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Professor Roman Sławiński  
(1932–2014)



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**FIELD STUDY REPORT**

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## Introduction

Dear Readers!

We are presenting you yet another, already the 28th, issue of *Acta Asiatica Varsoviensia* devoted to the countries and culture of Asia. Over the years of its activity the journal started to be issued in English and it has hosted on its pages many eminent experts on Asia, yet still it remained faithful to its formula which was proposed thirty years ago by Professor Roman Sławiński, the founder of the journal and its permanent editor in chief. This formula stipulated that the Asian cultures should present themselves in the journal and talk directly with their own voice. The idea was both: to include in the group of authors and editors of the magazine scientists who grew up in Asian cultures, as well as to publish materials based on or referring to the texts – philosophical, linguistic, historical, sociological, religious studies or political studies – which were created by the Asian culture. These could be proper names as an object of linguistic research, religious texts, political documents, ideological declarations, but also biographical materials, historiographical elaborations, experience of meeting other cultures and mutual acculturation phenomenon resulting from the relations.

Professor Roman Sławiński left us in November 2014. The more time passes from his death, the more I feel his absence and the more I realize how unique a character he was in the world of research on China. Professor Marianne Bastid-Bruguière, a prominent French scholar from Institut de France in Paris, who met Roman Sławiński in the times of his studies in Beijing, writes about that fact. Most striking is the variety of interests and multidimensionality of research on China which he ran. He was trained as a linguist, and he knew perfectly well not only the classical language, but also many dialects. There was even a time it was appreciated by Mao Zedong himself. Roman Sławiński was interpreting a conversation of the Chinese leader with the Polish state authorities. During the conversation Mao Zedong changed as usual from the classical language to the dialect of Hunan province, which was his place of origin. When he realized he was using the dialect, he noticed that it was not a slightest problem for the interpreter to understand his statements. Then he asked: „Who is that young man who understands the Hunan dialect?” It was known that many Chinese from the surroundings of the Chairman did not understand him when he spoke in the native dialect. It so happened, that Roman Sławiński knew the dialect.

He was interested not only in the language. History, politics, culture as well as China's economy were the subject of his interest and research. His views, opinions and insights on these matters were the inspiration for many researchers of China, some of which are the authors of the materials contained in this issue. Of the many research interests of Professor Sławiński in recent years at least two may be mentioned. First one became Confucianism, especially its latest colours and shades. Professor persistently sought and discovered them in the texts of Chinese scientists, government documents, archives and everyday citizens of China. In this regard he was a dedicated explorer and a keen observer. Even the slightest detail was important to him. Minor personnel changes on the bureaucratic ladder were important for the formation

of general conclusions. From my conversations with him, I got the impression that he was rather skeptical about the possibility of a revival of Confucianism under the supervision of the communist authorities. So he concluded after examining many texts of the so-called new wave of Confucianism in China. His works on the latest Chinese historiography constitute an invaluable contribution to global research on contemporary China. His second passion was the research on the minorities of China Southern. The field research among the peoples of Miao and Tujia that he ran and in which I had the opportunity to participate assumed getting to know the nature of change in the cultural identity of these minorities in the era of globalization and accelerated socio-economic transformation in China. These studies had not been completed, and we can only hope that one of the students of Professor will continue them in the near future.

The arrangement of contents offered to you in the 28th issue of *Acta Asiatica Varsoviensia* refers to the research passions of Professor Sławiński. The first article, written by Stanisław Tokarski – Indologist and long-time associate of Professor Sławiński, concerns dialogue between the East and the West and the possibility of mutual understanding and agreement. Understanding another culture is also the ability to read the symbols contained in the letters and that aspect of the intercultural dialogue interested Professor Sławiński in particular. The question of so-called Asian values – presented in the articles written by Adam Jelonek, Adam Raszewski, Artur Kościański and Larisa Zabrowskaia – was very close to Professor Sławiński and he dealt with it for many years as part of his research on the so-called new Confucianism. The issue of Chinese migration in the world was also in the interests of Professor – mainly in the context of global economic and social phenomena. This part of the research on China is presented in the article on the Chinese migration to France by Nicolas Levi. The issue of Chinese language was obviously important for Professor Sławiński as a linguist and he always welcomed in the columns of *Acta* the authors writing about language and linguistic issues. This area of research is presented in the current issue in the article on Chinese names written by Irena Kałużyńska. On the other hand, the artistic part of the culture is referred to in the articles by Izabella Łabędzka, Lidia Kasarełło, Ewa Chmielowska, Fu-sheng Shih and Diana Wolańska. The first three of these articles relate to Taiwan, where Professor conducted research for many years which resulted among others in a monograph *History of Taiwan*. The further three articles penned by Waldemar Dziak, Iwona Grabowska-Lipińska and Anna Mrozek-Dumanowska refer to the political sphere. Political sphere is inextricably linked with the ideology which was also the case of China. Confucianism and the new Confucianism emerged and developed in the shadow of the emperors, presidents and chairmen of the Chinese Communist Party. Researching them without the analysis of the political scene was not possible. The part of articles is closed by two texts unrelated with China, but with the Middle East. Their authors – Dorota Rudnicka-Kassem and Marcin Styszyński present materials based on the Middle Eastern sources and thus relate to the traditions of *Acta Asiatica Varsoviensia*. The issue is closed by the report from field research in southern China by Professor Sławiński and me. For me it was a unique opportunity to get to know at least a little piece of China – a unique one, because my guide was Professor Sławiński – such a great scholar and such a seasoned expert on Asia.

