

A STUDY OF THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE CHINESE
PEOPLE'S COMMUNES IN THE SINO-SOVIET DISPUTE

by

D. B. MARSON

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ABSTRACT

With the introduction of the people's communes in the People's Republic of China in 1958, a far-reaching ideological dispute arose between the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the Communist Party of China. In the years following the death of Stalin, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union had embarked upon a domestic policy which largely ignored many of the directives laid down by the fathers of Communism, and which often subordinated ideological considerations to pragmatic economic considerations. The people's communes embodied an attempt by the Chinese communists to realize all the prerequisites to Communism which the Soviet Union had forsaken in their drive to increase production and thus constituted a challenge to the "revisionist" policies of the Soviet Union. This was especially true in the light of the specific rejection of communes by the Soviet leaders a few months before the Chinese communes were introduced. Moreover, because "anti-party" groups existed both within the Chinese and Soviet parties, and were given ideological support by the opposing party, the dispute over the principles involved in the communes was turned from a theoretical dispute into a concrete struggle within the separate parties.

Besides being an ideological dispute over the correct policies to follow during the transition to Communism, the commune controversy also related directly to the more predominant issues of the Sino-Soviet dispute. The military

significance of the communes provided one such link; the detrimental effect of the communes on the world's image of Communism provided another such link, and the existence of pro-Soviet and pro-Chinese factions within the two parties, provided the other link; the latter situation was especially significant in the commune controversy since the C.P.S.U.'s support for the anti-commune faction of Marshall Peng Teh-huai and Chang Wen-tian, was at the same time support for a faction more in sympathy with the "revisionist" foreign policy of the Soviet Union.

In a broader perspective, the commune controversy also raised important issues concerning ideological authority, particularly over questions of domestic policy during the transition to Communism.

Since the Chinese party remains determined to proceed with their commune program as soon as economic conditions allow, and since the C.P.S.U. continues to make a more and more liberal interpretation of Communist society, it can be expected that the issues embodied in the commune controversy will continue to be strongly contended by the two parties. Moreover, the fact that the commune issue is related to the more predominant issues of the Sino-Soviet dispute, suggests that the debate over the communes will continue as long as differences remain between the two giants of the Communist world.

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Department of Political Science

The University of British Columbia,
Vancouver 8, Canada

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CHAPTER I

THE PEOPLE'S COMMUNES: AN INTRODUCTION

Officially introduced into China in August of 1958, the People's Commune superseded the collective farm as the basic unit in the Chinese countryside. The communes were formed by bringing together about twenty-five collective farms, each containing about 200 families, under one central administration; the collective becoming the sub-unit of the commune known as the production brigade. In nearly every case, the commune, with its population of about 20,000 corresponded almost exactly geographically to the township or Hsiang, the unit of local government; and the commune took over the function of local government. There are now about 24,000 of these rural people's communes in China.

While becoming the basic governmental unit of Chinese society, the commune also became the basic economic and social unit. The communes assumed control over the schools, industries, banks, and factories within their confines, and became responsible for coordinating all economic production and distribution. Two of the entirely new features which were introduced along with the communes were the public dining halls and the people's militia, which introduced a militancy not experienced before in Chinese life and resulted in peasant life becoming tightly disciplined and highly collectivized.

In general, the whole life process was organized along military lines, and came under the constant control of the Party apparatus. Another new feature was the introduction of a certain degree of "free supply" which was substituted for wages, with a resultant reduction in material incentive and a move towards equalitarianism in distribution of commodities. Intimately connected with these policies was the abolition of the peasants' small private plots, and the collectivization of nearly all of the remaining private property including livestock, implements and in some cases, personal effects.

In the spring of 1960 the country's urban areas were also transformed into a network of communes, sometimes centered around an industrial complex, and sometimes taking in a certain area of a city with all its diverse factories and enterprises. In some cases, workers were forced to change their place of residence to somewhere closer to their place of work, but in general the changeover to communes in the cities involved more of an administrative change than a social change. Initially in the cities too, communal dining halls were set up and commodities rationed out on a partial supply basis. Nurseries and homes for the aged were also established in the urban communes, as they had been in their rural counterparts. This resulted in most women being freed from general household duties, allowing the State to augment the urban labour force by many millions. In actual size, the

urban communes are considerably larger on the average than the rural communes, having a membership of approximately 50,000 persons each. In some cases, then, the commune includes an entire town.

China is thus, now divided into basic units known as communes. These communes, the Communist Party declares, are the socio-economic units which will carry the nation through the period of transition to communism, and which will continue to form the basic units of society when pure communism is reached. As China approaches nearer to communism, the communes, it is said, will evolve both to a higher stage of property relations and to a higher principle of distribution. Ultimately, all collective property will become property of the "whole people", and society will be based on the principle of "from each according to his abilities; to each according to his needs". The Chinese road to communism is, then, through the People's Communes.

A number of observers of the Chinese scene have made short studies of the Chinese communes themselves, and a few have made a somewhat limited analysis of their wider significance within the communist bloc. The most comprehensive study of the initial introduction of the communes and of their effect on Chinese-Soviet relations was conducted by D. S. Zagoria in a chapter of his book The Sino-Soviet Conflict, written in 1961. However, most of the reliable

evidence concerning the role of the communes within the total dispute has appeared since Zagoria collected his information, thus allowing a new and full analysis to be made. Especially lacking in the previous short studies of the Chinese communes has been the question of their historical and ideological significance within the framework of the communist ideology. For this reason, the present study includes a preliminary discussion of the ideological foundations of the Sino-Soviet dispute over the communes, and a historical survey of the relevant policies of Lenin and Stalin. Without this ideological-historical perspective, the real significance of the Chinese communes cannot be fully appreciated. There is a strong tendency of writers to disregard purely ideological considerations when dealing with the relations between China and the Soviet Union, laying the causes of dispute solely to such things as differing national interests and power politics. Such, I believe, is not the case. Although it may be tempered by these considerations, ideology still maintains an enormous influence on policy within the communist bloc; this being especially true in the Chinese case. Despite this fact, the obvious characteristic of the commune dispute was that it was carried on in ideological language with constant reference to the common ideology of Marxist-Leninism. Thus, without an understanding of the ideological foundations of the debate,

it is impossible to gauge how far each side was deviating, if at all, from the teachings of the ideology of Marxist-Leninism, and how much this deviation was caused by non-ideological considerations such as national interest.

From the evidence gathered it will be shown that the introduction of the communes resulted in an ideological dispute between the leadership of the two parties over the correct interpretation of Marxist-Leninism in regard to the question of the proper road and the proper speed for the advance of communism. The intensity of the dispute, and the importance attached to it by both sides, will be shown to be a direct result of the existence of opposing factions within both parties; while the origin of the dispute will be shown to be a result of Soviet ideological revisionism and conservatism. From the evidence presented, it will also be shown that the dispute over the communes widened into a dispute over the question of the ideological authority of the Soviet Union with regard to domestic construction and domestic policy in other communist nations, and the binding nature of "Soviet experience" in the transition to communism.

The military implications of the communes will be shown to be one direct link with the more predominant aspect of the Sino-Soviet dispute--the question of bloc foreign policy and of violent revolution. The economic and organizational aspects of the communes will be shown to have similar

relevance to the wider dispute, in so far as they affect the image of communism in the Western world. The significance of the communes in terms of Chinese leadership of the underdeveloped nations will also be elaborated upon, and their implications for the future in the light of the Sino-Soviet rift, will be suggested.

The major sources used in this study have been: the published works of Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Stalin; official documents and speeches published by the Foreign Languages Publishing House in the Soviet Union, and the Foreign Languages Press in China; the translations of the Soviet press and Party journals as collected in Soviet Press Translations and Current Digest of the Soviet Press; the translations of the Chinese press and Party journals as collected in the Peking Review, Current Background, Extracts from China Mainland Magazines, Survey of China Mainland Press, and Current Scene; the China Quarterly and Soviet Survey; The New York Times and numerous secondary sources included in books and articles both on the communes as such, and on communist ideology.

One of the greatest problems in studying the relations between China and the Soviet Union from the source material available to the Western researcher has been the necessity of undertaking considerable interpolation and interpretation because of the veiled language used in the communist

world. However, since 1963, the split between the two parties has evolved to the stage of open public argument, and thus the need to undertake "decoding" of the polemics is no longer present. Moreover, the facts revealed in the public exchanges between the Russians and Chinese have cast light on events in the past which before were completely unknown, or only guessed at, and allow the scholar to make a much more valid interpretation of past articles and speeches in the Soviet and Chinese press. It is with this "hindsight" that any necessary interpretation of documents and articles of the pre-1963 period have been made.

The study is organized into three main sections. First, the ideological and historical perspective is outlined. Then a detailed examination of the history of the commune dispute between the two parties is undertaken, beginning in 1957 and continuing through until the date of writing. Finally, an analysis of the chief trends emerging from the data and interpretation is presented, and the commune controversy is considered in the context of the total dispute.

CHAPTER II

THE IDEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS OF THE DISPUTE:

THE COMMON IDEOLOGY

From an ideological point of view, the Sino-Soviet rift over the communes is directly concerned with the broad question of the transition to communism, in the post-revolutionary period. Therefore, in order to put the dispute into its ideological perspective, it is necessary to examine the theoretical foundations of Marxist-Leninism (the common ideology to which both disputants claim to subscribe) with regard to the ultimate goal of communism, and with regard to the prescribed means of reaching this goal. The writings of Marx, Engels and Lenin form the main components of the Marxist-Leninist ideology, and will be dealt with in turn. The works of Stalin dealing with the transition to communism will also be considered since both the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the Chinese Communist Party recognize that Stalin's ideological contribution "enriches and augments the science of Marxist-Leninism".¹

I. MARX

Nowhere does Marx discuss in detail the communist utopia towards which he claims the world is inexorably

¹People's Daily, October 30, 1952; Soviet Press Translations, 1952, p. 432.

advancing. Neither does he lay down in detail the exact construction of the immediate post-revolutionary society, which, under the dictatorship of the proletariat, is the transitional phase between capitalism and communism. His chief concern in his writings is to analyze history dialectically, and to influence the proletariat to become conscious of its historical mission to overthrow world capitalism through violent revolution. His discussions of the immediate tasks--the organization of the workers of the world, and the overthrow of exploitative capitalism as represented by the bourgeoisie--are exhaustive since these pertain to the practical affairs of the moment; but generally only passing references are ever made in his writings to the characteristics of the post-revolutionary phases. As a result of this fact, it was left to the ideological heirs of Marx--Lenin, Stalin, Khrushchev and Mao to fill in the loose and general theoretical framework. This lack of a detailed characterization by Karl Marx of the period of the transition to communism, and of communism itself, has resulted, during the current century, in considerable dispute among Marxists as to the "correct" course to follow now that a number of national revolutions have been successful. The commune controversy is one manifestation of this dispute.

The Concept of Communism

In one of Marx's very early writings--his posthumously published Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, the father of

modern communism provides considerable insight into the nature of his thinking in regard to the future communist utopia. He also provides, in this work, an analysis of the human condition, which serves as a foundation for his conception of the ideal society. In general terms, Marx saw the human condition as one of self-alienation, of domination by the material world, of human debasement through slavish acquisitiveness; and he saw capitalist society as the highest stage of this alienation--of this dehumanization. The workers, he argued, were treated as little more than animals or machines by the exploitative capitalists and had reached the lowest depths to which mankind could sink. Soon, he claimed, they would rise up against their capitalist overlords, smash the socio-economic-political structure and free the whole of mankind from the bonds of materialism--creating in the long run a new kind of society in which self-alienation was transcended.

The most comprehensive outline of future society made by Marx appears in his Critique of the Gothe Program which was written in 1875. Here Marx clearly defined the two stages of the post-revolutionary stage and outlined the principles of production and distribution operative in each. Clearly separating the two distinct stages and their characteristics, Marx declared that:

Between capitalist and communist society lies the period of revolutionary transformation of the one into the other. There corresponds to this also a political transition period in which the state can be nothing but the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat.²

Marx pointed out that since the new society emerges from the old, it must necessarily undergo a transitional phase in which all the vestiges of capitalist society are overcome. In the following passage, he outlined this intermediate stage:

What we have to deal with here is a communist society, not as it developed on its own foundations, but, on the contrary, as it emerges from capitalist society; which is thus in every respect, economically, morally and intellectually, still stamped with the birthmarks of the old society from whose womb it emerges. Accordingly, the individual producer receives back from society - after the deductions have been made - exactly what he gives to it. What he has given to it is his individual quantum of labour.³

What this means in actual practice, then, is equal shares of the total production for equal labour contributed:

. . . the social working day consists of the sum of the individual hours of work; the individual labour time of the individual producer is the part of the social labour day contributed by him, his share in it. He

²K. Marx, Critique of the Gotha Program (Moscow, F.L.P.H., 1947), p. 39.

³Ibid., p. 24.

receives a certificate from society that he has furnished such and such an amount of labour (after deducting his labour for the common fund) and with this certificate he draws from the social stock of means of consumption as much as costs the same amount of labour. The same amount of labour he has given to society in one form, he receives back in another.⁴

In the first stage of communist society, then, equal labour begets equal right to the social products of society as a whole. But equal right in this sense is still "bourgeois right" according to Marx. This is because although an equal standard--labour--is laid down, "the right of the producers is proportional to the labour they supply."⁵ Thus "natural" inequalities come into play even here. No matter whether labour is computed on a time basis or an intensity basis, some men will contribute greater amounts of labour because they are stronger or intellectually superior to others, and will therefore "earn" more social products than others. Moreover, some men have wives and families to support while some do not, and some have more children than others; therefore while two men may contribute equal labour and receive equal portions of commodity production, one will be richer than the other--due merely to the circumstances he finds himself in. Bourgeois rights, then, still remain. "But these defects are inevitable, in the first phase of

⁴Ibid., p. 25.

⁵Loc. cit.

communist society," Marx argued, "as it . . . has just emerged after prolonged birth pangs from capitalist society."⁶

In time, Marx declared, the last vestiges of bourgeois society will be swept away by the dictatorship of the proletariat, and a new and final stage will be ushered in:

In a higher phase of communist society, after the enslaving subordination of individuals under division of labour, and therewith also the anti-thesis between mental and physical labour has vanished; after labour has ceased to be a means of life and has become itself the primary necessity of life; after the productive forces have also increased with the all-round development of the individual, and all the springs of co-operative wealth flow more abundantly--only then can the narrow horizon of bourgeois right be fully left behind and society inscribe on its banners; from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs.⁷

From this description, it is seen that in the higher stage of production, the principles guiding both production and consumption change. Whereas the amount of labour formerly determined the amount of social commodities distributed to citizens, now need is the guiding factor in distribution, and all men produce according to their abilities. Thus the direct link between production and consumption is superseded. The prerequisites required before the new principle of production and consumption is introduced are also forthrightly pointed out, and add up to a fairly impressive list--suggesting that in practice the lower stage of communism will remain in

⁶Ibid., p. 26.

⁷Ibid., p. 27.

existence for some considerable length of time. The anti-thesis between town and country is not specifically mentioned in the list, but it is evident from other passages devoted to this question that it is included as an integral part of the abolition of the division of labour.

Thus, Marx's Critique of the Gotha Program, within a few paragraphs, gives the most succinct general summary of the post-revolutionary phases to be found in Marx's extensive writings. Here, however, he was more concerned with elucidating general principles and prerequisites, and was therefore not as specific in detail as he was in certain other scattered passages in other works.

II. ENGELS

Engel's most comprehensive treatment of post-revolutionary society is to be found in his Anti-Duhring, which lays out perhaps the most straight-forward exposition of Marxism produced by either men. Particularly valuable in Anti-Duhring are Engels' discussions of the State in future communist society, of the division of labour, of commodity value and of the de-alienation of man.

In relation to the future of the state as such, Engels expounded in Anti-Duhring his famous principle of the withering away of the state. He declared that:

when at last it becomes the real representative of the whole of society it renders itself unnecessary The first act by virtue of which the state really constitutes itself the representative of the whole of society - the taking possession of the means of production in the name of society - this is at the same time, its last independent act as a state. State interference in social relations becomes, in one domain after another, superfluous, and then dies out of itself; the government of persons is replaced by the administration of things, and by the conduct of processes of production. The state is not abolished. It dies out.⁸

Thus, as in the plans of the Paris Commune (discussed by Marx in his The Civil War in France), the central administration apparatus eventually concerns itself only with economic co-ordination and planning, and related tasks. In this latter regard, Engels noted earlier that "the social anarchy of production gives place to a social regulation of production upon a definite plan, according to the needs of the community and of each individual."⁹ Economic production is regulated but social relations as such are not. The coercive state gives way to a system of economic administration. Nowhere does Engels specifically relate the process of dying out to the higher and lower stages of communism, and one can only

⁸F. Engels, Anti-Duhring (Moscow, F.L.P.H., 1954), p. 389.

⁹Ibid., p. 387.

surmise that the dying out of the state coincides with the actual achievement of the higher stage and is a precondition to it.

In two separate discussions concerning the determination of the "value" of commodities in communism's lower phase, Engels cleared up some of Marx's somewhat confusing explanations. Engels emphasized that actual labour-time will be the determining factor in establishing the amount of social product due to each individual. He also stated that the "price" of commodities will be determined exclusively according to the average number of labour-hours embodied therein. Thus if one man makes a shoe in four hours and another in two hours, then both shoes will be valued at three labour hours, and this will be their "cost" to the labourer.

Engels also discussed in detail the question of the division of labour in future society, and the related matter of man's de-alienation. He lauded both Fourier and Owen for their demand that each individual be given as wide a possible variation of occupation, in order to recover for man the attractiveness he found in labour before the division of labour despoiled it. Engels noted that the arrival of the machine age had established the conditions necessary for the division of labour to be maintained independently of the identity of the labourer. Quoting Marx, he pointed out that "since the motion of the whole system does not proceed from the workman but from the machinery, a change of persons can

take place at any time without an interruption of the work"10 Thus, men can interchange occupations at will in the future society without jeopardizing the productivity of labour.

Turning finally to the question of the development and de-alienation of man, Engels declared that in communist society:

productive labour instead of being a means of subjugating men, will become a means of their emancipation, by offering each individual the opportunity to develop all his faculties, physical and mental, in all directions, and develop them to the full - in which, therefore, productive labour will become a pleasure instead of a burden.11

Thus, man is to find true freedom within the classless society of communism; and creative, productive labour is to be a joy in itself, since through it man will find a vehicle of self-expression.

With the seizing of the means of production, Engels argued, the domination of man by his material world ceases. At the same time:

The struggle for individual existence disappears. Then, for the first time man in a certain sense is finally marked off from the rest of the animal kingdom, and emerges from mere animal

¹⁰Ibid., p. 409, quoting from Capital.

¹¹Ibid., p. 408.

conditions of existence into really human ones. The whole sphere of the conditions of life which environ man, and have hitherto ruled man, now comes under the domination and control of man, who for the first time becomes the real, conscious lord of nature, because he is now become master of his own social organization.¹²

Engels concluded with the proclamation that from henceforth man will be the master of his own destiny, and the moulder of a truly human existence within a classless, communist society:

Only from that time will man himself, with full consciousness make his own history It is the ascent of man from the kingdom of necessity to the kingdom of freedom.¹³

Thus, in these final few passages Engels returns to the original theme laid down by Marx in his 1844 Manuscripts--the ultimate overcoming of man's alienation from his material environment through communism, and the final setting free of humanity so that it may develop all its human potential through creative interaction with its natural environment. In communism, man's inner needs are liberated, and fulfilled. The communist man, in harmonious intercourse with nature and his fellow man, realizes his full human potential.

¹²Ibid., p. 393.

¹³Loc. cit.

III. LENIN'S CONCEPTION OF SOCIALISM AND COMMUNISM

In 1917, immediately before the Bolsheviks seized power in the Soviet Union, Lenin wrote his well-known The State and Revolution in which he summed up the teachings of Marx on the nature of the dictatorship of the proletariat and the two phases of post-revolutionary society. In the process, he also added his own interpretation to a number of important questions concerning the nature of socialism and communism. Lenin went very carefully over Marx's writings, and particularly over his Critique of the Gotha Program, quoting Marx at length and adding numerous comments. Concerning the lower phase of communism outlined by Marx, Lenin upheld the necessity of distributing commodities on an equal basis according to work performed. He suggested that:

It is unavoidable in the first phase of communism; for if we are not to indulge in utopianism, we must not think that having overthrown capitalism people will at once learn to work for society without any standard of right; and indeed the abolition of capitalism does not immediately create the economic premises for such a change. And there is as yet no other standard than that of 'bourgeois right'.¹⁴

Lenin reiterated the fact that while bourgeois rights are retained there will be a continuing need for the state to continue in existence. "For the complete withering away of the state complete communism is necessary."

¹⁴V. I. Lenin, Selected Works, vol. II (Moscow, F.L.P.H. 1947), p. 205.

Lenin then passes on to a discussion of the 'complete communism'. He suggests that until this stage is achieved "socialists demand the strictest control by society and by the state of a measure of labour and the measure of consumption."¹⁵ He declares that "the whole of society will have become a single office and a single factory, with equality of labour and equality of pay."^{16*} During this time, economic production will increase immensely, thus laying the foundations for the transition to pure communism: "The economic basis for the complete withering away of the state is such a high development of communism that the antithesis between mental and physical labour disappears."¹⁷ Thus, social abundance is reaffirmed as a precondition to communism. But Lenin makes no estimate of the period required to achieve this abundance and the necessary other prerequisites to the higher stage of communism. He declares that:

how rapidly this development will proceed, how soon it will reach the point of breaking away from the division of labour, of removing the antithesis between mental and physical labour, of transforming labour into 'the prime necessity of life' - we do not and cannot know.¹⁸

Nor can one predict "the specific forms of the withering away" since there is no basis upon which such a prediction

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 207.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 210 (*the emphasis is mine).

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 206.

¹⁸ Loc. cit.

can be made. These questions are left for the future. Nevertheless, the general principles under which future society will operate are known, as are the general prerequisites, one of which is that "the necessity of observing the simple, fundamental rules of human intercourse will become a habit."¹⁹ The other prerequisites outlined by Marx were reiterated and upheld by Lenin.

Summation of Engels, Marx and Lenin

We are now in a position to sum up the theoretical foundations of Marxist-Leninism on the questions of socialism and communism, as things stood on the eve of the Soviet Revolution. All the ideology that has developed since then has been linked with experience rather than with theory pure and simple, and belongs in another category. From the scattered references made by Marx, Engels and Lenin to the post-revolutionary transition to communism, the following general picture can be built up.

First of all, post-revolutionary society is seen as two distinct stages--socialism and communism--differentiated chiefly by the different principle of distribution operative in each stage. In the first stage it is "equal pay for equal work" and in the communist stage it is "from each according to his abilities; to each according to his needs."

¹⁹Ibid., p. 211.

The characteristics of the first stage are the following: the dictatorship of the proletariat nationalizes all the instruments of production and abolishes private property, including land; the principle of equal pay for equal work is introduced; inheritance rights are abolished; schools are opened to all children free of charge; a people's militia replaces the standing army; credit and banking are nationalized; co-operative farming is established in the rural areas; factories are run democratically by the workers themselves; true democracy along the lines of the Paris Commune is introduced; job mobility is introduced; and central economic planning is undertaken by the 'state'. In order to establish the pre-requisites for the advance to the higher stage of communism, the socialist society works towards the following goals: the abolition of the differences between mental and manual labour (partly through occupation mobility); the abolition of the differences between town and country (through an integration of agriculture and industry, and through a decentralization of population); the achievement of material abundance; the establishment of proper social conduct as ingrained habit; the establishment of labour as a human necessity and working according to ability as a social rule; and finally, the gradual withering away of the state. When these prerequisites have been fulfilled, society enters the higher stage of communism where the principle "from each according to his abilities;

to each according to his needs", is put into effect. As has already been pointed out, Marx, Engels and Lenin were not more specific than this, because they claimed that any further details would only be speculative. Moreover, they suggested that detailed structure during the transition period might vary from country to country, depending on local conditions, and so specific forms and policies could not be laid down on a blanket basis. In other words, while the principles and the goals were universal, means of achieving them might differ somewhat from place to place.

IV. LENIN IN THE POST-REVOLUTIONARY PHASE

Following the victory of the October Revolution in 1917, it became necessary for Lenin as leader of his Party to begin to put into practice the teachings of Marxism. At the same time, Lenin continued to serve as the font of ideological wisdom, further developing the ideas of Marx and Engels as he went along. Experience was crystallized into ideology.

Almost immediately, nationalization of banking, finance, and industry was put into effect, and the means of production was step-by-step gathered into the hands of the state. As far as land was concerned, in early 1918 the government promulgated a decree that all land was to be "the property of the whole people, to be used by those who

cultivate it."²⁰ While most of the land was to be divided up for use by all the peasants, large estates and "lands with highly developed forms of cultivation" were to be "cultivated exclusively by the state, or by the communities"²¹ and all the livestock and equipment thereon was retained for state use. These large estates were not to be divided up for peasant use, but were to be turned into model state farms. As far as the rest of the land was concerned, there was to be no restriction on the forms of land tenure--be it individual, co-operative or communal. Once distributed, the land could no longer be bought or sold, so that only by a co-operative pooling of land could large scale farming be carried out.

Thus, although the land had been nationalized by decree, de facto 'ownership' remained with the individual peasants. But on February 14, 1919, a decree entitled "The Regulations Concerning the Socialistic Agrarian Arrangement and the Measures for Organizing Agriculture on a Socialistic Basis," was issued, setting out Lenin's plan to gradually change over to collective farming. It proclaimed that:

²⁰Ibid., p. 236.

²¹Ibid., p. 237.

For the purpose of destroying all exploitation of man by man; of organizing rural economy on the basis of Socialism and with the application of all improvements in science and technique; of educating the toiling masses in the spirit of Socialism; of bringing about alliance between the proletariat and the 'village poverty' in their struggle against capital, it is necessary to pass from the individualistic forms of land exploitation to collective forms. Large Soviet estates, rural communes, group agriculture and all other forms of collective use of the land are the best forms for achieving this object, and therefore all forms of individual use of the land should be regarded as merely temporary and doomed to destruction.²²

Thus, in declaring the need for "the introduction of collective principles in the use of land, rather than individualistic ones" the Soviet Government set out three specific forms of collective agriculture which were permissible: Soviet estates, rural communes, and agricultural associations.

