

# **WHICH EAST IS RED?**

**THE MAOIST PRESENCE IN THE SOVIET UNION  
AND SOVIET BLOC EUROPE 1956-1980**

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*To My Family*

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# Contents

Introduction		7
Chapter 1	An Uneasy Alliance	12
Chapter 2	The First Cracks: Destalinization and the Beginnings of the Sino-Soviet Split	16
Chapter 3	Inakomislyashchii (Other-Thinkers): Anti-Revisionist Communists in the Soviet Union	19
Chapter 4	Comrades-in-Arms: China and Albania	40
Chapter 5	Rumblings in Bulgaria: The Coup Attempt on 1965 and the 1968 World Festival of Youth and Students	45
Chapter 6	"Becoming Chinese": Maoists in the German Democratic Republic	50
Chapter 7	Mao on Trial: Maoist Students in Hungary during the Kádár Era	57
Chapter 8	The Curious Life of Kazimierz Mijal: Polish Maoism in the 1960s and 1970s	63
Conclusion	Interrogating History and the Myth of Monolithic Marxism in Eastern Europe	68
References		70



# Introduction

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Make trouble, fail, make trouble again, fail again... until their doom; that is the logic of the imperialists and all reactionaries the world over in dealing with the people's cause, and they will never go against this logic. This is a Marxist law. When we say "imperialism is ferocious," we mean that its nature will never change, that the imperialists will never lay down their butcher knives, that they will never become Buddhas, till their doom.

Fight, fail, fight again, fail again, fight again... till their victory; that is the logic of the people, and they too will never go against this logic. This is another Marxist law. The Russian people's revolution followed this law, and so has the Chinese people's revolution.

Mao Zedong, "Cast Away Illusions, Prepare for Struggle" (14 August 1949), in *Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-tung* (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1972), 58-59.<sup>1</sup>

From the late 1950s to the mid-1970s, the theories of Mao Zedong inspired many people—youth, students, workers, and intellectuals—to “make trouble” for the status quo across the world. It was a time when the world was experiencing a whirlwind of decolonization and of new horizons beyond the global Cold War between the US and USSR. Hard on the heels of Soviet premier Nikita Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin and Stalinism at the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in 1956, the international communist movement suffered a dramatic schism within both the socialist countries in Asia and Europe—and the ranks of communist parties all across the world—with the USSR and Eastern Europe on one end and China and Albania on the other. Seemingly at stake were ideological purity, political authority, and revolutionary praxis in overcoming capitalism and advancing toward communism. The

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<sup>1</sup> Each section of this writing opens with a quotation from *Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-tung* [Zedong], i.e., the “Little Red Book,” with a further citation of the source of the quotation found in *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung*. While not standard practice, full citation of my epigraph is essential to inform readers of the location of the original quote. The format for citing each epigraph, using the above as an example, is, Mao Zedong, "Cast Away Illusions, Prepare for Struggle" (August 14, 1949), in *Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-tung* (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1972), 58-59, followed by the *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung* (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1965), 4:428.

Chinese and their Albanian allies seemed isolated in their struggle: China was the most populous country in the world and the second-largest socialist power, but after Sino-Soviet Split<sup>2</sup> saw the majority of socialist nations align with the Soviets, while the North Vietnamese and North Korean governments vacillated between the two sides.

If the governments and parties of most socialist countries opposed the new positions that Mao and the Chinese Communist Party were taking, the same cannot be said of the broader international communist movement. Indeed, communists across the First and Third worlds split into rival pro-Moscow and pro-Beijing “Maoist” parties, each claiming to be the true heir of Marx, Engels, and Lenin. The world found itself doubling in number of leftist parties, often with the appellation “(Marxist-Leninist)” added to the end of the names of the new Maoist organizations. Usually starting out small, the Maoist parties grew over the course of the “Global Sixties.” For a time at least, student and youth movements in many societies of both the First and Third Worlds found the Maoist message appealing: a refreshing and rebellious alternative to the revisionist, reformist, and authoritarian pro-Moscow parties of their elders. For example, the Black Panther Party and Revolutionary Union (later the Revolutionary Communist Party) in the US, the Gauche Prolétarienne (Proletarian Left) in France, and African anticolonial groups such as the FNLA (Frente Nacional de Libertação de Angola or National Liberation Front of Angola) in Angola, and the ZANU (Zimbabwe African National Union) in Zimbabwe all waved the *Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-Tung* (the “Little Red Book”) and wore the ubiquitous Mao badges, those icons of iconoclasm.

Modern historical discourse has spent a great deal of time looking at how Mao became an inspiration to anti-revisionist communists across the First and Third World, but a gap seems to exist: what about the Second World? Apart from Albania, was Eastern Europe devoid of Maoism? My research has found this not to be the case: a careful examination of even English-language sources at the margins of discourse around Maoism in

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<sup>2</sup> In most literature, the diplomatic and ideological fracturing between the USSR and People’s Republic of China is written as the “Sino-Soviet split.” However, Maoists then and now emphasize the term “split” and stylize it as the “Sino-Soviet Split,” marking it as a particularly important part of socialist history. In keeping with the Maoist essence of this work, the term “Split” remains capitalized.



the Sixties shows that it was there. The advent of the Internet not only allows us access to new sources (especially newly opened archives) around the world, but also to connect to networks of veterans of the struggle as well as scholars in the field. This research has certainly not been easy to undertake: thankfully, my own years of personal study of Soviet history and Maoist theory helped make it possible to accomplish. Soviet archives are still mostly inaccessible, with the Russian government divulging its sources only slowly and sporadically. Even other countries that are part of this study would have been impossible to research had it not been for my contacts inside Maoist organizations in those countries.

The present study is a challenge to these discourses that omit the effects of the Sino-Soviet Split and its effects on the Eastern European intellectual world and to the arguments that Marxism and dissent in Eastern Europe were monolithic in being either pro-Soviet or pro-Western. Why would the Eastern Bloc continue to be exempt from the zeitgeist of the Global Sixties? While these countries had extensive police surveillance apparatuses (from the Stasi of the German Democratic Republic to the KGB of the USSR) that made it particularly difficult to organize new communist parties or militant groups, they certainly failed to prevent the “East Wind” of China any more than the “West Wind” of the American-led First World from blowing through their globally connected societies and cultures. Dissidents who held left-wing or Marxist-Leninist convictions at variance with official doctrine and whose voices were silenced or lost, should be heard again as part of the new historical scholarship on the Second World, the Global Sixties, and the Cold War.

The structure and methodology of this study begins chronologically with a presentation of the post-1949 alliance between the Soviet Union and the newborn People’s Republic of China. It then segues into a narrative of the Sino-Soviet Split and the ideological divergences between Moscow’s and Beijing’s interpretations of Marxism, or the clash between “revisionism” with “Mao Zedong Thought.”<sup>3</sup> Each of the following chapters discuss

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<sup>3</sup> The terms “Maoism,” “Mao Zedong Thought,” and “anti-revisionism” are key terms in this study that oftentimes overlap or seem to be used interchangeably: however, they are distinct terms in and of themselves. “Mao Zedong Thought” was the most common appellation for what is today considered “Maoist” ideology, as the Chinese Communist Party and its international allies viewed Mao’s theories as not necessarily being a new and higher stage of Marxism-Leninism, but rather Marxism-Leninism

the people and events connected to Maoism in the Soviet bloc, with a key chapter devoted to the case of the Soviet Union. The study concludes with a thorough explanation of my challenge to fellow historians and a call to change the way we view Eastern Europe during the Long Global Sixties.

It should be noted that this study glaringly omits the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, the Socialist Republic of Romania, and the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic. While there was indeed a brief attempt at a small group of youth to distribute the Serbo-Croatian translation of the *Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-tung* gifted to them by the Chinese embassy in Belgrade, their attempt was so brief and lacking in any success that any significant discussion of Maoism in Yugoslavia (i.e. lack thereof) would be moot.<sup>4</sup> While China and Romania had tepidly friendly diplomatic relations, I found no evidence of any attempts by Romanian citizens to bring Maoism to their home country in any scholarly work on Sino-Romanian relations; the exact same can be said of Czechoslovakia. Hopefully future studies on communist dissidence in the Eastern Bloc, however, will bring to light any attempts to bring Maoism to these countries during the 1960s and 1970s.

My primary sources include numerous contemporary periodicals, pamphlets, and other writings. They are supplemented by scholarly sources, especially monographic studies of the Sino-Soviet Split and the Cultural Revolution. Reports by other scholars documenting their findings in state archives and compilations of essays concerning the historical experiences of movements in various countries have been invaluable to the construction of my narrative. Indeed, the ability to network with scholars

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as applied to the stage of history marked by national liberation struggles, anti-Soviet revisionism, and cultural revolution within socialism. It was not until after Mao's death that the surviving pro-Beijing parties proclaimed "Marxism-Leninism-Maoism" as being a third and universally applicable stage of communism. The term "anti-revisionism" is an umbrella term for all communist schools of thought which rejected Khrushchev's Destalinization and deemed the Soviet bloc to having "revised" genuine Marxism-Leninism out of official state ideology: the Chinese Communist Party, Party of Labour of Albania, and their international allies referred to themselves as "anti-revisionist Marxist-Leninists" when contrasting themselves to the Moscow-approved interpretation of "Marxism-Leninism." In the twenty-first century, Maoists refer to themselves as "Marxist-Leninist-Maoists," while pro-Albanian Hoxhaists continue to refer to themselves as "anti-revisionist Marxist-Leninists."

<sup>4</sup> Dominique Kirchner Reill, "Partisan legacies and anti-imperialist ambitions: the Little Red Book in Italy and Yugoslavia," Alexander J. Cook ed., *Mao's Little Red Book: A Global History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 197-204.

and activists via social media and public forums has greatly enhanced my access to research materials and activist recollections that would have been otherwise impossible for me to acquire

# Chapter 1

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## AN UNEASY ALLIANCE

Who are our enemies? Who are our friends? This is a question of the first importance for the revolution.

Mao Zedong, "Analysis of the Classes in Chinese Society," in *Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-tung* (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1972), 12-13.<sup>5</sup>

Even before his own revolution, Lenin saw a revolutionary storm culminating in Asia.

Speaking about Xinhai Revolution of 1911-1912 that overthrew the Qing Dynasty and established China's first republic, Lenin proclaimed that "China is a land of seething political activity, the scene of a virile social movement and of a democratic upsurge" and that the rise of anticolonial and left-leaning democratic movements across Asia was a promising new development alongside the communist movements of World War I taking form among the European working class.<sup>6</sup> As the Communist International (Comintern) developed in the wake of the Russian Revolution and with the founding of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in 1921, the Soviets now had a stake in China's political trajectory. Eager to help foment world revolution, Moscow sent Comintern agents into China to help along the infant CCP in its struggle to become a party with a mass base capable of seizing power.<sup>7</sup>

However, the Comintern and the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) advised the Chinese Communists to take a unique route compared to that of other communist parties in the world. Taking into account the small and scattered nature of the Party and the fractured warlordism continuing to plague China, the Soviets suggested that the CCP

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<sup>5</sup> For the original, see Mao Zedong, "Analysis of the Classes in Chinese Society" (March 1926), *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung* (Peking: Foreign Language Publishing House, 1965), 1:13.

<sup>6</sup> V.I. Lenin, "The Awakening of Asia" (May 7, 1913), *Collected Works of V.I. Lenin* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1977), 19:85-86.

<sup>7</sup> Alexander V. Pantsov and Stephen I. Levine, *Mao: The Real Story* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2012), 100-106.

form a “united front” with the ruling Guomindang (Nationalist Party, hereafter known as the GMD). This arrangement, which came to be known as the “First United Front” of 1923, created a political dynamic where the CCP and GMD achieved a uniquely close symbiosis. Joint membership in both parties became a near-requirement for CCP members and the CCP was able to put prominent cadres into the highest ranks of the GMD, all in hopes that not only would a GMD-CCP alliance unite China, but would steer the GMD into becoming a socialist party itself (indeed, the Soviets were keen on the possibility that the GMD could eventually join the Comintern).<sup>8</sup>

While the Chinese Communists certainly saw the First United Front as an excellent opportunity for the growth of their party, it should be noted that the move was only semi-voluntary. In theory, the Comintern acted as a worldwide council of communist parties in which all parties had an equal say and overall self-determination. In reality, the CPSU had an unspoken final say in all matters, even at a global level, and by the 1930s the Comintern’s central task had essentially become one of defending the Soviet Union as the nucleus of a nascent socialist world.<sup>9</sup> Even during Lenin’s tenure as leader of the USSR, deviating in any way from the blueprint given by the Comintern was going to be exceedingly difficult for the CCP, if not outright verboten.

The United Front was at first a successful endeavor: it created the National Revolutionary Army (NRA) of the GMD, which was able to unite Communists and Nationalists into a fighting force seeking to rid China of its warlord dilemma. In 1926, the NRA launched the successful Northern Expedition that mopped up the eastern warlords and brought them loosely under a party-state dominated by Chiang Kai-shek. The honeymoon between the CCP and GMD broke down: GMD leader Chiang tired of the Communists’ attempts to swing the GMD to the left. He dissolved the First United Front midway through the Expedition, and on 12 April 1927 NRA forces loyal to Chiang launched a massacre of Chinese Communist Party members in Shanghai, sparking the beginning of the

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 151-155.

<sup>9</sup> David Priestland, *The Red Flag: A History of Communism* (New York: Grove Press, 2010), 124.

CCP's insurgency that would last until 1949.<sup>10</sup> While the warlords had suffered critical defeats in the Northern Expedition, the CCP's strict following of Moscow's orders to refrain from pursuing an independent path from the GMD ended in bloody tragedy.

The Soviets were quick to condemn Chiang (although the cessation of relations between the Comintern and the GMD was a gradual one),<sup>11</sup> and the Chinese Communist Party fled to the countryside to begin its revolutionary "people's war." Moscow was overjoyed that a communist revolution had broken out in the world's most populous country, even if it was initiated in a manner contrary to Comintern policy at the time. Unfortunately, due to the CCP's lack of holding territory on the Soviet-Chinese border, the Soviets were unable to supply the new revolution with arms, money, or extra Comintern agents. According to Edgar Snow's 1938 classic report on the Chinese communist movement, *Red Star Over China*, "the Chinese Reds fought with less material foreign help than any army in modern Chinese history."<sup>12</sup>

In June 1941, the German Reich attacked the USSR with all its might. While the Japanese had yet to engage the Soviets and were preoccupied with fighting in China and Manchuria, Japan was still part of the Axis Powers and thus an indirect enemy of Moscow. Across Europe and China, Moscow gave its moral and advisory support to the Chinese Communists, who formed an anti-Japanese "Second United Front" with the GMD in 1937. United against a common enemy, the GMD and CCP helped expel the Japanese from China, and in August 1945, mere weeks before the end of the war, the Soviet Red Army swooped in to liberate Manchuria and the northern half of Korea from Japanese occupation. With two atomic bombs dropped on Japan, Manchuria gone, and Japanese forces in China decimated, Japan surrendered to the Allies.