I would like to thank the authors – students, colleagues and friends – for participation in the preparation of the issue, and the Directorate of the Institute of Mediterranean and Oriental Cultures of the Polish Academy of Sciences for the possibility to dedicate the anniversary issue of *Acta Asiatica Varsoviensia* to Professor Sławiński.

Jerzy Zdanowski

WALDEMAR DZIAK

## China and the October '56 Events in Poland

### Abstract

The situation in Poland and Hungary in 1956 caused resulted in increased political activity within the Communist Party of China. The aim of Mao Zedong's strategy was for China to attain a significant position within the communist bloc. China supported the changes taking place in Poland with a focus on its own political gains with its relations with the USSR.

**Key words:** Mao, Khrushchev, Gomulka, October '56

The attitude of Chinese executives to the Polish October and more broadly to the whole process of the so-called renewal may be the best illustration of their future tactics. The events in 1956 in Poland, as well as during the whole post-October process, were received with a lively and enthusiastic acceptance by the Chinese leaders.

Years ago, in the volume *Albania między Belgradem, Moskwą i Pekinem*<sup>1</sup> a point was made, regarding the situation in Poland, that Chinese leaders had from the beginning formulated two diametrically different assessments and interpretations – a negative one for the internal use within the party, and a positive one, being presented externally and internationally. With newly acquired knowledge, and armed with previously unknown archival documents, the author no longer retains such a categorical assessment. It was basically correct, but the essence of the matter, as usual, lay in the details. The Chinese leadership circles differed in their evaluation of the events in Poland, and Soviet interference in the internal affairs of the fraternal party. It seems that the key note was defined from the policy adopted by Chairman Mao Zedong. Presumably the official support for the Polish transformation, as well as for Gomulka was to be attributed to his assessments and far-reaching plans.

China with great satisfaction realized that the Polish Communists were fighting only to widen the scope of their autonomy, and not for freedom from a doctrinal orthodoxy. It was then when the Chairman was to declare that “China and Poland were unified, without even knowing it. It's a good union, one with which we are satisfied”.<sup>2</sup>

Returning to strict political leadership Władysław Gomulka, the ex-secretary general of the Polish Workers' Party, who, was accused of rightist-nationalistic deviations, had been removed from his position on Stalin's inspiration, and shortly after placed under house

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<sup>1</sup> W.J. Dziak, *Albania między Belgradem, Moskwą i Pekinem* [Albania between Belgrade, Moscow and Beijing], Warszawa: ISP PAN, 1991.

<sup>2</sup> R. Terrill, *Mao. Biografia* [Mao. A Biography], Warszawa: Iskry, 2001, p. 288.

arrest. But his returning to the rank of First Secretary to the Central Committee of the PUWP greatly excited the Chinese to the highest degree. Fortunately for Poland, the reaction of the Soviet leadership to such a course of events, as well as the announcement of a forceful solution of the problem turned out to be important and crucial for China and its leaders. Mao was not indifferent to the issue should Khrushchev, returning to the old Stalinist methods of leadership in the socialist bloc, subdue an unruly ally by a military invasion, or seek other ways to solve the emerging contradictions among these countries.

In light of the disclosed Polish documents it seems indisputable that during September–October 1956 Mao and the other Chinese leaders, indoctrinated by Khrushchev and his immediate acolytes were convinced that Gomulka was a right-wing usurper ready to deny obedience to Moscow. In subsequent letters addressed directly to Mao and the CPC Central Committee, Moscow informed Beijing that Gomulka was pushing for a withdrawal of Soviet troops from Poland and an ostentatious limitation of the Soviet influence in the country, which was a “clear action in favour of imperialism”. The charges were serious and the Chinese leaders, including Chairman Mao, tended to support the Soviet invasion of Poland. On the 20th October 1956, in a conversation with the Soviet Ambassador in Beijing, Mao supposedly said: “If the conditions become such that you will need to enter Poland with the Soviet army, you are free to do it”.<sup>3</sup>

