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BRIEFS ON INTERNATIONAL COMMUNISM

1957

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The CCP Article

"More on the Experience of the Dictatorship
of the Proletariat"

As An Expression of the International Communist
Party Line for 1957

10 January 1957

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THE CCP ARTICLE, "MORE ON THE HISTORICAL EXPERIENCE
OF THE DICTATORSHIP OF THE PROLETARIAT",
AS AN EXPRESSION OF THE
INTERNATIONAL COMMUNIST PARTY LINE FOR 1957

1. The 14,000 word article, "More on the Historical Experience of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat", published in People's Daily of 28 December 1956 on the basis of a discussion at an enlarged CCP Politburo session, is a symptom of the ideological and disciplinary crisis affecting the International Communist Movement as a result of the de-Stalinization process, the fermentation in the Satellites and the Hungarian revolution. Reacting to and acknowledging the "setbacks" which Communism has met "recently", the article is conceived as a critique of Tito's Pula speech of 11 November. Actually it is an attempt to deal with the entire fermentation problem, and to call a halt to those evolutionary processes which may lead to the liquidation of orthodox Communism. The document is a forceful restatement of the fundamental positions and aims of World Communism and a sharp warning to Tito and the Communists of the world not to deviate from these basic concepts, but to close ranks around the Soviet Union--the "center"--and get down to the main priority of Communism, i.e., "the class struggle on a world scale" against the "imperialist camp headed by the United States." Although the Chinese restate their position that the center should consider the views of all Communist Parties and States, they subordinate relationship problems to the main priority.

2. The statement coincides in most aspects with recent Soviet positions and pronouncements which indicate considerable concern about the effectiveness of the Western propaganda exploitation of the Stalin and the Satellite issues as well as the rising tide of intellectual criticism of the Soviet system and its ideological foundations. The current Chinese position was foreshadowed by the extremely cautious and almost reluctant CCP statement on the Stalin issue of April 1956 and further developed at the 8th CCP Congress. The current Soviet position, still scattered and not codified in a single document, is a linear descendant of the 30 June Resolution of the CPSU Central Committee which was a futile attempt to

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stem the tide of fermentation. A highly qualified observer thought that the Chinese statement of 28 December 1956 may have been coordinated with, if not inspired by, the Soviets. Although there is no evidence to support this view and although CCP is perfectly capable of producing such document on its own, it is not improbable that the Soviets preferred to have an international position summed up by the Chinese in order to avoid the impression of "interference" and to facilitate acceptance of the views by the International Communist Movement. The CPSU may also have calculated that the Chinese would be in a better position than the Soviets to impress Tito and other "revisionists". At the same time they may have desired to spike rumors of Chinese support for Polish "liberalization" trends.

3. The Chinese document is so broad in scope that it could be characterized as the post-Hungary international Party line. It employs occasionally the declarative-imperative in addressing all Communists, thus following the practice used by the Cominform journal whenever the latter made a directive statement. In any case, the CCP statement, which is much better written and much more clearly conceived than the ideological hackwork emanating from Moscow, should increase the stature of the CCP. The Soviets themselves have contributed to this rise in stature during the crisis period by playing up Chinese statements supporting the Soviet position. Khrushchev, on 29 November, strongly praised China as "a model for many people", thus giving advance notice of the international significance of CCP pronouncements. In any case the indirect method of publicizing CPSU positions through the medium of foreign Communist statements has become an increasingly common practice, e.g.,: publication of French Communist Maurice Thorez' statement characterizing the use of the term "Stalinism" as an enemy epithet; publication of Albanian leader Hoxha's sharp attack on Tito.