The Soviet estates were roughly equivalent to the modern Soviet state farms. They were managed by the state itself, and the people working on the estates assumed the same status as urban proletarians, since they were paid wages for their work directly by the state. The Soviet estates thus designed as models which embodied pure socialist principles.

The rural communes were a form of collective farm which were organized by the state, and embodied a lower level

²²Quoted in C. Basvolsky, The Economics of Communism (New York, Macmillan, 1921), p. 72.

of socialism than the Soviet estates, insofar as implements and equipment were collectively, rather than state owned. Designed primarily for the "village poverty" who had recently returned from the cities to the countryside and had no land to cultivate, these communes were aided in the beginning by a huge billion ruble loan fund on which they could draw. Everything in the commune was owned collectively, and members were "permitted to keep certain fixed amounts of the food products they produce as compensation for their toil."²³ Everything else produced had to be delivered to the state, although everything above the commune's quota was paid for by the state. Any such profits had by law to be "used for the improvement and extension of the communal estates." Generally, each commune was managed by a small elected council, and all the communes within a county or a province were organized into groups or loose federations. Thus, these rural communes were highly equalitarian in that all members received an equal share of their collective production. Moreover, there was no private property as such, since the land was state owned, and all other property was communally owned. They were, therefore, of a relatively advanced socialist character.

The third form of collective agriculture established in the rural areas was the agricultural association in which

²³Ibid., p. 79.

the individual peasant voluntarily loaned the association his land and implements, putting them into a common pool, but retaining de facto ownership over them. Distribution of the collective production was "made among members according to norms existing for the whole country at the time of the division."²⁴ The remainder, if any, was turned over to the state.

By January of 1920 approximately 9% of the land was in the form of Soviet estates, and roughly 2.5% in rural communes and agricultural associations. Thus, nearly 90% of the land remained in the form of individual holdings "loaned" to the peasants by the state.²⁵

On December 4, 1919, Lenin addressed the First Congress of Agricultural Communes and Agricultural Artels, making a number of important statements concerning the communes. He observed that "the name 'agricultural commune' is a great one; it is associated with the conception of communism." However, he emphasized that:

. . . it has frequently happened that the communes have only succeeded in provoking an attitude of hostility, and the word 'commune' has even at times become a call to fight communism. And this happened only when stupid attempts were made to drive the peasants into the communes by force. The

²⁴Ibid., p. 82.

²⁵Ibid., p. 83.

absurdity of this was so obvious that the Soviet government long ago forbade it.²⁶

He urged all those attending the congress to see that all vestiges of coercion be stamped out. Lenin noted that "Communism is the highest state of the development of Socialism, when people work because they realize the necessity of working for the common good," and urged all commune members to give free labour and assistance to the surrounding peasantry--to labour in a communist "subbotnik" spirit.²⁷

During these first years following the revolution, nearly every organization that sprang up began to adopt the name "commune". In the summer of 1919, in a pamphlet entitled "A Great Beginning", Lenin criticised this practice, declaring that:

every enterprise that is started by communists, or which they help to start, is very often at once declared to be a 'commune', and very often it is forgotten that this honourable title must be won by prolonged and persistent effort, must be won by practical achievement in genuine communist construction.²⁸

He referred to the fact that the government had decided to change the name of "consumers' communes" to a less extravagant title, and urged other organizations to:

²⁶ Lenin, op. cit., p. 541.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 544.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 500.

First show that you are capable of working gratis in the interests of society, in the interests of all the toilers, show that you are capable of 'working in a revolutionary style', that you are capable of raising the productivity of labour, of organizing in an exemplary manner, and then put your hand out for the honorable title of 'commune'!²⁹

At the same time, he declared that not enough attention was being given to the kind of exemplary units he had described. These "young shoots of Communism" he exclaimed, "should be nursed with much more care." He referred especially to those socialist creations which freed women from being "a domestic slave". He declared that "the real emancipation of women, real Communism, will only begin when a mass struggle . . . is started against this petty domestic economy, or rather when it is transformed on a mass scale into large-scale Socialist economy".³⁰ He urged communists to give all support possible to the establishment and maintenance of "public dining rooms, creches, kindergartens"--examples of "communist shoots" which free women from household drudgery. In a wider sphere he lauded the "communist shoots" of "exemplary production, exemplary communist subbotniks, exemplary care and conscientiousness in procuring and distributing every pod of grain, exemplary dining halls . . ." and so on. "All these," he said, "are the young shoots of communism; and nursing these shoots

²⁹Loc. cit.

³⁰Ibid., p. 498.

should be our common and primary duty . . . with the support of the proletarian state, these young shoots of Communism will not wither; they will grow and blossom into complete Communism."³¹ Really there are two types of so-called communist shoots, then. One type relates to the development of the socially conscious, selfless communist man, and the other relates to organizational forms such as public dining halls, which apparently will be universal in the higher stage of communism.

Tempered mainly by actual experience in constructing a socialist society, Lenin wrote a number of articles in the period between 1917 and 1923, in which he took a much more realistic view of the transition to communism than was evident in some of his earlier writings. In 1918, for example, in an Izvestia article entitled "Immediate Tasks of the Soviet Government", Lenin took to task those who take Engels at his word and want to "leap from the kingdom of necessity into the kingdom of liberty." These people, he said, have read all about socialism in books, but "have never seriously understood it, have never stopped to think that by 'leap' the teachers of socialism mean changes in world history, and that leaps of this kind extended over periods of ten years or even more."³² In the following year, faced with famine and a

³¹Ibid., p. 499.

³²Ibid., p. 388.

faltering economy, Lenin observed that "we cannot establish a socialist system now--God grant that it may be established in our children's time, or perhaps in our grandchildren's time."³³ Thus, Lenin was cautioning against any reckless leap into socialist forms before the time was ripe, and was warning that the transition period might take several generations. In the same vein he wrote in the Communist International in the autumn of 1919 that:

Socialism means the abolition of classes
 In order to abolish classes one must . . . abolish
 the difference between working man and peasant,
 one must make them all workers This
 task . . . can only be solved by the organiza-
 tional reconstruction of the whole economy, by
 a transition from individual, disunited petty
 commodity production to large scale social
 enterprise. This transition must of necessity
 be extremely protracted.³⁴

As Lenin accumulated more and more experience in the actual administering of a state, he became more and more emphatic that a state can only evolve very slowly, and by small increments, towards the distant communist utopia. He realized the necessity of making temporary compromises and of taking one step backward in order to take two steps forward. In his book Left Wing Communism, written in 1920 just before War Communism was abandoned and the liberal New

³³Ibid., p. 545.

³⁴Ibid., p. 532.

Economic Policy introduced, Lenin quoted Engels' well known passage which criticised the Blanquists for wanting to achieve communism overnight without entering into temporary compromises or going through intermediate way stations: Engels had ridiculed the Blanquists because "they imagine that merely because they want to skip the intermediate stations and compromises, that settles the matter . . . and once they come to the helm, 'Communism will be introduced' the day after tomorrow."³⁵ In 1921, Lenin introduced the New Economic Policy, admitting that "we made the mistake of deciding to change over directly to communist production and distribution."³⁶

On October 14th, 1921, Lenin wrote a most important article in commemoration of the October Revolution's Fourth Anniversary. In this article, Lenin made two key points: first, that the transition to communism is an unrelenting struggle which does not come to a halt at any particular stage; and second, that intermediate stages are vitally necessary, and that it is a mistake to race through these stages without regard for objective factors.

On the first point Lenin declared:

³⁵Ibid., p. 606.

³⁶Lenin, Works, vol. 33, p. 40: speech to Second Congress of Committees for Political Education; cited in Abramovitch, The Soviet Revolution (New York International Press, 1962), p. 220.

We have consummated the bourgeois-democratic revolution as nobody has done before. We are advancing towards the Socialist revolution, consciously, deliberately and unswervingly, knowing that it is not separated from the bourgeois-democratic revolution by a Chinese wall, and knowing that (in the last analysis) struggle alone will determine how far we shall advance, what portion of this immense, lofty task we shall accomplish, and to what extent we shall succeed in consolidating our victories.³⁷

On the latter point, Lenin admitted that immediately following the revolution, the Communists had been carried away by their own enthusiasm. He characterized the post-revolutionary euphoria in the following way:

Borne along on the crest of the wave of enthusiasm, rousing first the political enthusiasm and then the military enthusiasm of the people, we reckoned that by directly relying on this enthusiasm we would be able to accomplish economic tasks just as great as the political and military tasks we had accomplished. We reckoned - or perhaps it would be truer to say that we presumed without reckoning correctly - on being able to organize the state production and state distribution of products along Communist lines in a small peasant country by order of the proletarian state.³⁸

But this enthusiasm merely led to a subjective evaluation of the possibilities and caused the communists to make serious errors by pushing forward towards socialism too fast. Lenin, admitting his mistakes, noted that "experience has proved that we were wrong." Like the Blanquists who wanted to introduce communism practically overnight, the Russian

³⁷ Lenin, op. cit., p. 747.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 752.

communists had been overzealous in their desire to reach socialism and communism as soon as possible. Crystallizing experience into an ideological framework, Lenin drew the following conclusion:

It transpires that a number of transitional stages are necessary - state capitalism and Socialism - in order to prepare by many years of effort for the transition to Communism. Not directly relying on enthusiasm, but aided by enthusiasm engendered by the great revolution, and on the basis of personal interest, personal incentive, and business principles, we must first set to work in this small-peasant country to build solid little gangways to Socialism by way of state capitalism. Otherwise, we shall never get to Communism. That is what experience, what the objective course of the development of the revolution has taught us.³⁹

Sometime earlier, Lenin had taken preventive action against being labelled a Blanquist by suggesting that the three months which transpired before the communists took measures in the rural areas allowed enough time for the Party to make the necessary "differentiation of classes" and the necessary compromises. Had the Party gone ahead immediately to socialize the rural areas, then "this would have been a Blanquist distortion of Marxism, this would have been an attempt on the part of a minority to impose its will on the majority, this would have been a theoretical absurdity"⁴⁰

³⁹Loc. cit.

⁴⁰Lenin, Works, vol. 28, p. 281; quoted in Abramovitch, op. cit., p. 220.

Despite this defense by Lenin, however, it was clear from his own admissions that his War Communism policies were guilty of Blanquist-like tendencies.

Lenin touched on the question of socialist organizational forms in the rural areas, in an article written shortly before his death. In "On Co-operation", Lenin re-emphasized the need to introduce collective forms into Soviet society, and especially in the rural areas. He declared that, "If the whole peasantry were organized in co-operatives, we would be standing firmly with both feet on the soil of Socialism."^{41*} But the prerequisite to the establishment of co-operatives on a universal basis throughout the country was, he said, "a complete cultural revolution", which in turn rested on the wiping out of illiteracy and a greater development "of the material means of production."⁴² The basis of Socialist rural organization was to be, nevertheless, the co-operative. He makes no mention of the appropriate organizational forms in the higher stage of communism, however; but the commune and the state farm were still considered to be higher forms than the co-operatives, and superior if they could be achieved. For Lenin, experience had shown that the communist utopia was a long way off:

⁴¹Lenin, op. cit., p. 835 (*the emphasis is mine).

⁴²Loc. cit.

The re-education of the small landholders, the reshaping of their entire psychology and habits will take generations When I say it will take generations, I do not mean it will take centuries . . . but you understand very well that this must be reckoned . . . at least in decades.⁴³

While laying out guiding principles, Lenin had little to say about the detailed form and structure of future communist society: Lenin, like Marx, was more concerned with the immediate tasks at hand. For the very reason that pure communism was still a thing of the distant future, Lenin remained strictly "scientific" in his descriptions of the ultimate utopia, and refused to describe more than the general operative principles. Such things as the ultimate social units of future communist society were left for future generations to determine. Like Marx, Lenin was more deeply concerned in his writings with matters immediately at hand than with idle theorizing about the detailed structure of future society.

Moreover, whereas in his earlier writings Lenin emphasized the necessity of maintaining the momentum of the revolution, in the post-revolutionary period Lenin placed much more stress on the necessity for pragmatism and for a long prolonged struggle before communism could be realized. In the light of Soviet experience he warned against trying to

⁴³ Lenin, Works, vol. 28, p. 281; quoted in Abramovitch, op. cit., p. 221.

leap forward towards communism, and emphasized the gradual nature of the transition to communism.

Since Lenin's attitude towards the post-revolutionary phase underwent important changes in the light of actual experience, Lenin can selectively be quoted to support both "radical" and "pragmatic" views on socialist construction within the communist world. This situation has important bearing on the current ideological dispute between the leaders of the Soviet and Chinese parties, since both are able to partially justify their positions by reference to Lenin.

V. STALIN'S SUCCESSION, AND HIS PATH TO COMMUNISM

Following Lenin's death in 1923, Stalin assumed the position of supreme interpreter of Marxist-Leninism, and Pope of the world communist movement. And in his lifetime he consciously advanced the Soviet Union along the path of communism; sometimes at enormous human sacrifice.

In January of 1926, Stalin discussed in his work "Concerning Questions of Leninism", the question of "permanent revolution" in a domestic situation, a question which involved the whole issue of the speed of transition to communism and the question of the various stages along the way. Stalin pointed out that Lenin himself was an advocate of permanent revolution insofar as it applied to maintaining the momentum of revolutionary domestic change. Stalin suggested that:

It should be born in mind that the idea of the growing over of the bourgeois-democratic revolution into the socialist revolution, propounded by Lenin as long ago as 1905, is one of the forms of embodiment of Marx's theory of permanent revolution.⁴⁴

He noted that Lenin had declared in 1905 that, "we stand for uninterrupted revolution. We shall not stop halfway . . ."⁴⁵ On another occasion shortly before his death, Lenin had reiterated this belief that the post-revolutionary phases occur in uninterrupted succession, Stalin noted. On this occasion Lenin had said of the bourgeois and socialist revolutions: "the first grows over into the second. The second in passing, solves the questions of the first. Struggle, and struggle alone, decides how far the second succeeds in outgrowing the first."⁴⁶ Stalin thus gave his support too, to the idea that the process of the evolution towards ultimate communism must never be halted, and must proceed by constant struggle. And indeed, Stalin's forced collectivization of the peasantry in the years following 1929 proved that he practiced what he preached.

One brief, but significant, reference by Stalin to the actual ultimate social units of future society, occurred

⁴⁴J. Stalin, Works, vol. 8 (Moscow F.L.P.H. 1954), p. 20.

⁴⁵Lenin, Selected Works, p. 442.

⁴⁶Lenin, Works, vol. 27, p. 26.

in the same year as his "Concerning Questions of Leninism"--1926. In a speech at the Party's Fifteenth Congress, replying to criticisms by Zinoviev, Stalin undertook a discussion of Engels' The Principles of Communism. One of the twelve measures laid down by Engels as the necessary program of the dictatorship of the proletariat was the following:

Erection of great palaces on the national estates to serve as common homes for communes of citizens which engage both in industry and agriculture, and which combine the advantages of both urban and rural life, without the one-sidedness and disadvantages of either.⁴⁷

In his comment on this item, Stalin claimed that "this evidently refers to a large scale solution of the housing problem", and observed that the government was carrying out housing construction as fast as its resources would allow. But, of course, the significance of Engels' program went far beyond any mere solution to the housing question. It was concerned with the question of merging town and country, and with the ultimate social units of communist society. In fact, Engels' description of the "great palaces" is borrowed directly from Fourier's description of the future decentralized communistic society which Engels lauded in his "On the Housing Question". Thus, it would seem evident that at this time Stalin was far too concerned with matters at hand to be too concerned about resolving the city-country antagonisms or about the future communal society.

⁴⁷Stalin, op. cit., p. 315.

In 1928 Stalin put forward a new agrarian law to supersede the previous one passed in 1922--not long before Lenin died. The new law in effect made it compulsory for all peasants to join collectives. Throughout 1929 enforced collectivization took place throughout the country, in the face of widespread resistance and at a terrible loss of human life, especially of the kulak class. Although the coercive and often brutal tactics of the authorities succeeded in forcing the large majority of peasants into co-operatives within a little over a year, economic chaos was also a necessary result:

(The peasants) worked on the collective farms without any real desire for achievement. Sowing and harvesting were carried out lazily, carelessly and late in the season; agricultural machinery was kept in poor repair; the losses suffered in animal husbandry, for lack of skilled and devoted personnel, were particularly large The losses in livestock were so extensive that it took Russia more than a generation to recover The grain harvests, too, were disasterously poor.⁴⁸

With the nation's economy threatened, Stalin issued an article entitled "Dizzy with Success" in which he cynically reprimanded cadres who got carried away with enthusiasm and practiced coercion to force the peasants into collectives. This was on March 2, 1930. On March 15, just two weeks later, the Party Central Committee issued an order relaxing somewhat the strict socialization of property. It "countermanded the

⁴⁸ Abramovitch, op. cit., p. 340.

socialization of dwellings, small livestock, poultry, and dairy cattle whose products were not intended for sale.⁴⁹ The following summer, however, collectivization was stepped up again and the remaining peasants gradually forced into collectives. On the heels of this harsh collectivization came a nationwide famine which brought death to millions in 1932 and 1933.

At the 17th Party Congress in January 1934, Stalin addressed a considerable part of his "Report on the Work of the Central Committee" to the theory and practice of agricultural co-operation, discussing in some detail the future of the collectives and the communes. This discussion represents by far the most important and detailed consideration of the co-operative question undertaken by Stalin within his lifetime, and is for this reason of particular ideological significance.

In general, Stalin was striking out at the "Leftist petty bourgeois chatter" within the party which favoured the abolition of money, the introduction of direct commodity exchange, and the agricultural communes. Devoting the greater part of the discussion to the merits of artels (collectives) as opposed to communes, Stalin noted that the Party had been absolutely correct in transforming the communes which remained from the period of War Communism, into artels during

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 341.

the 1929 collectivization drive. He emphasized that under conditions prevailing in the Soviet Union in 1934, the artel was the most appropriate form of collective agriculture for the rural areas, because it combined public with private interest, and at the same time taught the peasants to appreciate collective life. Contrasting this with the commune, Stalin pointed out that:

Unlike the artel, where only the means of production are socialized, the communes, until recently, socialized not only the means of production, but also the appurtenances of life of every member of the commune; that is to say, the members of a commune, unlike the members of an artel, did not individually own poultry, small livestock, a cow, grain or household land.⁵⁰

In other words, in the commune all private ownership was abolished and everything was owned in common--except the land, which was owned legally by the state. In the artel, private incentive was retained and a small amount of private ownership tolerated. Stalin noted that the higher degree of socialization in the communes had resulted in private interest being eclipsed by public interest "in the pursuit of petty-bourgeois equalization". He suggested that the lack of individual ownership and initiative in the communes was responsible for their lack of popularity among the peasants, and argued that the few communes left had had to permit individual ownership of livestock, and ease up on their

⁵⁰J. Stalin, Report to the 17th Congress (Moscow, F.L.P.H. 1951), p. 95.

policies of strict equalization, in order to save themselves from complete collapse, and in the process therefore becoming artels. "There is," he said, "nothing bad in this, because it is necessary in the interests of the sound development of the collective movement."⁵¹ However, Stalin very clearly expressed the view that the commune was definitely a higher socialist social unit than the artel, but that it was premature to introduce it at the present stage:

This does not mean, of course, that the commune is not needed at all, and that it no longer represents a higher form of the collective-farm movement. No, the commune is needed, and of course, it is a higher form of the collective-farm movement.^{52*}

But the future commune, he suggested could only arise "on the basis of a more developed technique and of an abundance of products The future communes will arise out of developed and prosperous artels."⁵³ Because the communes were introduced before the material foundations had arisen, they had been compelled to introduce rigid equalitarianism, Stalin argued--and this eventually resulted in their failure. Thus, the following conditions were necessary before artels could be transformed into communes:

⁵¹Ibid., p. 96.

⁵²Ibid (*the emphasis is mine).

⁵³Ibid., p. 97.

The future agricultural commune will arise when the fields and farms of the artel are replete with grain, with cattle, with poultry, with vegetables and all other produce; when the artels have mechanized laundries, modern dining rooms, mechanized bakeries etc. . . . the future commune will arise on the basis of a more developed technique and of a more developed artel, on the basis of an abundance of products.⁵⁴

The final, and perhaps most important prerequisite laid down by the Soviet leader was that the transition to communes must be voluntary and "must proceed gradually to the extent that all the collective farmers become convinced that such a transition is necessary."⁵⁵

It was on the question of equalization of income that Stalin most fervently opposed the War Communism communes. Perhaps the main reason for this fact was that Stalin was continuing the capitalist policy of providing some occupations with much higher salaries than others--something quite alien to Marxist notions of equal wages for equal labour time. The equalization of income in the communes was an attempt to implement the principle of "from each according to his abilities; to each according to his work" which was supposed to prevail in the socialist stage. Thus, it represented a challenge to Stalin's incentive policies, and a reminder of Marxist orthodoxy.

⁵⁴Loc. cit.

⁵⁵Loc. cit.

Answering "those who think that in declaring the artel to be the fundamental form of the collective-farm movement the Party has drifted away from Socialism," Stalin skirted the vital question of labour wage equality by charging that "equalization in the sphere of requirements and individual life is a piece of reactionary petty-bourgeois absurdity worthy of a primitive sect of ascetics."⁵⁶ Thus he changed the question from one based on relative remuneration for work, to one of human needs--which Marx, Engels and Lenin all recognized as unequal. As has been noted previously, all three men had accepted the necessity of "equal pay for equal work" in the first stage, despite their realization that human needs differed. Only if those who did more work were not recompensed more, could "equalitarianism" be fairly charged. But it was clear, despite his ideological arguments, that Stalin opposed "equalitarianism" for the very practical reason that it dampened initiative and slowed production:

There can be no doubt that the confusion in the minds of certain Party members concerning Marxian Socialism and their infatuation with the equalitarian tendencies of the agricultural communes, are as like as two peas to the petty-bourgeois views of our Leftist blockheads, who at one time idealized the agricultural communes to such an extent that they even tried to set up communes in factories, where skilled and unskilled workers, each working at his trade, had to pool their

⁵⁶Ibid., p. 98.

wages in a common fund, which was then shared out equally. You know what harm these infantile equalitarian exercises of our 'left' blockheads caused our industry.⁵⁷

Although, as Stalin says, this wage equalization may have impeded production, nevertheless it was ideologically sound, since Engels had specifically emphasized in Anti-Duhring that in Socialist society skilled workers would get no more than unskilled (since society absorbs the cost of the training which gives them the added skill).

Despite his extensive discussion of the commune question, Stalin made no reference to the future of the state farm, nor to the unit, if any, that might supersede the future communes. Therefore, although the commune was definitely designated to succeed the artel, neither form (including the state farm) was officially designated as the ultimate goal of the collectivization process. Thus, while answering many questions, the 17th Congress still left some important ones unanswered.

The next Party Congress, which did not convene until 1939, was also a significant one in terms of the development of the communist ideology on questions of the advance to communism. In his report to this 18th Congress, Stalin distinguished two definite stages in the Soviet advance thus far.

⁵⁷Ibid., p. 102.

The first phase was the period from the October Revolution to the elimination of the exploiting classes;. . . . The second phase was the period from the elimination of the capitalist elements in town and country to the complete victory of the socialist economic system and the adoption of the new constitution.⁵⁸

Implicit in this analysis was the claim that the Soviet Union had achieved socialism; and was now setting its sights on communism:

As you see, we have now an entirely new socialist state But development cannot stop there. We are moving ahead towards Communism.⁵⁹

Thus, Soviet society had basically arrived at the socialist stage, and its duty now was to prepare for the transition to the higher stage.

The last major work written by Stalin was his Economic Problems of Socialism in the U.S.S.R. which was published in 1952, shortly before his death. In this work he took as his main thesis the problems of the transition to communism, and laid down three major prerequisites to be achieved before Soviet society could go over to communism. The first prerequisite outlined by Stalin was to ensure "a continuous expansion of all social production" in order to create the necessary foundation of material abundance. Secondly, he deemed it necessary:

⁵⁸J. Stalin, Report to the 18th Congress (Moscow F.L.P.H., 1951), p. 84.

⁵⁹Ibid., p. 93.

by means of gradual transitions carried out to the advantage of the collective farms, and, hence of all society, to raise collective-farm property to the level of public property, and also by means of gradual transitions, to replace commodity circulation by a system of products exchange, under which the central government, or some other socio-economic center might control the whole product of social production in the interests of society.⁶⁰

On the question of the collective farms, Stalin emphasized that at the present and in the near future, they would continue to be the correct units of Soviet agriculture. "But," he added,

it would be unpardonable blindness not to see at the same time that these factors (collective property and commodity circulation) are already beginning to hamper the powerful development of our productive forces, since they create obstacles to the full extension of government planning.⁶¹

He concluded that:

In order to raise collective farm property to the level of public property, the surplus collective-farm output must be excluded from the system of commodity circulation and included in the system of products exchange between state industry and the collective farms.⁶²

No mention at all was made by Stalin about the introduction of communes. Communism could be attained, if accomplishment of the third task was realized:

⁶⁰ J. Stalin, Economic Problems of Socialism in the U.S.S.R. (New York, International Publishers, 1952), p. 51.

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 52.

⁶² Ibid., p. 69.

to ensure such a cultural advancement of society as will secure for all members of society, the all-round development of their physical and mental abilities, so that members of society may be in a position to receive an education sufficient to enable them to be active agents of social development, and in a position to freely choose their occupations, and not be tied all their lives, owing to the existence of the division of labour, to some one occupation.⁶³

In concrete terms, in order to achieve this end, Stalin prescribed the eventual shortening of the working day to five hours and compulsory polytechnic training in several occupations for all. Thus, he was advocating positive practical steps which would achieve the condition of occupational mobility advocated by Engels and Marx as a necessity for creative human development.