The Second United Front crumbled almost immediately thereafter and the Chinese Civil War surged on until the victory of the People's Liberation Army in 1949. On 1 October 1949, in Tiananmen Square, Mao Zedong, now undisputed leader of China and founder of the People's

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<sup>10</sup> Pantsov and Levine, 178.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 190.

<sup>12</sup> Edgar Snow, *Red Star Over China*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (New York: Grove Press, 1968), 359-360.

Republic of China (PRC), declared that “the Chinese people have stood up!” Shortly after, in December 1949 and January 1950, Mao left for a trip to Moscow to meet with Stalin and other leaders of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), where Stalin congratulated the Chinese Communist Party for its victory over the GMD and its founding of the People’s Republic. During Mao’s Moscow visit, the Chinese and Soviets struck a deal that would allow the Soviet Union to send economic advisers all across China to aid in China’s post-revolution restructuring. Negotiations ended with the signing of the Sino-Soviet Treaty of Friendship, Alliance, and Mutual Assistance.<sup>13</sup>

Post-Liberation relations between China and the Soviet Union were still tense, however. While Stalin was impressed that Mao had achieved victory against the Japanese and the Guomindang by going against Moscow’s specific orders, a sense of resentment remained and Stalin continued to exercise dominance over Mao to maintain his position as head of the socialist bloc. The Comintern had been dissolved in 1943, but the USSR still saw itself, to an extent, as the undisputed leader and architect of the postwar socialist order.<sup>14</sup> Still, when the Korean War broke out on 25 June 1950, the Chinese and Soviets unconditionally united alongside the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea out of fear that a Korea united under a Seoul government could be used as a “jumping off point” for US attacks on China.<sup>15</sup> The Soviet-Chinese alliance, however tenuous, began to crack when Stalin died on 5 March 1953 mere months before the armistice between North and South Korea on 27 July.

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<sup>13</sup> Pantsov and Levine, 367-373.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, 371.

<sup>15</sup> Zhou Bangning, “Explaining China’s Intervention in the Korean War in 1950,” *Interstate: Journal of International Affairs*, vol. 2014/2015, no. 1, (2015): 1, <http://www.inquiriesjournal.com/articles/1069/2/explaining-chinas-intervention-in-the-korean-war-in-1950>.

## Chapter 2

### THE FIRST CRACKS: DESTALINIZATION AND THE BEGINNINGS OF THE SINO-SOVIET SPLIT

We must never adopt an arrogant attitude of great-power chauvinism and become conceited because of the victory of our revolution and certain achievements in our construction. Every nation, big or small, has its strong and weak points.

Mao Zedong, "Opening Address at the Eighth National Congress of the Communist Party of China," (15 September 1956), in *Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-Tung* (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1972), 180.

In 1953, despite the loss of Stalin, the socialist bloc still seemed to have every reason to be confident: the world's two largest nations had experienced successful communist revolutions, aided the Western Allies in the defeat of the Axis in both European and Pacific theaters, had built a network of socialist-aligned "people's democracies"<sup>16</sup> in Eastern Europe, and had partially defeated Western forces in Korea. The Soviets had developed their own atomic bomb in 1949, demonstrating to the capitalist world that the socialist world would not find themselves helpless in the event of another global war (and thus setting off the Cold War). In much of their rhetoric, the communist parties of world boasted of how capitalism was in its twilight years and that the inevitable victory of socialism was nigh.

Internally, however, the Eastern Bloc was filled with tension. The Soviets were experiencing an intense power struggle over who would succeed Stalin, which ended with the rise of Nikita Khrushchev, a Politburo member who had received the Hero of the Soviet Union award for his

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<sup>16</sup> The term "people's democracies" has been used within the international communist movement to denote the Eastern European nations that did not experience a socialist revolution within their own borders, but whose communist parties were externally installed by the Soviet Red Army after liberating the Eastern European countries from Nazi occupation. The term denotes that while the "workers and peasants" were now in charge of the government with the help of Moscow, socialist modes of production had yet to take root within their economies and cultures, delaying the transformation of these societies into comprehensive dictatorships of the proletariat.



service as a commissar at the Battle of Stalingrad during the Second World War.<sup>17</sup> On 14 February 1956, Khrushchev presided over his first congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union—and the twentieth since the birth of the Party. The Twentieth Congress was heralded with a stark condemnation of Stalin’s cult of personality, the Great Purges, and authoritarian manner of rule. Khrushchev’s so-called “Secret Speech” initiated the beginning of “Destalinization,” which would dismantle Stalin’s personality cult, including removing his body from the Lenin Mausoleum, tearing down almost every statue of him, and ceasing publications of his works.

In October of the same year, an uprising in Hungary against the Soviet-backed government caused even more confusion and tension. Khrushchev immediately called for Soviet troops to put down the Hungarian Revolution brutally. Chinese officials denounced the Hungarian Revolution but in secret were hesitant about the ramifications of it: publicly Mao said “It [the counter-revolutionary rebellion in Hungary in 1956] was a case of reactionaries inside a socialist country, in league with the imperialists, attempting to achieve their conspiratorial aims by taking advantage of contradictions among the people to foment dissension and stir up disorder. This lesson of the Hungarian events merits attention.”<sup>18</sup> Yet initially, and even afterward, Beijing felt uneasy about the ramifications of the Soviet Union being able to meddle in the affairs and quash the self-determination of their socialist brethren.<sup>19</sup>

In the wake of Khrushchev’s denunciation of Stalinism paired with the crushing of the Hungarian Revolution, Mao stood before the Central Committee of the CCP, saying “I would like to say a few words about the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. I think there are two “swords”: one is Lenin and the other Stalin. The sword of Stalin has now been discarded by the Russians.”<sup>20</sup> The CCP’s concern of

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<sup>17</sup> William Taubman, *Khrushchev: The Man and His Era* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2003), 168.

<sup>18</sup> For the original, Mao Zedong, “On the Correct Handling of Contradictions Among the People” (February 27, 1957), *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung*, (Peking: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1965), 5:15.

<sup>19</sup> Lorenz M. Luthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008) 58–62.

<sup>20</sup> For the original, see Mao Zedong, “Speech at the Second Plenary Session of the Eighth Central Committee of the Communist Party of China” (November 15, 1956), *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung*, (Peking: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1965),

Which East is Red?

the trajectory of the USSR was becoming clearer.

## Chapter 3

### **INAKOMISLYASHCHII (OTHER-THINKERS): ANTI-REVISIONIST COMMUNISTS IN THE SOVIET UNION**

A Communist must never be opinionated or domineering, thinking that he is good in everything while others are good in nothing; he must never shut himself up in his little room, or brag and boast and lord it over others.

Mao Zedong, “Speech at the Assembly of Representatives of the Shensi-Kansu-Ningsia Border Region” (21 November 1941), in *Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-tung* (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1972), 33.

The “Secret Speech” at the Twentieth Congress was not only causing concern in Beijing, however. Significant sections of Soviet people who had grown up revering Stalin as a father figure who saved the nation from the Nazi jackboot became confused. How could it be that someone so revered—if at times frightening—could so suddenly be stripped of all his sanctity? Small gatherings of protest began in Moscow, Leningrad, and Stalingrad, albeit with no major unrest.<sup>21</sup> In one particular case, however, confusion and contempt turned to rage, and in early March 1956 the Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic—Stalin’s birthplace—became a storm-center of pushback by common Soviet citizens against the earliest stages of Destalinization.

The third anniversary of Stalin’s death on 5 March brought out thousands to lay wreaths and flowers at the foot of the statue of Stalin in the main square of Tbilisi, with the knowledge that authorities were planning to tear down the statue shortly. Unrest had already begun the night before, however: according to Soviet Georgian special reports and MVD (Ministry of Interior Affairs) correspondence, a young college student attempted to stab a Soviet Army officer for not setting up an honor guard around the statue of Stalin, where a crowd had gathered that night to commemorate

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<sup>21</sup> Austin Jersild, *The Sino-Soviet Alliance: An International History* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014), 115.

him.<sup>22</sup> The next morning, 50,000 people—primarily Komsomol youth and students—came to Stalin Square to commemorate the death of “the father of the peoples” and 150-200 people laid at the foot of the statue.<sup>23</sup> On 7 March, university and workplace walkouts caused the demonstration to swell to well over 70,000 workers, students, and Party members.<sup>24</sup> That same night, the cities of Gori (Stalin’s birthplace), Sukhumi, and Batumi broke out into unrest.<sup>25</sup> Clearly, the people of Soviet Georgia were not going to allow their revered leader to be put to the dustbin of history without a fight.

The Communist Party leadership in Georgia seemed at a loss. A Stalinist movement of tens of thousands of citizens swirl at their doorstep, yet they dared not defy Moscow.<sup>26</sup> Even more of a strain came as a result of the presence of Chinese PLA delegations led by Marshal Zhu De, who had wished to make a pilgrimage of sorts to Soviet Georgia as an homage to Stalin.<sup>27</sup> While the international implications of the coinciding Sino-Soviet military summit were already enough stress on them, the Georgian Party leaders would later see implications on a local level, and the first significant historical “node” of meeting between China and Soviet citizens in an exchange of anti-revisionist ideology. Yet the worst to come for the republic-level leadership was only two days away.

The 8 March protests had tens of thousands—possibly near 100,000—occupying the square across the day. At one point, the First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Georgian Communist Party Vasilii Mzhavanadze came out to address the crowd and promised to defend Stalin. However, the crowd also demanded that Zhu De address the meeting.<sup>28</sup> According to author and eyewitness Faina Barzova, some even specifically requested Mzhavanadze “support the efforts of Mao to restore the remains and honor of Stalin.”<sup>29</sup> According to scholar Vladimir Kozlov, “at the request of the

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<sup>22</sup> Vladimir A. Kozlov, *Mass Uprisings in the USSR: Protest and Rebellion in the Post-Stalin Years* (London: M.E. Sharpe, 2002), 113.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 113, 129.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 115.

<sup>25</sup> Jersild, 115.

<sup>26</sup> Kozlov, 114-116.

<sup>27</sup> Jersild, 115.

<sup>28</sup> Kozlov, 117.

<sup>29</sup> Jersild, 115.

republican[-level] leaders, Zhu De greeted<sup>30</sup> the demonstrators twice, but the crowd still did not disperse... Five students, according to the information of the Georgian MVD, met face-to-face with Zhu De, but failed to convince him to visit the Stalin monument in Tbilisi. *Someone from the Chinese delegation, however, did speak at a meeting there [emphasis added].*<sup>31</sup>

After the Chinese delegate had spoken, clashes began between demonstrators and local militia as they shouted pro-Stalin slogans and hung banners of Lenin and Stalin across the center of the city.<sup>32</sup> Signs of the protests being peaceful ebbed slowly away into the night, as the clashes escalated in ferocity. Finally, the breaking point was reached the next day: workers and students gathered together and violently stormed the Ministry of Communications building. Realizing a full-on revolt was on their hands, the Soviet Army's district of defense for the Caucasus region, the Transcaucasus Military District, was called into Tbilisi.<sup>33</sup>

The arrival of the Army brought with it immediate tragedy. With the riots now an organized rebellion, tanks appeared around the Stalin monument and opened fire on the crowds, causing the deaths of numerous Georgian protesters. While still unclear as to who fired the first shot—the protesters were now armed with pistols and rifles—the Army's reaction to the riots was disproportionate at the beginning. The 9 March Massacre—as it came to be known in Georgian history—ended with somewhere between 100 and 800 (according to later Russian sources) dead.<sup>34</sup>

The final day of demonstrations on 10 March saw the demonstrators greatly dispersed and ragged: sporadic riots were attempted in Tbilisi and Gori but instantly quashed by the Soviet Army. By dawn, the largest Stalinist—if not largest generally antigovernment—uprising of the Khrushchev years had been completely crushed. Workers, students, and rank-and-file Party members retreated to their regular lives, and while the riots had made national press,<sup>35</sup> within days life returned to normal in

<sup>30</sup> But did not give a speech.

<sup>31</sup> Kozlov, 118.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 117.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 124-125.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 126-127. The veracity of claims of casualties ranging in the higher hundreds are unclear.

<sup>35</sup> "We Shall Not Allow Criticism of Stalin: The Incidents in Georgia, March 1956," *Revolutionary Democracy* 5, no. 2 (September 1999), <http://www.revolutionaryde->

Soviet Georgia.

An important point should be made about the motivations of the March rioters in terms of ideology: not all the demonstrators were Stalinists, much less Maoist. Many Georgians simply opposed Khrushchev as an incompetent leader who ignored the needs of non-Russian Soviet citizens. For some, it was a sheer matter of Georgian nationalism: while very few were explicitly anticommunist, some protesters began to call for the Georgian SSR to leave the USSR.<sup>36</sup> This eclecticism, the motley of motivations for opposing the new Soviet order, was to characterize other manifestations of organized anti-revisionism across the 1950s through the 1970s.

While some of the demonstrators had reached out to China, the Chinese said nothing in regards to the uprisings. Even Zhu De, who had saluted the crowd and had one of his delegates speak at one of the rallies, was completely silent on the matter. From a geopolitical viewpoint, this is honestly unsurprising. Mostly likely, it could be wagered, a major pro-Chinese uprising against the Soviet establishment by the Soviet peoples was *not* on the table for Beijing at this particular point. After all, the Sino-Soviet Split had only begun: indeed, both countries were still in the stage of the Split where they hoped that a full schism could be prevented.

While the rest of the Khrushchev era had its share of further (though far less extensive or violent) unrest, and Khrushchev grew increasingly unpopular among the Communist Party leadership, the center still held and the Soviet Union looked outward to create a new global position in a post-Stalin order. The Cold War was in full swing and the socialist bloc was already showing cracks on its periphery, something Moscow certainly could not afford.

The Soviet invasion of Hungary, the same year as the Tbilisi riots, was causing enough concern across the world, even within the socialist bloc. However, as said before, the Soviets had a far more expansive plan for global hegemony, and would continue enacting foreign policy that made the Chinese and Albanians more and more uneasy. Khrushchev now reached out to the Third World and was ready to bring newly independent nations or anticolonial movements into the Soviet orbit. The Soviet Union broke with the traditional Leninist notion of the inevitability of

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[mocracy.org/rdv5n2/georgia.htm](http://mocracy.org/rdv5n2/georgia.htm).