4. Psychologically it is interesting to note that the Chinese statement (as well as the parallel Soviet positions which it reflects) finds no other alternative to the solution of the current crisis than to return to the fundamental hostility of the Communist to the "imperialist" world. In essence, the Chinese say that evolution of Communism is possible and

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permissible only when and if it contributes to the downfall of "imperialism" and not when it involves a risk of weakening or destroying the Communist position as has been in the case in Hungary and elsewhere. This attitude seems to be based on fear--fear of losing one's grip and one's identity if the tested principles of Bolshevism are relinquished. From this attitude stems the attack on Tito and "revisionism" in general which is the main theme of the document. It is only within the steel framework of the "dictatorship of the proletariat" that Communism can be accomplished internally and externally. The title of the document "More on the Historical Experience of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat" is symbolic.

5. As an effort to solve the crisis in intellectual terms the document, although impressively constructed, is almost as dishonest and fraudulent as the 30 June Resolution of the CPSU. In essence it attempts to identify "liberalization" with the imperialist enemy and the "revisionists" (Tito, Kardelj, and others) as potential enemy agents, e.g., "...the imperialists and all counter-revolutionaries, bent on attacking our cause, have always demanded that we 'liberalize',...they have always concentrated their forces on wrecking the leading bodies of our cause, and on destroying the Communist Party, the core of the proletariat... They have expressed great satisfaction with the current 'instability' in certain Socialist countries, resulting from the impairment of discipline in the Party and state organs." Earlier (7 December) they said "Anybody who cannot correctly understand this just stand of the Soviet Union (note: on Hungary) will inevitably fall into the trap of the imperialists' anti-Soviet instigations..." In the 28 December statement they repeat "In the present international situation, it is of particularly great significance to defend (this) Marxist-Leninist path opened by the October Revolution. When the imperialists proclaim that they want to bring about 'a change of character of the Communist world', it is precisely this revolutionary path which they want to change."

The rejection of "liberalization" as an enemy plot is linked with the (traditional) rejection of "democracy." The role of the "people" is subordinated to the program of the proletarian dictatorship: they must be indoctrinated and pacified but will not be permitted to change the character of the regime.

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"Socialist democracy should in no way be pitted against the dictatorship of the proletariat, nor should it be confused with bourgeois democracy. The sole aim of Socialist democracy in political, economic, and cultural fields alike, is to strengthen the Socialist cause of the proletariat and all the working people, to give scope to their energies for the building of Socialism, and to bring their energies into full play in the fight against all anti-Socialist forces. If there is a kind of democracy that can be used for anti-Socialist purposes and for weakening the cause of Socialism, this is certainly not Socialist democracy."

6. The process of rationalization reaches its climax when the document ascribes the successes of the "counter-revolutionaries" in Hungary to the fact that "in the past, a dictatorship of the proletariat had not been really established in Hungary." (I.e., "In the past...the democratic rights and revolutionary enthusiasm of the Hungarian working people were impaired, while counter-revolutionaries were not dealt the blow they deserved.") Not enough repression under Rakosi! This Chinese position is significantly reflected in the statement of the Hungarian government of 6 January, i.e., "But the government has unmistakably stated that there is a dictatorship of the proletariat in Hungary" and "The Leninist principles of the dictatorship of the proletariat must prevail now and in the future over the anarchist and petty bourgeois tendencies." The Hungarian government statement followed the announcement of a meeting in Budapest of Soviet, Hungarian, Czechoslovakian, Rumanian and Bulgarian leaders: Chinese, Soviet and some Satellite views converge on the rejection of "liberalization" or "democracy" outside the framework of the dictatorship. Control and manipulation of the "masses" remain the main approaches to the fermentation process.

7. The document flounders also in its attempts to set the Stalin issue straight. The bulk of the statement is devoted to this task. This may be an expression of a Chinese view that the handling of the issue by Khrushchev and the CPSU caused or precipitated the crisis. The reference to the April 1956 article "On the Historical Experience of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat" which first dealt with the issue, may be a subtle we-told-you-so. (It will be recalled that Chu-teh in his greetings to the 20th CPSU Congress still referred favorably to Stalin.)

