soviet-oriented on this issue.<sup>109</sup> Even after Gomulka's rehabilitation, and the retraction of previous criticisms, in August, after which he acceded to a determining position in the future of the Polish Communist Party and state, Chinese intelligence in Warsaw failed to refer explicitly to Gomulka's symbolic importance.<sup>110</sup> Partly this was due simply to ignorance on the part of the Chinese.<sup>111</sup> Nevertheless, if we dig a little deeper, it is evident that Chinese intelligence could easily have inferred Gomulka's significance, especially given the Polish initiative of leaking information about him in early July. Chinese information-gathering seems to have been directed by Mao and the Central Party, who apparently chose to ignore or downplay questions of Gomulka's status in the Polish Party until late August at least, on the basis that Mao had no desire to participate in domestic Polish politics.

At this juncture, in order to begin to dissociate themselves from Moscow's influence, the Poles turned to Beijing for inspiration under the pretext that the CCP regime was independent of Soviet rule and receptive to the principle of equality within the socialist camp. Before Ochab left Warsaw traveling through Moscow to attend the CCP CC Eighth Congress in September 1956, he invited Wang Bingnan, the Chinese ambassador, for a banquet. That evening, Ochab told Wang Bingnan that besides expressing his goodwill towards the Chinese people and strengthening the two countries' parties' ties of unity, he was coming to China to learn from the experience of the CCP. Ochab claimed a particular interest in the resolutions that China had "courageously" passed after the Twentieth Congress, most probably the Ten Relationships. Although these resolutions emerged out of a domestic Chinese environment, the Polish Party

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<sup>109</sup> *CFMA* *ibid.*; Xie Wenqing, *ibid.*

<sup>110</sup> Ochab's recollection: Rozmowa z Edwardem Ochabem, Teresa Toranska, *Oni*, Warszawa, 1989, s.214-217, quoted by Shen Zhihua and Li Danhui's conference paper, "The 1956 Polish Crisis and Sino-Polish Relations: sources from the Chinese Archival Documents and Inside Reports".

<sup>111</sup> Wang Binnan, the Chinese ambassador to Poland, asked about Gomulka during one meeting with the Soviet ambassador held in mid June. See "Summary of Ambassador Wang [Binnan]'s Conversation with the Soviet Ambassador, 15 June, 1956", 109-01141-01, pp.17-18. There is no report in *CFMA* current declassified documents of 1956 on Chinese further consultation on the situation of Gomulka either from the Soviet or from the Polish side.

believed some of them might apply to its own situation. Ochab also informed Wang Bingnan that he might have to return to Warsaw ahead of schedule due to "the complicated situation at home."<sup>112</sup>

Ochab's delegation arrived in Moscow first on 12 September. During his meetings with the Soviet leaders, Ochab told them that the PUWP Central Committee requested the departure of the Soviet advisors attached to Polish Public Security. It is less clear whether Ochab also told Khrushchev of the PUWP CC's intention to restore Gomulka to the Politburo. In either case, it is now known that, to ensure Chinese support, Ochab fully briefed the Chinese central leadership in Beijing of this plan. As Ochab recalled, the Chinese leaders "entirely sympathized with the Polish situation," bolstering his implicit faith in Sino-Polish party relations.

<sup>113</sup> Whatever the degree of Sino-Polish rapprochement, though, the two sides did not broach the question of Poland's relation with the Soviet Union, with Ochab even taking steps to dissimulate coming confrontations with the U.S.S.R. by assuring Mao that the Soviet ambassador had accompanied him all the way on his trip. Ochab's chief concern here seemed to be to regulate the flow of information about Poland to the Chinese himself, over the head of Soviet interpretation.

On the day he left, Ochab finally took the opportunity to intimate that all was not well in his country's relations with its senior partner in Communism. After his flight fortuitously "malfunctioned" on the runway, Zhu De boarded the plane to see Ochab. Ochab came clean that marked anti-Soviet tendencies existed in Poland, though the Poles were by no means yet prepared to break their alliance with the Soviets. Rather, the Poles merely sought autonomy in dealing with domestic issues within the current socialist framework.<sup>114</sup> Ever since the Chinese

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<sup>112</sup>"Summary of Ambassador Wang (Binnan)'s conversation with the Polish Party delegation during the reception before its departure to attend the CCP CC Eighth National Congress, 10 September, 1956" 109-01141-01, pp.58-61, *CFMA*.

<sup>113</sup> Leszek Gluchowski said in his paper on the Soviet-Polish crisis that Ochab had informed Khrushchev the Polish initiative to restore Gomulka to the leadership. See his "Poland, 1956: Khrushchev, Gomulka, and the 'Polish October'," *CWIHP Bulletin*, Issue 5 (Spring 1995): 47, ft. 6. Shen Zhihua points out that Ochab didn't mention even a word about Gomulka's rehabilitation to the Politburo to Khrushchev when he was in Moscow, see Shen Zhihua and Li Danhui's conference paper, "The 1956 Polish Crisis and Sino-Polish Relations".

<sup>114</sup> Rozmowa z Edwardem Ochabem, s.219-221, quoted from Shen Zhihua and Li Danhui, "The 1956 Polish Crisis and Sino-Polish Relations: sources from the Chinese Archival Documents and Inside Reports", (conference paper

Party had aired its response to the Twentieth Congress, emphasizing the need to work through its own socialist plan accentuating distinctively Chinese characteristics, the Poles had understood the Chinese model as validating their own stress on autonomous domestic patterns. China's qualitatively different relationship with the socialist bloc and its leverage in the Kremlin through Moscow-Beijing cooperation in the Krushchev era, Ochab and his colleagues believed, made the "independent and autonomous" Chinese regime the best candidate for coordinating an international socialist response and subtly applying pressure on the Soviet Union, in the event that the CPSU could not come to an agreement with the Poles.<sup>115</sup>

As for the Chinese response to Ochab's overture, the French *France-Soir* reported Mao's support for Poland's aspirations, suggesting that China was emerging as a counterweight to the U.S.S.R. in the international communist movement.<sup>116</sup> The US *New York Herald* even claimed in a headline to detect "Soviet Restraint on Poland Because Of China: Mao Zedong Was the First to Send Congratulation Message to Wladyslaw Gomulka."<sup>117</sup> In fact, judging from the current available Chinese and Polish source materials, there is still insufficient evidence to make out Mao and the Chinese leadership's immediate reaction to the Polish problem and Gomulka's reinstatement.<sup>118</sup> Nevertheless, in contrast to its earlier construction of Polish issues principally in relation to domestic problems, it was evident that from late October the Chinese leadership had been actively discussing Soviet interference in Poland and intervening themselves on the East European scene.<sup>119</sup> The active role later played by

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delivered to the "The October 1956 Events in Poland in International Relations" October, 2006, Warsaw Poland).

<sup>115</sup> Rozmowa z Edwardem Ochabem , s.219-221, *ibid*.

<sup>116</sup> *Neican*, no. 2036 (17 October 1956): 1042-1044.

<sup>117</sup> *Neican*, no. 2036 (27 October 1956): 1283-1284.

<sup>118</sup> Ochab only said that the Chinese were "very sympathetic" to the Polish situation, without making any clear statement of the leadership's response to his overtures in his memoir; see Rozmowa z Edwardem Ochabem , s.219-221 quoted from Shen Zhihua and Li Danhui, "The 1956 Polish Crisis and Sino-Polish Relations" conference paper. As of yet, China has not declassified the records of the Chinese leaders' meetings with the Polish delegation (Ochab). As far as I know, Mao, Zhou Enlai and Liu Shaoqi received the East European leaders separately during the Eighth Party Congress. *Mao zhuan* reports that during the Eighth Congress, Mao met the delegations of socialist parties or other workers' parties from 29 countries, with several paragraphs devoted to reports from these meetings (with the GDR, Yugoslavian, British, Italian, Bulgarian, and French parties); however, the meeting with Ochab is not even mentioned. Mao met Mikoyan on 18 September to discuss how to treat correctly those colleagues who had committed mistakes. According to a prominent scholar, Mao said to Mikoyan that Rákosi was a good comrade. See *Mao zhuan*, 536-543.

<sup>119</sup> Wu Lengxi, *Shinian lunzhan*, 34-48.

the Chinese in mediating between Soviets and Poles was quickly interpreted by Poles, Hungarians, other socialists and even some western observers as endorsing the Polish position, namely that local diversity should be respected within Communism. The actual picture was more complex, both with regard to the Chinese leadership's changes of attitude towards Poland and its perception of shifts in Sino-Soviet relations, the two leading themes in the evolution of Chinese foreign policy.

On June 30 the CPSU CC issued a declaration in response to some of the anti-Stalinist criticisms of the Soviet system. This declaration met Soviet efforts to define the limits of the anti-Stalinist aftermath in seeking to posit some common foundations for inter-state socialist unity, which seemed more needed than ever in the face of the breakout of the Poznan riots in late June. While taking stock of these disturbances, the Soviets were also extremely wary of Yugoslavia's growing influence in Eastern Europe, especially in Hungary and Poland. In the course of negotiating the second Soviet-Yugoslav declaration, Khrushchev had realized his fundamental differences with Tito on the key issue of the unity of international Communism. As Micunovich correctly pointed out, Tito's refusal to assume any obligations with regard to the "camp" or to sign any statement on "ideological unity" significantly alarmed the Russians.<sup>120</sup> Alerted by Yugoslav ambition and the possibility of regional instability and rebellion, the Soviets naturally moved to stress the common aims and outlook of international Communism, which could be implemented through an available Soviet model defined as determining the conditions under which specific adaptations would be tolerated. Although the Soviets meant to issue warnings to the whole socialist camp, unsurprisingly their message resonated particularly in the ears of the Chinese regime, the only socialist regime which operated autonomously within the framework of international socialist camp.

Furthermore, the Soviet leaders had obtained a report on Mao's April "Ten Relationships" speech by the end of August 1956, despite its not yet having been published and having been kept secret from China's socialist allies. The report dwelled on the Chinese tendency critically to utilize Soviet experiences in the first six months of 1956, a course suggested by Mao

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<sup>120</sup> Micunovich, *Moscow Diary*, 73.

himself.<sup>121</sup> The Soviets, conscious of Yugoslav ambition and the instability of its subordinate East European regimes, cared less about China's development of distinctive socialist features and more about its potential role as a rival and power-broker within the bloc. Aiming to mitigate Chinese influence in this sphere, Mikoyan flew to Beijing to attend the Eighth Congress of the CCP. Moscow (or Khrushchev) probably felt quite justified in making a statement of Soviet primacy within the camp, timing their statement to shore up the U.S.S.R's indisputable authority. The June 30 statement nevertheless caused the Chinese leadership extreme discomfort.

An article co-authored by two prominent Chinese scholars diagnoses Mao and his comrades' dissatisfaction with the Soviet manner of handling Khrushchev's "secret speech" as pretty much the sole origin of the CCP's criticism of Soviet "big power chauvinism".<sup>122</sup> In fact, it is more likely that, as early as the beginning of March, Deng Xiaoping, Zhang Wentian and Wang Jiaxiang had argued that the Soviets would have difficulty in curbing their traditional "big power" behaviour even though Stalin, their ringmaster, had gone (though their opinions may also reflect Mao's position). While obviously uncomfortable with Khrushchev's exposure of Stalin, and denigration of his mistakes, without advance consultation with Beijing, Mao placed much less weight on the thesis of Soviet "chauvinism" at this time. Relevant documents and materials from February to September betray no evident discontent on Mao's part with the development of Sino-Soviet relations under Khrushchev. Khrushchev's secret speech, from Mao's perspective, rather helped the CCP to break with Stalinist superstitions, potentially widening the sphere of theoretical and ideological Chinese influence across the international socialist camp. Alongside Khrushchev's secret speech, Mikoyan's design of diminishing the value of the China's specific revolutionary experience in the Eighth Congress struck Mao as more of an open or intentional affront to him and his country.

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<sup>121</sup> "B. Likhachev's Report to the CPSU CC on Ma Zedong's Ten Principles (Ten Relationships, added by the author)", ЦХСД, ф.5, on.28, д.407, p.5174, л.129-147, Chinese translated version see Shen Zhihua and Li Danhui eds., *Zhongguo guanxi: eguo dangan fuyinjian huibian* (weikan), vol.11, 2690-2708, the Center of Cold War History Studies, China East Normal University.

<sup>122</sup> Chen Jian and Yang Kuisong, "Chinese Politics and the Collapse of the Sino-Soviet Alliance", in Westad ed. *Brothers in Arms*, 260.

Addressing the Eighth Congress of the Chinese Communist Party, Mikoyan bluntly observed, “Assuredly, each country has its distinctive features and brings its own specific elements to bear in making the transition to socialism. But, as Lenin pointed out, these features can relate only to something relatively unimportant.”<sup>123</sup> According to Shi Zhe, Mikoyan spent most of his speech exalting Soviet Russia, even claiming that each positive achievement or progressive step of the CCP derived from its emulation of the Soviet model. Mao took personal offense at Mikoyan’s arrogance and apparent theoretical naivety, stopping him one day before the end of the Congress to complain at the unequal relations between the Soviet Union and China and to take issue with the Comintern and CPSU for their heavy-handed paternalism in treating the CCP as some form of errant “child”.<sup>124</sup> In Mao’s eyes, China’s revolutionary achievements under his leadership deserved a respect lacking in Mikoyan’s haughty and significantly open qualifications. But even if the Chairman was unhappy with Mikoyan, cooperation between the Chinese and Soviets was not necessarily impaired at this stage. Especially given his legendary short temper and habits of commands, it is likely that Mao intended to do no more than arraign Mikoyan for his impertinence.

Although Mao had spoken out against the Soviets’ “father-son” mentality in his talk with Mikoyan, the two sides were committed to working closely together in involving themselves in the internal politics of other communist member states. In the course of the Eighth Congress, Mikoyan, together with Peng Dehuai, fled to Pyongyang to intervene in factional struggles within the Korean Workers’ Party.<sup>125</sup> Before Mikoyan’s departure, Mao hosted a dinner for him, Iudin and other Soviet delegates, during which they discussed Mikoyan’s mission to Pyongyang and the situation in both Hungary and Poland. The Chairman mainly focused on the Korean issue, suggesting Mikoyan mediate discussions between Kim Il-Sung and his party critics. With Mikoyan receptive, Mao specifically agreed, “we have to prepare for one thing, that

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<sup>123</sup> Brzezinski, *Soviet Bloc*, 204.

<sup>124</sup> See Wu Lengxi, *Shinian lunzhan*, 32; Shi Zhe, *Zai lishi juren shenbian*, 608-613. Shi Zhe, as the simultaneous interpreter of Mao’s talk to Mikoyan, had provided a detailed description of the conditions and a record of Mao’s talk.

<sup>125</sup> For a discussion on the origin and development of the inner party power struggle in North Korea based on archival source materials, see James F. Person, “The Myth of Factional Struggle within the Korean Workers’ Party, 1945-1956”(preliminary draft delivered in International Workshop on The Cold War and the Korean Peninsula: The Domestic Politics and Foreign Relations of North and South Korea, Beijing University, PRC, 18 May, 2007).



Kim Il-Sung may say that we are intervening their own affairs and ask us to withdraw our troops [the Chinese Voluntary Army still stationed in North Korea]", a course to which he was reluctant to assent given that the "Americans are in the South; Syngman Rhee's force is strong." Agreeing that the Koreans were resistant to Soviet and Chinese interference in party matters, Mikoyan put the case that it was absolutely appropriate for the socialist parties to advise or criticize each other. Interestingly, at this point Mikoyan moved to the topic of Hungarian events and used his decision to remove Rákosi as an example that the Soviet interference in Hungarian affairs had been beneficial to Hungarians in kickstarting an adequate domestic response to social problems. Mao was not necessarily sold on the analogy between Korea and Hungary as records suggest he replied only briefly, while Mikoyan had spoken at length. Furthermore, the Chairman does not seem to have assigned a high priority to the Hungarian developments at this stage, worrying more about Kim and Korea. Mao's words—"Rákosi is a good comrade with a high Marxist ideological level. He can quit. But Kim is a man hard to deal with"—seem to betray a double standard as regards intervention into other socialist states' politics. Evidently, the Chinese Chairman shared the Soviet position to remove Stalinist leaders like Rákosi who were in his judgment handicapping the local parties to regain popular support in Eastern bloc. It was a satisfactory result for Rákosi to accept the Soviet arrangement for stepping down while Kim was making trouble in the Asian region by insisting on his independence in domestic affairs. While Chairman Mao had consistently insisted on his autonomy in domestic politics, he in essence felt both ideologically and politically justified for the more "advanced" Communist states to lead the "less developed" ones.<sup>126</sup>

Even if piqued by Soviet paternalism, Mao saw the strategic value for the Chinese of stability in the Communist camp, as assured by Sino-Soviet cooperation. As long as these two factors—international unity and the Chinese perception of Soviet attitudes towards the PRC—were not contradictory, the Chinese leadership was in no hurry to throw down any sort of challenge to the Soviets. Mao had been taking a principled line in telling Tito that the

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<sup>126</sup> "Record of Chairman Mao's Conversation with Mikoyan, September 1956", pp.138-143, *China Central Achieves* (CCA), personal collection.

Chinese “support[ed] the Soviet Union as the center inasfar as this was beneficial to the socialist movement”, even as he regretted that “there are still certain figures [in the Soviet Union] who doubt[] that our socialist construction can be successful and assert our Party to be fake.”<sup>127</sup> Yet a head of discontent among the Chinese had clearly been building up at the Soviet’s “big-power Chauvinism”, which to some extent underwrote Chinese encouragement at Polish aspirations to greater autonomy.

In the Central-Eastern Europe, the turning point of the Polish situation came in early October. The Polish leadership stated their reasons for believing that Polish Communism had reached a dead end, preparing the way for the return of Gomulka. In his reappearance in the Politburo, Gomulka set out a political prospectus, which included the return of his associates to both the Politburo and Secretariat and the ousting of Rokossovsky and other pro-Soviet members.<sup>128</sup> The Soviet leaders were shocked to learn of this sidelining of “the people on whom they depend”<sup>129</sup>, especially as they had not even been pre-consulted. Primarily concerned for the sake of Soviet military security to dampen nationalist and anti-Soviet emotions in Poland, the Kremlin determined to apply both political and military pressure to compel the Poles under Gomulka to back down. To avoid confusion inside the camp, the CPSU Presidium issued telegrams to the other socialist parties on 18 October, one day before leaving for Warsaw. On 19 October, a powerful delegation led by Khrushchev headed for Warsaw simultaneously with a battalion of armored troops.<sup>130</sup> The situation had suddenly cranked up to a point of imminent danger.

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<sup>127</sup> For Mao’s words during his meeting with the Yugoslavian delegation during the Eighth Congress of the CCP, see Zhongyang wenxian yanjiushi ed. *Mao Zedong Wenji* diqijuan [Collection of Mao Zedong’s written texts, vol.7, *MWJ* thereafter] (Beijing: Renmin, 1999), 122-123; for an English translated version, see “The Emerging Dispute Between Beijing and Moscow: Ten Newly Available Chinese Documents,” *CWIHP Bulletin* 6-7 (Winter 1995/1996):148-52.

<sup>128</sup> Leszek W. Gluchowski “Poland 1956: Khrushchev, Gomulka and the ‘Polish October’”, *CWIHP Bulletin* issue 5 (Spring, 1995): 38-39.

<sup>129</sup> Khrushchev greeted Marshal Rokossovsky and other pro-Soviet generals at the airport and told the Polish leaders in Russian: “..these are the people we relied on”, quoted from “the Polish United Workers’ Party (PUWP) Politburo Announcement, 19 October, 1956” in Shen Zhihua et al., eds., *Selected Historical Soviet Archives* Vol.27, 28; English version see L. W. Gluchowski “Poland 1956: Khrushchev, Gomulka and the ‘Polish October’”, 40.

<sup>130</sup> Mark Kramer, “New Evidence”, 35; Johanna Granville, “From the Archives of Warsaw and Budapest: A Comparison of the Events of 1956”, *East European Politics and Societies*, Vol.16, No.2 (Spring 2002): 548-549; Jenő Györkei and Miklós Horváth eds., *Soviet Military Intervention in Hungary 1956* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 1999), 9.

In late October, a few days before the outbreak of the Hungarian upheaval, Beijing's diplomatic attention was taken up by the "October" disturbances in Poland and tensions in Polish-Soviet relations.<sup>131</sup> During the CCP Politburo Standing Committee's enlarged meeting and the enlarged Politburo convention meeting from 21 to 22 October 1956, the Chinese top leaders considered the anti-Soviet feeling in Warsaw and Soviet intervention on the basis of the telegram sent by the CPSU and their own source materials from Warsaw.<sup>132</sup>

On 19 October, Soviet Ambassador to Beijing, Pavel Iudin, forwarded the CPSU Presidium telegram to Liu Shaoqi. According to Shi Zhe, who was present as interpreter for Liu, the Soviet ambassador indicated to the Chinese the serious divergence on fundamental policies that had emerged inside the Polish Party. Officials of the Polish United Workers' Party (PUWP) intended to reshuffle the Politburo to expel Marshal Rokossovsky. Shi Zhe interpreted Iudin as expressing a fear, on the part of the Soviets, that the PUWP Eighth Plenum would confirm an incipient tendency of Polish deviationism away from the socialist camp and towards the capitalist world. Liu then learned that the Soviet delegation was already en route for Warsaw.<sup>133</sup> Comparing the content of Iudin's talk to Liu with that of the Soviet telegram, it appears the ambassador said no more to the Chinese than committed to paper. Notably, Shi Zhe pointed out in particular that Iudin betrayed no inkling of the impending Soviet siege of Warsaw.<sup>134</sup> The earliest reports from Warsaw (either from the embassy or the Xinhua

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<sup>131</sup> For a general introduction of the Polish crisis and China's response, see *The Secret Speeches of Chairman Mao*, 8. For a good description and analysis, see Chen Jian, *Mao's China and the Cold War*, 146-150; Shen Zhihua, "1956 nian shiyue weiji: zhongguo de juece he yingxiang", 123-127; Shen Zhihua and Li Danhui's conference paper, "The 1956 Polish Crisis and Sino-Polish Relations: sources from the Chinese Archival Documents and Inside Reports".

<sup>132</sup> *ZNP*, 630; According to Wu's memoir, one enlarged meeting was held in the afternoon of 20 October on the topic of the Polish crisis. For a good description of this meeting see Chen Jian p.147. In *ZNP*, however, only the meetings on 21 and 22 October feature. Mao and other members of the Politburo agreed that the Soviets wanted to intervene on the strength of their "big-power chauvinism", a mindset that violated the egalitarian spirit of international communism.

<sup>133</sup> The Soviet delegation, led by Khrushchev, flew to Warsaw at 7 am on 19 October. Negotiations went on to the morning of 20 October (Warsaw time, or in Beijing time the afternoon of 20 October). According to Wu Lengxi, a Politburo meeting was held in the afternoon of 20 October to discuss the Soviet notice, in which the CPSU canvassed Chinese opinion on a possible military resolution of the Polish crisis. Mao said that the Soviets were on the brink of military intervention yet pulled back from making a final decision. At this point the Soviets' own meeting with the Poles had broken off without agreement. There is some uncertainty as to whether the Soviets actually forewarned the Chinese as to their military plans. There is no corresponding Soviet record they did so, and the timing of the communication—after the end of meetings in Poland—would suggest that consultation with the Chinese could carry no influence on the Soviet course of action. Alternatively, it is possible that the CCP got wind of Soviet plans from the Chinese embassy in Poland. The Chinese were definitely behind events in Warsaw during their meeting, which sought ways to prevent an outbreak of inter-state violence in Warsaw. See Wu Lengxi, *Shinian lunzhan*, 37-39.

<sup>134</sup> See TsKhSD, f.3, op.14, d.67, ll.25, 104.; Chinese version see "the CPSU CC Presidium's Decision to Send a

journalist) were sent on 20 October. Wang Bingnan, the Chinese ambassador in Warsaw, reported the rumor of the Soviet movement towards Warsaw, which was explained by the Soviet ambassador Ponomarenko as "several soldiers taking a walk".<sup>135</sup> The Chinese side also obtained news from Associated Press in Warsaw, which offered the analysis that the Soviet troop movement was surely mandated the top Soviet leaders before they made for Warsaw.<sup>136</sup> Even if the time lag in receiving these reports is ignored, there is no way that the Chinese leadership could have guessed of Soviet military action before 20 October 1956, let alone checked it.<sup>137</sup>

Meanwhile, on 19 October, before the Soviet delegation met Polish representatives, the situation, in Khrushchev's own words, became "somewhat bleak"<sup>138</sup>. The Soviet troops encountered in the field revolting Polish soldiers who had thrown off Rokossowski and other Soviet-aligned generals' command. These rebellious Poles were already on a war footing against those who remained loyal to Rokossowski. The situation was so pressing that "for a brief while, Poland appeared to be on the verge of civil war as well as a conflict with the Soviet Union."<sup>139</sup> The Soviet leaders, however, were not prepared to intervene by force of arms without the utmost certainty that such a course was necessary. Even at this late juncture, the Soviets still expected that a combination of political pressure and military threats would bring the Poles back into line, at least to the degree that a political accommodation could be arranged. Further, the unsettled state of the Polish army made Khrushchev believe it would be easy to start an armed conflict with the Poles, but hard to vanquish every army faction decisively. Judging that the Gomulka regime was still backed by Polish troops from the Corps out of Rokossowski's control and would not budge under Soviet pressure, the Soviet

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Delegation to Poland, 18 October, 1956, top secret", *Selected Historical Soviet Archives* Vol.27, 26. The recently published official biography of Mao also adopted Shi Zhe's remembers to represent the history. Shi Zhe's recollection see *jianzhenglü*, 220; also see *Mao Zhuan*, 601-602.

<sup>135</sup> "Main points of Wang Bingnan's meeting with Ponomarenko, 20 October 1956", 109-01141-02, pp.77-78, *CFMA*.

<sup>136</sup> *Neican* (22 October 1956): 1087.

<sup>137</sup> Even telegrams from Chinese intelligence abroad, whether in Eastern Europe or the West, normally took at least a day to arrive. For a good analysis of the Chinese role in the Soviet threat to the Poles, see Shen Zhihua's paper "1956 nian shiyue weiji: zhongguo de juece he yingxiang", 119 -143.

<sup>138</sup> Nikita, Khrushchev, *Khrushchev Remembers: The Last Testament*. Strobe Talbott trans. and eds., (New York: Bantam Books, 1974), 203.

<sup>139</sup> Kramer, "New Evidence", 361.

delegation returned to Moscow.<sup>140</sup>

While the Soviets had paused, however, affairs in Poland took on a revolutionary character. Tensions mounted on 20 and 21 October, with anti-Soviet campaigns spreading throughout the country. Under the pressure of this mounting unrest, both the Soviet and Polish sides preferred peaceful resolution rather than a direct military confrontation. On 21 October Khrushchev suggested in the Presidium that "in view of the situation we should give up on armed intervention and show our patience." Most Presidium members present at the meeting agreed. The Soviet leadership was forced to make concessions to Poland in "refrain[ing] from military intervention" and "display[ing] patience" for the time being.<sup>141</sup> In order to appease public feeling in Poland, the Soviets addressed a letter to the Central Committee of the Polish Communist Party agreeing to the withdrawal of the Soviet Advisory Group attached to the Polish security department and recalling Soviet advisers in the Polish armed forces.<sup>142</sup> While on the Polish side, Gomulka immediately took action to appease the army and public, sending clear message to Moscow about the Polish new regime's commitment to Marxism-Leninism and to close relations with the USSR. Faced with snowballing demonstrations across Poland and Gomulka's posture of cooperation, the Soviet leadership took the path of least resistance, tolerating Gomulka's independence in domestic affairs for now and relegating the prospect of military intervention to a last resort.

On the question of how to deal with the aftermath of the Polish crisis and how to stabilize the Soviet bloc, the Soviet leaders remained at a loss. Seeking to shore up unity, the CPSU Presidium convened a meeting to be attended by leaders from Democratic Germany, China, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria and Hungary on 23 October. A letter to the Party central committees of these countries was also agreed, featuring a single substantive sentence: "In view of the

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<sup>140</sup> For Khrushchev's estimation of the possible consequence of using military intervention in Poland and the Polish side's efforts in convincing the Kremlin leaders of their unchanged commitment to Communism and wishes to maintain allied relationship with the Soviets, see Kramer, "New Evidence", 360-361.

<sup>141</sup> "Working Notes from the Session of the CPSU CC Presidium on 21 October, 1956" *Selected Historical Soviet Archives*, Vol.27, 43.

<sup>142</sup> TsKhSD, f.3, op.14, d.67, l.1, 4, 5.; Chinese version see "The CC CPSU Presidium decision of sending a letter to the PZPR CC on the issue of Soviet advisors in Poland", *Selected Historical Soviet Archives*, Vol.27, 47.

situation in Poland, we would like an exchange of views.” Khrushchev and his colleagues took especial care to fetch the Chinese comrades in a Soviet aircraft.<sup>143</sup> The immediate task in the aftermath of the Polish crisis for the Soviets was to win the support of the other socialist parties, especially the CCP, in order to prevent the national diversity of the camp from developing into international splits. Communist China’s detached relationship with the Eastern bloc and the recent experience of coordination with Beijing in dealing with intro-bloc affairs for unity (Kim’s North Korea for example) probably convinced Khrushchev that the Chinese could be more useful in mediating the Soviet-Polish relations than those East European satellites. But the problem is: what if Chairman Mao desired more than the Kremlin leader wanted him to do in the politics of the Soviet Eastern bloc.

By the time of the evening of 21 October, the Chinese side were *au fait* with the Soviet military movements in Poland.<sup>144</sup> More importantly, Xie Wenqing, the *Xinhua* journalist stationed in Warsaw, sent through a telegram to the Central Party, reporting on splits in the Polish Party and on the general political complexion in Poland in the run-up to the Eighth Plenum on 20 October after the Soviet delegation had already left. According to Xie’s personal experience of participating in some of the students’ and workers’ demonstrations, the reporter made the following judgments: (1) the demonstrators (both workers and students) advertised their commitment to Communism and to a fraternal Polish-Soviet relationship; (2) the Poles stressed their autonomy in seeking to establish socialism their own way, calling for inter-state equality and for Gomulka’s restoration to the leadership. The Polish people were very unhappy with the Soviet delegation’s visit to Warsaw, construing this as unreasonable Soviet interference in Polish domestic politics. Xie finally pointed out that “it was said” that Gomulka’s domestic line was to pursue independent foreign and economic policies.<sup>145</sup> At the same time, Beijing received reports from the Chinese embassy concerning Wang Bingnan’s meetings with

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<sup>143</sup> TsKhSD, f.3, op.12, d.1006, l.1-3; op.14, d.67, l.129; op.14, d.67, l.1, 4, 5.; Chinese version see “the CPSU CC’s Decision to Send Telegrams to Chinese, Czechoslovak, Bulgarian and East Germany Central Parties and Letter to Gomulka, 21 Oct., 1956”, *Selected Historical Soviet Archives*, Vol.27, 45.

<sup>144</sup> “Telegram on the recent development of the Polish Party, telegram from the Chinese embassy in Warsaw” sent on 19 October, 1956”, 109-00762-03, pp. 15-17, *CFMA*.

<sup>145</sup> “Xie Wenqing’s report on the Polish Party Divergences”, 109-00762-03, pp. 18-20, *CFMA*; *Neican* (22 October 1956); 1075-1076, 1079-1080.

the Soviet ambassador P. K. Ponomarenko, in which the Soviet ambassador expressed the deep anxiety of the CPSU CC Presidium regarding the anti-Soviet propaganda rife in Poland and the possibility of Polish deviation away from the socialist bloc.<sup>146</sup> Evidently, the Xinhua journalist report and the embassy briefing reflected two different perceptions of the same crisis, the first the Polish grassroots, the second from the Soviet leadership. The crux of the matter was which side the CCP leadership, especially Mao, would take.

In the evening of 21 October, Mao summoned a Politburo Standing Committee meeting to discuss the Polish issue after receiving the Soviet letter inviting a Chinese delegation to Moscow. After hearing an introductory presentation on the Polish situation compiled from foreign reports from Wu Lengxi, head of the New China Agency, Mao stated his view out that the Soviet intention of intervening stemmed from “big-power chauvinism”, and as such violated the basic principles of international relations.<sup>147</sup> Insofar as the Polish new leadership under Wladyslaw Gomulka had made clear that their allegiances in the Cold War lay unambiguously on the socialist side, the Chinese officials opined that it would be wrong for the Soviet Union to use military means to interfere in the domestic affairs of Poland. Mao declared the Polish situation urgent, counseling haste in crafting the Chinese position.<sup>148</sup> The meeting’s participants reached consensus on an emergency resolution, firmly opposing Soviet military intervention in Warsaw, and indeed ascribing the Soviet incursion to “big power Chauvinism”: “[Soviet military intervention to Poland] is [a case of] serious big-power chauvinism, which should not be allowed in any circumstances.”<sup>149</sup> After the meeting on the 21st, in the small hours of 22 October, Mao, accompanied by Zhou Enlai, Deng Xiaoping and Liu Shaoqi, met with the Soviet Ambassador, Pavel Iudin to deliver the unanimous CCP CC unanimous view that Soviet armed intervention in Poland was against the internationalist principles of the Proletariat. Their text read: “if [the Soviet side still] insists [on military intervention], the Chinese

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<sup>146</sup> “Minutes of Wang Bingnan’s talk with Ponomarenko”, 109-01141-02 pp.76-78, *CFMA*.

<sup>147</sup> *ZNP*, 630; Wu Lengxi also mentioned that Mao’s criticism of the Soviet military threat to Poland as “big-power chauvinism” in his memoir, see *Shinian lunzhan*, 38-39. The Problem is that Wu stated the Politburo meeting was held on 20 October with quite a few mistakes in his recollection. Currently, the available Chinese official historical publications, like *ZNP*, *LSN*, even *Mao zhuan*, all recorded the first Politburo meeting on Poland was held on 21 October.

<sup>148</sup> Wu Lengxi, *Shinian lunzhan*, 35.

<sup>149</sup> *ZNP*, vol.1, 630; Wu Lengxi, *Shinian lunzhan*, 35-36; Chen Jian, *Mao’s China and the Cold War*, 147.

government is prepared to denounce [any Soviet steps towards invasion].”<sup>150</sup> Iudin immediately phoned Khrushchev to tell him the Chinese position. Mao’s message at this stage, however, apparently played no significant role in influencing Soviet decision-making on Poland. As mentioned above, when Mao’s message reached to Khrushchev, the Soviet leadership had already decided to make concessions to Gomulka and the Poles.

The Chinese leadership was not necessarily abreast of developments on the Polish issue inside the Kremlin, complicating their efforts at mediating between their Communist partners. Soon after their discussion with Iudin, Mao Zedong, Liu Shaoqi, Zhou Enlai and Deng Xiaoping reconvened at around 3am to frame the agenda for the Chinese delegation invited to Moscow. They defined their mission as interceding between the CPSU and the PUWP, intending to rebuke the CPSU’s “big power Chauvinism” on the one hand and, on the other, to persuade their Polish comrades to desist from breaking from the overall interests of the socialist camp. It appears that the Chinese were ready to act as power-brokers, foreseeing a series of bilateral negotiations as the context in which to effect these diplomatic maneuvers.<sup>151</sup> In the late evening of 22 October, another CCP CC Standing Committee meeting gathered to continue the discussion on Poland. By then, more information on the latest developments had been sent to Beijing. The situation in Poland seemed to have stabilized, with Soviet troops beginning to withdraw. Yet the final settlement was left open, to a large extent pending the result of the PUWP Eighth Plenum.<sup>152</sup>

After the Politburo meeting, Mao met with Iudin again. Most likely already aware of the dissipation of tension, Mao addressed the ambassador in a calmer and more moderate tone than the previous day. Mao confirmed that the Chinese would send a delegation to Moscow, adding that independent sources of information available to the CCP suggested that the reactionaries (on the Soviet view) had been joined by many members of the masses

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<sup>150</sup> *ZNP*, vol.1,631: the meeting ended at 00:40, and Mao met with Yudin at 1am; It was evident that Mao’s talk to Yudin had a hidden message for Moscow, warning against their “big-power chauvinism”.

<sup>151</sup> *ZNP*, vol.1,631.

<sup>152</sup> *Neican*, No.2029(22 Oct., 1956),1075-1080; also see “Xie Wenqing’s Telegram to the New China News Agency via Foreign Ministry on the inner-split of the Polish Party”, 109-00762-03, pp.18-20, *CFMA*.



theoretically well-disposed towards Communism. Therefore “it seems that the Poles were not on the immediate verge of breaking from the socialist camp, yet they were determined to reshuffle the Politburo.” In dealing with the Polish issue, in Mao’s view, no more than two measures suggested themselves as plausible, one “hard”, the other “soft”: the “hard” was to suppress dissidence by force, and the “soft” to persuade the Polish to back down. If persuasion did not work, Mao’s view was that it would be preferable for the Soviets to reconcile themselves to certain concessions, admitting the legitimacy of Gomulka’s regime, continuing economic assistance, and cooperating on equal terms than to jettison the Poles from the Socialist camp.<sup>153</sup> Having clearly discerned the growing weakness of the Soviet dominant Communist system, the Chinese Chairman’s explicit opposition to Soviet “chauvinist” intervention to Polish domestic affairs and “kind” suggestions on the Kremlin to treat the Poles on more equal footing for unity implicitly intended to make a gradual change of the Soviet leading role in the Communist world.

Notably, the Chairman at this point broached a related but sensitive topic: the correct assessment of Stalin. On this matter, Mao stressed his sense of the necessity of criticizing Stalin, but only according to certain methods, noting that the Soviets and Chinese disagreed on these. For Mao, it was only legitimate and strategically desirable to repudiate elements of Stalin’s legacy under the condition of protecting his overall reputation. Mao re-emphasized his seventy-thirty or even eighty-twenty ratio in rating Stalin’s achievements as far more significant than his mistakes, which originated from his subjectivism rather than anything related to his personality (This may have been a reference to Stalin’s supposed “crude style” or personal rusticity). To Mao’s purposes, Stalin and his image represented a weapon to be used to fight against the imperialists and various enemies. The Soviet denunciation of Stalin risked discarding this weapon simply because Stalin had made some mistakes. But what if our common enemies used the weapon to kill us? “We had lifted a rock only to drop it on our own feet”.<sup>154</sup> The Chinese Chairman’s words indicated his increasing awareness of the danger in

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<sup>153</sup> Shi Zhe, *jianzhenglu*, 221-222; Shi Zhe, “Boxiong shijian yu Liu Shaoqi fangsu” [The Polish-Hungarian Crisis and Liu Shaoqi’s Trip to Moscow], *Bainian chao* [Hundred-year Tide] 2 (1997): 12.

<sup>154</sup> Shi Zhe, *Zhongsuguanxi jianzhenglu*, 222; Chen Jian, *Mao’s China and the Cold War*, 149-150; Deng Xiaoping repeated Mao’s words during his meeting with the Soviet delegation in July 1963, for an English translated version,

repudiating Stalin and his dogma, whose essential ideological and political elements had already been part of the Communist practice for decades. In Mao's judgment at this stage, a careless rejection of the orthodoxy, even it had been proved to be imperfect, could be channeled by the "class enemies" against the legitimacy of the Communist enterprise in general, a consequence that the Communist Mao felt responsible to keep from happening. Iudin duly conveyed Mao's words to Khrushchev after their meeting.

The Chinese top leaders' discussions on the Polish crisis and the Soviet-Polish relationship, together with Mao's talks with Iudin prior to the delegation's trip to Moscow, reveal Beijing's major concerns during the Polish unrest and in the run-up to the Hungarian events.<sup>155</sup> First of all, the Chinese wanted to signal their divergence from the "big power" approach deployed by the Soviets, which they considered responsible to a major degree for the crises' outbreak. This difference was furthermore understood by the top Chinese leaders as a pretext for adjusting the general principles regulating relations between the fraternal parties, challenging the take-for-granted seniority and superiority of the USSR in the Communist hierarchy. China justified this formula of Socialist equivalence as the best way to prevent similar crises from happening again. Nevertheless, it should be noted that Chinese advocacy of a more equitable adjustment between Soviet interests and those of the other members was primarily guided by its own political concerns. After Mikoyan's open speech in the CCP Eighth Congress, Mao and his comrades' suspicions of the opportunism of the new Soviet leaders (incubated at the time of the Twentieth Congress) deepened. The Chinese were always wary of any Soviet intention to downgrade the importance of the CCP and thus to crimp Chinese freedom of action. The Soviet military threat to the Poles had in effect provided Mao and the CCP with a good opportunity to express their discontent with the unequal relations between China and the Soviet Union (even if these were one-sidedly defined by Mao and his colleagues as the Soviets took their dominant position inside the camp for granted). In other words, Chinese discomfort at Soviet big-power chauvinism and its "father-son" mentality applied predominantly

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see "Meeting of the Delegation of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the Chinese Communist Party, Moscow, 5-20 July, 1963", *CWIHP Bulletin*, no.10 ( March 1998), p.176, sources from the Russian side.

<sup>155</sup> The Hungarian crisis turned out to be of a different nature as time went on. However, at this stage it was still amenable to the initial concerns of Beijing.

to China itself, however it might have been construed in Eastern Europe. The Polish anti-centralist campaign and subsequent unrest in the socialist camp offered China a pivot on which she could seek to redress the balance of relations among the Communist states more favourably to the PRC.

This assessment of the priorities of the Moscow missions, however, does not mean that Mao directly intended to challenge the dominant Soviet position within the international communist movement.<sup>156</sup> It is undeniable that Mao had already felt the pull of a strong aspiration towards ideological and political primacy immediately preceding late 1956, sometimes acting as if he had become the “new emperor” of the international Communist movement.<sup>157</sup> Moreover, the Chairman’s awareness of China’s future potential as a great power probably also affected his strategies to an unprecedented degree. Nevertheless, at least by early October 1956, Mao considered that China under his leadership remained deep within a process of internal socialist development, such that it was not ready to accede at once to international leadership. Realistically, the Soviets’ leading position was indisputable, not so much in political and ideological terms as on the back of dominance in military build-up and heavy industry, achievements that China could not hope to outstrip any time soon. China’s interests meanwhile lay on the side of Communist Camp unity, which went a long way to securing Chinese ideological ambitions and economic plans.

## **Conclusion**

The CPSU Twentieth Congress and Khrushchev’s secret speech marked a turning point in domestic politics in both Eastern bloc states like Hungary and Poland and in Mao’s Communist China. For the Hungarian and Polish Communist regimes, the dissipation of Stalinism occurred at an unfortunate phase in their development – in the immediate aftermath of the most difficult stage of industrialization and collectivization, but before new social institutions could take root, meaning that these states’ capacity to resist external and internal pressures came under

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<sup>156</sup> For the account given by some Chinese scholars see Shen Zhihua and Li Danhui’s conference paper, “The 1956 Polish Crisis and Sino-Polish Relations: sources from the Chinese Archival Documents and Inside Reports”, 8.

<sup>157</sup> Chen Jian and Yang Kuisong “Chinese Politics and the Collapse of the Sino-Soviet Alliance”, Westad ed. *Brothers in Arms*, 263-264.

extreme pressure. Objectively speaking, China was in a stage of socialist transition similar to that of Eastern Europe. In Mao's estimate, though, the Soviet de-Stalinization movement took place at an opportune moment, allowing the Chinese Communists license to seek a faster path to industrialization after the first success of transition of their socialist transition, which could be informed by the Stalinist experience but would not be slavishly bound by it.

This freedom to tap on a Chinese heritage permitted Mao to hold out the hope of projecting a socialist method of a genuinely global significance. Notably, one significant difference between Mao's understanding of a "characteristically Chinese" method of socialist construction before and after the Soviet denouncement of Stalin was that, from the end of 1955 to the early 1956, the Chairman positively agitated for a big leap forward in industrial production with the regional leaders; in the aftermath of Khrushchev's secret speech, Mao's being able to subscribe to re-assessment of Stalinist mistakes caused him to trim his previously radical development line into a relatively gradualist one despite his constant desire for rapid economic development. Given that it enjoyed a far greater measure of political and ideological autonomy from the Soviet Union than bloc states like Hungary and Poland, the Chinese Communist regime may have imagined it had its eye on a distinctive and liberal road to socialism other camp members could only admire. But, as we shall deal with both in the following and fourth chapters, the question remained how far could China would be able to revise the Stalinist model that had essentially served as a blueprint and road map to Mao's successful achievement of socialism. The aftermath of the October Hungarian Revolution would subject the Chairman's un-Stalinist policy adjustments in both political and economic realms to their severest test.

In contrast to Gerő regime's heavy reliance on Soviet leverage to contain domestic instability, the Polish Communist Party top leadership, at least the dominant figures, realized the great danger in re-echoing Soviet line and requiring direct Soviet backing in the revolutionary atmosphere of post-Poznan. The CCP's official statement in response to the CPSU Twentieth Congress and Chairman Mao's "On Ten Relationships" gave the Eastern bloc states the impression that the Chinese Communists favored an intro-bloc relationship based more on equality and autonomy than the Stalinist hierarchical pattern. The Poles evidently took the

initiative in setting up bilateral diplomatic and political contacts with Mao's Communist China aiming to tap the latter's support for their non-Stalinist and autonomous socialist development at home. As far as China's attitudes towards the Polish intention to reshape its relationship with the U.S.S.R. is concerned, Mao and his colleagues' perception of the nature of Polish October and their understanding of the balance in relations among Communist states were two key factors in deciding China's hard-line intra-bloc policy throughout late 1956. It is conceivable that the Chairman and his lieutenants regarded the Polish request for more independence in domestic affairs as a good opportunity to redress the Soviet-dominant politics inside the camp. At the same time, they acknowledged the usefulness of bloc unity and integrity to their national interests, coming down on the side of bailing out the Soviets' decision to restore order.