<sup>36</sup> Kozlov, 134-135.

war between socialism and capitalism in its new policy of “peaceful coexistence.” Instead of fomenting communist revolution in the newly independent countries, Moscow pushed a policy of pouring large amounts of economic aid and advisement into them in order to curry the favor of these countries’ governments and convince them of the superiority of a socialist-based economy and the advantages of staying within the Soviet camp. Moscow also used “peace,” rather than militant struggle, as a major propaganda tool to gain international prestige in the face of the “warmongering” Western imperialist powers.<sup>37</sup>

It seems there was a sense of puzzlement among some Soviet citizens over this and the widening split between the Soviet Union and China. Local branches of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union recorded citizens and local officials asking questions such as “Are we not in fact compromising with imperialism over West Berlin?” and “Why did the USSR stop giving aid to China when we still give aid to bourgeois countries such as India, Syria, Iraq, and the UAR?”<sup>38</sup> This is striking, as the wording and position of these questions denotes them as asked by persons who were genuinely Marxist-Leninist, expressing their concern about the CPSU’s divergence with the militant anti-imperialism of Lenin. These were exactly the kind of people who might deviate from the Party line and embrace anti-revisionist dissidence.

Khrushchev found himself ousted in October 1964, and the Party leadership was transferred to Leonid Brezhnev as General-Secretary and to Alexei Kosygin as Premier (positions that Khrushchev had held simultaneously during his administration). By this time, the Sino-Soviet Split had become irreconcilable as the Chinese had declared the USSR “revisionist,” “state-capitalist,” and “social-imperialist” (socialist in form, capitalist-imperialist in essence). It was just as much an enemy to world communist revolution, the Chinese argued, as the US and Western Europe.<sup>39</sup> Coinciding with this were the dual ideas of “Actually Existing Socialism” and the “Brezhnev Doctrine”—the former meaning that all true socialism must fit

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<sup>37</sup> Jeremy Friedman, *Shadow Cold War: The Sino-Soviet Competition for the Third World*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015), 37-39.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 103.

<sup>39</sup> *The Polemic on the General Line of the International Communist Movement* (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1965), 418-467.

the Moscow model economically and politically, while the Brezhnev Doctrine set a precedent where the Soviet Army could intervene in any Warsaw Pact countries began to deviate from “Actually Existing Socialism.” The first manifestation of the Brezhnev Doctrine came three years after the new General-Secretary assumed power, with the swift and brutal invasion of Czechoslovakia in retaliation to the 1968 “Prague Spring.” The Chinese and Albanians were quick to condemn the invasion, citing it as evidence of the USSR’s true nature as an imperialist aggressor which pro-Beijing parties echoed across the world.<sup>40</sup> In contrast, the majority of Soviet citizenry (and pro-Moscow communist parties) passively supported or kept silent about the Brezhnev Doctrine, except for a small incident in Red Square on 25 August 1968, where seven demonstrators were arrested for vocally opposing the invasion of Czechoslovakia.<sup>41</sup>

Does this mean the vast majority of Soviet citizens subscribed to the general line of the CPSU? Surely not: treating any population in a heavily controlled society as either fully complicit or fully secretly dissident is irrational. The USSR was a country of over a hundred different nationalities with generations that had grown up with distinct experiences. The postwar, post-Destalinization generation of the 1960s-1970s own distinct experience was one where a nation had reconstructed itself and reconstituted itself but was slowly becoming static and stagnant: a mixture that could potentially galvanize *and* cause discontent among a generation. In order to understand how this developed, a look at the social and economic changes the Soviet Union went through across the 1960s must be examined.

In the compilation *Soviet Youth Culture*, Tanya Frisby states that by the end of the Khrushchev period “[m]ost young people were eager to move further along the road of political liberalization.... By and large, young people were idealistic; they tended to expect more from the leadership because, at the same time, they still firmly believed in socialism... Political development after the fall of Khrushchev, therefore, must be seen in terms of the destruction and disillusionment of youthful idealism. In so

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<sup>40</sup> “Brutal Aggression by Soviet Revisionist Renegade Clique Against Czechoslovakia Resolutely Condemned,” *Peking Review*, 11, no. 35, (August 30, 1968): 9-12.

<sup>41</sup> Vladimir Kara-Murza, “Remembering Seven Dissidents and Soviet Brutality,” *World Affairs*, August 23, 2013, <http://www.worldaffairsjournal.org/blog/vladimir-kara-murza/remembering-seven-dissidents-and-soviet-brutality>



far as previous political and social experience of the Khrushchev Thaw had shown young people the possibility of attaining genuine political and social awareness, many young people joined dissident groups at the end of the 1960s, when the political situation under Brezhnev deteriorated.”<sup>42</sup>

“Dissidence” and “rebellion” are a sliding scale, of course. For most Soviet youth, enthusiastic adherence to the Party and Komsomol line was not particularly common, but neither was fierce opposition to the entire system itself. Granted, in 1965 over twenty million youth—some 65% of the population between 18 and 29—were members of the Komsomol;<sup>43</sup> indeed, membership was almost an absolute prerequisite for admission into university. It was also a major place for youth to meet and socialize, and was viewed as “a place to learn diligence, discipline, and selflessness.”<sup>44</sup>

Nevertheless, Soviet youth tended to regard the Komsomol leadership and the more enthusiastic Komsomol activists with relative suspicion. Many criticized the Komsomol leadership “*from a socialist viewpoint*” [emphasis added] as “insincere moralizers and cynical careerists.”<sup>45</sup> In Soviet culture a social framework developed known as *svoi*, literally meaning “us” or “ours”: *svoi* was an idea of socialization in which youth did not actively dissent or even personally oppose the regime behind closed doors, but simply felt no compulsion to become serious activists in the Komsomol or aspire to become Party members on the basis that they knew that the “script” (i.e. the ideological paradigm) that the nation’s leadership had imposed on all aspects of society was overall meaningless and open to interpretation by leaders and citizens alike.<sup>46</sup> As long as you stuck to “the script” and took part in the rituals of Soviet society (joining the Young Pioneers as a child, attending the May Day or October Revolution anniversary parades, etc.), passive dissent was allowed or at the very least ignored.<sup>47</sup> This is an interesting contrast to the sincere enthusiasm for par-

<sup>42</sup> Tanya Frishey, “Soviet Youth Culture,” in James Riordan, ed., *Soviet Youth Culture*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989), 3-4.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>44</sup> Riordan, 38.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 93.

<sup>46</sup> Alexei Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More: The Last Soviet Generation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 108.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 93.

ticipation in revolutionary activism of their peers in China, who as Red Guards were willing to do anything and spend every waking hour to keep their nation on the socialist road.

1965 was a watershed year for the Soviet Union: while the Chinese were still a year away from the Cultural Revolution, Premier Kosygin oversaw a complete overhaul of the Gosplan (State Planning Committee) and a drastic change in the direction of the Soviet economy. While Khrushchev had already partially liberalized thought and expression among economists and some regional decentralization had been enacted,<sup>48</sup> the “Kosygin Reforms” of September 1965 went a step further and began to enact decentralization across the entire Union.

In her monograph *Economic Reforms in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe Since the 1960s*, Canadian economist Jan Adam described succinctly the new Soviet economy (as well as the general model for the economies of the rest of the Soviet Bloc):

At first experimentation in profit was confined to a few targets—particularly garment enterprises and light industries, but by 1968, 72% of Soviet enterprises were fixed to profit to one extent or another. While enterprises were still not free to determine *what* they would produce and *where* they would buy and sell, the 1965 reforms enlarged the autonomy of these enterprises by giving leeway to managers within enterprises in terms of decision-making about planning, incentives, employment, profit, and investment. At more points than not, the Soviet planners put ideology entirely aside when agreeing to link the calculation of profitability to invested capital.<sup>49</sup>

Adam points out that according to a guideline formula, the profit margin was related to capital employed (fixed and working). The so-called price of production was applied to whole branches or groups of products. Profit was divided between individual products according to cost of production. State regulations on investment were relaxed, and Party functionaries heading different enterprises were encouraged to engage in decentralized personal investment in their own ventures. Profit, for all intents and

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<sup>48</sup> Abraham Katz, *The Politics of Reform in the Soviet Union* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1972), 53-58.

<sup>49</sup> Jan Adam, *Economic Reforms in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe Since the 1960s*. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989), 41-42.

purposes, had taken control of the economy rather than concentrating on achieving world revolution and classless society.<sup>50</sup>

However, as late as 1969 a “conservative” (as deemed by Kosygin) trend within the Party still existed. The conservative wing, although small, issued the occasional attack against “right-wing opportunist theoreticians” who advocated “market socialism” to press forward. Profit as the main regulator of the economy was routinely denounced by these “conservatives,” saying that such a planning model inherently stood against the very essence of socialist economics.<sup>51</sup> These denunciations are quite interesting, as they seem to echo most of the Chinese criticisms of the Soviet economy. Yet these voices never seriously dissented or broke off from the establishment, instead allowing themselves to be reabsorbed into the fold of the Party as the Era of Stagnation witnessed an economic freeze that would last until the mid-1980s.

The staff at the Chinese embassy in Moscow mounted their own criticism of—and resistance to—the CPSU’s line. In October 1966, the CCP’s Central Committee proclaimed that the dissemination of Mao Zedong Thought was the principal task of all Chinese embassy staff in every country.<sup>52</sup> Their embassies in the Eastern Bloc were no exception. In Maoist theory, these embassies might be considered base areas of the world revolution, much like the CCP guerrilla base areas of the Chinese Civil War. Despite being thousands of miles behind enemy lines, embassy staff were “rebels,” obligated to continue the Cultural Revolution against revisionism within Soviet borders.

These orders would be enacted most notably three months later, on 25 January 1967. Ma Jisen—a former Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs worker—wrote in her work *The Cultural Revolution in the Foreign Ministry of China* the story of sixty-five Chinese embassy staff and students who marched on Red Square, carrying a large wreath toward Lenin’s tomb. They joined the long queue of people who came each day to see Lenin’s body, and once arriving at the feet of Lenin’s embalmed body, stood in silence. When a guard asked for them to move along, they opened

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 46-49.

<sup>51</sup> Katz, 182.

<sup>52</sup> Ma Jisen, *The Cultural Revolution in the Foreign Ministry of China* (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 2004), 152.

their Little Red Books and began shouting quotes about the inevitable triumph of socialism and the friendship of Lenin and Stalin toward the Chinese people. When ejected from the mausoleum, the students and staff ran back out into the Square and started singing “The Internationale,” the police rushed onto them. Chanting “Down with Soviet revisionism!”, “Long Live Leninism!” and “Be resolute, fear no sacrifice to win victory!” The Chinese and Russians clashed while Muscovites looked on in horror. Every student and staff member was assaulted by police with no exception, and the students were all sent back home by train. In Beijing, they were greeted back home with great fanfare and a million-person march on the Soviet embassy in Beijing. In Moscow, no further significant trouble was elicited from the Chinese embassy there.<sup>53</sup>

One of the most notable post-Tbilisi attempts at starting an anti-revisionist Marxist-Leninist party by Soviet citizens themselves occurred in 1964, in the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic. Based out of the Kharkov region in the small industrial city of Balakleya, local organizers called themselves the “Workers ‘and Peasants’ Revolutionary Party of Communists” (WPRPC). Founded by the brothers Adolf and Vladimir Romanenko, Vladimir was a 35 year-old electrician who worked in Kharkhov, but then went on to study journalism at Leningrad State University. Adolf was a labor union activist and a journalist for the local union newspaper *Hammer & Sickle*. While in Leningrad in 1963, Vladimir met with Chinese students studying at his university, from whom he received Maoist literature. After studying works given to him by his foreign classmates, Vladimir brought the literature home and Adolf began to study them as well.<sup>54</sup>

In October 1961, the brothers wrote a letter to the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party denouncing the Twenty-Second Congress of the CPSU. In a later report to authorities by Vladimir, the brothers had “fallen under the spell of Chinese propaganda” and believed that the CPSU was now a “party of the petty-bourgeoisie” that did not

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 168-172.

<sup>54</sup> V.A. Kozlov and S.V. Mironenko, eds. *Kramola: Inakomiclie v SSSR pri Khrushcheve i Brezhneve 1953-1982* [Sedition: Other-thought in the USSR Under Khrushchev & Brezhnev] (Moscow: Mainland, 2005), transcription available at <http://www.universalinternetlibrary.ru/book/24151/ogl.shtml> and <http://library.sakharov-center.ru/>.

represent the interests of the Soviet working people. In September 1964, the brothers created the WPRPC, issuing a manifesto saying:

The gap between the earnings of the average worker and leading specialists and party bureaucrats continues to grow with each passing day... even the bodies of the so-called party-state control are stealing the surplus product [i.e. extracting profit from the labor of the workers] from its manufacturer...

...The working class dictatorship has outlived its usefulness: it is necessary not to the working class, not to the peasant class... those who have even mentioned the dictatorship of the working class causes a toothache, [they who] rob the surplus product in the framework of the “whole people” [referring to Khrushchev’s declaration of the Soviet Union having become a “dictatorship of the whole people” and not a “dictatorship of the proletariat”] in a semi-bourgeois state, and when the ruling party does not fight it, and promotes it legally, then such party is petty-bourgeois...

However, within months the brothers were arrested by the KGB and what little there was of their party (no evidence can be found that the “party” stretched beyond the two brothers) was broken apart. Still, Adolf continued to speak his mind and defended the Cultural Revolution. He later said: “I draw the conclusion that fraternity and equality is out of the question in the present setup and believe that the CPSU can’t be an expression of the people’s will... I believe that the interests of the working people and the leadership are diametrically opposed to each other and from this, I believe, that there is no unity of Party and the People.”

The brothers faced a long prison sentence, but were let off the hook by sheer luck of timing. The day after their arrest, the CPSU held its Extraordinary Plenum on 14 October 1964, which toppled Khrushchev and replaced him with Leonid Brezhnev as General-Secretary of the CPSU and Alexei Kosygin as Premier. Brezhnev, upon assuming power, hoped that he would be able to reverse the Sino-Soviet Split. A decision was made by the local KGB department in Kharkhov to release the Romanenkos in order to aid Brezhnev in easing tensions with a Chinese delegation which

was present. However, the Romanenko brothers remained under close KGB surveillance for the rest of their lives, making it impossible for them to ever reestablish their short-lived party or engage in dissident activity ever again.<sup>55</sup>

In 1966, a communique from Albania, China's stalwart European ally, was published which proclaimed the existence of an underground organization known as the Soviet Revolutionary Communists (Bolshevik), or SRC(B). The SRC(B)'s seventy-nine-page "Programmatic Proclamation" and rousingy condemned the Khrushchev and Brezhnev cliques for their slander of Stalin, their doctrines of peaceful coexistence and détente, and the lavish lifestyles of the Party leadership, while hailing Albania and China as the only remaining bastions of socialism. The mysterious manifesto proclaimed to have already been distributed among CPSU cadres who were ready to already be on a mission to build a new "Communist Party (Bolshevik) of the Soviet Union" to overthrow the Soviet government and institute a new anti-revisionist direction.<sup>56</sup> This may not have been the first declaration of a new Marxist party in the Soviet Union, but it certainly was the first to garner international attention among the pro-Beijing parties of the world. Nevertheless, while the document was widely circulated within international leftist publications and received official support from both the Party of Labour of Albania and the Chinese Communist Party, nothing else seems to have come of the SRC(B), which may have been nothing more than a paper organization confined to Albanian borders.