According to Edgar Snow’s reports, the Moscow generals were strongly supported by the Chinese military with Defense Minister, Marshal Peng Dehuai, and that “was supposed to cool down the Polish revisionists”.<sup>4</sup> Meanwhile, between the 18th and 22nd October the CPC (Central Committee Political Bureau) was literally flooded with information from Moscow, which in a simplified, schematic, and sometimes intentionally false way created the situation for the PUWP in the Polish state and society. In a letter to the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Soviet Union dated October 18th, addressed also to the Central Committees of the fraternal parties, also certainly including the Chinese Party, the Soviets sought to “draw their comrades’ attention to the fact that the situation in Poland raises serious apprehension in connection with the special meaning of Poland’s position for the socialistic camp, particularly for the Soviet Union”. These words were intended to communicate a real threat from Poland’s exit from the Warsaw Pact, which, as we know, was completely far from the truth.<sup>5</sup>

The most significant point of these attacks was that the Soviet comrades did not approve the program of the VIII Plenum of the PUWP Central Committee and negatively assessed the transformation in Poland. The Chinese party and its leader Mao Zedong, having received “comprehensive” information from the Chinese embassy in Warsaw, came to the conclusion that Khrushchev and the CPSU had both wrongly diagnosed the situation in the PUWP elites, as well as the new party leader, Władysław Gomułka. According to information recently disclosed by Chinese historians, the actions taken by the Polish government against the workers’ strikes were considered as a sign of “serious bureaucracy”, which inevitably

<sup>3</sup> An excerpt from the conversation between Deng Xiaoping and F. Kozlov regarding the situation in Poland and Hungary in autumn 1956, PUWP Archives of Modern History Documentation, 2509 K. 19–21, p. 3.

<sup>4</sup> E. Snow, *China, Russia and the USA*, New York: Marzani & Munsell, 1962, p. 648; see also V. Micunovic, *Dziennik moskiewski 1936* [A Moscow Diary 1936] Warszawa: Niezależna Oficyna Wydawnicza NOVA, 1988, p. 142.

<sup>5</sup> A. Paczkowski (ed.), *Centrum władzy w Polsce 1948–1970* [Center of Power in Poland 1948–1970], Warszawa: ISP PAN, 2003.

justified the protests and Gomulka's attempts to reform socialism, and thereby contributed to a diametrically different assessment of the events in Poznań and tensions in Poland. The new stance, favourable for Poland, was taken on the night of the 21st October by China's highest leaders: Mao Zedong, Zhou Enlai, Chen Yun, Deng Xiaoping, Peng Zhen, Lu Dingyi, Hu Qiaomu, Li Fuchun, Peng Dehuai. Wang Jiaxiang, Kang Sheng, Li Weihan, Bo Yibo and Li Xiannian.<sup>6</sup> In view of this situation, the Chinese party leadership asked the Soviet leadership for a revision to their erroneous position. On the night of 20th October at Zhongnanhai, Ambassador Judin was told that if the Soviet army entered Poland, China would officially condemn the Soviet Union, following which he was immediately, on the spot, ordered to call Khrushchev with this information.<sup>7</sup> In response to this, the Chinese delegation was invited to Moscow for talks, with a suggestion that they consider paying a similar visit to Warsaw in order to "persuade their Polish comrades to restrain themselves." On the 23rd October 1956 a delegation of the Communist Party of the China Central Committee consisting of Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping commenced talks at the Kremlin with representatives of the CPSU and the delegation of PUP. Occasionally they had a stormy course, because Khrushchev still criticised the October transformation in Poland and did not trust Gomulka.

Mao's instructions, given firstly to Liu, subjected the Soviets to criticism because of their "grandly-powered chauvinism" and assumption of a military intervention as a primary solution. Liu, using these proxies, proposed that the Russian leadership with Khrushchev submit a self-critique<sup>8</sup> which had to be a painful affront, given the fact this method was used previously during the Chinese political campaigns to humiliate their political opponents. Still in December 1956 during a conversation with Stanislaw Kiryluk, the Polish Ambassador in Beijing, Mao stressed that "Soviet comrades had no knowledge of the situation in Poland and were ready to use force, similar to the position taken by their Czech and German comrades." According to Mao's account, when the Chinese delegation with Liu Shaoqi visited Moscow, Khrushchev and the Soviet leadership were convinced of the absolute necessity of the earliest possible military intervention in Poland. The Chinese delegation only anticipated the acceptance of the use of force, but not to a discussion of the problem. However, things went differently<sup>9</sup> because in the face of a firm stance by the Chinese Khrushchev relented, preferring to choose the method of political persuasion and pressure on the new Polish leadership.

In light of the disclosed archival documents one must admit that the Chinese delegation in Moscow did a good job, also in Khrushchev's opinion, whom a few months after these events said to Polish Ambassador in Moscow that "His Chinese comrades gave him some wise counsel regarding the Poles". He cited, among others, the words of Liu Shaoqi, "In China there is a worm that after the rain comes out of the ground, spreads out and lies quietly. Squeeze it with a finger in the middle and it will shrink, turn and become very worried; let

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<sup>6</sup> Xianzhi Feng, Chongji Jin, *Mao Zedong zhuan 1949–1976*, Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian, 2003, pp. 601–602.

