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A QUESTION OF THE MOLOTOV-MAO AXIS

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(London Times, 17 January 1962)

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Introduction

The main difficulty in interpreting the accusations of recent foreign policy errors made against Molotov by the leaders of the CPSU at the 22nd Party Congress is that there is no independent evidence which tends to support them. L.F. Ilyichev's speech to the Congress portrayed Molotov as having submitted to Kommunist on April 18, 1960 a "pretentious" article on Lenin,¹ which Ilyichev then described in terms calculated to make his audience think that Molotov must have been paraphrasing the Red Flag editorial "Long Live Leninism!" of April 16th. Kuusinen's speech² accused Molotov of fishing in alien waters and N.G. Ignatov spoke of his double-dealing while in Ulan-Bator.³ P.A. Satyukov described Molotov's letter of October 1961 to the Central Committee⁴, in which the ex-Foreign Minister denounced the draft Program of the CPSU in a manner reminiscent of the probable Chinese attitude to the Program.⁵ But it has reasonably been pointed out in the West, notably by O. Korab in the Neue Zürcher Zeitung, that Molotov, as a Great Russian nationalist and chauvinist par excellence, is an unlikely ally of the Chinese.

Nevertheless there is one important case on record in which Molotov himself, not a member of Khrushchev's team, provided some reason for the belief that he at one time viewed Mao Tse-tung's party with considerable sympathy. This was the notorious speech on 8th February 1955 in which Molotov made his irreparable error by saying that only the foundations of socialism had been built in the USSR.⁶ The ensuing public attack on him, and his subsequent self-criticism revolved around that point alone.

But in the same speech he also said something equally reprehensible but much more topical. He was reporting to the Supreme Soviet of the USSR on the international situation and on Soviet foreign policy, for which he was responsible at the time. In his

¹ Radio Moscow, 26 October 1961.

² Radio Moscow, 27 October 1961.

³ Izvestia, 24 October 1961.

⁴ Pravda, 27 October 1961.

⁵ See Background Information, 12 January 1962.

⁶ See W. Leonhard, Die Zeit, 19 January 1962.

opening remarks, the Pravda version of which was headed "Changes in the International Situation" he proclaimed that:

"A most important result of the Second World War was the formation, on a par with the world-wide camp of capitalism, of the world-wide system of socialism and democracy headed by the USSR or more accurately, headed by the USSR and the the Chinese People's Republic."

This formulation, "headed by the USSR and the Chinese People's Republic", has never subsequently been used by any Soviet leader. Moreover Molotov did not say it in flattery or out of courtesy to a Chinese delegation, since the occasion was one on which Soviet domestic problems were in the foreground (the removal of Malenkov from his post as Chairman of the Council of Ministers was announced on the day that Molotov's speech was published.)⁷

Since November 1960, the time of the 81-Party Conference in Moscow, the phrase "headed by the USSR" has been entirely dropped from all Soviet and most satellite references to the "socialist" camp (N. Korea and Albania have continued to use it sporadically). The official Soviet explanation of this unwonted modesty is somewhat involved and psychologically unconvincing. Its latest exposition comes from Radio Budapest (16 January 1962), over which Gyorgy Szanto, Professor of Ideology at the Hungarian Party Academy, told his audience:

"Should there be one or more leading powers, one or more parties or institutions? There have been various temporary views demanding the necessity of various leading centers. The majority of the Communist parties - both now and a couple of years ago - have taken the stand that such leading centers are not necessary.

"In the present complicated international situation there can be no question that in the international communist or workers' movements there could be an exceptional leading role of one party or that an organization such as Comintern should be established. How can one coordinate the work of 87 communist parties with 40,000,000 members?...

"The Soviet C.P. has been leading for many years, it has built socialism and has elaborated the program for communism. The USSR is the leading power of our time. It is the main defender of all the socialist countries and the main obstacle to imperialism.

"The Soviet Party is therefore not a leading one in the administrative sense, but it is a leading party, as the Moscow delegation has pointed out, the leading group of international communist movement. In this sense the relationship to it is the proof of internationalism."

⁷Pravda, 9 February 1955.

This is not only Szanto's but also Khrushchev's version of why the phrase "headed by the USSR" was dropped. The Western reader may be forgiven for asking whether a more likely explanation is not simply that at some time in the spring or summer of 1960, the Chinese had begun to press the Kremlin for the official adoption of Molotov's short-lived formula of February 1955.

r.r.g.