Recent archival work done within the Supreme Court and Prosecutor's Office of the USSR has revealed a vast swathe of people brought to court for pro-Stalin sentiment and even some Maoist sentiments (the latter particularly students, journalists, and writers).<sup>57</sup> A collection recently published and edited by Vladimir Kozlov and Sergei Mironenko—*Sedition: Other Thought in the USSR Under Khrushchev & Brezhnev* (now available via multiple online Russian resources)—is a veritable treasure-trove of these cases from the Romanenko brothers in Ukraine to student militants in Siberia.

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<sup>55</sup> "Istoriya: Bratya Romanenko," [History: the Romanenko Brothers], Sait Goroda Balakleya [Official Website of the City of Balakleya]. [http://bal.at.ua/index/bratja\\_romanenko/0-33](http://bal.at.ua/index/bratja_romanenko/0-33).

<sup>56</sup> *Programmatic Proclamation of the Soviet Revolutionary Communists (Bolsheviks)* (Tirana: Foreign Languages Press, 1966), 75-79.

<sup>57</sup> Kozlov and Mironenko, *Kramola* [Sedition].

At one point the writers of the compilation go on to list a number of small groups who attempted to build new parties or currents within the CPSU but were broken up by authorities: “Union of Struggle for Justice,” “Organization of Mass Struggle for Justice,” “Party of the Struggle for the Reality of Lenin’s Ideas,” “Socialist Party of the Soviet Union,” “Union of Struggle for Workers’ Liberation,” “Workers’ and Peasants’ Underground Party,” “Russian Labor Party,” “Union of Honest Workers,” and “People’s Party.” The text goes on to say that the name of these organizations show “that their members acted under the banner of the struggle for the right of socialism” and that “the vast majority of workers’ organizations did not intend to overthrow the Soviet regime. Documents from these groups deem their main enemies as “bureaucrats,” “the Soviet bourgeoisie,” and “the Communist-capitalists.”<sup>58</sup>

One particularly common way of showing opposition to the CPSU’s line and advocacy of a return to pre-Khrushchev socialism was spoiling one’s ballot. *Sedition* gives us multiple examples of spoiled ballots and pamphlets thrown into ballot boxes: one ballot from March 1957 local soviet elections in Ulyanovsk proclaimed that Khrushchev had climbed to power by “murdering Beria” and “slandering Comrade Stalin,” and was wrong to crush the Hungarian Revolution. In the 1958 Supreme Soviet elections, polling places and train stations in Vologda were covered with posters denouncing Khrushchev as having destroyed the contributions of Stalin, Malenkov, Molotov, and other hardliners, and that the CPSU had become traitors to “all peoples of the world.” More continue to harp upon and denounce the “Soviet bourgeoisie”: something possibly lifted from Chinese rhetoric.

In 1999, the International Democracy Fund in Moscow published another compilation of anti-Soviet sedition cases, also edited by Kozlov and Mironenko. It revealed cases of specifically Maoist sentiment among some Soviet citizens. As early as 8 October 1962, a “D. Elefteriu,” a former member of the Communist Party of Greece now in exile in the USSR, was arrested for distributing a leaflet around Tashkent, Soviet Tajikistan, proclaiming that Albania and China had now become the only guardians of socialism.<sup>59</sup> On 12 August 1966, a Russian technician student in Moscow

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, “Documentation.”

<sup>59</sup> Vladimir Kozlov and Sergei Mironenko, eds. *Nadzornie Proizvodstva SSSR Po-De-*

was accused of attempting to defect to China after distributing “slanderous manuscripts” against the CPSU. In Komsomolsk-on-Amur, three Komsomol members were arrested for pasting posters around the city saying “Mao Zedong is the Reddest Red Sun in Our Hearts! Proletarian communists, fight the gang of modern revisionists, the anticommunist successors of Khrushchev!”<sup>60</sup>

On 12 Jan, 1967, Guo Dan-Ching, an international student studying economics at the USSR Academy of Sciences, recruited a handful of Russian graduate students to found a Maoist organization called the “Revolutionary Socialist Party of the Soviet Union.” They issued a programme called “The Manifesto of Socialism,” but were arrested after being caught distributing Little Red Books and other Maoist literature from the Chinese embassy. Guo was deported back home, but the case against the native Russian students was surprisingly dismissed.<sup>61</sup> Maoism struck Moscow twice the next year where in January 1968 a history student at Moscow State University put up seven large posters denouncing the CPSU and was arrested after having purportedly written a letter to Mao declaring his intent to defect to China. In September of that same year, two Moscow construction workers formed a group called the “Union of Struggle Against Revisionism” and were arrested when seen distributing Chinese Communist Party literature to their fellow Muscovites.<sup>62</sup>

The amount of data discovered by Kozlov and colleagues is startling. Among the numerous examples of pro-Stalin and/or pro-Beijing leaflets, spoiled ballots, and letters published are data from archival sources showing that 4,000-5,000 court proceedings concerning “anti-Soviet propaganda” occurred between 1953 and 1986.<sup>63</sup> If it is true that the “vast majority of workers’ organizations [who wrote this literature] did not intend to overthrow the Soviet regime,” then can we deduce that, while fragmented, spontaneous, and scattered, there was a major current within

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*lam Ob Antisovietskoi agitatsii i propagandi.* [Review of Proceedings of the USSR Prosecutor’s Office in Cases of Anti-Soviet Agitation and Propaganda, Annotated Catalog 1953-1991] (Moscow: Mezhdunarodni Fond «Demokratiya» [International Democracy Fund], 1999), 672-673.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 678.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 679.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 685, 690.

<sup>63</sup> Kazolov and Mironenko, *Kramola*.



Soviet society that could be considered anti-revisionist (or at least hardline leftist) dissent? If we are to believe what the court records of the USSR say, it seems quite so.

Records of leftist sedition were already being published in English during the late Soviet period. Prominent historian, liberal-democratic dissident, and cofounder of the Moscow Helsinki Watch Group (a think-tank whose mission was to monitor human rights violations in the USSR) Ludmila Alexyeva writes in her monograph *Soviet Dissent: Contemporary Movements for National, Religious, and Human Rights* about even more “anti-revisionist” and “Marxist-Leninist” micro-sects popping up and down across the 1960s into the early 1980s. In her book she notes that “among the organized socialists were underground and semi-underground groups and organizations which consisted almost exclusively of young people. In most cases each such group was closed in upon itself; only a few had contacts with two or three more groups, and even these contacts did not go beyond joint meetings. These youths of the new postwar generation were sincere Marxists, socialists, and patriots. They did not want to subvert the existing order. Rather, they wanted to better it by a return to ‘true Leninist socialism’...”<sup>64</sup>

In one instance, Alexyeva describes a group of graduates who came from the Technological Institute of Leningrad. Originally a Komsomol anti-crime patrol brigade, they wrote a programme titled “From the Dictatorship of the Bureaucracy to the Dictatorship of the Proletariat,” written primarily by 2 members Valery Ronkin and Sergei Khakhayev in 1962. In 1965 they began to publish a journal called *Kolokol* (The Bell). However, by their third issue, the group was arrested. That same year, a group of students and teachers in Gorky wrote a text called “Socialism and the State” which also landed them in jail.<sup>65</sup> On the day of the anniversary of the October Revolution in November 1969, three young Latvian workers Gunar Berzins, Laimonis Markants, and Valery Akk were arrested for distributing 8,000 leaflets in three regions, criticizing the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia and the Soviet attitude toward China.<sup>66</sup>

<sup>64</sup> Lyudimila Alexeyeva, *Soviet Dissent: Contemporary Movements for National, Religious, and Human Rights* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1985), 421.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 421-422.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 98.

In the 1970s a group called the “True Communist Party” arose in Sorotov, and the “Party for the Struggle of the Realization of Leninist Ideas” was broken up in Voroshilovgrad. A “Union for Struggle for the Rebirth of Leninism” was founded in 1963 by military officers in the Far East. Its founder, war hero Gen. Pyotr Grigorenko, wrote leaflets calling for a renewal of “true Leninist socialism” and had his officers hand them out at the Moscow “Hammer & Sickle” factory.<sup>48</sup>

On 24 February 1976, opening day of Twenty-Fifth Party Congress, four youths threw 100 leaflets from the gallery of the Gostinny Dvor department store on Nevsky Prospect in Leningrad, crying “Long Live the New Revolution! Long Live Communism!” The four students, led by graduate student Arkady Tsurkov, were arrested and expelled from the Komosomol and their schools. In April of the same year a group of Tsurkov’s classmates and comrades called the “Leningrad School” announced a platform directed toward achieving “true” communism. They referred to the Soviet system as “monopoly capitalism” (echoing the Maoists). They demanded “the removal from power of state bureaucrats” after a class struggle by the workers. Later that year they formed a commune outside Leningrad; by the spring 1978 the group now had begun to call itself the “Left Opposition” and began publishing the journal *Prospekti* (“Prospects”). Fellow thinkers from Moscow, Gorky, and other cities planned to join them upon reading the journal but 40 of them were arrested on their way. A few months later, the entire commune was arrested, with Tsurkov serving five years in prison and two years in exile.<sup>67</sup>

It is important to note that in the text Alexeyeva, as pro-Western as she is, writes clearly that “those who wished to subvert the Soviet *system* were *rare* among dissidents, actually an isolated few.” This is an interesting proclamation. Although written three decades ago, it is worth revisiting in order to gain a new view of the “other-thinker” terrain.<sup>68</sup>

The final tale of a notable attempt within the Soviet Union to build an anti-revisionist Marxist-Leninist movement documented in either Russian or English is the story of the Workers’ Centre led by workers Grigori Isaev and Alexei Razlatsky. Razlatsky was an oil engineer living in Samara who had been brought up in an intellectual family and had already

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 423.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 423.

published some works of poetry. Across the 1970s, Razlatsky—well-read in Marxist “classics”—began to grow unhappy with the establishment, particularly after having been rejected from joining the Party.<sup>69</sup> Soon after meeting Isaev—a technician and engineer at the factory where he was working—the two began churning out revolutionary pamphlets and circulating them among coworkers. Soon, according to Razlatsky’s son, the two had gained a following of 30-50 followers and began to hold meetings outside the workplace; eventually they had comrades in other workplaces in the city.<sup>70</sup>

Finally, their work culminated in a coherent programme. Naming themselves the Workers Centre, they launched a successful strike at the Maslennikov Factory in which they won several demands concerning working conditions. Eventually the group was able to launch around ten minor strikes and organize multiple factory committees.<sup>71</sup> While the state enterprises did end up giving in to the less political demands of the strikes, the Workers’ Centre had garnered the attention—and the ire—of the local authorities.

A few years after their successful strikes, the Workers’ Centre put out a “Second Communist Manifesto” in 1979. In their manifesto, the organization stated that capitalism had been restored in the Soviet Union and that it was up to the workers to create a new vanguard party to be called “Party of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat.”<sup>72</sup> Razlatsky and Isaev used the document to state their own case for Mao, saying “The ‘Cultural Revolution’ is a direct appeal to punish... formative bureaucracy, an attempt by crude facts to demonstrate to the masses that it is they who are the masters of the situation in the country, that in their collective actions they are all-powerful.... The death of Mao Zedong for China has meant, like the death of Stalin for the Soviet Union, the end of the period of the dic-

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 416.

<sup>70</sup> Evgeniy Karsakov, "The Razlatsky-Isaev Case: Pro-Marxist Opposition in the Soviet Provinces Part I." *The Stanford Post-Soviet Post*. March 14, 2013. <http://postsovietpost.stanford.edu/history/razlatsky-isaev-case-pro-marxist-opposition-soviet-provinces>.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Mikhail Kruglov, “Samii Proletarskii iz Diktatorov” [The Most Proletarian of Dictatorships], Party of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat Official Website, <http://www.proletarism.proletarism.ru/biogis.shtml>

tatorship of the proletariat.”<sup>73</sup>

Although their organization’s activities had declined since their first year of existence, Razlatsky and Isaev continued to produce more and more literature. Finally, in December 1981—the same month as labor unrest began in Poland—the authorities had had enough. The KGB arrested the two men and dispersed their Party.<sup>74</sup> Razlatsky’s son writes that his father “was sentenced to 7 years of prison plus 5 years of exile, and Isaev to 6 + 5 (one year fewer since he had two children at home). One more of Razlatsky’s companions, Koparov, was sentenced to prison. The others mostly just showed remorse, but those who were members of the Communist Party were expelled, and those who held administrative positions were fired.”<sup>75</sup> A small, recently formed leftist organization that refers to itself as the “Party of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat” (PDP) currently exists in Russia; although they take inspiration from Razlatsky’s works, they do not label themselves anti-revisionist, Stalinist, or Maoist.<sup>76</sup> Yet with the dispersion of the PDP at the end of 1981, all signs of attempts to build an anti-revisionist line within in the USSR vanish.

What are we to make of this? Two questions must be asked in order to sum up—or launch a larger conversation about—the “anti-revisionist” (Maoist and Neo-Stalinist) experience in the USSR.

First: what do we take from seeing these tiny sects—usually with memberships only in the dozens at most—popping up and down across the USSR? If it is true what Kozlov and Lyudmilla say in that the majority of Soviet citizens who dissented from the Party line were doing so out of conviction to socialism and not aspiring to attain liberal-democratic capitalism, then how do we re-categorize the various trends of sedition or dissent within the USSR? A broader interpretation of how the Soviets viewed ideologically misaligned thought must be injected into Western

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<sup>73</sup> Alexei B. Razlatsky, “The Second Communist Manifesto.” Chebarkl Literary Portal. <https://www.proza.ru/2008/10/24/244>.

<sup>74</sup> Mikhail Kruglov, “Arest, poluchaetsya, ne stal vnezapnostu?” [Arrest, did it not come quickly?]

<sup>75</sup> Evgeniy Karaskov, “The Razlatsky-Isaev Case: Pro-Marxist Opposition in the Soviet Provinces Part II.” *The Stanford Post-Soviet Post*, April 17, 2013, <http://postsovietpost.stanford.edu/node/197>.

<sup>76</sup> The Party of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat Official Website. December 12, 2014. <http://www.proletarism.ru/>.

discourse. While anyone who would not be described as a “true” Marxist-Leninist in mainstream Soviet press was seen as being a danger to social order and needed to be suppressed, these persons might not have necessarily been labeled as an agent of foreign-fomented sedition. Anti-Soviet, yes, but not necessarily anticommunist. Either way, it is telling that most of those arrested and convicted for membership in these organizations or who attempted to promote an anti-revisionist line were given prison sentences of only a few years, a fine, or simple expulsion from the Party or Komsomol (this contrasts to pro-Western dissidents, who were given long or even life sentences in the gulags) is telling about how the Soviet state viewed these anti-CPSU Marxist-Leninists. It seems that the category of *dissyidenti*—which had more traitorous connotations—is but one part of the broader concept of *inakomyshlyashchii* (the other-thinkers).