<sup>7</sup> Jung Chang, Jon Halliday, *Mao. The Unknown Story*, London: Jonathan Cape, 2005, p. 421; see also Xianzhi Feng, Chongji Jin, *Mao Zedong...*, pp. 601–602.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 421.

<sup>9</sup> Cipher text No. 19477 from Beijing, sent 4 December 1956 by Ambassador S. Kiryluk, p. 3 (a copy of the document in the author's private collections); cipher text No. 17599 from Beijing, sent 1 p.m., 27 October 1956.

go, and it will straighten up again and then calm down. There is no need to bother Poles".<sup>10</sup>

Once the threat of a Soviet intervention in Poland had been averted, the main Chinese leaders – Mao Zedong, Zhou Enlai, Chen Yunem and Zhang Wentian, at 2 a.m. that day invited Ambassador Kiryluk to the main building of the CPC Central Committee and for three hours they explained to him the reasons for China's intervention in Moscow in favor of Poland; and most importantly, they wanted to deliver to the new leadership in Warsaw the message of "complete solidarity with the political stance of the PUWP Central Committee and welcomed the economic program resulting from the analysis of the achievements and mistakes occurring over the six year period. In addition, their Chinese comrades explicitly stressed that the Polish way is correct and to endorse it with full confidence." According to Kiryluk's reports, Mao also stressed that "the issue of an autonomy of Polish activities cannot be questioned despite the objections from the CPSU Political Bureau, which would become accustomed to the methods and forms of action that need to be eliminated from the relationships within the camp." Mao also spoke about the remains of grandly-powered chauvinism in the USSR and asked that at the forthcoming meeting of the Soviet and Polish leaders they pave new rules of cooperation between the two parties.<sup>11</sup>

Given such an unequivocal support to the October changes in Poland and personally to Gomulka, Mao simultaneously insisted that the PUWP leadership in Warsaw, whilst taking important political decisions, also take into account the "interests of the whole socialist community", its security and stability. In this context he addressed the Polish authorities to reconsider the justification of the current withdrawal of Soviet troops from Poland and whether such a step would not "undermine the existence of the Warsaw Pact."<sup>12</sup> One cannot let the enemy take advantage of fissures in our camp – supposedly said Mao and he again stressed a full solidarity with the new Polish leadership.

On the day Ambassador Kiryluk sent a sensational cipher text to Warsaw, at the airport in Beijing an unexpected conversation took place between Mieczyslaw Marzec, a member of the Political Bureau of the PUWP Central Committee and also the head of the Department of Light Industry at the PUWP CC who had just completed his mission in China, and Marshal Zhu De, who asked Kiryluk to inform the Polish leadership that the Political Bureau of CPC Central Committee "fully supports the transformation taking place in Poland and, within its capabilities, China will be happy to help Poland".<sup>13</sup> Zhu De's declaration meant something more than just mediation in the dispute or a declaration of solidarity; it meant firm support and assistance. And it was probably read as such in the executive circles of the PUWP. Even in July 1957 in the political report from the Polish Embassy in Beijing sent by ambassador Kiryluk to the Foreign Ministry in Warsaw it was stressed that from the 8<sup>th</sup> Congress of CPC (September 1956), and after the talks between Mao and Edward Ochab, and especially during the VIII plenum of the Central Committee and the departure of the Chinese delegation to Moscow, "comrade Mao Zedong and other comrades from the leadership expressed their overall approval for the changes taking place in Poland," as the Ambassador had informed in detail earlier in dispatches. "During this period, Comrade Mao Zedong repeatedly asked the ambassador to see him, carrying out long and detailed

<sup>10</sup> A note from the Polish Ambassador in Moscow, PUWP Archives of Modern History Documentation, 2631 K. 195–201. p. 2; Cipher text No. 17599..., pp. 2–3.

<sup>11</sup> Cipher text No. 17599..., pp. 2–3.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

<sup>13</sup> PUWP Central Committee Archives of Modern History Documentation 254 / K. 2, p. 1.

discussions on the history of the Polish labour movement, achievements and deviations of the past 12 years, and the abnormality that occurred in the party and state relations between the Soviet Union and Poland. Further analysis of the facts still established comrade Mao Zedong's and the CPC Central Committee PB's [belief] about the correctness of the direction taken by the new Political Bureau and the Central Committee of PUWP. Support for the events in Poland was given in parallel with a profound analysis and assessment of the situation in the Soviet Union and the CPSU leadership. Chinese comrades repeatedly stressed the need for methods of persuasion and a skillful polemic in order to overcome the construction of the old style of work in the CPSU leadership and thus influence the implementation of the resolutions of the 20<sup>th</sup> Congress.<sup>14</sup> On 30th October, at a meeting of the CPC Central Committee Political Bureau, Mao Zedong described the earlier Soviet decision of the military intervention in Poland as "insolent" and "quite wrong".<sup>15</sup>