The Chinese also knew that their experience in dealing with the Eastern bloc states was limited alongside with that of Moscow, recommending for China the role of an arbiter, rather than that of the "center of international proletarian solidarity" or final decision-maker reserved for the Soviets. Furthermore, Mao, up to this point, namely by the latter half of October of 1956, already began to realize that to denounce the Stalinist doctrine in general would have meant to deny the Communist leaders like himself and the figures in Moscow, Warsaw, Budapest, etc., a crucial source of strength. As a result, whatever their disagreement with the Russians over the Chinese contribution to world revolution or Soviet policies as imposed on Hungary and Poland, the Chinese top leaders prudently acknowledged their junior status with the Soviets to other member states and planned to persuade the Soviet leadership to revive the legitimacy of Stalinism even if seeking greater equality with (or respect from) the U.S.S.R.

## **Chapter 3 China's Diplomatic and Political Involvement in the Hungarian Crisis October-November 1956**

The initial purpose of Khrushchev's inviting the Chinese delegation to Moscow was definitively to win Beijing's backing for the Kremlin's policy in the Eastern bloc and to ask the Chinese to induce the Poles to bow to Soviet domination. Although the Soviets had made advance preparations in military terms to respond to a crisis in Hungary, they do not seem to have anticipated the outbreak of the Hungarian riots immediately following the Polish events. The violence in Hungary, then, caught both Russians and Chinese on the hop. Beijing, further, had very limited information on Hungary, meaning that it was questionable whether the basic principles they had come with in their diplomatic mission to Moscow could apply or answer to the new situation. When the Hungarian crisis broke out on the day of the Chinese delegation's arrival, the Chinese leaders had quickly to decide which factors in the newly emerging Hungarian case were crucial in their political assessment of the revolt's character, and, further, how best to play their cards in maximizing Chinese influence in the Kremlin.

Although my analysis in this chapter will assess the special role Chinese played (or not) in the Soviet decision to pull out troops from Hungary, before sending them back in to suppress the October revolution, my focus bears rather on the rationality (or otherwise) of the Chinese leadership's decision-making in regard to the events. To a large extent, Beijing's limited knowledge of Hungary and the Chinese leadership's, chiefly Mao's, optimistic estimation of Hungarian developments had prevented Communist China from acting rationally in relation to the events. Coming to believe that the bloc was splitting, Mao and his colleagues were forced to reorient their political objectives from challenging the Soviet-centered order to advocating bloc unity in blunt neo-Stalinist terms. In studying these shifts in Chinese diplomatic and political objectives from the end of October through early November, we can see Beijing selected its line of upholding of Bandung principles, namely national independence, sovereignty, equality, and noninterference in internal affairs, for reasons of expediency. Once it felt that bloc unity and integrity were in real danger after Hungary, the CCP decisively

reasserted the necessarily hierarchical patterns of inter-state relations in communism. In the final analysis, the Chinese leadership's sense of basic, structuring laws in defining orthodox socialist revolution and construction, and basic laws relating the unity of all socialist states, drew heavily on the Stalinist pattern.

### ***Unexpected Crisis: The Chinese delegation in Moscow***

The Chinese delegation arrived on the afternoon of 23 October. According to Shi Zhe, its interpreter, the group was immediately puzzled as to why they were welcomed personally at the airport by Nikita Khrushchev without any retinue or intermediaries. As we now know, a Soviet Presidium session held before the Chinese delegation's arrival had determined that Khrushchev and other leaders should greet the Chinese at 11 a.m. on 24 October.<sup>1</sup> Khrushchev was motivated by a desire to win over the Chinese to whatever course of action in Eastern Europe chosen by the Soviets. At the airport, he struck the Chinese delegation as "extremely nervous", reciting a litany of complaints in relation to the crisis as well as expanding on domestic affairs to Liu Shaoqi as soon as they reached the Chinese group's guesthouse. The Chinese delegates got the impression that Khrushchev was desperate to secure Chinese support on various matters, especially the Eastern European bloc revolts and the CPSU inner party issues.<sup>2</sup>

With regard to the Polish crisis, Khrushchev outlined to the Chinese the Soviets' initial plan of intervening militarily in Warsaw, in order to preempt the Poles' 'treason' or departure from the

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<sup>1</sup> Khrushchev held a session with the Presidium members, in which they decided to meet the Chinese on 24 October. See ЦХСД, ф.3, on.12, д.1006, л.5, 506(TsKhSD, f.3, op.12, d.1006, l.5.), Chinese version see "Working Notes of the CPSU CC Presidium Session", in *Selected Historical Soviet Archive*, vol. 27, 49.

<sup>2</sup> Shi Zhe did not make it clear about what problems Khrushchev kept complaining about on the way to the guesthouse. It could be inferred from the later talk between Khrushchev and the Chinese delegation that he mainly discussed ethnic problems, the chaos in East Europe and inner party cadre issues. In regard to what these ethnic problems and inner party cadre issues were, Shi Zhe is silent. See Shi Zhe, "The Polish-Hungarian Incident and Liu Shaoqi's Visit to the Soviet Union," *Bainian Chao* [Tide of the Century], no.2(Beijing: 1997):13. It is said in Shi Zhe's other memoir, *Wo de Yisheng* [My Life], recorded by his daughter Shi Qiulang (Beijing: Renmin, 2001), 468-469, that Khrushchev had already told Liu Shaoqi of the anti-Communist nature of the Hungarian crisis on the way to the guest house from the airport on 23 October. This seems impossible given that Khrushchev still had no clear idea of the Hungarian turmoil at the time of his welcoming the Chinese delegation according to currently available Soviet documents on the Hungarian Crisis of 1956, see for example Malin's notes. Shi Zhe's article published in *Bainian Chao* therefore should be treated as the most reliable record of the Chinese delegation's stay in Moscow by far. Also see Jin Zhongji et. al. *Liu Shaoqizhuan*, 804.

socialist camp. But, Khrushchev told Liu, the U.S.S.R. had backed down from this last-ditch policy after a full day's negotiation and trust-building with the Poles. The Kremlin was thus now in a position tentatively to acknowledge the new Polish leadership. Knowing that his Chinese comrades enjoyed greater credit among the Poles than the Soviets, Khrushchev expressed the wish that the Chinese delegation could prevail on the Poles to keep up strong ties with Moscow. In the course of discussion, according to Shi Zhe, Khrushchev also criticised his previous actions, though exactly what he said on this matter is not recorded. Liu and Deng, despite their reservations as to the Soviet conduct, took the view that the Soviet Polish policy was already in accordance with the CCP's guidance and fell in line with the policy agenda previously arranged with Mao, promising Khrushchev their backing.<sup>3</sup> But when Khrushchev moved to wind the talks up apparently in raptures of delight, Liu Shaoqi asked him to stay on as Liu introduced a more important topic: the problem of Stalin. This was a theme that the Chinese had always intended to broach after the sequent of political disturbances took place in Eastern bloc in the second half of 1956. As Shi Zhe recalled, Liu Shaoqi said to Khrushchev that given that Lenin and Stalin were two swords [of world communism], one of them [i.e. Stalin] should not be thrown away.<sup>4</sup> Obviously, Mao and his colleagues considered their divergence with the Soviets over the evaluation of Stalin and Stalinism a very serious issue, pledging themselves to efforts to bring round Khrushchev to their standpoint during the delegation's visit. Nevertheless, the Chinese leadership was cautious enough to negotiate with Khrushchev on this issue solely via private meetings, preventing an open challenge to Khrushchev's treatment of Stalin either in front of the Soviet leaders or in public.

During his talks with the Chinese, Khrushchev received a phone call from Ernő Gerő, the new HWP leader appointed by the Soviets to displace Rákosi several months ago, asking for permission to cancel his visit to Moscow given the turbulence of Hungarian domestic affairs.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Shi Zhe, *jianzhenglu*, 223.

<sup>4</sup> Shi Zhe, *Bainian Chao*, 13; *jianzhenglu*, 225.

<sup>5</sup> Shi Zhe, *Bainian Chao*, 13; also see "Hungarian [sic] and Poland, 1956: Khrushchev's CPSU CC Presidium meeting on East European Crises, 24 October 1956," Kramer trans., *CWIHP Bulletin*, no.5 (Spring 1995):54. As András Hegedüs recalled, Gerő had remained in contact with Moscow through Andropov through the evening of 23 October before the escalation of the upheaval in the Hungarian capital. See András Hegedüs, *Hegejusi Huiyi lu* [Hegedüs's memoir] trans. Chen Zhiliu, Chai Pengfei (Beijing: Shijie Zhishi, 1992), 291. For a Hungarian version see *A történelem és a hatalom igazságában. Életrajzi elemzések* [Among History and Struggles, memoir of Hegedus Andras] (Budapest,



In fact, Gerő and other key figures had been away for several months only returning one day before the first demonstration took place, and lacked any action plan to deal with such an emergency. By the point Gerő talked to Khrushchev over the phone, the Hungarian turmoil had already reached breaking point and was moving beyond the control of the top Hungarian leaders. Strangely, although Gerő had already appealed for Soviet military assistance through the Soviet attaché in Budapest, he chose not to enlarge upon the current Budapest events directly to Khrushchev. Gerő most likely feared for his job in failing to communicate to Khrushchev the full extent of the disturbances; the Kremlin leader had a reputation for harshness and impulsiveness and could well have discarded Gerő summarily.

Shortly afterwards, Khrushchev received two phone calls from Marshal Georgy Zhukov, reporting a severe mass riot and relaying the request of the Hungarian government to mobilize the Soviet forces stationed outside Hungary. The Chinese delegation was thus inadvertently present during Khrushchev's conference with Zhukov on this issue. Both Khrushchev and Liu Shaoqi were surprised by Zhukov's report, as Gerő's earlier call had given no hint of impending insurrection. Putting down the phone, Khrushchev said immediately that since the Chinese representatives knew nothing about the Hungarian issue, he would not ask for their input at this point. He then invited the Chinese delegation to the CPSU Presidium session held the following day for further information. In regard to the Stalin question, Khrushchev seemed not to grant it any great significance and simply replied, "It was right to abandon the sword of Stalin since it was already useless." The development of events in Hungary then forced Khrushchev to abbreviate his discussion with the Chinese and rush off.<sup>6</sup>

Having left the Chinese delegation's guesthouse in haste, Khrushchev summoned an urgent Presidium plenary session to consider a Soviet response to the Hungarian events. As the Hungarian crisis had come upon the Soviet leaders while they were still locked in deliberations over the Polish case, a divided Kremlin quickly appreciated it could hardly afford another rent

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Interart,1990). András Hegedüs was named as the first vice prime minister by the Hungarian Party's Central Committee to assist Nagy's work on 23 October 1956. See *Magyarország miniszerelnökei*, "András Hegedüs: 1955.április 18.-1956.október 24.", 197-200.

<sup>6</sup> Shi Zhe, *Bainian Chao*, 13.

in its Eastern European front.<sup>7</sup> Against the backdrop of the Cold War, as Khrushchev later recalled, the double upheavals on the Soviet East European front could in the worst case precipitate a serious crisis in both the military and geopolitical sense if the Soviets found themselves cut off from their forces in the GDR.<sup>8</sup> Khrushchev immediately proposed sending troops to Budapest; most of the Presidium members agreed. Only Mikoyan advocated political measures such as delegating the management of the situation to Nagy and the Hungarians, while reserving force as a last resort after political measures had failed.<sup>9</sup> Other Soviet officials doubted Nagy's ability to take control when "the government is being overthrown", further taking the view that "there's no comparison [between the Hungarian case and] Poland". In Poland the Gomulka leadership clearly held the reins of power, while Gerő was making a direct request for Soviet military intervention since the events in Budapest were moving at too fast a pace for the Hungarian Worker's Party (HWP) to deal with on its own. Eventually, the Presidium had to make a decision to send troops to Hungary without unanimity. Seeking to nip unrest in Eastern Europe in the bud, Khrushchev ordered a first military intervention in response to the Hungarian's informal call for Soviet assistance.<sup>10</sup>

The Soviet leadership had de facto become aware of the signs of a general crisis in Hungary implicit in Hungarian society's demands for radical change long before incidents eventually broke out. As early as in July 1956, the Soviet Special Corps in Hungary began to draft a plan for "the maintenance, defense, and—if need be—restoration of the socialist order of society" by way of Soviet military force, an expedient given the code-name Volna ("Wave").<sup>11</sup> The plan

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<sup>7</sup> All the top leaders except Mikoyan favored a military resolution. Mikoyan's dissenting view advocated political measures, insisting that troops should be used only when it was necessary. The original note does not mention the time of this session, though according to the research of the working note author, it seems to have started after 10 pm (running from 10-11pm). Therefore Khrushchev would have summoned this session after he left Liu Shaoqi's lodgings; see "Working Notes from the Session of the CPSU CC Presidium on 23 October 1956", *Cold War International History Project (CWIHP) Bulletin*, no.8-9, 388-389.

<sup>8</sup> Khrushchev, *Khrushchev remembers: the Last Testament*, 199, 225.

<sup>9</sup> Mikoyan advised 'trying political measures, then sending troops'. TsKhSD, F. 3, Op. 12, D. 1006, Ll. 4-4ob, compiled by V. N. Malin, in *CWIHP Bulletin* 8-9, 388-389

<sup>10</sup> Khrushchev insisted that the Hungarian government should send a request for military assistance. See *CWIHP*, virtual archive, "Account of a Meeting at the CPSU CC, 24 October 1956, on the Situation in Poland and Hungary". [www.wilsoncenter.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=topics.home&topic\\_id=1409-56k-](http://www.wilsoncenter.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=topics.home&topic_id=1409-56k-). Gerő did not draft one and it was Hegedüs who eventually signed a letter requesting Soviet troops, which arrived in Moscow on 28 October via Andropov. See "Andropov Report, 28 October, 1956" in *CWIHP Bulletin*, no.5 (Spring 1995): 30.

<sup>11</sup> The Soviet troops stationed in Eastern bloc states were reconstituted in September 1955 (in the so-called Special Corps). The purpose of the Special Corps was to close down and defend the Austrian frontier and to safeguard lines of

included a "special order", which determined key sites to be protected in possible cooperation with Hungarian national defense organizations and the people's army, together with the number of firearms available. The formulation of "Volna" at this stage represented a defensive gesture, indicating that Soviet leaders wanted a reliable fall-back option in the event that their attempts to bolster political stability in Hungary did not work out.<sup>12</sup> In mid-October, the Soviet ambassador to Poland, Yuri Andropov, and the commander of Soviet forces in Hungary, General Lashchenko, sent letters to the CPSU and the Soviet General Staff, calling their attention to possible emergencies in Budapest. Considering the political situation to be worsening, Lieutenant General Lashchenko in the middle of October ordered his commanders to be ready to take necessary measures. Lieutenant General Evgenii Malashenko, who helped command the operation in Hungary in 1956, arrived in Budapest on the evening of October 22 to examine the state of affairs on the ground in person.<sup>13</sup> Therefore, before a formal request for military aid from the Hungarian government was made and a decision made inside the Kremlin, the Soviets already had detailed action plans to hand.<sup>14</sup>

Despite the 23 October decision to send troops to Budapest to be ready to carry out stringent security measures planned by the Soviets several months earlier, Khrushchev, however, did not entirely give up on the prospect of solving the Hungarian problem through largely political means. It was in order to offer an escape valve for political pressure that Khrushchev resolved to restore Nagy to political life, though he was not willing at this stage to rehabilitate him to the degree of letting him lead the Hungarian government. Sending Mikoyan and Suslov,

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communication in case the Soviet troops were withdrawn. In July 1956, a group of high-ranking Soviet Officials visited Hungary to inspect the Special Corps stationed there. These officials helped the command staff of the Special Corps in Hungary draw up plans for possible anti-riot and counterinsurgency operations in Hungary. See Mark Kramer, "New Evidence" *CWHP Bulletin* 08-09, 365; Miklós Horváth "Soviet Aggression against Hungary in 1956: Operations 'Wave' and 'Whirlwind'", in Lee W. Congdon, Bela Kiraly eds., *The Ideas of the Hungarian Revolution, Suppressed and Victorious, 1956-1999* (U.S.A: East European Monographs, 2003), 66.

<sup>12</sup> Alexander Kirov, "Soviet Military Intervention in Hungary, 1956" in Jenő Györkei and Miklós Horváth ed., *Soviet Military*, 132; Also see Shen Zhihua, "1956 nian shiyue weiji: zhongguode juece he yingxiang", in *Lishiyanjiu*, 2005, 133-134; Miklós Horváth "Soviet Aggression against Hungary in 1956: Operations 'Wave' and 'Whirlwind'", in *The Ideas of the Hungarian Revolution*, 67-69.

<sup>13</sup> Yevgeny I. Malashenko, "The Special Corps under Fire in Budapest: Memoirs of an Eyewitness" in Jenő Györkei and Miklós Horváth ed. *Soviet Military*, 221; Györkei and Horváth, "Additional Data" in *ibid*, 7-8; Shen Zhihua "1956 nian shiyue weiji: zhongguode juece he yingxiang", in *Lishiyanjiu*, 133.

<sup>14</sup> Malashenko, "The Special Corps under Fire in Budapest", 221, 7-8; also see Shen Zhihua, "1956 nian shiyue weiji", in *Lishiyanjiu*, 133-134; Györkei and Horváth, "Additional Data" in *Soviet Military*, 7-8; Miklós Horváth "Soviet Aggression against Hungary in 1956: Operations 'Wave' and 'Whirlwind'", 66.

Khrushchev's two key political allies in the Presidium, as envoys to Budapest, Khrushchev seems to have held out the hope, as suggested by Mikoyan in the 23 October Presidium session, that Nagy could do in Hungary what Gomulka had done in Poland for the Soviets.<sup>15</sup> But if Khrushchev was prepared to take a punt on Nagy, the newer Kremlin leaders had been in two minds about the Hungarian from the very beginning. Nagy was viewed with suspicion on account of his label as a New Course reformist and supposed nationalist; Rákosi, Gerő and some Soviet diplomats had also to a large extent succeeded in painting Nagy as variously rightist, opportunistic, stubborn and idealistic, someone "not an enemy, but with 'very dangerous thoughts'".<sup>16</sup> Aiming to hold the situation in check, Khrushchev therefore told Gerő to pass on to every Hungarian party leader that the MCP CC Plenum could not be held until the demonstrations were suppressed.<sup>17</sup> But this order notwithstanding, Gerő and his colleagues had already held a party plenum to discuss the riots, selecting Nagy, the most likely appeaser of the masses, as the new Premier on the night of 23 October.<sup>18</sup> As events unfolded, the Soviets' marked ambivalence over Nagy and their suspicion of his ability to alleviate the Hungarian conflict would become crucial factors in their final decision to replace the regime with pro-Soviet placemen.

Meanwhile, on the Chinese delegates' side, Liu Shaoqi made a phone call to Mao after Khrushchev left the guesthouse, giving an account on the situation in Budapest. Beijing thus indirectly received news of the Hungarian crisis at almost the same time with Moscow. Nevertheless, the process of the top Soviet leaders' evaluation of and decision-making with regard to the Hungarian incident undoubtedly remained closed to the Chinese. Liu's knowledge of the Hungarian crisis on 23 October was too shallow to act as a base for any detailed evaluation on the part of the Chinese. In fact, Beijing did not obtain corroborating

<sup>15</sup> It was Zhukov who suggested sending a CC Presidium member to Budapest; Khrushchev chose Mikoyan and Suslov, his closest allies, to carry out the mission. See Malin notes, CWIHP Bulletin 8-9, 388-389

<sup>16</sup> "Andropov's telegram to the Soviet Foreign Ministry, 12 October, 1956", in Shen Zhihua et. al. *Selected Historical Soviet Archives*, vol. 27, 274; A good reference with study on archival materials see Johanna C. Granville, *The First Domino*, 19-24; Rákosi's account of Nagy in his memoir see *Selected Historical Soviet Archives* vol. 26, 196.

<sup>17</sup> See CWIHP, virtual archive, "Account of a Meeting at the CPSU CC, 24 October 1956, on the Situation in Poland and Hungary". [www.wilsoncenter.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=topics.home&topic\\_id=1409-56k-](http://www.wilsoncenter.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=topics.home&topic_id=1409-56k-).

<sup>18</sup> Shen Zhihua, "1956 nian shiyue weiji: zhongguo de juece he yingxiang" in *Lishiyanjiu*, 127, his source is from АВПРФ, ф.0122, оп.40, 1956г, л.336 д.10 л.108, Орехов, События 1956 года, ИРИРАН, Советская внешняя политика, с.234.

reports on the latest developments in Budapest from its own resources or from foreign reports until 25 October.<sup>19</sup> It is likely that the Chinese would have harboured doubts that the Hungarian stand-off could exacerbate so quickly, seeing its coincidence with the high water-mark of the Polish unrest as a suspicious coincidence.<sup>20</sup> As one scholar has pointed out, Mao definitely had reason to be unhappy with Moscow's first military intervention into Budapest in late October, considering the Kremlin's decision hasty, irresponsible and arbitrary.<sup>21</sup> But without being factually well-informed, Mao and Liu held back from any clear statement in relation to the Budapest case either at home or in Moscow.<sup>22</sup>

In the meantime, the Chinese leaders also seemed to fear that unless they were properly settled, the major problems in Soviet-satellite relations would threaten the unity of the Communist camp. The Chinese thus adopted the line of helping the Soviets restore unity and moderating their criticisms of Soviet mistakes at this juncture. Having contacted Mao on the night of 23 October, Liu Shaoqi, together with Deng Xiaoping, next met the Chinese diplomats from Warsaw, who had been called to report the latest developments in Poland. After having considered their reports, Liu states, "the Central Committee decided [that the Chinese

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<sup>19</sup> As previously noted, the Chinese leadership mainly relied on routine reports from the Chinese embassy in Budapest to get first-hand information from that country. The situation only improved by November 1956, when two New China news agency journalists were sent to Budapest after the Soviet second intervention in Hungary. *Tass* reported the Budapest riots on 24 October, together with the Hungarian government's request of Soviet military assistance to restore order. This report was reprinted in the 26 October version of *Neican*, suggesting that the Chinese's earliest news of the riots in Budapest could only have come from Liu Shaoqi in Moscow. See *Neican*, no. 2035(26 October, 1956):1242-1243.

<sup>20</sup> The Chinese embassy in Budapest sent a telegram comparing the Hungarian events to the aftermath of the Polish Eighth Plenum, which would necessarily suggest to the Chinese leadership that the Hungarian demonstrations were stirred up by developments in Poland. This telegram was sent on 23 October before the demonstration and reached the Central Chinese leaders by noon, 24 October; see "Chinese Embassy in Hungary's Telegram to Foreign Ministry and the Central Party on the Great Impact of the Polish Party's Eighth Congress had on Hungarian domestic politics" 109-01041-01, pp. 1-2, CFMA.

<sup>21</sup> Yang Kuisong, *Mao Zedong yu Mosike de enen yuanyuan* [Past Kindness and Grudges between Mao Zedong and Moscow], (Jiangxi: Renmin, 2002), 390. With a relatively vague picture of what was happening in Budapest, Liu Shaoqi phoned Mao to solicit his opinion on Moscow's decision to intervene in Hungary. Mao thought it better not to give a clear answer on this matter. Yang says further that it was obvious that Mao was not onboard with Moscow's first intervention in Budapest. Yang Kuisong's statement here is remarkable in light of what we can reconstruct of Beijing's Beijing's major concerns at this moment. Unfortunately, Yang does not provide any reference to support his account, but the Chinese official declaration "More on the historical lessons of Proletarian Revolution" did not agree with Soviet first military intervention can corroborate his claim.

<sup>22</sup> Shen Zhihua's personal collection, Liu Shaoqi's "Report at the 1<sup>st</sup> Meeting of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Plenary Session of the Eighth Central Committee" in his article "Zhongguo dui dongou shiyue weiji de fanying he sikao", *Shixue Yuekan*, 75-85. It seems clear that the Chinese news reports on Hungary took the form of brief informative summaries without any official comment or special political colouring; this was the case up to 28 October, 1956. see New China News Report draft from 24 to 31 October 1956.

delegation in Moscow should] comment merely on Soviet big-power chauvinism, [as] too many criticisms at one time would be difficult for the Soviet side to accept." Liu also told his colleagues that enforcing conformity within the Eastern bloc through Soviet high-handedness would only speed the bloc's tendency to disintegrate, but that the Soviets did not understand the value of a more arm's-length relationship.<sup>23</sup> The latter part of Liu's words demonstrated that the Chinese leadership, Mao in particular, had already begun to conceive of a pattern of Soviet bloc unity different from that established by Stalin.

In relation to the Polish developments, Deng Xiaoping emphasized knowing the changes in personnel in the Polish politburo personnel after its Eighth Plenum reshuffle, laying especial weight on the positions of Gomulka and Rokossovsky respectively. He told the representatives of the Chinese embassy in Poland: "[we] should make more efforts in Soviet-Polish mediation. It needs to be noted, however, what [we] say to one side is very likely to be transferred to the other. Therefore, any view [of our side] that we judge improper to be known by either side [the Poles or the Soviets] should not be expressed. Despite the current situation of relations between the two parties being difficult, we should keep in mind that their relationship is likely to improve later."<sup>24</sup> In general, the Chinese delegates followed certain guidelines set by the CCP CC in dealing with East bloc conflicts, as Liu was later to recall in November; "first of all", the Chinese worked to advance "Sino-Soviet solidarity; second", they sought "to do [their] work smoothly", in other words, to avoid ructions either with the Poles or Soviets, or indeed between these parties, and "third", they were "careful [in the way they] made suggestions to fraternal parties." This line was dictated by the perception that stability in the Communist camp and a general fraternal and stable relationship with the USSR were for the Chinese the preconditions of their own security and development during the Cold War.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> The diplomats sent to Moscow on 23 October, 1956 from Warsaw Chinese embassy were Yu Zhan, then counselor, and Luo Yisu, interpreter in the embassy. Notably, the Chinese delegation did not raise the Stalin question again after 23 October's private meeting with Khrushchev. Luo Yisu, "the 1956 'Polish incident' and the Chinese policies", *Waijiao xueyuan xuebao* [Chinese Foreign Affairs University Bulletin], issue 3(1997):41-42; also see the author's interview with Luo Yisu, April, 2004.

<sup>24</sup> Luo Yisu, *ibid.*, 41-42. In Wu Lengxi's memoir, Mao said similar things in the discussion before the Chinese delegation was sent to Moscow, see *Shinian lunzhan*, 44-45.

<sup>25</sup> On the CCP's position in dealing with Eastern bloc conflicts, Liu said that "our guidelines are, first of all, Sino-Soviet solidarity; second, to do our own work smoothly; third, be careful to give suggestions to fraternal parties." Transcript of Liu Shaoqi's report at the Second Plenum of the Eighth Central Committee of the CPC, 10 November 1956.

On 24 October, another Soviet Presidium session was held with the Chinese in attendance.<sup>26</sup>

Liu Shaoqi, the Chinese representative, hoped the discussion would gravitate towards the issues of big-power Chauvinism, bloc unity (as discussed above, the reappraisal of Stalin would be temporarily laid aside) underlying their mission; at any rate, he used the convening of the Presidium members as a chance to meet all of its members. As the meeting in fact played out, the Presidium was devoted to a narrow and urgent consideration of Poland and Hungary.<sup>27</sup> In describing the Hungarian situation, Khrushchev said that the Soviet troops had entered Budapest, basically restoring social order and solving all but a few residual problems, such as the rebels' possession of a small number of strongholds. The Hungarian people had welcomed the Red Army and the Soviet tanks. He begged the Chinese comrades to understand this drastic measure on the grounds of its absolute necessity. Khrushchev further explained to Liu that the situation in Hungary had demonstrated "a counterrevolutionary tendency" of a completely different character from that in Poland, whose problems were constrained within the party. He stressed that the Presidium members had reached unanimity over the use of military means in the Hungarian case and that the Presidium had already dispatched Mikoyan to Budapest. It is plausible that Liu received an impression of the situation in Hungary as perplexing but still not entirely out of hand at this stage. To Khrushchev, the Chinese had a certain utility both in possibly soothing the Poles and as a counterweight in Soviet domestic politics to revanchist elements calling for the reassertion of Stalinist controls. As long as he could handle the Hungarian case without much difficulty, the Soviet First Secretary would seek to retain primacy in decision-making inside the Communist bloc, rather than genuinely consulting the Chinese for their suggestions. Nevertheless, Khrushchev felt it was necessary to justify the Soviet military intervention to Hungary and to emphasize the substantial differences between Hungary and Poland to the Chinese to ensure their support.<sup>28</sup>

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Quoted from Shen Zhihua's article "Zhongguo dui donggou shiyue weiji de fanying he sikao", *Shixue Yuekan*, 75.

<sup>26</sup> ЦХСД, ф.3, on.12, д.1006, л.5, 5об, Chinese version see *Selected Historical Soviet Archives*, vol.27, 49.

<sup>27</sup> Malin notes in *CWHP Bulletin* 8-9,389; Jin Zhongji et al., *Liu Shaoqizhuan*, 805.

<sup>28</sup> Shi Zhe, *Bainian Chao*, 13; also see Chen Jian, *Mao's China and the Cold War*, 152. For the Russian record see ЦХСД, ф.3, on.12, д.1005, л.52, for the Chinese version see *Selected Historical Soviet Archives*, vol. 27, 52-53. It should be noted that the Russian record says nothing further than the Soviet and Chinese sides exchanged views on the Polish-Hungarian crises (Cde. Khrushchev, Kaganovich, Bulganin, Molotov, Malinkov with Cde. Liu Shaoqi) omitting any account of what Khrushchev told Liu vis-a-vis current developments in Hungary. Since Malin notes were

Despite speaking in session for over two hours including interpreting time, Liu Shaoqi, following his directions from Beijing sent the previous night, did not set out an unambiguous Chinese position in the Soviets' first military intervention into Hungary. Instead, Liu spent much of his time on analyzing the Polish events in their essence, pointing out that the divergence between Warsaw and Moscow was a matter of interpretations of socialism, not a conflict between revolution and counterrevolution. In the CCP's judgment, the Polish party under Gomulka's leadership was only asking for autonomy, and not trying to dissociate itself from socialism, with the implication that Poland intended to remain a socialist country inside the Communist camp. Had the Soviet decided to use military force in settling a dispute between two socialist countries, this would have amounted to the Chinese to a major error. Having conveyed Beijing's support of Moscow's decision to solve the Polish dispute through negotiations, Liu thus stressed the necessity of analyzing the origins of the tensions emerging between the Soviet Union and the Eastern bloc states, such as Poland and Hungary.<sup>29</sup>

Liu's speech, then, centrally dilated on a theme he dubbed Soviet "big-power chauvinism". He attributed tensions between the Soviets, Poles and Hungarians primarily to overweening Soviet habits of interference and "hegemonising" in the Stalin era.<sup>30</sup> Liu's broad brush approach meant he did not deal with the Hungarian situation in detail, nor advance a view with regard to Moscow's direct military intervention, even though these two issues obviously formed the very crux of the matters under discussion at the meeting. Liu rather asked the Soviets to consider whether the nationalist sentiments in Poland and Hungary were essentially created by Stalin's chauvinism, which had spawned abnormal interstate relationship inside the socialist camp.<sup>31</sup> It seems that the Chinese delegation decided before the meeting to limit their

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served as keynote references to high-ranking officers, it is understandable that most of them were only memos of key points rather than anything more detailed.

<sup>29</sup> Shi Zhe, *Bainian Chao*, 14, *jianzhenglü*, 225-228; Jing Zhongji et al., *Liu Shaoqizhuan*, 805; for a detailed account of Liu's speech, see Chen Jian, *Mao's China and the Cold War*, 153.

<sup>30</sup> See Shi Zhe, *Bainian Chao* 14, *jianzhenglü*, 226; Jin Chongji et al., *Liu Shaoqizhuan*, 805.

<sup>31</sup> It should be pointed out that in Shi Zhe's article published in *Bainian chao* (pp.11-17), also in Chen Jian p.52, Liu Shaoqi is described as having offered no separate appraisal of the Hungarian incident. Liu only pointed out that both Polish and Hungarian crises were, to some extent, caused by Soviet "big-power chauvinism". In Shi Zhi's book, *Wo de Yisheng [My Life]*, however, Liu is described as saying that the Hungarian incident had external as well as internal causes. This seems to be a reference to Soviet interference on one side and the domestic difficulties of the Hungarian



discussion to the topics preselected in Beijing on 23 October, concerning in general terms the basis of fraternity on which all socialist nations should henceforth deal with each other. If this theme had a practical reference at all, it was not to Hungary but to the Soviet action, which the Chinese meant to commend, in defusing the Polish crisis through un-Stalin-like negotiations.

In denouncing big-power politics, Liu said that the Chinese Party had already openly raised the issue of anti-chauvinism and anti-nationalism in the Eighth Congress of the CCP with the view of bringing these matters to the attention of the masses. Seeking to capitalize on Khrushchev's own denunciation of Stalin to warn the Soviets against further blunders in foreign affairs, Liu told the Soviet leaders outright what the Chinese thought of Soviet behavior in the past. The Soviet manner of dealing with other socialist states, according to Liu, had imposed its own will insensitively; it would be better, Liu said, if the Soviets sought to "bring round the other party to your view; otherwise, they are the target of your attack." But it was improper, given a truly international vision of socialism, for the Soviets openly to attack other Parties, as they had in their articles against the Japanese Communist Party in 1950. Mao's second in command added that he saw *Pravda's* recent accusations against the Polish media in the same light.<sup>32</sup> "It is terribly wrong to consider only one's own interest while totally ignoring that of others, [something] which would bring grave harm to our shared Communist undertaking." To right interstate relationships within the bloc, Liu recommended that the Soviets embark on a course of post-Stalinist self-criticism, learning how to negotiate and cooperate properly with other socialist states.<sup>33</sup>

The Soviet Presidium members, according to Shi Zhe, were much agitated by Liu Shaoqi's direct critique of the Soviet Union, even if it was couched in the same terms that Khrushchev had used in critiquing Stalin. Khrushchev simply listened with his head bowed. Yekatrina

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party on the other. See Shi Zhe, *Wo de Yisheng* [My Life], 471. Shi Zhe's recently published (2005) oral recollection, *Zhongsuguanxi jianzhenglu*, also adopted the account of the article in *Bainian chao*. Li Haiwen, a trained historian who recorded and compiled Shi Zhe's memoirs, represents a possibly more reliable source than *Wo de Yisheng* [My Life].

<sup>32</sup> *Pravda*, the official paper of the Central Committee (CC) of the CPSU. The article against the Japanese party was "On the Japanese situation" of January, 1950; see Shi Zhe, *Jianzhenglu*, 227; the latter is most likely referred to "Antisovetskaya kampaniya v pol'skoi presse," *Pravda*, 20 October 1956.

<sup>33</sup> Shi Zhe, *Bainian Chao*, 14; also in his *jianzhenglu*, 227.

Furtseva, the CPSU Central Committee Secretary, could so little tolerate Liu's wording that she tried to walk out of the meeting room, only being compelled to take her seat again by a sharp glance from Khrushchev.<sup>34</sup> After returning to China, Liu's report, as delivered during the Second Plenary session of the Eighth Central Committee of the CPC in November 1956, noted "in my speech [to the Soviets], I criticized their big-state, big-nation chauvinist tendencies in dealing with relations with foreign countries, and in particular with fraternal communist parties. I also pointed out some mistakes and errors they had made in [handling] several specific matters. On this occasion, we finally expressed our views in a frank way."<sup>35</sup> He does not say whether the Soviets construed his criticisms to refer to their Hungarian misadventure. Apparently, however, a hidden purpose of the Chinese side to mention Stalin's past unequal treatment of the bloc member states was to remind Khrushchev and his colleagues not to make the same mistake on dealing with Polish and Hungarian issues.

Nonetheless, Liu made it very clear during the meeting that in any circumstance, "the center (of the international movement) can only be the Soviet Union." "Comrade Togliatti introduced a 'multi-centrality' thesis," Liu Shaoqi stated, "but we told the Italian comrade that we oppose[d] that thesis."<sup>36</sup> The CCP set out to align itself with the CPSU within the parameters of a robust debate. In other words, in light of the fear of the imperialists that the Soviet Union and China would bind together, the unity of the two parties (the CCP and the CPSU) stood as the essential principle of international relations to be preserved before all else. As Shi Zhe recalled, some of the Soviet leaders certainly bridled under his Chinese straightforwardness, even though he had laid great stress on the CCP's recognition of the Soviet leadership within the camp. More anecdotally, Shi Zhe's memoirs suggest that many Russians and Soviets thought it unacceptable that the Chinese Communists should determine Communism for them, jibing "so you (Chinese) then are the real Marxists." Any hidden complications notwithstanding, Khrushchev stated his view at the end of the meeting that the Soviet side agreed with Liu's

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<sup>34</sup> Shi Zhe, *jianzhenglü*, 227.

<sup>35</sup> Transcript of Liu Shaoqi's report at the Second Plenum of the Eighth Central Committee of the CPC, 10 November 1956. Quoted from Jin Chongji et al., *Liu Shaoqizhuan*, 805. Also see *Gongheguo wushinian zhenguidangan, shangce* [Fifty years Precious Archival Collection of the People's Republic, vol.1 of 2] (Beijing: Zhongguodangan, 1999), 515-518.

<sup>36</sup> Togliatti, leader of the Italian Communist Party, Liu's words see Shi Zhe, *Bainian Chao*, 14, *jianzhenglü*, p.227.

opinions and were open to hold another discussion on big-power politics with the Chinese.<sup>37</sup>

In what is now available from the Russian archives, the Soviet side kept a very brief note of meeting on the 24<sup>th</sup> of October penned by V.N. Malin, head of the CPSU General Department, with one or two sentences for every key point. The main course of the meeting, judging from the materials preserved from both sides, was dominated by Liu Shaoqi's speech. Careful comparative study of Shi Zhe's recollections and the Soviet Presidium session record reveals that the Soviet version, though much shorter than Shi Zhe's memoir, retains the major points of Liu's speech as conveyed by Shi Zhe's account, notably the Chinese acceptance of the peaceful resolution to the Polish question and China's support of a hierarchical organization for the communist camp with the Soviet Union as the center. Malin's notes does touch on Liu's attestation that "there are mistakes [on the Soviet side], which needed to be overcome." Malin also comments or annotates, "in some occasions, [we] did impose [our] views on the others." It is significant that in the Soviet record, all specific incidents mentioned by Liu were left out; further, all traces of Chinese criticism in the *Pravda* article and any suggestion of a new relationship between the socialist states has been effectively expunged.<sup>38</sup> No conclusive judgment can be made concerning whether the Soviets omitted any treatment of the substantive matters of Liu's speech because Malin notes were typically short or because they were unhappy ideologically with the Chinese line. One thing for certain was that it was unprecedented for the top Soviet leaders to face such direct criticisms by another socialist party within the Kremlin, making it understandable if Malin chose to omit these unpleasant words (at least to the Soviets) from his note.<sup>39</sup>

In Shi Zhe's much more detailed account of the session, Khrushchev showed enough patience

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<sup>37</sup> ЦХСД, ф.3, он.12, д.1005, л.52, Shi Zhe, *Bainian Chao*, 15; Shi Zhe, *jianzhenglü*, 228; Jin Chongji et al., *Liu Shaoqizhuan*, 805; Chen Jian, *Mao's China and the Cold War*, 337. the Chinese version see *Selected Historical Soviet Archives*, vol. 27, pp52-53;

<sup>38</sup> Shi Zhe, *jianzhenglü*, 225-228; The Russian record see ЦХСД, ф.3, он.12, д.1005, л.52, (TsKhSD, f.3, op.12, d.1005, l.52.), for the Chinese version, see *Selected Historical Soviet Archives* vol. 27, 52-53. Words in [ ] are added by the author on the basis of a comparative study of the material from Chinese and Soviet sides.

<sup>39</sup> It is impossible to say definitively that Shi Zhe's recollection of this meeting is the most reliable and least likely to be clouded by exaggerations, distortions and retrospective face-saving. Yet comparative studies of Shi Zhe's words and the Malin note establish that the reliability of the key part of Shi Zhe's recollection of the Chinese delegation's visit to Moscow.

and humility to hear out the Chinese criticisms of Soviet mistakes. As far as it is possible to reconstruct Khrushchev's motives, it seems that Khrushchev needed to ensure Chinese political support for his project of shoring up Eastern bloc unity. As long as the Chinese criticisms of big-power chauvinism restricted themselves to Stalin's mistakes, the First Secretary was resigned to accepting them. Of course, Khrushchev's willingness to bear up under the Chinese chargesheet of Stalin's mistakes was also rooted in his portrayal of himself as innocent of Stalinist crimes and as a reformist of the Stalinist legacy. In Khrushchev's own words, "a normalization of relationship[s with the other socialist states] must be established on a new base" to the Stalinist one. The First Secretary of the CPSU therefore claimed: "we had to learn to listen to unpleasant criticisms, learn to understand people complaining about the Stalinist measures", and "we had to eat the sour vegetable soup cooked by Stalin."<sup>40</sup> Interestingly, although Khrushchev largely got what he wanted from Mao's regime, namely mediation and support, his meek manner to the Chinese, however sincere, played a subtle but crucial role in making the CCP imagine it made a significant achievement in inducing the Soviet leadership to recognize their mistakes in dealing with other socialist states and furthermore wielded some influence in changing Soviet absolute dominant position in dealing with the intro-bloc issues that had been legitimized by Stalinist system.

On 26 October, members of the Chinese delegation attended another meeting held by the CPSU Presidium. Given that Khrushchev had given the nod to another discussion on the theme of 24 October, namely great-power politics, Liu Shaoqi and his comrades had supposed they would be getting another chance to air their views on "big-power chauvinism", preparing for a whole-day session on the 25<sup>th</sup>. But Khrushchev deliberately steered discussion away from the theme of great-power politics, instead raising Poland and Hungary. Khrushchev apparently had little appetite for another round of discussion of former and present Soviet wrongdoings as alleged by the Chinese, possibly caused by the Kremlin collective leadership's opposition to repeat these topics. Moreover, despite the fact that Khrushchev had agreed with Liu's opinions expressed on 24 October, the post-Stalin leaders were evidently annoyed at the

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<sup>40</sup> Nikita Khrushchev, *Nijita Heluxiaofu, Heluxiaofu huiyilu* (quanyiben) [Nikita Khrushchev, Khrushchev remembers, a complete version, 3 vols.] vol.3(Beijing: Shehuikexue wenxian, 2006), 2269.

explicit manner in which the Chinese had criticized Soviet behaviours, while also holding serious reservations with regard to the Chinese suggestion for establishing equal relations inside the camp.<sup>41</sup>

Therefore, noting that Khrushchev and his colleagues shied away from the sensitive question of big-power politics, Liu made the decision to swerve the “big issues” designated by the Chinese, instead stating Chinese views on Polish-Hungarian issues and help the Soviets to preserve bloc unity. During the 26 October meeting, Liu Shaoqi told the Presidium that, in their opinion, the Polish treatment of Rokossowski represented the central question in terms of the cohesiveness of Polish-Soviet and, by implication, bloc relations. In Liu’s view, Rokossowski should stay on in his post of Polish State Defense Minister.<sup>42</sup> It would not be appropriate, Liu said, for Gomulka to retaliate against those who had put him on trial or placed him under arrest.<sup>43</sup> The Soviet leaders could not agree more, but told Liu that awkwardness between the Soviets and the Poles had prevented them from conveying this idea to Gomulka themselves. Liu volunteered the Chinese for this role as a mediator, provided an opportunity arose. The CPSU First Secretary then made the suggestion that Liu Shaoqi visit Warsaw, a proposal to which Liu was amenable provided he had Mao’s authorization and an invitation from the Poles.<sup>44</sup>

The Chinese side had actually expected the Soviets to ask them to step in with the Poles given that a far more damaging crisis was threatening to flare up on the Hungarian front. But with the Polish-Soviet standoff to some extent unresolved, Liu was forced to be even more cautious in his criticism of previous Soviet mistakes. While the Chinese delegation failed to adopt a policy line vis-à-vis Hungary, they were extremely conscious of the dangers involved in successive upheavals inside the Soviet bloc. In the eyes of the Chinese Communists, the most dangerous tendency of these events was the increasing political disunity of the Communist Camp, which

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<sup>41</sup> Shi Zhe, *jianzhenglu*, 229.

<sup>42</sup> See TsKhSD, F. 3, Op. 12, D. 1005, LI. 53-53ob, 62-62ob, compiled by V. N. Malin. Malin Notes from the Session of the CPSU CC Presidium on 26 October 1956, Published in *CWIHP Bulletin* 8-9, 389; Shi Zhe, *jianzhenglu*, 229.

<sup>43</sup> In Malin notes, it is recorded as: “Gomulka is taking this to extremes”, *CWIHP Bulletin* 8-9, 389.

<sup>44</sup> Shi Zhe, *jianzhenglu*, 229. Malin notes for the same suggestion do not record the Soviet suggestion of Liu’s visit to Warsaw.

could only be exploited by the western powers to attack world communism. It is therefore conceivable that at this stage the Chinese favored a peaceful settlement of the Polish-Soviet conflict partly through their own diplomacy, hoping that the readjustment of Polish-Soviet relations within the framework of Soviet bloc unity could serve as a model for Hungary and other states inside the Communist camp. Most likely on this basis, Beijing sent a message to Warsaw shortly after the 26 October CPSU Presidium meeting via its own channel, asking to send a Chinese delegation led by Liu Shaoqi to Poland. The Polish leaders knew that the Chinese vice chairman and other CCP key leaders had been in Moscow for days and turned down the Chinese request, probably on the grounds that the Chinese would be no more than emissaries of the Soviets.<sup>45</sup> After being knocked back once, Chairman Mao decided to take up matters in person.

Liu, in representing the CCP leadership, clearly expressed his disagreement with the move to oust the Soviet appointee Rokossovsky from his Polish military post during the CPSU Presidium session of 26 October. His attitude reflected the Chinese Central Party's misgivings regarding the possible chain effect of the Polish example on other bloc states and the region as a whole. Interestingly, as late as 24 October, the Chinese took the line that the major problem in Soviet-satellite relations was the danger of a return to Stalinism, meaning that their consistent advice to the Soviets was to hold to a principle of "non-interference in others' domestic politics."<sup>46</sup> By 26 October, however, one can detect signs that the Chinese regime was becoming increasingly concerned over the disintegrative effects that Polish intransigence might have on the other bloc states, in the first instance, Hungary. Before examining Mao's specific steps in seeking to persuade the Poles to make concessions, there are several questions we should try to clear up: why and how did the Chinese shift their focus from requests for a more equal pattern of relations to a concern with possible disintegration in Eastern Europe? Why didn't they understand these considerations as contradictory?<sup>47</sup> To

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<sup>45</sup> Author's interview with Luo Yisu, April, 2004. According to Luo, Liu Shaoqi later said this himself.