Closely associated with the question of occupational mobility and the division of labour, are the questions of the antithesis between town and country, and between mental and manual labour. Stalin's claim was that the actual antithesis between these elements had all but disappeared, since all citizens--peasant, industrial worker, manager and labourer--were working in harmony towards a common goal. Only "distinctions" now remained. Stalin recalled that Engels had predicted that with the abolition of the antithesis between town and country "the great towns will perish", but discounted Engels' statement. On the contrary, he argued, great towns

⁶³Ibid., p. 53.

will arise in the countryside and "this will facilitate the cultural progress of the nation and will tend to even up conditions of life in town and country."⁶⁴

As to the remaining "distinctions" between town and country and mental and manual labour, Stalin maintained that some distinctions would never disappear: "Some distinctions, even if inessential, will certainly remain, owing to the difference between the conditions of work in industry and in agriculture," and because "the conditions of labour of the managerial staffs and those of the workers are not identical."⁶⁵ The most serious remaining "distinction" in the former case was the difference between state ownership in the towns and the remaining collective ownership in the farms of the rural areas. "It therefore cannot be denied," Stalin stated, "that the disappearance of this essential distinction between agriculture and industry must be a matter of paramount importance to us."⁶⁶ But Stalin's solution was not "simply to nationalize collective-farm property, to proclaim it public property." He declared that "conversion into state property is not the only, or even the best form of nationalization, but the most natural initial form of nationalization."⁶⁷ In the future when most of the states are socialist, the state

⁶⁴Ibid., p. 23.

⁶⁵Ibid., p. 25.

⁶⁶Ibid., p. 24.

⁶⁷Ibid., p. 65.

as such will die away, he argues, and "the heir of public property will then not be the state, which will have died away, but society itself, in the shape of a central, directing economic body."⁶⁸

However, Stalin did oppose the plan put forward by some economists to sell the state-owned "basic implements of production" controlled by the Machine Tractor Stations, to the collectives. He claimed that this would be a step backward from communism, rather than a step towards it, since the state property would be transformed into less-socialistic collective property:

Can it be said that such a status would facilitate the elevation of collective-farm property to the level of public property, so that it would expedite the transition of our society from socialism to communism? Would it not be truer to say that such a status could only dig a deeper gulf between collective-farm property and public property, and would not bring us any nearer communism, but, on the contrary, remove us farther from it?⁶⁹

Hence, it would appear that Stalin still intended to socialize the lesser tools and implements owned individually within the collectives, and to ultimately nationalize the collectively owned implements, machinery and animals as well. This would involve going through the commune stage, but the Soviet leader made no explicit reference to future social units. It is not entirely clear whether Stalin's plan to take control

⁶⁸ Loc. cit.

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 68.

over all collective-farm commodity exchange was meant to obviate the need to adopt higher social units in the future, but this cannot rule out as a possibility.

It is with the long ideological and historical background outlined, that the Sino-Soviet differences over the Chinese People's Communes arose. As can readily be seen, the communes of China necessarily involved very extensive ideological implications for the entire communist movement since they were concerned with the correct road to communism, and with the discovery of the fastest method of achieving the prerequisites to communism. Moreover, the introduction of the communes in China cannot be viewed in isolation, but only as a continuation of a long historical debate within the communist movement--and with special significance for the Communist Party of the Soviet Union which had experienced several decades of dispute over the future of collectives and communes, and which was still in progress when the communes were introduced.

Even before the introduction of the communes, the Chinese had become a party to the controversies over transitional measures, occurring in the Soviet Union. Thus, with the publication of Stalin's Economic Problems of Socialism, the Chinese placed themselves in line with Stalin in the controversy by supporting his basic theses. People's Daily noted that the article:

throws much light on the basic problems in the economics of socialism and points the way to the transition from socialism to communism. In this work, Comrade Stalin systematizes the experience gained in the construction of socialism in the U.S.S.R. and in the world revolutionary movement and he enriches and augments the science of Marxism-Leninism.⁷⁰

The People's Daily further noted that Stalin was pointing the way for the whole communist movement, not just the Soviet Union:

It is beyond doubt that Comrade Stalin's theoretical contribution to all these questions is of extremely important significance, not only for the economic construction of the U.S.S.R., but also for the economic construction of China and the other countries of the people's democracies.⁷¹

Thus it was inevitable that with the fall of Stalin, and the reversal of some of his agricultural and collective-farm policies, the Chinese, as supporters of Stalin's ideological pronouncements should come into conflict with the new CPSU leadership over domestic issues. As an independent entity, China remained a proponent of Stalinist orthodoxy, out of the control of the CPSU leaders and a thorn in their sides.

⁷⁰People's Daily, October 30, 1952; Soviet Press Translations, 1952, p. 432.

⁷¹Loc. cit.

CHAPTER III

THE DIALOGUE OF A DISPUTE:

THE BEGINNINGS OF THE COMMUNE CONTROVERSY

On August 29, 1958 an enlarged session of the Chinese Communist Party's Politburo passed a resolution supporting the establishment of "Peoples Communes" throughout the rural areas of the nation, and providing a theoretical justification for the introduction of this new social unit of Chinese society.

Until the resolution was officially published on September 10, no comment of any kind had appeared in the Soviet press regarding the communes, despite the fact that some provinces were already completely "commune-ized" by the end of August when the party resolution was passed, and despite the fact that the communes had been initiated in some areas as far back as April, and had been extensively publicized in the Chinese press. This apparently purposeful policy of the Soviet party hierarchy to ignore the commune movement in its early stages is in itself significant and suggests (the possibility) that the C.P.S.U. was privately seeking to dissuade the Chinese leaders from continuing their experiments. Certain discussions concerning the future of co-operative farms in the Soviet Union did take place in the spring and summer of 1958 at the same time that communes were beginning to be set up in various parts of the People's

Republic, but these discussions were apparently aimed at quelling opposition to Premier Khrushchev's plan to dissolve the Machine and Tractor Stations and sell their assets to the collectives. Whether these discussions have direct, or only indirect, bearing on the Chinese communes depends largely on whether the Soviet leaders had advance knowledge of Mao's intention to depart from the path of the Soviet Union in agricultural development. In this regard, it is also important to establish the date of the Chinese Communist Party's switch in policy in regard to the development of the co-operatives.

By 1957, agriculture in China had gone through the succeeding stages of Land Redistribution, Mutual Aid Teams, Lower Stage Co-operatives, and Higher Stage Co-operatives, thus bringing it in eight years to the approximate stage of collectivization achieved in the Soviet Union in 1933, and more or less retained ever since. Following a similar move in the Soviet Union, some Chinese co-operatives amalgamated in 1957 into larger units of over 1,000 families each. However, in general, the co-operatives for the most part retained a membership of approximately 100 to 300 families, and taking in a single village. Moreover, as late as June 1957 Mao Tse-tung suggested that it would take five years or more to "consolidate the co-operatives and end these arguments

about their not having any superior qualities."¹ Furthermore, on September 14, three months later, the Central Committee passed a resolution stating that:

Experiences in different localities during the past few years have proved that large collectives and large teams are generally not adaptable to the present production conditions . . . all those that are too big and not well managed should be divided into smaller units in accordance with the wishes of the members. Henceforth, a collective should generally be the size of a village with over a thousand households After the size of the collectives and production teams has been decided upon, it should be publicly announced that this organization will remain unchanged in the next ten years.²

Yet six months later Mao himself helped initiate the first communes in the province of Honan.

The testimony of the Honan party secretary in an article published in Red Flag on September 16, 1958 casts some light on the events preceding the establishment of the first communes:

When co-operation of the advanced type was achieved in Honan in 1956, there were altogether 26,211 co-ops, each having an average membership of 358 households, and 808 co-ops embracing over one thousand

¹Mao Tse-tung, On the Correct Handling of Contradictions Among the People (Peking, Foreign Languages Press, 1960), p. 35.

²People's Handbook for 1958 (Peking, 1958); cited in Choh-Ming Li, "Economic Development," China Quarterly, no. 1, January-March 1960, p. 43.

families each. With the initial overhaul in the Spring of 1957, the co-ops in the whole province became consolidated in the main and many large co-ops fared comparatively well. Closing their eyes to this situation and yielding to the demand of a small number of well-to-do middle peasants, a few rightist opportunists within the Honan provincial Communist Party committee, however, indiscriminately tried to compel all the large co-ops to split up.³ As a result, the number of co-ops in Honan increased to 54,000 each averaging 180 households with the smallest containing less than 30.^{3A}

The dismantling of the large collectives was of course in line with the Party's September 24 directive. It must be presumed that Pan Fu-sheng's error then, was in forcing even highly successful large collectives to reduce their size, and in succumbing to pressure from the peasantry to relax collectivization. The result of his error, according to the Honan Daily (July 4, 1958) was that "landlords, rich peasants, counter-revolutionaries, bad elements, and well-to-do middle peasants accustomed to capitalist ways of thinking applauded and agitated for withdrawal from their collectives saying 'big co-operatives will turn into small

³Note: In 1957 during the Anti-Rightist campaign, Pan Fu-sheng alternate member of the Central Committee and first secretary of the Honan provincial committee, was 'exposed' and removed from office for 'right opportunist mistakes'.

^{3A}Wu Chih-pu, "From A.P.C.s to People's Communes," Red Flag, no. 8, September 16, 1958; People's Communes in China (Peking, F.L.P., 1958), p. 26-47.

co-operatives¹, then into mutual aid teams and back into individual farms.⁴ The lesson that the Party was to draw from this was that as soon as political pressure was released, the peasants would spontaneously reverse the course of collectivization. The choice was either to push forward, or be driven back.

Wu Chih-pu, the new Honan provincial secretary, suggests the course decided upon: "As it was, spontaneous merger of agricultural co-ops began in Honan as early as the spring of 1958, so that by the time of the wheat harvest the existing co-ops were amalgamated into 30,000 or more."⁵

In actual fact, the merger was far from 'spontaneous'. In reality, Mao Tse-tung had announced this policy of combining the co-ops into larger units at a conference of members of the Central Committee and regional party representatives at Chengtu in March.⁶ At the same time the Central Committee also initiated its policy of industrial decentralization which was to play a vital role in the establishment of the communes.

⁴Honan Daily, July 4, 1958; Current Background, no. 515, August 29, 1958, p. 26.

⁵Wu-Chih-pu, op. cit., p. 34.

⁶People's Daily, editorial, August 29, 1959; reprinted as Appendix to Report on Adjusting the Major Targets of the 1959 Economic Plan (Peking, F.L.P., 1959), pp. 31-46.

Commenting on the situation in Honan, Wu Chih-pu revealed that:

Some of the large co-ops took another stride forward last spring. They developed industrial and agricultural production simultaneously, merged the farming, handicraft, supply and marketing, and credit co-ops into one, set up their own secondary schools, trained large numbers of leading personnel and activists who are both socialist minded and professionally competent, and gained adequate experience in the management of large scale production. This was in essence the people's commune in the bud, displaying a still greater superiority over the small co-ops.⁷

In mid-winter, Mao Tse-tung himself had made a tour of the southern provinces. During this tour Mao inspected the sites of the tremendous irrigation and flood control projects, being built by the mass peasant army of over 100 million throughout the rural areas in the winter months. This successful campaign by the Party to mobilize the nation's greatest resource--manpower--no doubt convinced Mao that a new form of social organization must be created in China to exploit fully the labour potential of the 500 million Chinese peasants.

Following this tour a Supreme State Conference was held in February, presumably to discuss the new surge forward in the countryside. The only clue to the proceedings of this conference appeared in an oblique reference in the People's Daily on June 11, 1958. In the article in question it is stated that:

⁷Wu Chih-pu, op. cit., p. 33.

At a Supreme State Conference in February this year, Chairman Mao mentioned a criticism made by a friend against the Communist party, saying that the Communist Party 'loves grandeur and achievement, wants quick results and profit, belittles the past, and believes blindly in the future'. Chairman Mao replying to the criticism said the Communist Party was just like that-- that it loved the grandeur of Socialism, wanted quick results in Socialism, belittled the past, and believed blindly in the future.⁸

From this reference it is evident that the subject under consideration at the conference was socialist construction, and the speed and forms thereof. It is difficult to ascertain whether these remarks by Chairman Mao referred to criticisms made by persons within the country or without. There is a distinct possibility that the 'friend' referred to by Mao was Khrushchev, or some other high Soviet official at the November 1957 conference of communist parties in Moscow, just three months earlier. It is known from subsequent disclosures by both sides that a considerable amount of mutual criticism and disagreement took place between Mao and Khrushchev at this meeting in November when the international line of the communist movement was hammered out, and it is also thought that the question of Soviet trade credits and Soviet aid to China were also discussed in private talks between the representatives of the two countries. Thus, it is distinctly possible that the remarks and criticisms to which Mao refers were made during these negotiations. This is especially so

⁸Quoted in D. S. Zagoria, The Sino-Soviet Conflict (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1962), p. 89.

in the light of the fact that no new loans were forthcoming from the negotiations.

From 1956 onward the receipt of loans from the USSR have been negligible. In fact they have been systematically outweighed by heavy repayments. This state of affairs is reflected in the growing Chinese export surplus in Sino-Soviet trade obviously connected with the servicing of old debts; by 1957 exports to the USSR were half as large again as imports.⁹

It has been argued by many that the Soviet Union was in no position to advance loans and aid to China at this time since the Russians were deeply committed to aid programs in Europe, sparked by the uprisings in Poland and Hungary the year before. But whatever the reason, the Soviet Union failed to provide the Chinese with the economic boost they needed, especially in view of the poor harvest, leaving the Chinese no choice but to utilize the resources of manpower in order to raise themselves by their own bootstraps, and to organize their society along the lines most suited to direct and control peasant labour in the rural areas. At the time of the Moscow Conference, the Central Committee had already issued the September 24 directive several weeks before, to mobilize the vast peasant armies for the massive winter campaign to build dams, canals, reservoirs, and irrigation ditches throughout the country-side; thus, there is also

⁹A. Zauberman, "The Economic Aspect," The Chinese Communes (New York, Institute of Pacific Relations, 1960), p. 65.

the possibility that this policy of mass mobilization reminiscent of the Stalin era in the Soviet Union, came under fire in discussions with the Soviet leaders.

It is important to establish whether Khrushchev was the author of the remarks to Mao, since this would establish the origin of the dispute over agricultural policy in China, and the correct road of building socialism in communist countries. It would also add a new significance to articles and pronouncements in the press of both countries in the early months of 1958. At the second session of the Eighth National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party in May 1958 for instance, Liu Shao-chi included in his report on behalf of the Central Committee the following statement:

Referring to the mass mobilization of rural labour over the winter months, Liu stated: During this great movement in which hundreds of millions of people were mobilized, it is inevitable that there should be some defects in our work even while great successes are being scored and that as we advance we should meet with some difficulties Some people criticize us for 'craving greatness and success', for seeking 'quick success and instant benefits'. What they say about us is right! And shouldn't we crave greatness for our 600 million people and the success of socialism? Should we rather crave smallness and court failure, reject success and benefits, and rest content with lagging behind and doing nothing?¹⁰

¹⁰ Liu Shao-chi, "Report on the Work of the Central Committee," Second Session of the Eighth National Congress of the Communist Party of China (Peking F.L.P., 1958), p. 45.

Clearly, this is a reference to the same statement which Mao revealed at the State Conference in February. From Liu's choice of words it would appear that the reply is directed at persons outside of China, and its repetition by Liu makes it clear that this criticism came from a person of high enough stature to outrightly challenge Chinese policy.

Obviously no non-Party person within China would have the prestige and power to warrant such serious consideration by both Mao and Liu; the importance attached to this criticism of Party policy can best be explained by the fact that it came from the lips of an important Soviet leader, and by the fact that it gave ammunition and support to the right wing elements in the Chinese communist party who Liu revealed were in opposition to the general line of "building socialism by exerting our utmost efforts and pressing ahead consistently to achieve greater, faster, better and more economical results," put forward in September 1957.

If indeed the originator of the criticism of the general line was N. S. Khrushchev, in his November talks with Mao, then the Soviet Party no doubt kept close watch on the domestic developments in China in succeeding months, and consciously studied the events which led to the emergence of the communes in People's China. Moreover, it would appear certain that the Chinese were keeping closely informed of domestic developments in the Soviet Union, also, since

Khrushchev was similarly contemplating important reforms in Soviet agriculture.

The Early Experiments: Spring 1958

As has been noted previously, the Chinese Party's Central Committee met in Chengtu in March of 1958 and issued a directive reversing the September 14 directive of the previous Fall, and ordering a gradual amalgamation of the co-operatives into large scale co-operatives. This in itself was not necessarily a departure from Soviet policy, since the same process had been initiated in the Soviet Union after Stalin's death, and was still continuing.

During April Mao himself spent some time in Honan and Hopeh presumably initiating and overseeing the experiment in combining the two policies of decentralization and large collectives into a concrete form:

The Communist Party committees at various levels in the province undertook to set up on a trial basis some large co-operatives of several thousand households each, among them the 9,369-household Weihsing (Sputnik) Co-op in Chayashan, Suiping county, formed (on April 20) out of 27 smaller co-ops In the course of the merger of the small co-ops, energetic efforts were made to build industry, organize community canteens, nurseries, kindergartens, homes for the aged, and other welfare services; plots of land reserved for private use were turned over to the co-op and socialist co-operation was developed on a vast scale. In the cities too, an increasing number of factories were built and more community services and welfare facilities initiated. This was, in essence, already the start of the movement for people's communes Only after Comrade Mao Tse-tung gave his directive regarding the people's communes

did they (the people) begin to see things clearly, realize the meaning of this new form of organization that had appeared in the vast rural and urban areas, and feel more confident and determined to take this path.¹¹

The Reform of Soviet Agriculture

At approximately the same time that selected Chinese Party leaders were meeting in Chengtu to initiate the policies that would result in the formation of the communes, a nationwide discussion was taking place in the Soviet Union over the proposal by the CPSU to reorganize the state-owned Machine Tractor Stations and sell their tractors and machinery to the collective farms. This proposal arose out of Khrushchev's policy of giving the peasants more incentives in order to encourage increased production. In Marxist eyes, such a policy, based on expediency rather than ideology is retrogressive, and a number of Soviet economists and party members said as much during the debates on the proposal. To many, the selling of state property (i.e. property of the whole people) to the collective farms was a step away from the Communist goal, since according to Marxist theory, the avowed aim is to gradually transform all the means of production into state property: property of the whole people. In fact, in 1952, Stalin had rejected similar proposals as retrogressive for this very reason.

¹¹Wu Chih-pu, op. cit., p. 34.

In the debate over the reorganization of the M.T.S., both Khrushchev and leading Party theoreticians took up the whole question of the transition to communism and attempted to provide theoretical justification, within the framework of Marxist-Leninism, for the Party policy. In doing so, they adopted positions on a number of important theoretical questions which were to form the center of the commune controversy in the succeeding months. Some of the comment had bearing on the exact subject of communes, which meant that the CPSU took an ideological position on the communes immediately prior to the time that the first one was officially established in Honan. (It should be noted, however, that the new unit in China was not officially termed a "commune" until June of 1958.¹²) Thus, the Chinese set up their communes fully knowing that the Russians had just adopted a public position concerning their appropriateness at the current stage of the road to communism. It is not equally discernible from available evidence, whether the CPSU was fully aware at this particular moment of the Chinese experiments or intents. If the Soviet leaders were indeed fully informed of the Chinese intent, then the articles in the Soviet press and journals take on added significance. In either case, the reorganization of the M.T.S. proved to be

¹²"Long Live the People's Communes," People's Daily, August 29, 1959; reprinted in Report on Adjusting the Major Targets of the 1959 Economic Plan (Peking, F.L.P., 1959), p. 41.

the occasion for the Communist Party of the Soviet Union to make its views known concerning collectives, communes and the transition to communism.

In his speech on March 27 to the Supreme Soviet, Khrushchev discussed in detail the question of the transition to communism, from both a theoretical and from a practical point of view. From the outset, he stressed the importance of increasing production and emphasized that his liberal agricultural policies designed to achieve this end had been opposed by the more dogmatic element within the Party, (which had been led by Molotov, Shepilov, Malenkov, Kaganovitch and Bulganin, who were ousted from the politburo in the summer of 1957). Khrushchev pointed out that:

In organizing the nationwide struggle for a sharp advance in agriculture, the Communist Party is guided by the programmatic principles of Marxist-Leninism concerning the enormous importance of agricultural production and of creating an abundance of food, without which the transition to communism is inconceivable. The Party delivered a shattering blow to the conservatives and dogmatists divorced from life who resisted the Party's Leninist line and opposed implementation of such major measures as developing the virgin and idle lands, increasing livestock productivity and consistently applying the principle of the material stake of the farmers in the development of the communal economy.¹³

¹³N. S. Khrushchev, "On Further Developing the Collective Farm System and Reorganizing the M.T.S.," Pravda, March 28, 1958; Current Digest of the Soviet Press, vol. X, no. 13, p. 6.

Turning to the collective farms as such, Khrushchev propounded the view that they had not yet reached their full potential as an organizational form, and that with his proposed reorganization of the Machine Tractor Stations, their productiveness would be vastly increased. Thus, he made the declaration that:

An increase in agricultural production depends on further strengthening the collective farms, improving the organization of their work and reinforcing their material and technical base Amalgamation of the collective farms was an important step in the development of the collective farm system. This measure opened up favourable opportunities for more rational use of equipment and manpower resources and for advancing the collective farm economy. But because of serious shortcomings in the management of agriculture, this measure alone could not assure a radical turning point in the development of collective farm production . . . Now . . . it is time to think about making radical changes in the provision of technical and production services to the collective farms.¹⁴

Basically then, Khrushchev's main theses in these passages were that (a) the most important task is to create material abundance, which is the primary prerequisite for the achievement of communism in a socialist nation; (b) material abundance can be most quickly achieved by the use of material incentives and through mechanization; (c) further collectivization into bigger units has limited practical value and (d) ideology must take second place to increased production if communism is to be reached in the shortest time.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 8.

The Soviet premier then went on to discuss the problems in Marxist-Leninist theory raised by the proposed policy, and specifically the question of the different forms of socialist ownership. It should be remembered that in reorganizing the M.T.S., Khrushchev was reversing the policy explicitly laid down in 1952 by Stalin himself. Thus, Khrushchev was forced to come to grips with, and refute, the ideological arguments presented by Stalin for the retention of the Machine Tractor Stations in the hands of the state. Stalin's most formidable argument had been that the selling of state machinery to the collective farms would constitute a backward step, since collective property was a lower form of socialist property than property belonging to the whole people. Khrushchev was thus forced to defend his M.T.S. policies against those who upheld the ideological validity of Stalin's stand, made only a few years before in 1952. Khrushchev outlined their arguments in the following passage:

Some comrades, primarily among the economists, held that with the reorganization of the M.T.S. a vagueness would arise in certain theoretical questions, in particular the question of two forms of ownership. Proceeding from the premise that the transition to communism requires the comprehensive strengthening of public ownership and raising collective farm co-operative property to the level of public property, they expressed the fear that the planned reorganization of the M.T.S. would contradict Marxist-Leninist theory and that the sale of machinery to the collective farms might weaken public ownership. The question was also raised as to which form of socialist agriculture better corresponds to the tasks of building communism, collective or state farming? Since the state farm is based on public ownership, should not the collective farms be converted to the state farm form of economy?¹⁵

¹⁵Ibid., p. 11.

This argument concerning the gradual transition towards ownership of the whole people is a key one, ideologically, and proved to be one of the central issues in the Sino-Soviet dispute over the communes. Khrushchev's position on this question is thus an important factor being taken into account.

He assumed the position that the importance of transforming collective property into public property should not be over-stressed. While conceding that Lenin had declared public property to be the highest form of property, he suggested that Lenin had "never counterposed public property and co-operative property." Instead, "he stressed that both forms of property are socialist, and both serve the interests of the people and the common aim--the building of communist society." Thus, he concluded that there was no need to view collective and state property as antagonistic, and that collective property would gradually evolve towards public property anyway in the natural course of events:

Of course, there are definite differences between collective farm co-operative property and public property, but these are merely the different forms of development of one and the same thing, namely, the socialist mode of production. The only difference is that public property has a higher and collective farm property a lower degree of socialization. This means that it is a matter of gradually raising the level of socialization of collective farm property and thus raising it to the level of public property. How is this to be done? Only by further developing both public, state property and co-operative, collective-farm property. The measures planned for further developing the collective farm system and reorganizing the M.T.S. will assure the expansion

of collective farm property and its closest approximation to public property.¹⁶

In other words, Khrushchev de-emphasized the difference between collective and state ownership, and placed the task of raising production over the theoretical requirement of moving towards state ownership. And despite his fancy Marxist-Leninist footwork, his main point remained implicit-- that a movement towards state ownership of agriculture, or retention of state-owned M.T.S. wouldn't raise production. In short, pragmatism must take precedence over ideology. It is interesting to note in this regard, a comment made by Liu Shao-chi a month later at the Chinese Party Congress in which he took the opposite view, saying that "some people say that ideological and political work can produce neither grain nor coal nor iron. This is like failing to see the wood for the trees." These two statements of position form an important point of departure in the Sino-Soviet dispute, one stressing material incentive, the other ideology, in the struggle to raise production.

Continuing his argument, Khrushchev goes on:

One wonders how it can be assumed that the development of collective farm ownership contradicts the interests of building socialism, that this ownership can be used against our state, against the working

¹⁶Loc. cit.

class. Only those people can think this who lag hopelessly behind life.^{17*}

It is interesting to note that Khrushchev refers in this paragraph to the building of socialism rather than the building of communism, which is the stage in which the Soviet Union is purported to be. This may be a clue to the fact that Khrushchev was also directing his remarks to the Chinese, who like the other members of the communist bloc, are considered to be still in the stage of building socialism.

The selling of state equipment to the collective farms will result in an increase in production of foodstuffs, the Soviet leader continues:

Does this contradict the tasks of building a communist society? No, . . . for it speeds the progress of our country towards communism. The indivisible funds of the collective farms will increase, the level of socialization of collective farm production will be higher and inter-collective farm ties will grow; this will be a major condition for the further development of collective farm property and will help it grow into public property.¹⁸

Developing this point in another part of his address he suggested that:

. . . the collective farms are uniting their efforts to solve problems that fall outside the framework of individual farms and are building installations that are essentially of

¹⁷Ibid., p. 14 (*the emphasis is mine).

¹⁸Loc. cit.

a public nature. Here it is not difficult to see elements of the development of collective-farm co-operative property into public property.¹⁹

From a purely Marxist point of view, this analysis is hardly convincing: the property that Khrushchev cites is still collective property owned by, at the most, a few thousand families, and by no means public property. The differences between rich collectives and poor collectives on a nationwide scale still persists. At no point does Khrushchev suggest that a party-initiated, formal program would be initiated to transform collective ownership into state ownership in the foreseeable future. Rather, he suggested that as a social unit, the collectives would be retained throughout the transition to communism. At no point did he even mention the possibility of evolving to the commune units that were experimented with in the Soviet Union in the period of War Communism, immediately following the revolution. Moreover, he denied the necessity to gradually switch over to the state farm system which embodies the principle of ownership by the whole people.