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"As far as basic theory is concerned, the path of the October Revolution reflects the general laws of revolution and construction at a particular stage in the long course of the development of human society. It is not only the road for the proletariat of the Soviet Union, but also the road which the proletariat of all countries must travel to gain victory." It must have been an overriding consideration which forced the CCP to identify itself openly with fundamental Bolshevik objectives which clearly conflict with the two most important principles of Panch Shila, the "peaceful coexistence" program of the Chinese government which it solemnly subscribed to at Bandung, April 1955. The document, for instance, advocates revolutionary overthrow of non-Communist governments:

"The proletariat under the leadership of the Communist Party, rallying all the laboring people, takes political power from the bourgeoisie by means of revolutionary struggle." (There is no reference to "parliamentary" methods here.)

It advocates interference in the affairs of other nations:

"The (Communist) State, led by the proletariat and the Communist Party,.... firmly adheres to the principles of proletarian internationalism, strives to win the help of the laboring people of all countries, and at the same time strives to help them and all oppressed nations."

It appeals to all Communists to follow these precepts:

"It is the task of all Communists to unite the proletariat and the masses of the people to beat back resolutely the savage onslaught of the imperialists against the Socialist world, and to march forward resolutely along the path blazed by the October Revolution."

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Nevertheless the Chinese find it now necessary to bail out the Soviet Union on the Stalin issue and related problems, weaving together an intricate net of arguments which may catch the little fish swimming about in an ocean of ideological confusion but which nevertheless is basically composed of holes. This effort, in our opinion, is a crisis symptom. Fundamentally at stake in the controversy over the Stalin issue is the validity of the Soviet system which Stalin represented. The 30 June Resolution of the CC/CPSU tried already--and in vain--to separate Stalin's "mistakes" and their consequences from the validity and success of the Soviet system. The Chinese try it again, only more so. Why? Because the validity and "superiority" of the Soviet system proves the validity and "superiority" of Communism as a whole. Admission of inherent defects would be tantamount to an admission of the failure of Communism and would serve only to disintegrate the international movement and the power position of its leaders. "The very fact of the advance of the Soviet Union in revolution and construction is a great accomplishment--the first paean of victory of Marxism-Leninism in the history of mankind." Currently the Soviet system is not only saddled with the onus of the Stalin issue but also with the action in Hungary; it is under fire from the West and from Western Communists. The intelligentsia at home has been affected.

In our opinion the Chinese effort at maintaining and strengthening the myth of Soviet superiority and Soviet leadership has been motivated by this selfish interest in the ultimate victory of Communism. At this juncture, Chinese and International Communism cannot afford a deterioration of the Soviet position in the Communist world and in the world as a whole. (If the document was indeed coordinated with the Soviets, the Soviets could have used the same argument.)

8. In this context the document reaffirms that the basic conduct of all Communist Parties must be patterned after the Soviet model "since the basic path of the Soviet Union in revolution and construction was correct" and is "generally applicable."

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9. Having thus redefined the fundamental validity of the concept of the "single road to socialism", reaffirmed the fundamental "correctness" of the Soviet system, and reestablished the class struggle against imperialism as the main priority, the document proceeds to relegate the Stalin issue and related problems to a secondary level. In essence their formula is:

a. Stalin's accomplishments outweigh his mistakes, serious as they were.

b. Although it is important to correct his "mistakes", at the moment it is equally if not more important to stop the dangerous "revisionist" trend which has developed in the course of events beginning with the 20th CPSU Congress.

c. "De-Stalinization" is a propaganda term invented by "the Western bourgeoisie, and the right-wing social democrats." De-Stalinization is not involved in this process of correcting Stalin's mistakes. If there was such a thing as "Stalinism" it was identical with "Communism and Marxism-Leninism".

d. "Those comrades who made similar mistakes under his (Stalin's) influence" should not be labelled as Stalinists and "we... should not treat them as enemies" because this "will not help them learn the lesson they should learn."

e. Finally, since the issue is an intra-Party issue it must be subordinated to the main issue, i.e., the struggle against imperialism.