<sup>46</sup> ShiZhe, *jianzhenglu*, 227.

<sup>47</sup> Although in Mao's view Soviet Chauvinism was serious and worth getting to grips with, an attempt on the part of the Poles to wreck the basic unity of the socialist camp risked a possible "domino" effect, that would certainly not be in the Chinese's best interests. Mao had already framed the terms of the Chinese delegation's mission before they set out for Moscow; the party would mediate between the Soviets and Poles under a precondition of socialist camp unity and

meet these points, it is necessary, first and foremost, to look at Beijing's reaction to the dramatic outbreak of the Hungarian Revolution and to the Chinese leadership's reconceptualization of the situation inside the bloc.

### ***Beijing's efforts to rescue bloc unity***

In fact, Mao summoned a series of Politburo Standing Committee, Politburo and Politburo enlarged sessions from 24 October (Beijing time) through to 31 October. It appears that these meetings were convened very shortly after Mao had heard from Liu on the evening of 23 October, Moscow time, that Hungary was in open revolt.<sup>48</sup> The Chairman and the central party paid close attention to the Polish and Hungarian crises guided by both domestic and external considerations. As Bo Yibo recalled, the leadership attacked these crises intellectually as holding within them various contradictions, or more specifically unsolved problems, persisting under the socialist system.<sup>49</sup> This understanding led the Chinese unavoidably to associate the Polish and Hungarian crises with domestic unrest among students, peasants and workers that China had itself suffered in 1956 (an in-depth analysis of Chinese domestic considerations is offered in Chapter 4). Equally importantly, there was a new need to re-examine Soviet-satellite relations given the urgent need to restore Communist bloc stability and unity in the more volatile post-Twentieth Congress atmosphere.

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would also seek to make other political gains for the Chinese.

<sup>48</sup> Discussions of the Hungarian crisis followed Mao's normal pattern of dealing with domestic and external events: when a situation was still not clear to him, he would hold an enlarged session soliciting various views and ideas; as the state of affairs getting clear, Mao would confine the topic within a smaller circle, say the Politburo; when things became clearer and Mao made a judgment, he would hold a wider-range discussion again. The Central Committee meetings on Polish Crisis began on 21 October; from 21 October to 9 November, 1956, thirteen to fourteen enlarged Politburo sessions sat on the Polish and Hungarian crises and relevant issues. See Bo Yibo, *huigu*, 595-600; *ZNP*, 632: 27<sup>th</sup>, 29<sup>th</sup>, 30<sup>th</sup>, 31<sup>st</sup> of October 1956; According to Wu Lengxi, then head of the New China News Agency who sat in most of the Politburo meetings, the Politburo members led by Mao had been mainly working on the talks held in Moscow about the Polish-Soviet relations from the 23rd to the 30th. At the same time, the delegation cabled a daily report on the progress of the Sino-Soviet and the Sino-Polish talks. However, a key problem with Wu's recollection is that the Polish leadership under Gomulka in fact remained in Warsaw instead of presenting at Moscow meetings during the period of the Chinese delegation's appearance at the Kremlin. It was, therefore, impossible for the Chinese representatives in Moscow to hold talks with the Poles and Soviets separately and write reports back to Beijing. See *CWIHP* Virtual Archives, "Account of a Meeting at the CPSU CC, on the Situation in Poland and Hungary, 24 Oct. 1956": "On 23 Oct. 1956 Comrade Gomulka told the CPSU CC that he would accept the invitation and that he would arrive after 11 Nov. 1956." See [www.wilsoncenter.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=topics.home&topic\\_id=1409](http://www.wilsoncenter.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=topics.home&topic_id=1409) - 56k -

<sup>49</sup> This trend is arguably reflected in the People's Daily editorials issued after the Soviets' second intervention into Hungary and China's announcement of its position on November 1; see my section on Hungary and "More on the historical lessons of Proletarian Revolution". See also Wu Lengxi, *Shinian lunzhan*, 71-72, 83-91 and fn.118.

As far as we can make out, the position adopted at this stage by the PRC was highly ambiguous, reflecting both the uncertainty of the Chinese leadership over the basic character of the Hungarian incident and its inherent caution. The first Soviet response to the sudden crisis in Budapest, in contrast to its wavering over Poland, was fast and effective. Soviet troops had already entered the Hungarian capital on the morning of 24 October, within 12 hours of the situation's beginning to unravel. The Chinese were at this stage without a position, though it is important to note that they had, simultaneously with the uprisings, underlined their opposition to Soviet big-power politics, which might be taken to imply that their sympathies were on the side of the rebels.<sup>50</sup> At the same time, China's political and ideological interests lay in the consolidation of the Communist camp, in particular the Eastern bloc states' bond with the Communist camp and China's bond with the Soviet Union.<sup>51</sup> The outbreak of violent opposition in Hungary this presented the Chinese with both an opportunity and a threat. They could use the crisis as a stick with which to beat Soviet chauvinist traditions (as Liu Shaoqi had done successfully in Moscow), but this line risked jeopardizing the total solidarity and security of the international Communist camp, which the Chinese acknowledged depended on Soviet hegemony. Without enough information to make assessments of the origin and nature of the Hungarian revolution, the Chinese leadership apparently refrained from either endorsing or rejecting it.

From the initial worsening of the situation in Budapest on 23 October up to the end of the month, Beijing had de facto three major channels to obtain information on Hungary: Chinese intelligence sources in the Eastern bloc, the delegation in Moscow and news reports (from both West and East). The New China News Agency offered its first foreign news roundup on the development of the Hungarian situation on 25 October, forwarding *Tass's* report of Nagy's election as the new Premier and the failure of the "anti-people" disturbances in Budapest. Up to 25 October, to the best of Chinese knowledge, the major Western news media had made almost no detailed reports of the Hungarian tension.<sup>52</sup> The CCP was very much averse to

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<sup>50</sup> *Mao zhuan*, 603.

<sup>51</sup> See for example, Mao's conversation with Tito in September, 1956; Liu's speech delivered on 24 October in the CPSU CC Presidium session quoted above.

<sup>52</sup> United Press (UP, USA) published a news report on "Free Europe" intensified its attempts to broadcast to the



basing its evaluation of the events solely on a Soviet definition of the riots, leading them to place much more weight on independent sources and feedback from their own delegation.

Aiming to get to the bottom of the Hungarian situation, the Foreign Ministry, under the direction of the Party Center, cabled the Chinese embassy in Budapest for prompt information "on the Hungarian domestic political situation and the standing of members of the Hungarian Central Party, that of Imre Nagy in particular."<sup>53</sup> In the meantime, the Ministry also requested the Chinese embassies in the neighboring East bloc states (Czechoslovakia, Romania, Bulgaria, the GDR and Albania) to report local feedback to the Hungarian situation.<sup>54</sup> In the telegram sent to Budapest, the Foreign Ministry stressed the need for relevant materials from the embassy to be "objective as to avoid by all means the repetition of others' views." Moreover, Chinese diplomats in Budapest "should not rashly express views or draw hasty conclusions with regard to the Hungarian political situation when meeting with their Hungarian or other socialist country counterparts."<sup>55</sup> This message, stressing independent judgment and caution in dealing with the Hungarian case, was causally related to the Central Party's critical comment on the pro-Soviet attitude of the Chinese embassy in Poland.<sup>56</sup> Forewarning their Budapest colleagues against uncritical alignment with Moscow, the Center also sought to inform itself on Imre Nagy, who presented certain parallels with Gomulka in Poland and was becoming the focal point of domestic aspirations from all sides in Hungary. Nagy's ability to restore order to his country, while bringing Hungary back into the Communist fold, became, for the CCP leaders, the litmus test determining the formation of Chinese policy towards Hungary.

But unfortunately Beijing's instructions never reached the Chinese embassy in Budapest.

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Eastern bloc states. British and American meanwhile were still devoting more attention to Poland, criticizing the relationships between the Soviet Union, Poland and other socialist states. *Neican*, no.2034 (25 October, 1956):1232-1245; no. 2035 (26 October,1956): 1243-1245.

<sup>53</sup> "Foreign Ministry telegram to the Chinese embassy in Hungary: for a quick report on the current Hungarian domestic political situation and the Hungarian Party's status, 24 October,1956" 109-01041-01, p.9, *CFMA*.

<sup>54</sup> "Request for collecting local feedback to the Polish-Hungarian incidents, telegrams to embassies in GRD, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, Albania" 109-00972-01,p.8, *CFMA*.

<sup>55</sup>"Foreign Ministry's Telegram to Chinese Embassy in Hungary in Urging it to send back reports on the current Hungarian domestic situation and the condition of the Hungarian Central Party",109-01041-01, p.9,*CFMA*.

<sup>56</sup> "Foreign Ministry's telegram to Wang Bingnan" 109-00762-02, p.8, *CFMA*. The telegram sent to Budapest was worded almost identically, cautioning against this improper way of "echoing others' views", despite being sent on 24 October, one day later than that to Warsaw.

Since there was no radio or telephone hotline over which the Chinese diplomats could get in touch directly with Beijing, they were forced to rely on routine contacts made through the Hungarian public telecommunication system (both telephone and telegram). However, ever since 23 October, communications between Beijing and Budapest had been disrupted by the paralysis of lines out of Hungary.<sup>57</sup> For example, the two cables arriving in Beijing on 25 October were actually delayed by more than half a day, even taking into account the 7-hour time lag between China and Hungary. These two telegrams, which reported Gerő's speech and the student demonstration respectively, were useful in helping the top leaders understand the initial aims of the college student demonstration, namely, to express support for the Polish revolution and to demand similar democratic changes in Hungary.<sup>58</sup> Events as they unfurled, though, were too fluid to be evaluated on a basis of "news" reports more than one day old, meaning that the CCP leaders could place little faith in updates from Budapest. The time lapse between sending and receiving messages necessarily contributed to the Chinese floundering for a response to the crisis in its first two days.

While Beijing was effectively left on its own, the Chinese embassy in Budapest, according to its attaché Xia Daosheng, followed the dramatic developments on the ground throughout the night of 23 October. In the evening, Hao Deqing, the ambassador and a Communist who had joined the party in 1928 and had a long experience in carrying out Party propaganda work at provincial level, held a plenary meeting to assess what they knew of the disturbances. To their knowledge, one group of Hungarians had marched to Stalin square (today's Város Liget) chanting the slogan "Russians get out" before proceeding to tear down Stalin's statue. According to Chinese eyewitnesses, a thick iron chain had been looped round Stalin's neck while the statue's base was sliced through with an oxygen cutter. A crane then appeared in the

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<sup>57</sup> Hungarian foreign telecommunication connections were temporarily cut from midnight of 23 October, reconnected the afternoon of 25 October and became completely paralyzed on 26 October. The Chinese embassy thereafter used the Hungarian foreign ministry connection between Budapest and its Beijing embassy to send ciphered telegrams to and from the Chinese Party center. From 23 October to 4 November, communication between Beijing and Budapest via telegrams was delayed on average by one and a half or two days, though normally there was a seven-hour time difference between Budapest and Beijing to be counted in the time gap between sending and receiving. See "Reasons the Chinese embassy was not able to send reports promptly" 109-01041-01, p.16, *CFMA*; interview with Xia Daosheng, 16 April, 2004.

<sup>58</sup> See "Report on the student demonstrations in Budapest" 109-01041-01, pp3-4; "Gerő's radio speech delivered at night of 23 October" 109-01041-01, pp4-5, *CFMA*.

square, attached the iron chain and toppled the statue. The masses immediately converged on Stalin, kicking him and dragging him across the ground.<sup>59</sup> Hao and his colleagues formed the view that this action must have been premeditated rather than spontaneous.

Furthermore, the protesters had apparently shouted "Koreans out" at Asian-looking passers-by. Told that these people were Chinese, the Hungarians then called "Chinese out". The veracity of these claims, it should be stressed, rests entirely on the reliability of the account of Chinese embassy staff in Budapest. Taken aback by the nationalism of the Hungarians, the Chinese judged it unsafe to venture out after dark. At around 9 pm, gun shots were fired, precipitating a free-for-all. Violence spread over in Budapest with the city's Police Station, powder magazine and railway station all seized by the rebels. Having led efforts at political indoctrination in the provinces for almost twenty years, Hao immediately sensed the potential danger of these demonstrations; even if they were caused only by hot-headedness, the riots were extremely liable to be manipulated later by "reactionaries", and the evidence anyway suggested a serious controlling intelligence targeting sites of military and political significance. Hao and his colleagues therefore concluded that initially peaceful anti-Soviet demonstrations had mutated into counterrevolutionary *putsch*, conveying this judgment in a telegram to Beijing on 24 October.<sup>60</sup>

Meanwhile, Hao Deqing's actions were primarily concerned to ensure the safety of his staff in the face of a deteriorating situation. He locked up the embassy front door and gathered most of the staff in the lodging house, with only a few deputed to guard the office block. But beyond further securing a diplomatic delegation and Chinese exchange students in Budapest, Hao

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<sup>59</sup> According to the Soviet record, Khrushchev also raised the issue of Stalin's statue in the CPSU CC Politburo meeting of 24 October, which the East German and Bulgarian leaders also attended. Khrushchev's account of this incident, however, was slightly different from that of the Chinese embassy. Khrushchev said, "the bandits wanted to tear down the statue of Stalin. But when they were unsuccessful in this task, they seized a welder's torch and cut the statue to pieces, and then disposed of the whole thing". The Soviet report suggests less forethought on the part of the rioters than the Chinese. "Account of a Meeting at the CPSU CC, 24 October, 1956: on the Situation in Poland and Hungary", CWIHP Visual Archives.

<sup>60</sup> Interview with Xia Daosheng; for the telegram sent on 24 October, see "Briefing on the reactionary riots in Budapest, telegram to the Foreign Ministry and the Central Party" 109-01041-01, pp.10-11; "List of the Hungarian party and government leaders' reshuffle", 109-01041-01, p.8; "The formation of the Hungarian temporary tribunal", 109-01041-01, p.12; "On the safety of our personnel after the Budapest reactionary riots" 109-01041-01, p.7, CFMA.

took not to involve himself in Hungarian politics without the authorization of the Central Party.<sup>61</sup> On 31 October, when officials from the previous Rákosi's regime came to the Chinese embassy seeking asylum, Hao Deqing got the guard to direct them to the Soviet embassy.<sup>62</sup> There was almost no contact between the Chinese embassy and the new Hungarian regime after the outbreak of the riots, with Chinese diplomatic connections with other socialist state embassies also being intermitted by violence in the capital. The ambassador's action in battering down the hatches was successful in safeguarding Chinese nationals, but had the evident drawback of cutting the Chinese off from all sources of information regarding events outside. Previously, in the Polish case, a constant stream of communications between the Chinese mission and high-ranking Polish and Soviet officials, together with in-depth reports from Xie Wenqing on the economic, political and social background of the troubles, had yielded for Beijing a tolerably comprehensive picture of the Polish October. The Chinese embassy in Budapest was in another situation altogether. It had not established a close working relationship with its Soviet counterpart and was compelled to allow its contact with the Hungarian leadership to drop almost entirely after the outbreak of the demonstrations. As a result, the Chinese embassy mainly relied on broadcasts and leaflets to follow the course of the events, a task further complicated by the fact that official newspaper publications has been suspended for several days even prior to the riots. In making its final decisions, therefore, the Central party leadership had to make do with a particularly thin knowledge basis as provided by their Hungarian informants.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> "Foreign Ministry's Telegram to Chinese Embassy in Hungary in Urging it to send back reports on the current Hungarian domestic situation and the condition of the Hungarian Central Party", 109-01041-01, p.9, *CFMA*.

<sup>62</sup> Interview with Xiao Daosheng; Rádványi, "The Hungarian Revolution and the Hundred Flowers Campaign" :122-123; "On the safety of our personnel after the Budapest reactionary riots" 109-01041-01, p.7, *CFMA*, which also reported that the delegates and exchange students were also out of harm's way; see also Hao Deqing, "Thirty Years of My Diplomatic Career" in Pei Jianzhang ed., *Diplomatic Careers of Contemporary Chinese Envoys* (Beijing: Shijie Zhishi, 1995), p. 65; "Telegram from the Chinese Embassy in Budapest to the Foreign Ministry and the CCP CC: On the rejection of the request of the former General Secretary of the Hungarian Party to borrow a car from the Chinese embassy" 109-01041-01, p.70, *CFMA*.

<sup>63</sup> According to János Rádványi, a high-ranking official in the Hungarian Foreign Ministry in charge of Asian affairs with close ties to Hao Deqing, the Chinese ambassador in Budapest, the Chinese embassy had established a very effective information network within the Hungarian Communist Party and government. The embassy even gained the reputation of "the best informed foreign post" in the capital. Hao's caution in dealing with the Hungarian events can possibly be explained by his understanding of the complexity of the Hungarian domestic situation and uncertainty of the real nature of the Nagy's regime. See Rádványi, "The Hungarian Revolution and the Hundred Flowers Campaign," :121-129.

Messages sent on 24 October from the Chinese embassy in Budapest arrived in Beijing in the early morning of 26 October.<sup>64</sup> The same day, the New China News Agency journalist in Prague sent back a news report, corroborating the Budapest Embassy's claim that the unrest had been stoked by reactionaries, who had taken advantage of initially peaceful popular parades to stir up Soviet and anti-communist feeling. According to the Prague briefing, the protests had already passed the point where they had become full-blown armed civil disturbances.<sup>65</sup> Before noon on 26 October, the CCP's leaders were aware of the complexity of the Hungarian uprising, at least insofar as they believed that basically popular events had taken on a "counterrevolutionary" character as a result of dissatisfaction with the Soviet Union and Rákosi's regime being brought to a head by provocateurs. The Budapest telegram read: "gunshots continued the whole night...part of the Hungarian state security (AVH) forces joined the reactionary side and fired on the Public Security force...the Soviet troops had already entered the city."<sup>66</sup> Even worse, "the reactionaries broke into public places and houses and killed some public security personnel and common people". Yet it appeared that the response of the reshuffled Hungarian party and government was to look entirely to Soviet troops to quell the situation after having made no preparation for any form of disturbance.<sup>67</sup> It was thus difficult for the CCP to get hold of what was happening in Hungary, but obviously equally difficult for them to give the okay to the Soviets' flagrant invasion of a fellow socialist state.

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<sup>64</sup> "Briefing on the reactionary riots in Budapest", telegram to the Foreign Ministry and the Central Party" 109-01041-01, pp.10-11; "list of the reshuffled Hungarian party and government leaders", 109-01041-01, p.8; "on the formation of the Hungarian temporary tribunal", 109-01041-01, p.12; "On the safety of our personnel after the Budapest reactionary riots" 109-01041-01, p.7, *CFMA*.

<sup>65</sup> This date was the exact time for the completed draft to be cabled. Usually news would be published in the newspaper at least one day later than this date. In fact, this piece apparently featured in the newspaper on the 27<sup>th</sup>. According to the report, reactionaries had piqued anti-Soviet and anti-people's democratic feelings in an initially peaceable students' parade, before laying on well-organized armed riots. See New China news report manuscripts for 27 and 28 October, *Budapeisi dengdi xuesheng juxingyouxing, fangemingfenzi liyong youxing zhizao baoluan* [26 October 1956 New China News Agency Cabled from Prague], *News drafts of New China News Agency: 27 October 1956*, published by New China News Agency, Beijing p.48. *Budapeisi baoluan shangwei pingxi : xinhuashe bulage dian* [The Riots in Budapest still not have been suppressed]: 27 October 1956 New China News Agency Cabled from Prague, *News drafts of New China News Agency: 28 October 1956*, published by New China News Agency, Beijing p.42.

<sup>66</sup> "Briefing on the reactionary riots in Budapest, telegram to the Foreign Ministry and the Central Party" 109-01041-01, pp.10-11, *CFMA*.

<sup>67</sup> "The reactionaries had broken into public places and houses and killed some public security persons and common people...the Hungarian government had not predicted this anti-revolutionary crisis and made no preparation. Therefore, the Hungarian government called for a urgent Soviet military assistance to restore the order... ", quoted from "The formation of the Hungarian temporary tribunal", 109-01041-01, p.12, *CFMA*.

The Chinese could not have made a decision approving the incursion without the utmost certainty that the Soviets' military intervention was necessary and efficient. It was not clear to the Chinese leaders how badly out of hand events in Budapest had got; to some extent, they would have inferred, disturbances had been brought in check by the Soviet presence. However, there were also contrasting reports that, far from appeasing violence, the Soviet invasion had actually escalated hostilities in Hungary.<sup>68</sup> Force alone, it appeared, could not resolve the problems in the Eastern bloc. After Poznan, the Chinese leadership was fully aware of the domestic difficulties in the Eastern bloc states bequeathed by Stalin-era inflexibility. With the Polish October as a precedent, the Chinese side judged a certain degree of domestic institutional diversity acceptable so long as the local communist regime maintained control of their own countries' situation. The Chinese were wary of attributing the Hungarian uprising to counterrevolutionary activity; the Soviets' heavy-handed mismanagement of their relations with weaker partners seemed in many ways a more plausible cause. And the Chinese had very recently sought to prevail on the Soviets not to repeat the errors of Stalin-era big-power chauvinism.

It is noteworthy, however, there were two interacting conditions for the Chinese to recognize the possibility of limited local diversity. First of all, any anti-Soviet campaigns or disturbances in these countries could not translate into an internal challenge to Communist party dominance or to the wider cohesion of the socialist bloc; and second, the local communist party should be strong enough to keep a grip on events without having to call on Soviet military assistance. Both of these conditions seemed to have been breached by the Hungarian events. The weakness of the Hungarian regime, furthermore, alerted Mao and his comrades to the possible presence of residual class enemy elements stirring insurrection perhaps across the whole Eastern bloc.

The course of the Chinese leadership's discussion on their response to the Hungarian violence has never been made public. But judging from Liu Shaoqi's comments on the Polish treatment of Rokossowski at the 26 October session, it is clear that the Chinese leaders were

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<sup>68</sup> "On the Hungarian Capital's riots", 109-01041-01, p13, *CFMA*.

principally concerned that an excessively nationalist policy on the part of the Poles would exacerbate tensions in other bloc states by licensing anti-Soviet feeling. In any sense, it would pose too much of a risk for the Chinese to support an individual state's bid for independence at the price of the communist camp's security and consolidation. Mao and his colleagues in fact were disturbed by Gomulka's insistence on Rokossowski's dismissal from the national defense ministry, which would encourage requests for Soviet military withdrawal in Hungary and probably in other bloc states. Consequently, the Chinese side took it on themselves to salvage the East European scene through political and diplomatic negotiations with the Poles. After the first attempt to send a Chinese delegation to Warsaw was rejected by the Poles, Mao decided to intervene in person.

On 27<sup>th</sup> of October, 2 am, Stanislaw Kiriuk, the Polish ambassador to Beijing, was invited for an urgent meeting with the Chinese Party top leaders, including Mao Zedong, Zhou Enlai and Chen Yun, with Zhang Wentian also in attendance. The consultation went on for three hours. It is likely that the decision to summon Kiriuk was made during the enlarged Politburo session held the same day as the Chinese delegation's first rebuff.<sup>69</sup> According to Kiriuk's telegram sent to the Polish Party immediately after the meeting, Chairman Mao, who apparently dominated this meeting, asked Kiriuk to explain to him the genesis of Poland's domestic problems as they emerged in the period from 1949 to 1956. In answering Mao's question, Kiriuk discussed party missteps in regard to both political and economic policy while acknowledging the harm done to Poland by the Beria phenomenon, that is, the domination of politics and society by a secret police organization.<sup>70</sup>

Notably, Kiriuk emphasized two points in relation to the current situation in Poland: first, that the Polish Party's Eighth Plenum had been extraordinarily successful in setting in train a process of democratization, and second, that that the process of "Polish democratization was meant to improve the friendship and alliance between the Polish and Soviet Parties and the people of the two countries." Kiriuk's aim seems to have been to get the Chinese and Soviets

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<sup>69</sup> On 27<sup>th</sup>, 29<sup>th</sup>, 30<sup>th</sup>, 31<sup>th</sup> of October, 1956, Politburo enlarged sessions were held on the Polish and Hungarian crises. See *ZNP*, 632.

<sup>70</sup> Werblan, Chiny a Polski Pazdziernik 1956, *Dzis*, 1996r., nr10, c.124-126.

to back off, insisting that Gomulka's regime was fully able to deal with domestic affairs. But the Soviet and Chinese alliances, he hastened to add, had nothing to fear from increased Polish autonomy. Kiryluk's words seem to reflect Gomulka's views at that time: that the Poles needed to be able to chart a distinct domestic course without relying on the Soviet Union.<sup>71</sup>

On the domestic program planned by the United Polish Worker's Party (PZPR) Eighth Plenum, Mao Zedong, representing the Chinese Politburo, expressed his hearty support of the Polish reform. Mao said that the CCP Politburo was already acquainted with Gomulka's speech and the Eighth Plenum resolution, and that the Chinese Party was "absolutely supportive of the political line of the Central Committee of the PZPR." The Polish Party's new economic program set up on the basis of an assessment of the achievements and mistakes of its forerunner found large favour with Mao. "The Chinese comrades regard our [Polish] way [of reform] as correct and give strong backing to us with full confidence", Kiryluk told Gomulka in his letter; "when asked by the Soviets [for their attitude on the Polish October], the Chinese comrades said that they were affirmative to the Polish reform." The Chinese Chairman also told the Polish ambassador that a Chinese delegation led by Liu Shaoqi, Deng Xiaoping and Wang Jiaxiang arrived in Moscow to take up a Soviet invitation to consult on the Polish October. After negotiations with the Russians, the Chinese delegates successfully persuaded Khrushchev to approve Gomulka's domestic line and to support the Polish Party and its leaders. The Kremlin had already invited a Chinese delegation to Moscow, and "if it is possible", also wanted to "send a Chinese delegation to Warsaw".<sup>72</sup> Mao obviously had his reasons for playing up the effectiveness of the Chinese in wringing support for Polish domestic autonomy from the Soviets; he wanted the Poles to assent to them as a mediator and arbiter, for which they needed to be convinced that the Chinese were on their side. Even though the idea to send a Chinese delegation to Warsaw had come from Moscow, the Chinese were the main mover in bringing the plan to fruition.

However straightforward Mao was with the Poles, it is conceivable that at this stage the

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<sup>71</sup> Werblan, *ibid.*

<sup>72</sup> Werblan, *ibid.*



Chinese Communists favoured redressing the balance of relations among Communist states by allowing limited diversity. "Although the Kremlin still has reservations on the Polish right for free action", Mao asserted that "it goes without saying that the Poles should have the freedom to manage their own affairs and that outdated styles of dealing with other states in the socialist camp should be abolished by the Soviet Politburo anyway." Mao further reiterated his earlier warning against "big Russian chauvinism", suggesting that a Polish-Soviet party relationship of cooperation should be "reestablished on new principles" in the forthcoming working session between the Polish and Soviet parties on 8 November, 1956. Chairman Mao seemed determined to set up a new pattern of Soviet-Eastern bloc relations for the Soviets and the Eastern Europeans.<sup>73</sup> This Chinese-designed pattern of socialist camp relations, however, came with the proviso that it should respect above all broader unity and stability of the Communist camp. Such a reservation opened the way to varying interpretations of acceptance unity, which, depending on time and circumstance, would inevitably impel the Chinese to alter their position with regard to Eastern bloc country aspirations.

At this juncture, when events in Hungary had developed into a perplexing revolution, or "reactionary campaign" as the Chinese saw it, the Chinese leadership apparently became concerned with the consequences of the Polish insistence of Rokossowski's complete dismissal and the possible Soviet military withdrawal from East Europe. As the Chinese side stated to Kiryluk, Comrade Khrushchev and the Soviet Politburo "were against [the Polish request of] pulling the Soviet troops back from Poland, were against [the Polish request of] repatriating Soviet military advisors and officers", the Soviets also expressed their anxiety over 'the possible Polish decision to remove Marshal Rokossovsky from the national defense minister post'.<sup>74</sup> The Soviets, Mao explained, were not reassured by Gomulka's promise to remain a loyal ally and member of the Warsaw Pact, as attested by his order that the Polish army should cease considering the prospect of a complete withdrawal of the Soviet Northern

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<sup>73</sup> See Liu's comments to Chinese diplomats from Warsaw: "Liu further told his colleagues that the Soviets did not realize that too strict a pattern in managing the Eastern bloc would only lead to trend of disorbiton, together with heavier burdens and obligations. Lifting the control over [the bloc states] would instead turn the scales." For an amplification of thesis, see ft.48.Luo Yisu, "the 1956 'Polish incident' and the Chinese policies", *Waijiao xueyuan xuebao*, 41-42.

<sup>74</sup> Werblan, Chiny a Polski Pazdziernik 1956, *Dzis*, 1996r., nr10, c.124-126.

Group of Forces from Poland.<sup>75</sup> The Soviet leadership, once it had decided to “display patience” for the time being on 24 October, must have wanted to avoid a final showdown and battle of wills with Poland. In its own diplomacy, therefore, the Chinese leadership used the cover of referring to Soviet anxieties as a way of introducing its own misgivings over Polish policy.

With respect to the Soviet military presence in the Eastern bloc, Mao Zedong actually verbalized why the Chinese leadership was against the Polish request for a complete withdrawal of the Soviet forces: “the Soviet withdrawal [would have to be] of much more widespread and profound nature”, meaning that if it were mismanaged, the whole socialist camp would be “in severe danger.” According to Mao and the Chinese top leaders, although they trusted the Polish party with the domestic situation in Poland, now that ferment had spread into Hungary and threatened other socialist states, the whole Communist bloc needed the safeguard of a rapidly mobilizing Soviet military apparatus. If Poland got its way, other socialist states, “whose power was still not strong enough to take hold of the situation”, might also agitate for Soviet withdrawal, and indeed “Nagy’s demands [for a Soviet pull-out] during the struggle with the anti-revolutionaries have confirmed the above argument.” To emphasize its position, the Chinese side completely agreed with Gomulka’s assessment of the necessity for Soviet forces to stay in the GDR. What the Chinese feared the most was “the possible Soviet military withdrawal from the GDR following that from Poland, which posed a severe threat to our [Communist] camp.” Mao Zedong thus asked the Poles to think over their request for Soviet military withdrawal, when would shake the Warsaw Pact to its foundations.<sup>76</sup>

In sum, Mao was preoccupied with two major tasks in his urgent meeting with Kiryluk: to convince the Poles that the CCP was supportive of Gomulka’s regime and would not intervene in its domestic reforms; and to persuade the Polish leadership to give up on its requests for Soviet military withdrawal. The degeneration of the Hungarian events into “reactionary riots” warned the Chinese of the possible collapse of a People’s Democracy following the leadership’s failure to

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<sup>75</sup> Kramer, “New Evidence” *CWHP Bulletin*, 8-9 (1996/1997): 361-362.

<sup>76</sup> Werblan, *Chiny a Polski Pazdziernik 1956*, *Dzis*, 1996r., nr10, c.124-126.

curb a popular spirit of anti-Soviet nationalism. As the Chinese saw it, the Polish October offered a possible template to the Hungarians of a new form of socialist international equality with the Soviets. So long as Polish nationalism restricted itself to domestic affairs would, in the Chinese opinion, a further spillover of unrest to Hungary and other possible “weak points” inside the bloc could be arrested. As a result, Mao’s concluding suggestion was that, on the problem of the Polish domestic reform, “we [the Chinese and the Poles] should unite to persuade the Soviets to accept our view”, while on inter-party relations and the anti-Soviet feeling in the bloc, “we [referring to the Poles in particular] should demonstrate understanding and tolerance in relation to party-party relations...and we ... never allow enemies to make use of rifts inside our camp.” Mao was finally clear about the Chinese’s own signature policy of non-interference: “No Chinese delegation will visit Poland without the invitation of the local party. This way, we will avoid giving the imperialists an excuse to accuse [the Chinese of intervening in Polish politics].”<sup>77</sup> This does not quite state the facts of the case, in that Mao had already resolved that, invited or not, he would send a delegation to Warsaw to bring the Poles round to the presence of the Red Army.

Kirylyuk’s cable reached Gomulka and the other Politburo members at 8 pm, 27 October (Warsaw time).<sup>78</sup> Gomulka had no great difficulty in acceding to Mao’s request, in that his line had been from the start to restrict the national Communism of Poland to domestic affairs, placating the Soviets with pledges of friendship and continued socialist allegiance. Even if a number of military officers thought it time to ask for the Soviet military to pull out, Gomulka saw the Soviet Army’s encampment on their soil as essential to the Warsaw Pact. In regard to Rokossovsky’s removal, this was rather an issue of symbolic significance that had been granted to satisfy popular demand. In the Politburo meeting held the next day considering the Chinese offer, the Polish Party readily welcomed the CCP delegation, writing a letter immediately. In light of Chinese opposition to the immediate dismissal of Rokossovsky, the Polish leadership compromised by giving him a holiday. The visit of the Chinese mission was penciled in for November, just after the Polish-Soviet talks. Furthermore, the Polish Politburo

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<sup>77</sup> Werblan, *ibid.*

<sup>78</sup> “Kirylyuk’s Telegram to Gomulka: Mao Zedong’s Attitude to the Polish Events”, *Dzis*, 1996r., nr10, c.124-126 (Chinese version), thanks for Shen Zhihua for his generosity in sharing a Chinese version of this article with the author.

leaders were at pains to clarify that they had never meant to make an unambiguous request for the withdrawal of the Soviet military from their land.<sup>79</sup> Receptive to the idea implicit in China's diplomatic overtures that the PRC would play a more prominent role in socialist interstate relations, the Poles made certain concessions in the expectation that Soviet hegemony would be to some degree displaced with Chinese involvement and that bloc affairs would soon be more multilateral.

In retrospect, however, this line constituted a misread of Chinese intentions. The outbreak of the Hungarian violence just after the Polish October had in fact led the Chinese leaders to take more seriously the possible effect of Polish divergence in sapping bloc unity. Before the Chinese had obtained reports on Hungarian domestic developments through its own channels on 26 October, Mao and his colleagues felt themselves in the dark over the character of the disturbances there. Their immediate strategy was to use the crises in the Eastern bloc to challenge the monolithic Stalinist formula of intra-bloc relations, for instance urging a more flexible approach through their delegation in Moscow. When telegrams, however, from both Budapest and Prague on 26 October suggested to Mao that the socialist leadership in Hungary had allowed things to spiral out of control, with the events taking on a "counterrevolutionary" character, Mao and his men began to place the emphasis on wresting concessions from Poles to ease their strained relations with the Kremlin. Mao may still have seen some play in finessing the Polish-Soviet conflict as a means to redefine Soviet-satellite relations. As we can see from following section that the Chinese attitude to the October crises in the bloc had already changed before the Polish Party's reply reached Beijing. This change was prompted by the rapidly evolving situation on the ground, so far as the CCP leadership could understand it, between 28 and 29 October in Budapest.

### ***Towards a Maoist formula of inter- state relationships***

The Kremlin, meanwhile, was itself surprised by the difficulty of managing the Budapest events after its green light for military intervention. Debates raged among the CPSU CC Presidium

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<sup>79</sup> Gluchowski, "The Soviet-Polish Confrontation of October 1956: The Situation in the Polish Internal Security Corps", 81-82.

members over the significance of the pervasive anti-Soviet violence inside Hungary and from the best way of dealing with the events as these were reported back to the Soviets in a series of incoherent telegrams.<sup>80</sup> Judging from the course of those Presidium sessions held in 26 and 28 October, the position adopted at this stage by the USSR equivocated just as much as the Chinese line, reflecting deep-seated uncertainties and conflicts within the Soviet leadership. The Soviet indecision on the Hungarian problem up to 29 October in fact gave the Chinese a window of opportunity in which they could take a hand in the issues affecting the Soviet East European bloc.

Mikoyan and Suslov, Khrushchev's envoys, arrived in Budapest on 24 October, before the great efflorescence of the troubles.<sup>81</sup> Their initial telegram to Moscow described a pacified but still uncertain scene: "all the fortified points of the insurgents [had] been crushed" except for a holdout in the radio station, from which the "rebels" were requesting Gerő's removal as the condition of their surrender. With the Hungarian government flatly refusing, the Soviet Command center "was assigning tasks for the liquidation of the fortification tonight". Mikoyan and Suslov took the view that Gerő in particular, along with other top Hungarian top leaders, were "exaggerating the strength of the opponent and underestimating their own strength." In their assessment, "a turning point in the [Hungarian] events had occurred," in the sense that support was draining away from the rioters; it was now time to rely more heavily on local forces and to emphasize the role of the Hungarians themselves in quashing the revolt. As recorded in the telegram, Gerő told Mikoyan and Suslov via phone before their arrival in Budapest that the situation, in his judgment, was contradictorily "improved and at the same time worse" in the wake of Soviet intervention, since the Soviet action had "negative effects on the mood of the residents, including workers".<sup>82</sup> Mikoyan and Suslov regarded Gerő's words as pessimistic

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<sup>80</sup> Mikoyan and Suslov, KGB chief Ivan Serov and Gen. Mikhail S. Malinin arrived in Hungary on 24 October. Mikoyan and Suslov then went into Budapest to reconnoitre the latest developments. Mikoyan, Suslov and Serov kept the Soviet leadership in Moscow well informed of the situation in Budapest and Hungary through telegrams and secure telephones. See *Selected Historical Soviet Archives* Vol.27, 282.

<sup>81</sup> The CPSU CC Presidium decided to send Mikoyan and Suslov, KGB chief Ivan Serov and Gen. Mikhail S. Malinin to Hungary for on-the-spot inspections, the former two representing the highest level of the Soviet leadership with a special mission to direct the Hungarian Party and government to resolve the domestic conflict.

<sup>82</sup> Source: Archive of Foreign Policy, Russian Federation (AVP RF) F. 059a, Opis 4, Papka 6, Delo 5, Listy 1-7; translation by Johanna Granville. Published on *CWIHP Bulletin*, issue 5, 23,29; also see "Mikoyan and Suslov's telegram to the CPSU CC" in *Selected Historical Soviet Archives* Vol.27, 282.

and possibly strategically motivated—that is, as a way of pinning responsibility for crushing the protests on the Soviets.

The Kremlin received Mikoyan and Suslov's report on 24 October via telephone, giving the Soviet leaders the impression that order in Budapest had been restored, with a total stabilization due for the next morning. The minds of the Politburo now turned to the issue of how to evolve some form of interstate tie to replace the former Stalinist controls and prevent manageable Eastern bloc diversity from developing into irreconcilable splits. Notably, in a CPSU CC Presidium meeting on 24 October, Khrushchev claimed that the Hungarian uprising appeared to have been fomented by writers and supported by students; the population at large had been neither active participants nor hostile to the USSR. If this were true, he rejected the GDR leader Ulbricht's suggestion of using Eastern bloc party propaganda to "expose all the incorrect opinions." The First Secretary of the CPSU CC explained to the East Germans and Bulgarians in attendance that "we are not living as we were during the Communist International [in Stalin's era], when only one party was in power." The CPSU could no longer, as Khrushchev had learnt from the Polish-Hungarian cases, operate its relations with the other socialist parties "by command" since "polemics between fraternal parties", including propaganda battles between ruling establishments, would inevitably "lead to polemics between nations."<sup>83</sup>

Beyond promising an undefined if limited measure of political autonomy in the Soviet bloc, Khrushchev also emphasized the importance of socioeconomic development across the socialist camp. The people in Poland and Hungary, as Khrushchev understood, were striking not out of any ideological confusion or anti-Soviet emotion but because "basic economic and social issues had not been resolved". The Soviet leader put this idea in a straightforward and simple way: "ideological work itself will be of no avail if we do not ensure that living standards rise. It is no accident that the unrest occurred in Hungary and Poland and not in Czechoslovakia. This is because the standard of living in Czechoslovakia is incomparably

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<sup>83</sup> "Account of a Meeting at the CPSU CC, 24 October, 1956: on the Situation in Poland and Hungary" *CW/HP* visual archives.

higher.” In his view, as long as the stomachs of the Polish and Hungarian people were full, they would have no cause for complaint at the local Communist regimes and Soviets. Unity among the bloc would thus come about for Khrushchev as a combined effect of improved ideological and propaganda work and economic management.<sup>84</sup> The Soviet Party First Secretary, rooted in his experience of peasant life, stressed the primacy of the economic on the political stability of Eastern European regimes, in a way congruent with the claim made by the Soviet model of socialist construction to raise the masses’ standards of living. But Khrushchev’s emphasis seems also to have underestimated the extent of the alienation and hostility, long simmering over the Stalin era, felt by ordinary Poles and Hungarians towards socialism.

On the Hungarian side, Soviet participation in the fighting had provoked another spasm of violence in 25 October after a temporary truce. As Mikoyan and Suslov reported, “fighting again escalated at noon after stabilization since daybreak.” According to the Hungarian leaders, tension had built up in other major cities such as Miskolc, Pécs and Szeged, which had seen separate demonstrations appealing to the government for reform.<sup>85</sup> In effect, the Soviet intervention invited by Gerő forced the Hungarian leadership to square up to some hard dilemmas. In calling for aid against the “counterrevolutionaries”, Gerő set his face against a new regime which, however inchoate at the time, would inevitably be headed by Nagy. When the troops arrived, Nagy had already been elected as the new Premier without Soviet agreement. Problematically, though, Gerő remained head of the party with Nagy the nominal leader of the government. Had the call for Soviet military intervention been even briefly delayed, there would have been a chance, however slender, for the Hungarian leaders to remove Gerő and to seek to exploit Nagy’s symbolic cachet to appease the upheavals. The presence of the troops, however, immediately became a major source of national anger, making Nagy’s return to power almost irrelevant. A large scale spirit of revolution characterized by a strong anti-Soviet flavor, now even joined by the Hungarian officer corps and workers, was spreading throughout the country.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> “Account of a Meeting at the CPSU CC, 24 October, 1956: on the Situation in Poland and Hungary” *CWHP* visual archives.

<sup>85</sup> “Mikoyan and Suslov’s telegram to the CPSU CC, 25 October”, *Selected Historical Soviet Archives*, vol.27,286.

<sup>86</sup> The Chinese embassy reported that “it has been confirmed that most of the Hungarian people’s army had joined the

Pressure mounted accordingly for immediate action and, thereby, implicitly for a restatement of the regime's Soviet policy. One of the newly elected Politburo Secretariat members, Kobol (head of the 1st department of the CC MSP, who had recently spoken out sharply against the Politburo)<sup>87</sup> suggested that the Hungarian government should ask the Soviet troops to remove themselves from Hungary after social order had been restored. Mikoyan and Suslov, who were present, strongly opposed this proposal, opining that "the question of Soviet military pull-out cannot be raised by any means, since it would amount to a US military pull-in." The diplomats' last negotiating position was that "the Soviet troops would return to their bases once order in Budapest was restored."<sup>88</sup> When the Soviets clearly not open to discussion on the question of withdrawal, none of the other HWP Politburo members backed Kobol's up. In an effort to stabilize the situation, the HWP Politburo decided to replace Gerő by Kádár as the leader of the party and to depute Nagy, as a representative of the government, and Kádár, the new party head, to appeal for order.<sup>89</sup>

However this meeting panned out, though, the Soviets soon found that the Hungarian had acted against their wishes. Without Soviet agreement, Nagy addressed the public via radio on October 25, declaring that "the Hungarian government [was] requesting negotiations between the Hungarian and Soviet governments on a bilateral interstate relationship following the principle of internationalism", in which it would consider "the problem of Soviet armed forces' departure from Hungary." Mikoyan and Suslov were bewildered by Nagy's declaration, which the Hungarians explained to their guests simply as an expedient to "control the situation and maintain [the party's] legitimacy among the workers". This incident provoked strong suspicion among the Soviets over the credibility of Nagy and his regime.

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reactionary armed forces to fight against the Soviets, the Hungarian police and the rest of the people's army troops" and that "the fight went on for 16 hours and is still ongoing", "in Miskolc, new Pecs and other cities in the east of the country, 'people's committees' have been established under the control of state local authorities." "On the 26 October situation in Budapest, telegram to the Foreign Ministry and the Central Party", 109-01041-01, p23, *CFMA*.

<sup>87</sup> Account of a Meeting at the CPSU CC, on the Situation in Poland and Hungary, 24 October, CWIHB visual archives.

<sup>88</sup> "Mikoyan and Suslov's telegram to the CPSU CC, 25 October" *Selected Historical Soviet Archives*, vol.27, 286.

<sup>89</sup> *ibid.*



In a telegram from Budapest to Moscow on 26 June, Mikoyan and Suslov, while filling the Kremlin in on Nagy's broadcast, still considered the HWP CC to be reliable and recommended political means, rather than military intervention, as the solution to Hungary's problems. Mulling their response on receipt of the message, the Kremlin leaders came to the view in an evening session that further concessions to the Hungarian reactionaries would be taken as weakness, strongly advocating the forceful suppression of the demonstrations as a sign of strength.<sup>90</sup> Most of the Presidium session participants, except for Khrushchev, blamed Mikoyan for his softness in dealing with Hungary and called for a policy of force. While Khrushchev had been on the side of entering Budapest on 23 October, he still held out a certain hope for Mikoyan's political measures, so that the criticism of his political ally within the Kremlin placed him in a situation of some embarrassment. This was all the more acute given Khrushchev's likely analysis that rearguard leftist elements in the Politburo were using the Hungarian events as a pretext for veiled attacks on his own leadership.<sup>91</sup> Khrushchev was forced to defend his colleague without abandoning his earlier line that violence should be faced down with force.<sup>92</sup>

With the mushrooming of new popular demonstrations across Hungary, however, the Soviet leaders soon found the events were moving beyond their control and that of their army. Hungarian workers' support for the agitation forced the Kremlin to reclassify the Hungarian events as something other than a "counterrevolutionary uprising". The Hungarian leadership, including Kádár, was inclined to hold negotiations with the revolutionaries, if the alternative was sending in the tanks.<sup>93</sup> To make matters worse for the Soviets, Nagy's position was itself precarious given the distrust in which he was held by some of the "rebels".<sup>94</sup> At this point, the

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<sup>90</sup> TsKhSD, F. 3, Op. 12, D. 1005, Ll. 53-53ob, 62-62ob, compiled by V. N. Malin, "Working Notes from the Session of the CPSU CC Presidium on 26 October 1956", *CWIHP Bulletin* 8-9, 389.