A peaceful solution to the post-October crisis situation in Poland, as planned by the Chinese, and more importantly – with their significant participation, was an unprecedented event in the current practice of Moscow's relations with its allies in the communist camp. It turned out that the determination of the Chinese party forced the Soviet party and its leadership not only to consult with Beijing on the most important decisions, but also to seek political consensus on certain behaviors. The new situation was both unusual and exceptional, in practice it irretrievably broke the former Soviet monopoly of truth and the binding dogma of the infallibility of the Soviet party. The solution to the Polish issue respecting the Chinese attitude, without an intervention by the USSR and still maintaining the party leadership in Warsaw independent of Moscow, for China meant a successful attempt to break not only the ideological monopoly of Moscow, but also – in one sense – establish a new practice and a new reality in which the CPSU and its leaders were losing their political primacy and an undisputed position. This created a very promising situation for Mao and his far-reaching plans. At this stage of the political game with the USSR it was enough for him to win an equivalent communist superpower status for China, by undermining the importance of Khrushchev as a successor to Stalin and the leader of the socialist world and a move towards playing such a role himself.<sup>16</sup>

"I suppose – says Andrzej Werblan – that their [Chinese] far reaching intention was to force the Soviet Union to share weapons, and for the USSR to help them become equal partners, as well as in a military aspect. The first step was to create a situation in which nothing would happen without their consent. It had not been like that in Stalin's time. Now China decided to exploit the situation and was waiting for an opportunity to capitalise. When the opportunity came – it was the Polish issue".<sup>17</sup>

It is difficult not to agree with this opinion, because the Polish issue occurred in extremely favorable circumstances for the Chinese leaders. Mao decided to capitalize on the situation, by intensifying diplomatic activity and decisively involving China in the trend of changes taking place in the countries of the Eastern bloc. Driven mainly by his own self interests, he insistently sought – and successfully too – to create an image of political reality in which China

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<sup>14</sup> A political report of the Polish Embassy in Beijing from 5 July 1957, Archives of Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Department VI, Division I, China 074, section 12, folder 94, set 5, p. 18.

<sup>15</sup> Wu Lengxi, *Shinian lunzhan*, Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe, 1999, Vol. 1, p. 51.

<sup>16</sup> Chang, Halliday, *Mao...*, pp. 421–422.

<sup>17</sup> 'Daltonista. Z Andrzejem Werblanem o Władysławie Gomułce' [Color Blind. On Wladyslaw Gomułka with Andrzej Werblan], *Res Publica*, 1990, No. 11, p. 34.

would be perceived by the majority of socialist countries as the main spokesman for equal rights and a sole defender of and their sovereignty. The remarkable activities of the Chinese leaders and their pressure on the Soviet leadership led ultimately to the solemn proclamation of a declaration by the Soviet government on 30th October 1956 in Moscow, regarding the basics of development and further strengthening of the friendship and cooperation of the Soviet Union with the other socialist states. The declaration acknowledged that there had been some violations and mistakes in the past that had limited the principle of equality in relations between Socialist states and helped cause unnecessary tensions and disputes. According to the new stance defined by the 20<sup>th</sup> Congress, the CPSU were committed to the principles of equality for all states and nations. The document, adopted on the inspiration of Beijing, was intended by Mao to sanction the new political order in the countries of the bloc which were created by the events in Poland and Hungary in which Beijing would play a role of an equal partner and co-leader for the whole great family of socialist states.

Documents disclosed years later prove that Mao, keeping up the momentum, proposed that Khrushchev include in the text of the declaration the five principles of peaceful co-existence adopted at the Afro-Asiatic conference in Bandung (May 1955), where China had played an active role. Unfortunately – said Liu Shaoqi years later “Soviet comrades did not agree to it and deleted the principle for peaceful co-existence”.<sup>18</sup>

The Chinese initiative was all too clear for Khrushchev, who realized that by making concessions to Mao, in this case, would mean political consent on a wider range of independence for the socialist bloc countries in their external relations, which would weaken the already loosened Soviet control over the allies. Therefore, Ziemowit J. Pietraś is right to emphasize that on the part of China it was “an obvious attempt to define its specific global role, which was not quite in line with the interpretations adopted in the USSR, where it was believed that relations between the socialist countries are of a new type, with the result that the principles of coexistence among them do not apply, especially in the sphere of respect for the sovereignty and equality of participants”.<sup>19</sup>

The Soviet refusal did not, however, discourage the Chinese leaders, on the contrary – they would be even more actively manifest in their own impeccable attitude with regard to this issue. This purpose was served, among other things, by giving wide publicity to the People’s Republic of China official statement on the USSR government’s declaration, a document full of anti-Soviet allusions. It seems that the purpose of both the Soviet declaration and the Chinese statement was to “define new conditions created by the events in Poland”<sup>20</sup>, and it also represented the last desperate attempt to prevent the exit of Hungary from the socialist camp.