Answering those who were maintaining that state farms were more appropriate than collective farms during the period of communist construction, the Soviet leader again de-emphasized the differences between the two and declared that there was no vital necessity to change the relations

¹⁹Ibid., p. 12.

of production from a collective to a state form. He argued that until the collectives had outlived their usefulness, they would be retained, and that this usefulness was likely to continue into the indefinite future:

Naturally it is impossible mechanically to equate the state farms and the collective farms. The state farms are state enterprises with a higher level of socialization and organization of production But does this mean that one form should change into another? This question could only arise under conditions where one of these forms had exhausted its possibilities for further development and for increasing production. But can it be said that the collective farms have exhausted their possibilities? The experience of socialist production shows that both the collective farms and the state farms have inexhaustible (emphasis added) reserves for advancing production.²⁰

The last sentence of Khrushchev's argument is especially significant since it suggests that the status quo as regards the organizational forms of socialism will remain right through the period of building communism. It is important to note in this regard that the Soviet leader emphasises the fact that the collectives in their present form have virtually unlimited potential in terms of production development. According to Marxist theory, the production relations, or organization forms of the process of production, can only change when they have outlived their usefulness; that is to say, when the superstructure restricts the further expansion of the productive forces. In other words, changes in the

²⁰Ibid., p. 14.

organization of the productive forces can only occur when objective conditions demand it; a new economic superstructure cannot be arbitrarily imposed. Whether or not the collectives had really outlived their usefulness, was to become one of the key arguments in the dispute over the introduction of the communes in China. In this speech by Khrushchev, the Soviet view was firmly established: the collectives would serve for many years to come. Later, the Chinese were to argue differently.

The Development of Collective Farm Theory

In the following weeks articles by leading economists and theoreticians appeared in Soviet newspapers, magazines and journals, further expanding the case put forward by Khrushchev at the session of the Supreme Soviet. The articles by comrades Leontyev, Glotov and Strumilin were of particular importance. In these articles, not only were Khrushchev's policies given further ideological support, but also explicit references were made to communes as a form of socialist organization. Thus, the Soviet attitude towards the introduction of communes into socialist society was specifically spelled out less than a month before the first experimental communes were organized by Mao Tse-tung in Honan on April 20.

Leontyev's article which appeared in the April 7 edition of Pravda, the party newspaper, was entitled "For

a Mighty Upsurge of the Socialist Economy" and dealt mainly with the methods by which the collective farm economy would gradually evolve into a form more closely akin to that of the state farm, while at the same time praising the party's policies in agriculture as being ideologically correct.

Can one imagine more vivid and so to speak, more tangible proof of the strength and vitality of the Marxist-Leninist principles of building a socialist economy, principles creatively applied by the Party at the present stage of the advance towards communism? In improving the methods of guiding economic construction the Communist Party is resolutely casting aside dogmatic concepts that hamper the successful advance to communism.²¹

Of course, one of these basic so-called "dogmatic concepts" to which the writer was referring was the thesis put forward by Stalin in his work Economic Problems of Socialism in the U.S.S.R., that collective farm property was already beginning to "retard the powerful development of our productive forces", and would do so increasingly as time wore on. This, of course, was the thesis publicly proclaimed by the Chinese Communists later, in defence of their introduction of the communes.

Leontyev further developed Soviet theory regarding the development of the collective farms, and their role in the transition to communism, arguing that:

²¹L. Leontyev, "For Mighty Upsurge of Socialist Economy," Pravda, April 7, 1958; Current Digest of the Soviet Press, vol. X, no. 15, p. 31.

Life has shown that the raising of collective farm property to the level of property belonging to the whole people proceeds through the development, growth and increase of both state and co-operative property; moreover, this takes place through expansion of the sphere of commodity circulation as a result of greater marketed production by the collective farms, on the one hand, and the free sale of machinery to the collective farms on the other. It is no longer possible to deny that the bringing of the two forms of socialist property closer together is not being accompanied by a contraction of the sphere of value relations but an expansion of this sphere The advance of the socialist economy to communism is connected with ever fuller and wider use of the law of value and the value categories based on it - prices, money, etc.²²

In short, by taking one step backward ideologically, the Soviet Union would move two steps forward in the long-term evolution to communism. The road to communism did not lie through a structural revolution in Soviet society, but through increased production, whence structural changes would gradually and naturally evolve.

It is noteworthy that not only Stalin's teachings on collective versus state property is negated, but also his teaching concerning the connected matter of commodity circulation. Stalin had stressed in his Economic Problems of Socialism that in the future commodity circulation would gradually decrease and be replaced by direct barter and exchange. Leontyev's article argues for exactly the opposite-- the increase in commodity circulation and greater use of the

²²Loc. cit.

law of value. Thus, the new Soviet line embodied an almost complete reversal of the Stalinist position, and far-reaching compromises in ideology in order to stimulate productiveness. From a dogmatic Marxist point of view, these policies were ideological heresy.

The second of the two articles defining Soviet policy concerning the appropriate agricultural units in the period of the transition to communism appeared in the March 25 edition of the Literary Gazette and dealt more specifically with the commune as an alternative to the collective. The author, Academician S. Strumilin, a leading Soviet economist, makes his main points in the following passage:

To this day we do not regard the collective farm as the highest rung of socialist collectivization. It was assumed that the collective farm was a stage in the transition to the agricultural commune - i.e. the stage immediately preceding the commune. However, since the communist principle of distribution presupposes inexhaustible sources of abundance, it would be sheer absurdity to begin applying this principle with the collective farm countryside, i.e. the most backward sector of the socialist economy. Therefore transformation of the artel into a commune has been, of course, precluded in practice for an entirely indefinite period. The idea that the present-day collective farm should in time turn into an independent producer-and-consumer commune seems to me fundamentally untenable.²³

²³S. Strumilin, "On the Right Track," Literary Gazette, March 25, p. 2; Current Digest of the Soviet Press, vol. X, no. 15, p. 25.

He also rejected the possibility of transforming the collectives into state farms, and advocated instead a gradual evolution of the collective farms in their present direction, towards a form more similar to state farms, but not the same:

It would be wrong to orient ourselves towards turning the collective farms into state farms. But to direct the development of the collective farm system towards possibly coming closer to more progressive forms of the Soviet economy, towards bringing the collective farms closer to the state farms in the organization of labour, seems the most natural path of the collective farms' further development.²⁴

Here, the Soviet view was laid squarely on the line, completely repudiating the idea that the commune could be introduced until abundance had been achieved, and rejecting the idea that such a form would be introduced in the foreseeable future, even in the Soviet Union--the most economically advanced nation in the communist bloc. Moreover, the strength of the Soviet conviction is clearly and explicitly revealed by the strong language used; the introduction of communes was completely out of the question. Moreover, the future development of the collectives was clearly laid out--they would come gradually closer to the state farm form, that is to say nearer to ownership by the whole people, but would certainly not change over into communes.

²⁴Ibid., p. 26.

The third article in the series on the future of agricultural development, was probably the most significant. It was written by I. Glotov, and appeared in the official journal of the Central Committee, Kommunist, the April edition.

After dealing with Stalin's thesis that the sale of the M.T.S. assets to the collective farms would be a retrogressive step and would only remove the Soviet Union farther from communism, Glotov turned his attention to the whole question of the future of the collective farms:

Will collective farm property go through the stage of state property belonging to the whole people, or is this stage not necessary for it? On the road to communism will the collective farms in their present form of agricultural artels grow over into communes, or is the process of raising collective farm property to the level of property belonging to the whole people, of communist property, not connected with a stage of the artel's growing over into a commune? Such questions arise among many comrades.

It must be said that the correct answer to these questions can be given only by life itself, by the practical experience of millions of Soviet men and women building communism in its full concreteness and all its details. They have never said that they would adhere once and for all to (any) set form methods and ways in accomplishing the tasks of communist construction.²⁵

This passage sets up the stage for the 'negation' of the communes as a useful form in the task of communist

²⁵I. Glotov, "Reorganization of the M.T.S. and Collective Farm Property," Kommunist, no. 5, April 1958, pp. 38-54; Current Digest of the Soviet Press, vol. 10, no. 15, p. 22.

construction, and ties in with Strumilin's careful assertion that "it was assumed (previously) that the collective farm was a stage in the transition to the agricultural commune," implying that the assumption has now been proven false, in the light of Soviet experience. Of course, the nature of Glotov's assertion concerning the finding of the correct ideological road only through experience is most useful as a tool for the Soviets since it means that they are not tied to unbending ideology. However, at the same time, it does mean that the Soviet Union arbitrarily sets ideological standards for the rest of the Socialist countries as it progresses ahead of the others along the communist road. And this of course, is one of the chief sources of the friction in the dispute over the communes: Soviet 'experience' takes precedence over the ideological 'assumptions' to which the Chinese subscribe.

Having cleared the way ideologically for the need to be guided by 'experience' (i.e. expediency) in the process of evolving to communism, Glotov banishes the commune from ideological orthodoxy:

Does this mean that the collective farms will come to communism in the form of agricultural artels or will they grow over into communes, enterprises also based on group property, but which apply the principle 'From each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs'? Evidently such a commune is unlikely under socialism for the economic conditions at this stage differ from the economic conditions under communism precisely in that they are not ripe as yet for the application of the communist principle of distribution. And under

communism a commune, as a collective of owners of group property, is obviously senseless. The commune proved to be unviable at the dawn of the collective farm system. It is also unsuitable during the period of transition from socialism to communism.²⁶

In this short statement, Glotov rejected the commune outright, even as a unit of future communist society, thus throwing the commune concept on the Russian's ideological scrapheap. It should be noted, too, that Glotov's ideological assertions are of such a nature as to be directed at the communist movement as a whole and not merely the Soviet Union. Here, he is not just prescribing for the Soviet Union, but is making ideological pronouncements of a general nature, applicable to the communist movement as a whole. Since the article appeared in the Central Committee's theoretical journal, it can be safely concluded that this pronouncement concerning communes and future development of the collective farm system represented the formulation of the new party line in the aftermath of the M.T.S. debates.

It is interesting to note that although Glotov mentioned the fact the "commune proved to be unviable at the dawn of the collective farm system," he did not quote Stalin's 1934 repudiation of the communes in support of this case against the commune. There are two reasons for this anomalous situation. The first is that the party had just finished rejecting Stalin's arguments against the transfer

²⁶ Ibid., p. 25.

of the M.T.S. equipment to the collectives, and was hardly in a position to use him as an ideological authority in the field of agriculture. The second reason is that while Stalin rejected the commune idea in 1934, he by no means ruled it out in the future. In fact, he fully supported the notion that the collectives would evolve into communes when the time was ripe; and his suggestions in the years immediately before his death that the collectives were beginning to hamper forces of production, seemed to indicate that he thought the communes might not be far off. And since Glotov's purpose was to rule out the communes altogether ideologically, to quote Stalin, was to court disaster.

Commenting on the prematurity and the apparent failure of the agricultural commune, Stalin had suggested three reasons for its lack of success: a shortage of products, a too-low level of technology, and an egalitarianism forced on the communes by scarcity.

The present agricultural commune arose on the basis of an underdeveloped technology and a shortage of products. This really explains why it practiced egalitarianism and showed little concern for the individual, everyday interest of its members--as a result of which it is now being compelled to assume the status of the artel, in which the individual and the public interest of the collective farmers are nationally combined Practice has shown that the communes would certainly have been doomed had they not abandoned egalitarianism.²⁷

²⁷J. Stalin, Report to the Seventeenth Congress of the C.P.S.U. (B.) (Moscow, F.L.P.H., 1951), p. 98.

This last statement was to be a foreshadowing of events in People's China more than twenty-five years later. Moreover, it was this assertion, along with the formulated prerequisites for the implementation of the commune outlined by Stalin, that prevented the Chinese too from mobilizing Stalin's works in support of their commune program. This explains why Stalin was never referred to for support by either side in the controversy over the communes.

Outlining the specific conditions under which the commune as a social unit could arise in Socialist society, Stalin had asserted in his 17th Congress speech, that:

The future commune will arise on the basis of a more developed technology and of a more developed artel, on the basis of an abundance of products. When will that be? Not soon of course. But it will be. It would be criminal to accelerate artificially the process of transition from the artel to the future commune. That would only confuse the whole issue and would facilitate the work of our enemies. The transition from the artel to the future commune must proceed gradually, to the extent that all the collective farmers become convinced that such a transition is necessary.²⁸

Clearly, the Chinese communists could not hope to claim in 1958 that they had fulfilled Stalin's conditions. Even with the bumper harvest of that year, China still remained in the same conditions of poverty that characterized the Soviet Union at the time the agricultural communes were disbanded there. Thus, by introducing the communes into the

²⁸Ibid., p. 97.

Chinese social system, the Chinese found themselves in the position of flying in the face of, not only the contemporary Soviet leaders, but also of Joseph Stalin, the man who seemingly claimed so much of Mao's ideological allegiance and respect.

Nevertheless, the Chinese communists, apparently oblivious to these considerations, initiated the first experimental communes in mid-April in Honan, with a view to advancing the revolution in China to yet another stage.

CHAPTER IV

THE UNVEILING OF THE COMMUNES:

SINO-SOVIET CONFRONTATION

The Chinese Party Congress

The most important event in the month following the establishment of the first experimental communes in Honan was the meeting of the 8th National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party which had last met in October 1956. At the 1956 session, representatives of fraternal parties from nearly every country in the world were invited to attend the proceedings, and were even invited to address the Congress. It was here for instance that Anastas Mikoyan made an important speech regarding Soviet aid to China and a number of other aspects of Sino-Soviet relations. But, significantly, at the 1958 Congress no outside observers were invited to attend the sessions and to record the deliberations. Even in the Soviet Union, the only reports of the Congress were those issued by the New China News Agency. Evidently, not even the Soviet Union had been invited to be represented at the Congress' closed sessions. Clearly this curtain of secrecy which was drawn over the proceedings of the Congress was not without purpose, and strongly suggested that the communes were among the things discussed behind closed doors. It is interesting in this regard that although Mao Tse-tung addressed the Congress, his speech was not published along with those of Liu Shao-chi and Tan Chen-lin.

It would appear likely that Mao dealt at some length with the communes in his address, since the experiment had been underway for several weeks, and Mao had only just returned from his month in various provinces overseeing their initiation. It is interesting to note that nowhere in the report of the Central Committee to the Congress was there any direct mention of the communes (indeed it should be remembered that the name 'commune' was not applied by the Central Committee until a month later). Nor was there any indication in the speech by Tan Chen-lin on the National Program For Agricultural Development, that a revolutionary new movement was underway in certain rural areas. A number of important ideological and domestic policy points were made in these speeches, however, and a number of oblique references made, which in the light of subsequent events, can be seen as pertaining to the impending introduction of the communes on a nationwide scale. Moreover, the ideological foundation was laid for substantiating the Party's new policy of leaping forward in economic construction and for the coming full-fledged dispute over the communes.

Perhaps the most important principle laid down at the Congress was the principle of "uninterrupted revolution", which laid the ideological foundation for both the economic leap forward, and more directly, the people's commune. Liu Shao-chi expressed the concept in these words:

Marx, Engels and Lenin often pointed out that the watchword of the working class should be 'uninterrupted revolution'. In putting forward new revolutionary tasks in good times, so that there is no halfway halt in the revolutionary advance of the people, the revolutionary fervour of the masses will not subside with interruptions of the revolution, and Party and state functionaries will not rest content with the successes won and grow arrogant or apathetic, the Central Committee of the Communist Party and Comrade Mao Tse-tung have always guided the Chinese revolution by this Marxist-Leninist theory of uninterrupted revolution.¹

This was the first time that Mao Tse-tung's theory of 'uninterrupted revolution' had been publicly expressed, indicating that it was meant to set the theoretical foundation for the radical policy changes that were being introduced. In the following months, the theory was to form the theoretical core of the Chinese dialogue with their Soviet comrades. In actual fact, although Liu claimed the principle to have been advanced by the fathers of communism, later it was claimed to be a "creative addition to Marxist-Leninism". It is true that Marx, Engels and Lenin advocated uninterrupted revolution but not exactly in the sense that Mao was seeking to use it. They had used the concept to apply to the period of revolution in a country before the working class (the communist party) seized power, and to the period of transition from bourgeois revolution to socialist

¹Liu Shao-chi, "Report on the Work of the Central Committee," Second Session of the Eighth National Congress of the Communist Party of China (Peking, F.L.P., 1958), p. 39.

revolution, while Mao was extending this concept to include the advance of society from socialism to the communist utopia.

It is likely no coincidence that Mao had formulated this principle in the months following his visit to the Soviet Union for the Moscow conference. It would seem clear from later Chinese charges of Russian "conversatism" that Mao had been impressed by the increasing "bourgeoisization" of life in the Soviet Union during his visit there and had become convinced that the "modern revisionists" were bringing the Soviet revolution to a halt in the domestic arena; that the advance towards communism in a non-material sense was non-existent.

The message behind Mao's new principle was clear: the Party must move the nation into the next stage of communist development. Hinting that big changes were due in the make-up of Chinese society, Liu Shao-chi declared:

The fact is that the growth of the social productive forces calls for a socialist revolution and the spiritual emancipation of the people; the victory of the revolution and emancipation in turn spurs a leap forward in the social productive forces; and this in turn impels a progressive change in the socialist relations of production and an advance in man's ideology. In their ceaseless struggle to transform nature, the people are continuously transforming society and themselves.²

²Ibid., p. 32.

Since a so-called leap forward in production had already occurred over the winter and spring months, the Chinese leaders were already in an ideologically consistent position to argue for a change in production relations. Calling for a revolutionary upsurge in building socialism, Liu noted that already Chinese society was in revolutionary ferment:

In city and countryside people vie with each other to join in all kinds of voluntary labour. In building irrigation works the peasants in many places have thrown aside the age-old narrow-minded idea of only looking after their native places Many enterprises, organizations, schools, army units and individuals have taken the initiative in co-ordinating their activities with those of others so as to promote the progress of all concerned. All this is, as Lenin said, the actual beginning of communism, the beginning of a change which is of world historic significance!³

As a corollary to the 'permanent revolution' formula, Liu put forward the party's general line for socialist construction: of achieving "greater, faster, better and more economical results," which had been passed by the Central Committee the previous September. The communes were later said to have resulted from this ordered speed up in the tempo of construction since new organizational forms were needed to make better use of rural labour. Thus, Liu's arguments supporting the increase in tempo can also be seen as arguments supporting the necessity of introducing the communes. He asserts that:

³Ibid., p. 28.

Some people do not recognize the importance of increasing the speed of construction Some say that speeding up construction makes people feel 'tense', and so it's better to slow down the tempo. But are things not going to get tense if the speed of construction is slowed down? Surely one should be able to see that a really terribly tense situation would exist if more than 600 million people had to live in poverty and cultural backwardness for a prolonged period, had to exert their utmost efforts just to eke out a bare living, and were unable to resist natural calamities effectively, unable to put a quick stop to possible foreign aggression and utterly unable to master their own fate.⁴

Quite clearly, his argument is that if substantial progress is not made by the regime in a fairly short time, peasant unrest might possibly become widespread and threaten its existence. The experience of 1957, especially during the Hundred Flowers period, had shown the party quite clearly and unmistakably that a lot of resentment and unrest lay beneath the surface of the society which would spring to the fore as soon as conditions were right. During the first five year plan, agricultural production had increased by less than 5% per year, hardly keeping ahead of population growth--in order to justify the peasants' sacrifices in terms of increased work and regimentation, the party would have to step up production and produce more results. The alternative, implied Liu Shao-chi, was to risk peasant uprisings such as those of a minor nature, which occurred in some areas in 1957.

⁴Ibid., p. 44.

The third major proposal made by Liu was that industry should be decentralized and placed under local control in order to increase local initiative and increase output. This move was an important one in the move towards the communes, since one of the outstanding features of the communes was to be that they combined both industry and agriculture, and became the basic administrative as well as the basic social and economic units of Chinese society.

Thus, the Party Congress, which met for nearly three weeks, while not publicly issuing any statement concerning the commune experiment, did lay the theoretical and ideological foundation for their introduction, and provided the opening challenge to the Soviet policy of gradualism and conservatism in agriculture and ideology.

On June 1, an article appeared in Red Flag under the authorship of Mao Tse-tung, and called "Introducing a Co-operative". Here Mao made his famous assertion that:

Apart from their other characteristics, China's 600 million people are: first of all poor and second "blank". This seems like a bad thing, but in fact it's a good thing. Poor people want change, want to do things, want revolution. A clean sheet of paper has nothing on it, so that the newest and most beautiful words can be written and the newest and most beautiful pictures painted on it.⁵

⁵Mao Tse-tung, "Introducing a Co-operative," Red Flag, no. 1, 1958; Peking Review, no. 15, 1958, p. 6.

Moreover, he went on, "throughout the country the communist spirit is surging forward." However, no explicit reference to the experiments in Honan was made, even though in retrospect it can be seen that Mao obviously had the communes in mind when he made these remarks.

Khrushchev at the Bulgarian Party Congress

A few days later, at the Bulgarian party congress, it was the Soviet leader's turn to state his views. His opening remarks were clearly intended for the Chinese, suggesting that they should co-operate in the Soviet plan for economic integration of the bloc. (A conference of bloc members had met a few weeks previously and was scheduled to discuss this matter again within another few weeks.) Soviet distress over the Chinese determination to build an independent economy was evident, and it is clear that part of the dismay over the Chinese leap forward and the communes stemmed from the fact that these moves were related to the Chinese drive for economic independence. In his speech, Khrushchev told his audience that:

It goes without saying that each socialist country decides independently on its forms of co-operation with the other socialist countries. There is not and cannot be any pressure whatsoever in this respect.⁶ However, could the rich opportunities of the socialist countries be exploited to the full if each country acted in isolation

⁶This statement would suggest that pressure had indeed been applied on the Chinese--perhaps in the form of withholding economic assistance.

stewed in its own juice as the saying goes? If the socialist countries were to act at cross purposes, could a reliable defence of the gains of socialism be assured under present international conditions? Of course not Only the solidarity of the socialist countries and the strengthening of all-round co-operation and fraternal aid can assure a general increase in the socialist economy and the advancing of the formerly underdeveloped countries to the level of the advanced.⁷

The attempt by the Soviet Union to coerce and persuade the Chinese to enter the Soviet economic orbit had met with no success at the May COMECON meeting in Moscow, and this should be borne in mind as a contributing factor to the subsequent commune controversy.

In the same speech Khrushchev also made a number of apparently favourable references to the creative ideology of the Chinese party. In a historical perspective, these can now be seen as a kind of left-handed compliment, stressing the correctness of the policies the Chinese had followed in collectivization, and leaving implied the suggestion that to make a radical policy switch would be wrong. Thus Khrushchev asserted that:

The Chinese Communist Party and the other fraternal parties of the people's democracies have . . . found unique forms for applying the Leninist cooperative plan in practice (referring to mutual aid teams

⁷N. S. Khrushchev, "Speech at the Seventh Congress of the Bulgarian Communist Party," Pravda, June 4, 1958, pp. 1-3; Current Digest of the Soviet Press, vol. 10, no. 22, p. 8.

and other innovations), China has masterfully combined the general truth of Marxist-Leninism with the concrete practice of revolution and socialist construction in its country.⁸

Yet he took pains to stress very clearly that "the experience of your (Bulgarian) party confirms once again that whatever the national features, there is no other way to enlist the broad peasant masses in socialism except by the tested Leninist cooperative plan."

Here he explicitly countered the Chinese argument that the communes were a product of national peculiarities. His statement is such as to reassert the essence of Glotov's article--that the path to communism charted by the CPSU in the light of Soviet experience did not just apply to the Soviet Union, but had the force of Marxist dogma, binding on all. Doubtless these words by the Soviet leader were in the nature of a warning to the Chinese not to proceed with their experiments, but to remain true to the "Leninist cooperative plan", and were designed to show Soviet displeasure at the developments in China in recent months, without explicitly and openly referring to the commune experiments.

However, before the month was over the Chinese Party's Politiburo had committed itself even deeper, ideologically, to a departure from the Soviet line. It was

⁸Loc.cit.

in June that the decision was made to adopt the name "people's communes" for Mao's rural creations. The significance of this move cannot be overestimated, since to apply the word 'commune' signified a deliberate move on the part of the Chinese to challenge the Soviet Union ideologically. The communes could just as well have been called "Higher Stage Collectives" by the Chinese, and much of the conflict would have been averted. But the naming of these new units as communes signified (a) that the Chinese did not adhere to the CPSU's revision of Marxist theory to exclude the commune as the final stage of the agricultural revolution, nor its formula revising the notion of the nature of the transition of socialist society to communism, and (b) that the Chinese were claiming to be moving one step ahead of the Soviet Union on the road to the communist utopia. In short it signified a direct challenge to Soviet ideological leadership and to the U.S.S.R.'s position as the leading socialist state. The decision had clearly been made to directly oppose the line set down by the CPSU only two months before; and to assert ideological independence.

Public Unveiling of the 'People's Communes'

On July 1, an article by Politburo member Chen Po-ta in Red Flag finally revealed publicly the term 'people's commune', applying it to describe the Hsukuang No. 1 Co-operative in Hupeh (where Mao had also spent a good deal of time in April) which had been publicized previously in Red

Flag as a new type of cooperative. According to Chen, this new people's commune was an example of what Mao was talking about when he said that the "poor and blank" Chinese people were "painting the newest and most beautiful pictures" on a clean sheet of paper. Exalting this brand new Chinese creation--the people's commune--Chen Po-ta declared that it would enable the Chinese to realize all the prerequisites to communism in record time:

Can it be said that what this cooperative is doing is actually an indication that our country can develop the productive forces of society at a rate unknown in history, can quickly eliminate the distinction between industry and agriculture, and the distinction between mental and manual labour, thereby to open a road on which our country can smoothly pass over from socialism to communism? I think it can be said.⁹

Referring to the prerequisites to, and principles of, communist society laid down by Engels, theoretician Chen Po-ta openly proclaimed that the new people's commune, such as the one under discussion, "is concretely and gradually realizing such an ideal of the founders of scientific communism."