<sup>91</sup> Mark Kramer, "New Evidence on Soviet Decision-making and the 1956 Polish and Hungarian Crises", *CWIHP Bulletin* 8-9, 367.

<sup>92</sup> The 26 October session decided that the Politburo was out of step with the Hungarian government and that reinforcements should be sent (Molotov, Zhukov, Malenkov). It also suggested establishing contact with Hegedus and writing an appeal to the troops. See "Working Notes from the Session of the CPSU CC Presidium on 26 October 1956", *CWIHP Bulletin* 8-9, 389.

<sup>93</sup> "Cde. Khrushchev—the matter is becoming more complicated. They're planning a demonstration. Kádár is leaning toward holding negotiations with the centers of resistance", see "Working Notes from the Session of the CPSU CC Presidium on 28 October 1956", *CWIHP Bulletin* 8-9, pp. 389-392.

<sup>94</sup> "Mikoyan and Suslov's report from Budapest", *APRF*, F. 3, Op. 64, D. 484, Ll. 131-134, Chinese version see

Americans together with several other western states proposed the discussion of the Hungarian case in the UN Security Council, condemning the Soviet intervention as a violation of the peace treaty they had themselves signed with the Hungarians. The worse possible upshot of these international deliberations would be for "UN troops [to] move in on the proposal of the USA and for a second Korea to take place."<sup>95</sup> The Soviet government therefore exerted all political and diplomatic efforts to stop Hungary appearing before the Security Council.<sup>96</sup>

Brought to this pass, the CPSU CC held an emergency meeting on 28 October on how to deal with these changes. Argument in the Presidium members reached a standstill over the line to take in relation to Nagy. Voroshilov, Kaganovich, Bulganin and Mikoyan (back from Budapest on 28 October) insisted that it was necessary to form a new regime backed up by the Soviet military forces since the current government had failed to cope with the situation under the envoys' guidance. Meanwhile, Malenkov and the former hardliner Zhukov began to call for greater political flexibility since "the situation has unfolded quite differently [to the way we expected] when we decided to send in troops." This switch of allegiance undoubtedly helped Khrushchev to defend Mikoyan and to lead the meeting to a common position. In Khrushchev's view, they had "two options": either to support the current Hungarian government's action, meaning, as "this might soon be completed", "Nagy will demand a ceasefire and the withdrawal of [the Soviet] troops", or if they resolved on intervening, accepting that "Nagy will turn against us." Khrushchev apparently preferred the first course, stating that "the formulation of a Soviet-controlled committee to take over power" from the current regime represented a last resort. In the end, the Presidium members agreed to support the current government, giving the go-ahead to the withdrawal of the troops on the condition of a ceasefire.<sup>97</sup> On the

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*Selected Historical Soviet Archives*, vol.27,297.

<sup>95</sup> "Telegram from the Budapest KGB Station concerning the latest developments in the city following the popular uprising" TsKhSD, F. 89, Per. 45, Dok 10; for a Chinese version, see *Selected Historical Soviet Archives*, vol.27, 305.

<sup>96</sup> "Report from the Soviet Foreign Ministry to the CPSU CC(no later than 28 October, 1956): several western big power states were planning to raise up "the Hungarian Situation Question" in the United Nations Security Council, suggestions for a Soviet response on this issue" in *Selected Historical Soviet Archives*, vol.27, 301. An emergency session of the UN Security Council on Hungary was eventually convened in the mid-afternoon on 28 October (New York time, i.e. Moscow time at night).

<sup>97</sup> Except for Voroshilov, who preferred to maintain the troops under a firm and powerful committee, Saburov was the only other voice urging the Soviet forces remain in place. See TsKhSD, F. 3, Op. 12, D. 1005, Ll. 54-63, compiled by V. N. Malin. "Malin Notes from the Session of the CPSU CC Presidium on 28 October 1956", *CWIHP Bulletin* 8-9, 389-392.

same day, the Soviet Military Command in Hungary issued an order to prepare a plan for the Soviet troops' withdrawal from Budapest, where they duties would pass the Hungarian army. In the plan later made out, the Hungarian army would get into position between 8pm on the 29th to 6am on the 30 October.<sup>98</sup> Moreover, to win the Hungarians over to a ceasefire, the CPSU CC Presidium members decided to request the intercession of fraternal parties, namely the Chinese, Bulgarians, Poles, Czechs and Yugoslavs, to prevent further bloodshed.<sup>99</sup> The apparent Soviet willingness to consult the Chinese on Hungary, as we now know, unintentionally encouraged the CCP to take up an active role to solve the Hungarian dilemma and start to acquire purchase on Soviet policy-making. In fact, Beijing on the one hand still had a special interest in pressing the Soviets to admit their Stalinist mistakes in dealing with satellite relations; on the other, the Chinese central leadership was doubtless fully aware the need to guarantee bloc unity. Comparing with the Polish case, the Hungarian events turned out to be more complicated and unpredictable for the Chinese Communists and therefore the CCP's changing perception (Mao's in particular) of the domestic developments in Hungary to a large extent determined that the Chinese position taken in solving the Soviet bloc events throughout this period could be anything but consistent.

### ***The turning point: 29 October***

In the evening of 29 October, Khrushchev, Molotov, and Bulganin met with Chinese delegates in their guesthouse on the Hungarian issue. The Soviets discussed with the Chinese the Hungarian request that the Soviet military retreat. According to Shi Zhe, Liu Shaoqi believed that the troops should remain in both Poland and Hungary for the purposes of consolidating the Warsaw Pact, a policy in accordance with the Chinese position expressed on 26 October. Hard on the heels of this deliberation, Liu also talked about the necessity of protecting General Rokossovski from "reactionary" vengefulness or backskiding. At this point, Mao called from Beijing, with an apparent reverse of position: as Liu Shaoqi reported to the Soviet leaders, political and economic equality should be granted to the Soviet Eastern European satellites,

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<sup>98</sup> Györkei and Horváth, *Soviet Military*, 70-71.

<sup>99</sup> TsKhSD, F. 3, Op. 12, D. 1005, Ll. 54-63, compiled by V. N. Malin. "Malin Notes from the Session of the CPSU CC Presidium on 28 October 1956", *CWIHP Bulletin* 8-9, 389-392. In line with this decision, the CPSU CC Presidium immediately sent out messages to the Poles and Yugoslavs.

even if this meant allowing them a greater measure of autonomy. Mao further asserted that the Soviets should pull out and allow the European socialist states to be independent and self-determining. In theoretical terms, Mao was formulating a response to the “big issues” of domination and equality in international relations, rather than a detailed policy line for Hungary. But even if Mao had in mind a new framework for left internationalism after the Polish Crisis, the questions remains why he and his Beijing colleagues thought it appropriate to push the Soviets to accept their ideas on 29 October?<sup>100</sup>

In retrospect, the development of the Hungarian situation possibly had a significant influence on Mao’s strategic thinking. On 27 October, Nagy announced the formation of a new government consisting of communists neither tainted by the Rákosi excesses or persecuted under Rákosi. By 28 and 29 October, Beijing had already received telegrams from the embassy in Hungary (as well as from East bloc states) on the reformulation of Nagy’s government and the improving situation in Budapest; the “anti-revolutionaries”, the news was, “had been generally suppressed”.<sup>101</sup> A Xinhua journalist in Prague reported Nagy’s 28 October reshuffle without comment. The next day, 29 October, at the same time as Mao weighed in on the resolution of the Polish and Hungarian crises with Moscow, the Prague wire praised Nagy’s new government, suggesting it represented a new hope for socialism.<sup>102</sup> Notably, the *RMRB*, the Chinese Party’s mouthpiece, was also positive on the 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> about Hungarian developments, claiming that a large number of rebels had lain down their arms on government entreaties, and that the leaders of the unrest were seeking a negotiated settlement under a temporary ceasefire.<sup>103</sup> It seemed that peace had been restored.

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<sup>100</sup> One of the Chinese delegation’s major tasks in Moscow was to rebuke Soviet “big power chauvinism” and call for the Soviets to declare a new type a relationship among the socialist states. Liu Shaoqi had already expressed this Chinese intention on 24 October during the CPSU CC Presidium session. See this paper pp5-9; Mao’s meeting with Kiryluk on the 27<sup>th</sup> had also outlined the need to rebase Soviet-satellite relations, see this paper, p.21.

<sup>101</sup> “The Hungarian reactionary armed forces have generally been suppressed, telegram to the Foreign Ministry and the Central Party”, 109-01041-01, p.24; “Resumes of the Hungarian [new] Ministers”, 109-01041-01, p.25; “On the Hungarian government’s measures to suppress the riots”, 109-01041-01, p.31-32 *CFMA*.

<sup>102</sup> ‘Xiong zucheng xinzhengfu’: 28 October 1956 New China News Agency Cabled from Plague, *News drafts of New China News Agency: 29 October 1956*, published by New China News Agency, 33. In this news draft, it says that “the Hungarian government commanded the rebels to stop resistance and [up to now] there are large groups of rioters have already laid down their arms. The rioters asked for negotiation and a temporary ceasefire is achieved in Budapest. The Government and people are trying to restore to peaceful life. ...the negotiations [between the Government and the rebellions] are processing.” Also see *RMRB*, 28 and 29 October, 1956.

<sup>103</sup> *News drafts of New China News Agency* 29 October 1956, *ibid*; *RMRB*, 28 October and 29 October.

It is unlikely this endorsement originated from Mao himself, since Mao later criticized the 29 October comment as an instance of an inability to “keep calm” when the actual situation was not clear.<sup>104</sup> It is certain, though, that whoever authorized the *RMRB* to express the Chinese view on Nagy’s government would have been confident that Mao was at least optimistic about developments. At this stage, Mao probably envisaged the reformulation of Nagy’s government as a turning point, proving that the Hungarian communists were as able to bring the riots to heel as Gomulka was in Poland. In Mao’s estimation, now was the moment for the Chinese to press the Soviets critically to re-examine their relations with the satellite states, since no shattering ideological challenge had issued out of the Polish and Hungarian moves towards a more national mode of socialism.<sup>105</sup> These thoughts were likely uppermost in Mao’s mind during his call to Liu in Moscow on 29 October. Besides urging a relaxation of Soviet dominance, it is possible that Mao now offered his view of *Pancha Shila* as a new paradigm of interstate relations.<sup>106</sup> In contrast to the circumspect Chinese line taken on 27 October to avert the dissolution of the Pact should Soviet forces have to pull out from Poland, Mao now recommended that Moscow consult with the Eastern European countries on its terms of the Pact’s functioning and even on whether it was still necessary.<sup>107</sup> The stabilization of the situation in Hungary appears to have emboldened the Chinese to question the legitimacy of Warsaw Pact, the single most important formal commitment binding the Eastern Europe states to the USSR in the post-Stalin era.

According to Chinese archival material, Khrushchev and his colleagues received Mao’s

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<sup>104</sup> On the question of the “speed of news”, Mao said: “we should conduct concrete analysis of concrete problems, and the same applies to the speed of news. In the case of Imre Nagy’s coming to power during the Hungarian incident, we were not clear about what was happening but weren’t able to stay calm and quiet either, so we published the news three days too early. As a result we published the news on day one without saying whether Nagy was good or bad. In day two’s news, we said he was good. On day three, we said he was bad. So the masses became confused. Since the original situation was not clear, we really didn’t have to say nothing. See *The Secret Speeches of Chairman Mao*, 266.

<sup>105</sup> Liu Shaoqi had already raised this prospect with the Soviets without securing their approval. See Shi Zhe, *jianzhenglü*, 227.

<sup>106</sup> *Pancha Shila*, or the five principles of peaceful international relations, included (1) mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, (2) non-aggression, (3) non-interference in another country’s internal affairs, (4) equal and mutual benefit, and (5) peaceful coexistence. These principles were introduced in a joint statement by Indian prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru and Chinese premier Zhou Enlai in New Delhi in June 1954 and remain at the core of the PCC’s foreign policy.

<sup>107</sup> Shi Zhe, *jianzhenglü*, 229-232; Yang Kuisong, *Mao Zedong yu Mosike de enen yuanyuan*, 391.

suggestion badly, uncomfortable at his implication of an inequality between the Soviet Union and the Soviet bloc states. Liu explained that Mao only wanted to consolidate camp unity since “they [i.e. the Soviet bloc states] would get closer to you [the USSR] and become more supportive of your primacy if you withdraw to a distance.”<sup>108</sup> After a long discussion, Khrushchev seemed to come round to Mao’s view: “[Mao’s] suggestions were correct, we should show our courage and establish our [the Soviet] relations on a new base”.<sup>109</sup> Liu Shaoqi further asked whether the Soviets could issue a public declaration on their new-found commitment to reformed relationships with the other socialist states. The two sides agreed on the immediate drafting of a Soviet government declaration of the “Principles of Development and Further Strengthening of Friendship and Cooperation Between the USSR and Other Socialist Countries”, with the Chinese itself promising a declaration in support of the Soviet announcement.<sup>110</sup> The fact that such a declaration on Soviet relations with other socialist states originated from Mao, not Khrushchev, symbolized, for the Chinese, their increasing leverage in shaping the order of the socialist camp.

In brief, the reformulation of Nagy’s government and the seemingly stabilized domestic situation in Hungary to a large extent prompted Chairman Mao in Beijing to shift the CCP’s position from striving to repair the Soviet centric bloc unity via its own resources to pressing the Soviets to set up a new pattern of inter-Communist state relationship on basis of *Pancha Shila* on 29 October, 1956. At first glance, it seems that Mao and his Communist regime represented all the other Communist countries, especially the small and weak ones like Poland and Hungary to challenge the old intro-bloc pattern established by Stalin, namely a pattern in which all member states had to subordinate their interests to that of the USSR and be under the absolute and ultimate leadership of the Soviet Union. The Chairman’s

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<sup>108</sup> Shi Zhe, *Bainian Chao*, 15: Liu Shaoqi received a phone call from Beijing in the course of the meeting on 29. He then conveyed Mao’s opinion to the Soviet leaders immediately.

<sup>109</sup> In Khrushchev’s memoir, he recalled that the two sides discussed the Hungarian issue for a whole night, with both sides stating views for and against keeping troops in Budapest. Eventually, according to Khrushchev, they agreed that Soviet troops should pull out from the city. See Khrushchev, *Heluxiaofu huiyilu*, vol.3, 2945-2947.

<sup>110</sup> Shi Zhe, *jianzhenglu*, 229-232; “Zhonghua renmin gongheguo Zhengfu guanyu sulian zhengfu 1956nian 10yue 30ri xuanyan de shengming” [Statement by the People’s Republic of China on the Soviet declaration of 30 October 1956, 1 November 1956], *Xinhua Banyuekan* [New China Half Monthly] vol.23, (1956):103. Also see *Documents on International Affairs 1956* (Oxford, Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1956), 476-477.

behavior in suggesting applying the five basic principles of international affairs, i.e. national independence, sovereignty, equality, noninterference in internal affairs, and self-determination to Soviet-satellite relations could further convince the audience that Communist China was intended to introduce a more scientific and truly equal state-to-state relationship pattern to the Soviet bloc. With enough knowledge of Mao's Communist China's long-range perception of world politics and intro-bloc relations, however, all the above interpretations were merely misreads of Chinese intentions. As it would soon be proved by Beijing's reaction to Nagy government's nationalist independent requests in the following days, Mao's suggestion of applying the five principles to intro-bloc state relationship should only be seen as political means to alter the old Stalinist formula, which established the Soviet unquestioned dominance in the Communist camp, rather than an end in itself. In the Chinese Chairman's understanding of relations among Communist-ruled states, he had never really doubted the legitimacy of an ultimately power-centralized Communist order, which the strongest "fraternal socialist country" naturally play the leading role, set up the principles and guide other members' behaviors. The root of Mao's abrupt shift in policy should be understood from the perspective that the Chairman by this point saw China's future potential as the most powerful Communist regime and recognized the improvement of the Hungarian domestic situation on 29 October as a rare good chance to manipulate the weakening Soviets to abdicate the leading position and give room to what he saw as better men. With all due respect to Mao's political skills, however, there is no evidence that he anticipated the nationalist emotion among the people and Nagy's eventual independent appeal to the Communist camp in the following days, which eventually would force him to readjust his own policies.

### ***China and the second Soviet intervention in Hungary***

The situation in Hungary, however, was already spinning out of control as Khrushchev and his colleagues were discussing a declaration with the Chinese. According to Selov's 29 October report on the latest development in Hungary, "on 27-28 October, 8,000 prisoners were freed, with many of them looting weapons [from their jails] ... strong anti-Communist feeling was aroused among the masses and in several regions armed men search[ed] the apartments of communist [officials] and gunned them down." After the government bowed to popular

pressure and declared the dissolution of the state security organ (the AVH), the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD) and remaining internal security operations fell prey to despondency and paralysis. MVD personnel remained, however, under the threat of death by armed groups.<sup>111</sup> Furthermore, Moscow received new telegrams from Mikoyan and Suslov from Budapest on 29 and 30 October, communicating their concern over the situation. The Hungarian "comrades have failed to win over the masses," they said, while "the anti-Communist elements are acting with impunity." Mikoyan and Suslov also feared for the AVH officers after the disbandment of the organization.<sup>112</sup> In their estimation, "the situation [on 30 October] [was] not getting better; it was getting worse" with "the party organizations ... in the process of collaps[ing]" as violence escalated. Nagy's negotiations with the "insurgents" were at an impasse after the revolutionaries refused to put their guns down until "the Soviet troops had left Budapest and Hungary."

In Mikoyan and Suslov's opinion, the matter of most pressing concern was the attitude of the Hungarian troops, since the possibility existed that "the Hungarian units sent to suppress the insurgents would eventually join the rebels, and then it would be necessary for the Soviet forces once more to undertake military operations." The Hungarians had caught wind of the latest Soviet army manoeuvres, obliging Nagy to negotiate on two fronts, with the masses in promising the Soviets' withdrawal, and with the Soviets, in asking for the infantry to be held off. Mikoyan and Suslov were of the mind that it was advisable to give Nagy breathing space by keeping troops out of territorial Hungary. Part of their motivation was that "this [increased level of Soviet troops in Hungary] could trigger a change in Hungarian policy in the [UN] Security Council." At the same time, the envoys insisted that the U.S.S.R. "had to make a fundamental reassessment of [their] tactics were the situation to worsen any further."<sup>113</sup> The optimism of

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<sup>111</sup> TsKhSD, F. 89, Per. 45, Dok. 11; trans. Johanna Granville, *CWIHP* Bulletin 5, 31-32.

<sup>112</sup> "Shifrtelgramma: TsK KPSS," 29 October 1956 (Strictly Secret- Urgent), from A. Mikoyan and M. Suslov, in AVPRF, F.059a, Op.4, P.6, D.5, L1.13-14. quoted from "working note of the Session of the CPSU CC Presidium on 30 October 1956", *CWIHP* Bulletin 8-9, 392-393; The Chinese embassy in Budapest also sent back telegram back to Beijing on Nagy's 28 October declaration, in which Nagy announced to set up new police in replacing AVH. See "A complete version of Nagy's 28 October declaration(received on 30 October)", 109-01041-01, pp 34-35, *CFMA*.

<sup>113</sup> Mikoyan and Suslov's telegrams from Budapest to the CPSU 29 October 1956: AVPRF, F. 059a, op.4, P.6, D.5, L1. 13-14 ; 30 October 1956: AVPRF, F. 3, op.64, D.484, L1. 122-124. English translation see *CWIHP* Bulletin, 8-9, 404; for a Chinese version, see *Selected Historical Soviet Archives* vol. 27, 308, 312.



the diplomas vis-à-vis the Hungarian riots had evaporated by the time of their telegrams to Moscow on 30 October, at which point the situation was more clouded than ever and all prospects of a simple solution had closed down.

Not long after Khrushchev, Molotov, and Bulganin left the Chinese delegates, another CPSU CC Presidium convened on 30 October to discuss Hungary. The session kicked off with a reading of the Budapest wires of the 29<sup>th</sup> and the 30<sup>th</sup>, with Khrushchev following this up with an account of discussions with the Chinese. Some form of action was clearly imperative. Khrushchev suggested "we should adopt a declaration today on the withdrawal of troops from the people's democracies (considering these matters further at a session of the Warsaw Pact), taking account of the views of the countries in which our troops are based. The entire CPC CC Politburo supports this position." Even if the Presidium regarded Mao's internationalist proposal as a "good suggestion", they were more immediately preoccupied with Hungary and seemed to see Mao's idea of a statement of principles as a means of settling a specific issue. While the hardliners Molotov, Bulganin and Kaganovich had reservations about the Chinese *Pancha Shila*, all the Presidium members eventually agreed to issue just such a declaration as a means of putting the Hungarian problem to bed.<sup>114</sup> The Soviet leadership thus approved and issued the document on the same day.<sup>115</sup> In Shi Zhe's account, the content of the Soviet declaration's final draft was broadly identical with Liu's views expressed the night before, with Liu's own words and turns of phrase appearing in several places of the document.<sup>116</sup> Malin notes of the Presidium session, meanwhile, suggest that the Soviet leaders were making amendments to a draft declaration, which itself would form the basis of negotiation with the Chinese delegates.<sup>117</sup> After the adoption of this document, however modified and hedged with implicit caveats concerning the Polish and Hungarian cases, Khrushchev had it cabled to Mikoyan and Suslov, requesting its transmission to the Hungarian government as a

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<sup>114</sup> "Working Notes from the Session of the CPSU CC Presidium on 30 October 1956", *CWIHP Bulletin* 8-9, 392.

<sup>115</sup> "Working Notes from the Session of the CPSU CC Presidium on 30 October 1956", *CWIHP Bulletin* 8-9, 393.

<sup>116</sup> Shi Zhe, *jianzhenglü*, 231.

<sup>117</sup> In Malin's note on 24 CPSU CC Presidium session, he wrote that "they had brought a draft announcement". The author considers "they" could refer to the Chinese delegates and that the "draft announcement" probably was very first version of the draft declaration mentioned later by Shi Zhe. See "24 CPSU CC Presidium session" *Selected Historical Soviet Archives*, vol.27,52.

peace-making clarification of the Soviet attitude on the Hungarian issue.<sup>118</sup>

The Soviets' declaration of non-interference was not as successful as Mao had hoped in defusing suspicion of the "big power" in the bloc. The Chinese and Soviets immediately understood the edict to frame their relationship in different ways. The U.S.S.R. had been willing to sign the 30 October declaration on the understanding that their primacy in the socialist bloc was taken for granted and did not come under any threat from an adjustment of official policy. Mao and his colleagues, on the other hand, while preaching unity and hailing the Soviets' leadership, had a special interest in setting up a new pattern for Soviet-satellite relations. For Beijing, Moscow's declaration on 30<sup>th</sup> October held great importance, representing a significant step forward in the Chinese quest for equality of standing with the Soviet party, a goal it had pursued since the establishment of the PRC. China effectively used the Polish and Hungarian crises as bargaining chips in return for a Soviet acknowledgment that Soviet-East European relations had been plagued by mistakes, and that Moscow had committed rampant violations of the principle of equality with fellow socialist countries. More importantly, the declaration pledged that in the future the Soviet Union would scrupulously observe the full sovereignty of every socialist state.<sup>119</sup> The Soviet Presidium was only kept on board by the prospect that the 30 October document, once ratified by China, would lead to the immediate cessation of the upheaval in Hungary.<sup>120</sup> As they understood it, the situation was deteriorating all the time, so that whatever their reservations on the "five principals" or the relaxation of the Warsaw Pact, they pledged unanimously to a remedial course of action. But the expectation that the riots would cease, however, set the bar too high for what the communiqué could achieve at this juncture. The Soviets were faced with options ranging from the end of the socialist experiment in Hungary, an ignominious pull-out of troops and a 'hot war' imposing socialism on a resistant population.<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> "Working Notes from the Session of the CPSU CC Presidium on 30 October 1956", *CWIHP Bulletin* 8-9, 392-393.

<sup>119</sup> Wu Lengxi, *Shinian lunzhan*, 47; Kramer, "New Evidence" *CWIHP Bulletin* 8-9, fn. 89, 381.

<sup>120</sup> "Working Notes from the Session of the CPSU CC Presidium on 30 October 1956", *CWIHP Bulletin* 8-9, 392

<sup>121</sup> Hu Bo, *Lengzhan Yinying xia de Xiongyali Shijian*, 40; "Working Notes from the Session of the CPSU CC Presidium on 30 October 1956", *CWIHP Bulletin* 8-9, 392-393

At this stage, the Chinese delegation in Moscow obtained access to Mikoyan and Suslov's cables from Budapest via the Soviets.<sup>122</sup> The delegation was shocked by of the envoys' reports of a heated anti-communist atmosphere in Budapest, and by the suggestion that the Hungarian government, after the retreat of the Soviet forces, had succumbed to sclerosis. The Chinese thus spent the whole day of 30 October discussing Mikoyan and Suslov's communications, being unable to reach a unanimous decision between two options: either accepting the retreat or urging the return of Soviet forces to Budapest. Liu Shaoqi thus made an evening-time phone call to Chairman Mao, who suggested that the delegation could put forward both alternatives to the Soviets for discussion. Mao himself inclined to the Soviet Red Army's intervention, yet was prepared to wait until the reactionaries were exposed, partly so that any reprisal against them would carry a greater measure of popular support.<sup>123</sup> In general, although the Chinese leadership was leaning towards Soviet intervention at this point, Mao still thought it better to defer the final decision a little longer. But one thing was clear: whether in Budapest or not, there was a need for Soviet troops should stay in Hungary. Under Mao's direction, Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping immediately contacted Khrushchev to ask for a meeting conveying the revised Chinese position.

After receiving the Chinese request, Khrushchev left the session to meet the Chinese delegates around midnight on 30 October. Liu Shaoqi described two possible "roads" the Soviets could follow, namely intervention and retreat, and made clear the Chinese party's opposition to the withdrawal of the Red Army from Hungary. The Chinese now saw the Hungarian events as fomented by an "international imperialist plot," from which it was necessary to pull the satellite by force. This Chinese volte-face, given that they had previously urged the pull-out of troops,<sup>124</sup> put Khrushchev in a quandary, leading to his bringing in Liu Shaoqi to the Presidium session to consult with other Presidium members.

Before Liu Shaoqi appeared in the Presidium session, he spoke again to Yudin, firing off

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<sup>122</sup> Shi Zhe, *Bainian Chao*, 16: The Soviet side sent the cables to the Chinese delegation on 30 October.

<sup>123</sup> Shi Zhe, *ibid*: Liu asked for instructions from Mao on the evening of the 30<sup>th</sup> (Moscow time).

<sup>124</sup> Shi Zhe, *jianzhenglu*, 233. For a in-depth description of this meeting, see Chen Jian, *Mao's Chian and the Cold War*, 157; Wu Lengxi, *Shinian lunzhan*, 53.

towards the end of their encounter several questions bearing directly on the issues that worried the Chinese: "Will Hungary leave our camp? Who is Nagy? Can he be trusted?"<sup>125</sup> China's main concerns at this point seem to have been the weakness of the Hungarian party and government, especially given a perceived bias on Nagy's part to nationalism. As a matter of fact, the Chinese embassy sent Beijing a series of reports on the worsening Hungarian situation from 28 to 30 October. In one telegram, sent as early as at 11am on 28 October from Budapest, the Chinese Embassy warned: "ever since the outbreak of the Hungarian riots, it is notable that there are many political dubious points [in the current government] to judge from various [official] announcements and measures broadcast by Hungarian radio."<sup>126</sup> The embassy also asked Beijing's permission to send a counselor back to report on the latest developments in Hungary.<sup>127</sup> Unfortunately all these important telegrams, which would have helped the Chinese leadership form a judgment of the local regime, did not reach the Foreign Ministry and Central Party till 31 October. In evaluating Nagy, the Chinese leaders had to fall back on Soviet reports, which they programmatically mistrusted.<sup>128</sup>

After meeting with Yudin, Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping went into the session room to see the members of the Soviet Presidium.<sup>129</sup> Liu repeated the CCP CC's opinion that Soviet forces should stay in Budapest and Hungary.<sup>130</sup> Perversely, the new Chinese suggestion went down

<sup>125</sup> "Working Notes from the Session of the CPSU CC Presidium on 30 October 1956", *CWIHP Bulletin* 8-9, 392-393.

<sup>126</sup> Beijing did not receive this information till the afternoon of 31 October (the telegram was ciphered and the printed version not ready till 7:50pm). See "More reports on the Hungarian riots, telegram to the Foreign Ministry and the Central Party", 109-01041-01, pp.42-43, *CFMA*.

<sup>127</sup> "Whether to send the Embassy staff back to report the situation", 109-01041-01, pp.55, *CFMA*. This telegram was sent on 29 October yet printed out in Beijing at 9:25 am, 1 November, 1956.

<sup>128</sup> Hungarian events were raised at the end of the discussion between Liu Shaoqi and Yudin on 30 October. Liu only said on this subject that "the events in Poland and Hungary should serve as a "healthy lesson for the whole communist movement." "We communists," he stated, "needed to generalize our experience theoretically, as Marx in his day generalized and analyzed the reasons for the defeat of the Paris Commune, and Lenin the reasons for the defeat of the bourgeois-democratic revolution in Russia." According to Péter Vámos, Liu's words may be read as an indictment of Soviet policy, without commenting either on the Soviets' first or possible second intervention in Hungary. The Soviet source of the time, Malin's notes, only include a few keywords on Yudin's report ("What's the situation: will Hungary leave our camp? Who is Nagy? Can he be trusted? About the advisers." qt. from Peter's paper. It is also possible in the author's estimation that Liu was at that stage without clear direction from Mao with regard to the Hungarian issue.

<sup>129</sup> "Working Notes from the Session of the CPSU CC Presidium on 30 October 1956", 393: records the names of the Soviets present. "Zapis besedy s tovarishchem Liu Shaoqi, 30 oktyabrya 1956 goda," Archiv Vnesnei Politiki Rossiyskoi Federacii, fond 0100, opis 49, delo 9, papka 410, pp. 202-3. English translation of a document kindly provided by Lorenz Lüthi.

<sup>130</sup> "Working Notes from the Session of the CPSU CC Presidium on 30 October 1956", *CWIHP Bulletin* 8-9, 392-393; Also see Wu Lengxi, *Shinian lunzhan*, 53; Jin Zhongji et al, *Liu Shaoqi zhuan*, 806. Wu Lengxi records that Liu spoke harshly during the session, saying that if the Soviet troops retreated from Hungary, the Soviet Union would betray the

worse than their earlier, apparently more anti-Soviet line. Molotov said that “we should issue the Declaration and explain our position”, thus setting relations with the Nagy government on a workable footing. The Presidium still looked to the declaration to effect some sort of outcome, especially if it meant an accommodation with the West over Hungary. According to Liu’s records of the meeting on his return to Beijing, the members of the Soviet Presidium set their face firmly against Chinese delegation’s suggestion, being convinced of the necessity of retreat.<sup>131</sup>

Condemning “the leadership of the CPSU [who] at one time tried to leave socialist Hungary to the mercy of fate”, Deng Xiaoping later in July 1963 asserted of the meeting “you [i.e. the Soviet side] know that at that time we spoke out against your position. Such a position was tantamount to capitulation.”<sup>132</sup> Khrushchev’s recollection of the meeting is somewhat different, suggesting that the two sides held an all-night meeting, eventually deciding not to use military force in Hungary and to let affairs develop naturally.<sup>133</sup> It is difficult to deny that the Chinese did clearly express their opinion that the Soviet troops should remain in Hungary. Yet, as the Soviet leaders had already reached a consensus, Liu did not insist on the Chinese position.<sup>134</sup> This Chinese concession, in retrospect, was reasonable because, as stated above, the Chinese leadership was still in two minds over Nagy’s regime and thus was not absolutely certain that an immediate military suppression of the revolt was in order.<sup>135</sup> It is plausible that had Beijing received telegrams from Budapest outlining Nagy’s suspicious policies more promptly, Mao would have been much more decisive in pushing the Soviets toward military

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Hungarian people (and the whole proletarian enterprise) and the Soviet leaders would be looked back upon as “historical criminals”. See Shi Zhe, *Bainian Chao*, 17, however, only recorded that the Chinese delegation (Liu and Deng) expressed its opinion on Hungarian crisis very clearly; the Hungarian revolt was already of a different nature from that of the Polish. Hungary had to be pulled out of its reactionary crisis.

<sup>131</sup> For a good description of the meeting, see Chen, *Mao’s China*, 157; Wu Lengxi, *Shinian lunzhan*, 53.

<sup>132</sup> Vladislav Zubok, “Deng Xiaoping and the Sino-Soviet Split, 1956-1963”, *CWIHP Bulletin*, issue 10 (Spring, 1998):154, fn.18.

<sup>133</sup> Khrushchev, *Heluxiaofu huiyilu*, vol.3, 2266-2267.

<sup>134</sup> Shi Zhe, *jianzhenglu*, 233.

<sup>135</sup> Hao Deqing called Beijing to check up on his judgment of the Hungarian Crisis on 31 October as Beijing had been incommunicado since 28 October. Hao informed Beijing about Nagy’s change of political system in Hungary, suggesting that the current government “was already not communist but was looking towards the capitalist united government of 1945”. It was thus not until 31 October that Mao and his colleagues came to the view that the Soviet Union would be committing a blunder if it abandoned its satellite to a reactionary uprising, sacrificing Hungarian state socialism to the opposing camp. “Telephone from Hao Deqing”, 109-01041-01, pp.66-67, *CFMA*.

involvement.

The situation changed again as the Chinese delegation was preparing to return to Beijing on 31 October.<sup>136</sup> During their send-off by the Presidium at the airport, Khrushchev informed Liu that they had resolved on the continued stationing of Soviet troops in Hungary, helping the Hungarian people to defend socialism in that country. Khrushchev then offered a multiplicity of reasons as to why the Soviet troops could not retreat from Hungary, in the Chinese view almost identical to those put forward by the Chinese delegation the day before. All smiles, Liu told Khrushchev: "what you're saying is identical to what we said yesterday." Khrushchev responded that the Soviet declaration was still good, and that it was not contradictory to use force just after the communiqué had been published. In the Chinese record, Liu raised the question of timing: first of all, the troops should be sent in with a governmental invitation; and second, the Hungarian people should be evidently onside. Only when the anti-revolutionary features of the Nagy government were completely exposed to the masses, would the people forgive the Soviet intervention.<sup>137</sup> In Khrushchev's recollection, Liu said nothing of the kind, only agreeing with the decision to send in the troops. Khrushchev is emphatic that the final choice of sending the army back in was made by the Soviets independently with absolute support from the Chinese side.

What caused the Soviets to reverse their policy? Did Chinese involvement played a key role in their decision? While the line consistently taken by the Soviets is that they made up their own minds with the promise of absolute Chinese support, CCP leaders believed that the Chinese intervention may have swung Khrushchev's final choice to "suppress the reactionary elements in Hungary".<sup>138</sup> An extensive scholarly literature has not been able to settle the point.<sup>139</sup> As we

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<sup>136</sup> Wu Lengxi, *Shinian lunzhan*, 53. It should be mentioned that Wu's book has the date of the delegation's leaving Moscow as November 1. According to LSN, they actually left on the evening of 31 October, p. 378. Also see Shi Zhe, Bainian Chao, p.15. The Soviet Presidium session on 31 October, which decided to intervene in Hungary see *CWIHP Bulletin* 8-9, 393-394.

<sup>137</sup> Chen, *Mao's China and the Cold War*, 157; Jin Zhongji et al., *Liu Shaoqi zhuan*, 806; Wu Lengxi, *Shinian lunzhan*, 53; Shi Zhe, *Bainian Chao*, 15.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid.

<sup>139</sup> Shen Zhihua concludes that the decisive factor for the renewed Soviet armed intervention was the change in Mao Zedong's attitude towards the Hungarian crisis or, to be more precise, towards Nagy's government in the night of 30 October.; Péter Vámos, meanwhile, argues that the Chinese played no role in the Soviet's decision to send troops to

know, the Chinese suggestion that the Soviet troops should stay on continuously in Hungary came at a point when the Soviet leaders were trying to avoid an occupation. Something had changed, then, in the political complexion of the Hungarian events from the day before, when the Soviets had bowed to the political concessions to the Chinese as a prelude to the peaceful solution to the crisis. The Soviet leadership issued the declaration "On Friendship and Cooperation between the Soviet Union and other Socialist states" immediately after the 30 October session, ignoring the Chinese suggestion of postponing its publication until the Hungarian situation could be seen in its true light—that is, either as a reactionary uprising or a manageable revision of socialism. Insofar as the CCP had already made their views clear on stationing troops in Hungary, the Chinese took no further exception to the 31 October actions of the Soviets in suppressing the Hungarian Crisis. Liu Shaoqi in fact ended his meeting with the Soviet Presidium in a relaxed atmosphere, with the CCP delegation leaving for Beijing the next day without putting in any further request to discuss the Hungarian issue.<sup>140</sup> There are thus good grounds for being skeptical of the large claim that Mao's change in attitude towards Nagy's government on 30 October was the decisive factor impelling the Soviet volte-face.<sup>141</sup>

Rather, the tipping-point may have been Nagy's restoration of a multiparty system on 30 October 1956. The next day, Nagy raised the ante yet further in announcing Hungary's withdrawal from the Warsaw Pact. At the same time, the breaking-out of the Suez Canal Crisis and the Soviet fear of a spill-over from Hungary were instrumental in pushing Moscow to act decisively to deploy military force.<sup>142</sup> The American assurance that it did not regard Hungary as its ally—and thus would not come to its aid—further defused the Soviet anxiety over a potentially cataclysmic conflict that had perhaps previously stayed their hand when weighing up the pros and cons of intervention.<sup>143</sup> In comparison with these factors, the role of the

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Hungary again. See Shen Zhihua "1956 nian shiyue weiji: zhongguo de juece he yingxiang", 141; Péter Vámos, "Evolution and Revolution: Sino-Hungarian Relations and the 1956 Revolution", 38.

<sup>140</sup> See Shi Zhe, *Bainian Chao*, 17.

<sup>141</sup> Shen Zhihua, "1956 nian shiyue weiji: zhongguo de juece he yingxiang", *Lishi yanjiu*, 141.

<sup>142</sup> Kramer, "New Evidence on Soviet Decision-Making and the 1956 Polish and Hungarian Crises," *CWIHP Bulletin* 8-9, 369-70.

<sup>143</sup> This assurance refers to the US Ambassador Bohlen's statement to the Soviet government that it did not regard the new Hungary as its ally, reemphasizing the same statement made by John F. Dulles, the Secretary of State, on 27 October 1956. On the next day, the US representative repeated the assertion during a session of the UN Security Council. Eisenhower himself re-emphasized the US position on 31 October in a TV speech. See Györkei and

Chinese delegation was necessarily slight in changing the Soviet attitude on 31 October. Nevertheless, the fact that Khrushchev and his colleagues informed the Chinese delegation of their decision to intervene at least shows the seriousness with which the Soviet leaders entertained the Chinese suggestion of a troop presence. Moreover, in the Soviet Presidium deliberations on intervention, it is plausible that hardliners like Kaganovich would have appealed to the Chinese opinion in arguing against Mikoyan for the use of force. In the event, Mikoyan was the only Presidium member to oppose military intervention.<sup>144</sup> Although the Chinese were not au fait with the Soviet inner-debates on the final decision, they obviously received the impression that the Soviets listened to them and looked for their support in resolving their dilemma.

The Hungarian crisis by 31 October, as the CCP's leaders saw it, took the form of an anti-communist riot stoked by imperialist powers and a few exiled and internal reactionaries.<sup>145</sup> In the last two days of the month, a series of reports and phone calls from the Chinese embassy in Budapest had put the Chinese leadership's minds to rest on the true character of Nagy and his regime. Not having received any feedback from Beijing since 28 October, Hao Deqing made an urgent call on 31 October (at 18:00, Beijing time 1:00, 1 November), finally getting through to report the latest situation in Hungary. Hao informed Beijing of Nagy's change of political system in Hungary, taking the line that the current government "was already not communist but had come back to the capitalist united government of 1945".<sup>146</sup> Just at the point at which he had sanctioned political pluralism, Nagy and his colleagues turned to the Chinese for help in what turned out a misguided effort to prevent a second Soviet military invasion. Nagy summoned Hao Deqing to his office at the late evening of 1 November to explain the origin and complexity of the current events in Hungary. The Nagy leadership's

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Horváth, "Additional Data," in *Soviet Military*, pp.31-32 ; Shi Yinhong, "the Hungarian Incident and the American Policy", *Nanking University Journal*, issue 1 (1998): 97-111, 122.

<sup>144</sup> Mikoyan returned from Budapest to attend this session after Presidium had already effectively decided to use force in Hungary. He was alone in his support of Nagy's government. Kaganovich is reported as coming back at him: "The discussion was complicated. The Chinese said we should not withdraw troops. ...We can't wait long. The reactionary forces attacking and we are attacking." "Working Notes from the Session of the CPSU CC Presidium on 1 November 1956", *CWHP Bulletin* 8-9, 394-395.

<sup>145</sup> See the Chinese announcement in response to the Soviet declaration issued in 1 November.

<sup>146</sup> "Hao Deqing's phone call on 31 October", 109-01041-01, pp.66-67, *CFMA*.



major purpose was to ask ambassador Hao “to send word to Chairman Mao and Premier Zhou to interfere in the issue of Soviet military withdrawal”—that is, to get them to call off the tanks.<sup>147</sup> The Hungarian leaders apparently still pictured the Chinese as a major advocate for the tolerance of diversity and national independence within the socialist bloc, counting that they would take a stand against a Stalin-style Soviet military intervention.<sup>148</sup>

Nagy’s attempt to conscript the Chinese against the Soviets, though, backfired. Its apparent effect was to provoke the Chinese embassy to adopt an even more radical position towards his proto-capitalist regime. In a summary of the latest situation in Hungary sent back to Beijing around half a day after Hao’s meeting with Nagy, the Chinese embassy reached the conclusion that the Hungarian Communist Party’s leadership “had degenerated and that Nagy was especially suspicious politically. He is at the very least a careerist, which has become apparent judging by his words and action after the outbreak of the crisis.”<sup>149</sup> The Chinese embassy’s evaluation undoubtedly played a key role in forming Beijing’s final attitude to the Soviet second intervention. In a meeting with the Hungarians held at 5 May 1959 in Beijing, Mao asserted to Ferenc Münnich that it was “the Ambassador [Hao Deqing, who was present at the meeting] whose reports and recommendations” had helped the Chinese leadership the most “in assessing and dealing with the rapidly developing situation in Hungary during 1956”. Mao recalled that the Chinese embassy reported that “the counter-revolution was gaining more and more ground and had warned that if the Soviet Union should fail to liquidate the Imre Nagy Government, the restoration of capitalism in Hungary would be unavoidable.”<sup>150</sup> Reports sent from Budapest and other source materials received from the East European Communist

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<sup>147</sup> “Hao Deqing’s phone call on 2 November”, 109-01041-01, pp.90-91, *CFMA*.

<sup>148</sup> The Hungarian newspaper *Zhenshi* (Chinese translated from Hungarian) published an article citing sources in Warsaw suggesting that the Chinese saw the Soviet crackdown as an act of imperialist aggression against the Hungarian uprising. Raising the possibility that the article was libellous, the Chinese Embassy in Budapest cabled back to Beijing for directions on how to respond. “On the Hungarian Newspaper libeling our announcement”, 109-01041-01, p.89 *CFMA*. This telegram from Budapest demonstrated indirectly the Hungarian (and Polish) misinterpretation of the Chinese announcement made on 1 November, seeming to take it for granted that the Chinese would oppose the second Soviet military intervention.

<sup>149</sup> “On the current Hungarian political situation, telegram from the Chinese embassy to the Foreign Ministry and the Central Party”, 109-01041-01, pp. 93-94, *CFMA*.

<sup>150</sup> János Rádányi, “The Hungarian Revolution and the Hundred Flowers Campaign”, 123, 126. The specific report Mao referred to in this conversation must be the telegram sent back to Beijing on 2 November. In this report, the Chinese embassy concluded that “...the reactionary restoration [of Capitalism] would destined to come if there were no foreign intervention.” See “On the current Hungarian political situation”, 109-01041-01, pp. 93-94, *CFMA*.

parties emboldened the CCP to express its appraisal of the crisis in the most unambiguous terms.<sup>151</sup>

After the Soviet leaders' decision to intervene was made in 31 October, Soviet troops in Romania and the Ukraine advanced on the country. The Soviet embassy had János Kádár and Ferenc Münnich sent to Moscow where the Soviet leaders were waiting to discuss the formation of a counter-government.<sup>152</sup> Nagy resorted to the UN in calling for negotiation between the Soviet Union and his country, imploring the Great Powers to work through this institution to recognize Hungary's neutrality. At the same time, Khrushchev and his comrades negotiated with Romanian, Bulgarian and Czechoslovak leaders over the terms of Soviet intervention in their neighbour.<sup>153</sup> In 4 November, the suppression of the Hungarian "reactionary riots" began. At 4 am, Soviet troops attacked Budapest. Three days later after the deaths of an estimated two and a half thousand Hungarians, a Soviet backed Kádár government had been set in place to the satisfaction of Mao and the CCP leadership.<sup>154</sup>

In the *RMRB* editorial published on 3 November, the Chinese leaders accepted that the origin of the Hungarian crisis was profoundly international and that Western countries had been instrumental in fomenting unrest in Hungary.<sup>155</sup> The final aim of this 'conspiracy' was to unsettle the leading socialist state, the Soviet Union, which they intended to destroy after picking off its allies, one by one. The Chinese government had therefore completely changed its standpoint vis-à-vis the need for socialist cohesion under the most stringent interpretation of

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<sup>151</sup> In Rádanyi's recollection, Mao told Münnich that "on the basis of this and other information received from the various East European Communist Parties, he had sent an urgent message to the Kremlin asking Khrushchev to take quick military action against the Hungarian revisionists", which indicated that Mao urged Khrushchev for decisive military action in early November. The present author has not been able to secure any hard evidence certifying Rádanyi's recollection. For an editorial issued on 3 November defining the official Chinese response to the Hungarian events, see *Xinhua Banyuekan* [New China Half Monthly] vol.23(1956):104-105: "Shehuizhuyi geguo de weida tuan jie wansui" (Long Live of the United Bloc of Socialist Countries) People's Daily Editorial 3 November.