At this point it is worth considering the attitude of China towards the revolutionary events in Hungary<sup>21</sup>. Throughout October 1956, China (similar to the case of Poland) urged the Soviet leadership to abandon their intervention in Budapest and to continue to seek

<sup>18</sup> ‘Rozmowy delegacji polskiej z delegacją Chińskiej Republiki Ludowej, Moskwa, listopad 1960’ [The Talks of the Polish Delegation and the Delegation of the People’s Republic of China, Moscow, November 1960], *Annex*, 1978, No. 18, p. 122.

<sup>19</sup> Z.J. Pietraś, *Międzynarodowa rola Chin* [The International Role of China], Lublin: UMCS, 1990, p. 118.

<sup>20</sup> Z. Brzezinski, *Jedność czy konflikty* [Unity or Conflicts], London: Odnova, 1964, p. 193.

<sup>21</sup> J.M. Rainer, *Imre Nagy. Biografia polityczna* [Imre Nagy. A Political Biography], Warszawa: ISP PAN, 2003, p. 142.

ways of a peaceful solution to the problem, with the basic assumption that Hungary would remain in the community. Nikita Khrushchev in his memoirs also admits that China did not have a consistent view on the issue, sometimes supporting it, whilst criticizing it on other occasions. Finally, during the China – USSR talks in Moscow it was agreed that the Russians would refrain from intervention. However, several hours later after the end of negotiations, Khrushchev, already then on the Moscow airport tarmac, informed Liu Shaoqi that the Soviet leadership had finally decided to intervene.<sup>22</sup> And that was the message that Liu carried back to Beijing.

The indecisiveness of the Chinese in their evaluation of the first phase of the Hungarian events may have stemmed from the ambiguous assessment of Prime Minister Imre Nagy, who at the beginning of 1956 advocated the socialist path of development in Hungary, albeit with a greater internal autonomy, as well as the acceptance of the five principles of peaceful coexistence in external relations, which was consistent with the Chinese aspirations.

Rightly says Ross Terrill, Mao's biographer, that for some time the Chairman "flirted with Hungary".<sup>23</sup> Perhaps this lack of enthusiasm for the actions of the Soviets made China behave in an ostentatiously neutral manner towards and during the fratricidal fights in Hungary, by not granting refuge to the Hungarian communists in its embassy in Budapest. It did not escape the attention of Hungarian the insurgents who quickly spread the enthusiastic news that "the Chinese are with us".<sup>24</sup>

A radical change in China's position took place at the time Hungary, announced its neutrality, and exited the Warsaw Pact. The case of Hungary was treated as a special one related to the decision of the political leaders in Budapest to exclude their country from the camp, and the inability of the Hungarian communists to regain control of the situation all by themselves.

The stance of the Chinese was a surprise to Poland and the new Gomulka team, but the Chinese government, justifying its attitude, tried at the same time to argue that – as put diplomatically by the then ambassador of PRC in Warsaw in an interview with Polish Deputy Foreign Minister Marian Naszkowski – "what is occurring in Poland is fundamentally different to the situation in Hungary. In the Polish case we see internal issues between the different socialist countries, while in Hungary there is a war between revolutionists and counter-revolutionists".<sup>25</sup>

Due to the fact that the situation in Hungary was different from that in Poland, Mao Zedong, albeit without enthusiasm, accepted the Soviet invasion of Hungary, but opposed a similar solution for Poland. In a special statement the Chinese authorities confirmed that the declaration "corresponds to the wishes of the Chinese party" and even expressed a hope that "the same way would be taken to deal with the divergences that may arise in the future".<sup>26</sup> Still in December 1956 Mao Zedong intentionally emphasized his own great personal satisfaction with the way Wladyslaw Gomulka had conducted the negotiations in Moscow. "In Mao's opinion – writes Kiryluk – The Polish delegation showed political

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<sup>22</sup> N.S. Khrushchev, 'Vremya. Lyudi. Vlast. Vospominaniya v 4 knigakh' [Time. People. Power. Reminiscences], 4 vols., Moscow: Moskovskije Novosti, 1999, Vol. 3, p. 51.

<sup>23</sup> Terrill, *Mao...*, p. 289.

<sup>24</sup> W.E. Griffith, *Communism in Europe. Continuity, Change and the Sino-Soviet Dispute*, Cambridge, Mass.: M.I.T. Press, 1964, Vol. 1, p. 241.

<sup>25</sup> PUWP Central Committee Archives of Modern History Documentation, 2541 K 7, p. 1.