Second: why did Soviet anti-revisionism fail? Why was the most powerful and populous of the Warsaw Pact countries one of the countries where anti-revisionism manifested the least in Eastern Europe? Despite a thorough investigation, it seems that anti-revisionism of either a Maoist or Neo-Stalinist type was a series of micro-movements that regularly sprung up, but were perpetually confined to isolated individuals, tiny “parties,” or to the actions of Chinese government officials living or working in the Soviet Union, with the Tbilisi Uprising and the Workers Centre strikers being the only exceptions of note. With all things considered, anti-revisionism is a flash in the pan in Soviet history, with only a few sparks of specific Maoism within it.

Permit me to posit a few of my own hypotheses of what contributed to the stifling of Maoism in the USSR. For starters, chipping away at the hegemony of the CPSU would have been exceedingly difficult: the ideological landscape of the USSR was so monolithic that to perceive anything as being “left in form, right in essence” (as Mao would say) would be conceptually borderline impossible. There was nothing in the Soviet concept of the development of communism that could be comparable to Mao’s more “anarchic” concept of ideological struggle (i.e. the Cultural Revolution), with struggle being cemented as a police matter or as a matter of the top levels marginalizing of those at the lower levels who may have different ideas on the direction the CPSU was to go. All other strains of leftist thought were perceived as either not having reached the

sophistication of Soviet Marxist-Leninism or deviated from the “correct” path towards inevitable counter-revolutionary hijacking and had become a threat to the project of socialism overtaking capitalism globally (as in the case of Maoism).

It is also important to notice that, compared to later chapters of this thesis, Chinese embassy dissemination of Maoist literature to the common Soviet citizen is significantly lower than efforts by the Chinese embassies in other Warsaw Pact countries such as East Germany or Hungary. Perhaps the Chinese didn’t want to risk funding a full-blown revolt against the Soviet government because of the military pressure the Soviets had on them, instead preferring to chip away at the edges of its empire? The Chinese had already clashed with the Soviets enough both within China and in PLA-Soviet Army border skirmishes: being accused of fomenting dissent within Soviet borders might only escalate already-seething hostilities. In the end, Soviet Maoists may have been “left hanging” because of sheer realpolitik on the part of the Chinese Communist Party.

One must also take into account that Soviet society was a vast surveillance state. The KGB, Party, and Komsomol maintained firm social and judicial control in the USSR up until the coming of Gorbachev’s glasnost and perestroika, and Brezhnev had taken steps to reverse much of the Khrushchev Thaw’s social openness. Phones were easily tapped, the post routinely searched and censored, and every workplace and institution of learning had KGB agents posted to them. All forms of press were state-owned and only through some *samizdat* (self-published) publications and periodicals do we see any amount of independent written word. The vast amount of state oversight over—and surveillance within—the Komsomol also made it nearly impossible for youth to organize clandestine dissent that could operate for any significant length of time.

Adding to this was the fact that this police state stretched over 8.6-million square miles of forest, mountains, desert, steppe, and tundra. In an age before the internet and with no discreet forms of communication in order to network with one another, any attempt at building an *all-Union* Marxist-Leninist party across such vast swathes of land would be easily doomed to fail. In the end, Maoism (and broader anti-revisionism) in the Soviet Union was not a storm, but a mere sporadic cloudburst.

Yet the historiography is there. Kozlov’s scholarship in his account of

the Tbilisi Uprising as well as his research from the archives of the Supreme Court and Prosecutor's Office of the USSR show waiting a story to be told. Alexeyeva's earlier work as a liberal-democratic dissident chronicling Soviet ideological repression revealed that hardline leftist opposition to the CPSU existed, and a few modern-day Russian leftists are attempting to keep alive the memory of these forgotten revolutionary organizations. English language historians must get to work translating already-existing works published in Russian, aiding their Russian peers in opening up old archives, and constructing a new history of sedition in the USSR.

## Chapter 4

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### COMRADES-IN-ARMS: CHINA AND ALBANIA

The socialist countries are states of an entirely new type in which the exploiting classes have been overthrown and the working people are in power. The principle of integrating internationalism with patriotism is practiced in the relations between these countries. We are closely bound by common interests and common ideals.

Mao Zedong, “Speech at the Meeting of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR in Celebration of the 40th Anniversary of the Great October Socialist Revolution” (November 6, 1957), in *Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-Tung*. (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1972) 178.

As the Soviet Bloc countries closed ranks against China, one Eastern European country stepped forward as the sole defender of their comrades in Beijing. Enver Hoxha and the Party of Labour of Albania (*Partia e Punës e Shqipërisë*, or PPSH)<sup>77</sup> denounced Khrushchev’s Destalinization and took it upon themselves to be supporters of Stalin and opponents of Soviet social-imperialism. Across the Sino-Soviet Split and the Cultural Revolution, Albania and China would be closest of comrades in their fight against both Moscow and Washington.

Albania did not take up Mao Zedong Thought as its official ideology *per se*: officially they referred to themselves as “anti-revisionist Marxist-Leninists.” However, Mao’s theories were still disseminated by the Party of Labour and its mass organizations. At a meeting in Shanghai in late summer of 1967, two Albanian PPSH cadres were sent by Hoxha to request an Albanian translation of the Little Red Book. Mao gave them permission, saying, “See if you find [my quotations] useful.” He added, “China’s experience may serve other countries, but they must judge this for themselves.”<sup>78</sup> Upon the release of the Little Red Book across Albania, *Zeri I Popullit* (“Voice of the People”), the official newspaper of the PPSH) wrote an editorial entitled “In Albanian—Chairman Mao’s Quotations—a Great

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<sup>77</sup> To differentiate the Party of Labour of Albania from the People’s Liberation Army of China (PLA), the abbreviation “PPSH” will be used.

<sup>78</sup> Elidor Mehilli, “Mao and the Albanians,” in Cook, 166.



and Precious Gift from the Fraternal Chinese People!” A week later, East German diplomats in Tirana reported that a Chinese professor was teaching Mao’s quotations at Tirana University.<sup>79</sup>

Most curiously, the Albanians did not just disseminate the works of Mao Zedong. First Secretary Hoxha took it upon himself to partially replicate the Chinese experience with his very own “Ideological and Cultural Revolution,” initiated in May 1966. In February 1967, Hoxha declared Albania to be the first atheist state in history<sup>80</sup> and called for a campaign to dismantle all religious institutions in the country. He appointed his mission to be carried out by his own version of the Red Guards, dubbed the “Albanian Youth.”<sup>81</sup>

The Ideological and Cultural Revolution had a curious beginning. Originally, Hoxha had declared in 1961 that “internal economic and social conditions for the restoration of capitalism have now been eliminated [in Albania]” and that class struggle was no longer necessary within the Party or society. However, upon the outbreak of the Cultural Revolution in China, Hoxha abruptly reversed this summation and seemingly changed ideological course entirely.<sup>82</sup> The Albanian Cultural Revolution started with a notable number of reforms: the abolition of ranks in the military, reintroduction of political commissars into the armed forces, sending mid-to-high level officials to work in factories and fields, collectivization of remote mountain areas, and a concentrated effort to keep out foreign influences.<sup>83</sup>

The Ideological and Cultural Revolution was, interestingly, mainly characterized by its antireligious aspect: one study showed that “Within

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 166-167.

<sup>80</sup> Before Albania, all other socialist states simply called for separation of church and state. While atheism was encouraged via state propaganda and taught in institutions of learning, nations like the USSR and China were not *officially* “atheist” in either constitution or law.

<sup>81</sup> Nertila Haxhia Ljarjaa, “An Analysis on the Consequences of the Ideological and Cultural Revolution,” *Sociology Study* 1, no. 6 (November 2011): 469.

<sup>82</sup> Peter R. Prifti, *Socialist Albania Since 1944: Domestic and Foreign Developments*, (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1978), Prifti argues that some form of cultural revolution-style campaign would have eventually been inevitable, considering the fact that Tirana and Beijing had become united in terms of ideology and economics, 143-144.

<sup>83</sup> Raymond Zickel and Walter R. Iwaskiw, eds. *Albania: A Country Study*, (Washington: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1994), 49.

the month of May 1967, 2,169 religious objects were destroyed and violated or converted into other usages. This figure included 600 monasteries and 327 buildings of the Catholic Church.”<sup>84</sup> Ironically, around the time Chinese authorities began to discourage Red Guards from destroying ancient temples, relics, and other symbols of “the Old World,” Hoxha had begun his own campaign of wiping away the “Old Albania.” In his own variation of Mao’s theory of the role of superstructure in the process of a cultural revolution, the Albanian government decreed “the superstructure must get rid of all retrograde things and foreign elements.” In other words, Hoxha justified it with the inappropriateness of the basis with the superstructure.<sup>85</sup>

Despite the inspiration of the Cultural Revolution of China, the Albanian Cultural Revolution never reached the massive scale of the former. The Albanian Youth were only used to attack religious institutions and already-toppled landlords, and there were no mass workers’ or women’s organizations that particularly aided in the attack on the old society. Unlike the PLA in China, the Albanian People’s Army was consigned mainly to the background, acting as something to be transformed rather than a tool with which to transform.<sup>86</sup> In the end, it was a top-down initiative orchestrated primarily by Hoxha himself. The Ideological and Cultural Revolution was launched for more calculated and pragmatic reasons than the ideological convictions that Mao held which caused him to launch the Chinese Cultural Revolution. The Albanians knew that officially breaking from the Warsaw Pact would cause serious military and economic setbacks, and that they needed to be ready to weed out any form of social vulnerability.<sup>87</sup>

Isa Blumi writes in his substantial article about the Ideological and Cultural Revolution, “Hoxha’s Class War,” that “initially, subtle criticism of the work of enterprise directors found its way into the public...” While this sounds like the workplace denunciations seen in the Chinese Cultural Revolution, the criticisms in Albania were directed strictly through the

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<sup>84</sup> Ljarjaa, 469.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 470.

<sup>86</sup> Prifti, 146.

<sup>87</sup> Isa Blumi, Hoxha’s “Class War: the Cultural Revolution and State Reformation, 1961-1971,” *East European Quarterly*, 33, no. 3 (September 1999): 305.

Party-led trade unions and the vocabulary of “party line” was far more prevalent than the Chinese vocabulary of “mass line.”<sup>88</sup> Instead of Maoist “bombarding the headquarters” (transforming the Party), Hoxha wanted to concentrate on creating a “new man” out of Albanian workers (transforming the people themselves).<sup>89</sup> The ICR copied the GPCR’s *dazibao* (“big character sheets”) by creating *Flete-ruffe*, or “wall newspaper,” but only used them for propaganda sloganeering and targeting of “misguided” citizens.<sup>90</sup> On 9 April 1968 a call for new “workers’ committees” (à la the revolutionary committees of China) was released by the PPSH; however, by the end of 1969 the Party pulled the plug on the workers’ committees because they felt that the Soviet-era managers (who Hoxha characterized as the revisionist class in Albania) had been decisively pushed out of power.<sup>91</sup> This brought about a noticeable doctrinal difference between the Albanian Cultural Revolution and the Chinese Cultural Revolution. Compared to the Albanian view that all contradictions had ceased, the Chinese believed that capitalist-roaders were to be constantly fought until full communism was achieved due to old ideas having the ability to regenerate.<sup>92</sup>

Anti-revisionism outside of the PPSH’s ranks, i.e., specifically *Maoist* anti-revisionism, was decisively impossible. Hoxha said that “even if demanded by our Chinese comrades,” there was to be no independent pro-Beijing activity in Albania. Any Maoist works or propaganda material from China was to be solely distributed by Albanian authorities.<sup>93</sup> This stringent handling of ideology and broader society was seen by Hoxha as a way of making sure that Sino-Albanian anti-revisionism would stay on its intended course at all times. Unfortunately for Hoxha, he made the fatal error of not waging cultural revolution primarily on his opponents in the Party itself, but rather on aspects of Albanian culture that had already been stripped of their power by the foundation of the people’s socialist republic. This led him to remain wide open to attacks by those around him as he began diverging greatly from the Maoist doctrine of continu-

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<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 311.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 312.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 319.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 320.

<sup>92</sup> Mehilli in Cook, 175.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

ing revolution. Hoxha abruptly broke from the Chinese line shortly after Mao's death, declaring that Mao had been a revisionist all along and that Hoxha had opposed him across the entirety of the Sixties and Seventies. This led to a Sino-Albanian Split which led to many Maoist parties fracturing in three-way splits between pro-Gang of Four factions, pro-Deng Xiaoping factions, and pro-Hoxha factions, greatly weakening the Maoist movement globally.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> For primary documents concerning the Sino-Albanian Split and the impact it made upon Maoist parties around the world, I would recommend the Marxists Internet Archive's Encyclopedia of Anti-Revisionism Online (<https://www.marxists.org/history/erol/>). Particularly noteworthy are Enver Hoxha's own polemic against Maoism, *Imperialism and the Revolution* (Tirana: Foreign Languages Press, 1978) and American Maoist J. Werner's rebuttal of the text, "Beat Back the Dogmato-Revisionist Attack on Mao Tsetung Thought: Comments on Enver Hoxha's *Imperialism and the Revolution*," published in the Revolutionary Communist Party USA's theoretical journal *The Communist*, no. 5, (Chicago: RCP Publications, 1979), accessible at <https://www.marxists.org/history/erol/ncm-5/rcp-hoxha/index.htm>.

## Chapter 5

### RUMBLINGS IN BULGARIA: THE COUP ATTEMPT OF 1965 AND THE 1968 WORLD FESTIVAL OF YOUTH AND STUDENTS

“Our army has always had two policies. First, we must be ruthless to our enemies; we must overpower and annihilate them. Second, we must be kind to our own, to the people, to our comrades and to our superiors and subordinates, and unite with them.”

Mao Zedong, Speech at the reception given by the Central Committee of the Party for model study delegates from the Rear Army Detachments (September 18, 1944), in *Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-Tung*. (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1972), 148.