<sup>152</sup> Kádár and Münnich attended the Soviet Presidium sessions from 2-3 November, and Kádár was appointed by the Soviets as the head of the counter-government; see *CWIHP Bulletin* 8-9, pp. 395-398. Also see *Magyarország miniszerelnökei*, 209: Ferenc Münnich; *Magyar Százados: a Huszadik század története*, 394.

<sup>153</sup> Micunovic, *Moscow Diary*, 135, 138-139.

<sup>154</sup> See Liu's talk for CCP leaders' continuing beliefs in their significance in Moscow's decision for a second military intervention into Budapest on November 1, at Yinian Tang, see Wu Lengxi, *Shinian lunzhan*, 58.

<sup>155</sup> *RMRB*, Editorial, 3 November 1956

Warsaw Pact terms.<sup>156</sup> China in effect claimed that as long as NATO existed, the Warsaw Pact should remain in force as a unified front sheltering its member nations from capitalism. The imperialist power, together with a few reactionaries inside and outside Eastern Europe, was seen by China as making mischief in provoking anti-Soviet sentiment at every possible opportunity. Adopting, then, a marked Cold War mentality, without overlooking or entirely exonerating the errors of the former Hungarian leaders, the top CCP leadership concluded that only socialism could bring about freedom, independence and welfare on the level of the state.<sup>157</sup> After the primacy of the HWP, the local Communist Party, had been so shaken in the Hungarian crisis, in turn putting great strain on the unity of the international socialist bloc, Beijing moved its focus from seeking to alter the pattern of relations in the Communist camp to emphasizing the shared ideological background of all the bloc states and conceding the bloc's Soviet leadership.

### ***The Chinese solution: Repairing Communist Unity***

Although the Soviet second military suppression of the Hungarian uprising had seemingly brought the Communist camp back to order, the doubts and the disagreements stimulated by Khrushchev's policy of undercutting the Stalinist myth *de facto* intensified in the aftermath of the Warsaw and Budapest crises. The Polish October and the Hungarian Revolution had occasioned even more confusion in the communist camp than the secret speech of February, throwing into doubt the degree of orthodoxy and indeed adherence to Soviet Russia expected of ruling and (especially) non-ruling communist parties.<sup>158</sup> Tito made a speech at Pula in November on the international situation in the aftermath of the Hungarian Crisis, arraiging the Stalinist model and the Stalinist leaders inside the camp and speaking authoritatively on matters involving the policies of the Soviet bloc, provoking a heated debate among the world socialist parties. Different countries' parties found themselves at odds over the nature of Stalin and his and his followers' excesses, the place of personality cults in socialism, the possibility of

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<sup>156</sup> Mao's attitude changed from that at the time of his "good suggestion" to Moscow on 29 October, see chapter I.

<sup>157</sup> The Chinese government made this statement about Hungarian socialism on several occasions: *RMRB* Editorial, 3 November 1956; "Celebrating the Great Success of the Hungarian People", *RMRB* Editorial, 5 November 1956. In the latter piece, the importance of Soviet assistance in the Hungarian crisis as well as the role of people's dictatorship had been emphasized.

<sup>158</sup> See *The Secret Speeches of Chairman Mao*, p.9

arriving at socialism by many paths, the form of the Communist party system and many fundamental tenets of Marxist-Leninist theory, including the dictatorship of proletariat and the problem of class struggle.<sup>159</sup>

Despite his allegations about the Stalinist system and the cult of personality, Tito's speech took an ambivalent position on the Hungarian uprising, condemning the Soviet first intervention as "as absolutely wrong" but giving qualified endorsement to the second Soviet intervention.<sup>160</sup> Furthermore, the Yugoslavia Communist leader quite bluntly criticized the Nagy regime for "doing nothing to stop the brutal actions of the reactionaries." For Tito, Nagy's action in "making an announcement to withdraw the Warsaw Pact and declaring national independence had been meaningless in context and impotent in saving Hungarian Communism. "Viewing the current development in Hungary from the perspective of whether socialism or counter revolution" then held, Tito though came down on the side of socialism, praising the Soviet-sponsored Kádár government for doing the best of a bad job and keeping faith in communism. The second military intervention had been unfortunate for Tito but there was still hope that good could come of it. Tito set out a nuanced position in this speech, hoping to maintain workable relations with Khrushchev and offer support to Gomulka and Kádár while displacing Stalinism from the norm governing relations among the Communist states.<sup>161</sup>

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<sup>159</sup> Tito delivered this major speech on 11 November, 1956 at Pula to define his policy in the face of the new circumstances, see 'Tietuo tongzhi zai Pula fabiao yanshuo he geguo gongchandang de fanying (zhaiyao)', ['Tito's Pula speech and the reactions of the Communist parties... abstract'] *Xinhua Banyuekan*, vol.1(1957):141-152.

<sup>160</sup> In his Pula speech on 11 November Tito said: 'We are against interference and the use of foreign armed forces ... [but] if it meant saving socialism in Hungary, then ... the Soviet intervention was necessary', see Johanna Granville "Hungary, 1956: The Yugoslav Connection" *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 50, No. 3. (May, 1998): 515, ft. 86.

<sup>161</sup> "Complete version of Tito's Pula speech" (translated in Chinese), in Zhongguo renmin jiefangjun guofang daxue dangshi dangjian zhenggong jiaoyanshi ed. *Zhonggong dangshi jiaoxue cankao ziliao: neibu faxing* [CCP Party History Teaching and Researching Materials: inner-circled], vol.21, 588-600. Khrushchev and Malenkov went to Brioni island to meet with Tito on the Hungarian issue during 2-3 November and informed the Yugoslav side of the Kremlin's decision to employ military force in Hungary in order to oust the Nagy government and "defend socialism," Tito, to the "pleasant surprise" of Khrushchev and Malenkov, immediately expressed his agreement with this plan since, in Tito's opinion, the Hungarian events had headed off in the direction of "counter-revolution." See Leonid Gibianskii, "Soviet-Yugoslav Relations and the Hungarian Revolution of 1956" *CWIHP Bulletin* 10, 140. In a letter to the CPSU on 8 November replying to the Soviet inquiry about Yugoslavia's decision to provide shelter to Nagy and his group at their embassy, the Yugoslav side again expressed their agreement that Nagy's government was weak and that it was desirable to form a new government under Kádár, possibly uniting the "honest communists" of Nagy's government. See "Letter of the CC UCY to the CC CPSU with an exposition of the views of the leadership of the UCY on the events in Hungary", *CWIHP Bulletin* 10, 145-147.

Moscow likewise had to perform a difficult balancing act in evaluating Tito's speech. On the one hand, Tito's attitude towards Hungary was a sign for his commitment to a common outlook and to common practices which made Khrushchev unwilling entirely to consign him to the reactionaries; on the other, it was necessary to cut the Yugoslavs down to size for having dared to attack Stalinism and assert their sphere of influence in Eastern and South-Eastern Europe. In any case, Tito's Pula speech (and later the speech of Yugoslav Vice President Edvard Kardelj) complicated Soviet-Yugoslav relations however much Tito disavowed this as his ambition ("I did not want to complicate in any way Soviet-Yugoslav relations.")<sup>162</sup> The other Communist weighed in, with leaders in Tirana, Prague, Sofia and East Berlin, having been sharply accused by the Yugoslav Marshal as "stubborn Stalinists", joining in with Soviet critiques of Tito and defences of Soviet socialism.<sup>163</sup> For the Communist world at this juncture, as Moscow understood, the most pressing need was to restore the bloc's ideological and political unity with the USSR at the centre. Nevertheless, in forsaking many elements of its Stalinist past and involving itself militarily in Hungary, the Soviet leadership had tied its hands when it came to setting the terms of international socialist cohesion. The Chinese thus found themselves in an advantageous position to propose a new formula of unity.

The consideration presumably uppermost in the minds of Chinese leadership was the long-range implication of existing political and ideological diversity in the aftermath of the Polish and Hungarian events. Faced with Tito's allegations that a Stalinist-type bureaucratic system would risk a wave of anti-communist unrest across the world, Mao and his comrades went through with the gesture of praising the Soviet system and Stalinism in the strongest possible terms. Whatever the hangover of Mao's own relationship with Stalin and the Chinese

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<sup>162</sup> Tito's words are quoted from Johanna Granville, "Hungary, 1956: The Yugoslav Connection" *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 50, No. 3. (May, 1998): 498. The Soviet reply came on November 23 in form of a *Pravda* article, entitled "To Consolidate Further the Forces of Socialism on the Basis of Marxist-Leninist Principles", in which the Soviets rejected Tito's charges against the Soviet system and the cult of personality and criticized some Yugoslav contentions, such as the applicability of Yugoslav model to other socialist states. Belgrade accordingly pressed for granting all socialist states full equality with the USSR as the major retrenchment from Stalinism. For a full English translation of the *Pravda's* article, see *New York Times*, 24 November, 1956; quotation of Belgrade reply see Brzezinski, *the Soviet Bloc*, 233.

<sup>163</sup> The satellite leaders in Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Albania, Bulgaria, Poland and Mongolia sprang into an attack on Tito and his party through their party organs. The Italian and French Communist party leaders also wrote articles or made reports to criticize Tito's position. The Chinese side later published these articles on 11 December 1956's *RMRB*.

Chairman's bad memories of Stalin's mistaken attitudes towards the Chinese revolution, the Chairman regarded the unified socialist ideology of Leninism and Stalinism and the principles of the October Revolution as the essential moral basis of the Chinese socialist regime, indeed of the international communist movement in the context of the Cold War. Almost every maxim and goal of socialism was related to the Stalinist model and to the Leninist construction of a party-state. For Mao and his comrades, challenging the Stalinist basis of the socialist enterprise could only possibly be divisive and demoralizing, creating an ever larger threat to over the possibility of realizing socialism than any war in Hungary.<sup>164</sup>

Furthermore, the CCP's growing perception of the Hungarian crisis as uniquely counter-revolutionary in character and its hostility to "Western imperialism" made it imperative for the Chinese leadership to emphasize the importance of a disciplined and hierarchical unity against dark forces undermining socialism from outside. In the first draft of the Chinese statement, the writers, namely Mao's two secretaries, Hu Qiaomu, Tian Jiaying and the head of New China News Agency Wu Lengxi, included the judgment that the Hungarian popular demonstrations could have been avoided if Hungary's domestic social and economic problems had been better dealt with by the local regime. This could have happened, they suggested, had the Soviet model had not been mechanically transplanted to the satellite state.<sup>165</sup> It seems overwhelmingly likely that this point had been heavily discussed and agreed in the Chinese context in their previous sessions on Poland and Hungary. By mid-December, however, Mao had changed his mind, making the decision to omit this idea, since in his own words, it "oversimplified the essence of the Hungarian events." Preoccupied with the problem of Communist rule, whose legitimacy had been challenged within a Communist state for the first

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<sup>164</sup> The official record of the series of Politburo sessions of the CCP held from the late November to early December has yet to be made publically available and quite probably is not extant. Wu Lengxi, who attended the meetings as a non-voting delegate, made detailed notes on the discussions, which may represent the historical evidence of these important decision-making processes. See Wu Lengxi, *Shinian lunzhan*, 62-82.

<sup>165</sup> These three people made a division of labor to draft the statement according to their strengths after the top leaders decided to write the article. Hu Qiaomu wrote the first section (the common lessons of the Soviet experience) and the introduction and conclusion; Wu Lengxi drafted the second section (the evaluation of Stalin) and the fourth part (on socialist internationalism), while Tian Jiaying was responsible for the third on anti-doctrinism and revisionism. After numerous revisions from Politburo members, the Chairman in particular, the manuscript was eventually finalized under Mao's direction on 28 December, 1956. See Wu Lengxi, "Yu Jiaying gongshi de rizi ,shang [Remembering the days I worked with Tian Jiaying, first part of total three]", *Dang de wenxian [Party Documents]*, issue 4 (1996):85.

time in Hungary, the Chinese Chairman formed the thesis that residual class elements continued to represent enemies and potential counter-revolutionaries to the established socialist order. The Hungarian experience, then, was instrumental in Mao's development of the thesis of the persistence of class struggle after the victory of Communism. Although Mao admitted that the Hungarian affair was the result of various causes, both internal and external, he increasingly laid more emphasis on the external imperialist plot and on local class struggles, diverting attention away from economic problems caused by radical Stalinist policies even where these bore close comparison with Chinese issues. Mao's view of the Soviet crackdown in Hungary was that the purge was regrettably justified; it was necessary to defend socialism even though numerous party members had been discarded in the purge's aftermath. The power of the state to some degree needed to be founded in a party with its own security apparatus. Moreover, while acknowledging that a limited degree of internal autonomy was needed to make Marxist-Leninist theory applicable to specific conditions, the Chairman accepted the political and ideological correctness of re-establishing a general framework to bind a bloc of states together.

The Chinese delivered their verdict on the October events and Tito's interpretation of them in a lengthy article entitled "More on the Historical Lessons of the Proletarian Dictatorship." This article, published on 29 December in *RMRB* after eight revisions, was based on a one-month long CCP Politburo discussion convened by Mao. In Mao's words, this statement set out to "pass criticism both on Tito and the Soviet Union, as a means of achieving [bloc] unity." The Chairman recommended the use of traditional Chinese writing methods to make the article persuasive, according to which in order to criticize someone or something, one must first affirm its positive aspects, and in order to defend someone or something, one must first concede his mistakes. The first method applied to Tito and the latter to Stalin.<sup>166</sup> On Tito's attack on Stalinism and the taggle of Stalinist leaders, the Chinese side thought although "the Yugoslav comrades'...particular resentment of Stalin's mistakes" was "understandable", it was absolutely wrong for Tito to relate Stalin's personal mistakes to Stalin's socialist ideas and the Soviet system and denounce Stalinism on those terms. From the CCP leaders' perspective,

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<sup>166</sup> Wu Lengxi, *Shinian lunzhan*, 64-65.

“Stalin’s mistakes did not originate in the socialist system” and therefore “it is not necessary to ‘correct’ the socialist system in order to correct these mistakes.” Even if people must speak of “Stalinism”, as Mao concluded, this could only mean, in the first place, “communism and Marxism-Leninism”, or to be more exact, “imperfect Marxism-Leninism”. In the Chairman’s eyes, while the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU had been helpful in correcting some Stalin’s mistakes, it was improper for Khrushchev to seek to negate the Stalinist legacy entirely. By putting up the erroneous slogan of “de-Stalinization”, the Chinese statement asserted, some Communists “have helped to foster a revisionist trend against Marxism-Leninism”, which “can only lead to a split in the communist movement.” During the discussion of writing this article, Mao made it very clear that the cutting edge of this statement should be directed against this trend of revisionism.<sup>167</sup>

To contain the influence of excessive diversity in ideology and practice after Warsaw and Budapest, the Chinese party leadership under Mao’s construction summarized the basic laws of the Soviet experience in its December statement, claiming them as “all universally applicable truths of Marxism-Leninism”. The Chinese position was thus markedly different from the Yugoslav insistence on the existence of many pathways of practical and ideological implementation towards socialism. Essentially on the ground of this disagreement, the Chinese listed five points they understood in the guise of “the fundamental experience of the Soviet Union in revolution and [the] construction [of socialism]”. We can recapitulate these points as a number of phases of socialist development as outlined in the article. First, the advanced members of the proletariat organize themselves into a Communist Party basing itself on Marxism-Leninism, builds itself up through democratic centralism, establishes close links with the masses, and educates its party members and the masses in Marxism-Leninism( through means of mass line or mass campaigns and party rectification) ; second, under the leadership of the Communist party (CP), the proletariat takes state power from the bourgeoisie *by means of revolutionary struggle* (my emphasis here and later); third, after the victory of the revolution, the proletariat, under the leadership of the CP, *rallies the*

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<sup>167</sup> For the record of CCP Politburo meetings for writing this editorial, see Wu Lengxi *Shinian lunzhan*, 62-82; “More on the Historical Lessons of the Proletarian Dictatorship”, editorial in *RMRB*, 29 December, 1956.



*broad mass of the people* on the basis of a worker-peasant alliance, establishes a dictatorship of the proletariat over the landlord and capitalist classes, crushes counter-revolutionary resistance, and carries out the nationalization of industry and the step-by-step collectivization of agriculture. This eliminates the system of exploitation, private ownership of the means of production and classes. Fourth, the state, led by the proletariat and the CP, leads the people in the planned development of a socialist economy and culture, on this basis gradually raising people's living standards and actively preparing for the transition to communist society. All the while, fifth, the state resolutely opposes imperialist aggression, recognizes the equality of all nations and defends world peace and proletarian internationalism, appealing to labouring and oppressed people of all nations.<sup>168</sup> The Chinese Communists in this article offered a common ideological standard defining the genuine Marxist-Leninist path, reserving for the party itself a directive and organizational role in socialist development. Those who refused to follow any of these general principles, described by the Chinese as a "broad road which the proletariat of all countries must travel to gain victory", would automatically fall into the category of "revisionism".<sup>169</sup>

The purpose for Mao and his comrades in summing up certain common laws of the Chinese "correct learning from the Soviet experience" and of Leninism-Marxism was twofold: externally, such a restatement of socialist doctrine defended Stalin and the Soviet experience by generalizing its political and ideological pattern as a prototype for the Communist bloc, while internally, it resumed past Chinese history and offered guidelines for future domestic revolution and socialist construction. The CCP promised that its undefined "active preparations and work" would lead the people all the way to the realization of socialism (as discussed in the next chapter). From Mao's point of view, in a situation in which the Stalinist formula was being questioned inside the bloc, only Communist China was in a position to vindicate the Soviet model on the basis of "some new methods"—that is, Chinese forms of socialist construction—that bore out "the lessons of the Soviet experience."<sup>170</sup> Given their self-given position of arbiter, the Chinese appeared to hold a middle line, reiterating their earlier warning

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<sup>168</sup> "More on the Historical Lessons of the Proletarian Dictatorship", *Communist China 1955-1959*, p.260

<sup>169</sup> "More on the Historical Lessons of the Proletarian Dictatorship", *ibid.*

<sup>170</sup> "More on the Historical Lessons of the Proletarian Dictatorship", *ibid.*

against “certain great-nation chauvinist tendencies” while at the same time criticizing the “nationalist tendencies in smaller countries”, which could not be taken as “a pretext for opposing the general interest” of “the international proletariat solidarity”. By December, the Chinese regime had apparently shifted its focus from Stalinist doctrinism or big-state chauvinism to the disintegrative trends in the bloc and the need to restore the hierarchical structure of the Communist commonwealth with the Soviet Union as its core.<sup>171</sup>

It is noteworthy that, as Wu Lengxi recalls, the CCP still had reservations not only on the crude Soviet dissolution of Stalin’s legacy but also on the notion of “peaceful transition” to socialism brought up during the CPSU Twentieth Congress. Using the Hungarian case as a good example, the Chairman told his colleagues that “class struggle is an objective presence that won’t be transformed according to people’s will”, affirming the Stalinist political system as generally correct in its analysis that class struggle was fundamental to socialism. Mao also stressed repeatedly that “the fundamental conflict of the modern world is the antagonistic contradiction between the imperialist force and the socialist power”, meaning that on a large scale any “settlement of contradictions within the ranks of people” had to be conducted within “the class struggle between Capitalism and Socialism” worldwide. Following this logic, any type of non-violent parliamentary or capitalist democratic device could only lead socialist revolution up a dead end. In the immediate run-up to the Chinese declaration’s publication, the draft of the article still contained a section expressing the CCP’s different views on this issue of “peaceful transition”. Probably to avoid further confusion inside the bloc, however, Mao eventually ordered the deletion of this consideration, emphasizing instead the “common laws of the Soviet experience” as a bulwark against “revisionism” or “nationalist tendencies”.<sup>172</sup>

The shared Soviet and Chinese consciousness of the dangers involved in the acceptance of new ideological and institutional diversity without a proper framework post-Budapest had the effect of bringing Beijing and Moscow closer together. *Pravda* immediately published the

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<sup>171</sup> On 23 and 24 December, Mao re-emphasized that the statement should stress a combination of “patriotism” and “internationalism”; the continuous reiteration of Soviet primacy inside the bloc and opposition to the “multi-centric” theory promoted by the international communist movement. See Wu Lengxi, *Shinian lunzhan*, 62-82.

<sup>172</sup> See Wu Lengxi, *Shinian lunzhan*, 80.

Chinese statement in full on 30 December, Moscow time. Further, according to the Chinese source material, not only the Soviet top leaders but also diplomats, party theorists and students wholeheartedly embraced the CCP's declaration. Despite ongoing internal disagreements in Moscow, the Kremlin leaders all seemed happy with the Chinese replacement doctrine for full-dress Stalinism. The CPSU Presidium member Shepilov told Liu Xiao, then Chinese ambassador in Moscow, that "the article demonstrated the mutual understanding and the unanimity reached between us on ideological and theoretical cognitions"; it was "the best new year present" for the Soviet leaders. Khrushchev, who may be thought to have received a priceless lesson in the vagaries of political diversity in 1956, found himself toasting Stalinism as the orthodox form of Marxist-Leninism in his New Year's party of 1957. Both Khrushchev and Molotov told Liu Xiao, invited by the former to sit between them in the Politburo session, to send their word to Chairman Mao and Liu Shaoqi that they "totally agreed with" the opinions expressed by the December 29 Chinese article, which resounded with "the magnificent voice of the Chinese people".<sup>173</sup> Any hidden divergences between the two socialist giants notwithstanding, the Soviet leaders claimed the Chinese ideological pattern would be of service in addressing their existing problems.

## **Conclusion**

From a geopolitical viewpoint, the crises in Poland and Hungary, a thousand miles away from the Middle Kingdom, could not pose a direct threat to the PRC. Nevertheless, Mao attached a great importance to the Polish and Hungarian events on account of their indicative or symptomatic significance for the future destinies of all socialist states as they sought to navigate a course to some degree independent of the U.S.S.R. Should the Eastern bloc gain more autonomy, the existing Stalinist inter-bloc relationships, hierarchically organized, would come under pressure, a development towards which the Chinese Communists entertained rather complicated feelings. First and foremost, the Chinese Chairman evidently viewed the

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<sup>173</sup> "Reponses of various countries to the 'More on the Historical Lessons of the Proletarian Dictatorship' article", edited and delivered by the Secretariat Bureau of the CCP's Central Party Office to commissions and ministries of the Central Party, state and local party organizations, military organizations, party committees of provinces (cities) and municipalities [...] on 15 January, 1957, copy stored in Hunan Provincial Archives(HPA), Vol. 856, Catalogue 1, No. 141. pp.146-153.

Soviet difficulty in dealing with the “foul-ups” in its Eastern bloc as a chance to redefine China’s position in the camp, which Mao repeatedly complained of having been downgraded or diminished by the Kremlin. There is no doubt that the Chinese leaders judged the Soviet management of the Polish and Hungarian Crises, including that of Khrushchev personally, as heavy-handed in managing socialist international relationships, notably in balancing the Stalinist legacy with their less ‘leftist’ line of intended development. In these respects, the CCP’s leadership perceived themselves as far more capable and far-sighted than the CPSU’s leaders, which further strengthened the Chinese Chairman’s consciousness of Beijing’s potential to inherit Moscow’s central position inside the camp.

This is not to suggest, however, that Mao felt his country was ready to displace Moscow as the strategic centre of the world proletarian revolution by October 1956. While opposing the presumption of Soviet dominance, and of the dependence of all other socialist nations, in theory, and of Stalinist “big state chauvinism” in practice, Mao was necessarily constrained by the Soviet lead in technology and economics, deferring to the success of the Soviet model in “building a socialism” in quick order (Mao had been anxious to plan for faster and better socialist development at home from late 1955 onwards). Furthermore, Soviet political and military leverage in Eastern European bloc was something the Chinese Communists knew they could not hope to emulate over the short run. Ultimately, the Chinese leaders perceived the Hungarian Crisis through a prism of Cold War defensiveness. Hungary’s ideological and political uncertainties warned Mao against the possible disintegrative impact that the demise of Stalinism as the principle of bloc relations would have on the general unity of the camp. The Chairman and his colleagues therefore oscillated in their political objectives from the very start of the Budapest upheavals between an adjustment of Stalinist general principles regulating “Soviet-centered” relations between fraternal parties and a restoration of Communist camp unity, blown about as they were by their uncertainty over the nature of the Hungarian uprising.

Within this context, the Chinese leaders decided which factors in the Hungarian case were ideologically salient and which they could safely ignore. This made certain questions permissible in China, while consideration of others, concerning the more fundamental

tendency of state socialism in small and weak bloc countries and the essential problem of inter-bloc relations based on hierarchical principles, remained outlawed. In the Chinese Chairman's eyes, the permanence of "Soviet autocratic rule" was improper, while at the same time it was only reasonable that the strongest socialist state should head up an armed socialist camp. The Chinese were interested in determining, for instance, whether Nagy's Hungarian government was able to control domestic disturbances as Gomulka's had done in Poland, or whether domestic revolt was going to spin out of governmental control. Their interpretation of the Hungarian developments thus became a key criterion for the Chinese side to shift their policy preferences in the period from 26 October to 29 October. It seems highly likely that Mao's dramatic change of attitude on 29 October, when he suggested that the Soviets deal with satellite states on the basis of the five Bandung principles, i.e. that they issue a declaration, allowing the Eastern bloc states more autonomy to choose their way to socialism, indeed amounted to a bold bid on Mao's part to sap Soviet political and military dominance in Eastern Europe. This line was only facilitated by his judgment that the Hungarian events would pose no fundamental threat to the overall unity of the Communist camp after a new leadership in Budapest had been installed. Chairman Mao's explicit support for the Polish and Hungarian aspirations for autonomy was no more than a pragmatic tactic pushing at the Soviet-centered bloc pattern, paving the way for the Chinese junior partner to displace its senior in the foreseeable future.<sup>174</sup>

Against Mao's expectation, though, Nagy failed to put a lid on Hungary's domestic events. Beijing's immediate change of position to advocate Soviet military intervention demonstrated that the Chinese Communist leadership took the integrity and unity of a centralized Communist camp as fundamental to their interest, and that in the final analysis, Beijing interpreted its own independent distinctiveness in the Communist hierarchical organization as not applicable elsewhere. As far as China's diplomatic and political involvement in the Soviet decision to intervene Hungary for the second time goes, the Chinese side did not play overall a significant role in determining the Soviet Union to return to the scene of the Budapest riots. Although the

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<sup>174</sup> This seems to have been the first time Mao ever proposed the application of principles designed for dealing with non-aligned relations to relations between the Soviet Union.

CCP's leaders affirmed the need to save Hungary from a reactionary crisis by 30 October, urging the Soviet leadership to keep their troops in place, they were wary of showing their cards over Hungary before they had ascertained the nature of the Hungarian party and government. Without having formed any view of the intentions and capacities of the new Hungarian leader Imre Nagy, the Chinese side was unable to press their position at the point when they saw the Soviet leaders already at a point of consensus over pulling out military forces out of Hungary. Once Beijing received the telegrams from Chinese embassy in Budapest on the worsening Hungarian situation from 28 to 30 October, backed up by Chinese diplomats' comments on the shakiness of the new government from a doctrinaire Marxist viewpoint after 31 October, Mao was content to play power politics by openly supporting the Kremlin's use of force in subjugating the Eastern European bloc once more.

The Hungarian Crisis and Soviet military intervention triggered further debate on the evaluation of Stalin and Stalinism, occasioning severe disagreement not only in the socialist states but within Communist parties in the West. Tito's Pula speech underlined the fact that global Communism was anything but monolithic, thereby checking the fundamental momentum of the united international communist movement and throwing into doubt the moral justification of many states, like China, who relied heavily on mass ideological and political mobilization institutionalizing Stalinist-type principles. This perception of the form of their own communism led the Chinese to defend the Stalinists and the Soviets, even as they perhaps appreciated a greater multiplicity of causal factors in Hungary than the Soviets were prepared to do themselves. Any hidden divergences between the two socialist giants notwithstanding, the shared Soviet and Chinese consciousness of the dangers involved in the acceptance of new ideological and institutional diversity without a proper framework post-Budapest had the effect of drawing Beijing and Moscow closer together.

Interestingly, if we change our angle of examination, the Hungarian Crisis, together with the Polish, can be judged as indirectly helping the Chinese to achieve a greater measure of equality, however ill-defined, with the Soviet Union, boosting its prestige in the communist camp. The fact that the statement defining the form of Communist inter-relationships

originated from Beijing instead of Moscow and the Kremlin's complete acceptance of it meant a much greater role for China and an admission of China's position inside the Soviet bloc, which as some scholars had pointed out was "a development the Soviets would later regret".<sup>175</sup> After the Polish and Hungarian crises, the Chinese party continued to play an important role in mediating relations between the Soviet and the Eastern European parties. Zhou Enlai's trip to the Soviet Union, Poland and Hungary in January 1957 brought China's political thought on correctly managing relations among the socialist states (the "five principles") outside Asia to Europe for the first time. China's political influence on the Eastern European socialist bloc increased, providing at least some PRC leverage where none had existed previously.

In terms of their implications for domestic policy, though, insofar as the two crises enabled Chinese leaders to grasp various structural contradictions within state socialism, they were construed as bearing positively on indigenous problems. In this respect, although Mao and his comrades steadfastly remained votaries of international Communism, their perspectives always remained bound by domestic politics. As soon as the Soviet armed forces suppressed the riots in Hungary, the Chinese leaders exerted great effort in trying to apply their lessons to their own situation.<sup>176</sup>

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<sup>175</sup> Joseph L. Nogee and Robert H. Donaldson, *Soviet Foreign Policy Since World War II* (New York: Pergamon Press, 1984), 219.

<sup>176</sup> See Bo Yibo, *huigu*, vol. 2, 597-599.

## **Chapter 4: The Impact of the Hungarian Crisis on Chinese Domestic Politics, 1956-57**

The Polish-Hungarian crises were not only important events in terms of Cold War geopolitics but also had highly significant consequences for the development of socialism in China. The Chinese delegation returned from Moscow on 1 November, with the top leadership waiting no more than a few hours before the CCP Politburo Standing Committee meeting convened later that evening to hear detailed reports by Liu Shaoqi and Dengxiaoping on the state of affairs in Hungary and Poland. Two enlarged Politburo Standing Committee sessions were subsequently called for 2 November and then 4 November, in the wake of the re-entry of Soviet troops into Budapest and mounting unrest within the Soviet Eastern bloc. The general expectation in China at the time was that the riots in Eastern Europe would be quickly suppressed without incurring mainstream popular resentment. Mao's view was that, whatever the outcome, the task of consolidating socialism in Hungary would necessarily remain a long-term effort. It was already not feasible for the Hungarians to press on with the old formula that had held before the outbreak of the crisis, with Mao's view being that party leaders had to grope their way towards a new pattern, in which search they would be supported by the Chinese. It seemed to Mao and his lieutenants that Polish and Hungarian crises might even be of benefit to the Chinese in helping them, in the first instance, better appreciate the distinctive features of political problems in China.<sup>1</sup>

By November, the Chinese Communist leaders had come to the view that Nagy's Hungarian leadership had lost control of events, leading to alarming outbreaks of anti-party and general violence throughout the country. Worse of all, Nagy and his men, Communist leaders properly charged with fortifying the people against reactionaries in such a crisis, had called on the masses to take up arms against the Soviet Army, announcing Hungary's withdrawal from the Warsaw Pact and the restoration of a pre-1945 model of multi-party government. The

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<sup>1</sup> Wu Lengxi, *Shinian lunzhan*, 59. Wu Lengxi was then director of the 'New China News Agency' and editor-in-chief of *RMRB*; he attended several Politburo Standing Committee meetings, discussing the de-Stalinization issue and the Polish Hungarian crises. Also see Peng Xianzhi, Jin Chongji ed. *Mao zhuan*, 604-05.



Hungarian decision posed for Mao and his lieutenants a number of novel theoretical and practical questions concerning the danger of a reversion to capitalism even after the revolutionary establishment of a socialist state. As explored more fully later, Mao was concerned to investigate the political and ideological implications of this potential backsliding for Chinese domestic development. The other top leaders, however, were more concerned with systematic problems in party organization and economic crises in food and other forms of production at home in the aftermath of the bloc crises. In hindsight, Mao had no intention to carry out a fundamental reform in his party and bureaucratic architectures. But he was bolder than his colleagues in aiming to align the majority of the Chinese population behind socialism. With the party cadres resisting Hundred Flowers policy after Hungary, Mao decided that he could prevent a Hungarian type crisis from happening at home by adopting “soft means” in governance in trying to win over marginal groups to the ideology of communism. This meant a continuation of the Hundred Flowers policy and the opening of the party to the ‘rectification’ of the criticism of non-party members. The dramatic cancellation of the Hundred Flowers and mutation of rectification into an anti-Rightist campaign represented, then, the failure of the Maoist experiment.

### ***The Hungarian revolt and Chinese domestic problems***

By the latter half of the 1950s the Chinese, China’s national economy and its people’s standard of living quickly began to show the strains imposed by the radical Maoist form of socialization. By the end of the First Five Year Plan in late 1956, in response to shortages of food and consumer goods, mass demonstrations had taken place in a number of Chinese provinces. Within the next six months, around ten thousand workers’ strikes, both large and small-scale, and a similar number of student strikes were held nationwide.<sup>2</sup> Many groups, furthermore, withdrew from the Agricultural Collectives in the countryside, some even calling publicly for a revolt inspired by the Hungarian revolution.<sup>3</sup> A Central Committee directive

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<sup>2</sup> “Zhonggong zhongyang guanyu chuli bagong, bake wenti de zhishi” [Central Committee’s Directive on how to solve the problems of demonstrations by students and strikes by workers] from *Cankao ziliao*, vol.22, 8; Also see *Mao zhuan*, 610.

<sup>3</sup> “Zhonggong henan shengwei nongcun gongzuobu guanyu chuli bufen diqu bufen nongye shengchan hezuoshe fasheng naoshe tuishe qingkuang de jianbao (Country Work Department of the Henan Provincial Party Committee’s Briefing on the Situation of Managing Some Cases of Troubles or Withdrawals from the Practical Agricultural

delivered on 25 March, 1957, records on this matter: "In Northeast China, Northern and Northeast China, South Central, Northwest, and Southwest China, strikes and demonstrations took place in all these regions."<sup>4</sup> Another party memo reads: "It is worth noting that among those demonstrations, some were led by party members and youth league members; chairmen of the primary work unions participated in some; some were provoked by the private capital representatives of certain firms and some cases demonstrations were stirred up by anti-revolutionaries. In many cases, the masses' blood was up, with even some administrative leaders yelling '[we] have to fight till the end', 'the troops cannot be withdrawn until [the] success [of our protest] is sure, and '[we'll] denounce the low ranking [officials] and then turn to the higher ones'. A few workers were even heard to proclaim, 'as [we] see, there's no other way for us than learning lessons from Hungary!"<sup>5</sup> Although the unrest of 1956 had begun months before the October crises and most participants' grievances were economic, rather than in any sense ideological or informed by an accurate appraisal of Warsaw or Budapest, the Polish and Hungarian events apparently had the undesirable consequence of suggesting to the Chinese grass-roots that the domestic demonstrations and strikes could have external sources.

In trying to face down the effect of the Eastern European crises both diplomatically and domestically, the Chinese leaders actually sat down and went over point by point their interpretations of the underlying causes of the Polish and Hungarian uprisings and of the methods required for solving the problems they embodied. From 10 to 15 November, the second plenary session of the eighth party Central Committee convened with the European uprisings a top item on the agenda. Liu Shaoqi made a key report on the current situation, which summarized the central leadership's evaluation of genesis of the troubles in the Soviet bloc. Admitting that the Polish and Hungarian events were both "large-scale anti-Soviet campaigns which should be regarded as [emerging out of] contradictions among the people",

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Collectives in Certain Regions)", *cankao ziliao*, vol.22, 12.

<sup>4</sup> See "Report made by the Party Organization of the Chinese National General Labourers' Union on the situation of the strikes of workers", vol.141-1-840, pp 16-39, quoted from p.16, *HPA*.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*, p.18. These demonstrations took place from the second half of 1956, from around September 1956 to March 1957. Also see Bo Yibo, *huigu*, vol. 2, 589; Jin Chongji. et. *Liu Shaoqi zhuan*, 810.

Liu was careful nonetheless to distinguish between the two cases: while the Polish simply featured “some non-Marxist [politically or ideologically incorrect] factors”, “the anti-revolutionaries [had] already seized power...taking up a dominant position during a certain period of the [mass] campaign” in Hungary. As regards the historical origins and immediate causes of “the severest events inside the Communist camp”, Liu cited three historical origins and three further immediate causes thus: (1) both Poland and Hungary had been liberated by the Soviet army, meaning that the masses as workers and peasants had never been sufficiently politicized or organized in the struggle against landlords and capitalists; their class consciousness was in consequence deficient. Problems with national self-determination in both countries meant that class politics were less defined than they might be, with many struggles rather assuming the appearance of inter-state rivalries. Local students admired the West and disliked Socialism, being further tutored by intellectuals who had never taken to Communism. Last, specific mistakes in political purges had made good men suffer but left the real counter-reactionaries unpunished. (2) Further, the state apparatuses in both countries had invested excessively in heavy industry, ignoring light industry and agriculture. As a result, people’s standards of living had not risen. Local leaders’ privileges, meanwhile, aroused popular discontentment. (3) Local regimes had lost confidence and become disheartened once the shortcomings of their apeing of the Soviet experience had become apparent; at the same time, Soviet intervention into the countries’ domestic affairs hurt their national pride. (4) Hungarian and Polish adherents, party members and masses alike, were confused after the CPSU Twentieth Congress’ condemnation of Stalin’s mistakes. (5) The Soviets had mismanaged the early stages of both crises, in particular the Polish (6) spurred by Yugoslav agitation.<sup>6</sup> These six points in fact represented the CCP core leadership’s (namely Mao and the other standing committee Politburo members’) clear attitude towards Poland and Hungary in the immediate aftermath of the Soviet second intervention in Budapest. The Chinese condemnation of the Yugoslavs’ role in provoking the Poles and (even more so) Hungarians

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<sup>6</sup> Liu Shaoqi’s report delivered during the Second Plenary Session of the Eighth Party’s Congress, 10 November, 1956. This report was partially published in *Dang de wenxian* [Party’s Documents], issue 5 (1998) and can also be found in the edited version of the Party Central Archives in *Gongheguo wushinian zhengui dangan* [Precious Achieves of the Republic’s Fifty Years’ History], vol. 1 of 2, (Beijing: Zhongguodangan, 1999). Also see Shen Zhihua, “Zhongguo dui dongou shiyue weiji de fanying he sikao”, *Shixue yuekan*, 1(2007): 76.

into nationalist ambitions fully reflected Mao and his colleagues' eventual support of a Communist camp hierarchy.

The CCP central leadership's analysis of the crises reflected a purely, or at least a very heavily, doctrinaire Maoist understanding, which would go on in turn to shape the formation of Chinese domestic policy. Possibly the most notable example of this tendency was Liu's implicit reference to the CCP's successful experience of political and social reconstruction in the initial stage of socialist state-building, in which it had mobilized the workers and peasants as participants in the class struggle, in so doing (apparently) remoulding the ideology of intelligentsia and so eliminating most of the real and potential class enemies. This Chinese ideological perspective on political struggle notwithstanding, the CCP top leaders still recognized some faults in the Eastern bloc regimes' more specific management of state socialism, especially in the areas of party organization and economic policy, which should exert a cautionary effect on the Chinese leadership in forewarning them of certain policy hazards.

On the question of how to avoid similar upheavals in China, Liu suggested, first and foremost, to dig into possible contradictions and sources of political failure within the party. In his eyes, the "fundamental issue" was to avoid bureaucratic mismanagement within the Party's leadership, according to which individuals would pursue personal or sectarian interests at the expense of identification with the masses and with the spirit of the revolution.<sup>7</sup> As the developments in the Eastern bloc states had demonstrated, Liu asserted, it was possible for cadres to appear and indeed to become "a privileged class" within a socialist party's leadership. The tendency among some Chinese cadres in the Party and government organizations to see their leadership roles in terms of power and privilege rather than responsibility could potentially lead to the formation of a Chinese "new aristocratic class" as had happened in Poland and Hungary. In Liu's view, if necessary measures were not taken in time, the example of Hungary proved that a divorce of practical interests between the Party and the masses could have very dangerous results. The gap between the two, as Liu saw it, might be bridged by, on the one

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<sup>7</sup> Jin Chongji et., *Liu Shaoqi zhuan*, 807-808; Bo Yibo, *huigu*, vol.2, 590.

side, educating the masses and, on the other, educating the Party.<sup>8</sup> Liu's prognosis was that under the leadership of the CCP, more effective state organization and the cultivation of political constituencies through the better provision of public services could allow the party to hold onto people's allegiances despite changes in their circumstances and possibly in Communism's international context.<sup>9</sup>

In seeking to resist bureaucratism and make the party work more efficiently, Liu took the view that the authority of leaders and the party cadres should be constrained, so that the CCP could "exercise [a] democracy of the people". By hemming in senior party figures, Liu further expounded, "there should be a framework of power defining to what extent a party member may use his authority to determine a certain issue, i.e., the limits of officials' scales of function and power [should be defined]." The internal threats to socialist development, Liu believed, could be headed off by ending the life tenure of party cadres, which he anticipated would reduce income gaps among different section of the population following the example of western democratic countries. Liu recruited in support of this initiative the names of George Washington, Dwight Eisenhower and George Marshall, quoting Mao's words back at him that "some of the [means of] capitalist democracy, in particular those adopted during the initial stage of its establishment, are more developed than the ones we are using."<sup>10</sup> The fact that Liu had recourse to the early expression of Mao's own views in promoting his own policy preference in curbing cadre bureaucracy demonstrates the unchallenged centrality of Mao to decision-making, even during a period in which the Chairman deliberately created a "relaxed" and "democratic" atmosphere in the center. At the same time, it appears unlikely that Mao would have been willing to sanction any proposal that could harm his absolute authority inside the party, even if the majority of his leadership agreed to it. We will return to this topic later in considering the steps the party actually took in ensuring the continuity of the revolution.

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<sup>8</sup> Jin Chongji et., *Liu Shaoqi zhuan*, 808.

<sup>9</sup> See Lowell Dittmer, "Review: The Past Recaptured", review of *Liu Shaoqi xuanji. Vol. I* by Liu Shaoqi; *Liu Shaoqi: Ausgewählte Schriften und Materialien* by Th. Bergmann; U. Menzel; U. Menzel-Fischer, *The China Quarterly*, No. 97. (Mar., 1984):126-134.

<sup>10</sup> *Gongheguo wushinian zhengui dangan*, 515-518; also see Shen Zhihua's article "Zhongguo dui dongou shiyue weiji de fanying he sikao", 75-89.

At the same time, Liu underlined the need for mass participation in governance and for officials' supervision by the people: "our country is a democratic dictatorship of the people, meaning that dictatorship can only be used to deal with antirevolutionaries while democracy should be exercised among the people."<sup>11</sup> Liu's emphasis on the role of the masses on restraining cadres' freedom of operation reflected a Maoist orthodoxy in seeking to rid the Party of the bureaucratization, corruption and deviation from a common interest, which had already aroused popular dissatisfaction according to briefings received at the Centre from lower levels of Party organization. Liu Shaoqi's concerns were apparently focused in a practical way on preventing the consolidation of a system of hierarchical privilege, which would alienate the party and government from the masses, as the lessons of Stalin's Soviet Union and the Eastern bloc socialist meltdowns had shown.

However, the central discussion of curtailing Party privileges and introducing certain forms of popular moderation and check into socialist government only circulated within the highly restricted ambit of the Party's leadership, in accordance with Mao's notions of democratic-centralism. As a highly disciplined and intelligent Leninist, Liu also shared Lenin's scepticism over the possibility or efficacy of spontaneous mass activity. "Democracy" in Communist China, in Liu's interpretation, "could merely be democracy under the leadership [of the Party] rather than, as some had advocated, a 'big democracy' or some form of 'democracy' without proper political leadership."<sup>12</sup> Liu later dubbed this Chinese form of democracy as "limited democracy", designing a restriction of popular participation in and supervision of Chinese politics to situations where the ideological and directional role of the Party was not under serious threat. On the whole, as one scholar has pointed out, Liu was willing to experiment on pragmatic grounds in organizational or economic realms alone, while standing in principle for the ideological purity of the Communist Party.<sup>13</sup> He later made it clear that a mode of "extensive democracy", namely "bourgeois" electoral and parliamentary arrangements, "is unsuitable" for Communist China.<sup>14</sup> Insofar as it refused to deviate from

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<sup>11</sup> Shen Zhihua, *ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> see Shen Zhihua's "Zhongguo dui donggou shiyue weiji de fanying he sikao", *Shixue yuekan*, 1(2007): 76-77.

<sup>13</sup> Lowell Dittmer, "Review: The Past Recaptured", *The China Quarterly*, No. 97. (Mar., 1984): 126-134.

<sup>14</sup> "Address to the 1957-class graduates of the Peking Institute of Geology," May 1957, quoted from Lowell Dittmer,

state dirigisme, top-down Chinese Communist Party reform was in essence a self-regulative attempt to avoid Polish or Hungarian-style disorders, rather than any genuinely self-critical attempt at political transition.