<sup>26</sup> *Trybuna Ludu* [The People's Tribune], 23 November 1956, p. 2.

wisdom, by highlighting the importance of the community and alliance on legitimate grounds, while at the same time offering their Soviet comrades the possibility to withdraw from their previously assumed wrongful positions”.<sup>27</sup>

Let us stress once again that the issue of Poland and its solution helped to legitimize the growing role of China as an equal power (beside the USSR), while facilitating the process of creating the image of China as a political guarantor for the independence and sovereignty of the satellite states of the Soviet Union. Mao realized that the support for the post-October changes in Poland, and personally for Wladyslaw Gomulka, would create a sound platform for political confrontation with Khrushchev regarding the extension of Chinese autonomy concerning relations with Moscow. Hence, the publicly demonstrated sympathy towards changes in Poland and the fostering of Gomulka were part of Mao’s great political game with the new leaders in the Kremlin.

However, the support for the Polish transformation and personally for Gomulka was conditional: Mao and the other Chinese leaders clearly stressed that the struggle for the autonomy of the PUWP and the independence of socialist Poland may not lead to a weakening of the socialist camp. Hence the admonition not to withdraw the Soviet troops from Poland, and to come to terms with the intervention in Hungary and “defend the Soviet Union against the attacks of imperialism”.<sup>28</sup> “Recognizing the legitimacy of clashing views [...], the leadership of the CPC represents the view – read the political report of the Polish embassy in Beijing – that from the outside, the ideological and political primacy of the Soviet Union and CPSU should be maintained, and that the evaluation of errors cannot shake the position of the Soviet Union and the unity of the socialist countries in the international arena”.<sup>29</sup>

Chairman Mao indeed supported the efforts from post-October Poland aiming at a greater sovereignty, as well as the autonomous pursuit of the PUWP in its relations with the CPSU, but at the same time marked the boundaries of support and the scale of its autonomous ambitions. And these boundaries were defined by Chinese strategic and political interests both in confrontation with “American imperialism” and “Soviet hegemony”. While Poland was still officially praised, at the same time highly critical opinions were voiced within the Chinese party in the process of the ongoing struggle for a new shape to domestic policy. Already in November 1956, once Mao sent enthusiastic signals of support for Poland, at a closed session of the Central Committee plenum Wladyslaw Gomulka (on a par with Khrushchev and Tito) was mercilessly criticised as a “model representative of the ideological destruction and deviation”. “The basic problem for some Eastern Europe countries is that the class struggle was carried out improperly there, so many counter-revolutionaries have not been dealt with, the *proletariat* has not been educated on how to make a distinction between us and the enemy, truth and falsehood, and between idealism and materialism. And now, consuming the fruits, they became burnt”.<sup>30</sup> In this way Mao was proving that the realization of Khrushchev’s ideological innovations in China would automatically activate the revisionist powers in the party and the counter-revolutionary ones in the state, together with the imitation of the stance taken from the 20<sup>th</sup> Congress of the CPSU which would

<sup>27</sup> Cipher text No. 19477 from Beijing, sent 4 December 1956 (a copy of the document in author’s private collections).

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>29</sup> A political report of the Polish Embassy in Beijing..., p. 1.

<sup>30</sup> Mao Zedong, *Mao Zedong xuanji. Di wu juan*, Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1977, p. 323.

end like that in Poland and Hungary. Mao made use of the Polish and Hungarian events to achieve his two main strategic objectives: first – to strengthen China's autonomous position in the bloc and get to the position of actual co-leader of the whole community, and secondly – to oppose the stance of the 20<sup>th</sup> Congress over the Chinese internal scene.

The Chinese leaders, especially Mao, began to evaluate and interpret Khrushchev's new line mainly in terms of its suitability toward their political interests. Therefore, the Chairman appreciated his courage and praised the 20<sup>th</sup> Congress when he considered useful and politically convenient. At the same time he warned of the consequences of the new Soviet policy over its strength. Officially he would defend Stalin, repeating ad nauseam that 70 percent of his actions were merited and that only 30 percent were errors; actually attacking him ruthlessly. Seemingly an inconsistency, in fact it was a deliberate and thoughtful action. Mao defended Stalin's reputation when it was connected with his self-defense, his style and his model of political leadership. In turn, he attacked Stalin's policy when it resulted in interference of the internal affairs of the Chinese Revolution or a misunderstanding of the aspirations and determination of China to play a more active and an independent role in the international arena.