SCUFFLINGS BEHIND THE CURTAIN

The Times
January 17, 1962

NOT TO BE MICROFICED

Any slight hopes that Mr. Khrushchev had after the Soviet Party Congress that his difficulties with China and Albania might be resolved have been disappointed - buried almost - by the events of the past two months. Mr. Chou En-lai protested against the dispute being brought into the open and soon afterwards departed, to be greeted effusively on his arrival in Peking by Mr. Mao Tse-tung. Both of them could read the ironic appeal that followed a few days later in Mr. Khrushchev's closing speech at the congress:

We share the anxiety of our Chinese friends and appreciate their concern for the strengthening of unity. If the Chinese comrades desire to apply their efforts to normalization of relations on the part of the Albanian Workers Party with the fraternal parties, then hardly anyone can make a better contribution to the solution of this problem than the Communist Party of China.

To the Albanians his appeal was to "renounce their erroneous views and revert to the path of unity and close cooperation within the fraternal family of the socialist community": small hope of that too, with the Chinese still backing them.

Neither appeal has been answered. Both China and Albania have defied the Russians by word and deed, up to the latest Chinese move in renewing the aid agreement with the Albanians. The Albanians have been equally intrasigent and much more directly offensive. The Russians in turn have kept up their pressure. By withdrawing their diplomatic mission from Albania they have taken an abnormal step of ostracism within the Communist camp. An article in Problems of Peace and Socialism, the Communist international journal, has now denounced the present Albanian leadership for having "in fact joined ranks with the enemies of the communist movement."

It has been obvious enough that the differences with Albania were not just those that any power in Russia's position might have with a recalcitrant satellite. The codes have been read plainly by both sides in this dispute. "For Albania read China" is the message to Peking, underlined in this article by chastisement of the Albanians on the old themes of peaceful coexistence, the possibility of eliminating war, communist success by peaceful means, and Stalinism in theory and in practice. From the Chinese side the same code is used and is just as clear. Yugoslav revisionism is the whipping boy, when plainly it is the deviations of the Russian leadership that are being attacked. Even if, at this late stage, the Chinese might argue that in the interests of fraternal propriety they have never directly attacked the Russians, the printing side by side of Mr. Khrushchev's violent attack on Albania and the violent and personal Albanian reply would have had only one meaning to a reader of the People's Daily.

The dispute has been exacerbated by both sides poaching in what might be regarded as the other's territory. Chinese competition rather than cooperation with the Russians in the virgin revolutionary soil of Africa and Latin America has become increasingly open. The Russian willingness two years ago to listen to the appeals of Chinese "rightist" opponents of the great leap

froward shows how both sides can play on the dangers of an anti-party group in the other camp.

Certainly it is right to place great weight on differences in ideology between governments whose concern with ideology is itself so profound. But having said that, the conclusions should not be too confidently drawn. A split between China and Russia does not necessarily follow when both sides have national interests as well as communist ideals to weigh up; nor is a direct struggle between the two for leadership in the communist world a justifiable inference: The Chinese are sincere in their desire for solidarity. The present dispute has not come about by design on both sides. The Chinese sent to the Moscow meeting a delegation that was plainly not chosen to do theoretical battle. Even in the past few weeks, while sticking to their case and coming to Albania's aid, the Chinese have shown some signs of avoiding too vehement exchanges.

Yet the facts are too plain for all speculation to be dismissed especially by communists. If they look up the words of the founding fathers of their creed they will find many references to the ending of class exploitation leading to peace within the land and to governments that have ended such exploitation necessarily living together in a newly won fraternity. The facts now plainly disappoint the expectation. If the camp can no longer be one family under one leader; if the danger of two rival leaders is obvious enough to all communist countries and parties; then surely, some of them must reflect, the end of this road can only be each party for itself; maintaining what fraternity and community of thinking it can. The Chinese have been making this point for internal policy for years past with their insistence on the "concrete conditions" that face each country. Communists everywhere may be asking whether the Stalinism they are now rejecting was not only a perversion of Lenin's high hopes for Russia. Has not his confidence in an inevitable communist fraternity also been disappointed? When the body was moved from the mausoleum any doubts that an era had ended with Stalin's death were finally set at rest.