In the end of his report, Liu talked briefly about Eastern European economic problems, rounding off with a tactful expression of his own view that domestic industrialization courted obvious difficulties if conducted at a breakneck pace. Agreeing with the position of Chen Yun, the party's chief economic planner for both the first and second FYPs, for Liu the "speed of economic construction" should be "slower" and "steadier". Industry should be brought forward at "sound and reliable" pace, balancing the demand for efficient and rational management with a call for increased enthusiasm in production. But "[w]hat is a 'sound and reliable' pace [of development]?" "By this we mean that [our economic policy] should not lead the people to go out to the street or to mount a mass disturbance; at the same time, it should maintain the initiative and enthusiasm of the masses."<sup>15</sup> Alongside Zhou Enlai's later much more assertively worded report on economic problems, Liu's argument about fitting industrial development to China's economic means was much more cautious and moderate.

Liu's circumspection doubtless owed to the identification of his "rightist" mistakes in the Sixth Plenum of the 7<sup>th</sup> Central Committee in 1954 (in the session that also put an end to the Gao-Rao affair) and his effectively being placed on his best ideological behaviour by Mao's presence. Mao responded to Liu's view that right was better than left on the question of keeping to a "sound and reliable" pace in economic construction by saying "it depends what sort of rightism is involved". After Liu circumscribed his rightism just to the speed of construction, Mao replied that this kind of rightism was acceptable, implying Liu's 1950s flirtation with the capitalism remained firmly off-bounds. In Liu's case, his political ambiguities were probably less a matter of taking a truly middle line in evaluating China's economic difficulties than of acting rationally in avoiding offense to the Chairman and his radical plan for

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"Review: The Past Recaptured", *The China Quarterly*, No. 97. (Mar., 1984): 126-134.

<sup>15</sup> *Gongheguo wushinian zhengui dangan*, vol. 1, 515-518; Shen Zhihua's "Zhongguo dui dongou shiyue weiji de fanying he sikao", *Shixue yuekan*, 1(2007): 76-77.

socialization.<sup>16</sup> On the other hand, the Chairman's implicit warning to the central party against excessive reforms ventured too far to the "right" indicated that Mao preferred restrictive policy adjustments after the Hungarian events, whose unexpected political consequences emphasized the need of a restrained approach in dealing with domestic problems.

For Zhou Enlai, Chen Yun and the other top economic leaders, who had overseen the First Five Year economic plan based on the Soviet model, the uprisings in Poland and Hungary represented a historic opportunity to question the applicability of Stalinist development strategy to Chinese conditions. On the one hand, the top economic planners saw the Soviets themselves were suffering from the emphasis they had placed on heavy industrialization efforts at the expense of a concentration on agriculture and light industry. On the other, they realized that the massive uprisings in East Germany, Poland and Hungary reflected "the serious consequences of enforcing this [Soviet or Stalinist] policy", which did not appear, further, to be universally sound ("Stalin's economic theory has [left] something open to doubt," they noted).<sup>17</sup> Knowing Communist China's development in the first half of the 1950s was in fact established on the Stalinist pattern, people like Zhou Enlai feared that if further adjustments were not made to rectify the "modern industry-centered" policy, China risked a similar fate to Poland and Hungary. The Premier therefore called for a special focus on existing problems of socialist construction in a Standing Committee meeting of the State Council on 9 November: "the recent international development affords us lessons that merit attention: ever since the CPSU Twentieth Congress' denouncement of Stalin, many problems with socialist construction have been exposed with the consequence of social and political instabilities making themselves felt from Poznan to the Hungarian October. There are still hidden problems

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<sup>16</sup> Shen Zhihua interprets that the final section of Liu's speech on economic matters to connect up the lessons learnt from the Eastern bloc to "the relationship between heavy industry and light industry and that of accumulation and consumption," laying the ground for a following discussion of domestic economic problems on the basis of the Polish-Hungarian events. Shen's interpretation is arguably misleading in giving the impression that Liu Shaoqi, Chen Yun and Zhou Enlai presented a united front in opposing "rash advancements", even forming a bloc on the matter of economic policy. In fact, although Liu was apparently sympathetic to a 'sound and reliable' economic policy, as against a radical move forward, he was far from a leading figure in setting out an "anti-rash advance" policy, which was rather spearheaded by the more unambiguously sound ideologues Zhou and Chen. See Shen Zhihua, "Zhongguo dui dongou shiyue weiji de fanying he sikao", 76-78.

<sup>17</sup> ZNP, 629-630.



in other [socialist] countries. All these should be taken as an object lesson for our country.”<sup>18</sup>

Up to this point, the Premier felt it important for a wider range of party cadres to arrive at a common view on the necessity for a change in the country’s development strategy. Zhou thus decided to appeal, in a stronger and more direct way than he did in the CCP’s Eighth Congress, to his central party colleagues to recognize mistakes in their previous economic policies on the basis of lessons learnt from the Polish and Hungarian crises.

As a result, when it was the Premier’s turn to deliver his speech on national economic planning for 1957, Zhou addressed the main agenda item of the economic plan by drawing attention to the unbalanced economic policies in Poland and Hungary. Based on ideas formulated in a series of discussions with his State Council colleagues about Poland and Hungary’s economic problems and how they might relate to Chinese domestic conditions, Zhou in fact offered his colleagues two resolutions for readjusting economic policies at home, the first underlining the need to raise people’s standards of living and the other advocating a moderate, well-balanced prospectus for the Second Five-Year-Plan. Carefully stating that socialist industrialization was “designed for people’s long-term interest”, Zhou made the case that light industry and agriculture were more directly related to people’s immediate interests. “If people had been placed under undue stress to tighten their belts, that is, if people’s living standards had not risen or they had been asked to give up basic goods,” Zhou said, “then it would have been impossible to arouse people’s enthusiasm, let alone to increase capital accumulation.” Following this logic, Zhou warned that “development of heavy industry would have had to come to a halt even had it been further advanced.” At this point in history, then, Zhou came to the conclusion that it was necessary to slow down the pace of industrialization, even claiming that the economic index formulated in the Eighth Congress of the CCP and the 40-article Draft Program for Agricultural Development of January 1956 on Mao’s initiative were “merely suggestions” capable of revision. Backing up his arguments, Zhou reminded his audience that “the events [that] took place in some Socialist countries should serve as a grave warning to

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<sup>18</sup> “Zhou Enlai’s speech record, Meeting of Standing Committee of the State Council, November 9, 1956”, quoted from Zhonggong zhongyang wenxian yanjiushi ed., *Chen Yun Zhuan* [Biography of Chen Yun], (Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian, 2005) vol.1 of 2, 1036.

In order to push the 1957 annual plan in the direction of greater moderation, the Premier again raised the issue of FFYP evaluation, repeating his theme of the August Eighth Congress of the CCP. But this time, Zhou's review of the FFYP pressed harder on "defects and errors" than previously, taking the line that the CCP's "achievements are tremendous, but there have also been *some* defects and errors in our work which we must strive to correct". In rowing back to a position where Communist development had only been "generally" correct, Zhou took aim at the so-called "rash advance" tendency, which between 1953 and 1956 had blundered in setting unrealistically optimistic targets, something that had to be corrected in 1957 planning. On the 1957 proposal, the Premier called everybody's attention to the necessity of "a general lowering [of the economic targets]", otherwise "[our economy] will be unstable and have negative impact on our currency, goods and materials, labour and salaries." The Party should not "allow [something like] Poznan to happen in China, leading to several hundred thousands or several millions of people standing on the streets and demonstrating."<sup>20</sup> Despite Zhou's boldness and persistence in advocating for a balanced economy while setting his face against a rash advance, the Premier's address was still a political balancing act: industrialization and socialization remained "primary" and in "the long-term interests of the people" as defined by the Chairman.<sup>21</sup> But the substantive message was a sober: unless something was done to solve the real problems of people's livelihoods, China would court the same falling-out with masses as in Hungary.

Following the Premier's report, Chen Yun made a speech on the themes of food and non-staple foodstuff supplies.<sup>22</sup> Shortages in all comestibles, especially pork and cooking oil

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<sup>19</sup> "Zhou Enlai's Report to the Second Plenary of the 8<sup>th</sup> Central Committee of the CCP, November 10, 1956", *Zhou Enlai xuanji*, vol.2 (Beijing: Renmin, 1980), 229-258.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Mao moderated his emphasis on heavy industry as primary in agreeing to balance investment between heavy industry and light industry in April 1956; see his "On the Ten Major Relationships" (April 25, 1956), *The Writings of Mao Zedong*, 46-47.

<sup>22</sup> The First Five-Year-Planning period got underway in 1953 with Zhou Enlai and Chen Yun as the chief responsible persons. After Gao Gang had been promoted to lead economic planning in late 1952, Chen Yun ceded his leading position in the FFYP to Gao. The first year saw the emergence of the Gao-Rao affair, leading to the Chairman's nomination of Chen Yun to head up the FFYP. *Chen Yun zhuan* (Biography of Chen Yun), vol.2, 873-916.

had become particularly acute, causing the issue to rise up the Plenary agenda prompting reassessment of the top of the CCP development strategy. Chen Yun reported that there would be a 2.5 billion kg. deficit in supplies the following year, predicting “a mess”, which should mean a cutting of forecasts now rather than later. Chen further suggested mooted a role for the free market in rural areas in stimulating agricultural production and encouraging a flow of commodities, notably in non-staples like pork, to towns.<sup>23</sup> Together with Liu Shaoqi’s speech on bureaucratism in the party system, Zhou’s concern over the economic and societal validity of the Soviet model and the widespread perception that people’s livelihoods in China were not picking up as anticipated, Chen’s report struck a chord, focusing Party attention in the subsequent small discussion sections on shortages in housing, power generation, steel and other daily necessities. Local representatives further connected the entrenched privilege of cadres at home with the lessons learnt from Eastern bloc states and questioned the applicability of the heavy industry development pattern to Chinese conditions. Zhu De, a member of the Standing Committee of the CCP Politburo, stated that “it appears that the problems [at home] are serious”, coming into line behind a more balanced development strategy. Dong Biwu, Politburo member and head of the People’s Supreme Court, commented that unless the “rash advance” ideology had been put in its place, problems were sure to emerge in the Second FYP. The Northwest group (divided between different geographical locations) reported during discussion that supply was unable to meet the demand in its regional market, resulting in shortfalls of both food and clothing in Lanzhou, the capital city of Gansu province. If the situation continued, suggested by the cadres from this region, something like Poznan would be hard to head off.<sup>24</sup>

Evidently, a large number of the leading cadres who attended the sessions, either from the center or from the provinces, already realized that the East European problems in the realms of economic and party organization emphasized the danger of letting similar problems fester at

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<sup>23</sup> Chen Yun’s report, records of the Second Plenary of the 8<sup>th</sup> Central Committee, November 11, 1956, quoted from Shen Zhihua, “Zhongguo dui dongou shiyue weiji de fanying he sikao”, 76-78. For an analysis on the origin of the food supply and agricultural raw materials problem from an economic perspective, see Alexander Eckstein, “Economic Growth and Change in China: A Twenty-Year Perspective”, *The China Quarterly*, No. 54, (Apr. - Jun., 1973):214-215.

<sup>24</sup> Briefing and small group discussion records, the Second Plenary of the 8<sup>th</sup> Central Committee, November 11, 1956, quoted from Shen Zhihua, “Zhongguo dui dongou shiyue weiji de fanying he sikao”, 78.

home, resolving on the necessity of further reforms in China. Moreover, encouraged by the inner-party détente promoted by Mao since early 1956, the top elites must have felt safer to express their real attitudes towards domestic problems, considering they were answering the Chairman's call for collective wisdom and effort in spearheading internal reform. It seemed that both Premier Zhou and Chen Yun believed their advocacy for an adjustment of the Stalinist model of economical development was politically in line with Mao's desire to specify and cultivate the specifically Chinese characteristics of "socialist construction" on the basis of a critical review of the Soviet experience. Yet the degree to which Mao would allow criticism of the Stalinist model remains very much in doubt; such criticism may have been especially unwelcome if it could be taken to cast doubt on the "achievements" of China's socialization, as identified with Mao, and even on the legitimacy of his past policies. Therefore, no matter how the central party cadres may have called for further reforms to prevent a Poznan or Hungary from happening in China, Mao's own interpretation of the meaning of Communist bloc crises and their possible impact on domestic developments has to hold a central place in our analysis of the possible direction of any policy changes post-Budapest.

Mao's views on the economic issues discussed in the Second Plenum appear to have been complex and contradictory. All the same, we can make out his viewpoint on two interrelated but distinct questions: China's broad development strategy and current imbalances and failures in execution. On the specific economic problems at hand, the Chairman continued pragmatically to acquiesce in moderate economic policy adjustments.<sup>25</sup> The Chairman's discussion of economic policies in fact allowed his lieutenants to massage down expectations, "arrang[ing] the reduction problem rationally to avoid disturbances from occurring." "[Since we only have] this limited amount of money and material", Mao stated, "it is necessary to make appropriate reductions from 1956 levels and to guarantee the implementation of key construction projects while ensuring that people's livelihood continues at an acceptable level." Mao further advised that "when materials are not sufficient, [they should be] first and foremost sent to support necessary production; at the same time, the balance [in material supply] should also be

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<sup>25</sup> For Mao's attitudes towards "anti-rash advance" policy in the summer of 1956, see chapter 2.

noted.”<sup>26</sup> There can be no doubt that Mao was fully apprised of the financial and resource restrictions on rapid industrialization, as his comments on economic policy in fact broadly support the State Council’s reduction proposal for 1957. At the same time, it is also plausible that, in Mao’s mind, these moderate measures were no more than transitional means for getting around the bottleneck on resources prior to a fresh round of industrialization. On the basic problem of the applicability of a “heavy industry-centered” economic model to Chinese conditions, Mao does not appear to have wavered from his belief in industrial modernization, parting company with Zhou’s immediate post-Hungary doubt on this matter.

This determined differences between the two men over both tone and strategy, with Mao taking exception to Zhou’s emphasis on “defects and errors” in the Party’s economic work, which Mao feared as potentially jeopardizing the enthusiasm of the party cadres and masses for ongoing socialist revolution, or even worse, encouraging misgivings about the basic correctness of the Party’s policies. The Chairman therefore summoned a meeting of the small group heads, closing the session on the 15<sup>th</sup> by apparently offering a corrective to Zhou’s excessively pessimistic take on economic development work. Without setting his face against purely tactical adjustments in the speed of construction and specific economic policies, Mao in fact put in a bottom line for any moderation attempts: in no circumstances should the achievements of socialism be underestimated or the Party’s success badmouthed. Mao rehearsed the old 1955 case of Deng Zihui, though without specifically bringing up Deng’s name, to warn Zhou and others off similar mistakes: “[we] should protect the enthusiasm of the cadres and masses and not pour cold water on them. Some people once poured cold water [on them] on the issue of agricultural socialization and formulated a ‘pro-retreat committee’.” In the interests of retaining “the enthusiasm of the cadres and masses”, Mao revised the wording “safe and reliable” for the economic guideline from the State Council budget report to “sufficient and reliable”. For Mao, keeping to the “correct” political consciousness fired by the revolutionary enthusiasm of the party and his people always took priority over tactical demands for economic course-trimming.

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<sup>26</sup> *MZDWJ*, vol.7, 160.

There is also reason to believe that Chairman harboured implicit reservations over Zhou and Chen's argument for giving a high priority to people's livelihood in reviewing economic conditions both at home and in the East European satellite states. Their emphasis on living standards worried Mao in seeming to impugn the authority of the development goal he had himself set up for his country. With the fundamental political struggle largely won, priority was now given to economic development with the aim of, as Mao made clear, "wiping out China's economic, scientific and cultural backwardness within a few decades and getting rapidly abreast of the most advanced nations in the world."<sup>27</sup> In the Maoist scheme of values, it was definitely the "modern heavy industry sector," rather than food or light industry production, that constituted the principal determinant of national power.<sup>28</sup> Following the Chairman's logic, once his country achieved the goal of modernization (or industrialization as defined by Mao), people's living standard would naturally rise in tandem with the increase of China's productive power. Yet in getting to this stage, it was necessary to direct the majority of resources into industrial development. This motivated Mao's words to his colleagues that "the improvement of people's living standard must be a gradual process" and "[if] the masses make us unrealistic demands or raise what seem to be insoluble problems, [we] should explain [this] to the public openly and repeatedly." Mao's conclusion was that "most of the investment in capital construction and other projects in 1956 was sound, and only a portion of it inadequate", attempting to bear out the general correctness of his economic strategy, however congruent this was with a Stalinist mode that had been put in doubt.<sup>29</sup> This line differs markedly from that of Zhou and others who had misgivings on the development strategy in general.

In short, although Mao accepted the specific economic plan for 1957 and did not oppose his colleagues' "cool-down" policy in the aftermath of the Eastern European uprisings, the Chairman must have felt that Zhou and the other economic leaders lacked the vision to identify the key problems actually revealed by the incidents. Mao's mind, at this stage in the middle of

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<sup>27</sup> "Speech to Supreme State Conference" (January 1956), trans. quoted from Frederick Teiwes with Sun, *Politics and Purges*, 167.

<sup>28</sup> Anthony M. Tang, "Agriculture in the Industrialization of Communist China and the Soviet Union", *Journal of Farm Economics*, Vol. 49, No. 5, Proceedings Number, (Dec., 1967):1118

<sup>29</sup> *MXJ*, vol.5 (Beijing: Renmin, 1977), 313-329.

1956, was more preoccupied by the political and ideological considerations prompted in the aftermath of the Polish October and abortive Hungarian revolution than by their specifically economic character. To a significant degree, Mao Zedong agreed with Liu's argument that the government and the ruling party's alienation from the people lay at the root of the Hungarian public's discontent, in particular the disaffection of the peasants, workers, intellectuals and students. At the same time, the weak leadership of the Hungarian party made it possible for reactionary forces at home and abroad to exploit otherwise justifiable popular unhappiness, fundamentally changing the class character of their protest.<sup>30</sup> Nonetheless, Mao apparently had no intention of accepting Liu's proposals of restricting the power of the inner party in the name of curbing bureaucracy, given that he believed that communist rule made policy deliberations and the consolidation of power at the centre more, rather than less, important. Instead, Mao rather set out to instigate a procedure of reforming thinking by "soft" means, seeking thereby to displace the "incorrect" ideas, including those of a bureaucratic stamp, that had come to light together with the lessons pointed by the Eastern European events. Nevertheless, the political climate at home in the wake of Poland and Hungary was particularly volatile, with participants never able to feel sure that the Chairman would stick to noncoercive means in framing his agenda for Chinese Communism.

### ***The Hungarian revolt and the rectification plan***

The events in Hungary, even more so than the Poland October, stimulated domestic debates, in the first place among upper and middle-ranking cadres in Beijing and, at both central and local levels, among senior intellectuals and democratic party members.<sup>31</sup> The major issues discussed were the nature and origin of the uprisings in Hungary, the perils of weak leadership, the legitimacy of the Soviet military intervention and the relevance of the events to the CCP's governance. The initial reactions of the population seem to have been a mixture of shock and confusion caused by their knowledge of violent and violently suppressed anti-government demonstrations taking place in a Soviet bloc state, which eventually needed the intervention of

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<sup>30</sup> Bo Yibo, *huigu*, 598-9; Jin Chongji et al., *Liu Shaoqi zhuan*, 807-8.

<sup>31</sup> The latter two groups could also get access to more information on Hungarian events through the dissemination of inner-circle party documents on account of the "liberal" political atmosphere during the Hundred Flowers and "mutual supervision" of the CCP and the democratic parties' policies since early 1956.

Soviet troops. The masses may have been particularly bewildered by the contradictory conclusions drawn by the Chinese state newspaper on the nature of the Hungarian uprisings (as discussed in chapter 3: the *RMRB* initially dubbed the Hungarian case as a “riot”, changing this to a “incident”, before the events’ later redesignation as “counterrevolutionary” in early November). This begged the why so many Hungarian civilians participated in the uprisings if these events were “rebellious and antirevolutionary” as eventually defined by the CCP.<sup>32</sup>

Moreover, the events did nothing to dispel certain groups of peoples’ uncertainties over the wisdom of adopting the Stalinist legacy: some pointed out that both the Polish and Hungarian revolts grew out of local parties’ bureaucracy and could be understood as attempts on the parts of the masses to get the party to heed their voices. As the Hungarian people lost any confidence in the solidarity of their leaders, they began to express dissatisfaction; and when the Party again stood aloof from the mass line, they revolted. Notably, in the views of some analysts, the Hungarian case was caused by internal Party splits, echoing the Gao-Rao affair in China. All these debates and discussions among party and non-party people supposed, without explicitly articulating, more sensitive questions concerning possible institutional flaws in the Communist party and its patterns of governance.<sup>33</sup>

Collated official information suggests that while popular responses continued to be largely positive towards the role of the Chinese central leadership, they also aired a growing sense of apprehension among more thoughtful groups or individuals. Even those who appraised the CCP top leadership as “wise and correct in Marxism-Leninism” recognized that party work was liable to certain defects, which, they were careful to specify, “should only be blamed on lower echelons who had mistakenly carried out the central policy.” As an instance of this disquiet, teachers and students in Jiangxi Normal College questioned the superiority of the socialist system, with some cadres and intellectuals implicitly suggesting that “China should draw a lesson from the Polish-Hungarian events” as they effectively indicted “errors in the work of [the

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<sup>32</sup> *Neican* (2 November, 1956): 61; (November 5, 1956): 127.

<sup>33</sup> *Neican* (November 6, 1956): 167-168.



socialist] party and government.”<sup>34</sup> A senior student at Beijing University wrote a letter directly to *RMRB* on 27 October, 1956 to criticize its embargo on international news. This letter sets out an understanding of “democracy and freedom,” proclaiming that only someone who had established his ideas on the basis of “real knowledge about existing events” could be regarded as a “man of free thinking”. Only a “free press” (under the dictates of the Party), then, could truly respect “human rights and personal dignity” in informing China’s citizens appropriately.<sup>35</sup> Besides these discussions, a number of “reactionary slogans” appeared on the wall of the dining hall of the Beijing Steel Institute, calling students to “oppose the current regime”, saying “we need democracy and freedom” and setting forth the analyses “the Chinese people are in a miserable situation; youth, take action!”, “support the Polish and Hungarian people’s struggles!” One or two “suspicious elements”, or so called by those collecting this information, in urban Beijing districts “even claimed that ‘[the party and the government] commend socialism every day and it turns out to be like this [ie in riots and violence in socialist countries]’.”<sup>36</sup>

These “scattered and unsystematic ideas” inside and outside the Party in the aftermath of the Hungarian events were collected by central and local party organizations and submitted to the centre. According to Mao’s “mass line”, the leadership of the CCP was under an obligation to respond to local currents of thought. The central leadership was thus impelled to a thorough “investigation and study” of peoples’ views in which it would “seek truth from facts” (that is, carry out phases of ‘understanding’ and ‘evaluation’) before any specific policy could be set.<sup>37</sup> Alerted by their interpretation of Hungary to the possible existence of so-called “residual and active class-enemy elements” stirring up insurrection within China, the top leaders, Mao in particular, thus had to decide to what extent these manifestations were in essence counter-revolutionary, rather than popular, and evaluate how far consciousness of the cadres and of various groups of people were appropriate before seeking to direct these systematically.

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<sup>34</sup> *Neican*, issue 2043:122-123; (November 1, 1956): 5.

<sup>35</sup> *Neican*( 10 November, 1956):295-298.

<sup>36</sup> *Neican*, issue 2043(November 5, 1956):129.

<sup>37</sup> For a in-depth analysis of the mass line in Chinese politics, see Graham Young, “On the Mass Line”, *Modern China*, Vol. 6, No. 2 (Apr., 1980): 225-240.

At first glance, this Maoist “mass line” method resembles a statesmanlike policy emphasizing the leadership’s awareness of local support and popular opinion as the only conceivable basis for bringing large populations around to a policy. The contrast with centralizing Stalinist methods would appear stark. In essence, though, Mao, the inventor of the ‘democratic’ method, never let up on his insistence on the elite’s absolute and ultimate authority to examine the ideological and political “correctness” of popular demands, deeming it “inappropriate” to bow to whatever the people seemed to want. Mao’s approach was more un-Stalinist in form than content.

Mao was immediately restive with “some democratic party members’ negative comments” on “the policies of suppression taken against the counter-revolutionaries” in the immediate aftermath of Hungary. According to materials available on the Second Plenum suggests, democratic outsiders did not cast direct doubts on the correctness of specific policies but rather took issue with the legitimacy of paying too high a human cost to realize revolutionary ideals.<sup>38</sup> But in Mao’s understanding, these democratic-party people were nakedly throwing down a challenge to authority of the Communist policy of “beating down those notorious landlords, bad gentry and counterrevolutionaries,” which the Chairman had considered as indispensable to consolidating the victory of the revolution. Therefore, when Liu talked about the Vietnamese government’s concern over an excessive numbers of deaths in its land reform campaign and political purge on November 10, 1956, the Chairman rowed in with his view as connected to the Eastern European developments: “we put seven hundred thousand to death [in political campaigns], or 0.13% of the total [Chinese] population of 600 million. There has not been much killing [of anti-revolutionaries and enemies] in Eastern Europe. This [kind of killing] is revolution!”<sup>39</sup> Later in his closing speech on 15<sup>th</sup>, Mao took up this theme again, jibbing that

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<sup>38</sup> For Mao’s allusion to democratic party members’ comments on the CCP’s policy in suppressing counterrevolutionaries, see Liu Shaoqi’s report made for the Second Plenum of the 8<sup>th</sup> Central Committee in Shen Zhihua “Zhongguo dui dongou shiyue weiji de fanying he sikao”, 73-78 and *MXJ* vol.5, 313-329.

<sup>39</sup> If Eastern Europe’s most severe problems in late 1956 came about as a result of transplanting the Stalinist model, North Vietnam’s most acute problems originated from their imitation of mass Chinese campaign and political purges. Land reform in Vietnam was modelled on Chinese practices, in which any better-off peasant could be labeled a “landlord,” sent to “people’s court,” and publicly executed without any legal process, with sympathizers facing severe punishment. See Yinghong Cheng “Beyond Moscow-Centric Interpretation: An Examination of the China Connection in Eastern Europe and North Vietnam during the Era of De-Stalinization”, <http://www.historycooperative.org/journals/jwh/15.4/cheng.html>. For Mao’s comments, see Liu Shaoqi’s report to the

the democratic party members “had always taken a different tone than us on this matter [the elimination of counter-revolutionaries].” As Mao saw it, the democrats’ inclination towards clemency was a sign of their lack of the proper political and ideological consciousness, a “mistaken view” that he vowed should not cause any confusion among the Communist cadres. His own assessment, meanwhile, was that the fundamental problem in the Hungarian crisis had a failure to bind the masses to socialism brought about by an insufficient waging of class struggle against counterrevolutionaries. Hungary became in these terms a useful negative example with which the Chairman could counter-attack democratic commentators and educate the party.<sup>40</sup>

Mao was likewise exercised by some commentators’ call for a “big democracy”, or political reform on the western democratic model, both within and without the party. It appears that Mao never understood more by “democracy” than a revolutionary means towards the end of achieving more ultimate political goals, such as the instigation of mass campaigns against political “enemies” or supposed counterrevolutionary “classes”. Mao’s ‘democratization’ campaigns—the “land-reform”, “three-antis”, “five-antis” and purges in 1955—never had anything to do with democratic political reform. Mao’s closing speech set out his stall unequivocally: “There are some intellectual cadres on the levels of *si*(department) and *ju*(bureau), who advocate *daminzhu* (big democracy) since a little one is far from enough. This so-called “big democracy” would adopt the western capitalist parliamentary system and copy the western style of ‘parliamentary democracy’, ‘free press’, and ‘free speech’. Their ideas are wrong, deficient from a Marxist standpoint and do not set out a class position.”<sup>41</sup> In other word, the Chairman now became aware that admitting political elements from capitalism into China’s socialist regime was theoretically and practically beyond his pale in the post-Hungary atmosphere. The “intellectual cadres” Mao referred to in his speech were most likely Wang Fei and Li Shenzhi, then director and vice director of the international department of the New

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Second Plenum of the 8<sup>th</sup> Central Committee, CCP, November 10, 1956, quoted in Shen Zhihua, “Zhongguo dui dongou shiyue weiji de fanying he sikao”, 73-78.

<sup>40</sup> *MXJ* vol.5, 313-329.

<sup>41</sup> The official record of Mao’s speech delivered on 15 November 1956 in the second plenary session of the eighth CC remains unavailable. For a record of Mao’s comments on “big democracy”, see *MXJ*, vol.5, 313-329. In *Mao zhuan*, 605-06, two paragraphs quote Mao’s speech.

China News Agency.<sup>42</sup>

In early November, Mao sent his personal secretary Lin Ke to consult Wang Fei and Li Shenzhi for their opinions on the international issues. Li and Wang's jobs had kept them better informed of the actuality of the Polish and Hungarian riots than other pressmen, so that there is little strange in Mao's wanting to sound out the political and ideological understanding on post-Twentieth Congress issues of two such well-informed intellectuals.<sup>43</sup> Li recalls being deeply stirred by the denouement of Stalin and the outbreak of Polish October and the Hungarian Crisis, furthermore nurturing great hopes that Mao's famed tolerance and open-mindedness would be able to draw the correct lesson from the incidents and change course in China. Li and Wang used the terms 'big' and 'little' democracy to forward their ideas of how China's political system should develop through Lin to Mao. Moreover, Li suggested that the Central Party draw up a Five-Year plan for returning "political power back to the people", setting up courses in the national Constitution and in Citizenship at primary level and establishing a Constitutional Court. Li was possibly emboldened in these suggestions in that he had learnt of some of the Chairman's "liberal" ideas from Wu Lengxi, who sat in Politburo meetings regularly in the 50s, perhaps believing further that Mao was receptive to ideas of democratizing China's political system after class enemies in China had generally been eliminated. Li thought he was "anxious about what the Chairman is anxious about" and supposed his contributions might make a difference, though it turned out that these were fond hopes on his part.<sup>44</sup>

Nonetheless, the terms "big and little democracy" as used by Li and Wang were of some kind of service to the Chairman in helping him to define two opposed approaches to current problems: "since the language of big and little democracy is easily imagined, let us borrow

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<sup>42</sup> Lin Ke's diary (unpublished written draft), 15(personal collection); Li Shenzhi, *Fengyu canghuang*, 105.

<sup>43</sup> In Li Shenzhi's account, Wang and himself "were the two figures who came into contact with the situation [of the international disturbances in 1956] the most." Li Shenzhi, *Fengyu canghuang*, 105-117.

<sup>44</sup> As Li recalled, Wu Lengxi had always come to him for the latest international news before he went to *Zhongnanhai*; Wu also told Li about some of the issues discussed during the Politburo meeting, particularly the Chairman's major concerns and ideas, giving Li hints about what type of news to collect for the Center. Li Shenzhi, *Fengyu canghuang*, 105-107; Also see, Li Shenzhi, "Guanyu 'daminzhu' he 'xiaominzhu' de yidian gongan" [On the Intricate Case of 'Big Democracy' and 'Little Democracy'], *Bainianchao*, issue 5(1997):47-49.

these [two] terms.”<sup>45</sup> In reviewing recent popular criticisms against inner-party bureaucratism, Mao spoke up for “big democracy,” which he redefined into strikes, popular parades and demonstrations as proper methods for forcing the cadres to correct their mistakes.<sup>46</sup> He summed up the origin of the workers’ and students’ strikes as lying in their dissatisfaction with bureaucratism, noting “there are more than several hundred thousand of cadres whose levels are above the county party committee level, [and] the nation’s fate is held in their hands. Had they [these cadres] not exerted themselves to their utmost ability and skill in the completion of their tasks, the workers, peasants and students would have reasons to disapprove of them. We have to be on our guard against officialdom and the formation of an aristocratic class whose interest deviates from that of the people. The masses have the right to dismiss and replace those [cadres] whose officialdom is problematic, who always do not solve the difficulties of the people but rather scold and suppress them.”<sup>47</sup> Notably, although both Liu Shaoqi and Chairman Mao advocated political measures taking aim at intra-party bureaucratism, the former’s ideas largely concerned party discipline and systemic improvements, while the latter envisaged corrective action taken from (or encouraged by) the top, particularly himself; once cadre bureaucratism had been decisively identified by protests, it was viable to appeal directly to the masses and to use large-scale violence to lance the party.

However seriously or closely Mao formulated his idea of “big democracy” as a solution to inner-party problems, in the Chairman’s overall assessment of the domestic situation in the immediate aftermath of Hungary, “*xiaominzhu* (little democracy)”, that is, the traditional party rectification, i.e. thought reform, strategy, was good enough to deal with current problems. On the one hand, Mao understood “big democracy” as a measure more suitable for power struggles against longstanding class “enemies” or in the event of a domestic emergency (as

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<sup>45</sup> Li Shenzhi, *Fengyu canghuang*, 105.

<sup>46</sup> After the Second Plenum, Lin Ke went to see Li Shenzhi to make sure that he had conveyed Li’s messages to Mao correctly. Li explained that by his term “big democracy” he did not mean “taking to the streets” but rather the instigation of democratic reforms against the background of the triumph of the revolution. Mao responded to Li’s assertion that in his eyes “congress democracy and free press advocated by them [Li and Wang] are in no sense different from taking to the streets.” See Li Shenzhi, “Guanyu ‘daminzhu’ he ‘xiaominzhu’ de yidian gongan”, 47-49.

<sup>47</sup> *Mao zhuan*, 611. Mao’s ideas on the causes of the strikes also can be understood indirectly from the directive “Zhonggong zhongyang guanyu chuli bagong, bake wenti de zhishi (Central Committee’s Directive on how to solve the problems of demonstrations by students and strikes by workers)”, *Cankao ziliao*, 8-9.

the later Cultural Revolution against inner-party capitalist enemies represented by Liu Shaoqi). At this point in late 1956, the Chairman still demonstrated a willingness to adopt peaceful and persuasive methods in the correction of mistakes, seeking to convene a united front, which as he understood it might best facilitate his grand vision of social and economic development. His session talk could thus declare: "from now on, all problems among the people and inside the Party are to be solved by means of rectification, by means of criticism and self-criticism, and not by force."<sup>48</sup> On the other hand, Mao saw the ideas of "western democratic reforms" expressed by the leading pressmen "not merely [as] problems among a few people, but [as] a wave of thought" that should be corrected now than later.<sup>49</sup> With these words, Mao announced a rectification campaign to deal with "subjectivism" in thinking, sectarianism in organization and bureaucracy in working style to be commenced the next year, that is to say, 1957.<sup>50</sup> Mao then read the Hungarian riots as demanding urgent full-scale rectification within the Party. Of his trio of evils to be overcome, the 'subjectivism' bespoken by politically and ideologically "incorrect" thoughts inside the party came top of the list, with the Chairman's definition of "objective" and "subjective" in Party orthodoxy being flexible or just opportunistic enough to respond to different practical situations.

In the following weeks, although Mao and his colleagues were preoccupied with fraying of the Communist bloc (see chapter 3), the Chairman seems not to have taken his eye off developing issues at home. In *More on the Historical Lessons of the Proletarian Dictatorship*, published in December 1956, Mao expressed a thesis on two types of contradictions within established socialism: first, a set of contradictions between "us" and "enemies" based on the inevitable persistence of class differences after the success of the revolution, and second, further contradictions within the ranks of the people. With his thinking bore directly on both

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<sup>48</sup> For Mao's speech made on the Second Plenum of the Eighth Central Committee, see *Mao zhuan*, 605.

<sup>49</sup> After the Plenum, the Chairman told Wu Lengxi "not to criticize them (Wang and Li), they are good comrades." This statement, however, was balanced by his assessment that the opinions expressed by Wang and Li represented a whole tendency that would need to be denounced. Li Shenzhi, "Mao Zhuxi shi shenme shihou jue ding yinshe chudong de (When did Mao decide to draw a snake out of its hole?)," in Niu Han, Deng Jiuping, eds., *Liuyuexue jiyizhongde fanyoupai yundong*, 124-125; see also Li Shenzhi, "Guanyu 'daminzhu' he 'xiaominzhu' de yiduan gongan", 47-49.

<sup>50</sup> The original text is from Mao's speaking notes for the session of 15 November, 1956. Since most of the resources quoted in *Mao zhuan* are from the Beijing central archives, very few people are permitted to read and study these materials, meaning much trust has to be placed in their interpretations. *Mao zhuan*, 611.

international and domestic realities, the Chairman made it clear that any solution to contradictions within the people should be "subordinate to overarching interests in the struggle against the enemy", not least because of his recognition that "a certain contradiction among the people can gradually come to take on the character of an antagonism", a view that from mid-1957 on would set China on a path of continual self-criticism and revolution.<sup>51</sup> The theme of continuing contradictions in socialist society had already been identified as potentially throwing up obstacles in the way of Chinese socialism before the Hungarian crisis, but Mao's view of these contradictions' possibility of intractability was sharpened in late 1956 by a new perception that, unchecked, they could incite popular revolt.

It is noteworthy that the editorial to the *Historical Lessons* included a special paragraph on the correct understanding of "socialist democracy". Although admitting that "a broad basis of democracy" was needed to cement a socialist political system, the editorial however pointed out that "socialist democracy should in no way be pitted against the dictatorship of the proletariat; nor should it be confused with bourgeois democracy." Using the communist intellectuals' reaction to the Hungarian events as a case-in-point, it further stated that setting up a representative democracy in the absence of a dictatorship of the proletariat (the Party's leadership, to be more specific) ran the risk of directly countering socialism: "Some people, however, do not see things that way. Their reaction to events in Hungary has revealed this most clearly. ...communist intellectuals in some countries...came out with declarations that the counter-revolution in Hungary was a "revolution" and with demands that the Worker-Peasant Revolutionary Government extend "democracy" to the counter-revolutionaries! ...These people are, in effect, asking for capitalism and opposing socialism, though many among them may themselves be unaware of that fact." While the main target of this analysis was communist intellectuals in Hungary, the Chairman's criticism of "some communist intellectuals' " illusion about capitalist democracy in his November 15<sup>th</sup> closing remark found

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<sup>51</sup> 'Zailun Wuchan jieji zhuanzheng de lishi jingyan' ('More Discussion on the Historical Lessons of the *Proletarian Dictatorship*'), written according to the discussions of the CCP CC's expanded session, edited by the RMRB Editorial Department, *Xinhua Banyuekan*, vol.2(1957): 1-10; *JMW*, vol.6, 283-85. Also see *Cankao ziliao*, vol.21, 549-562. "On the Historical Lessons of the *Proletarian Dictatorship*" is in the same volume, 249-254.

domestic implications for the highlighting of internal dissenters as well.<sup>52</sup>

The Hungarian events presented Mao with a frightening version of the possible mutation of contradiction from an evolving, dialectically generative antagonism between different classes to a form of outright conflict between the people and their imperialist foe. As early as the start of 1957, Mao noticed the role of the "Petöfi Circle" in challenging the legitimacy of the Hungarian government, which to some extent may have reawakened his suspicion of intellectuals' loyalty.<sup>53</sup> Therefore, in the meeting of provincial level secretaries held on 18 January, 1957, the Chairman gave the question of recent ideological trends among different groups of people the highest priority. Noting that some places had openly solicited a "Hungarian Revolution," Mao also advertised his cognizance of "several strange discussions among professors, saying things like 'we can't get on with this Communist party', 'Communism is no good' etc." These intellectuals "thought that they were not permitted to state their view before, but when the Hundred Schools Contending [policy] came out, they began to vent these [bad] words." Again, Mao chided the Communist intellectuals who had "wavered" politically since Khrushchev's denouncement of Stalin while expressing enthusiasm for October and the Hungarian riots. In Mao's eyes, these party insiders were making similar mistakes as the non-Communist professors in their fixation on the European events: "whatever they say, it's all about Poznan and Hungary; whatever they do, it's just to follow Gomulka's direction: once Gomulka called for 'big democracy', they also advocated it [in China]."<sup>54</sup> The role of the intellectuals and "revisionist" Communists as provocateurs in the Polish and Hungarian upheavals warned Mao against the possibility that similar groups at home would seek to take advantage of international tensions and the domestic détente in questioning the legitimacy of the Communist regime.

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<sup>52</sup> In his late March speech to the Shanghai cadres on his HF policy, some cadres asked Mao "what is to be done if there is poison" in HF campaign. Mao replied: "speaking of poisonous things, there is an article titled 'More on the Historical Lessons of the Proletarian Dictatorship.'...In this article there is such a passage that says that under democratic centralism ...criticism 'should be made only for the purpose of consolidating [the centre] and strengthening the leadership of the party.' This is correct and very well said. You should discuss this article with the democratic personages." See *The Secret Speeches of Chairman Mao*, 338-339

<sup>53</sup> Mao mentioned the role of the "Petöfi Circle" in organizing the student strikes in Hungary in his speech delivered on 27 February, 1957. See his speaking note "On the Correct Handling of Contradictions among the People" in *The Secret Speeches of Chairman Mao*, 144.

<sup>54</sup> *MXJ*, vol.5, 330-362; *Mao zhuan*, 615.



As a result of this political concern, Mao thus emphasized the need to get the Party well prepared to deal with domestic small-scale riots, calling for a continuous ideological remoulding of intellectuals and democratic members in the process of Hundred Flowers campaign. The intellectuals and democratic outsiders were blamed by Mao in inner-circle meeting as sowing confusions on the question of "democratic political reform" and the "CCP's policy of eliminating counter-revolutionaries".<sup>55</sup> Summarizing events at home and across the Communist camp, the Chairman concluded that "last year was a year of many troubles; internationally, it was Khrushchev and Gomulka who carried on agitation; internally, it was a period of vehement socialist transformation. Now is still a period of trouble with all kinds of thoughts emerging or being exposed."<sup>56</sup> It was within this context that Mao again asserted the necessity to pressing on with the Hundred Flowers policy. But his emphasis shifted from positive participation of the intelligentsia in further domestic economic and scientific development to the utility of the policy in strengthening the power of Party artists, writers, commentators and professors in their cultural struggle against the "harmful views" or "poisonous weeds" (*ducao*), in Mao's words, that needed to be cut down on a year-by-year basis. In this way the Chairman wanted to make sure that his relaxation rule would not go out of hand.<sup>57</sup>

Nonetheless, the Chairman's response to the events of October and November 1956 at this point was (at least not immediately) that intellectuals in general had to be left outside any process of moving towards a rapid socialist construction. As Mao saw it, years of class struggle and intellectual re-education has reshaped the intellectuals into what the Party termed "middle forces", namely people who, without necessarily subscribing in full to the CCP's philosophy, had gradually separated from their class origin. These forces should be placated and in the long run assimilated so that the next phase of socialist construction could tap their knowledge and expertise.<sup>58</sup> Furthermore, as Mao said in the meeting with some confidence,

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<sup>55</sup> *MWJ*, vol.7, 198; *MXJ*, vol.5, 330-362.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>57</sup> *MWJ*, vol.7, 195-196. *Mao zhuan*, 614-616; Teiwes with Sun, *Politics and Purges*, 182; see also *MXJ* vol.5, 330-362.

<sup>58</sup> Benjamin Schwartz, "Thoughts on the Late Mao- Between Total Redemption and Utter Frustration", in *The Secret Speeches of Chairman Mao*, 30.

since Chinese policies in the rural and urban areas were all correct, “big riots like those took place in Hungary won’t happen in China. Perhaps only a few will make a fuss here and there and advocate big democracy.”<sup>59</sup> On the question of how to deal with a small group of diehard “bad elements” and their “poisonous views”, the Chairman told his colleagues not to be afraid of the words “big democracy”, or of political challenges from suspect individuals who sooner or later would reveal their hand. After all, “[i]f there’s anyone who wants to use big democracy of whatever form to oppose the Communist system, to overthrow the leadership of the Communist party, we should exercise the dictatorship of the proletariat on him.”<sup>60</sup> Holding on firmly to ultimate power, Mao could afford to be optimistic in respect of the political situation domestically, intimating all the while that repression would be the penalty for anyone in the centre party who dared test the limits of his political tolerance.

Thinking more specifically about Mao’s policies towards the intellectuals and non-aligned democrats as social fractions, in the immediate post-Hungary aftermath the Chairman still considered it better to be lenient, relying on “rectifications” behind closed doors to remould the mentality of party outsiders and those of the wrong class origin. In November 1956, the China Democratic National Construction Association (CDNCA)<sup>61</sup>, largely a businessmen’s party, held the second plenary session of the first Central Committee. This was the association’s first central meeting after the period of socialist reform.<sup>62</sup> Huang Yanpei, the CCP’s link, wrote to inform the Chairman of the “political progress” of his party members: the members of CDNCA had heatedly debated issues such as the ‘two-sidedness’ of the national capitalist class (that is, the possible contribution it could make to socialism set alongside its innately counter-revolutionary character), the proper role and position of the capitalist class in society

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<sup>59</sup> *MXJ* vol.5, 330-362

<sup>60</sup> *MXJ* vol.5,ibid; *Mao zhuan*, 615.

<sup>61</sup> Founded in December 1945, the China Democratic National Construction Association is mainly composed of patriotic national business entrepreneurs and intellectuals from business circles. It now has more than 85,000 members. See <http://www.china.org.cn/english/shuzi-en/en-shuzi/zz/htm/ddhz-1.htm> The major eight democratic parties have a varied history, but all date back to the pre-Communist period when they made up a small and disunited “third force”. The most important one was, and remains the (China) Democratic League (CDL), of which Luo Long-ji and Zhang Bojun were Deputy Chairmen at the time of the launch of the rectification campaign. They were both identified as leading rightists in late 1957.

<sup>62</sup> The period of the Chinese socialist reform ran from 1949 to 1956.

and the relationship between workers and capitalists.<sup>63</sup> Huang reported that CDNCA members had entered fully into Communist methods of self-criticism, re-educating themselves into a unanimous conformity with the central party's line. Expressing delight with the outcome of the session, on 4 December Mao wrote back to Huang, congratulating him "on your successful sessions. It is really great news that criticism and self-criticism, as it gradually refines itself, was taken up in your group, among businessmen nationwide and among high-level intellectuals."<sup>64</sup> While there is nothing evidently disingenuous in either Mao's or Huang's praise of self-criticism, it seems likely that after Hungary, as a battle-scarred politician and rigid Marxist-Leninist, Mao would not allow his attention to be distracted from class differences and of the possible persistence, even after the triumph of socialism, of class struggle.