Other cracks of Mao-inspired dissent began to show in the Eastern Bloc as the Sino-Soviet break had become irreversible, with one of the most dramatic—and high-ranking—being the military coup attempt in Sofia, Bulgaria in April 1965. While partially a symptom of the Sino-Soviet Split, it was also the inevitable conclusion of a major split that had arisen between particular factions within the Bulgarian Communist Party: the Chervenkov faction (Stalinist, “anti-revisionist”), the Yugov faction (more nationalistic, known for opportunistic vacillation), and the prevailing Zhivkov faction (pro-Soviet, pro-Khrushchev).<sup>95</sup> The split had been growing over the process of twenty years: even as early as 1945 there was a distinct split between the “home communists” and the “Muscovites.”<sup>96</sup>

While a new General-Secretary of the Bulgarian Communist Party (BCP), Todor Zhivkov, was elected by the Central Committee in March 1954, much of the mid-tier and lower-tier Party officials became displeased with him over the course of the next decade.<sup>97</sup> The prior General-Secretary (as well as the brother-in-law of Comintern leader Georgi Dimitrov), Valko Chervenkov, was known as Bulgaria’s “little Stalin” and

<sup>95</sup> J.F. Brown, “The Bulgarian Plot,” *The World Today*, 21, no. 6 (Jun 1965): 265-266.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 264.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, 266.

was supportive of China's resistance to Destalinization, making it necessary for Zhivkov to sideline him despite his popularity with many BCP rank-and-file.<sup>98</sup> The "home communists" (now consolidated between the Chervenkov faction, Yugov faction, and Bulgarian nationalists within the military) felt that Zhivkov and the "Muscovites" had not only allied Bulgaria with the USSR, but had transformed their country into something akin to a Soviet vassal state. Angered by the military and economic reforms that Zhivkov was replicating from the Soviet reforms, a hardline section of the BCP Central Committee and Bulgarian People's Army conspired to carry out a coup against the general-secretary's revisionism.<sup>99</sup>

The leaders of the coup plot were a motley crew: head conspirator Ivan Todorov-Gorunya, a member of the Central Committee of the BCP, Deputy Minister of Agriculture, and anti-Nazi partisan veteran from World War II; Tsolo Krastev, Minister of Foreign Affairs, and former ambassador to North Korea; Major-General Tsvetko Anev, Commander of the Sofia Military Garrison; and Slavcho Transki, Deputy Minister of National Defense as well as another anti-Nazi partisan resistance hero.<sup>100</sup> The military background of Todorov-Gorunya, Anev, and Transki were particularly important: not only would such leadership be essential for an armed coup, but the fact that "[t]hrough not a militaristic nation in the accepted sense, the Bulgarians have always accorded their army a special and honoured status among national institutions."<sup>101</sup> Rallying the populace around the banner of anti-revisionist Marxism-Leninism, the plotters decided, would not be enough: they would have to evoke a cultural sentiment that would bring the Bulgarian masses to cast off the Soviet yoke.

The coup was to be enacted as follows: General Anev's military garrison was to cut off all roads and bridges leading out the capital, take out all communication centers, and capture the airport. Todorov-Gorunya, meanwhile, was to lead other troops to storm a meeting by the Central

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<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, 264-265.

<sup>99</sup> "Purge Expected in Bulgaria: Diplomats Link It to Coup That Failed," *Chicago Tribune*, April 22, 1965, sec. 2A, 5.

<sup>100</sup> There remains the possibility that there were other powerful figures that "at least promised their backing once the first moves of the conspiracy had succeeded." Whether or not Chervenkov was part of, or had knowledge of, the coup seems to be unknown, Brown 262-263.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*

Committee and arrest the eleven-man Politburo, including Zhivkov himself.<sup>102</sup> However, nothing went as planned for the plotters, and the coup attempt was quickly exposed. Little known to the conspirators, Soviet and Bulgarian intelligence had been monitoring some of the individual plotters and supporters for some time, and by the first week of April a wave of arrests, purges, and demotions swept through the Party and Army, ending in Todorov-Gorunya's suicide on 7 April.<sup>103</sup>

The coup attempt was unprecedented. With the exception of a coup attempt in 1960 in Albania, any attempt at a military overthrow of a Soviet Bloc state was seen as simply impossible.<sup>104</sup> How could this have happened, and how could the BCP explain it? Rumors and official state explanations began to fly. Western media such as *Time* magazine suggested that Todorov-Gorunya and company were plotting a "pro-Peking putsch"<sup>105</sup> and were directly inspired by Mao's opposition to Soviet social-imperialism. The *Chicago Tribune* reported that Zhivkov had declared the conspirators were "pro-Chinese elements... people of primitive thinking."<sup>106</sup> The *Tribune* also noted that the coup plot had begun to coalesce shortly after a diplomatic visit by Chinese officials.<sup>107</sup> American, Soviet, and Bulgarian press all seemed to point their fingers at one culprit acting as the coup's puppet-master: China.

Yet it would be difficult to say with absolute certainty that the 1965 Bulgarian coup attempt was a "Maoist" one. No material evidence or documentation of aid from Beijing to the conspirators has been found, nor did the Chinese state press report on or express solidarity with them upon their capture. Much like Zhu De's presence in Tbilisi during the 1956 Georgian uprising in the Soviet Union, the Chinese diplomatic mission shortly before the coup attempt seems to be coincidental and can only entertain speculation. While China's opposition to Destalinization and economic reforms in the Soviet Bloc certainly inspired the coup plotters,

<sup>102</sup> "Bulgaria: The Black Sheep," *Time*, 30 April 1965, <http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,898659,00.html>

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> Brown, 261.

<sup>105</sup> "Bulgaria: The Black Sheep."

<sup>106</sup> "Pro-Chinese Blamed for Bulgaria Coup: Zhivkhov Fixes Guilt in Abortive Effort," *Chicago Tribune*, July 17, 1965, sec. A, 12.

<sup>107</sup> "Purge Expected."

the aforementioned elements of nationalism and resentment of Soviet military dominance served as a more immediate incentive to mutiny against the Zhivkov regime. With the coup quashed, the Bulgarian government tersely swept all further discussion of the coup attempt under the rug until its collapse in 1989.

Sofia would once again be struck by the specter of China three years later, however, this time with far more overtly Maoist overtones and from a group of proud foreigners. In his 2012 monograph *Foreign Front: Third World Politics in Sixties West Germany*, Quinn Slobodian tells the story of how a group of Maoist students from the West German SDS (Sozialistischer Deutscher Studentenbund, or Socialist German Students Union) caused a dramatic ruckus at the Soviet-sponsored 1968 World Festival of Youth and Students (WFYS). The WFYS, a semi-annual gathering of youth leagues of left-wing parties from across the world (principally comprised of the youth leagues of communist parties aligned with Moscow or non-aligned within the Sino-Soviet Split), was to be hosted in Sofia, Bulgaria from 27 July to 6 August of that year.<sup>108</sup> A delegation of Red Guards from China was certainly out of the question; however, the German SDS<sup>109</sup> was invited, but arrived at the festival with the intent as being almost a surrogate delegation for the Chinese Red Guards.<sup>110</sup>

The Bulgarian and Soviet leadership initially thought nothing of a group of West German socialists representing the Federal Republic of Germany at the WFYS. Little did they realize the trouble that was to ensue beginning on 27 July 1968 at the opening ceremony. As the German SDS delegation marched past the Soviet authorities, they shouted, “Mao! Mao! Mao!” and carried portraits of the Chairman in an act of brazen defiance.<sup>111</sup> The festival’s events were constantly rife with trouble, with the German Maoists repeatedly breaking up pro-Soviet youth activities or demanding

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<sup>108</sup> Quinn Slobodian, *Foreign Front: Third World Politics in Sixties West Germany* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012), 194-195.

<sup>109</sup> The term “German SDS” is used to differentiate from the American SDS, i.e. “Students for a Democratic Society,” another radical student organization whose existence overlapped with the other and contained a Maoist faction within itself.

<sup>110</sup> A clarification should be made that while the Chinese government was supportive of the German SDS in general, Beijing itself was ambivalent about the idea of German SDS being their *official* representatives at the WFYS, 195.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, 196-198.



debates and discussions around key issues in the Sino-Soviet Split. The German Maoists' presence in Bulgaria finally climaxed in an unauthorized protest outside the American embassy in Sofia against the Vietnam War, and at the closing ceremonies the German SDS left the festival chanting "Castro, Mao, Guevara!"<sup>112</sup> With this defiant gesture, Maoism parted Bulgaria for Bonn rather than back to uninvited Beijing.

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<sup>112</sup> Ibid., 195.

## Chapter 6

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### “BECOMING CHINESE”: MAOISTS IN THE GERMAN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC

“At certain times in the revolutionary struggle, the difficulties outweigh the favorable conditions and so constitute the principal aspect of the contradiction and the favorable conditions constitute the secondary aspect. But through their efforts the revolutionaries can overcome the difficulties step by step and open up a favorable new situation; thus a difficult situation yields place to a favorable one.”

Mao Zedong, “On Contradiction” (August 1937), in *Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-Tung*. (Foreign Languages Press: Peking), 1972, 200.<sup>113</sup>

The West German SDS were not the only German youth who were shouting Mao’s name to defy Moscow. On the other side of the Berlin Wall, a small group of East German communists of a younger generation (also joined by a small group of older, hardline communists who survived the concentration camps of the Nazis) reached out to their fellow countrymen in the West who had already formed a cohesive Maoist party named the Communist Party of Germany/Marxist-Leninist (Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands/Marxisten-Leninisten. or KPD/ML). The KPD/ML had been looking to form a German Democratic Republic (GDR) section for some time, hoping to harness dissatisfaction among East German youth with the ruling Socialist Unity Party (Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands, or SED) and its stagnant, authoritarian, Soviet model of rule, especially as Beijing was heating up its global propaganda war against Moscow.

The German Democratic Republic’s birth was a painful one that was seemingly destined for political and economic tragedy. While the other Eastern European nations were liberated by the Soviets from Nazi occupation, the GDR (popularly known as East Germany) was born from the

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<sup>113</sup> For the original, see Mao Zedong, “On Contradiction” (August 1937), *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung* (Peking: Foreign Language Publishing House, 1965), 1:335.

destruction of the German Reich itself, split into two by the Allies and much of its eastern territories absorbed into Poland as geographic payback for wartime atrocities. The Soviet Red Army established a German Economic Commission (Deutsche Wirtschaftskommission, or DWK) in 1947 to direct the construction of a socialist economy.<sup>114</sup> Reparations to be paid to the other Eastern Bloc nations was almost immediately forced upon the Germans by the DWK, creating the basis for an economy intended to be a near-complete replication “down to the last machine, down to the last production unit of industry”<sup>115</sup> of Moscow’s model for the duration of East Germany’s existence. In 1949, the DWK was dissolved and economic planning was handed over to the government of the newly declared German Democratic Republic and the Soviet-manufactured SED ruling party.

Even after the transition from direct Soviet administration to East German domestic rule and the denazification of society, the new political and economic model did not serve the German people well, including the industrial working class that it was supposed to be ruled by. The average East German’s monthly income was 256 Deutsche Marks a month, with prices for even single items of food being up to a third of that income.<sup>116</sup> Riots and uprisings ensued across 1953 and by the end of the year, SED General Secretary Walter Ulbricht tried to curtail further discontent by enacting a series of significant economic reforms under a policy known as the “New Course.” The New Course, while meant to satisfy the populace, deviated from the traditional model of socialist planning by—much like the policies of Khrushchev and Brezhnev in the USSR—halting collectivization of agriculture and returning property to farmers and enterprise owners (particularly if they had fled to the West after having their property seized).<sup>117</sup>

Over twenty years later, in 1967 a new policy known as the “Economic System of Socialism” added reforms to the setting of wages and prices, as well as the autonomy of management of enterprises.<sup>118</sup> Ulbricht,

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<sup>114</sup> Mike Dennis, *The Rise and Fall of the German Democratic Republic 1945-1990* (Essex: Pearson Education Limited, 2000), 17.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, 55.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, 64-65.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, 117.

much like Khrushchev, was seen as incompetent in moving the economic reforms forward and in 1971 was replaced with the much more Brezhnev-esque (and Brezhnev-aligned) Erich Honecker. Much like the Kosygin Reforms did for Soviet anti-revisionists, the Economic System of Socialism would later be used by the East German Maoists of the KPD/ML as evidence that the GDR's economy was a capitalist one and that the SED was a junior partner in the CPSU's social-imperialist policies.

1968 was a whirlwind year that left no part of the world untouched, including the socialist countries. The Prague Spring in Czechoslovakia attempted to turn the Czechoslovak regime on its head, resulting in the Soviet invasion of the country and the crushing of the movement. Meanwhile in China, the Cultural Revolution had reached a screeching crescendo, with the Red Guards and other radical mass movements having spun out of Mao's control and leaving the country in what Mao called "an all-around civil war."<sup>119</sup> It was also a year that gave birth to even more Maoist parties (many far more radical and youth-oriented than the initial wave of Maoist parties a few years earlier), including the KPD/ML in West Germany (Federal Republic of Germany, or FRG). Meanwhile, in the East, the youth of 1968 began to form a Maoist nucleus via radical study circles in which they studied the "classics" of Marx, Engels, and Lenin independent of their high school and university Marxism-Leninism classes, as well as the officially disapproved works of Stalin, Mao, and Hoxha.<sup>120</sup>

In 1969, the Progressive Youth (Progressive Jugend, or PJ) was founded in Magdeburg. The PJ only had around a hundred full-time cadres, but built a small subculture of supporters who emulated other radical social movements internationally. The PJ, for example, was known for dressing in American Black Panther Party-style uniforms<sup>121</sup> and carry around the Little Red Books that they had received via the Chinese embassy in East Berlin (an embassy which, at one point, would cause grief for the

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<sup>119</sup> William Hinton, *Turning Point in China: An Essay on the Cultural Revolution* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1972), 17.

<sup>120</sup> Herbert Polifka, "New Revelations about the Activities and Destruction of the GDR Section of the Communist Party of Germany/Marxist-Leninist (KPD/ML)," *Revolutionary Democracy* 5, no. 1 (April 1999), <http://www.revolutionarydemocracy.org/rdv5n1/gdrkpd.htm>

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*

East German authorities).<sup>122</sup> By the early 1970s the PJ had supporters not only in Magdeburg and Berlin but in the key port city of Rostock, allowing it to form an even broader base.<sup>123</sup>

The PJ eventually reached out to the KPD/ML in the FRG and formed a “GDR Section” of the Party. On 7 February 1976, a pamphlet titled “Declaration of the Founding of the GDR Section of the KPD/ML,” was published, with the first page of the pamphlet topped with the heads of Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin, and Mao.<sup>124</sup> The pamphlet contained a program for the new communist party as well as a series of writings denouncing the East German economic model as a “thoroughly capitalist program”<sup>125</sup> and the SED as “traitors of the nation” and “vassals of Moscow.”<sup>126</sup> It was an incendiary text declaring all-out class war on the state and intending to carry it to total victory. Like their Western comrades, the Maoists of the KPD/ML GDR Section had succeeded in becoming “Chinese,” transferring the Chinese aesthetic onto themselves and the Red Guards’ goal of destroying revisionism by any means necessary.<sup>127</sup>

The GDR Section began printing its own edition of the Party’s central newspaper *Rote Morgen* (“Red Morning”) and disseminating it around university campuses and stuffing copies of the newspaper regularly into the mailboxes of working-class neighborhoods.<sup>128</sup> While only having a membership in the dozens, the GDR Section held together the small base of East German citizens sympathetic to anti-revisionism as the PJ had, quickly arousing the wrath of the powerful Ministry of State Security (commonly known as the Stasi). Avoiding the Stasi was as impossible to avoid as the KGB, if not more so with its sprawling network of 2 million

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<sup>122</sup> Quinn Slobodian, “Badge books and brand books: the Mao Bible in East and West Germany” in Cook, 221.