Two weeks later in the same Party journal, the Red Flag editor, Chen Po-ta discussed the communes in greater detail, and attributed them directly to the creative mind of Mao Tse-tung. He suggested that this new creation of the

⁹Chen Po-ta, "New Society, New People," Red Flag, July 1, 1958; Current Background, no. 517, p. 44.

Chinese leader was completely consistent with Marxist-Leninism since Marx and Engels had only set out the principles to be followed and had not set down "a prescription for each nation." Moreover, he noted that Lenin had remarked that Eastern countries had conditions which differed greatly from those in Europe, and that therefore different forms could be expected. Here, of course, is a clear indication that the Chinese leaders were very much aware that the commune was a deviation from the Soviet path, and were already defending their deviation on the grounds that different conditions demanded different solutions. In the course of the article, Chen also eulogized Mao as an outstanding theoretician of Marxist-Leninism, thus inflating Mao's stature as a source of doctrinal interpretation, and at the same time giving the communes added ideological orthodoxy. Chen noted that:

Comrade Mao Tse-tung said that we should steadily and systematically organize industry, agriculture, commerce, education, and soldiers (people's armed forces) into a big commune, thereby to form the basic units of society This conception of the commune is a conclusion drawn by Comrade Mao Tse-tung from realistic life.¹⁰

According to Chen, Mao's concept of the commune was that industry, agriculture and commerce would provide the material life of the members; culture and education would be deployed to satisfy their spiritual requirements and the armed forces

¹⁰Chen Po-ta, "Under the Banner of Comrade Mao Tse-tung," Red Flag, no. 4, July 16, 1958; Survey of the Chinese Mainland Press, no. 138.

would protect the members until such time as "exploitation of man by man in the world" is eliminated.

Confrontation Over the Communes: July 1958

Thus, with both sides having taken stands over the communes, the stage was set for a confrontation between Khrushchev and Mao--and the chance soon came. At the end of July, Khrushchev made an unexpected, secret trip to Peking, ostensibly to discuss the Middle East crisis with Mao, and to have consultations over the building tension of the Formosa Straits. The communique issued after the meeting contained no reference to anything but foreign policy, but subsequent disclosures by the Soviet party have confirmed that the Chinese commune policy came under fire and was officially and personally discouraged by Khrushchev. In its letter of September 21, 1963 to the Chinese government, the Soviet government revealed the nature of Khrushchev's misgivings concerning the communes:

Precisely because the interests of the Chinese people are dear to us, we were upset by the turn which became apparent in the development of the Chinese national economy in 1958, when the leaders of the People's Republic of China proclaimed their line of the "Three Red Banners", announced the "Great Leap", and began setting up the People's Communes. Our party saw that this was a road of dangerous experiments, a road of disregard for economic laws, and for the experience of other socialist states We could not fail to feel alarmed when, with every step they took, the leaders of the People's Republic of China began to pour abuse on the Leninist principle

of material incentive, abandoned the principle of remunerating labour, and went over to egalitarian distribution in People's Communes.¹¹

Thus the communes were regarded, even in their experimental stage, as being "dangerous experiments", involving a negation of material incentive and an undue emphasis on egalitarianism. It will be remembered that it was exactly for these latter "heresies" that Stalin abandoned and vilified the premature Soviet communes of the 1920's. The Soviet party also emphasized that the Chinese communes represented a blatant disregard for this Soviet experience with communes, and stressed that the Chinese communes were a deviation from the cooperative plan laid down by Lenin.

Recalling Khrushchev's 1958 confrontation with Mao on the commune question, the 1963 Soviet letter summed up the conversation as follows:

We regarded it as our duty to tell the Chinese leaders in a comradely way as early as 1958 about our doubts concerning such 'innovations'. This was said personally by Nikita Khrushchev to Mao Tse-tung in the summer of 1958. The head of the Soviet government pointed out that many things which the Chinese comrades regarded as the very latest in Marxist-Leninism, as a method of speeding up the building of communism, had already been tried out in practice by our own people during the first years of the revolution. In our day, we learned that such a form of organizing peasant production did not justify itself for many reasons. Our party accomplished

¹¹ Soviet Government, A Reply to Peking (London, Soviet Booklets, 1963), p. 12.

the task of the socialist transformation of agriculture on the basis of Lenin's cooperative plan.¹²

One of the important things to be borne in mind concerning this admonition by Khrushchev, and his charges against the communes, is that Marshal Peng Teh-huai was a member of the Chinese delegation at these talks, and so was witness to Khrushchev's display of displeasure. Marshal Peng later became intimately involved in internal party opposition to the communes. At the time, however:

The Chinese leaders turned a deaf ear to our considerations and did not take into account the experience of our party and state. Moreover, people in China began to call us conservatives, believing that the "great leap" and the People's Communes would permit the People's Republic to skip a whole stage in the building of a new society and go over to communism straight away.¹³

Thus the Chinese leadership rejected Khrushchev's warnings and decided to proceed full speed ahead with their radical new commune policies, come what may. Moreover, the charge against the Soviet Union of 'conservatism' opened up a new phase in the dispute in which Russian domestic policies were openly questioned as to revolutionary content.

Commune Upsurge: August 1958

Immediately after his meeting with Khrushchev--the very next day in fact--Mao Tse-tung set out on a tour of

¹²Ibid., p. 13.

¹³Loc. cit.

Hopei, Honan and Shantung to inspect the communes established in those provinces. It is almost certain that the purpose of this trip was to check up on the progress of the communes before the order was given to give the commune program official public party support. During this tour, the Communist leader, defying the warnings of Khrushchev and the Soviet party, gave instructions to local officials and cadres to proceed full speed ahead with the communes throughout the rural area:

On his inspection tour to Hopei, Honan and Shantung early in August this year, Comrade Mao Tse-tung gave further instructions on the organization of the People's Communes, saying 'It is better to run people's communes. Their advantages lie in that they can merge industry, agriculture, trade, culture and education, and military affairs into one entity and make it easier for leadership.' This was a still greater enlightenment and inspiration to the Honan people. An upsurge in forming people's communes thus spread throughout the province.¹⁴

In the Soviet Union, during Mao's tour of the countryside, articles dealing with Chinese agriculture stressed that the harvest successes were due to the Chinese following Lenin's cooperative plan and the experience of the Soviet Union, and ignored completely the still-unofficial commune movement. On August 5, for instance, while Mao was in Hopei,

¹⁴Wu Chih-pu, "From A.P.C.'s to People's Communes", Red Flag, no. 8, September 16, 1958; People's Communes in China (Peking, F.L.P., 1958), p. 34.

an article appeared in V pomoshch' politicheskomu soobrazovaniyu, a CPSU Central Committee journal, lauding the Chinese successes in the construction of socialism and Chinese creativity in applying the general tenets of Marxist-Leninism to the concrete conditions in China. However, the article also stressed that the best C.P.C. cadres had explained to the peasantry "the experience of collectivization and the successes of the kolkhoz regime in the U.S.S.R."¹⁵ And of course the Soviet experience included failure of the commune. It is characteristic of these articles in Soviet publications that the "correctness" of the cooperative path rather than the incorrectness of the commune path is stressed, thus criticising by implication rather than by specific reference.

On August 18, Pravda published an editorial (significantly, i.e. rather than a news report) concerning the successes of the Chinese harvest, noting that "this year, China will surpass the U.S.A. in gross output of wheat by at least two million tons, and this is not a limit. In their recent meetings with Chairman Mao, the Chinese peasants spoke with enthusiasm about the great possibilities inherent in the cooperative system."^{16*} Here the Soviets make it very plain that Khrushchev's assertion that the cooperatives in the Soviet Union had unlimited production potential, also applied very definitely to China. Before, it had been implied;

¹⁵Cited in D. S. Zagoria, The Sino-Soviet Conflict (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1962), p. 95.

¹⁶Loc. cit. (*the emphasis is added).

now it was explicit. Thus, while the Chinese were claiming that the co-ops were hampering production and made a new form of rural unit necessary, the CPSU was claiming just the opposite. It is indeed significant, and also ironic, that the editorial in Pravda was stressing the peasant support for the cooperative plan by reference to peasant reaction to Mao's visits with them on his commune tour. There is thus an implication in the editorial, that not only is Mao contravening Marxist theory with his commune experiments, but also the opinions of the "masses". And one of the fundamental arguments of Mao in support of the communes was that they were the "creation of the masses", and were instituted at their demand. The editorial was thus a two-pronged blow. Despite Soviet reaction, however, Mao made the decision to extend the experimental communes throughout the whole nation and make them the basic unit of Chinese society.

CHAPTER V

THE COMMUNE RESOLUTION AND SOVIET REACTION

In the latter part of August, the Chinese Party's politburo met to give formal approval to the extension of the communes to the entire nation. The decision was embodied in the historic August 29th Resolution "On The Establishment of People's Communes in the Rural Areas", published on September 10. This resolution signified the beginning of the formal ideological claims for the communes, and probably was the most significant departure point in the whole commune controversy.

The resolution has two main elements: one describing the process and particulars of setting up communes throughout the country, and the other intermingled, providing the ideological rationale and claims for the communes. As far as the commune dispute is concerned, the latter is, of course, by far the most important. Providing the arguments to show that the communes were not arbitrarily introduced but arose out of existing objective conditions that made the previous co-ops obsolete (and therefore fulfilling the condition imposed by Marxist historical materialism), the resolution stated that:

the people's communes are the logical result of the march of events The basis for the leap forward in China's agricultural production, and the ever-rising political consciousness of the 500 million peasants. An unprecedented advance has been made in agricultural capital

construction since the advocates of the capitalist road were fundamentally defeated economically, politically, ideologically (i.e. 1957 anti-rightist campaign). This has created a new basis for practically eliminating flood and drought, and for ensuring the comparatively stable advance of agricultural production Capital construction in agriculture and the struggle for bumper harvests involve large-scale co-operation which cuts across the boundaries between co-operatives, townships and counties. The people have taken to organizing themselves along military lines, working with militancy, leading collective life, and this has raised the political consciousness of the 500 million peasants still further What all these things illustrate is that the agricultural co-operative with scores of families or several hundred families can no longer meet the needs of the changing situation. In the present circumstances the establishment of people's communes . . . is the fundamental policy to guide the peasants to accelerate socialist construction, complete the building of socialism ahead of time and carry out the gradual transition to communism.¹

These, then, were the basic arguments presented by the Chinese to show that objective conditions demanded the introduction of the communes. "In such circumstances, the people's communes were born just as 'an irrigation canal forms as the water comes' or 'a melon drops from its stalk when it ripens'."² This was, of course, one of the central points at issue in the commune dispute; the Russians claiming (as did

¹"Resolution on The Establishment of People's Communes In The Rural Areas," People's Communes in China (Peking, F.L.P., 1958), p. 1.

²Lin Tieh (1st Secretary of Hopei Provincial Committee), "The People's Commune Movement in Hopei," Red Flag, no. 9, October 1, 1958; Ibid., p. 49.

a faction of the C.P.C.) that the communes were introduced prematurely, before the objective conditions were ripe, and therefore that the communes had been 'imposed' from the top, contrary to the dictates of Marxist-Leninism and historical materialism.

The commune resolution also defined the nature of the new social unit and showed where it differed from the co-ops. Quoting Chairman Mao, Wu Chih-pu later stated that the commune is distinguished by two chief characteristics: its bigger size, and its more socialistic nature. By 'bigger size', it was explained, two things were meant: one, that the communes were physically larger by at least ten times than the cooperatives, and were "much more powerful in terms of manpower, land, financial resources, and material strength."³ Secondly, "bigger size" meant that the communes had a much wider range of activities than the co-op: "It is no longer an organization dealing with agriculture alone, but a social unit that has as its task the overall development of agriculture, forestry, animal husbandry, side occupations and fishery, and that integrates industry, agriculture, trade, culture and education, and military affairs into a single whole." The commune also took over the role of local government, thus making it "at once a basic social unit and a basic organ of state power."⁴

³Wu Chih-pu, "From A.P.C.'s to People's Communes," Red Flag, no. 8, September 16, 1958; Ibid., p. 35.

⁴Ibid., p. 36.

By "more socialist nature" was meant that the commune was "the best form or organization for effecting the transition from collective ownership to ownership by the whole people, and that it contains the budding of communism."

In the spring, Soviet theoreticians had indicated that the road to communism included a gradual evolution of the collectives towards a form similar to the state farm. However, the commune resolution indicated that this was not to occur in China since the communes with their wide scope of activity were fundamentally different to the state farms. Thus, the politburo indicated that:

all the big merged cooperatives will be called people's communes. There is no need to change them into state farms, for it is not proper for farms to embrace industry, agriculture, exchange, culture and education and military affairs at the same time.⁵

It should be remembered that the CPSU had also ruled out the state farm as the ultimate unit, but for different reasons. In effect, the Russians had committed themselves to the cooperative as the most suitable unit in socialist society, and in the transition to communism, while the Chinese rejected it, and substituted the commune in its place.

The Chinese claimed that although the commune in its initial form was still based on collective ownership, it

⁵"Resolution on the Establishment of People's Communes in Rural Areas," Ibid., p. 6.

would soon evolve to the higher state-ownership by the whole people:

In fact, collective ownership in the people's communes already contains some elements of ownership by the people as a whole. These elements will grow constantly in the course of the continuous development of the people's communes and will gradually replace collective ownership.⁶

This assertion is really, of course, not too different from those made by the Soviet theoreticians some months earlier in regard to the evolution of the collectives to this higher form of ownership, and therefore, by itself, didn't represent a challenge to Soviet leadership. However, the resolution also contained a time-table for the changeover to ownership by the whole people, which the Soviets had not fixed. Thus, while the CPSU had assigned the changeover to some indefinite future, the Chinese were claiming that the process would be completed within a few years: "The transition from collective ownership to ownership by the whole people is a process, the completion of which may take less time--three or four years--in some places and longer--five or six years or even longer--elsewhere."^{6a} This declaration did signify a direct challenge to the CPSU since it meant that the Chinese were attempting to achieve a higher form of socialist ownership (the Russians had conceded this in the spring) throughout society before the Russians. In short,

⁶Ibid., p. 7.

^{6a}Loc. cit.

the Chinese were attempting to leap ahead of the Soviet comrades in this aspect of the transition to communism.

The Chinese made it explicit, however, that even when ownership by the whole people had been achieved, the communes "are still socialist in character, where the principle, 'from each according to his abilities, to each according to his work' prevails." However, the Chinese leaders also suggested that "where conditions permit, a shift to the wage system may be made." This last point indicated not the introduction of "each according to his needs", but rather an in-between stage in which a monthly wage was guaranteed despite how many days were worked. This principle had also been instituted in certain areas of the Soviet Union in certain wealthy collectives, and thus was not entirely in the nature of an innovation, although the Soviet party had never issued an official directive or policy regarding this "higher" stage of distribution. Insofar as the Chinese had made it official policy to encourage this system of distribution, it did tend to place the Chinese (on paper at least) ahead of the Soviet Union in this regard. But at no time in the commune resolution did the party advocate the introduction of the communist principle "to each according to his needs", or even suggest the system of "part supply" which was introduced later.

At the end of the historic commune directive, the Central Committee made abundantly clear the limits of its

ideological claims, reasserting unmistakably that:

At the present stage our task is to build socialism. The primary purpose of establishing people's communes is to accelerate the speed of socialist construction, and the purpose of building socialism is to prepare actively for the transition to communism. It seems that the attainment of communism in China is no longer a remote future event. We should actively use the form of the people's communes to explore the practical road of transition to Communism.⁷

It is only in the last two sentences that a challenge to the Soviet Union's leadership could be inferred. Since the U.S.S.R. is conceded to be building communism, it is clear that the Chinese are reiterating their previous stand, that the Soviet Union is the farthest along the road to communism, and is in fact a whole stage ahead. At the same time, however, there is an implication in the last two sentences that the Chinese are rapidly catching up. It was almost exactly one year earlier that Khrushchev had asserted in a speech that communism was no longer remote in the Soviet Union, so the Chinese were, by their own calculations, only one jump behind. But the real innovation in the Chinese claims was that the commune could be used as a practical experiment to 'explore' the road to communism.

But certainly, the Chinese had not claimed to have leaped ahead into the stage of 'building communism'. Indeed, the commune resolution specifically set out the prerequisites

⁷Ibid., p. 8.

that would have to be achieved before the communist distribution principle could be introduced and communism achieved:

After a number of years, as the social product increases greatly, the communist consciousness and morality of the entire people are raised to a much higher degree, and universal education is instituted and developed, the difference between workers and peasants, town and country and mental and manual labour . . . will gradually vanish and the function of the state will be limited to protecting the country from external aggression but will play no role internally. At that time Chinese society will enter the era of communism where the principle of from each according to his ability and to each according to his needs will be practiced.⁸

The essence of the Chinese ideological challenge was fourfold, then. First, the Chinese were rejecting the binding force of Soviet 'experience' which had supposedly proven the communes to be unworkable. Secondly, they were claiming to be a second source of ideological wisdom, insofar as the people's commune was an almost entirely new idea, differing substantially from the abandoned agricultural communes in the Soviet Union. Thirdly, they were striving to bring about ownership by the whole people, as opposed to collective ownership, before this was completed in the Soviet Union. Fourthly, they were setting themselves on a par with the Soviet Union by asserting that communism was no longer something remote in China; and while conceding the Soviet lead, they were claiming in essence to be moving

⁸Ibid., p. 7.

faster towards communism, with the possibility of reaching that final stage even before the U.S.S.R. It was implied that their innovation, the commune, would provide a revolutionary shortcut to the communist goal. Later, of course, in subsequent months, these claims were expanded by various party leaders, but these were the chief challenges involved in the text of the commune resolution itself.

Communes in the Chinese Press

Within the next few days, important articles appeared in both Red Flag and People's Daily, amplifying the content of the resolution. Moreover, a number of further ideological claims were advanced or implied. The communes were explicitly tied to Mao's theory of uninterrupted revolution, for instance in a Red Flag editorial on September 1. There, it was asserted that the communes had been introduced so smoothly not only because the forces of production had outgrown their cooperative superstructure, but also because:

the Chinese people have grasped the guiding ideology of the Communist Party's Central Committee, and Comrade Mao Tse-tung's teachings on uninterrupted revolution. The working people want no pause in the course of the revolution and they see that the more rapidly the revolution advances, the more benefits they will derive.⁹

Furthermore, it was recommended that the communes organize along military lines, and introduce a military style in their

⁹"Greet the Upsurge in Forming People's Communes," Red Flag, No. 7, September 1, 1958; Ibid., p. 13.

'battle' to raise production. The ideological foundation for this policy was found in the Communist Manifesto where Marx advocated the "establishment of industrial armies, especially for agriculture". The practical foundation was found in the fact that "the swift expansion of agriculture demands that they should greatly strengthen their (the peasants') organization, act more quickly and with greater discipline and efficiency, so that like factory workers and army men they can be deployed with greater freedom and on a larger scale."¹⁰ As a rather ominous additional comment on the para-military technique to be employed in the communes, it was noted that "although the organization of agricultural labour along military lines at present is for waging battles against nature and not human enemies, it is nonetheless not difficult to transform one kind of struggle into another."¹¹

The communes, as a social unit, were themselves further substantiated, ideologically, by claiming for them the approval of the fathers of communism, (although specific references to document this claim were not put forward). Thus: "it will become the basic social unit in the future communist society as thinkers--from many outstanding utopian socialists to Marx, Engels and Lenin--had predicted on many occasions."¹² Moreover, it was further asserted that the

¹⁰Ibid., p. 14.

¹¹Loc. cit.

¹²"Hold High the Red Flag of the People's Communes and Continue to March On," People's Daily, September 3, 1958; Ibid., p. 20.

party had discovered the specific road to communism: "Co-op, advanced co-op, people's commune, advanced people's commune (entirely communist in character)." And that while the Chinese revolution was still in the stage of building socialism, that some aspects of the communes such as the free supply of grain were "the budding sprouts of communism."¹³ Furthermore, while it was reasserted that it would be a mistake to think that the revolution was not still in the stage of building socialism, and a mistake to attempt to move too quickly or prematurely to the communist distribution system, it was also made abundantly clear that the transition to communism was not far off. While the August resolution suggested that after ownership of the whole people had been achieved (in three to six years or longer), it would still take "a number of years" to establish the prerequisites for communism, the article in People's Daily reduced this latter period to "a few years", thus implying communism to be even more imminent in China. From this latter forecast, one could conclude that there was a possibility of achieving communism within ten years in China.

At the same time as these radical ideological assertions were being made, other statements in the same articles provided amplifications of some of the practical

¹³"Greet the Upsurge in Forming the People's Communes," Red Flag, no. 7, September 1, 1958; Ibid., p. 12.

reasons why the communes had been introduced, indicating that (as in the Soviet Union's case) the changeover from old forms to new was apparently motivated partly by practical considerations. Thus, in the following passage, there is no reference at all to ideological considerations--only to the practical consideration of raising the nation's standard of living. Thus,

To achieve high speed advance in agriculture, enable the countryside to assume a new aspect at an early date, and improve the peasants' living standards as quickly as possible, as facts show it is necessary to carry out large scale capital construction that will fundamentally change natural conditions; to apply new farming techniques; to develop forestry, animal husbandry, side occupations and fisheries side by side with agriculture; to build industries that will serve agriculture and the needs of the peasants as well as big industries; gradually carry out mechanization and electrification; to improve transport, communications and housing conditions in rural areas; and set up educational, health and cultural establishments--to do all this is beyond the power of an agricultural producer's co-operative consisting of a few dozens or hundreds of households.¹⁴

One of the practical reasons also mentioned, was the one attributed to Mao, that the decentralization provided by the communes would "make it easier for leadership." It is presumed that this means the communes would relieve the burdens on the party leaders whose task is to direct a nation of over 650 million people, and place more responsibility for economic development in the hands of local authorities. However, another meaning might also be implied: that the

¹⁴People's Daily, op. cit.

commune system would make it easier for the leadership (and the party) to control and indoctrinate the peasantry and workers. The system of communal living offered by the communes is particularly well suited to political and economic control by a minority of party cadres, and to constant surveillance and indoctrination--in other words, totalitarian "total" control. That this aspect of the communes was one of the more practical advantages of the new social unit in the eyes of the Chinese leaders is not to be denied. This is especially apparent in the light of the events of the preceding two years which had included numerous student strikes, the discovery of secret peasant organizations advocating the overthrow of the regime, and widespread criticism of the party and popular unrest during the "Hundred Flowers" period.¹⁵ It was clear in the light of these events that the peasants in particular were in need of strict party supervision and ideological attention, and that permanent tight control could only be achieved through some kind of social unit like the commune. In communist terminology, the commune was the ideal social unit to raise the "political consciousness" of the peasantry and lead it to communism. Although the argument was never used by the Chinese, Marx could have been mobilized to support the communization of the peasantry. In his Eighteenth

¹⁵Mao Tse-tung, On the Correct Handling of Contradictions Among the People (Peking, F.L.P., 1960), p. 59.

Brumaire of Louis Napoleon, Marx noted that the reason the French peasants did not play a revolutionary role in French history despite their wretched conditions and exploitation, was that they farmed small individual plots and never came into contact with each other, thus never being able to develop an awareness that millions of others were in the same condition--never, therefore, developing a class consciousness, the prerequisite to playing a part in the process of history. Applying this to the Chinese situation, one can see that the bringing together of the peasants into very large units would (with the party's assistance) heighten their class consciousness, just as the bringing together of workers into factories during the industrial revolution had served to raise the political consciousness of the working class.

The Soviet Response to the Communes

The public claims of the Chinese concerning their people's communes did not go unanswered by the Soviet Union. Within a week the Soviet leaders announced the convocation of the party's 21st Congress to be held a year early, in February 1959. It is evident from the timing, and the theme of the Congress (the building of communism), that the Chinese challenge was serious enough to warrant an ideological answer from the podium of the most important of all party meetings--the Congress. Within days, the initial Soviet reaction to the Chinese ideological challenge became apparent--

it was to take a positive approach, reviving Khrushchev's statement of a year earlier that communism was on the horizon in the Soviet Union. In a Kommunist editorial on September 9, for instance, it was proclaimed that:

It is necessary to evaluate the significance of the forthcoming 21st Congress of the CPSU. Our country is in the process of a great upsurge. The higher phase of communism is already not a remote aim; the completion of the construction of socialism and the realization of the gradual transition from socialism to communism is the basic content of the contemporary stage of development of Soviet society.¹⁶

At the same time, articles which made any mention of the communes at all (which now of course could hardly be completely ignored) often referred to them as "higher type cooperatives", rather than "people's communes" thus indicating very clearly the ideological challenge inherent in the choice of the name "commune". One important article of this type appeared in Problems of Economics on October 16, and was entitled "Great China Builds Socialism". The article made it clear that the prerequisite for a rapid advance to communism was a high level of industrialization and this was exactly what China did not have. It also pointed out that in formerly underdeveloped countries like China, it was not enough to institute purely socialist production relations: "a certain level of development of production forces is also

¹⁶Quoted in D.S. Zagoria, The Sino-Soviet Conflict, (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1962), p. 110.

needed." In short, "it follows from this that the (socialist) transition period has not been completed in the C.P.R." It is noteworthy, however, that the article stated that the "higher type cooperatives" were the best form in China, for the speeding up of socialist construction.¹⁷ It is true, of course, that the Russians could hardly launch a head-on attack on the communes without inviting a major break with the Chinese party, and that some concessions to the more practical Chinese assertions could be made while undermining the more far-reaching ideological claims. It is perhaps even more significant, however, that no Soviet leader even mentioned the communes publicly, or expressed an opinion of them. Thus, while the press could hardly ignore them completely, the leadership most certainly could show its strong disapproval through an obvious and prolonged silence. This silence was to last for over three years.