Chairman Mao's views on class relations as expressed in his letter to Huang in fact reflected his cautious reevaluation of the ideological and political conditions in socialist China post-Hungary: "society is full of contradictions, even in the socialist and communist world; only the essence of the contradictions and [the names of] the class societies vary. As long as there is contradiction, it has to be revealed and resolved." There are two methods, Mao said, by which contradictions could be dealt with: "one is to get to grips with the foe [which here refers to spies and saboteurs] and the other is to work with the people (including the problems within the Party and those between parties). The first means uses suppression and the second persuasion, that is, some form of criticism." It is clear from Mao's letter that he foresaw the persistence of class difference in Chinese society in people's "ideological perspectives for a very long time. At the same time, a small number of secret agents will be with us for a long time too". With these words the seasoned revolutionary politician expressed his concern that a long-term ideological indoctrination of people both within and outside the party would be necessary to buttress CCP rule. Partly to reassure non-party members and partly to reveal his political intentions, he made it clear to Huang that he wanted to unite the majority "through

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<sup>63</sup> Huang Yanpei (1878-1965), born in Jiangsu, founded the League of Chinese Democratic Political Groups (LCDPG) in March 1941 and also led the CDNCA; the League adopted its current name the China Democratic League (CDL) in September 1944. After the establishment of the PRC in 1949, Huang was elected vice premier of the Government Administration Council, vice head of the National People's Congress and had been in these posts for many years. See <http://cave.shei.gov.cn/sqjs-rwzl.htm>

<sup>64</sup> The published version, see *MWJ* vol.7, 164-166. For two pages of the handwritten version, see *Mao zhuan*, 613.

criticism and self-criticism". He did not state his more ulterior purpose in fostering self-critical sessions, that is, to induce "a small number of enemies" (or "poisonous weeds") to show their hands and effectively offer themselves up as candidates for elimination.<sup>65</sup>

After all, the message Mao drew from the Hungarian events was that rule through repression remained a last resort and that Communist Party would be ineffective if it sought to deal with popular riots only through relying on rigid policies and coercion. As Mao understood it, the main reason for Rákosi's being forced out from office lay in the Hungarian communist leader's ineptitude in "the art of governing," in failing to divide the rioters and manage the situation peacefully. To avoid Rákosi's blunders, Mao told his colleagues that "both inside and outside the Party, all sorts of discussions, strange words or contradictions are better off disclosed. [We] should find out contradictions and then resolve them."<sup>66</sup> Following the logic of this Maoist tactic of "temporary indulgence for better investigation and control", the central party should in the first place leave those people either dissatisfied with or critical of the CCP's policies at large, the better to understand their purposes and intentions. Far from waiting passively for the popular discontentment or dissidence to accumulate and turn into real threat to the regime, as in Rákosi's case, Mao deliberately let people air their views, appearing to let down his vigilance as part of a concealed scheme to "divide, steer and educate" the majority. Mao told his cadres to accept opinions that sincerely pointed out shortcomings in the work, which they should revise accordingly; when they were critiqued on political grounds, however, they should denounce their attackers. In regard, meanwhile, to "a very small section who intend to make anti-revolutionary riots like those in Hungary", Mao's attitude was firm: "[we] must exercise the dictatorship of the proletariat on them. In laying down these guidelines, however, Mao made available no precise criteria by which to assess the character of outsiders' criticisms; furthermore, no clear boundaries were laid down limiting the involvement of non-Party members in political participation and the review of policy. Both these vague areas would leave the cadres in a position where they could not reliably execute Mao's wishes, meaning that often they construed policy with confusion, passively waiting for more specific policies from the

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<sup>65</sup> The published version, see *MWJ* vol.7, 164-166. Two pages of the handwritten version, see *Mao zhuan*, 613.

<sup>66</sup> *MXJ*, vol.5, 330-362; *Mao zhuan*, 615.

center.

In this period from November 1956 to January 1957, Mao was engaged in a continual process of redefining his policy line towards both cadres and the non-Communists, seeking to balance apparently irreconcilable elements (or to square intellectual contradictions) to meet very immediate preoccupations. Mao's positions were highly capricious during this period, though in retrospect we can identify certain persistent preoccupations. First of all, Mao in fact brooked no doubt as to the essential correctness of his plans for socialist state building in both political and economic realms. In consequence, any criticism that the Chairman perceived as tainting his core ideology was considered intolerable and in need of rectification at some stage. Second, and very much relatedly, while the Chairman had enthusiastically advocated genuine Chinese "socialist methods", endorsing and supporting ideological and political relaxation throughout 1956, he never displayed an awareness of the real problems in the Chinese socialist system, making him blind to the need for any essential political or economic reforms. In this sense, the Chairman learned little from Poland and Hungary vis-à-vis the value of Chinese socialism as such or feasibility of his revolutionary vision. Moreover, despite the political thaw promised by the Chairman himself in early 1956, his long-lasting suspicion of intellectuals and non-communists did not retreat overnight, especially when these people began to be more vocal with dissenting (or plural) views with regard to CCP policies following the outbreak of the Hungarian revolution. But notwithstanding this suspicion, there is little evidence to suggest that the Chairman intended to reverse the previous relaxation of controls by undertaking repressive measures immediately after Hungary. In a slightly different context, though, spurred by the increased theoretical and ideological uncertainty in the Communist bloc, Mao seems to have rowed back on his emphasis on pluralism in developing policy as expressed by the early months of his Hundred Flower campaign, focusing more on using the "softer methods" of the HF to effect the ideological reorientation of unaligned classes towards socialism. Within only two months of this campaign's onset, in fact, the Chairman began to orchestrate the HF liberalization together with the Rectification Campaign, inviting outsiders to criticize party errors, in the teeth of entrenched opposition from his own party. Was this a genuine attempt to broaden the CCP's skills and intellectual base or a ruse to draw out residual class opposition?

This question must preoccupy us in our following examination of Mao's conduct of rectification policies.

### ***Inviting the democratic parties to participate in rectification***

In the wake of the Hungarian revolt, Mao's warning against revisionism on the part of the Chinese had provided a good opportunity for party people to express publicly their suspicion of the HF, a view that found support with many local cadres. Perhaps unsurprisingly, Mao's Hundred Flowers policy and innovation in "mutual supervision", letting party outsiders (bourgeois intellectuals and members of the so-called "democratic" parties) criticise the highly power-centralized CCP since May 1956 did not receive a warm response from within the party: after years of class struggle and the dismantling of the old state during the transformation phase, party cadres would undoubtedly feel bitter to be subject to the criticisms of those social groups they had defeated and, in ideological terms, 'surpassed'. The center's new move especially stimulated the middle-ranking officials in propaganda and education departments to air their views against previous "liberal" policies towards the intellectuals.<sup>67</sup> On 7 January 1957, Chen Qitong, deputy head of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) propaganda department, Ma Hanbing, and two other cadres published an article in the *RMRB* critical of the trend of satirising intra-party machinations and bureaucracy in a vain of imaginative literature that had been allowed to flourish in the period of "blooming and contending". The authors feared this tendency in literature would lead to an erosion of political values as comic squibs came to be valued more highly than socialist dogma. The authors warned that "[i]f we do not take action...politics will be at an end."<sup>68</sup> In fact, only a few flowers had bloomed on political soil under Mao's HF policy in 1956. Wang Meng's short story "Young Newcomer to the Organization Department" was perhaps the most famous and bold in its cynical exposé of bureaucratic problems at the centre of the party. In their article, Chen and other three cadres' took Wang Meng's style of writing to task; the authors more generally feared that, in a more relaxed political atmosphere, their ideological and political control of the society in general

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<sup>67</sup> *The Secret Speeches of Chairman Mao*, 7, 10-12, 49-53, 44-45.

<sup>68</sup> Original published article see *RMRB*, 7 January, 1957. Summary of this article quoted from Teiwes with Sun, *Politics and Purges*, 183.

would come under threat.<sup>69</sup>

Besides propaganda departments in the military sector, many local party committees only grudgingly fell in with the new line. The Beijing Municipal party committee, to take a notable example, submitted in response to 'On the Correct Handling of Contradictions Among the People' that " [u]ntil Chairman Mao's report in the [12<sup>th</sup> enlarged] Supreme State Council Conference (held on 27 February 1957), we [the Beijing municipal party committee] have not held a systematic discussion on how to carry out the Hundred Flower co-existence and mutual supervision policies since these were raised by the Central Party...many comrades held different views or did not completely agree with these [HF and co-existence and mutual supervision] policies, and a considerable number of comrades, including some principals of Beijing Municipal party committee, were in agreement with the views raised by the article by Chen Qitong and others..."<sup>70</sup> There is much other evidence of foot-dragging among the cadres.<sup>71</sup> Taking stock of this ill-feeling and inertia within the Party, the Central Party put off the formal launch of the rectification campaign until 1958, deciding that in 1957 "the Central Committee must hold a session [and] issue a directive" preparing the cadres and people for change.<sup>72</sup> Notwithstanding the cadres' opposition, though, Mao's later complaints that his

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<sup>69</sup> *Mao zhuan*, 615, confirms that "ever since the Chairman had tabled the "Hundred Flowers Blooming, Hundred Schools Contending" thesis, reservation and even a head of opposition had been building up towards this HF policy."

<sup>70</sup> This was a Central Party document circulated to the provincial Party Committees. The Beijing Party Committee's response (7 May 1957), submitted to the Central Committee of the CCP and marked Chen no. 16, may be found in 141-1-850 pp.72-76, *HPA*. In a meeting summoned by Mao in Hangzhou in early April to investigate the local cadres' response to his new policy, in the chief propagandists for Shanghai, Jiangsu, Anhui, Zhejiang and Fujian all reported various levels of uncertainty over and passive resistance to the Hundred Flowers among middle-ranking party members. See the record of this meeting in *Mao zhuan*, 652-659.

<sup>71</sup> Document from the Central Party: Transmitting a version of the reports on the correct handling of contradictions among the people, Hubei Provincial Party Committee 8 May 1957. From the Central Party (1957) Chen no.18, from Hunan Provincial Party Committee Archives 141-1-850, pp.77-83. Transmitting a version of the reports on the correct handling of contradictions among the people, Sichuan, Guangdong, Gansu Provincial Party Committee 15 May 1957, from the Central Party (1957) Chen no.30 Author: the Central Committee of the CCP, 141-1-850, pp.84-99, *HPA*; Kang Sheng noted " three factions in relation to this (rectification) policy of the Central Committee: a "Left" faction represented by Chen Qitong and Ma Hanbing, suspecting the policy is bad and believing it should stopped at once; a Right faction, obsessed with the policy and finding it advantageous to stir things up in the newspapers; and a middle, who recognise the policy as good but are not certain in their minds and fear difficulties...[for instance,] the army cadres are confused about this policy". See *The Secret Speeches of Chairman Mao*, 264.

<sup>72</sup> An article in the 16 January issue of *Zhongguo qingnian* (Chinese Youth) revealed that the rectification campaign would get underway in 1958 (rather than 1957 as Mao announced in mid-November), quoted from Roderick MacFarquhar, *The Origins of the Cultural Revolution 1 Contradictions among the People 1956-1957, vol.1* ( New York: Columbia University Press; London: Oxford University Press, 1974), 276. Later in the talk with literary and art circles held on March 8, 1957, the Chairman announced the de-facto postponed schedule of rectification: "Within the party [we] have proposed criticising subjectivism (the focus is on doctrinairism), bureaucratism, [and] sectarianism. [The

attempts at reform in the HF were dogged by bureaucratic obstruction should be treated with caution. One crucial but usually ignored factor to this loss of a “mass basis” to the HF, in Mao’s own phrase, is the slowness of the central and local officials’ response to the co-existence and mutual supervision initiatives formulated in the early months of 1956. This dilatoriness largely came about as a result of the absence of any systematic directive from the centre—that is, from Mao—regarding the execution of his “liberal” ideas, which perhaps indicated the emperor’s own half-heartedness in drawing up a specific action plan over the period. Within the more restrictive post-Budapest atmosphere, meanwhile, many cadres may have felt emboldened to round on external critics, thinking they were in tune with the Chairman’s “anti-revisionist” line.

In the light of the party cadres’ open criticism of Wang Meng’s novel and their apparent reluctance to submit themselves to scrutiny, the misgivings of many non-Party outsiders over the consistency of the central party’s decompression become understandable. And to a significant extent, the intellectuals were also full of worries about the real intention of this HF policy. “The Intellectuals’ Early Spring Weather”, the title of an article written by the noted sociologist Fei Xiaotong, vividly demonstrates the prevailing mood among the Chinese intellectuals. On the one hand, when “early spring came to the Earth, that is, when the political atmosphere began to thaw in the spring of 1956, the intellectuals began to hope for a period of greater leeway and freedom than they had enjoyed during communism’s very early consolidation phase. But on the other, the relaxation resembled the easily changing weather of “early spring”, as Fei indicated in his article, and could hardly be trusted as a genuine opportunity to begin to voice distinct non-orthodoxy positions. Without proper political assurance from those in power, as attested by Fei’s article, the Chinese intellectuals dared not to “bloom” though most were strongly disposed to participate in various debates and discussions.<sup>73</sup>

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policy] has not been implemented yet. The Central Committee must hold a session [and] issue a directive, [ordering] preparation this year [and] beginning [the campaign] next year.” *Mao zhuan*, 631; for an English version, see *The Secret Speech of Chairman Mao*, 220.

<sup>73</sup> Fei’s article was published in March by the RMRB, but was written before Mao had delivered his famous February 27 “On Correctly Handling Contradictions among the People” speech. MacFarquhar, *The Origins of the Cultural Revolution* Vol. 1, 24; *Mao zhuan*, 616. For the original article, see 24 March, 1957, *RMRB*.



Dissent inside the party over the HF campaign, together with doubts over the CCP's sincerity over relaxation, put the Chairman on his mettle in defending his own policy. With certain ideas formulated in his mind, Mao summoned several small-scale talks within the party to explain his positions as a prelude to convincing the cadres to mend their ways.<sup>74</sup> The Chairman began with the question on how to evaluate Wang Meng's novel in revealing the institutional bureaucratism of the central party, enunciating the line that "the view says that the shortcomings of the Communist party can't be exposed is incorrect." Although Wang's story is marred by a "bourgeois ideology" and the author himself "does not have enough experience," Wang himself "represents a new-born force" whose courage in speaking up when others were silent is wholly praiseworthy.<sup>75</sup> But once again, the novel "has its one-sidedness," in failing to balance negative characters with positive, with the result that "both praise and denunciation of Wang Meng's writing are one-sided in nature."<sup>76</sup> On the matter of Chen's article and the cadres' criticisms against Wang, the Chairman expressed the judicious position that "many comrades have not actually understood the policy on how to handle mistakes among the people."<sup>77</sup> Mao's comments on Wang's story imply that the Chairman thought, given the broad correctness of party policy, that there was some advantage to fostering a literary mode of critiquing the party, if only to sugar CCP propaganda.<sup>78</sup> Wang Meng's "one-sided" fictional criticism did not quite meet the bill of the "good and persuasive" articles that the party should choose to encourage; it was too one-sided and lacked positive exemplars of party action. Nevertheless, though, to a large degree, Mao was prepared to countenance Wang's satire,

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<sup>74</sup> The first was the January talks, and the second the talk at Yiniantang held on February 16, before the Supreme State Conference, when the Chairman summoned a small-scale Supreme State Conference of 37 participants. All these talks homed in on recent political and ideological trends and on Mao's ideas about how to identify and deal with contradictions among the people. *Mao zhuan*, 617; for an English version of "Talk at Yiniantang", see MacFarquhar, Roderick, Timothy Cheek, and Eugene Wu *The Secret Speeches of Chairman Mao*, 113-128.

<sup>75</sup> Mao's original words are: "He [Wang] should be protected. The articles criticizing him have not set out to do that." *The Secret Speeches of Chairman Mao*, 116. A complete reading of Mao's analysis of Wang's case strongly suggests that the Chairman's emphasis on "protection" of young people like Wang was based on his belief in the possibility of remoulding their thoughts via persuasive means.

<sup>76</sup> MacFarquhar, Roderick, Timothy Cheek, and Eugene Wu eds., *The Secret Speech of Chairman Mao*, 123

<sup>77</sup> Here Mao referred to Chen Qitong's article and other cadres' criticisms against Wang Meng's novel, quoted from "Speech note of Mao in the meeting with heads of Central Party newspapers and journals, writers' associations, academy of sciences and youth leagues, February 16, 1957", *Mao zhuan*, 617; *The Secret Speeches of Chairman Mao*, 116.

<sup>78</sup> For Mao's complaining about his lack of mass basis, see below *The Secret Speeches of Chairman Mao*, 364.

not least because its attack on bureaucratism in the capital coincided with Mao's immediate political purposes. The young man's story came out at a time when Mao needed a typical case to defend his Hundred Flowers policy and clarify his intentions, which quite possibly he had left ambiguous owing to his habit of unstructured comment.<sup>79</sup>

Clearly for Mao, many cadres' opposition to "blooming and contending" was caused by "fear [of] a Hungarian incident". In Mao's view, however, "the Hungary incident was not necessarily bad" insofar as it pointed the lesson for him that one-sided propaganda promoting party policies or suppress dissidents risked estranging the masses and provoking national disturbance. The Chairman therefore concluded it was useless continually to call on "dogmatism" to criticise others, especially since non-coercive persuasive measures stood a better chance of "help[ing] others refashion their views so that we can achieve true unity."<sup>80</sup> This line of thought guided Mao's critique of Chen's article as 'unconvincing' and 'dogmatic' in seeming to "say that since the adoption of the Hundred Flowers policy, everything has gone wrong." In other words, Mao took exception to the article for casting doubt on his policy. Even so, Chen Qitong and his fellow writers were "loyal and devoted to the Party and the people", an appraisal in effect confirming many cadres' judgement that "dogmatism" was better and safer than "rightism".<sup>81</sup> A careful reading of Mao's words to the heads of Central Party newspapers, Writers' Associations, the Science Academy and Youth Leagues on February 16 suggests that the Maoist Hundred Flowers experiment represented little more than a tactic to appease immediate social dissatisfactions, adjusting the highly centralized and uniform party indoctrination pattern into a more diversified and persuasive one as to unite the broadest forces

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<sup>79</sup> This "divining of the helmsman's real meaning seems to have been a task regularly—and strategically—set by Mao. Published in January 1957; reprinted in Yao Wenyuan, *Lun wenxue shangde xiuzhengzhuyi sichao* (On the tide in revisionist thought in literature) (Shanghai, Xin wenyi, 1958), pp.3-11. Yao's article is subtitled: "A discussion with Mr. Yao Xueyin," referring to a veteran left-wing writer. Yao Wenyuan was a young Shanghai literary critic who later became a leading polemicist of the "Gang of Four", and whose attack on the historian Wu Han initiated the Cultural Revolution. This article may have first brought him to Mao's attention. MacFarquhar, Roderick, Timothy Cheek, and Eugene Wu eds., *The Secret Speeches of Chairman Mao*, 123.

<sup>80</sup> *The Secret Speeches of Chairman Mao*, 117

<sup>81</sup> In Mao's original words, these four writers were "zhongxingenggeng, weidangweimin", see Wang Ruoshui, *Zhihui de tongku* [the Agony of Wisdom], (Sanlian: Hongkong, 1989), 319-327; Mao said in the March 6 meeting that: "I have said on several occasions in supplementary remarks that 'these few comrades are loyal and devoted to the party, that [they] are committed to the party's undertakings; but [their] article cannot [serve as] advice.'" This [last qualifying] phrase was cut out [when transmitted down]." Text 5, *The Secret Speeches of Chairman Mao*, 210.

possible for future economic and social construction without sacrificing the long-term Communist goal of ideological purity.

There is little evidence that Chairman Mao had anticipated a significant degree of resistance within the party to his Hundred Flowers policy in the post-Hungarian revolution atmosphere. From the commanding height of his ruling position, Mao thought his persuasive strategy designed to set the one-party state on a firmer and more unified political basis than achieved by the Soviets and Communists in East European states. For the party officials in the central propaganda apparatus and cadres in the provinces, however, this Maoist "relaxation for better control" was a paradox, reasonable-sounding in theory but impossible in practice, especially when the Chairman was reluctant to set up specific principles, leaving officials to be tormented by unlimited criticisms from previous suspect groups. In the absence of specific HF policies, the cadres, then, went on the offensive in rejecting the policy. Playing one force off against another in his typical style, the Chairman found it opportune to encourage party outsiders to participate in politics more broadly, goading the cadres to accept his line.<sup>82</sup>

Although the Chairman did not even mention mutual supervision in his call for rectification in the late November, 1956 central party meeting, he pushed the "blooming and contending" policy much further than one could have expected in the first half of March after the enlarged session of the 11<sup>th</sup> Supreme State Conference and the CCP's national propaganda meeting. In the first conference, Mao delivered a lengthy speech "On the Correct Handling of Contradictions among the People" on February 27 to 1,800 leading communists and non-communists, in which he elaborated in detail his views as they had been developing over the past year concerning the two types of conflicts in China's new society. Notably, the Chairman spoke in a reflective, even philosophical vein, in touching on the need for HF and "mutual supervision" policies, reminding his audience that Marxism had come of age in

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<sup>82</sup> For the Party cadres' passive resistance to HF and supportive view towards Chen's article, see ft. 70. Mao was more than able to manipulate court politics in the context of the Socialist Transition policy from 1951 to 1953; one only need consider the Gao-Rao Affair and the dramatic small leap forward from late 1955. For my broad take on the formation of Mao's socialist China, see chapter 1; for an analysis of Mao's changed position in pushing for "Blooming and Contending", see Teiwes with Sun, *Politics and Purges*, 183-184.

engaging with capitalist ideas to which it was a “new born force” while they simply denoted “old objects, old things”.<sup>83</sup> If we look at Mao’s original speech notes for this talk, there seems to be no difference in principle between this passage and Mao’s views as outlined in his previous small-scale talks. Yet his speech has been described as “rambling and full of bizzare associations of ideas”, which make it difficult for readers (let alone audience participants) to grasp its essentials.<sup>84</sup> However, records suggest that most of the non-Communists who either attended the meeting or listened to the speech on record were struck by the Chairman’s humour and frankness, reporting feeling inspired or rejuvenated at such a great show of communication between the party leader and his followers.<sup>85</sup> These favorable reponses from the non-communists encouraged Mao to convene a national propaganda meeting from March 6 to 13 to further promote his “contradictions among people” doctrine.<sup>86</sup>

To make sure that his message reached the targeted groups, the Chairman broke the rule of close-door party meetings and invited more than 160 non-Communist scientists, literary and artistic intellectuals, professors, journalists and publishers, in all one fifth of the total number of participants, to take part in inner-party discussions. All the participants were able to listen to a recording of Mao’s ‘contradictions’ speech before being summoned by the Chairman separately for group meetings. During these free discussions, the Chairman generally listened to the issues raised up by others and put himself at their disposal in answering queries about the HF policy and rectification. Mao devoted considerable attention to problems such as teaching in schools and intellectuals’ ongoing fear of party trickery in developing its “blooming and contending” policy.<sup>87</sup> Mao had two main intentions in opening up these policy sessions to outsiders: he wanted further to propagandize the Maoist “blooming and contending” policy, and more importantly, to investigate non-communists’ views of the party’s work, especially over the Hundred Flowers, which he imagined might be able to win over significant numbers to the

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<sup>83</sup> *The Secret Speeches of Chairman Mao*, 162-174.

<sup>84</sup> See Benjamin Schwartz’s comments on the style of Mao’s speeches in “Thoughts on the Late Mao”, *The Secret Speeches of Chairman Mao*, 20-21. This speech in fact was recorded and delivered to a wider range of non-communists during the national propaganda meeting held in early March; see *Mao zhuan*, 629-639.

<sup>85</sup> Zhang Yihe, *Wangshi bingbu ruyan* [The past is not like smoke] (Beijing: Renmin, 2004) 37; Roderick MacFarquhar, *The Origin of the Cultural Revolution*, vol. 1, 86-87

<sup>86</sup> *Mao zhuan*, 629-640.

<sup>87</sup> Text 4-8, *The Secret Speeches of Chairman Mao*, 191-274; also see *Mao zhuan*, 629-633.

Maoist project.<sup>88</sup>

Having collected enough information on the thoughts of intellectuals, Mao made a closing speech on March 12, 1957, taking pains to ease any post-Hungary anxieties among this group. Kicking off with an overall assessment of the situation in spring 1957, Mao asserted that in China: “we find ourselves in a period of social transition, in which the old system has been overthrown and a new socialist one has been established. ...But we currently still haven’t shifted to a consolidation phase, and I think it may still take five years to consolidate this socialism in our country before we see a future, in which we build our country into an industrialized one on the basis of this socialist system.” This judgment, moreover, reflected a view that the phase of “*large-scale* (italics added) class struggle was concluded and the main problem we have to deal with now is contradictions among the people.” These words can be taken as conveying the reassurance that class had been removed from the top of the CCP’s political agenda and that “problems concerning the bourgeois class” would hereafter be downgraded to “contradictions among the people.” Furthermore, Mao declared that “the five million intellectuals are our nation’s property” and the “people’s teachers”, redesignating these as “workers” putting their intellects at the service of the workers and peasants. While this praise was perhaps received as an unexpected favour from the great leader, the non-aligned figures in Mao’s audience had reason to withhold their unquestioning allegiance to the HF on the grounds of Mao’s insistence on the need to remould intellectuals’ ideology and his critique in the speech of one-sidedness, taking issue with the tendency either to embrace or eschew communism wholesale. At the same time as holding out the prospect for more nuanced ideological commentary, though, Mao restated his view that ultimately there were only two schools, Marxism and Capitalism, and that those siding with the latter set themselves up as enemies of the state.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> *Mao zhuan*, 629-640.

<sup>89</sup> *Mao zhuan*, 633-639; this concluding speech is not included in *The Secret Speeches of Chairman Mao* and *Mao zhuan* provided a summary of Mao’s speech, which is good enough for us to grasp his main ideas expressed to the party outsiders. Jian Bozan, a noted Marxist historian, wrote an article commenting on the Hundred Flower policy published by the RMRB on April 20, 1957, which represented a section of intellectuals’ continuous doubts about the sincerity of the bloom and contend policy even after Mao’s contradictions and propaganda conferences. Jian Bozan’s comments, as argued by MacFarquhar with evidence, apparently offended Mao and probably led to the Chairman’s rush to rectification in the end of April. For the briefing of Jian’s article and relevant analysis see MacFarquhar, *The*

Although Mao had repeatedly warned his veteran cadres against the “weeds” coming up alongside the “the fragrant flowers” in inner-party discussions on Hundred Flowers, the tone of the Chairman’s speech was distinctly encouraging to outsiders, seeming to testify to Mao’s view that the “bloom” would not fundamentally canker for his country, nor the HF precipitate another Hungary. Mao had reason to suppose that most counterrevolutionary elements had been eliminated in China after the victory of socialism in a way they had not for instance in Poland, Hungary and Vietnam.<sup>90</sup> Furthermore, as Mao later in an inner-party session claimed, “China is not Hungary; here the Communist party and the People’s Government enjoy a high reputation among the people.”<sup>91</sup> A further important contributory factor to Mao’s sanguine outlook was his evaluation of China’s intellectuals. Despite his longstanding distrust, he took the line that since the source of the intellectuals’ social power - the landlords, rich peasants, and the bourgeoisie – “have been cut off”, this starved the space for a “Petőfi Circle” to emerge in China.<sup>92</sup> Retaining a strong commitment to his HF experiment, the Chairman thus made his attitude clear: “should we still ‘bloom’ or should we ‘rein in’? It is a problem of policy. The Center’s opinion is we must ‘bloom’.”<sup>93</sup> In this speech, Mao announced an incremental start to the rectification campaign in 1957, with “Non-Party people [being invited] to take part on a voluntary basis.”<sup>94</sup>

Mao’s speech on the unextinguished social contradictions in Communism made a profound impact on certain group of non-communist members of his audience. After hearing Mao, the famous writer and translator Fu Lei (who later committed suicide with his wife in Cultural Revolution) wrote to his son: “Chairman Mao’s speech was kind and easy in rhythm and phrase; it was full of humour. [He spoke] no indoctrinatory words, but took care to pause at the right places. I cannot express my feelings just by noting down what he said ...He stressed

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*Origin of the Cultural Revolution*, vol.1, 209. Jian’s article was translated in part in MacFarquhar, ed., *The Hundred Flowers Campaign and the Chinese Intellectuals* (London: Praeger,1960), 27-8.

<sup>90</sup> Text 11, *The Secret Speeches of Chairman Mao*, 299-300, 329

<sup>91</sup> Text 12, *The Secret Speeches of Chairman Mao*, 338.

<sup>92</sup> Text 12, *The Secret Speeches of Chairman Mao*,336.

<sup>93</sup> *Mao zhuan*, 638.

<sup>94</sup> *Mao zhuan*, 635; also see Macfarquar, *The Origin of the Cultural Revolution*, vol.1, 190.

several times that the fact that contradictions remain among the people is a new problem for the Party. This means that the Party needs to talk with non-party people. It is good to combine inside and outside elements when studying this problem. [This kind of discussion and study] should be organized annually within the forthcoming three to five years.” Fu Lei went on to praise Mao’s open-mindedness, saying that such a man as the Chairman would have no difficulties in managing public affairs.<sup>95</sup> In Fu Lei’s eyes, the very freedom with which Mao handled Marxist categories (understood as slovenly or incomprehensible by a western scholar on the basis of reading Mao’s speech-notes) demonstrated that “his [understanding of] Marxism already reached perfection.”<sup>96</sup> Fu took Mao’s inconsistencies (or ambiguities) as a deliberate “strategy” concealing the logic [of his statement] view, which [proved] him to be “the master of art.”<sup>97</sup> Fu Lei’s reaction to Mao’s overtures is not untypical of the politically inexperienced intellectuals’ response to the Chairman’s late March speech, which seems in many instances too bedazzled to think closely about what the emperor might actually have meant by any of his words.

If Mao had stopped at rectification of the Party and conducted “Blooming and Contending” separately, the PRC’s history might have been very different. However, describing the causes of the Hungarian crisis as “a pustule that will burst sooner or later!”, the Chairman resolved to eradicate bureaucracy or subjectivism not merely within the inner party circle but more systematically, initiating an campaign of rectification through the old method of relaxation and self-correction, which had its roots in the Yan’an era.<sup>98</sup> Though this general approach to organizational management was a staple of the Party’s conduct of its own evolution, in the 50s Mao wrought a variation on traditional party policy by allowing the non-party intellectuals and democratic party members a role as licenced internal censors, criticizing and supposedly

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<sup>95</sup> Fu Lei, *Fu Lei jishu*: zengbuben [Family letters of Fulei: appended version] (Beijing: Sanlian, 1994), 158; *Mao zhuan*, 639-640.

<sup>96</sup> For Benjamin Schwartz’s comment on the style of Mao’s secret speeches, see *The Secret Speeches of Chairman Mao*, 20-21.

<sup>97</sup> Fu Lei, *Fu Lei jishu*, 158; *Mao zhuan*, 639-640.

<sup>98</sup> Text 10, *The Secret Speeches of Chairman Mao*, 281. For a detailed analysis on the origin and tradition of the CCP’s rectification doctrine established in the Yan’an era, see Frederick C. Teiwes with Sun, *Politics and Purges*, 13-46; for the relationship between the formation of Yan’an Rectification doctrine and the process of Mao’s rising to the top in the late 1930s to early 1940s, see Gao Hua, *Hongtaiyang shi zenyang shengqi de* [How Did the Sun Rise over Yan’an? A History of the Rectification Movement] (Hong Kong: the Chinese University of Hong Kong, 2000).

spurring the CCP's reform.<sup>99</sup> On the one hand, the Chairman wanted to brush aside any doubts, especially those from party outsiders, on his ability to mobilize his party for an "open-door" rectification<sup>100</sup>; on the other, he was averse to allowing disagreements to persist within the party once he made his attitudes clear. As a matter of fact, in April 1957, when Mao was enthusiastically launching the rectification and "Hundred Flowers" campaigns, he himself made an *ex post facto* complaint that a comparably large or overwhelming majority of the CCP members were not supportive enough of the campaign—bemoaning the fact that "I have no mass base" among the apparatus he was trying to move.<sup>101</sup> Mao had thus to devote much of his efforts to persuading the inner CCP members to support his upcoming campaign. After the national propaganda conference, the Chairman toured Tianjin, Jinan, Nanjing and Shanghai to convene meetings with the local Party cadres, turning himself, in his own words, into "a wandering lobbyist." Within a short period from March 17 to 20, Mao made four speeches to local leaders and party members, in which he called on the provincial cadres to participate in his general project of universal emancipation through unity.<sup>102</sup> Interestingly, in his later speech in March, Mao emphasized the positive side of the Hungarian crisis, which he described as educational in the sense that it imparted a urgency to his personal desire to implement his new policy.<sup>103</sup>

While pressing the rectification and big-tent reforms, Mao, however, continued to assure the local cadres that China was different from Hungary and had no plans for deviating from socialism. No "Petöfi Circle", that is, no capacity on the part of students and intellectuals to mobilize the people against a weakened socialist government, was possible in China. The intellectuals would be bound to a narrow definition of patriotism and have a cramped freedom of manoeuvre; democratic party members (who in Mao's mind were in large intellectuals)

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<sup>99</sup> *The Secret Speeches of Chairman Mao*, 133-138. In Mao's eyes, both democracy and dictatorship were useful means to consolidate his political regime; when and how to use these tools mostly depended on the concrete situation and the current political need. He also emphasized a choice between big democracy (da minzhu) and little democracy (xiao minzhu). On the original arguments for big and little democracy (da xiao minzhu), see, Li Shenzhi, *Fengyu canghuang*, 105-117. For resemblances between the two campaigns see Roderick MacFarquhar, *The Origins of the Cultural Revolution 1 Contradictions among the People 1956-1957*, 169.

<sup>100</sup> MacFarquhar, *The Origin of the Cultural Revolution*, vol.1, 209

<sup>101</sup> *The Secret Speeches of Chairman Mao*, 364.

<sup>102</sup> *The Secret Speeches of Chairman Mao*, 193, 213, 217, 249. Also see *MWJ* vol.7, 186, 204, 245, 249, 260, 267.

<sup>103</sup> *The Secret Speeches of Chairman Mao*, 281.



would *not* be at liberty to question the fundamental themes of socialism. On the problem of winning over intellectuals' "hearts and minds" to "our" side, Mao conceded that it would take a long time to educate intellectuals of capitalist origins.<sup>104</sup> Furthermore, Mao understood his experiment of a "little democracy" in China to emerge in an unforced way from national conditions—explaining why he placed so much emphasis on the coordination of the HF with his essentially Chinese scheme of rectification. Properly managed, then, he considered that his steps towards "liberalisation" would forestall, rather than foment, a "Hungarian incident" in China.<sup>105</sup>

Once Mao had promoted his post-Hungary "open-door" policy of rectification among the party outsiders, and the local cadres had determined the policy had to be carried out without hesitation, the touchy side of the Chairman's personality began to manifest itself. Mao was in fact deeply frustrated with *RMRB* for not actively attacking the four PLA writers' article and for failing to publish articles in support of his "blooming and contending" policy; he singled out Deng Tuo, the head of the *RMRB* news agency, as deliberately opposing his relaxation. The Chairman severely rebuked Deng, explicitly urging the *RMRB* to publicize his new policy in a meeting with the editor and senior journalists early April, which directly led to the formal launch of "open-door" rectification in late April.<sup>106</sup> Even if Mao's judgment that Deng harboured reservations about the HF was correct, the Chairman seems to have deliberately overstated the extent and effect of the editor's diffidence. Having for years kept his ear to the ground in the *RMRB* News Agency, a classic Communist propaganda organ which institutionalized communications under the direct control of the central party, Deng is unlikely to have misconstrued Mao's actual intentions, most probably just believing that the "left" was more in tune with Mao's real "line", so that it was ultimately safer to side against the rectificationists.

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<sup>104</sup> *The Secret Speeches of Chairman Mao*, 337: Mao in fact also analyzed the situation of intellectuals in China and identified that those truly supported Marxism constituted perhaps only 10% of all Chinese intellectuals. The wavering centrist faction took up 70 to 80 %; giving up on the remainder, the party's task was to win the centrists over. Also see *Mao zhuan*, 644, 649, 655.

<sup>105</sup> *JMW*, vol.6, 320-322.

<sup>106</sup> On 10 April, the *RMRB* published an editorial criticizing the Chen Qitong group and other opponents of the "Blooming and Contending" policy, also taking itself to task for not having criticized them earlier, given that Mao had stated his determination to push ahead with the new policy. See 10 April, 1957, *RMRB*, also see MacFarquhar, *The Origin of the Cultural Revolution* vol.1, 201.

Unlike Chen and his colleagues who were openly questioned the political feasibility of “blooming and contending” in the post-Hungary atmosphere, Deng seems to have imagined that any “opening wide” policy would necessarily be followed by a corrective suppression.<sup>107</sup> However, so far the Chairman made his attitude clear that he wanted immediate rectification, the Party in general, including the media, had no alternative but to follow his course.<sup>108</sup>

Indeed, the Communist bloc crises in the latter months of 1956 were crucial in bringing Mao round to a sense of the reality of the problems he faced at home, as can be seen in two related if not necessarily reconcilable views he held with respect to policy in that year. The first concerns the modification of the party’s ruling methods, the other ideological remoulding. If the Soviet re-evaluation of Stalin in early 1956 stimulated Mao to repair the relationship between the Communist Party and the party outsiders, the intelligentsia in particular, the Hungarian revolution alerted Mao to the danger of isolating himself from broad popular sentiment, as might well happen if the political consciousness of various groups (those with an intellectual background in particular) was allowed to develop independently of the party’s scrutiny and guidance. The historical consequences of Stalin’s crude purges and Rákosi’s heavy-handed leadership reaffirmed Mao’s belief in the need to soothe short-term social dissatisfaction towards the regime via persuasive measures, all the while taking the temperature of disturbances, striving to assess whether in character they were anti-Communist or not. In terms of practical policy, then, Mao therefore advocated an inner party rectification against bureaucracy and sectarianism, opening the CCP up to external participation through the HF. At the same time, the emergence of “pro-liberal westernization” views inside the party and an increase of “incorrect” criticisms from outsiders strengthened Mao’s fears of the unsettling

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<sup>107</sup> On Mao’s dissatisfaction with the *RMRB*’s failure to respond to his speeches on Contradictions and his dislike of Deng Tuo, see Merle Goldman, “Mao’s obsession with the political role of literature and the intellectuals”, in *The Secret Speeches of Chairman Mao*, 49-58; for a detailed record of Mao’s harsh criticism of Deng Tuo in a small circle meeting with the journalists and pressmen and the central propaganda organization’s wariness in publicizing Chairman’s “blooming and contending” policy in early months of 1957, see Wang Ruoshui, *Zhihui de tongku*, 319-327; further, an abridged official meeting record can be found in *Mao zhuan*, 661-666.

<sup>108</sup> Largely due to Mao’s dissatisfaction with the propaganda and educational departments’ inefficiency in advocating his policies, the *RMRB*’s editorial of 13 April declared that the Party committees of all levels, especially their first secretaries, should take in hand ideological and political work among the masses, downgrading the authority of the propaganda departments of the Party and the educational departments of the government and strengthening the authority of local party committees, which were under direct control of Mao’s central party committee. See *RMRB* 13 April editorial in MacFarquhar, *The Origin of the Cultural Revolution* vol.1, 202.

effect of ideological deviationists even within a stable socialist system. This fear may have lain behind Mao's choice of "subjectivism" as the main target of the forthcoming rectification throughout late 1956 to early 1957; the reference of this term subtly changed from its pre-Hungary designation, to point to to unextinguished class animus of the party's enemies. Mao was consistent throughout this period in desiring the remoulding of the thought of intellectuals and students, and also consistent in thinking that the relaxation would be propitious in bringing bad elements to light.

While Mao's controversial effort to link rectification and the Hundred Flowers in spring 1957 could be interpreted as a genuine attempt to square these policy orientations, the shift of his short-term priority from insiders' "subjectivism" to the party's relationship with the masses in fact was largely reactive to the party cadres' resistance to critics from outside and to party outsiders' suspicion of his intentions in apparently opening up. Mao was nettled by the resistance to the HF and wanted to revive "mutual supervision" as an exemplary means of "reform". In doing so, Mao intended to deal with the problems that had led to the party's alienation from the masses in the first place, using the pressure of the party-outsiders' political involvement to break the inner obstacles to his grand rectification plan. On Mao's initiative, therefore, the central party listed the evils to be corrected in order in the announcement of the rectification campaign published in the *RMRB* on May 1, placing correcting "bureaucratism" and "sectarianism" before "subjectivism" as the highest priorities of the party's new movement.<sup>109</sup> A very crucial precondition for the Chairman to be willing to change his priorities was his sanguine assessment that the class struggle was over in China as it had proved not to be in Hungary.<sup>110</sup> With the capitalist class largely eliminated and political power tightly

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<sup>109</sup> See the rectification directive published on May 1, 1957, *RMRB*; MacFarquhar, *The Origin of the Cultural Revolution*, vol.1, 202; Teiwes with Sun, *Politics and Purges*, 186-187.

<sup>110</sup> On April 30, 1957, Mao told his forty-four audience members, which included Party and state leaders, the leaders of democratic parties and non-party affiliated persons, that he had chosen not to accept his reappointment as Chairman of the state next year. On the second day of the gathering, Chen Shutong and Huang Yanpei co-signed a letter to Liu Shaoqi and Zhou Enlai, in which they expressed their disappointment at Mao's standing down. Mao asked Deng Xiaoping to circulate this letter, along with Mao's marginal annotations, among the high and middle ranking cadres, representatives of non-Communists. It was in this letter that Mao stated with confidence that "now [we] have the basic consolidation of [this socialist] country, this country cannot be overthrown. In regard to absolute consolidation [of this country], according to Soviet experience, [we] may need another fifteen to twenty years." See "Guanyu buzaidang xiajie guojiazhuxi de pingyu: 5 May, 1957([Mao's] Comments on not to accept the reappointment as the Chairman of the state next year)", *JMW* pp457-461; also see *Mao zhuan*, 671; about Mao's plan to retire from state

controlled in the Communist center, as Mao estimated, most of the non-Communist groups would perforce attach themselves to the Communist regime over the long run.

### ***About Face: from Blooming and Contending to the Anti-rightist campaign***

As Benjamin Schwartz has pointed out, as a politician Mao was perhaps unduly optimistic, with a tendency to construct “best-case scenarios” in the early months of 1956.<sup>111</sup> But if Mao, as Schwartz suggests, came later to place the best possible construction on his swingeing HF and rectification campaigns after Hungary, his optimism was always balanced by his clear awareness that there could still exist a small group of “antagonist elements” among the intellectuals and “poisonous weeds” would also emerge with the growth of “fragrant flowers”. Underneath his tolerance, moderation and even openness to “liberal” and new ideas, Mao always intended to prohibit “incorrect” utterances but emphasized that the Communists should not enter into disputes hastily or badly prepared in terms of argument: “we do not meet an enemy attack in a hurry; we do not want to write articles in a hurry.”<sup>112</sup> This is also why the Chairman kept revising his contradiction speech in line with his changing perceptions of the domestic situation, limiting the diffusion of notes for his speech between February to April within a select circle.<sup>113</sup> Moreover, the Chairman’s consistent rejection of definitive restrictions on “blooming” either for insiders and outsiders turned venturing any critique of the party into a dangerous game for all potential dissenters. Indeed, Mao had formed a very clear picture of the domestic causes that led Hungary, an established Communist bloc state, to the verge of disintegration. Foremost among these were the failures to check ideological dissent to party hegemony and to stamp up challenges to an established Communist leadership. With the passive resistance to the Hundred Flowers inside the party largely overcome by the end of April, and inner-party rectification underway, the Chairman began to spend more time and

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chairmanship, see MacFarquhar, *The Origins of the Cultural Revolution*, vol.1, 105-107.

<sup>111</sup> Benjamin Schwartz, “Thoughts on the Late Mao”, *The Secret Speeches of Chairman Mao*, 25-26.

<sup>112</sup> *Mao zhuan*, 617; also see *The Secret Speeches of Chairman Mao*, 123-124.

<sup>113</sup> *Zhongyang gongzuo jianbao* [Briefing On the Central Party’s Work], an inner-circled bulletin published a speech draft made by Zhang Bojun transferring the main content of Mao’s speech made on April 30’s Supreme State Council Conference to his party members. One accused “rightist” guilt of both Zhang Bojun and Ye Duiyi was their distortion of the main spirit of Chairman Mao’s speech on April 30, 1957. See Ye Duiyi: *suijiushi qi you weihui* [Still do not regret though suffered severely], (Beijing: Shiyue, 1999), 88-9.

energy on supervising the behaviours of the non-Communist intellectuals, seeking to ward off any unpleasant side effects of cohabitation.

If we examine the wording of the official and unofficial materials on Chairman Mao's policy guidelines made for the party outsiders' participation of the rectification campaign in the first week of May 1957 carefully, we can find that Mao's attitude to blooming and contending had gone through a process of change corresponding to his shifting perceptions of the development of the criticisms put forward by outsiders. One thing noteworthy is that in the Supreme State Conference held on April 30, the Chairman stated that the the non-Communists' formal participation in the rectification to find faults in the party's work should be traced back to February 1957, this may, of course, simply be regarded as a small change with no significant political meaning.<sup>114</sup> But only four days later, in referring to the critical views expressed by the non-party people either in forums or via the press "*in recent two months*", the Chinese Chairman made clear in the inner-circled central directive of May 4 that: 'when critics are not correct, or we come across incorrect opinions in one certain article, we should refute them rather than allow the mistaken thoughts to prevail and go unanswered (but we should think closely about the timing of our answers and the tone in which we speak, which should be fully persuasive).' To avoid any unnecessary confusion about the central party's position immediate after the launch of the new campaign, Mao added that "most of the outsiders critics are cogent, and are beneficial to unification enhancement and work improvement". Nevertheless, we see a revival of his January emphasis on the utility of "blooming" to uncover "poisonous weeds" as the Chairman pointed out in particular: "even those mistaken critics [do us some kind of service] in exposing the real nature of some people, so we can see that they have a valuable contribution for us to help these people in carrying through ideological reforms in the future.'<sup>115</sup> Although Mao insisted the CCP rectification to be lasted for a period during which the outsiders' major roles were still to offer advices and criticisms to the party, he apparently laid more hopes on the extension of "rectification" pattern

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<sup>114</sup> *Mao zhuan*, 669; See Ye Duiyi: *Suijiusi qi you weihui*, *ibid*.