<sup>123</sup> “New Revelations.”

<sup>124</sup> *Gründungserklärung der Sektion DDR der KPD/ML* [Declaration of the Founding of the GDR Section of the KPD/ML], (Berlin: Roter Morgen, 1976), 1, [http://www.mao-projekt.de/BRD/ORG/GRM/KPDML\\_1976\\_in\\_der\\_DDR\\_gegruendet.shtml](http://www.mao-projekt.de/BRD/ORG/GRM/KPDML_1976_in_der_DDR_gegruendet.shtml)

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

<sup>127</sup> Slobodian, *Foreign Front*, 177.

<sup>128</sup> Dietmar Kestin, “Roter Morgen’: Zentralorgan der KPD/Marxisten-Leninisten, Ausgabe DDR,” Materialien zur Analyse von Opposition (M.A.O.), [http://www.mao-projekt.de/INT/EU/DDR/DDR\\_KPDML\\_Roter\\_Morgen.shtml](http://www.mao-projekt.de/INT/EU/DDR/DDR_KPDML_Roter_Morgen.shtml)

civilian informants in a country of only 16 million citizens.<sup>129</sup> Arrests of cadres was a regular occurrence, and *Rote Morgen* regularly contained coverage of KPD/ML prisoners in East German jails until the newspaper's dissolution in 1982.<sup>130</sup>

While the GDR had experienced a decade of small but vibrant Maoist activity, its time as a cohesive vanguard political party for Maoism lasted a mere two years. In 1978 the KPD/ML, including its GDR Section, sided with the Albanians in the Sino-Albanian Split, and in 1986 the new Hoxhaist incarnation of the KPD/ML dissolved its GDR Section while merging with the International Marxist Group to found the Unified Socialist Party, which dwindled away across the late 1980s.<sup>131</sup> East German Maoism had failed to build a popular base or become a serious threat to the SED regime (although the Stasi certainly treated it as such), and Soviet-style communism continued to be the only school of Marxist thought that the East German people were engaged with until the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989.

Unlike the Soviet and Bulgarian experiences, the story of Maoism in the GDR is nevertheless unique in that it had a much more significant *transnational* aspect to it, with more direct Chinese involvement in the dissemination of Maoism. To truly appreciate the Maoist presence in East Germany, we must turn to one of the Cultural Revolution's most active "base areas" behind the Iron Curtain: the Chinese embassy in East Berlin. The embassy had a knack for "making trouble" (to quote Mao) and opening its doors up to Germans, acting as a conduit through which Maoism enthusiastically and publicly flowed.

The Chinese embassy brazenly handed out German-language Little Red Books, leaflets, and pamphlets to workers, students, and functionaries in the streets around the embassy's grounds, and posted German-language posters denouncing the SED without any of the reserve shown in other countries.<sup>132</sup> Thousands of copies of *Peking Review* were printed for dis-

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<sup>129</sup> Dennis, 214.

<sup>130</sup> Kestin.

<sup>131</sup> "New Revelations."

<sup>132</sup> Quinn Slobodian, "The Maoist Enemy: China's Challenge in 1960s East Germany," *Journal of Contemporary History*, 51, no. 3 (2016): 19-20, [http://www.academia.edu/14288851/The\\_Maoist\\_Enemy\\_China\\_s\\_Challenge\\_in\\_1960s\\_East\\_Germany](http://www.academia.edu/14288851/The_Maoist_Enemy_China_s_Challenge_in_1960s_East_Germany)

tribution in East Berlin, as well as other small pamphlets published by Beijing's Foreign Languages Publishing House.<sup>133</sup> By late 1967, an average of 63 German students per day came to visit the embassy to receive Little Red Books and Mao badges directly from the Chinese. Concerned with this development, in January 1968 the East German authorities cut off any civilian visitation to the embassy and barred anyone from entering the building except diplomats and staff.<sup>134</sup>

Attempting to agitate among East German citizens was not the only reason that the government took the initiative to contain the Chinese inside their embassy, as the Chinese had become a headache for East Berlin since the outbreak of the Cultural Revolution in 1966. Quinn Slobodian's comprehensive paper (one of the few in the English language) "The Maoist Enemy: China's Challenge in 1960s East Germany," published by the *Journal of Contemporary History*, recounts how conflict between Chinese and local authorities almost came to blows, preceded by a concentrated campaign by the Chinese to illicit a reaction out of the East Germans. The first major provocation on East German soil began when, shortly after the Red Square incident of 1967, Red Guards were brought to the embassy to act as escorts for the Chinese ambassador to the GDR on a trip home. Shortly after this, the Chinese began to open new glass display cases outside the embassy grounds, showcasing Chinese propaganda posters and art as well as posters denouncing Soviet and East German revisionism.<sup>135</sup>

The campaign came to a head in June 1967, when four Chinese diplomats died in an automobile accident in Berlin. The embassy staff immediately jumped to the conclusion that the local authorities were to blame and that the accident had in fact been an assassination. Convinced of this, the staff began to chant "blood must be answered with blood!" and "down with revisionism!" via loudspeakers to passersby in the evenings.<sup>136</sup> In return, East German citizens scratched the glass on the embassy display cases with the word "pigs" and defaced the cases with lipstick. The provocations by both sides eventually died down, but Stasi and military

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<sup>133</sup> Ibid., 20-21.

<sup>134</sup> Slobodian, in Cook, 221.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid., 19

surveillance of the embassy stayed at the utmost high.<sup>137</sup>

The Maoist presence in the GDR was, aside from its state dissemination in Albania and similar student agitation in Hungary, far more intense than anywhere before in the Soviet Bloc. Unlike the Soviet anti-revisionists, the anti-revisionists in East Germany coalesced into a single national group, first as a youth group and then as a self-declared vanguard party, and were able to make their presence known nationwide. They also continued to live on past the end of the Cultural Revolution and into the mid-1980s, albeit as Hoxhaists and later as part of a party comprised of a merger with another Marxist organization. While English-language resources are still scant, hopefully this will change with translations and digitization of documents and texts concerning an experience that captures the spirit of the Sixties within the Second World on a transnational scale.

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<sup>137</sup> Ibid.



## Chapter 7

### MAO ON TRIAL: MAOIST STUDENTS IN HUNGARY DURING THE KÁDÁR ERA

Be resolute, fear no sacrifice, and surmount every difficulty to win victory.

Mao Zedong, "The Foolish Old Man Who Removed the Mountains" (June 11, 1945), in *Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-tung* (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1972), 182.<sup>138</sup>

Through a Western lens, the German Democratic Republic and the Hungarian People's Republic were like night and day. East Germany was viewed as a gloomy police state rivaling that of the USSR; the Hungary of the 1960s, however, was seen as surprisingly relaxed. Depicted as humane and cosmopolitan, Hungary was sometimes described by the Western press as "the happiest barracks in the socialist camp" for its access to Western goods, relaxed border laws, and low-level police surveillance compared to the rest of the Soviet Bloc. Hungarian socialism during the administration of Janos Kádár and the ruling Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party (HSWP) was dubbed "Goulash Communism," being described as a "goulash" stew combining both Soviet-style central planning and Western free-market mechanisms.<sup>139</sup> The Hungarian people possessed (alongside East Germans and Yugoslavs) one of the highest standards of living in Eastern Europe for the duration of Goulash Communism, with very little social or political turmoil.

Nevertheless, a dramatic episode of unrest fueled by the discontent of many youth and the resentment of some of the old guard of Hungarian communists did in fact cause a stir on the campuses of Budapest and exposed the Hungarian people to Maoism. Little information is available

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<sup>138</sup> For the original, see Mao Zedong, "The Foolish Old Man Who Removed the Mountains" (June 11, 1945), *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung*. (Peking: Foreign Language Publishing House, 1965) 3:321.

<sup>139</sup> Thayer Watkins, "Economic History and the Economy of Hungary," *San José State University Department of Economics*, <http://www.sjsu.edu/faculty/watkins/hungary.htm>.

in English language sources, although Adam Takacs' recent 2012 report "The Maoist Incident: Effects of Political and Ideological Consolidation on Youth Mentality in the Kádár Regime of the 1960s" has divulged key new information about the Maoist student rebels of 1968 and their connections to broader global social movements of the decade.<sup>140</sup> It spins a tale of fiercely idealistic youth who, inspired by the national liberation struggles in the Third World (particularly that of Vietnam), sought a vibrant, seemingly anti-authoritarian socialism beyond their nation's borders, and the political and intellectual response to the incident. Like their comrades in Western Europe and the two Germanys, these youth found the anti-authoritarianism they needed in Maoism.

Like the Kosygin Reforms of 1965 in USSR and the Economic System of Socialism in the GDR of 1967, the conception of Hungarian Maoism is rooted in economic reforms. Goulash Communism—known for its use of free market mechanisms and small private enterprises within a broader state-planned apparatus—was the product of Kádár's "New Economic Mechanism" initiated across 1966 to 1968.<sup>141</sup> Like the Bulgarian reforms of the early 1960s, Goulash Communism was also a process of sidelining hardline Stalinists, mainly centered around the first postwar Party leader Mátyás Rákosi.<sup>142</sup> The dual process of open economic reforms and sidelining of the authoritarian old guard seems to act, in my own observation, as a formula for creating bursts of *anti-authoritarian* anti-revisionism in 1960s Eastern Europe, and the student study groups found on Budapest university campuses serve as yet another example of this formula.

The first central figure of Hungarian Maoism was a young Hungarian Communist Youth League (CYL) activist named Gábor Révai. The son of Jozsef Révai, one of the hardline founders of the Communist Party of Hungary who took part in the establishment of the Hungarian Soviet of 1919, Révai attended Eötvös Loránd University in Budapest with a

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<sup>140</sup> Adam Takacs, "The Maoist Incident: Effects of Political and Ideological Consolidation on Youth Mentality in the Kádár Regime of the 1960s," RESOCEA (Regime and Society in Eastern Europe) Report, 2012, 67, [http://www.academia.edu/15233364/The\\_Maoist\\_Incident\\_Effects\\_of\\_Political\\_and\\_Ideological\\_Consolidation\\_on\\_Youth\\_Mentality\\_in\\_the\\_K%C3%A1d%C3%A1r\\_Regime\\_in\\_Hungary\\_in\\_the\\_1960s/](http://www.academia.edu/15233364/The_Maoist_Incident_Effects_of_Political_and_Ideological_Consolidation_on_Youth_Mentality_in_the_K%C3%A1d%C3%A1r_Regime_in_Hungary_in_the_1960s/)

<sup>141</sup> Ibid., 21.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid., 11.

double major in German and philosophy. Like his East German comrades, his beginnings as an opposition activist lay in his forming of student study circles of Marxist classics outside the approved CYL study groups in 1964.<sup>143</sup> Two years later, Révai became friends with prominent West German student activist Rudi Dutschke, to whom he was introduced in Budapest in 1966 by Ferenc Jánossy, the stepson of esteemed Marxist philosopher György Lukács, with whom he maintained a correspondence.<sup>144</sup> With such esteemed connections, Révai was seemingly destined to become a troublemaker for the Kádárist status quo.

Soon Révai linked up with other likeminded intellectuals within the HSWP and CYL. Among the core circle was György Por and Miklós Haraszti, two other CYL activists at Eötvös Loránd University,<sup>145</sup> György Dalos, an esteemed writer who had graduated from Moscow State University and member of the HSWP's Hungarian Writers Association,<sup>146</sup> and author Katalin Imre.<sup>147</sup> All had visited the Chinese embassy in Budapest at one point or another to receive Little Red Books, Maoist pamphlets, and issues of *Új Kína* ("New China," a Hungarian-language magazine which often published articles denouncing Kádár and the HSWP as revisionists)<sup>148</sup> or were in contact with Chinese students and teaching assistants at Eötvös Loránd and University of Budapest.<sup>149</sup> Now armed with Maoist theory, the students began to refer to themselves as "freethinking communists" and divided themselves into two clubs, known by the secret police as "the Thinkers" and "the Club."<sup>150</sup>

The Hungarian Maoists were particularly vocal and initially not prone to clandestine organizing. Imre was incendiary in her publications, stating that the HSWP "motivates us to like a socialism which is in fact a bourgeois one. In our country, right-wing tendencies and revisionism

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<sup>143</sup> Ibid., 24-26.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid., 25.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid., 43.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid., 44.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid., 41.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid., 46.

portray the principal orientation. There is no communism.”<sup>151</sup> Dalos published a work titled “The Revisionist Mask of Humanism,” which said that the amnesty of Kádár’s regime was promoting “humanism for the enemies of the people” and not “socialist humanism.”<sup>152</sup> Imre and Dalos were arrested but let off with a warning, and Imre lost her position at the Institute for Literary Studies at the University of Budapest.<sup>153</sup>

Momentum picked up, however, when the Vietnam War became a central issue for Hungarian youth. The Hungarian government and the Communist Youth League both expressed their support of North Vietnam in the conflict, but centered their policy around slogans such as “Peace for Vietnam!” while the Maoists centered their line around slogans such as “Liberate Vietnam!” and “Victory to the NLF!”<sup>154</sup> In 1965 the CYL formed the Vietnam Solidarity Committee (VSC), which was infiltrated and taken over by Maoist students, causing the CYL to expel the VSC in December 1966.<sup>155</sup> For Hungarian youth—much like other radical youth around the world—Vietnam was seen as part of a broader anti-imperialist movement and further radicalized the Maoist students.<sup>156</sup>

Finally going underground, in 1967 the Maoist clubs joined together to issue a joint program titled “The Way of the Revolution” under the name “Group of Hungarian Revolutionary Communists” (GHRC).<sup>157</sup> Released on the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the October Revolution, “The Way of the Revolution” proclaimed “We make no secret of the fact that our political goal can only be reached by the violent overthrow of this bourgeois-bureaucratic regime masked by revisionism. The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution in the People’s Republic of China reveals the way for us.”<sup>158</sup> By 1968, the GHRC coalesced into a central group of around 60 cadres who were behind the organizing of an increasingly militant antiwar

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<sup>151</sup> Ibid.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid., 46-47.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid., 47.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid., 57.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid., 48.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid., 49.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid.

movement.<sup>159</sup> One particularly violent demonstration organized by Por and Harazsti began as a march by 200 Hungarian, African, and Chinese students on the American embassy in Budapest, but ended with Molotov cocktails being thrown into the gates of the embassy, fire set to the cars of embassy staff, and clashes with Hungarian state police holding the students back from storming the embassy.<sup>160</sup>

With the small but determined group of Maoists now taking part in brazenly illegal actions, the state police finally decided to act and arrested the key leadership of the GHRC and its related campus clubs. On 9 June 1968, the HSWP's official newspaper *Népszabadság* ("Liberty of the People"), the central organ of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party (HSWP), informed its readers about "a recent verdict made by the Central Court of Budapest" in which the Maoists were found guilty of "a seditious conspiracy" but were given rather light sentences ranging from a few months in jail to a mere warning.<sup>161</sup> The trial gained some national attention, and while sympathy for Maoism itself did not grow, the trial caused dissatisfaction among Hungarian students toward the CYL and put pressure against the leadership caused the CYL to reform its approach toward dissenting opinions within it.<sup>162</sup>

After the trial, the GHRC dispersed and no further attempts to build a Maoist party were ever made again. Por, Dalos, and Harazsti continued to work as opposition activists, being arrested multiple times across the early 1970s but always let off with light sentences or mere warnings.<sup>163</sup> The Maoist movement had never taken root among working-class or peasant communities, and was consigned merely to the elite universities of the city of Budapest.<sup>164</sup> In an interview in *Rolling Stone* magazine in 1990, Harazsti reflected on his activism and disillusionment, saying "We were the last believers in Marxism in Hungary... When we lost faith, that was when

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<sup>159</sup> Ibid., 52.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid. 53.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid., 58.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid., 59-62.