Perhaps the most significant article to appear in Soviet journals during this period was one in Problems of Philosophy by T. A. Stepanyan, a leading Soviet philosopher and authority on the transition to communism. In this article Stepanyan put forward an entirely new concept in Marxist theory--that different groups of socialist countries would enter communism at different times, and that the European socialist countries would be the first to enter the communist

¹⁷Loc. cit.

state.¹⁸ Thus, People's China was relegated to a secondary position vis-a-vis the other bloc members, and would have to undergo the transition to communism at a much later date, along with the other Asian socialist countries. It is clear, of course, that this new assertion by Stepanyan was partly Soviet reaction to the refusal of communist China in May to agree to submit to Soviet pressures to enter into economic integration with the rest of the bloc. However, it was also an implied threat that if the Chinese didn't come to heel ideologically, the Soviet Union would refuse to aid in China's bid to catch up industrially to the more advanced nations. When the Chinese did back down somewhat in the following months, the Russians withdrew this 'law' laid down by Stepanyan and replaced it with the principle that all the socialist countries would enter communism simultaneously. And, of course, in order for this to occur, the advanced socialist countries would have to undertake large programs of aid to enable their underdeveloped allies to catch up economically.

A more obvious, purposeful downgrading of the Chinese occurred just a few days later upon the proclamation of the slogans for the anniversary celebrations of the October Revolution. Previously China had been accorded a special position in the slogans, indicating a more advanced state

¹⁸ Loc. cit.

than the other people's democracies. Now, she was downgraded to the position of the others. Thus, while being differentiated before as a 'builder of socialism' (as opposed to 'building socialism'), in the new slogans China was now said to be 'building socialism' like the rest of the satellites.¹⁹ This was a clear indication that the Russians were attempting to soft-pedal Chinese importance, especially as a bloc leader in ideology and socialist construction.

The Part-Supply System in the Communes

In the meantime the Chinese were continuing to press forward with their claims for the communes. On October 1, an editorial in People's Daily claimed that Mao Tse-tung had asserted on the basis of the 1958 leap forward that within from one to three years there would be an abundance of food and clothing in China. Moreover, emphasis began to be put on the communist nature of the supply system of distribution being instituted in the communes, and in mid-October the party put forward the policy of "part wages, part supply" for the rural communes. This policy was put forward after an intra-party debate conducted among other places on the pages of People's Daily during the first three weeks of October.²⁰ Some party leaders had attacked the wage system as bourgeois in nature, echoing what Lenin had said in "State

¹⁹Ibid., p. 111.

²⁰A collection of these articles appears in Current Background, no. 537.

and Revolution", and urging the implementation of the free supply system. In essence this demand was a demand to move from socialism to communism in terms of Marxist-Leninist theory, since Lenin had asserted that the two systems of distribution--to each according to his work (wage system) and to each according to his needs (supply system) were the chief characteristics of the socialist and communist stages respectively. Other participants in the debate urged that the wage system was the only appropriate one for the socialist stage in which China found itself. The party came down in the middle of these two schools--the utopians and the conservatives--and formulated the part-wage, part-supply system. Insofar as the system was part-supply, it was from a Marxist point of view also partly communist, and thus advanced beyond the Soviet system based almost solely on wages, and on "bourgeois" incentive. It is clear, however, that from the Soviet point of view, these so-called buds of communism contained in the communes were really artificial buds, since they were not in fact based on the principle "according to need", but on mere egalitarianism. It was obvious to all that there was not enough food in China, despite the bumper harvest, to supply the needs of 650 million people. There is a great difference between giving everyone a "free" bowl of rice, and letting everyone eat his fill. This is the difference between egalitarianism as practiced in the premature Soviet communes, and communism as envisioned by Marx.

²¹Zagoria, op. cit., p. 111.

Continuing Soviet Reaction

One of the most significant occurrences of this period was the recall to Moscow of the Soviet Ambassador, Pavel Yudin, in late October. He remained in Moscow for about two weeks, returning to Peking in the first week of November. Upon his return, Yudin made two speeches in Peking which completely ignored the communes and stressed instead the necessity of building up a vast technological and economic base before any socialist country could consider the transition to communism.²¹ It is clear from the turn of events following Yudin's return from Moscow that the Ambassador had important talks with the Chinese leaders about this time, bringing back from Moscow a message and instructions concerning the communes and Chinese economic progress. It is reasonable to assume, in the light of subsequent events, that the Soviet Union brought economic pressure to bear on the Chinese in order to bring about an ideological retreat. It is interesting to note that the Chinese had had their economic dependence on the Soviet Union underlined only a few months earlier when they had to appeal to the Russians for an emergency supply of trucks and other equipment to cope with the enormous harvest, and other aspects of the great leap forward:

In connection with the great upswing in economic development in 1958, requirements . . . for some types of machinery, equipment and raw materials increased significantly. Even after the signing of the annual protocol on trade in 1958, we approached the Soviet Union to request supplementary commodity deliveries . . . Soviet

organizations satisfied all our requests and delivered on schedule a large volume of equipment, raw materials and vehicles.²²

The magnitude of this emergency request can be gauged from the fact that 20,000 trucks and trailers alone were delivered under this supplementary agreement in August.²³

It is quite probable that, in the light of Stepanyan's article, the Soviet leaders instructed Yudin to inform Peking that unless their ideological claims were clarified and reduced in regard to the communes, the Soviet Union would withdraw its economic support in China's industrialization program and leave the Chinese to "stew in their own juice", (as Khrushchev had indicated in June at the Bulgarian Congress).

In the Soviet Union, the party continued its response to the Chinese ideological offensive. Thus, in November two mass movements hailed as "cells of the future communist society" were unveiled, with the effect of showing that, not to be outdone, the Russians also had "the buds of communism" within their society. These two mass movements were known as the "Brigades of Communist Labour", and the "People's Militia". The former was a mass movement of workers designed to increase labour productivity, and to develop a "communist"

²²Statement by the Chinese Commercial Counselor in Moscow, quoted in O. Hoeffding, "Sino-Soviet Economic Relations in Recent Years," Unity and Contradiction (New York, Praeger, 1962), p. 209.

²³Hoeffding, loc. cit.

attitude towards work, while the latter was a movement designed to take over the functions of policing the nation in preparation for communism, when the public order would be maintained not by the state, but by the "people".²⁴

In the same month, Khrushchev put forward his Thesis on the Seven Year Plan in preparation for the 21st Congress. Included in this preliminary draft was the following important passage, quite obviously meant for Chinese eyes:

Vladimir Ilyich Lenin has taught that without material incentives it is impossible to lead tens and tens of millions of people to communism. The founders of Marxist-Leninism underlined the importance of the principle of material interest of all toilers in the growth of communal production for the creation of an abundance of products which would ensure the transition to communism; and, in their time they criticized the attitude of equalization in distribution.²⁵

At the same time Khrushchev laid down the basic program for the transition towards communism through a huge increase in material abundance in the Soviet Union, as opposed to radical changes in the superstructure or organization of Soviet society.

²⁴H. Ritvo, "Totalitarianism Without Coercion?" Problems of Communism, November-December, 1960, p. 19.

²⁵N. S. Khrushchev, "Thesis on the Seven Year Plan," Pravda, November 14, 1958; Current Digest of the Soviet Press, vol. X, no. 46, p. 3.

The Beginnings of Retreat

During November the Chinese Communist party began a widespread check up on the communes.²⁶ It was clear from the rapidity with which they were set up that many problems necessarily arose in the communes during this period. And since the commune resolution had left the specific form of each commune in the hands of the local cadres, it was almost inevitable that some overzealous cadres would force the peasants into the communes against their will, and that some cadres would become carried away by the successes of the leap forward and attempt to set up premature "utopian" communes. From later reports, it is now evident that many communes instituted a free supply system in the flood tide of ideological enthusiasm, and that this led to a quick depletion of all the commune's grain reserves and to a great shortage of consumer commodities. It was in this kind of economic and ideological ferment that the Central Committee began to take steps to bring the commune movement under tighter control, and began to make a considered ideological retreat.

Between November 2 and November 10, Mao Tse-tung called a meeting in Chengchow of central and local party leaders to check up on the nationwide situation in regard to

²⁶Li Fu-chun, Raise High the Red Flag (Peking, F.L.P., 1960), p. 2.

the communes.²⁷ Chu Teh who was not at this session and apparently unaware of its development, made a speech at the Soviet Ambassador's reception on the evening of November 7 in which he asserted that the Chinese people "have the confidence to accomplish socialist construction in a very short historical period and, further, to pass on to communism."²⁸ Apparently after Mao had returned from Chengchow and reported to the politburo, and probably after Mao had received Yudin, and heard first hand the Soviet attitude, a distinct policy change was ordered. Thus, only two weeks after his November 7 speech, Chu Teh told a conference of young party activists that it was mistaken to start "behaving like utopians." He stressed that China required industrialization and the "highest world levels in science and culture" before the transition to communism could be considered. He added that "our achievements so far are still far behind what is needed to complete the building of socialism."²⁹ He also refrained from discussing the role of the communes in the transition to communism and remained silent on the question of the previously-lauded free supply system.

²⁷"Communique," 6th Plenary Session of the Eighth Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (Peking, F.L.P., 1958), p. 3.

²⁸Survey of the Chinese Mainland Press, no. 1894, November 14, 1958, p. 34.

²⁹Quoted in Zagoria, op. cit., p. 124.

CHAPTER VI

THE CHINESE RETREAT

On November 21, only eleven days after the end of the Chengchow meeting, Mao convened another meeting in Wuchang, this time made up of central officials and the party secretaries of the provinces, municipalities and autonomous regions.¹ This meeting dealt in length with the reappraisal of the communes and prepared the way for the Plenary Session of the Central Committee held in the same city immediately following (in fact, the next day) the close of the deliberations. It was decided at this meeting to undertake a massive checkup of the communes in the following winter months, according to a set of criteria set down by the party leaders and promulgated the following week by the Plenary Session of the Central Committee. This Central Committee Session which ran from November 28 until December 20 was one of the most important events of the whole commune controversy, producing one of the three major documents which have served to set party policy in regard to the practical and ideological aspect of the communes (the other two being the original resolution and the 1959 Lushan

¹Communique, Sixth Plenary Session of the Eighth Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (Peking, F.L.P., 1958), p. 3.

resolution). This document, entitled "Resolution On Some Questions Concerning the People's Communes", "elaborated a series of questions concerning the people's communes from the standpoint of theory and policy"² and fundamentally revised the more extreme ideological claims contained in the August resolution. At the same time the basic "correctness" of the people's commune policy was reaffirmed, and its fundamental ideological basis reiterated.

The Lushan Resolution

In defending the introduction of the communes the resolution asserted that "the emergence of the people's communes is not fortuitous; it is the outcome of the economic and political development of our country, the outcome of the socialist rectification campaign conducted by our party, of the party's general line for socialist construction and the great leap forward of socialist construction in 1958."³ Besides its practical benefits, the resolution added, "the commune has shown the correct road of the gradual transition to communism and has proven to be the correct vehicle for the realization of the prerequisites for communism." "All this," suggests the Central Committee, "proves the correctness and historical significance of the

²Ibid., p. 1.

³"Resolution on Some Questions Concerning the People's Communes", Ibid., p. 12.

(August) Resolution on the Establishment of People's Communes in the Rural Areas"⁴ To underline their basic faith in the commune the Chinese leaders confirmed the fact that "urban people's communes . . . will also become instruments for the transformation of old cities and the construction of new socialist cities"⁵ in the not too distant future. In short, the general commune policy was restated and reaffirmed:

Marxist-Leninist theory and the initial experience of the people's communes in our country enable us to foresee now that the people's communes will quicken the tempo of our socialist construction and constitute the best form for realizing, in our country the following two transitions. Firstly, the transition from collective ownership to ownership of the whole people in the countryside; and secondly, the transition from socialist to communist society, the people's commune will remain the basic unit of our social structure.⁶

It is significant to note, that while claiming the mantle of Marxist-Leninist theory for the communes, the Chinese expressly insert the qualification that they are the best form "in our country", thus disclaiming to be necessarily setting a "correct" model for the rest of the bloc. The soft pedalling of previous claims and insinuations giving the appearance of challenging Soviet leadership within the bloc or of challenging the Soviet lead in the transition to communism, was characteristic of the entire resolution.

⁴Ibid., p. 14.

⁵Loc. cit.

⁶Ibid., p. 17.

On the key question of the speed of the transition to communism, the resolution repudiated previous suggestions that communism was imminent in China, and asserted that the country would be engaged in socialist construction for many years to come:

This whole process will take fifteen, twenty or more years to complete, counting from now During this process, the elements of communism are bound to increase gradually and these will lay the foundation of material and spiritual conditions for the transition from socialism to communism.⁷

Thus, the challenge in an ideological sense to the Russian leadership in the drive towards communism was unmistakably withdrawn, since the Soviet Union had completed the stage of socialist construction in 1939 and had been (theoretically, at least) evolving from socialist to communist conditions for nearly twenty years. Thus the Russians were conceded to be far ahead of China on the road to communism.

A similar retreat occurred in regard to the claims put forward previously that the transition to the ownership of the whole people in the rural areas would be accomplished within a very few years. Now it was asserted that:

Collective ownership still plays a positive role today in developing production in the rural people's communes. How soon the transition from collective ownership to ownership by the whole

⁷Ibid., p. 18.

people will be effected, will be determined by objective factors - the level of development of production and the level of people's political understanding - and not by mere wishful thinking that it can be done any time we want. Thus this transition will be realized, by stages and by groups, on a national scale only after a considerable time.⁸

Furthermore, it was made perfectly clear that "the change from socialist collective ownership to socialist ownership by the whole people is not the same thing as going over from socialism to communism."⁹ At the same time, the resolution voiced a warning that the existing collective ownership could not be kept intact indefinitely since this would jeopardize the possibility of evolving to the higher stage; thus federation of communes on a county level was advocated as an immediate step to keep the revolutionary process on the move. It is interesting to recall in this regard that this policy was strikingly similar to the proposals by Soviet theoreticians in the previous spring, who had suggested that the road to eventual "ownership of the whole people" lay through federation of existing rural units.

Another ideological retreat lay in the resolution's modification of Mao's theory of "permanent revolution". While still maintaining the implied criticism that the Soviet

⁸Ibid., p. 21.

⁹Loc. cit.

Union had brought its revolutionary evolution to a standstill, the Chinese leaders repudiated the notion that the Chinese or anyone else could skip stages on the road to communism, or somehow leap forward to that final stage before fulfilling the Marxist prerequisites. Thus, the resolution held that:

We must not mark time at the socialist stage, nor should we drop into the Utopian dream of skipping the socialist stage and jumping over to the communist stage. We are advocates of the Marxist-Leninist theory of the development of the revolution by stages; we hold that different stages of development reflect qualitative changes and that these stages, different in quality, should not be confused.¹⁰

In essence, this latter modification was one which made it difficult to justify the introduction of "shoots of communism" in the socialist stage, and can be thus seen as a definite ideological concession to the Soviet point of view, more or less forced on the party by Soviet pressure.

At the same time there were also strong domestic reasons to oppose utopianism:

We should not groundlessly make declarations that the people's communes will 'realize ownership by the whole people immediately' of even 'enter communism immediately', and so on. To do such things is not only an expression of rashness, it will greatly lower the standards of communism in the minds of the people, distort the great ideal of communism and vulgarize it, strengthen the petty bourgeois

¹⁰Ibid., p. 24.

trend towards egalitarianism and adversely affect the development of socialist construction.¹¹

The phrasing of this statement is most reminiscent of Stalin's declaration on the communes at the 17th Congress and provides a strong indication that the Chinese had made a very conscious swing toward conceding that Soviet warnings and Soviet experience should have been more closely heeded.

Another ideological point conceded to the Russians in the text of the resolution was that an enormous abundance of social products was essential before communism could be achieved. It will be remembered in this regard that the Russians had made this point one of their key arguments in their reaction to the Chinese ideological challenge during the autumn months. Now the Chinese publicly agreed that without "an enormous abundance of social products . . . it is of course impossible to talk about entering a higher stage of development in human society--communism." More importantly, it was soberly suggested that "our comrades must bear in mind that the present level of development of the productive forces in our country is, after all, still very low." The significance of this point should not be underestimated, since it was at the very crux of Khrushchev's domestic policies. The most important of all goals as far as Khrushchev was concerned was increasing productivity and the

¹¹Loc. cit.

point which the Chinese were agreeing to had supplied the ideological foundation for the M.T.S. reorganization in the spring, and which supplied the rationale for Khrushchev's emphasis on incentives and other expedient, unsocialistic devices.

In a similar vein, the resolution rejected the premature introduction of the communist system of distribution and defended the system based on the principle of each according to his work. Bowing to the Soviet point of view the Chinese agreed that:

any negation of the principle to each according to his work will tend to dampen the enthusiasm of the people and is therefore disadvantageous to the development of production and the increase of social products, and hence to speeding the realization of communism Any premature attempt to negate the principle of 'to each according to his work' and replace it with the principle of 'to each according to his needs', that is, any attempt to enter communism by overreaching ourselves when conditions are not mature - is undoubtedly a Utopian concept that cannot possibly succeed.¹²

Moreover, in the light of this admission, an attempt was made to stress the socialist nature of the part-wage part-supply system instituted in the communes and to deemphasize the role of free supply in the communes. Thus it was suggested that in future wages should gradually increase as a proportion of total income, and that the free supply portion of income

¹²Ibid., p. 23.

should be reduced. Nevertheless, the free supply system was still defended as embodying the first shoots of communism, and was to be maintained as an auxiliary to the wage system:

The introduction of a distribution system which combines the wage system and the free supply system in the part of the commune's income allotted to its members for consumption is a form of socialist distribution created by China's people's communes, and at the present time it represents what the broad mass of the members earnestly demand This distribution system includes the first shoots of communism but in essence it is still socialist - based on the principle of 'from each according to his ability, to each according to his work'.¹³

Apparently in reply to charges of 'egalitarianism', the resolution went on to point out that the "free supply system does not seek to make the life of the people uniform."

In summation, then, it can be said that the December resolution upheld the commune as the correct and necessary social unit for China, while withdrawing most of the ideological claims which had suggested that China was rapidly advancing towards communism or that China had jumped ahead of the Soviet Union. At the same time, certain ideological challenges remained. For example, the Chinese still defended the principle of uninterrupted revolution with its implied criticism of those who "mark time at the socialist stage".

¹³Ibid., p. 31.

And in sticking to their advance from collectives to communes, the Chinese were still flying in the face of Soviet policy which had rejected the orthodox Marxist notion that communes were the ultimate unit of socialist and communist society. This still amounted to a concrete challenge of the Soviet revisionism in this regard. Moreover, in reaffirming the supply system as "budding communism" the Chinese could still claim to be nearer to communism than the "static" Soviet Union in certain limited respects. And finally, by relating the communes to needs arising out of the special conditions existing in China, the Chinese were still able to offer their road as the most appropriate for the underdeveloped nations, thus offering ideological leadership to these areas. In short, the whole commune policy as a striking divergence from the Soviet road and as a policy more in line with orthodox Marxist theory, established Peking as an alternative source of leadership--ideological, and practical--within the communist world.

Continuing Soviet Displeasure

On December 1 in Moscow, Khrushchev made mention of the communes in a private interview with Senator Hubert Humphrey while the Chinese Central Committee was in session. According to Humphrey's report, Khrushchev:

was openly derisive, however, of the Chinese experiment with communes. This is an 'old fashioned', 'reactionary' idea which the Soviet Union had tried unsuccessfully right

after the 1917 revolution and had long since been abandoned. The communes, he went on, are based on the theory 'from each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs.'¹⁴

The Soviet leader stressed that the communes repudiated incentives--a policy Khrushchev claimed was absurd. He told Humphrey that it was impossible to achieve increased production without an incentive system for the workers.

Mikoyan in the United States

A few weeks later, Mikoyan spoke in similar terms in Los Angeles to a U.C.L.A. seminar group. This was on January 13, some time after the December 10 resolution had been published by the Chinese. Discussing the communes, in answer to a press question, Mikoyan asserted that the Chinese had now realized the necessity of maintaining the incentive system if the communes were to function as effective economic units. According to the New York Times report, Mikoyan said that:

the Russians set up such communes in 1918 and 1919 but soon discovered that without a developed economy they would not work. He said it was not possible to institute the communist principle 'from each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs' until a very productive economy had been developed, a situation he admitted lay still in the distant future.¹⁵

¹⁴New York Times, February 7, 1959.

¹⁵New York Times, January 13, 1959, p. 1.

It is clear from Mikoyan's remarks that from the Soviet point of view, the Chinese had definitely attempted to introduce prematurely the communist system of distribution and work in the original communes. His remark concerning the December 10 decision to retain incentives points up Soviet recognition that the principle of 'to each according to his work' had been at least partially reinstituted by the Chinese. No doubt, however, the party-supply system of distribution was still a matter of Soviet concern.

Mikoyan went on to reinforce his previous comments by asserting that "in a poor economy such as that of the Soviet Union immediately after the revolution, the pure commune would not work." He said that Marx, Lenin and other communist philosophers had recognized that material incentives would be needed before pure communism was attained.¹⁶ In reply to a question asking how long it would be before communism would be attained, "Mikoyan smiled and said 'it will take some time, and it will be a gradual process'."¹⁷ It is interesting to note Mikoyan's choice of words here. His statement that the "pure commune" would not work leaves open the possibility that the revised Chinese commune might, if it still embodied the incentive system. On the other hand, his words concerning the necessary gradualness of the transition to communism is a clear indictment of the Chinese attempts to leap forward towards communism during the autumn months.

¹⁶Loc. cit.

¹⁷Loc. cit.

According to the New York Times correspondent, "Mr. Mikoyan stressed that there was no difference between the Soviet Union and China on the commune issue. However, his remarks implied that there was a difference in thinking since the Chinese were far from reaching an economy of abundance."¹⁸

Two weeks later, on January 24, Mikoyan was once again questioned on matters relating to Sino-Soviet relations. At the National Press Club he was asked whether Mao Tse-tung was now the leading theoretician of the communist world:

Mr. Mikoyan hesitated a moment before replying. Then he said very quickly 'Mao is as good a theoretician as he always was.' Listeners noted that Mr. Mikoyan spoke brusquely and immediately seated himself as if he wished to dismiss the enquiry as quickly as possible. The tone of his reply, particularly as expressed in Russian, verged on rudeness.¹⁹

Obviously this was a particularly sore point with Mikoyan as with the other top Soviet leaders, and his reply makes it clear that Mao's ideological initiatives were deeply resented in Moscow. It is also clear from these remarks that Mao's theorizing had assumed the proportions of a major challenge to the position of the CPSU as leading and only interpreter of the Marxist-Leninist ideology. The resentment against Mao as a theorist can really only be explained in the light of the fact that Mao's interpretations were not just of a

¹⁸Loc. cit.

¹⁹New York Times, January 25, 1959, p. 4.

domestic character but were of bloc-wide significance, offering alternative ideological leadership to that of the Soviet Union. Moreover this leadership was of such a nature as to even extend into the Soviet Party, and to provide a rallying point for such "anti-party" groups as the so-called Stalinist wing of the CPSU. Indeed, since Mao's interpretations of Marxist-Leninism were much more orthodox than those of Khrushchev, they were particularly dangerous to the Soviet leader since it was exactly this "dogmatism" that Khrushchev was struggling against. For instance, there had been by Khrushchev's own admission, considerable intra-party opposition to his reorganization of the M.T.S. in early 1958, and this opposition had come from the more "dogmatic" elements in the party. This opposition had been silenced, but only a few months later Mao Tse-tung came forth to support the same ideological position, and he was not silenced so easily. In his M.T.S. speech, Khrushchev had said:

The Party delivered a shattering blow to the conservatives and dogmatists divorced from life who resisted the Party's Leninist line and opposed implementation of such major measures as . . . applying the principle of the material stake of the collective farmers in the development of the communal economy.²⁰

Khrushchev's internal opposition was bolstered immensely by the appearance within the bloc of a powerful independent voice

²⁰N. S. Khrushchev, "On Further Developing the Collective Farm System and Reorganizing the M.T.S.," Pravda, March 28, 1959; Current Digest of the Soviet Press, vol. X, no. 11, p. 6.

supporting their point of view. Although Molotov, Kaganovich, Shepilov, and Malenkov were all demoted to minor posts and denounced, it is almost certain that these former presidium members had a large following within the party which was receptive to just the kind of external support which Mao provided (and continues to provide) in the ideological sphere. This situation is doubtless the cause of considerable concern to the Soviet leaders, and will remain so as long as Mao continues to follow closely in the footsteps of Stalin.

Although the two party leaders had first crossed ideological swords in Moscow in November 1957 over the issues of war and peace, and of co-existence,²¹ it was Mao's public pronouncements over the communes in 1958 which constituted the first public concrete challenge to Moscow's monopoly in ideological matters, and offered an alternative source of ideological leadership to rank and file communists of Stalinist and orthodox Marxist persuasion in communist parties everywhere--including the Soviet Union. It is in this light then, that Mikoyan's remarks about Mao to the National Press Club take on their significance, and in this light that they should be interpreted. As the New York Times observer correctly pointed out:

²¹Soviet Government, A Reply to Peking (London, Soviet Booklets, 1963), p. 18.

There was no praise for Mr. Mao's present theoretical capabilities, and an avoidance of any commitment by Mr. Mikoyan as to what Mr. Mao's past theoretical abilities had been. It was thought the possibility existed that Mr. Mikoyan's choice of curt, non-committal language reflected serious differences between Moscow and Peking of a theoretical nature, specifically on the question of the Chinese communes.²²

Mikoyan's tone indicated that despite the December resolution's partial ideological retreat, considerable differences of opinion remained between the Soviet and Chinese leaders, and feelings were still high. And this was on the eve of the Soviet Party's 21st Congress, and only three days before Khrushchev's major address.

German Party Reaction to the Communes

In this same period just before the 21st Congress a very significant article appeared in Unity, the theoretical journal of the East German Communist Party. The article dealt with the theory and practice of the communes in China, and was written by Paul Wandel, East Germany's Ambassador to Peking. The theme of the article was that while the communes might be suitable for China, they were not the appropriate form to be used in building a socialist society elsewhere in the bloc. According to the New York Times summary of the article, "Herr Wandel said the communes could be understood

²²New York Times, January 25, 1959, p. 4.

only in terms of the specific conditions found in China. Developments in China arise from conditions much different from those in other countries, Herr Wandel said."²³ Thus, the communes were explained away as arising solely from unique objective conditions in China. The communes and Mao's theorizing was deliberately rejected as a possible alternative road for the other bloc countries. This statement by Wandel, therefore, suggests great significance of the communes as an ideological challenge to Russian leadership over the bloc's transition to communism. At the same time Wandel's article seemed to indicate an acceptance of the commune system in its revised form, and an attitude of non-interference as long as the Chinese did not seek to prescribe for the rest of the bloc as well as for themselves.