What else, if not the criticism of Stalin and Stalinism which was highlighting the practices of the "grandly-powered chauvinism of the internal and external policy" of the Soviet Union under Stalin? How to evaluate this negative role of such international communist organizations as the 'Comintern' or 'Cominform' (which in the eyes of Mao were merely obedient tools of Soviet state policy), if not as a denial of the whole Stalinist foreign policy? Mao's anti-Sovietness found an outlet for his attacks on anything Soviet. Suddenly, it turned out that the Soviet experience in the construction and implementation of communism, various solutions, working methods, the style and model of relations with fraternal countries were a burden, an obstacle and a major brake on the Chinese revolution. Let us recall that Mao's anti-Soviet rants on the "Russian chauvinists", "hardline elements", "revisionists" and "conservatives" in fact also concerned the relationship between China and USSR at the time of Stalin's reign, not Khrushchev's, who also courted Mao for support, cherished and flattered him, satisfying Chinese political and prestige ambitions. So why did Mao, an old Chinese nationalist, attack the 20<sup>th</sup> Congress of the CPSU and its provisions, when it was this congress and the new policy that helped China so much on the path towards independence and greatness? The core of the problems lay in the fact that Mao feared – and rightly so – that the criticism of Stalin would hit indirectly his own position, and therefore his vision of China – vast, powerful, invincible.

Mao could afford open and explicit criticism of the stance taken from the 20<sup>th</sup> Congress but only in the situation that prevailed amongst most of the political leaders of the communist bloc countries, whom, after events in Poland and the Hungarian uprising felt a real threat, considering the so-called renewal and thaw resulting from the spirit of the 20<sup>th</sup> Congress as the harbingers of instability, problems and political disorder. Such fears were also shared by a significant part of the Chinese political leadership, but Mao only officially expressed them. Calling those Chinese party activists who supported the stance of the 20<sup>th</sup> Congress "shaky intra-party elements" or even more contemptuously "little ants" which required even from Mao considerable political courage. After all, the highest representatives of the party and the Chinese state: Liu Shaoqi, Zhou Enlai, Peng Dehuai, Deng Xiaoping, Zhu De, Bo Yibo and Chen Yun had spoken commendably about the 20<sup>th</sup> Congress of the CPSU. Would Mao have meant them when he spoke with disgust about "unstable elements within the party"? Certainly yes, because their subsequent political fates and charges formulated against them fully confirm this. Mao's opponents suddenly found themselves in a very awkward situation.

Supporting the decisions of the 20<sup>th</sup> Congress, after what happened in Poland and Hungary, as well as in North Korea (where a group of opponents of Kim Il Sung, inspired by the new policy of Moscow, attempted to overthrow the Korean Stalin), was neither easy nor reasonable. Defending the previous political positions by Mao's opponents actually became impossible when, quite vaguely, loosely and impersonally he accused many activists of the CPC of maintaining "secret relations with foreign countries" that "undermine relations between the parties and sovereign states". From the context it was clear that he meant the contacts within the Soviet party and its institutions. Let us remember that it was 1956, and hundreds – if not thousands – of the Chinese party activists remained in more or less formalized relations with their Soviet counterparts. Anybody could fall victim of persecution, attacks and accusations. And that was the point. Mao Zedong not for the first time showed that he knew how to intimidate, attack, hypnotise and convince all that anyone could face the executioner's axe one day. So, it would be better for them to stay quiet and take no action against him.

Having disarmed his main opponents morally and politically, the Chairman proceeded to attack the Soviet Union and its political leaders, whilst demonstrating unwavering friendship, cooperation and political alliance. "Do not imagine – he said – that between the communist parties there is no dispute. Are there no disputes in the world? [...] Nowadays between China and the Soviet Union there are some contradictions. The way of thinking and acting of the Russians [...] is different to ours [...]. We implement a different policy to Moscow in the areas such as collectivization, attitude to domestic capitalists and intelligence, and the relationship between agriculture and heavy and light industry, which we implement differently to the Russian's pricing policy on the market at a national scale and so on".<sup>31</sup>

From that time Mao's statements acted like a boomerang that returned the issue of the necessity for China to reject Soviet experience and methods of building communism as incompatible to local conditions, moreover, damaging and inhibiting the rapid economic development of the country.

Mao did not want to break with Moscow. On the contrary, he was keen for cooperation with the Soviets, their help and support for solidarity with Chinese foreign policy. His anti-Sovietism, at that time, was partly a reaction from years of humiliation, intervention and forced servility to Moscow. The death of Stalin, and later the stance of the 20<sup>th</sup> CPSU Congress made it clear to him that this was the long awaited moment when the Chinese party would be unable to completely free themselves from Soviet tutelage, and even get to the position of an equal partner.

Relations between China and the USSR during Stalin's life could be described as at best cool, and Mao, an unforgiving individual, carefully noted all the humiliations he had suffered from Stalin: the reprimands directed at the Chinese party, the wrong decisions and unfriendly attitude of the Kremlin towards the CPC in its conflict with Guomindang, finally, the numerous examples of anti-Chinese activities in the Soviet Union, such as the repressions of the Chinese people in the cities of Siberia shortly after the Shanghai massacre, i.e. after Chiang Kai-shek broke cooperation with the Communists by killing many of them in April 1927.

At the end of 1956 China apparently felt ready to actively participate in the formulation of global strategy for the world communist movement. Its growing position and external dynamics resulted also in an attempt to demonstrate a different model of economic development and distinct experience in constructing socialism.

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., p. 344.

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