This formula is a departure from the previous pattern. In our opinion it presages the outlawing of Party and non-Party elements which are "misinterpreting" the significance of the "de-Stalinization" line and are pushing for "liberalization". The following statement of the Hungarian Party paper, as quoted by an AP despatch from Budapest, 8 January, appears to support our interpretation.

"There is no truce with the Hungarian counterrevolutionaries. Our fight against them will now be pressed on a political basis, and we

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"will concentrate on isolating and destroying the anarchists, the petty bourgeoisie and all those with a false outlook. This fight will be pressed where these hostile elements try to disguise themselves as Marxists and proclaim slogans about democratization and de-Stalinization." (Underlining supplied)

10. The main switch in the treatment of the Stalin issue by the Chinese is the return to the subjective factors as an explanation of the Stalin phenomenon. It will be recalled that the secret Khrushchev speech of 25 February used this method while the 30 June Resolution emphasized the objective factors (historical, political, etc.) in the attempt to explain Stalin away.

The Chinese now say:

"Nevertheless, these objective conditions alone would not have been enough to transform the possibility of mistakes into their actual commission. Lenin, working under conditions which were much more complicated and difficult than those encountered by Stalin, did not make the mistakes that Stalin made. Here, the decisive factor is the ideological condition. A series of victories and the eulogies he received in the latter part of his life turned his head. He deviated partly, but grossly, from the dialectical materialist way of thinking and fell into subjectivism..."etc., etc.

The return to the Khrushchev formula is further dramatized by the fact that the Chinese repeat almost verbatim Khrushchev's famous dictum "We cannot say that these were the deeds of a giddy despot. He considered that this should be done in the interest of the Party; of the working masses; in the name of the defense of the revolution's gains. In this lies the whole tragedy!"

The Chinese state, "This tragedy lies in the fact that, at the very time when he was doing things which were mistaken, he believed they were necessary for the defense of the interests of the working people against the encroachments by the enemy."

From the point of view of the defense of the Soviet system the subjective explanation of Stalin may have appealed to Khrushchev and

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12. This position is the springboard from which the Chinese launch their attack on "revisionism," indirectly attacking Titoist views and Polish press statements (without, however, naming names). (Tito and Kardelj are singled out by direct attack in connection with their current attacks on "Stalinist" elements in the leadership of various Parties and in reference to their "revisionist" views on Hungary.) The "revisionist trend" is identified with the "interests of the imperialists," and portrayed almost like a fad. The fundamental principle of the dictatorship of the proletariat is raised in its stead.

"So if people reject the fundamental Marxist-Leninist principles regarding the dictatorship of the proletariat, if they slanderously dub these principles 'Stalinism' and 'doctrinairism' simply because they have perceived the mistakes committed by Stalin in the latter part of his life and those made by the former Hungarian leaders, they will be taking the path that leads to betrayal of Marxism-Leninism and away from the course of the proletarian revolution."

Borba, in its first (7 January) comment on the Chinese statements, expressed--as we believe, correctly--"regret that this Chinese newspaper has failed to contribute toward a fruitful elucidation of the problems facing socialism at present, as might have been expected from such an important and, in experience, so rich a party as the Chinese Party." Nevertheless, Borba, otherwise apparently bewildered by the firmness of the Chinese, hastened to agree with the Chinese on their views on the "nature and dictatorship of the Proletariat." Without making too much out of the raising of an ideological spectre such as the proletarian dictatorship, it is nevertheless our opinion that there are bloc-wide policy implications involved (see the recent tightening in Hungary) which may lead to the gradual liquidation of elements carrying the seeds of "liberalization" in order to deny the West any assets towards what the Chinese fear may lead to the disintegration of orthodox Communism. Chinese insistence on the paternalistic aspects of the dictatorship (which Stalin is accused of having violated) indicates, on the other hand, that the policy of meeting the basic needs of the right-thinking people will continue. In our mind this policy takes the form of a slogan: Think right--eat right. If the policy should be implemented by the CCP also,

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may now appeal again to the Chinese. The "objective" explanation obviously brings in questions relating to the validity of the system. However, it was the weakness of Khrushchev's subjective analysis which contributed greatly to the ensuing confusion in Communist ranks. What kind of a system is it which permits a Stalin to operate? The Chinese, in defense of the system, go even so far as to say that "the Party lacked experience in leading the State; the new system was not sufficiently consolidated to be able to resist every encroachment of the influence of the old era, etc."