The tone set by the German Ambassador in this article proved to be a harbinger of the ideological position adopted by the Russian leaders at the 21st Congress a few weeks later.

²³New York Times, January 14, 1959, p. 3.

CHAPTER VII

THE TWENTY-FIRST CONGRESS AND THE AFTERMATH: TEMPORARY TRUCE

As has been pointed out, the timing of the decision to call the 21st Congress was a strong indication that Khrushchev intended to use this forum as a vehicle to mount his ideological reply to the Chinese challenge and to win back the ideological initiative. Although the Congress was formally called to discuss the new Seven Year Plan, it was, in reality, a Congress convened in order to lay down the ideological line on the transition to communism, just as the 22nd Congress was called two years later to lay down the line of the international communist movement on revolution and peaceful co-existence. The CPSU Congress was an ideal vehicle for this since, unlike the Chinese party congress eight months earlier, there were delegations from seventy parties in attendance in Moscow, headed by such important bloc personalities as Chou En-lai, and the European satellite leaders.

The most important single event of the Congress was Khrushchev's lengthy speech, in which he devoted a whole section to the "New State in Communist Construction and Some Problems of Marxist-Leninist Theory". This was to become the most authoritative statement of the Soviet ideological position on the question of the transition to communism throughout the

dispute over the communes, and remains the basic document defining Soviet policy and ideology on this matter even today.

Khrushchev began by discussing "the two phases of communist society and the laws governing the growing of socialism into communism." He emphasized that Marx, Engels and Lenin had all maintained that following the revolutionary overthrow of capitalist society, the new order would pass through two distinct stages: a lower phase (socialist) and a higher phase (communism). Moreover, he asserted that this particular segment of Marxist-Leninist theory had been substantiated by the historical experience of the Soviet Union, which had completed the building of the first phase some years ago and had now entered "a new period in which socialism grows into communism."¹

Replying on the twin sources of Marxist-Leninist theory and Soviet experience, Khrushchev went on to formulate three basic propositions concerning the nature of this two-phase transition to pure communism. First of all, he asserted, "the transition from the socialist to the higher stage is a law-governed historical process that cannot be violated or bypassed at will; . . . society cannot leap straight from capitalism to communism without going through the socialist

¹N. S. Khrushchev, Control Figures for the Economic Development of the U.S.S.R. for 1959-1965: Report Delivered at 21st Extraordinary Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, January 27, 1959 (Moscow, Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1959), p. 114.

stage."² This, of course, was a clear ideological thrust at the Chinese who had originally intimated that the communes were a shortcut to communism. The charge that the Chinese were attempting to "skip over" a stage was one of the most serious levelled at the Chinese during the more heated moments of the dispute over the communes and was one of the most deeply resented. In expanding the proposition that it is impossible to skip over historical stages, Khrushchev denounced "egalitarian communism" and the premature introduction of distribution according to needs. Apparently referring to the Chinese, he remarked that:

Some comrades might, of course, suggest that we accelerate the introduction of the principles of communism. But to pass prematurely to distribution according to needs . . . would only impair the work of building communism This 'egalitarian communism' would only eat up our stockpiles, make extended reproduction impossible and block successful expansion of the economy. We must advance step by step creating the material and spiritual requisites for a methodical transition to communism.³

In this passage the Soviet leader not only pulls the ideological rug from beneath Chinese flirtation with egalitarianism, but also answers criticisms implied by the Chinese in the autumn that the Russians were holding back the advance to communism.

²Ibid., p. 115.

³Loc. cit.

The second of Khrushchev's three propositions proved to be strikingly similar to Mao's revised theory of "uninterrupted revolution" which had appeared in the December 10 resolution. He conceded that "notwithstanding all the differences between the communist and socialist stages, there is no wall separating these two stages of social development."⁴ Thus, while Mao had earlier made the concession that there were two distinct stages and that the two stages "should not be confused", the Soviet leader now bowed to the Chinese view that "no Great Wall exists or can be allowed to exist between the democratic revolution and the socialist revolution, and between socialism and communism." It is difficult to believe that this meeting of minds on such an important point developed without private consultation between the two parties, especially in view of Khrushchev's state of mind on December 1 in his interview with Humphrey. It is almost certain that discussions took place between the Soviet leaders and Chou En-lai on a number of ideological and economic issues, immediately preceding the Congress. This point of view is substantiated by the fact that Khrushchev did not publicly "deny" Humphrey's account of Khrushchev's remarks until his speech at the Congress on January 27 (the American Senator's report had been published weeks earlier). The Senator himself commented on the significance of the delayed

⁴Loc. cit.

attack in a speech delivered in the Senate following Khrushchev's speech, suggesting that the Chinese had asked for a public denial of his remarks.⁵ (It is also noteworthy that the Soviet Premier at no time actually denied making the remarks attributed to him, but merely announced how 'unthinkable' it would be for any confidential exchange to have taken place.)⁶ In fact, the whole tone of the speech by Khrushchev, suggested that a considerable degree of conciliation had occurred behind the scenes before the Congress opened. And, of course, this meeting of minds had been facilitated greatly by the general Chinese ideological retreat of December 10, which had opened up the way to some kind of ideological reconciliation.

Khrushchev's third main theoretical proposition embodied a further defense of the Soviet Union against charges of "conservatism", and was designed to counter suggestions that Soviet preoccupation with increasing the nation's material abundance meant a slowing down of the revolutionary advance to communism. Thus, the Soviet leader stated that the "gradual transition to communism should not be understood as a decelerated movement. On the contrary, it is a period of rapid development" Defending his policies of stressing

⁵New York Times, February 7, 1959.

⁶Khrushchev, op. cit., p. 187.

better management and material incentives in the transition to communism, Khrushchev strongly emphasized that the correct road lay not in institutional changes (like the communes) but in increased production. Increased production, he proclaimed, was the essential factor in speeding the advance to communism:

This objective process of socialism growing into communism can be accelerated on the basis of the high level of material production attained in the period of socialism. There must be no undue haste, no hurried introduction of measures that have not yet matured. This would lead to distortions and would discredit our cause.⁷

Here is a clear reference to the communes, reiterating once more the Soviet view that this form of social organization was introduced prematurely in China, before objective conditions were ripe, and suggesting that commune-ization had hurt the bloc's image. At the same time, it was also a defense of the Soviet policy of retaining the collectives as the basic agricultural unit, echoing the arguments of the previous spring, to the effect that the collectives did not need to be superseded by some other form, because they still retained inexhaustible potential for increased production. While counselling against undue haste, Khrushchev also asserted that, "on the other hand, we must not stop long at what we

⁷Ibid., p. 116.

have already achieved; that would lead to stagnation."⁸
 But he made it clear that his idea of moving ahead towards
 communism was to increase production, and that

the fundamental practical task today is to build up the material and technical base of communist society, secure a further powerful expansion of the socialist production forces
 In laying emphasis in the coming period, on the building of the material and technical base of communism, we proceed in every respect from Marxist-Leninism and the experience of the Soviet Union and all the socialist countries.⁹

By putting it this way, Khrushchev was making it clear that this was a pronouncement which was universally binding on all socialist countries. After collectivization, production was the most important task of all the socialist regimes, and other issues must be subordinated to it. It is interesting to note the difference in emphasis in the other prerequisites to communism between the Chinese and Soviet parties. Whereas to the Russians, increased production was the matter of greatest importance, the Chinese emphasized much more the organization and "spiritual" aspects in the struggle to prepare the foundations of communism. And this proved to be one of the most contentious areas of the dispute over the correct road to communism. To the Chinese, increased production was just one of several prerequisites. They had stressed that the communes would have as one of their tasks the

⁸Loc. cit.

⁹Ibid., p. 119.

elimination of the differences between town and country, which Marx and Lenin had proclaimed was a necessity for the achievement of communism. Moreover, the Chinese were much more concerned to raise the "ideological consciousness" of the masses in order to prepare them to look upon work as a labour of love, and to work "according to their abilities" as incentives and coercion were gradually removed, and communism came closer. To the Chinese, the communes were an instrument to achieve all these prerequisites, not just the material ones:

the communist consciousness and morality of the entire people will be elevated to a much higher degree; universal education will be achieved and the level raised; the differences between worker and peasant, between town and country, between mental and manual labour . . . and the remnants of unequal bourgeois rights which are the reflection of these differences will gradually vanish¹⁰

These differences would not magically disappear, any more than production could somehow magically increase--they were differences which the party would have to actively reduce and eliminate through a prolonged nationwide effort. The commune, by combining industry and agriculture sought to erase the differences gradually between town and country. But what, the Chinese might ask, were the Russians doing about these problems? The Soviet party had rejected the commune and had made no move to integrate industry and agriculture; on

¹⁰From the December 10th Commune Resolution.

the contrary, it had announced that the collectives, as basically agricultural units, would remain indefinitely in Soviet society. It was here that the Russians left themselves open to Chinese charges of conservatism, and of halting the revolutionary advance towards communism. Material abundance alone could not open the door to the communist society.

But in Khrushchev's 21st Congress speech, he inferred that by concentrating the party's efforts on increasing production, that somehow the other prerequisites to communism would naturally follow on. Thus, he claimed that:

as socialist production is extended on a new material and technical base, and as education is more closely linked with productive labour, the essential distinctions between mental and physical labour will gradually disappear. The all-round development of our people will transform labour into man's prime want. This will be facilitated by the forthcoming reduction in working hours and further improvement of working conditions. When every branch of industry is automated and man becomes the master of the machine, he will have to devote less time and energy to producing things he needs. Labour, which at times is still arduous and tiring, will become a source of joy and pleasure for a harmoniously developed healthy person.¹¹

Little mention was made of ideological considerations or of how this "all round development" was going to take place. Somehow, increased production would naturally solve the important problems and "contradictions" which stood in the

¹¹Khrushchev, op. cit., p. 119.

way of Marx's utopia. There is little indication of a practical party program paralleling production development which would seek to raise the ideological consciousness of the people to prepare the way for the introduction of the communist principle of distribution. As the Chinese were well aware from their initial experience with the communes, when communist "morality" and "consciousness" are not developed to an adequate level, the population merely takes according to needs, but doesn't replenish according to their ability to produce. In other words, they give as little as they can and take all that they can get. To establish in people the appropriate communist conscience to enable the state to introduce the communist system of distribution is an immense task requiring a fundamental change of human nature throughout the population. Yet, the Chinese who were constantly struggling, through mass campaigns and thought reform programs, to raise the ideological consciousness of their workers and peasants, were doing far more in this regard than their Russian comrades who claimed to be much closer to the attainment of pure communism. From the Chinese point of view, it looked very much as though Khrushchev was little concerned with really working to achieve the non-economic prerequisites of communism, and it appeared that his overriding concern was to raise the standard of living of his people and to give them a better--not necessarily a communist--life. While paying lip service to the requirements laid down by Marx

and to the goal of eventually entering communism, in actual practice, the Soviet leader was even sacrificing ideology, when expedient, to increase the flow of production. In short, it looked very much as though Khrushchev had compromised the revolutionary advance of his nation towards communism, and had lost sight of the ultimate goal. In many ways the Soviet Union had evolved more towards bourgeois society than towards communist society since the death of Stalin.

In defending the maintenance of the principle of distributing according to work during the period of building communism, the Soviet leader appealed to the fact that earlier Soviet history had shown the premature introduction of the communist system of distribution to be disastrous. Thus, he concluded, until communism was achieved, society must stringently control both labour and consumption. Using this historical argument as a springboard to launch a thinly veiled lecture aimed at his Chinese guests, Khrushchev bitingly proclaimed:

This country passed through a period of 'war communism' when, as a temporary measure, we were obliged to abandon the principle of distribution according to work and adopt 'distribution according to mouths'. This was not due to abundance, but to an acute shortage of food and consumers' goods That method of distribution, however, could not be regarded as normal. Its defects came to the surface immediately the country attacked the job of economic rehabilitation and development. Lenin forthrightly stated that without a material incentive giving every worker an interest in the results of his work, there

could be no question of raising the country's productive capacity or of building a socialist economy, and leading millions forward to communism.¹²

Forcing the lesson home, he added:

the socialist principle of distribution according to work is based on the understanding that in the socialist stage, egalitarian distribution is impossible We cannot disregard the fact that levelling would lead to an unjust method of distribution: the bad worker and the good would receive an equal share which would be to the advantage of the slackers Levelling would mean not transition to communism, but the discrediting of communism.¹³

Not once does Khrushchev mention the communes by name--either the former Soviet ones or the current ones in China--but these remarks are a clear indictment of the Chinese passion for "levelling" via the communes, and serve as a stern warning against further attempts at egalitarianism, which only serve to discredit the whole communist cause. The fact that the Soviet party leader did not mention the communes by name especially during his discussion of the period of war communism, is a strong indication that he was loath to publicly raise the commune issue, since he would then have had either to directly attack the Chinese "innovations" or to defend the Soviet policy of rejecting the commune as a useful social unit in the transition to communism. This

¹²Ibid., p. 121.

¹³Ibid., p. 123.

avoidance of a direct confrontation of the Russian and Chinese paths to communism was strong evidence that a considerable area of dispute still remained despite the partial ideological retreat by the Chinese in December.

While being careful not to raise the specific issue of the communes, Khrushchev did reiterate that the road to communism in the Soviet Union would involve the "growing together" of the two forms of ownership--collective and state--and completely ignored the commune as having any future role to play in the process. Moreover, he strongly emphasized that during the current stage, cooperative property would continue to be developed, despite the fact that some were urging that the process of merging be carried out immediately. "Property forms," he charged, "cannot be changed at will. They develop in accordance with economic laws and depend on the nature and level of the productive forces. The collective system fully accords with the present level and development requirement of the productive forces in agriculture."¹⁴ He pointed out that agriculture had lagged behind in latter years only because poor use was being made of collectives' potentialities, not because they were obsolete. The new upsurge in agriculture, he concluded:

is conclusive proof that the collective-farm form of production relations, far from having used up its potentialities, serves--and will

¹⁴Ibid., p. 124.

continue to do so for a long time to come--
to enhance the productive forces in agriculture.¹⁵

Embodied in these declarations is the implication that the Chinese property forms had been "changed at will", contrary to objective conditions and the level of the productive forces. If the Soviet Union at her stage of production still found the collectives to be the appropriate form of production relations for many years to come, then how could the Chinese justify their policy of discarding the collectives? Khrushchev's remarks thus had more than just simple domestic implications.

Discussing the significance of the eventual growing together of collective and public property forms, the Soviet leader alluded briefly to the important question of obliterating the differences between town and country--a question to which the Chinese accorded great importance. He emphatically stated that:

the merger of collective-farm-cooperative property with state property into an integral public property is not a simple organizational and economic measure, but is the solution of the cardinal problem of bridging the essential distinction between town and country.¹⁶

Moreover, he added, "the party's subsequent aim (after the Seven Year Program) will be to convert the collective-farm villages into modern urban-type communities supplied with all

¹⁵Ibid., p. 125.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 126.

the latest municipal and cultural facilities."¹⁷ This, then, was Khrushchev's alternative to the challenge initiated by the Chinese, who had given the commune the role of removing the differences between town and country. The Chinese had forced the Soviet leader into somehow retrieving the initiative on these ideological questions which had lain dormant in the Soviet Union for years. He could not remain silent on these issues now that the Chinese had initiated a program designed to solve them, and he could not accept the Chinese solution, since communes had already been repudiated in the Soviet Union. Thus he was forced to develop a theory based upon the already-announced plan to eventually merge state and collective property. The result was the "agro-city" concept. But again, this was something relegated to the future and subordinated to the task of increasing production. But in theory, at least, Khrushchev was able to formulate a plausible alternative to the Chinese plan:

Agricultural electrification, mechanization and automation will lead to the pooling, to a kind of merger, of collective farm production facilities with state, or public facilities. Agricultural labour will gradually become a variety of industrial labour.¹⁸

Perhaps the most striking aspect of these words is their lack of clarity, authority, and explicitness. One

¹⁷Loc. cit.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 125.

paragraph is all that Khrushchev devotes to this vital Marxist question of the "contradiction" between town and country, and his words lack certainty and conviction; indeed, his discussion of the whole point is vague. And, of course, the whole process was dependent on greater achievements in technology and production, and apparently occurred "naturally" with little party participation. Certainly Khrushchev was far from being explicit, and his words gave the impression that this theory of the eventual merging of town and country was more an ideological gambit than a purposeful guide to action. And by postponing the merging process until a future date, he left the impression that he was little concerned with these niceties of Marxist theory. Moreover, while plausible, his conception of how to solve the differences between worker and farmer is flimsy when compared to the Chinese program. In Principles of Communism, Engels had said ". . . contradiction between town and country will disappear. Those performing agricultural and industrial labour will be the same persons instead of two different classes." But Khrushchev made no statement which would indicate a policy of decentralizing industry, and of establishing basic social units which would include both industry and agriculture. He suggests, rather, that somehow through mechanization and automation, jobs in agriculture will become more and more like those in industry. On the other hand, the Chinese had proposed and introduced a social unit

which integrated industry and agriculture; and with their program of backyard furnaces had actually accomplished, temporarily, the task of combining agricultural and industrial labour in the same individual. Thus, there was still a considerable difference between Chinese and Soviet roads to communism; and despite his formulation of a specific theory outlining the future achievement of Soviet society along Marxist lines, Khrushchev's approach was still one which could give concern to doctrinaire Marxist-Leninists like the Chinese.

The 21st Congress speech by Khrushchev, and Chinese reaction to it, had all the indications of a major rapprochement despite the fact that the commune issue was still far from being completely resolved. It has been mentioned before that one probable factor in the ideological retreat conducted by the Chinese in December was Soviet economic pressure. From the concluding portion of Khrushchev's speech, it would also appear that economic inducement was also a factor in helping to smooth over Sino-Soviet differences. Indeed, it is no accident that Khrushchev reversed the policy voiced by Strumilin in the autumn, to the effect that the U.S.S.R. and the European satellites would go over to communism in a bloc, leaving China and her entourage to enter communism at a much later stage. The implied threat in Strumilin's statement was that if the Chinese did not care to follow Soviet ideological leadership, then they would be left to

"stew in their own juice" economically. Now, at the 21st Congress, Khrushchev repudiated this policy and pledged Soviet help to bring the formerly backward socialist states up to the Soviet level:

The economic law operating under socialism is balanced proportional development, with the result that countries economically backward in the past are rapidly able to make up for lost time and raise their economic and cultural levels by drawing on the experience, cooperation and mutual assistance of other socialist countries. In this way the economic and cultural progress of all the socialist countries is evened out.¹⁹

On the specific question of the transition to communism, he described as "highly improbable" the situation of one country achieving communism before the others and leaving them "trailing behind somewhere in the early stages of socialist construction." Instead he asserted that:

from a theoretical standpoint, it would appear more correct to assume that by successfully employing the potentialities inherent in socialism, the socialist countries will more or less simultaneously pass to the higher phase of communist society.²⁰

The fact that an extensive aid agreement was announced immediately following the Congress signified that the factor of Soviet economic assistance was one of the important ones in achieving the temporary ideological truce. However, it should be noted that Khrushchev had referred in

¹⁹Ibid., p. 134.

²⁰Ibid., p. 133.

his remarks to "successfully employing potentialities inherent in socialism" as the ultimate precondition to the "simultaneous transition" thesis. To Khrushchev this meant full economic integration of the bloc, if we are to judge from his previous statements on this subject. It should be remembered in this regard that the Chinese had declined in May of 1958 at a Moscow meeting of C.E.M.A. to fully integrate their economy with that of the European communist states, and had steadfastly refused to submit to Soviet economic domination. Immediately after this meeting (which was deemed important enough to be attended by the bloc leaders themselves) Khrushchev made his bitter remarks about economic isolationism, asking "could the rich opportunities of the socialist countries be exploited if each country acted in isolation, stewed in its own juice as the saying goes?"²¹ He had noted then that "only . . . the strengthening of all-round cooperation and mutual aid assure a general increase in the socialist economy and the advancing of the formerly underdeveloped countries to the level of the advanced."²²

²¹N. S. Khrushchev, "Speech at the Seventh Congress of the Bulgarian Communist Party," Pravda, June 4, 1958; Current Digest of the Soviet Press, Vol. X, no. 22, p. 8.

²²Loc. cit.; in a similar vein at the 21st Congress Khrushchev reaffirmed his view that "International division of labour particularly in its highest forms--specialization and cooperation--are to play a big part in the economic development of the socialist camp By itself no country could develop at the rapid pace at which it develops within the system of socialist countries."

Thus, while the February 1959 aid agreement helped to smooth over relations between China and the Soviet Union, Khrushchev was still holding out for Chinese economic integration; and this was to be the source of continuing conflict.

At the end of his lengthy discussion of ". . . Some Problems of Marxist-Leninist Theory" in his book-length speech, Khrushchev referred, significantly, to "Yugoslav . . . inventions about the alleged differences between the communist parties of the Soviet Union and China." The Soviet leader publicly denied that differences existed, while admitting that the Chinese were following a different path of development. "The Communist Party of China," he said, "is employing many original forms of socialist construction. But we have no disagreements with it, nor can there be any disagreement."²³ Following the Chinese argument he stated that "in China there are specific features in historical development, size of population, level of production and national culture. It would be a mistake to ignore these special features and to copy what is good for one country but unsuitable for another."²⁴ Then he made a most important admission (shedding light on his previous remark that there could be no disagreement), saying that, "The question of methods and practice in socialist

²³Khrushchev, Report to the 21st Congress, op. cit., p. 135.

²⁴Ibid., p. 136.

construction is a domestic affair of each country."²⁵ Of course, ideological claims are another matter, but Khrushchev here reiterates the line formulated in 1957 at the Moscow meeting of fraternal parties, which gave each party the right to take its own road to socialism within the bounds of Marxist-Leninism. This raises the interesting point once more, that had the Chinese not introduced their radical ideological claims for the communes, the Soviet party would not have reacted nearly so strongly to the Chinese experiment. Of course, it still remains a matter of subjective interpretation as to when a nation has overstepped the bounds of Marxist-Leninism under the guise of adapting it to local conditions. As Khrushchev had pointed out, "every country has its own specific features of socialist development. But that does not mean that we can go forward to socialism by some other road, one that lies to the side of the general path indicated by Marxist-Leninism."²⁶ In this manner, he was able to uphold the Chinese deviation from Soviet experience, while condemning the road taken by Marshal Tito in Yugoslavia. At the same time, the door was left open for criticism of the Chinese if the future situation warranted it; and particularly if ideological deviation was renewed to a dangerous degree.

²⁵ Loc. cit.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 135.

In summary then, it can be said that Khrushchev's speech was in essence conciliatory, matching the tone taken by the Chinese in the December 10 resolution, and providing the theoretical and practical bridge necessary to bring the Chinese and Soviet positions to common ground. From the Chinese point of view, it could be said that they had succeeded in prodding the Soviet leader to lay down a program for the achievement of communism and to speed up the lethargic revolutionary progress of the Soviet Union, as well as winning Soviet recognition of the right to build socialism in their own way. At the same time, however, by his refusal to specifically mention the commune and by his references to Soviet experience with egalitarian experiments, Khrushchev made it clear that he still did not approve of the Chinese "innovations". Moreover, he forthrightly stated that radical ideological claims such as those which had been made in China during the autumn, could not and would not be tolerated.

Chou En-lai's Congress Speech

As has been noted previously, the Chinese Communist Party sent Chou En-lai to head the Chinese delegation to the 21st Congress. Chou's speech to the Congress was delivered on January 28, the day after Khrushchev's marathon address, and was by contrast, relatively brief. Although it touched on a wide range of subjects, the Chinese premier's speech stressed two major themes: the significance of the Seven Year

Plan, and the successes of China's leap forward and the communes. In discussing the Seven Year Plan, it was particularly noticeable that Chou gave equal emphasis to the "spiritual" aspects of building a communist society, despite the fact that the Seven Year Plan was almost entirely based upon the material aspects. Thus, while noting the planned increases in production and standards of living, he also stressed the fact that:

The Seven Year Plan also lays it down that the Soviet Union will further enhance the communist consciousness of the broad masses of the people, will further develop public education on the principle of linking education with the realities of life, and raise the new communist man who will conscientiously observe the norms of social life, is well versed in science and well developed both physically and intellectually.²⁷

Herein, one can find once more signs of the differences in approach between the Chinese and Soviet parties--between emphasis on material and emphasis on spiritual prerequisites to communism. Despite this remaining difference in emphasis, however, Chou praised the new program of the CPSU for the transition to communism and gave it full Chinese support. "It can be clearly seen that the practical realization of this plan will be of great historical significance. It will show the world the way of transition from socialism to communism

²⁷Chou En-lai, "Speech to the 21st Congress," Peking Review, No. 5, 1959, p. 6.

and thus further enrich the treasury of Marxist-Leninism."²⁸ Of course, the actual realization of the plan was something of which the Chinese might be justly sceptical in the light of the directions of Soviet society since the death of Stalin; and by stating their approval in this way they were able to withhold final judgement until the Russians had shown their sincere resolve to build the spiritual foundations of communism among the Soviet people.

Turning to a consideration of Chinese efforts in the advance towards communism, Chou asserted that the Chinese people were travelling the same broad highway as the Soviet Union and the other socialist countries--"the road of the October revolution". Through the use of this device Chou was able to proclaim fundamental unity within the communist bloc. Of course, "the road of the October revolution" was by no means synonymous with the Soviet road to communism. It merely referred to the general principles of proletarian revolution, communist dictatorship, proletarian-peasant alliance, socialization of the national economy, and planned development, which were common to all states within the bloc, and which formed the basis of ideological orthodoxy, as laid out at the Moscow meeting of fraternal parties in November 1957. However, by stating that Chinese socialist

²⁸Loc. cit.

construction conformed to these principles of Marxist-Leninism, the Chinese leader was clearly reasserting that the Chinese deviation from the Soviet road was a "permissible" one--as Khrushchev had conceded in his speech the day before.