<sup>115</sup> "Zhongyang guanyu jixuzuzhi dangwai renshi dui dangzheng suofancuowuquedian zhankaiping de zhishi"[Central Party's Directive on Keeping on Organizing the Party-outsiders to Criticize Party and Government's Mistakes and Shortcomings] *cankao ziliao*, vol.22, 17-18.

to the whole society to “educate” and “unify” the thoughts of various groups once “our party succeeds in rectification” and “win absolute initiative [in moving to the next stage].” The first targeted group of the forthcoming societal rectification, as the Chairman said explicitly in this directive, should be the intelligentsia.<sup>116</sup> The May 4 directive showed that Mao, after encouraging the non-party intellectuals to participate in the rectification process for about two months, began to pave the way for putting a restrictive gloss on the open-door rectification experiment.

By the early days of May 1957, Mao was prepared to lop off a few blooms in order to avoid unexpected consequences of soliciting outsiders’ input. In the same directive of May 4, requesting party committees at all levels to arrange forums for party outsiders to air their criticisms of the party, Mao sanctioned the CCP’s United Front Work Department to meet in circles with urban intellectual elites from May 8 to June 3 in all the chief cities, especially in Beijing and Shanghai.<sup>117</sup> The purpose of these meetings, as stated by the CCP CC, was to solicit suggestions and opinions regarding the CCP’s work to assist the Party in its ongoing processes of self-criticism. The campaign, though, was not necessarily only innocent in motivation. In hindsight and whatever Mao’s intentions, it is clear that the forums had the effect of subjecting the non-Communist elites’ political activities to the surveillance of the Party. Possibly alerted by the dangers of letting the intellectual elites disseminate their views to society unrestrained as demonstrated in the Hungarian events, the Chairman moved first in placing these people under the supervision of the Party bureaucracy.<sup>118</sup> Furthermore, given the “reactive” behaviors of the elites in the Hungarian uprising and the emergence of some suspicious and “mistaken” views among Chinese intellectual groups after Hungary, Mao

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<sup>116</sup> *cankao ziliao*, *ibid.*

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>118</sup> In a meeting with Polish delegation held on April 8, 1957, Mao told the Polish leaders that in his understanding, the Hungarian events that took place in October 1956 were in essence different from the Polish movements. The Hungarian events were orchestrated by the Petöfi Club while the Polish were controlled by the Polish Communist Party. In Hungary, tens and thousands of the masses went on street and put the Party center in an embarrassing situation; within the Hungarian Communist Party, meanwhile, there were two factions, one represented by Nagy, who went for revisionism on the strength of previous connections with the Petöfi Club. Without proper leadership from the Party, the Hungarian incident degenerated into a mass riot, leading the disintegration of the Party, government and military forces. Mao’s words indicated that he learnt at least one lesson from the Hungarian crisis: the Communist Party had to organize and control domestic movements to head off deviation. See “Summary of Chairman Mao’s Meeting with the Polish Government Delegation”, 204-00040-03, pp 1-14, CFMA.

considered that the Chinese intelligentsia had to pass a test of political loyalty before the regime could use them in future development. While Mao took it upon himself to be the sole planner, manipulator and arbiter of this examination, his criteria of what constituted loyalty changed markedly with his view of domestic events.<sup>119</sup>

It is evident that by early May Chairman Mao still believed, despite his potential worries, that China was different from Hungary since the engagement between the Party and its outside critics would, in the Middle Kingdom, follow the prescribed script of criticism and self-criticism coming together to secure unity. It only took a week for the Chairman to revise his view, coming to rest at the position that the centre would reserve for itself the right to truncate outsiders' censure of the CCP at an appropriate moment.<sup>120</sup> On May 14 and May 16, two enlarged CCP Politburo emergency meetings were held under Mao's auspices reassessing the political implications of the domestic "blooming and contending".<sup>121</sup> Although the contents of these two meetings will possibly never be known in the stated absence of any records, the wording of the directives issued on May 14 and May 16 reflect the top leadership's decision-making processes in indicating that the central Party's attitude towards criticism had already hardened, suggesting that the central leadership only now intended to make short-term concessions to external critics to reap future benefits. Tactically, the Party believed that a certain type of criticism would only serve to make clear the real features of the rightists (a word first used in the directive of 14 May) to the masses.<sup>122</sup> By mid-May 1957, therefore, failure to suppress or shout down criticism that the center judged "incorrect" or "poisonous" did not so much indicate that the Party was listening, as that it was waiting for the democrats to

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<sup>119</sup> In referring to some intellectuals' worries that the Hundred Flowers "blooming" was aimed [by the center] to "fish" or uncover [wrong thinking], Mao stated that "it depends on how to understand [the HF]: is "blooming" a means or an end? In order to know the truth, it [HF policy] can be interpreted as a way of "fishing", but [we are] uncovering two type of fishes, one is Marxist, the other is un-Marxist." Record of Mao's talks, May 6, 1957 in Lin Ke, *Lin Ke's diary* (unpublished version), 36.

<sup>120</sup> For Chairman Mao's overall assessment that Hungarian-type riots would not be repeated in China by at least May 8, 1957, see *Mao zhuan*, 675-678.

<sup>121</sup> Liu Shaoqi, Zhou Enlai, Zhu De, Chen Yun, Deng Xiaoping, Peng Zhen, Li Weiham, Kang Sheng, Lu Dingyi attended the meeting. See *Mao zhuan*, 688.

<sup>122</sup> In *Mao zhuan*, the authors state that there is no record for the two meetings held on May 14 and 16, which makes sense since Chairman Mao had set up a rule that no memo was to be taken for secret central meetings, 688; "Zhongyang guanyu baodao dangwairenshi dui dangzheng gefangmian gongzuo de piping de zhishi (Central Party's Directive on How to Make News Coverage on Party-outsiders' Criticism to Party and Government's Various Work), May 14, May 16, 1957, *cankao ziliao*, 18-19.

overplay their hand. Those changes directly paved the way for the transformation of rectification and the “HF” into an Anti-Rightist campaign in early June 1957, about two weeks after rectification had actually begun. The leading question thus becomes why and how Mao’s attitude changed so dramatically in such a short period of time, especially over the intellectuals at home.

The change of tone in the center’s directives circulated among high ranking cadres during this period allow us to identify at least two domestic developments that possibly shook Mao’s basic assumption that a well-managed rectification could square off the divergent or contradictory interests of social fractions, which, in his analysis, had exacerbated the Hungarian revolt. All the available evidence would indicate that the suggestions raised by the non-Communists by the middle of May were concerned largely with how to repair the relationship of the Party and non-Party people, with little evidence that they were moved by any policy of supplanting the CCP leadership. However, Mao’s understanding of the political implications of the outsiders’ words was undoubtedly decisive in reorienting policy.<sup>123</sup> First and foremost, as the Chairman possibly perceived, the outsiders’ criticism of the CCP shortcomings began to touch upon some sensitive issues that went beyond his limit of tolerance, such as their harking back to the injustices inflicted on the counter-revolutionaries during the campaign to establish communism (as some of them did in early 1957) with particular reference to typical cases such as the suppression in 1955 “counterrevolutionary” Hu Feng’s “literary faction”.<sup>124</sup> Another factor that significantly aroused Mao’s concern was the non-Communist newspapers’ active political involvement in the campaign in criticising the ruling Party’s policies and spreading dissenters’ opinions to the students and the masses.<sup>125</sup> As noted previously, the Party’s relaxation of

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<sup>123</sup> Parts of these non-Party leading figures’ speeches were published on a daily basis by the RMRB throughout May 1957; for the editor’s comment and reports on the first week meetings, see *the RMRB*, 9 -12 May, 1957. For detailed speech records, see *cankao ziliao*, vol. 22, 21-92.; also see *Mao zhuan*, 683-687.

<sup>124</sup> *Guangming Ribao* (*Guangming Daily*) published intellectuals’ charges against the purge movement and their doubts about the legal reliability of Hu Feng’s case as early as on May 11, 1957. It is known that Chairman Mao read through newspapers such as *Guangming* and *Wenhui*, which had been run by non-Communist intellectuals in the short period from early 1957 to the summer of the same year, viewing the content and style of articles on these papers as key indicators of the party outsiders’ political development. See Roderick MacFarquhar edited, *the Hundred Flowers*, 66. For Mao’s habit of reading the non-Communist newspapers and close attention to the political implication of their articles, see *Mao zhuan*, 661-687.

<sup>125</sup> *Jianguo yilai zhongyao wenxian xuanbian*, (Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian, 1994), vol. 10, 264-270, 272, 273; *Mao zhuan*, 689-690; an official published version, see *JMW*, vol. 6, 469-476.



control over the press (non-Party papers in particular) had constituted an important part of the Chairman's post-CPSU Twentieth Congress reforms, designed by the center to diversify Chinese journalism in format for the underlying purpose of broadening communism's appeal. The press reforms allowed outsiders unprecedented discretion in crafting messages critical of the Party's policies and broadcasting these, especially to the elites and the young, in a way unforeseen by the centre. By mid-May, Mao seems to have weighed up the pros and cons of relaxation, coming to the view that he had underestimated the strength, ability and especially desire of residual bourgeois among the intellectual class to disrupt socialism and oust the Communists.<sup>126</sup>

The Party outsiders' request for real power in a "coalition" government and their resourcefulness in expanding their political influence among a wider range of people via the press, all owe their inception to the center's promotion of "Hundred Flowers" policies against the party bureaucrats' passive resistance in early months of 1957. Performing a volte-face (in appearance), the Chairman understood these initiatives as some democratic rightists' alleged effort to "seize the leadership of the press, cultural, education and scientific fields in the first instance".<sup>127</sup> On the basis of the Chinese Communists' rich experience in using propaganda to win over the masses, and their appreciation of the importance of the media in fomenting "counterrevolutionary" insurrection in Hungary, Mao and his colleagues could be in no doubt that "the rightists in journalism intend to incite the working-man and peasant against the government".<sup>128</sup> In general, Mao and his lieutenants must have already decided on May 14 that a counterattack against "revisionism" and "rightism" had shortly to be organized, while strategically opting to let latent rightists and enemies inside and outside the Party run amuck before the Party reasserted its authority. Mao's tactics are reminiscent of the advice that the

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<sup>126</sup> Teiwes with Sun, *politics and purges*, 210-213, 217-219; *Mao zhuan*, 689-690.

<sup>127</sup> For democratic party members' complaint about inequalities between Communists and non-Communists and request for equal rights and real power in practice, see *RMRB* May 14, 1957. For Mao's interpretation of the political and ideological intention behind these outsiders' words, see "Shiqing zhengzaiqibianhua (Things Are Changing)", *JMW*, vol.6, 469-476. In fact, the Chairman began to write this article on May 15 and had revised it several times according to his changing perceptions of the domestic development before circulating it within the Party on June 12, 1957. in the article is an uncertain barometer of Mao's mood since it is not clear which sections belong to late May or early June, being interpolated by the Chairman.

<sup>128</sup> *Mao zhuan*, 690.

Chinese side gave the Soviet leadership in dealing with the Hungarian reactionaries at the end of October 1956, namely to conceal its real intentions and make temporary concessions in order to obtain enough legitimacy to allow it to move onto the front foot.<sup>129</sup>

While the domestic situation in China in 1957 differed in many respects from that in Hungary in 1956, with the central party itself instigating forums and printing a series of pro-rectification articles in the *RMRB*, many non-Communist elites came to feel they were playing a role very similar to the Hungarian Petöfi Club, pointing out the Party's errors and offering salutary advice for the state's reform.<sup>130</sup> Critically reviewing the Communist-organized political movements since the establishment of the regime, besides the 1955 purge and Hu Feng's case, many intellectuals further sought to revisit abuses from the Three and Five Anti Campaigns and various thought reforms. At the same time, some began to question the validity of the official evaluation of the overall achievements of the socialist transformation as they became more and more aware of the economic consequences wrought by a rigid application of Stalinist development policies.<sup>131</sup>

Within the fraught, heady atmosphere of "liberalization" in the second half of May, the political ideas coming out of both the democratic press and *RMRB* in the midst of its anti-rightist and HF campaigns enthused university students to join in "blooming and contending" attacks on the 'three evils' of Party work on May 19, with impromptu demonstrations held in Beijing, Shanghai and other major cities.<sup>132</sup> With no obvious Party intervention in the initial period, the student movements soon developed a momentum of their own, beginning to touch upon some sensitive political topics in Communist China through flyers, unofficial publications, debates and inter-school visits. In particular, students concerned top party officials by debating the correctness of cadre denunciations of Hu Feng and his faction as "counterrevolutionary" and

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<sup>129</sup> See Chapter 3: China and the second Soviet intervention in Hungary.

<sup>130</sup> For example see *RMRB* May 19 editorial and *RMRB* May 21 on "blooming and contending" in Shanghai with the encouragement of Ke Qingshi, the first secretary of the Shanghai Party Committee and a close follower of Chairman Mao.

<sup>131</sup> For some intellectuals' critical views expressed in this period, see MacFarquhar, *The Hundred Flowers Campaign and the Chinese Intellectuals*, vol.1, 72-73.

<sup>132</sup> *Guangming ribao* [Guangming Daily], 26 May; *Wenhuibao* [Wenhui Newspaper], 27 May; *Mao zhuan*, 693; also see MacFarquhar, *The Origins of the Cultural Revolution*, vol.1, 221.

of the Gao-Rao group as “anti-Party and anti-people” without open trials and supporting evidence.<sup>133</sup> Largely idealistic, demonstrators do not appear to have considered the idea that their rectifactory impulses could go down badly with the CCP leadership, imagining that these disputes originated at a lower level of party organisation.

One female activist from *Renmin University* (the People’s University), indeed, declared that the Chinese movements “were different from the Hungarian events in essence” since “we [Chinese Communists] haven’t made serious mistakes like that Rákosi and Gerő in Hungary... I do not see the recent developments at Peking University as dangerous, even if some ‘mistaken views’ have emerged since no one intends to overthrow socialism.” She dubbed those officials concerned about the recurrence of the Eastern bloc riots in China “nervous masters,” aligning herself with “the Party center and Chairman Mao” and against the university authorities in favouring “a thorough rectification.”<sup>134</sup> Unbeknownst to the students, however, Mao was all too well aware of his role in recent political bloodletting and mindful of the effect that rehabilitating Rajk had on Rákosi regime’s, leading him to treat the Chinese student demonstrations with extreme caution.

The university students’ voluntary participation in the “big blooming and contending” event represented another unexpected consequence of the central Party’s ruse to smoke their enemies out as agreed in mid-May. The Chairman later admitted that, unlike the non-Communist forums, the students’ movements were not arranged by the Party committees and proceeded like a “violent storm”, which “actually had a flavour of...the Hungary incident in miniature”.<sup>135</sup> In this light, it becomes easier to understand the depth of uncertainty and frustrated annoyance felt by Mao and his top lieutenants immediately after the unanticipated escalation of student “blooming and contending” in late May. The Chairman responded to the agitation by sending people to collect first-hand information on the latest developments among the students in the four principal universities, namely, Peking, Qinghua, Beijing Normal and Renmin University; several months later, Mao declared that “before [I] got to the root of [the

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<sup>133</sup> *Neican*, issue 2212(1957): 3-15.

<sup>134</sup> *Neican*, issue 2215 (1957):19-21.

<sup>135</sup> Lin Ke, *Lin Ke riji*, 44-45.

student movements] in the four universities, I dispatched personnel to read the big-character newspapers [to figure out] how significant the influence of the Hungarian incident was. Only after May 20 when [I] found out the real situation, did [I] truly stop worrying.”<sup>136</sup> By “real situation”, the Chairman perhaps meant that after pooling information on the disturbances and assessing their nature at a high level, the party concluded that the influence of student movements was still limited, such that the campus campaigns could be sealed off from the rest of society and other major groups such as the workers and peasants. That is, they posed to threat to the CCP’s dominant status.<sup>137</sup>

Consequently, in the directive issued on May 20, the central leadership clearly stated that “in order to avoid disturbances”, the local cadres should make sure not to expand “blooming and contending” movements to the students and workers, since these groups, once they had made one with the campaign, “would raise up too many specific requirements”, making reform unmanageable for the CCP. The (party-controlled) press should not cover riots among students, workers and peasants, nor publish debates on economic or remuneration policies.<sup>138</sup> In contrast to the optimistic attitude that the Chairman had towards the domestic situation in the early months of 1957, viewing a certain degree of student and peasant demonstrations as salutary in stimulating the cadres to put more effort into their work, Mao adopted an entirely contrary position, moving to preempt wider social groups’ involvement in criticisms of the Party. This change of attitude suggests that the Chinese leader may himself at this stage have come to share many cadres’ fears of repeating the Hungarian Communist regime’s mistakes in China, i.e. losing control of developments at home and being sabotaged by hidden “enemies/rightists” both inside and outside the Party.

By the end of May, Mao already regretted having coopted the bourgeois intellectuals and

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<sup>136</sup> “Mao Zedong’s speech notes made before the Third Plenary Session of the Eighth CCP CC with the party secretaries of provinces and cities”, September 22, 1957 in *Mao zhuan*, 694.

<sup>137</sup> The Chairman should have summoned a Politburo Standing Committee meeting in around May 19, 20 to analyze and discuss the unexpected developments on campus in the Capital. The Directive issued on May 20 is a specific action guidance to the local cadres out of their policy discussion in these days. On Deng Xiaoping, Liu Shaoqi’s recollection of these highest level meetings in an enlarged Politburo meeting on May 23, see *Mao zhuan*, 694.

<sup>138</sup> *cankao ziliao*, vol.22, 19-22.

non-CCP members in such a sensitive political issue as the Party's criticism and self-criticism movement. The side effect of open-door rectification, in inducing students to question the Communist Party's policies, fundamentally shook the Chairman's assertion from early 1957 that "Communist Party has great power,...[we] do not fear of riots in the world since this [Communist] world [already] cannot be lead to turmoil."<sup>139</sup> It turned out that intellectuals were unworthy of the Party's trust, particularly since, Mao recalled, it was the Petöfi Circle, with the help of revisionists like Nagy inside the Hungarian Communist Party, who stoked the Budapest riots: "...there are some people who have erroneous revisionist or Rightist opportunist thought," as Mao said of the situation in China, doubtless referring to liberal intellectual-cadres of the kind of those headed by Li Shenzhi who advocated big democracy in early 1957. "They long for bourgeois liberalism and negate everything; they are linked to the bourgeois intellectuals in society in a hundred and one ways".<sup>140</sup> Therefore, as the Chairman understood the Chinese situation by this stage, the reactionary and rightist elements had merely remained concealed in the bourgeois intellectuals, students, and CCP members, who had had their own reasons in affiliating themselves with Mao's reforms in professing adherence to party principles.

In making these diagnoses, Mao more than ever positioned himself as almost stranded between two camps. On the one hand, Mao was disappointed with the intellectuals' and the students' behavior during the campaigns, starting to view them with deep distrust. Consideration of the Hungarian crisis only brought home to the Party the continuing danger for the regime of nursing bourgeois ideology within itself, especially when it was connected to the supposed rightist deviationism outside. Going back on his mixed or positive February interpretation of the Budapest events, Mao began to stress their negative aspects, especially insofar as they provided a parallel with a conceivable case in China. Mao therefore turned to

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<sup>139</sup> Mao probably wrote this sentence in his "On Correctly Handling" article in early 1957 and deleted it in early May when his assessment of the domestic situation changed. *Mao zhuan*, 682.

<sup>140</sup> "Things are beginning to change", 15 May 1957, see *JMW*, vol.6, 469. Since Mao had revised this article throughout the period from mid May to June 12, according to our knowledge of the development of events in this period, it makes more sense that the Chairman's sense of the connection between student critics and internal revisionist-provocateurs in late May after the outbreak of student movements. For English translations see John K. Leung, Michael Y. M. Kau eds. *The Writings of Mao Zedong*, 547-8.

the unquestioned loyalty of the mass of the Chinese people, calling for a campaign to vanquish class enemies. Ever since a segment of the non-Party intellectuals and later student activists had become vocal in questioning the legitimacy of Party's policies in political realm, Mao had been uncomfortable with potential opposition to his own revolutionary way and its implicit challenge to his personal authority. Budapest allowed Mao to tar the skeptics of the essential correctness of Central Party's politics with the brush of rightism or revisionism, opening up a political front that broke the compromise he had previously accepted. All the remarks and written materials made by the democratic intellectuals and students throughout late May to early June thus became "hard evidences" that Mao's Party used to charge against these groups of people with "rightist" and "revisionist" political intentions to overthrow the regime in the following "anti-rightist" campaign.<sup>141</sup>

## Conclusion

The Hungarian Crisis and Soviet military intervention threw socialism, or at least Stalinism, in doubt across the Socialist International. States began to question the legitimacy of using radical methods to transform society in pursuit of socialism, critically probing the moral justification for mass ideological and political mobilization, especially insofar as it seemed inseparable for a party bureaucratism on the Stalinist model. In China, several middle-ranking party members were naive enough to suggest to the center that the CCP consider promoting

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<sup>141</sup> Up to early June, the thrust of the criticisms made by outsiders of the Party had been directed more to the systematic political origins of the Party's shortcomings than to the superficial "sectarian" or "bureaucratic" mistakes made by the middle and low ranking cadres. Available evidence shows that a number of prominent democrats began to view the excessive concentration of power in the centre, tagged as 'the world belongs to the Party', as the key problem underlying the Eastern bloc crises and the Chinese Communist regime's alienation from the people. One intellectual called Huang Sha later confessed that "after the Hungarian incident, I came to the conclusion that the Party itself should change." For Huang Sha's confession, see Frederick MacFarquhar, *The Hundred Flowers*, 72-73. Chu Anping, the chief editor of *Guangming Ribao*, the party organ of the Democratic League (Chu was newly appointed to the position in early 1957 and *Guangming* under his direction became one of the most active non-Communist newspapers to make coverage of and comments on the developments of rectification), made a speech entitled "Allow Me to Offer Some Opinions to Chairman Mao and Premier Zhou" in one forum organized by the Party on June 1. Chu claimed the key to the problem of the Party's alienation from people in recent years lay in the idea that 'the world belongs to the Party' and pointed out that it was far from enough to only criticize "the young *bonzes*", namely the officials in lower echelons without questioning anything about "the old *bonzes*", i.e. the leadership represented by Mao and Zhou. Chinese version (complete speak notes) see Zhang Yihe, *Wangshi bingbu ruyan*, 48-50; also see *Cankao ziliao*, p.81; English translation (incomplete) see MacFarquhar, *The Hundred Flowers*, 51-53. All these words and confessions then became "hard evidences" for the Party to charge these intellectuals of "rightist" crimes, though they made these comments, half a month after the center had conspiratorially decided to suppress the so-called "rightist" and "antagonist" elements, with no practical political actions being taken to oppose the regime.

political reform modeled on the western experience of liberal democratization. At the same time, top CCP leaders like Liu Shaoqi, Zhou Enlai and Chen Yun became clearly committed to a critical review of Stalinist bureaucratic organization, embedded as it was in a system of hierarchical privilege underpinned by heavy industrial development. The central and local senior party membership attending the second plenary session of the eighth party Central Committee were, then, for the first time broadly united in their disagreement with the Stalinist model in political and organizational terms, sensing the necessity for reform as a precondition to future socialist development. Notably, both top colleagues of the Chairman, along with many middle-ranking cadres and intellectual outsiders, were sure that their concerns were essentially of a piece with Maoism and even with the trajectory's of the Chairman's thought in seeking to go beyond Stalin. Even during a period in which the Chairman deliberately created a "relaxed" and "democratic" atmosphere in the center, as we see in the process of policy discussion and domestic situation interpretation, Mao's centrality to decision-making brooked no challenge. In the post-Hungary atmosphere, Mao's interpretation of the ideological confusion swirling around his form of his own communism was, however, much more complex than both insiders and outsiders could correctly divine.

If we say that Mao began to recognize some problems with the Stalinist model both in political and economic realms in the aftermath of Hungary, taking the opportunity to shed much of the personal mythology and institutional appurtenances clinging to Stalin, his mind was nevertheless preoccupied by the political and ideological considerations of defending his own communism and past policies that were so closely affiliated to the Soviet model. By "reform", Mao never meant curbing bureaucracy by restricting the power at the center, let alone changing the existing one-party system as some intellectual cadres had wrongly suspected; nor did he brook any doubt as to the essential correctness of his past policies in consolidating power or putting in place a socialist state in both political and economic realms. In consequence, in theorizing democracy and dictatorship in late 1956 and early 1957, Mao made clear within his inner circle that he was not prepared to tolerate the advocates of so-called 'big democracy' whom he presumed had been active in the aftermath of the Hungarian Crisis. At the same time, although Mao accepted the specific economic plan for

1957 and did not oppose his colleagues' "cool-down" policy in the aftermath of the Eastern European uprisings, the Chairman did not appear to have wavered from his belief in industrial modernization and the core features of Stalinist economic pattern. In Mao's understanding, these moderate measures were no more than transitional means for getting around the bottleneck on resources prior to a fresh round of industrialization.

In the end, the message Mao drew from the Hungarian events was that rule through repression *after* the establishment of socialism would undermine the ideological and political legitimacy of a communist regime; he thus chose to instigate a procedure of determining residual "contradictions" in China and solve these by "soft" or peaceful means. By "contradictions", the Chairman referred to people's discontent with Party work's shortcomings, dissidence to the Party's political policies and the "anti-revolutionary" views of a few suspicious groups. The divided interests of the businessmen and intelligentsia trained in the West would present formidable obstacles to the project of unity, meaning that continuing class struggle in China was inevitable. It was thus central to Mao's plans that nationalist agents and political enemies standing against the regime would be executed or imprisoned. The vast majority of the Chinese intellectuals, however, it was anticipated, could be won over by persuasion. In order to achieve his broad goal of a socialist leap forward, Mao seems to have been sincere in believing that the support of the Chinese intelligentsia would be of great value to the CCP in securing universal popular support. From a purely prudential standpoint, the intellectuals' support would have a number of advantages: intellectuals' technical expertise was needed in the construction of socialism, and they would add considerable luster to the Party. So long as the CCP retained control of all administrative functions, a hundred flowers might bloom and schools contend.

While Mao's controversial effort to link rectification and the Hundred Flowers in spring 1957 could be interpreted as a genuine attempt to square these two policy orientations, his dramatic decision to push forward an "open-door" rectification, inviting outsiders to criticize party errors, largely responded to the cadres' passive resistance of his Hundred Flowers policy and to party outsiders' suspicion of his intentions in seeming to open up. One of the key reasons why the



party organizations, the cultural, educational and propaganda departments in particular, were reluctant to implement the Maoist "soft" policies of unification and investigation was that these projects not only put these bureaucrats' interest and security under threat, but also wrested them far from their accustomed political and ideological functions, i.e. the party officials now had to receive criticisms from people of the backward class whom they had been used to rectify and even suppress. The intellectual outsiders' role in the Hungarian events and the Chinese anti-revisionist posture taken on the international front after the October crises encouraged the Chinese cadres to be open about their reservations over "blooming and contending". To a large extent, then, the Chinese Chairman's efforts to encourage party outsiders to participate in inner-party rectification were aimed to goad the cadres into accepting his line.

This outcome of his movement of 'blooming and contending' made Mao question afresh the institutional bases upon which any future reform of communism could be carried out.<sup>142</sup> After having pushed through rectification and the HF against strong internal opposition, Mao found himself in the position of having to confront the fact that his initiatives had yielded opposite results to those he had anticipated.<sup>143</sup> Far from effecting any rapprochement with the intellectual elites, the campaign had driven a wedge between them and the Party. In addition, Mao's personal pre-eminence and judgment had been subjected to, in his eyes, a new level of hostile criticism. One can imagine both how furious and depressed Mao was in May and early June 1957. His "gentle breeze and mild rain" had turned into a full-blown gale. It was in this mood that Mao's thoughts on contradiction adapted themselves to the suspicion that he might have on his hands a 'fifth column' element persistently operative within China itself. As Mao sought to manage the dissent that rectification had aroused, he was particularly concerned to reconcile the divergent or contradictory interests of social fractions, which, in his analysis, had exacerbated the Hungarian revolt.

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<sup>142</sup> Bo Yibo quotes these words of Mao in *huigu*, vol.2, 634-637; *Mao zhuan*, 693-694.

<sup>143</sup> See Li Zhisui, *The Private Life of Chairman Mao-The memoirs of Mao's personal physician*, (London: Arrow books, 1996), 200, in which he described Mao's health safter the unexpected turning of the "Rectification" and "Hundred Flowers" campaigns: "He stayed in bed, depressed and apparently immobilized, sick with the cold".

## Conclusion

The 1956 Hungarian Revolution had a profound impact on the orientation of China's international policies. Even more importantly, the Chinese leaders', particularly Mao's, interpretation of the Crisis shaped the development of domestic policy from the late 1956 to the end of 1957 in a way that, while probably undertreated in historiography, is certainly just as consequential. Maoism adopted radical policies after Hungary to salvage the revolutionary dogma apparently jettisoned by Moscow and to push forward the famous 1958 campaign of a "Great Leap Forward". These developments prompted a crisis in the relationship between China and the Soviet bloc and a second crisis in the belief of the Chinese leaders that they had found a valid path towards socialism within their own country. This double crises led to the Chinese Chairman's committing himself to an extreme revolutionary path, resulting in the country turning its back on the world for the best part of the next twenty years. Last but not least, the lessons that the Chinese Communist regime drew from the Hungarian events continue to exert an implicit but far-reaching influence on China's political stagnation in the present day.

The Chinese Communist Party leadership -- party chairman Mao Zedong in particular -- by the end of mid-1950s began to conceive of "a great Chinese revolution" in modernization, that is, industrialization and socialist consolidation. On basis of a self-consciousness about China's potential to lead the socialist bloc in the near future, the Chinese Central Party under Mao took the Kremlin's denunciation of Stalin in early 1956 as a once-in-life-time opportunity to strike out for a more valid path towards socialization (and the realization of communism) within its country. At the same time, in trying to clear up ideological confusion among the camp states through issuing declarations rehabilitating Stalin and publicizing the peculiar Chinese experience of revolution and socialization, the Chinese regime gained considerable prestige in the Soviet Eastern bloc after Khrushchev's secret speech. After Poznan, the Poles took the lead in approaching Beijing, looking for Chinese support in navigating a course to some degree independent of the U.S.S.R. For a while, Mao and his colleagues found themselves in such a "historical" position as to initiate domestic reform accelerating the process of industrialization while intervening actively on the East European scene, challenging the Stalinist formula of bloc

order without troubling the presupposition of bloc unity. In retrospect, a key question emerged out of this reformist posture in relation to Stalinism throughout the period from early 1956 to early 1957, namely, to what extent could Mao allow himself to question Stalin and operate beyond the Stalinist framework, at home and abroad, when his worldview and political inspiration derived so closely from Stalinist dogma? Stalinism tended to pose issues in a black-and-white way incapable of bending itself to the subtleties of the Hungarian crisis and its dramatic repercussions. As such, the crisis put Chinese reformism to a severe test, ultimately proving that central-led reform on either an economic or political front under Mao was destined to exhaust itself unproductively.

In the field of inter-bloc diplomacy, China's sharp criticism of Soviet "big-state chauvinism" immediately after the outbreak of the Hungarian upheavals agitated the collective Kremlin leadership in mounting a challenge to their primacy. It was hard for Khrushchev and his colleagues to deny the pertinence of the criticisms: they could hardly seek to revise domestic and inter-bloc Stalinism without conceding past big-power errors. The disapproval of China, the junior partner, no doubt discomfited a side habituated to taking its superiority in the camp for granted. Therefore, although Khrushchev made the effort to restrain his top colleagues from reacting with unnecessary emotion to Chinese accusations, it seems that the top Soviet leaders had little interest in pursuing the theme of "big-power chauvinism", let alone thinking seriously about changing Soviet-satellite relations in line with Chinese suggestions.

The Soviets had not anticipated having to go in again after their first withdrawal, but found their hand forced by the unexpected strength of liberals inside Budapest. Up to 29 October, the Chinese, on their part, were able without damage to their self-image of neo-Stalinist orthodoxy, to mediate between the Poles and the Soviets, asking the Poles to make concessions on external affairs, and pressuring the bloc masters to concede to a greater degree their mismanagement of intra-bloc relations. This allowed the Chinese strategically to displace the Soviet Union's image as the "center of international revolution", while contributing to facing down insurrection in Eastern Europe. The unanticipated escalation of violence in Hungary after 30 October, combined with the strong Chinese suspicion of the "anti-revolutionary" character of

the events, however, forced Mao and his colleagues to drop their plan of criticizing the Soviets in order to save the Stalinist bloc system from collapse.

After the Chinese had been so helpful in rallying bloc unity and stressing Moscow's leading role inside the camp post-Budapest, the Soviet leaders found no difficulty in accepting China's highly theoretical prescriptions for party and bloc unity once the fires had died down. The Soviet leadership itself also became aware of the danger of abandoning Stalin in symbolic terms, taking Mao up on his suggestion of maintaining a Stalinist ideological orthodoxy as the 'glue' of an international communist movement. This reaffirmation of Stalinism brought the partners together in a fraternal union in late 1956. But the Chinese Chairman's desire to surpass the Soviets and enhance China's status in the revolutionary camp did not diminish with Hungary, posing future problems for the Sino-Soviet relationship and the general structure of the Communist commonwealth once the two had later broken over a mutually acceptable formula both for domestic construction and international relations.

In the domestic context, senior Party officials' interpretations of the Hungarian events were likewise instrumental in the evolution of social policy and governance in the sense that Stalinism had been open for criticism ever since the CPSU Twentieth Congress. The Hungarian Revolution intimated to Chinese party leaders that an established communist regime might fracture on account of socio-economic tensions and the corruption and ossification of its party organization. This was an unprecedented insight for the Chinese leaders. Central party leaders like Liu Shaoqi, Zhou Enlai and Chen Yun clearly made themselves over to a policy of adjusting the Stalinist model in terms of both economic and party organization and were further tacitly applauded by a large number of leading cadres from both the center and the provinces. Prior to 1956, although the Chinese Communist regime had gone through a very brief period of "New Democracy," when some central leaders believed that private and capitalist economies should be tolerated and even developed in a run-up period to the flowering of a mature Soviet-style socialism, no one in the center had ever doubted the vision that the "Soviet's today is our tomorrow". In other words, the essential applicability of the Soviet model to China in building a new socialist society was unimpugned. Even in the face of Chairman Mao's "divide-and-rule"

strategy as he aimed to reshape and unite the thinking of the central leaders under his radical line, the top Party officials' political and ideological belief in the ultimate legitimacy of Stalinism and its applicability to China were undoubtedly decisive in allowing them to work with Mao in achieving socialism. Only after the Polish and Hungarian crises, the latter in particular, did the top elites awake to the necessity of reforming to avoid another Hungary in China. Within the inner-party "democratic" atmosphere promoted by Mao from early 1956, the leading cadres apparently felt their advocacy for deepening the internal reform of the Stalinist model was politically congruent with Mao's desire to specify and cultivate specifically Chinese characteristics of "socialist construction" on the basis of a critical review of the Soviet experience.

Nevertheless, Mao, from the very beginning of his formulation of modifications to the Soviet experience, coupled all references to reform with an assurance that the Party's past policies (largely his own) were correct, and that great "achievements" of China's socialization stood beyond reproach. After Hungary, it is evident that Mao became gradually aware of the danger of denigrating the Stalinist model in a context where it was nigh-on indistinguishable from the foundations of China's own state order. Consequently, the Chairman repeatedly emphasized orthodox Stalinism as a basic standard in evaluating Chinese domestic policies. This standard inclined Mao to disagreements, however implicit, with leading economists' diagnoses of "defects and errors" in the Party's economic work and with their prescriptions that socialist planning should grant a high priority to people's livelihoods. Although Mao accepted the specific economic plan for 1957, declining to oppose his colleagues' "cool-down" policy in the aftermath of the Eastern European revolts, he does not appear to have wavered from his belief in the ultimate applicability of a "heavy industry-centered" economic model to Chinese conditions, parting company with his top colleagues' doubts on this score. In regard to the severe problems of the Party's alienation from the people as revealed by Hungary, Mao apparently had no intention of accepting Liu's proposals of restricting the power of the inner party top cadres in the name of curbing bureaucracy, rather believing that communist government made policy deliberations and the consolidation of power at the centre more, rather than less, important. In sum, the thought that his established socialist system might be economically or institutionally

defective was absolutely unacceptable to the Chairman, stymying any essential political or economic reforms of the Stalinist pattern.

Hungary stimulated unwanted political debate in China, raising politically sensitive questions of possible institutional flaws in the country's state architecture. Tolerated by Mao's relaxation policy, to Mao's disquiet, some non-communist intellectuals' queried the repressive line taken against "class enemies," falling in with some cadres' call for a political "big democracy", or political reform on the western democratic model. The first type of opinion touched on the correctness of radical Maoist class struggle policies, which as understood by Mao was central to the legitimacy of using revolutionary means to accomplish socialist transformation. The problem of "big or little democracy", in the Chinese Chairman's eyes, pertained to the basic ideological character of his regime; the question here was whether the Chinese people should choose a proletarian route or a bourgeois Western one. Mao undoubtedly regarded these opinions as utterly wrong-headed and in need of rectification sooner or later. But what made Mao different from Rákosi or other Stalinist leaders in Eastern bloc was his choice not at once to clamp down on internal dissent or to use coercive means to silence wrong ideas, which Mao interpreted as a last resort in restoring unity to an established socialist society. Instead, Mao rather set out to displace "incorrect" ideas through an institutionalized policy of ideological suasion, which targeted both right and bureaucratic left deviationism as these had come to light in the wake of the Eastern European events.

The tale of Chairman Mao's orchestration of the HF liberalization together with the Rectification Campaign, inviting outsiders to criticize party errors, is by and large that of Mao's personal efforts to defend his own policy in face of unexpected internal dissent over the HF campaign, piqued perhaps by doubts over the CCP's sincerity over relaxation after Hungary. Before the emergence of explicit inner party resistance to the HF policy, the Maoist Hundred Flowers experiment represented little more than a tactic to appease immediate social dissatisfactions, adjusting highly centralized and uniform party indoctrination into a more diversified ideological scheme so as to make socialism as attractive as possible to as many as possible. Nettled by resistance to his relaxation policy, Mao thus decided to prove that China was different from

Hungary insofar as his "softer methods" would not provoke side effects comparable to the Budapest upheaval—which had arisen in Hungary on account of its political dependence on the Soviet Union in the absence of a large-scale social transformation leading to a successful socialist revolution. The fact that the Chairman encouraged party outsiders to participate in the party rectification campaign and to criticize party officials' work allowed him to egg the party cadres to implement his line and silence any doubts from outside.

In the process of soliciting non-Party members' suggestions, the Party and the intelligentsia found themselves at cross-purposes. Historically, the Chinese scholar-bureaucrats have more or less formed a cadre, content to serve new political dynasties in the traditional spirit of their predecessors. Further, possibly influenced by the western political theories influential among the Chinese intelligentsia during the early twentieth century, quite a few middle-aged and senior intellectuals likely believed deep down that their social function was not to exercise government, but to check the negative tendencies of whatever government existed—that is, they believed that they bore responsibility for the supervision of state governance and, where necessary, for the reform of the system. These liberal concepts dictate that the ideal Chinese intellectual be honest, disinterested, principled, conscientious and capable of self-sacrifice in the face of unjust power. While the motives of the non-Communists attending the forums were doubtless mixed, patriotism and enthusiasm for more active political participation, showcasing their social values, would seem to have played a larger role in the cadres' resistance to Mao than political opportunism. Moreover, the majority of the Chinese intellectual elites did not bear any hostility toward Marxism or Chinese socialism but wished rather to take a more active role in politics to help the CCP build a more scientific socialism theoretically reconcilable with liberalism, democracy and humane values.

Within the fraught, heady atmosphere of "liberalization" in the second half of May, many non-Communist elites and then students came to feel they were playing a role very similar to the Hungarian Petöfi Circle, pointing out the Party's errors and offering salutary advice for the state's reform. However, the domestic situation in China in 1957 differed in many respects from that in Hungary in 1956, with the central party itself instigating forums, which subjected the

non-Communist elites' political activities to the surveillance of the Party. Although the Party had relaxed its control over the press (non-Party papers in particular), its tight hold of the main communication channels to the masses guaranteed that the forums and the press could not become the breeding ground for a Hungarian type campaign mobilizing a broad popular (and particularly youth) following. Both the non-Communist intellectuals and students were too politically inexperienced to make out the center's preoccupations. By mid-May, Mao was all too well aware of the danger of "reform" to Stalinism at home, which would sooner or later pose direct threat to his own authority and legitimacy, as Rákosi had faced in Hungary. Disappointed with the intellectuals' and the students' behaviour during the campaigns, the Chinese Chairman's mind turned against them, as he gave up on his plan of inviting in the well-educated to contribute to the next phase of socialist construction. Mao's recourse, then, was to the unquestioned loyalty of the mass of the Chinese peasants, changing the direction of his ideological campaigns to develop the revolutionary consciousness of the population at large in calling for a ramped-up effort at socialist construction. This, thought by Mao, would be genuinely characteristic of a distinctively Chinese path to modernization.

In November 1957, Chairman Mao paid his second visit to Moscow. Compared with his embarrassment of eight years ago, Mao's second trip was surprisingly fruitful. Necessarily constrained within the Stalinist socialist framework, Mao was brimful of confidence in his Chinese version, for which he believed the people, unlike the Russians, had retained their enthusiasm. Just as Khrushchev had committed the U.S.S.R. to overtaking the U.S. in industrial production within fifteen years, in keeping with the traditional Chinese precept that both the 'East' and 'West Wind' could not be strong, Mao pledged China to meet and surpass the output of the United Kingdom within a similar timeframe. Establishing in this way a motivating target for the efforts of the Chinese people, he readied the country for a forthcoming "Great Leap Forward", setting China on a more radical path of socialist revolution that was to continue unchecked for decades. Within this context, it is understandable that Mao would decisively terminate the most hopeful period of economic reform since the establishment of the PRC, which was perceived by him as so at odds with the vigorous onward march of orthodox



socialism (Stalinist in essence, Maoist in formula).<sup>1</sup> This radical Maoist domestic line, sloganeered as the “uninterrupted revolution”, would become key features of the ideological and political conflicts between the Chinese the Soviet Communists in the coming years.

But the most important lesson that the Chinese Chairman and his successors learnt from Hungary was their awareness of the risks of surrendering any measure of political and ideological control, however limited, over popular conceptions of the regime’s legitimacy. Power and success in apparently forging a socialist polity had for a short period bred overconfidence in Mao, disposing him to believe the reform of Stalinism would be possible ‘from inside’ by innovative non-coercive means: the political rationality, that is, of socialism could be retained without its inefficient bureaucratism. All the while, state totalitarianism and his personal dominance would continue unchallenged. But in the face of a growing sense of disillusionment with communism among the more thoughtful intellectuals and students, in many ways parallel to Budapest, the Chairman’s instincts reasserted themselves in seeing outside critics as another “Petőfi Circle” impudently contesting the leadership of the CCP and by extension that of Mao himself. The collapse of the rectification and HF policies into the repressive Anti-Rightist Campaign represented a failure of Mao’s “liberal” policy, which became inevitable given Mao and the inner party could not countenance any suggestion that their hold on power was not in the best interests of the Chinese people. Thereafter, Hungary became a symbolic event, whose name was repeatedly invoked by the Soviet Union to shore up bloc unity and by the CCP to insist on the ideological rectitude of communism. After Budapest, the CCP’s political centralization became impregnable. Considering the current CCP leadership’s announcement in early March 2009 of their determination to stick to the one-party system, with no plans to emulate the western way, there still seems little hope that the Chinese regime will be able to carry out meaningful political reform on its own initiative.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For the formulation of Great Leap Forward line and Mao’s apparent reservations concerning the “anti-rash” economic policy in later half of 1957, as communicated in stinging criticisms passed on to Zhou Enlai and Chen Yun throughout early 1958 see *Mao zhuan*, 763-777; Chen Hongxun “luelun Mao Zedong pipan fanmaojin de zhengzhi yinsu” [Briefly Commenting on the Political Factors in Mao Zedong’s Criticisms against anti-Rash Advancement], *Dangshi jiaoxue yu yanjiu* [Party History Teaching and Researching], issue 2(2002): 34-36; Liu Wusheng “Zhou Enlai yu maojin, fanmaojin, fanfanmaojin” [Zhou Enlai and Rash-advancement, anti-Rash advancement and opposing anti-Rash advancement], *Zong Heng* [Length and Breath], issue 5(2004): 4-13; Teiwes with Sun, *China’s Road to Disaster*, 82-110.

<sup>2</sup> See Wu Bangguo’s, the head of the National People’s Congress and the second-ranking leader within the CCP, report delivered on 9 March, 2009 during the second session of the 11<sup>th</sup> NPC, in which he declared that China would never emulate the western way, China would never adopt a multiparty political system, separation of powers, a

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bicameral legislature or an independent judiciary. See 10 March, 2009, *Xinjingbao* [New Beijing Newspaper], A06; also see New York Times, 10 March 2009,  
[http://www.nytimes.com/2009/03/10/world/asia/10beijing.html?\\_r=1&scp=1&sq=In%20China,%20no%20plans%20to%20emulate%20western%20way&st=cse](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/03/10/world/asia/10beijing.html?_r=1&scp=1&sq=In%20China,%20no%20plans%20to%20emulate%20western%20way&st=cse)

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