In any case, if the current Chinese line on Stalin is representative of the Soviet line--and we shall present evidence to this effect later--it seems clear that Communism as an ideology is still hurting at its very core and is twisting strenuously to shake off the issue of Stalin and its effects on the validity of the Soviet system.

Other falsifications evident in the Chinese document are the attempts to shift the period of Stalin's "mistakes" to the "latter period" of his life and to present his "crimes" as "mistakes". The lack of any reference to the famous term "Cult of the Individual" seems significant. In the upgrading of Stalin, he is now described as "after all a staunch Communist," and "implacable foe of imperialism."

11. Linked with the relative upgrading of Stalin is the effort to downgrade what the Chinese term the "present anti-doctrinaire tide". In essence they say Stalin's mistakes--and "doctrinairism" was one of their "gravest consequences"--must continue to be corrected. "Doctrinairism" in simplest terms is the mechanical application of fundamental Marxist-Leninist principles and the Soviet model without proper emphasis on local conditions and national characteristics. However, they imply fermentation resulting from the attack on doctrinairism has gone dangerously far.

"In the present anti-doctrinaire tide, there are people in our country /underlining supplied/ and abroad who, on the pretext of opposing the mechanical copying of Soviet experience, try to deny the international significance of the fundamental experience of the Soviet Union and, on the plea of creatively developing Marxism-Leninism, try to deny the significance of the universal truth of Marxism-Leninism."

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14. There follow some of the indications showing a close coincidence of the Soviet and Chinese positions. The evidence is obviously incomplete and has been selected at random.

a. Khrushchev's statements at the Kremlin New Year's Eve Party are authoritatively reported to have been along the following line: He denied any division into Stalinists and anti-Stalinists saying they were all Stalinists when it came to defending the Soviet Union and Communism against imperialistic enemies. Stalin had made many mistakes which they had been the first to acknowledge and were endeavoring to correct but Stalin had been a great revolutionary and staunch defender of the cause of Marx and Lenin and on balance his services outweigh his errors and mistakes.

The coincidence is striking, particularly in the use of the adjective "staunch" and in the reference to Stalin's role as foe of imperialism.

b. Some news reports credited Khrushchev with a statement admitting some sort of co-responsibility of Soviet leaders for Stalin's mistakes. Although unconfirmed the reports are not implausible. Following the Chinese (and his own) upgrading of Stalin it should now be possible to admit some co-responsibility since, after all, Stalin's achievements outweigh his mistakes.

c. Soviet and Chinese positions on "Revisionism" coincide.

(1) Issue #61 (January) of the Soviet magazine Questions of Philosophy attacked a "series of instances" where there has been "wholesale rejection of all of Stalin's theoretical propositions, including correct ones." In this context, the article further attacks bourgeois propaganda which has "influence on^a certain part of the Soviet people, particularly among youth" which is evident from certain statements which cast doubt on the "socialist character of our democracy." The article also apologized for having in previous issues "rejected the necessity for daily leadership" of cultural activity.

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this would indicate a significant shift: the 8th CCP Congress still advocated "leniency toward counter-revolutionaries."