<sup>164</sup> Robert Gildea, James Mark, and Annette Warring, eds. *Europe's 1968: Voices of Revolt* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 99.

Which East is Red?

Marxism died out in this country.”<sup>165</sup> While perhaps a bit presumptuous, it is definitely apparent that the Maoist students put on trial in 1968 saw themselves as the final heirs of Marx, born to defend communism from the revisionism of the HSWP.

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<sup>165</sup> William Greider, “The Morning After: Inventing Democracy in Hungary,” *Rolling Stone*, February 22, 1990, <http://www.rollingstone.com/politics/news/the-morning-after-19900222>.

## Chapter 8

### THE CURIOUS LIFE OF KAZIMIERZ MIJAL: POLISH MAOISM IN THE 1960S AND 1970S

“Communists should set an example in being practical as well as far-sighted. For only by being practical can they fulfil the appointed tasks, and only farsightedness can prevent them from losing their bearings in the march forward.”

Mao Zedong, “The Role of the Chinese Communist Party in the National War” (October 1938), in *Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-tung* (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1972), 271.<sup>166</sup>

The final significant example of Maoism in the Soviet Bloc comes in the form of a curious and complicated man. Kazimierz Mijal was a man with impressive credentials: born in 1910 in the Polish region of the Russian Empire, he grew up to help found the Polish Workers’ Party and fought the Nazis within the ranks of the communist People’s Guard (Gwardia Ludowa) and Polish People’s Army (Armia Ludowa) from 1942 until Poland’s liberation in 1945.<sup>167</sup> In the 1950s he became mayor of Lodz and then served as Minister of the Communal Economy and Chief of the Bureau for the Council of Ministers.<sup>168</sup> For a man with such an already prestigious background, Mijal seemed destined to greatness within the newly formed ruling Polish United Workers Party (Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza, or PZPR).

His career took a downward plunge, however, with the death of his good friend and political ally Boleslaw Bierut, who had served as President of the Polish People’s Republic and First Secretary of the PZPR from 1947

<sup>166</sup> For the original, see “The Role of the Chinese Communist Party in the National War” (October 1938), *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung* (Peking: Foreign Language Publishing House, 1965), 2:198.

<sup>167</sup> Paul Saba and Sam Richards, “Kazimierz Mijal [15 Sep 1910-28 Jan 2010],” Marxists Internet Archives, <https://www.marxists.org/history/erol/poland/poland-intro.pdf>, 1.

<sup>168</sup> “Kazimierz Mijal—Dogmatic Diehard or Political Adventurer?” Radio Free Europe, Munich: RFE, Jun 26, 1967, <https://www.marxists.org/history/erol/poland/cpp-diehard.pdf>, 2.

until his death in 1956.<sup>169</sup> Bierut was succeeded by Władysław Gomułka, whose economic reforms in October 1956 (the “Gomułka Thaw”)<sup>170</sup> were a near lock-and-step emulation of Khrushchev’s own thaw. A transcript of a report by Radio Free Europe concerning Mijał’s newfound dilemma informs us that “In the beginning, like his like-minded companions, he did not openly enter into factional struggle. He still acted under so-called Party democracy, though giving full rein to virulent attacks on more liberal groups. A few weeks after the Poznań uprising [by Polish workers in June 1956], the Seventh CC Plenum met, in the course of which the Natolin [hardline] faction violently attacked the ‘thaw’ tendencies in the Party and tried to push through the view that the Poznań tragedy proved that the liberalization of rule had led the Party into danger and demanded that a strong-arm policy be restored. For the first time, clearly demagogical methods were employed, such as antisemitic allusions, mention of purposely fanned anti-Soviet feelings, etc. The plenum did issue a compromise resolution, but it was known that it failed to solve the main problem—the deep rift between the Party factions. After the plenum, the final act in the struggle for power began.”<sup>171</sup>

In January 1957, Mijał was removed from the Ministry of Communal Economy and at the Third Congress of the PZPR in 1959 he was not reelected to the Central Committee.<sup>172</sup> Once more, we see the twin phenomena of economic reform and political sidelining giving birth to anti-revisionist discontent. After some years of silence, Mijał published in 1963—with the help of the Albanians—a pamphlet titled “The Struggle for Victory! Silence and Passivity Mean Defeat!” which was smuggled into Poland via Chinese ships.<sup>173</sup> After 10,000 copies were distributed across the country, multiple arrests ensued and Mijał was sacked of all political posts and party membership.<sup>174</sup> In December 1965, a new pamphlet titled “Under the Marxist-Leninist Banner, Into a Battle for Socialism!”

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<sup>169</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>170</sup> Hubert Zawadzki and Jerzy Lukowski, *A Concise History of Poland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 295-296.

<sup>171</sup> “Kizmierz Mijał—Dogmatic Diehard or Political Adventurer?”

<sup>172</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>174</sup> Saba and Richards, 3.



was released and distributed illegally among the Polish public, announcing the formation of the “Communist Party of Poland” (or CPP—also known as the Communist Party of Poland (Marxist-Leninist) or Communist Party of Poland (Mijal)).<sup>175</sup> The pamphlets initiated another wave of arrests, with estimates between 30 and 300 jailed (although some sources indicate the majority were just detained for questioning),<sup>176</sup> demonstrating that the new party was not simply an Albanian-sponsored one-man paper organization, but a group large enough to cause concern for the Polish authorities.

Mijal and his comrades minced no words in proclaiming which “East” they viewed as genuinely “red.” Party literature stated that “the center of the revolution has shifted east.... Marxist positions are maintained by Parties such as those of China, Indonesia, Korea, Vietnam, Albania, and New Zealand.”<sup>177</sup> Mao was referred to as “the most outstanding theorist of Marxist-Leninist thought of the time” and that a cultural revolution in Poland was necessary for the country to reorient itself onto the socialist road.<sup>178</sup> Yet the CPP seemed isolated other than some material aid from Tirana. The Chinese, in fact, maintained complete silence on their Polish comrades for some three years. It was not until August 1968 that Beijing finally recognized the CPP, stating in *Peking Review* that “Comrade Mao Tse-tung has pointed out that a party is a revolutionary party if it integrates theory with practice in a revolutionary way, maintains constant links with the broadest sections of the masses, and adopts a serious attitude towards its own mistakes. The vanguard of the Polish working class—the Polish Communists—under the banner of the Communist Party of Poland, is resolved to build such a revolutionary party which will be faithful to the proletariat forever.” The CCP particularly praised the Poles for allowing only the most militant and self-sacrificing workers to be members, with anti-Nazi resistance veterans to act as the backbone of the party.<sup>179</sup>

<sup>175</sup> “Poland’s ‘Chinese’ Faction,” Radio Free Europe, Munich: RFE, June 20, 1964.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid.

<sup>177</sup> “Kizmierz Mijal—Dogmatic Diehard or Political Adventurer?”

<sup>178</sup> Ibid.

<sup>179</sup> “Communist Party of Poland is a Working Class Party,” *Peking Review* 11, no. 35, (Aug 30, 1968): 15.

Across the next two years, the CCP would shower heaps of praise upon the CPP in *Peking Review* and Mao continually received Mijal at state functions.<sup>180</sup> The Polish Maoists seem unique in the amount of vocal support given to them by Beijing: coverage of the Poles in Chinese state press was disproportionately greater than that of Maoists in other Soviet Bloc countries, most of which were ignored.<sup>181</sup> The CPP in return showered praise onto the Chinese Cultural Revolution<sup>182</sup> in its newspaper *Red Flag*<sup>183</sup> and declared it as a model applicable to their own struggles. In reading articles concerning Eastern Europe in Chinese English-language periodicals, one could infer that the Chinese were using the CPP as their secondary fraternal party within the Eastern Bloc alongside their Albanian comrades.

The CPP had a particularly problematic approach to analyzing Polish society that was not shared by the other Maoist organizations in the Soviet Bloc, namely their fierce nationalism. At times this nationalism manifested in open antisemitism, with the party publishing pamphlets such as “The Participation of the Zionists in the Destruction of Polish Socialist Movement” and “Revisionists and Nationalist Jews in the Fight with the Polish Workers.” While Mijal asserted later in life that his remarks were toward Zionists and not Jews in general, rhetoric such as “the Zionist-Trotskyite group of Jewish nationalists, which, behind the mask of equality, desires the establishment of the rule of the Jewish national minority over the thirty-million-strong Polish nation” permeated the 1967 “Programme of the Communist Party of Poland,” making his defensive remarks somewhat difficult to believe.<sup>184</sup> One must wonder why this was not criticized by

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<sup>180</sup> “Delegation of Communist Party of Poland Concludes Visit in China,” *Peking Review* 11, no. 47 (Nov 21, 1969): 3 and “Urgent Note Regarding ‘the Visit’ of K. Mijal in Beijing,” January 31, 1975, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, Paweł Machcewicz, ed., *Polskie Dokumenty Dyplomatyczne 1975* (Polish Diplomatic Documents, 1975) (Warszawa: Polski Inst. Spraw Międzynarodowych, 2010), 88-89. Translated by Margaret K. Gnoinska.

<http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/117847>

<sup>181</sup> “Magnificent Victory of China’s Great Cultural Revolution Inspires Polish Working Class,” *Peking Review* 11, no. 42, (Oct 18, 1968): 18.

<sup>182</sup> “Greetings from Kazimierz Mijal, General Secretary of Communist Party of Poland,” *Peking Review* 12, no. 21, (Nov 21, 1969): 28.

<sup>183</sup> Saba and Richards, 4.

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

the Chinese or Albanians, who opposed antisemitism and put proletarian internationalism before nationalism at all times.

Tragically for the CPP, the beaming support from Beijing began to unravel with Mao's death in 1976. Interestingly, Mijal was unique in that he continued to support the succession of Mao by Hua Guofeng and Deng Xiaoping.<sup>185</sup> This angered his Albanian friends deeply, and in 1977 he was ejected from Albania for his continued support of Beijing, resulting in a quiet, inactive exile in China until 1983 when he returned to Poland. Upon his return to Poland, he attempted to recommence political work but was arrested for distributing anti-state pamphlets in November 1984, and the dwindling CPP dissolved three months later.<sup>186</sup> While Mijal attempted to revive the CPP in 1997 on a left-nationalist basis, nothing substantial came of the initiative and Mijal retired from radical politics to become a journalist until his death at 99 in 2010. After a tumultuous, controversial, and colorful life, Kazimierz Mijal was laid to rest in the Evangelical-Reformed Cemetery in Warsaw.<sup>187</sup>

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<sup>185</sup> Kazimierz Mijal, "The Significance of the Theory of Three Worlds," *Peking Review* 20, no. 51 (Dec 16, 1977): 17-18.

<sup>186</sup> Michael T. Kaufman, "Arrest In Poland Hints At Party Split," *New York Times* (New York, NY), Nov. 19, 1984, A3.

<sup>187</sup> Saba and Richards, 7.

## Conclusion

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### INTERROGATING HISTORY AND THE MYTH OF MONOLITHIC MARXISM IN EASTERN EUROPE

History is made in such a way that the final result always arises from conflicts between many individual wills, of which each in turn has been made what it is by a host of particular conditions of life. Thus there are innumerable intersecting forces, an infinite series of parallelograms of forces which give rise to one resultant: the historical event. This may again itself be viewed as the product of a power which works as a whole unconsciously and without volition.

Friedrich Engels, letter to J. Bloch, quoted in *Historical Materialism* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1972), 294.

Where do things stand after examining the Maoist experiences in six countries and their relationship to the both broader Maoist experience in the Global Sixties and mainstream understanding of dissent in the Soviet Bloc during the Cold War?

Almost all of my findings for this study have been discovered in the margins: in government statements or documents, compilation texts, small passages within texts concerning broader aspects of Soviet or Chinese history, recently published journal articles, and in works that remain untranslated into the English language. Despite this, a portrait can be painted of people within the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe who heard the Chinese anthem “The East is Red” and, looking at their immediate surroundings, asked “Which ‘East’ *is* ‘red’: the Soviet Bloc East or East Asia?” While the majority of citizens of Eastern Bloc nations eked out a passive existence, oftentimes eschewing politics altogether, a few—spurred by the dual phenomena of economic reform and sidelining of hardline communists—took a firm, vocal position and said that their “East” was *not* red.

Understandings of Marxism in Eastern Europe were not monolithic. Guided most often by the ruling party’s line, there was significant room nonetheless for other interpretations and summations all states in the bloc were to officially adhere to. Why is this not discussed more broadly in

### Western academic discourse?

Access to the voices of the *dramatis personae* in the Maoist story is certainly difficult. Many archives continue to be shuttered to scholars and the majority of those who took part in these events are either dead or living out quiet, discreet twilight years with no involvement in politics or historical preservation. Still, as stated in my discussion of anti-revisionism in the Soviet Union, there *is* scholarship unfolding out there. Lengthy new articles by scholars such as Slobodian and Takacs demonstrate that English-language accounts of Eastern European Maoism *are* starting to trickle out. German and Russian scholars are starting to compile documents and periodicals pertaining to these movements and load them onto the internet where they can be accessed easily by those who read their languages.

This process needs to pick up speed, however. More scholars must be willing to compile and translate these works and documents into English, and these efforts must be coordinated into a more coherent historiography. Mainstream academic discourse in the West concerning dissent in the USSR and Soviet Bloc concentrates almost entirely on dissidents with pro-Western, liberal-democratic views on how to fix the ills of their society. The histories accessible to the general public are the stories of men like Sakharov and Solzhenitsyn. Where is the history of those that fought so hard, often losing freedom and livelihood, to oppose the regimes within their respective nations with the message of communism? By publishing new histories of *communist* dissent in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, we can better understand the nuances of how social movements in these countries unfolded on a transnational level and how people in these countries understood themselves in relation to the rest of the world at an exciting and dynamic point in history.

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