13. In the final section the document renews its call for Communist unity in the face of the imperialist threat, insisting however, that this unity be based on the principle of equality--a principle which Stalin is accused of having grossly violated. The Chinese Communists have offered two formulas for relations between Communist states and parties. As for states, the larger nation should avoid "great-nation chauvinism"; the smaller should avoid "nationalism." As for parties, their relations should aim at "unity", through recognition of "equality" and "genuine, not nominal exchange of views." In practice, however, there can be more equality between equals or near-equals, such as the USSR and China, than between non-equals, such as the USSR and Albania. The distinct although indirect attacks in the CCP statement of 28 December on Polish liberalization trends, as well as Polish-Yugoslav collusion, suggest again that the Chinese Party concept on "equality" is a realistic one. In toto, we feel that the Chinese desire to subordinate in this period of setbacks, all intra-Party and intra-Bloc problems to the overriding priority: defense of the Socialist camp.

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(2) Party Life, the monthly journal of CPSU, was reported on 5 January to have attacked the CPUSA for attempting "open revision of Marxism-Leninism." It labeled this attempt as dangerous. (Note: CPUSA is currently plagued by a factional struggle of right-wingers, desiring to re-organize the CPUSA as a political association, against the orthodox leadership.)

The article also coincides with the Chinese view on the dictatorship of the proletariat. "They have come out against the dictatorship of the proletariat and against a party of the Leninist type. Instead they propose to create a mass association of Communist propaganda and they openly state that socialism is a matter for the remote future."

d. A Pravda article by Ponomarev (4 January) reviewing the Hungarian uprising placed unusual emphasis on the alleged organization of the uprising by the U.S. and stated that this initiated a general attack on World Communism and the unity of the Soviet Bloc in particular. This coincides with the Chinese statement which characterized the "Hungarian affair of October 1956" as "the gravest attack launched by them (Note: the imperialists led by the US) against the Socialist camp since the war of aggression they carried on in Korea", and that among the causes imperialism "played the main and decisive part."

e. The same Pravda editorial, in drawing "lessons from Hungarian events" firmly stressed the need for adherence to the forms of orthodox Marxism-Leninism and the dictatorship of the proletariat.

f. A TASS report on the Soviet-East German talks of 7 January adopted the Chinese position on the single road to Socialism which makes allowance for national characteristics but stresses common, fundamental aims and objectives.

g. Finally, although not conclusively, it is generally agreed that Malenkov's star has been rising since November 1956. His presence

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at the Soviet-Satellite meeting in Budapest which ended on 4 January confirmed previous rumors that his position exceeds the scope of his Ministry. We are not prepared to link the relative upgrading of Stalin's heir, Malenkov, to the relative upgrading of Stalin or to the question of a power struggle, and merely note the coincidence.

15. In sum, if the Chinese statement can indeed be construed as an expression of Soviet thoughts and as a common platform for the Communist Parties to unite on, what will it accomplish with its call for unity and blunt return to orthodox Bolshevik modus operandi?

At this writing it appears that such a position could create dilemmas rather than solutions. The "peaceful co-existence" tactic, reaffirmed as a valid line for Bloc relations with the free world on a governmental level as late as the January Soviet-East German talks, could hardly be maintained without adjustment and compromise of these relations. The militant posture of the Chinese and Soviet positions, primarily directed at the internal enemy number one, i. e., fermentation, may yet have an effect on the operations of international Communism outside the Bloc. To what extent the "Chinese" views (which will probably be adopted by non-Bloc Communist Parties) will be effective in aiding them in liquidating "fermentation" is an open question. The Yugoslavs, although taken aback by the pro-Soviet attitude of the document, claim that it is progress to have their views "discussed." They may have a point. While attacking fermentation and "liberalization", the document also gives it publicity. That it will stop the well-developed fermentation in CPs in Western Europe is questionable. Its effect on CPs in the Far East, Middle East and Latin America may, however, be considerable and increase the orientation of CPs in these areas towards the CCP which, however, could serve the common interests of CPSU and CCP.

16. At the beginning of 1957 international Communism, hurting from the setbacks received in 1956, assumes a hostile, militantly defensive posture. The further development of the international line which in our opinion is so clearly spelled out in the CCP article of 28 December, will depend on external events.

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