Turning to specifics, Chou openly discussed the communes and the great leap forward, thus breaking the deliberate silence on these phenomena which had so far prevailed at the Congress. Accordingly, Chou told the delegates that

The leap forward in socialist construction, especially in agricultural production, made the vast mass of the peasants feel that the former agricultural producers' cooperatives could no longer meet the needs of the development of the productive forces. The peasant masses in many places made spontaneous experiments to transform and improve the agricultural producers' cooperatives, amalgamate small cooperatives into large ones, expand the scope of their productive activities, combine their efforts and initiate collective welfare institutions and so on."²⁹

While attempting to maintain the necessary myth that the communes were the spontaneous creation of the masses, Chou admitted that the party had at least had some role in their formation, adding that "actively supported and guided by the Chinese Communist Party and Comrade Mao-Tse-tung, the Chinese people have created the organization form of large-scale people's communes"³⁰ At the same time,

²⁹Loc. cit.

³⁰Loc. cit.

however, he made no mention of the original commune resolution of August 28 which had laid the basis for the Sino-Soviet ideological conflict which had followed, and which had resulted in the country-wide movement to organize communes. Instead, he centered his remarks on the more moderate December 10 Resolution, pointing out that:

The Sixth Plenary Session of the Eighth Central Committee of the Communist Party of China gave a very high appraisal of the peoples' communes, considering them the best form for developing socialism under Chinese conditions, the best form for the Chinese rural areas to make the transition from collective ownership to ownership by the whole people, and the best form for China to make the transition from socialist to communism in the future.³¹

Thus, Chou defended the communes as the most appropriate road towards communism in China, but made it clear that this road was not the only road and that it did not necessarily apply to other socialist countries where conditions were different.

It would appear from Khrushchev's speech that he had accepted this formula as a basis for an ideological truce--that the communes were merely a phenomenon born out of local Chinese conditions and were in no sense a challenge to the validity of the Soviet road in national construction. But while the Soviet leader may have accepted this ideological compromise with the Chinese, the seeds of conflict still

³¹Loc. cit.

remained. No amount of disclaiming could erase the fact that the communes stood as an alternative to the Soviet road of building socialism and communism, and neither could it erase the fact that if the communes were the optimum unit for progress under Chinese conditions, then they were also the best form for the other underdeveloped members of the bloc--Korea, Viet Nam and Mongolia, and for underdeveloped nations throughout the world. It did not matter whether the Chinese proclaimed this or not--it still remained true, and thus a challenge to Soviet leadership in the sphere of ideology. Moreover, the communes still remained a monument to orthodox Marxist-Leninism and a radical contrast to the conservative policies of the Soviet Union. As long as the communes remained in existence and were upheld by the Chinese Party, the challenge to Soviet domestic policy remained, and the status of Peking as an alternative source of doctrinal guidance grew even stronger.

Thus, the practical effects remained, and were clearly evident even to the Western observer. Delegations from bloc countries toured China to view the revolutionary upsurge in the countryside. Several delegations commented on the possibility of adapting Chinese forms to their own economy, and the whole bloc witnessed a surge towards greater collectivization. In Korea a system similar to the communes was adopted and in some European communist countries amalgamation of cooperatives took place. Even the leader of a Polish

party delegation had lauded the communes and suggested that his own country might learn from them.³²

Chou En-lai's speech, then, by no means completely removed the causes of friction between the two parties, although it did establish some semblance of ideological unity on the question of the communes and the separate roads to communism. And Chou's support of the Seven Year Plan marked the temporary halt of Chinese charges of Soviet conservatism.

Pavel Yudin on Economic Questions

Pavel Yudin, Soviet Ambassador to Peking was called upon by the party to develop the theme of Khrushchev's speech specifically in relation to "the part of this report dealing with questions of ideology and Marxism."³³ It is by no means accidental that Yudin should be chosen for this task; indeed, it is an unmistakable sign that Khrushchev's remarks had been meant expressly for the Chinese and that Yudin was the best man to bring this point home. It is in this light, then, that his remarks take on their considerable significance.

³²Z. Brzezinski, The Soviet Bloc: Unity and Conflict (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1960), p. 285.

³³Pravda, February 4, 1959; Current Digest of the Soviet Press, vol. XI, no. 17, p. 19.

"It can be said without any exaggeration," he told his audience, "that the thesis regarding the transition to the second stage of communism constitutes a new chapter in the theory of scientific communism. I would like to note above all that Leninist principles are strictly observed here: there is not one iota of utopianism in defining the conditions and roads of transition to communism."³⁴ It is important to note that Yudin mentioned "Leninist" principles rather than "Marxist-Leninist" as is usually the case. It will be remembered that two of the chief arguments of the Soviet leaders rested explicitly on Leninist tenets--the "Leninist cooperative plan", and the Leninist "incentive" system. Yudin did not explicitly charge the Chinese with not observing Leninist principles, however, although the implication is there. Instead, he directed his fire at unnamed figures on the Soviet domestic scene, charging that "some scientific personnel want to move into communism at a faster pace without taking into account actual conditions."³⁵ It is likely that the views of these "scientific personnel" can be traced directly to the spirit of revolutionary enthusiasm engendered by the establishment of the communes in China. In any event, it can be seen how the sudden Chinese leap towards communism necessarily nourished and encouraged

³⁴Loc. cit.

³⁵Loc. cit.

the more radical groups within the Soviet party and brought pressure to bear on the Soviet leaders to speed up the process of evolution towards communism.

On the question of Khrushchev's new thesis regarding the simultaneous transition of the whole bloc to communism, Yudin made it doubly clear that the precondition to large-scale Soviet aid was Chinese economic integration with C.E.M.A.--the Soviet counterpart of the European common market. Khrushchev's thesis, Yudin suggested, "is the first formulation of the new thesis that the law of planned and proportional development applies not only to individual socialist countries but also the economy of the socialist camp as a whole." In other words, Khrushchev had extended the principle, embodied in the "road of the October Revolution" concept, concerning the planned development of national economies so that it applies to the whole bloc. He has thus unilaterally laid down a new law which is binding on the whole communist world, and has the force of dogma: "This is a new pronouncement in the theory of scientific communism. It expresses the profound truth of Leninism that the world socialist camp constitutes a single economic system."³⁶

In the face of this bold move by the Soviet leader, the Chinese were placed in the position of their agreeing to greater economic integration, or flying in the face of

³⁶Loc. cit.

Khrushchev's authority as leader of the bloc. Of course, it is possible that the Chinese had already undertaken to participate more fully in the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance in talks before the Congress, and this possibility is not to be ruled out.³⁷ However, both Khrushchev and Yudin were still arguing the case against economic isolationism in their speeches; and this would not have been necessary had firm agreement already been reached. Aiming his remarks ostensibly at the Yugoslavs, Yudin had pointed out that "with the emergence of the world system of socialism it is no longer possible to build socialism in one country in isolation from others."³⁸ His words had a familiar ring--they were almost exactly the same as those used by Khrushchev in his remarks in June 1958 following the meeting of C.E.M.A. when the Chinese declined to go further towards economic integration than increased trading. With the promulgation of Khrushchev's new thesis and with Soviet aid as the incentive, Yudin now foresaw that "the economic plans of these

³⁷On December 19, 1958, People's Daily declared that, "the international division of labour and coordination of long term economic planning among the socialist countries ensures the most rational utilization of their natural and economic resources, accelerates the growth of each country and promotes the rapid economic development of the whole socialist camp (Peking Review No. 44, 1958, p. 19). The article lauded the C.E.M.A. for its role in "the assistance given by the more developed countries to the relatively underdeveloped ones."

³⁸Yudin, op. cit., p. 20.

(bloc) countries will be more and more coordinated, and the more highly developed countries will help the less developed countries in order to march in a united front towards communism at an increasingly faster pace."³⁹

Striking was the fact that, like Khrushchev, Yudin at no time made any specific reference to the communes or to the leap forward, even though he went to considerable lengths praising the Chinese for their achievements: again, indication that the communes were still a source of considerable friction despite the temporary ideological truce.

Chinese Reaction to the 21st Congress

Official reaction to the 21st Congress in Chinese news media was enthusiastic and laudatory. Red Flag, for instance, on February 16 upheld all the important theses proposed by Khrushchev at the Congress. At the same time, subtle differences in emphasis gave evidence of certain underlying ideological differences. Thus, while the Red Flag editorial made mention of the Soviet leaders "creative proposition" concerning the simultaneous transition to communism of the entire bloc, and hailed the principle of the backward nations rapidly catching up with the aid of the advanced nations, it made absolutely no mention of closer economic ties or possible economic integration. Khrushchev, on the other hand, had emphasized that "international division

³⁹Loc. cit.

of labour, particularly in its highest forms--specialization and co-operation--are to play a big part in the development of the socialist camp.⁴⁰ Thus, it appeared that the Chinese were still holding back from merging their economy with the C.E.M.A. countries, and were still reluctant to submit to Soviet economic domination. Moreover, differences were also still apparent over the question of the forms of socialist society and of the evolution of social units. While other Soviet pronouncements met with praise and support, the question of the Soviet co-operatives' future evolution was dealt with in a noticeably non-committal way:

The Communist Party of the Soviet Union has mapped out a plan for developing and bringing closer together the two forms of Soviet socialist ownership - collective farm ownership, and ownership of the whole people. It held that the merging of the two forms of ownership is the solution to the profoundly significant question of overcoming the essential differences between the rural and urban areas.⁴¹

Of course, from the Chinese point of view, the commune was the solution to this problem.

The People's Daily in editorials on February 5 and February 8 also showed a generally positive response to the proceedings of the Soviet Congress. It maintained that "the current Congress will not only accelerate the building of communism in the Soviet Union, but also contribute to the development of the international communist movement and the

⁴⁰Khrushchev, loc. cit.

⁴¹Red Flag, February 16, 1959; Peking Review, No. 8, 1959.

strengthening of the world's peace forces. It is a great inspiration to all those who are fighting for peace and socialism."⁴² In a similar vein, the People's Daily editors proclaimed:

Forty and more years ago, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union led the people in blazing the trail for mankind to socialism. Today, by putting forward the Seven Year Plan, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union has again raised up before mankind a bridge leading to communism.⁴³

It is noteworthy that while praising the Soviet Union for putting forward a program for the advance to communism, the Chinese did not concede that this was the only road, or even the best road. In China at least, the communes still remained the key to the transition to communism.

The Post-Congress Economic Aid Agreement

Immediately after the close of the 21st Congress, it was announced that the Soviet Union had agreed to extend its technical aid to China, and to help build several score major industrial complexes. The announcement, coming when it did on the heels of the ideological truce, suggested the possibility of a significant tie-in with the commune dispute.

It has been stated previously that one of the apparent factors in the ideological truce signified by the

⁴²People's Daily, February 5, 1959; Peking Review, No. 6, 1959.

⁴³Loc. cit.

21st Congress was the promise by Moscow of more aid to China in her massive program of industrialization. As has also been suggested, one of the important considerations in the adoption of the policy of mobilizing the untapped resource of Chinese labour power was the fact that the Soviet Union was unable to provide the Chinese economy with the necessary amounts of industrial capital. It will be remembered that in the spring of 1957 a number of articles appeared in the Chinese press suggesting that the country must rely mainly on its own resources and should not count on aid from fraternal countries. These articles appeared shortly after Chou En-lai's return from Europe and Moscow, and tend to support the contention of a number of scholars that Khrushchev had informed Chou that due to the heavy Soviet economic commitments arising out of the increase in aid to European communist countries (and resulting from the Polish and Hungarian uprisings), the Soviet Union would not be able to provide any large-scale economic aid. Professor Brzezinski's analysis of the Soviet predicament during this period shows clearly why the Chinese requests for assistance could not be fulfilled without serious disruption of the Soviets' own domestic economy:

The political events of 1956 had a sharp impact on Soviet economic relations with East Europe. Until then the area had been a source of appreciable economic advantage to the USSR, with an estimated annual Soviet extract of at least one billion United States dollars. The Soviet

admission that past economic policies of the area, largely Soviet imposed, had courted disaster, the need to bolster the East German regime, to promote the recuperation of Kadar's Hungary, and to stave off a calamitous nation-wide repetition of Poznan in Poland, all forced the USSR to extend credit to these regimes. As a result Poland, Hungary, and East Germany briefly became economic liabilities.⁴⁴

In 1956 alone, the Soviet Union had extended credits of 370 billion rubles to Bulgaria, 1.2 billion rubles to East Germany, 200 million gold rubles to Hungary, 1.1 billion gold rubles to Poland, and 270 million rubles to Rumania. Moreover, she had cancelled 2.3 billion rubles in Polish debts. "According to the most thorough study available, the sum total of Soviet credit granted to the European Communist-ruled states in 1956-57 was \$1.3 billion. To this ought to be added \$1.8 billion in Soviet credit cancellations, or, \$3.1 billion."⁴⁵ This huge sum, which was required to promote economic and political stability in the bloc following the crises of 1956 was an even greater burden on the Soviet economy, due to the fact that the USSR was no longer receiving its \$1 billion subsidy from the satellite economies (and particularly East Germany). It was in the light of this situation that the Soviet Union cancelled in February 1957, some \$250 million in credits which it had granted Yugoslavia in the preceding year. This latter act

⁴⁴Brzezinski, op. cit., p. 283.

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 284.

may also have been motivated partly by political considerations since Khrushchev could hardly justify granting credits to "revisionists" and not to his Chinese allies.

It should be noted, too, that as far as the Chinese economy was concerned, 1956 and 1957 were especially critical years, since the Chinese had begun to pay back the \$1.7 billion rubles in economic credits extended by the Soviet Union in 1950 and 1954:

It seems well established, however, that the total of these obligations is far in excess of the acknowledged Soviet 'economic loans' to China Soviet writers have repeatedly quoted the Chinese statement that the total 'Soviet credits' to China since the founding of the People's Republic and presumably through 1957, have amounted to 5.29 billion yuan Converted at what has been reported to be the official rate of two rubles to the yuan, total debts to the Soviet Union thus may amount to some 10.6 billion rubles. Even if an annual export surplus of 1 billion rubles - as that of 1958 - were entirely applied to debt repayment, some 40% of Chinese exports to the USSR, also at the 1958 rate, would remain committed to repayment for nearly a decade.⁴⁶

No doubt the Chinese could well ask themselves (and perhaps the Soviets) how the Soviet Union could cancel 2.3 billion rubles of the trade debts of Poland, a country which had risen against Soviet leadership, and not do the same for a friend who had stood steadfastly beside her. Nevertheless,

⁴⁶O. Hoeffding, "Sino-Soviet Economic Relations," Unity and Contradiction (New York, Praeger, 1962), p. 303.

the fact remained that the Chinese economy vitally required either an external or an internal stimulus of considerable proportions to meet payments on increased debt while providing for the needs of 650 million people and increasing industrialization. Since the Soviet Union was in no position to supply this stimulus, it had to be found internally--in the mobilization of 500 million peasants, and in the policies of the great leap forward and the people's communes. Presumably it was recognition of a possible causal relationship between lack of economic assistance and the establishment of the people's communes that led the Soviet Union to offer China extensive economic assistance in August 1958 and again in February 1959. The latter agreement, as has been noted, takes on particular significance in that it came on the heels of the Chinese reassessment of the commune policy, and of Sino-Soviet ideological conciliation at the 21st Congress. Together, the two related aid agreements provided for Soviet assistance in the construction of 78 major industrial enterprises over an eight-year period. "The total value of the equipment to be supplied and the designing and other kinds of technical assistance to be provided by the Soviet Union for these enterprises is about 5,000 million rubles."⁴⁷ According to the agreement, this sum was to be paid back in goods according to already established trade agreements.

⁴⁷Peking Review, No. 7, 1959, p. 12.

From the Chinese reaction to these agreements it is clear how dependent China's industrial development was on the Soviet Union. In an editorial in People's Daily on February 14, just a few days after the agreement had been concluded it was stated that "according to the agreements signed during China's First Five Year Plan, the Soviet Union undertook to help China build 211 huge projects. In August 1958, the two countries signed another agreement on Soviet aid to build or expand 47 Chinese industrial enterprises. All of these enterprises form the spine of China's construction."⁴⁸ Referring to the new agreement for the construction of the 78 new enterprises, the editorial adds, "with the completion of these enterprises, the backbone of China's modern industries will be further strengthened and China will gain time and accelerate the fulfillment of the great task of developing its national economy."⁴⁹ Moreover, the editors of the People's Daily made it abundantly clear how much this Soviet assistance was appreciated, particularly at a time when the Soviet Union was pushing ahead as rapidly as possible in her own economic construction:

The Soviet Union has undertaken the extension of aid to our country at a time when it has been a heavy task to fulfill its own domestic construction The Sino-Soviet

⁴⁸Loc. cit.

⁴⁹Loc. cit.

agreement on the expansion of economic co-operation forcefully demonstrates that the Soviet Union considers the promotion of the economic development of all the brother countries as its own cause, that it will continue to exert its untiring efforts to bring about a common economic upsurge in all the countries of the socialist camp. The Chinese people express their heartfelt thanks for the great and selfless aid given to us by the Soviet Union.⁵⁰

This period immediately following the 21st Congress and the signing of the Sino-Soviet aid agreement can be viewed in retrospect as a mere lull in the ideological storm arising out of the appearance of the communes in China, but it certainly was a period when ideological differences seemed to have been overcome, and inter-party solidarity again firmly cemented. As has been pointed out, the healing of the ideological breach was essentially only superficial and temporary, and was subject to reopening on a wide range of issues, as long as the communes remained. And to dissolve the communes would mean the loss of face and perhaps the loss of leadership by the leading personalities in the Chinese Communist Party; thus, such a policy remained unthinkable.

Commune Consolidation and Soviet Acceptances: Spring 1959

The chief characteristics of the Chinese domestic scene in the spring of 1959 were the shortage of food, and the reorganization of the communes. Due to the implementation

⁵⁰Loc. cit.

of the free supply system in the initial stages of the communes, and because consumption was geared to faulty and exaggerated food production figures, the spring brought with it a countrywide shortage of food. No doubt, exaggerated production figures also meant that the huge shipments of grain and other agricultural products sent to the Soviet Union in 1958 and early 1959 were calculated on the faulty assumption that adequate food reserves remained in the country, when in fact, they did not.⁵¹ The resulting situation is summed up by a young "poor peasant" refugee from a commune in Kwantung who was interviewed in the spring of 1960 upon his arrival in Hong Kong:

Q. Did things improve when the communes started?

A. No. It was worse than the advanced co-operatives. It was not too bad during the first two months. We had three meals of rice a day and we could eat our fill. But later we were only given five taels of rice mixed with sweet potatoes and bananas. Finally the ration was cut to three taels of rice. . . .

Q. Did anyone complain about this kind of food?

A. Yes, everyone was complaining openly.⁵²

⁵¹In his April 1959 Report to the National People's Congress, Chou En-lai noted that "Some people suspect that the tension in the supply of certain commodities was due to excessive export," but claimed that exports were "only" 17.8% higher than in 1957.

⁵²Current Scene: Reports from Communist China (Kowloon, P.O. Box 5217, 1961), p. 108.

During this same period the plans for checking up on the communes and "consolidating" them, as laid out in the December 10 Resolution, was carried out. In actual fact, the so-called "consolidation" proved to be a major retreat back towards the situation existing in 1957 before the great leap. For example, many of the communal mess halls were disbanded and private plots returned to the peasantry in order to increase incentive, and stimulate the production of much-needed food. Far-reaching reorganization of the communes was carried out, returning much more initiative and responsibility to the production team and the production brigade (corresponding roughly to the lower and higher stage cooperatives respectively).⁵³

In late February and early March, an enlarged meeting of the Political Bureau was held in Chengchow for the purpose of issuing "detailed instructions for the check-up in the people's communes"⁵⁴ and for a reconsideration of the whole commune program. This was followed by a meeting of the entire Central Committee, after which top-level party men moved into the rural areas to personally supervise the implementation of the Central Committee's recommendations. Thus, according to a report in the March 10 issue of the Peking Review:

⁵³ Li Fu-chun, "Raise High the Red Flag . . ." (Peking, F.L.P., 1960), p. 3.

⁵⁴ Chou En-lai, Report on Adjusting the Major Targets of the 1959 Economic Plan (Peking, F.L.P., 1959), p. 36.

for some time large numbers of government and Communist Party cadres have been moving to the people's communes for a spell of work in the countryside The latest of the top province leaders to have gone to the communes are the first secretaries of the Provincial Communist Party Committee of Shantung, Yunnan, Kwangtung, and Chinghai respectively.

A few months later in the Report of the Central Committee's Eighth Plenary Session, it was revealed what changes these top party cadres had been supervising throughout the spring. It was revealed that, "during the check-up the principles of management and business accounting at different levels, of 'to each according to his work' and more income for those who do more work have been implemented."⁵⁵ But the changes went far beyond this. It was decided by the Central Committee that:

a three-level type of ownership of the means of production (would) be implemented in the communes. Ownership at the production brigade level constitutes the basic one. Ownership at the commune level constitutes another part A small part of the ownership should also be invested in the production team.⁵⁶

Through these measures it was hoped to overcome "the tendencies to over-centralization, to egalitarianism and extravagance"⁵⁷ These far-reaching measures went

⁵⁵Eighth Plenary Session of the Eighth Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (Peking, F.L.P., 1959), p. 10.

⁵⁶Loc. cit.

⁵⁷Loc. cit.

beyond anything envisioned in the December Resolution and indicated a definite retreat towards the collective farm system. In effect, what remained was mostly a "paper commune" which consisted essentially of a loose federation of agricultural producers' co-operatives. At the commune level of ownership only the state enterprises such as banks and small factories, which had been absorbed into the communes remained. The communes' power was limited to extracting from the production brigades such money as was necessary to build up the communes' capital accumulation funds, and to providing the apparatus of administration. In operation, these new "paper communes" differed little from the amalgamated co-ops that sprang up in the spring of 1958. But by retaining the skeleton outline of the original communes, the party was able to achieve two things--it was able to defend itself against charges that the communes had been a failure and had been abandoned, (and against any possible loss of face), and at the same time was able to leave the door open for a future attempt to scale the heights of communism through the communes.

The fact that "ideological consciousness" had not been at a sufficiently high level among the peasantry, meant that production had been slowed rather than spurred by the introduction of the communes. In order to overcome the economic dislocation caused by the great leap and the people's communes, it became necessary for the party to revert to the

policy of encouraging individual initiative and hard work through personal incentive. This was made clear by Premier Chou En-lai in his April 18th report to the National People's Congress, wherein he noted that:

Consolidation of the people's communes is the prerequisite of the smooth growth of agricultural production We are confident that when all the work of checking-up and organization is well done the people's communes will bring the rank and file initiative into fuller play and further develop their energies. This will be a further guarantee for fulfilling the tasks of increasing agricultural production in 1959.⁵⁸

Nevertheless, it was clear from Chou's speech in April which followed on the heels of the 7th Plenary Session of the Central Committee, that while a retreat had been ordered in regard to the communes, Mao Tse-tung was still determined to retain them as the basic unit of society in China, and to achieve "pure" communes as soon as it was objectively feasible. Reiterating the party's faith in the correctness of the communes, Chou said that:

the people's commune . . . will have vital significance for the development of our country's social economy. In the conditions obtaining in our country, it is not only the best form for promoting the continued development of the productive forces and quickening the tempo of socialist construction, but it is the best form for effecting the future transition of our entire countryside from socialist

⁵⁸Chou En-lai, Report on the Work of the Government, (Peking, F.L.P., 1959), p. 31.

collective ownership to ownership by the whole people, and the transition from socialist to communist society.⁵⁹

Chou also spoke most warmly of the achievements of the Soviet Union, and indicated that the conciliatory spirit of the 21st Congress still prevailed. Referring specifically to the Seven Year Plan and the Soviet advance towards communism, Chou emphasized that "this plan signifies that the Soviet Union has entered an important historical period--the period of extensive building of communist society--and is announcing to mankind that communist society with its infinite splendour is not far off."⁶⁰ From these remarks it can be clearly seen that the two nations' ideological reconciliation over the question of the transition to communism was still holding firm as late as mid-April. Moreover, from the Chinese Premier's remarks, it seemed as though the Chinese were in a receptive state of mind towards the Khrushchev plan to increase economic ties and economic co-operation between the two nations--although it is not specifically clear whether this included a receptiveness towards economic integration as such. Chou exclaimed:

We are deeply aware from our own experience, that mutual support and cooperation from the socialist countries is an important condition for their smooth development. In the future we will continue to strengthen actively our

⁵⁹Ibid., p. 6.

⁶⁰Ibid., p. 57.

cooperation with the Soviet Union and other fraternal countries in the political, economic, technical, cultural and other fields and continue to deepen the education of our people in proletarian internationalism.⁶¹

The course of events later proved that integration was still regarded very dubiously by the Chinese, and a strong fear remained that it would result in Soviet economic, political and ideological domination.

Following the rapprochement on the commune question at the 21st Congress, the Soviet press relaxed its policy of ignoring the communes and published a number of articles which generally repeated Chinese assertions that under Chinese conditions they had a number of practical (as opposed to ideological) advantages. In April, for instance, a journal specializing in the Orient carried an article in which it was said that the communes allowed a "much larger and more rational use of labour power," and that "already the first months of practice show that this form in the conditions of China contains many possibilities for stepping up the tempo of production in the Chinese countryside."⁶² And as late as June, Kommunist mentioned the communes in a favourable light.⁶³ But the commune truce was soon to break.

⁶¹Ibid., p. 58.

⁶²D. S. Zagoria, The Sino-Soviet Conflict (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1962), p. 421: citing "Problemy vostokavedinya" no. 2, 1959, p. 7.

⁶³Ibid., p. 134.

While ideological differences had been temporarily bridged, the basis for a further rupture over the communes at a later date still remained. Should Chinese revolution claims be renewed or should the Soviet Union fail--in Chinese eyes--to carry the revolution forward fast enough at home or abroad; or should either party be troubled by disruptive factions receiving ideological support from the leadership of the other fraternal party.

CHAPTER VIII

RIFT OVER THE COMMUNES IN THE CHINESE COMMUNIST PARTY AND SOVIET INVOLVEMENT: SUMMER 1959

The Anti-Commune Element Within the Chinese Communist Party

Mention has been made of the fact that a faction of the Chinese Communist Party had opposed the policy of "The Three Red Banners" (greater, faster and better and more economical results; the leap forward; and the people's communes), and had consistently advocated a more balanced, rational economic development similar to that undertaken in the Five Year Plan. In other words, they wanted to follow the general path of development taken by the Soviet Union in socialist construction. The existence of this group proved to be of exceptional significance in the Sino-Soviet dispute over the communes since it meant that pronouncements on the commune question by the Soviet Party could be seized upon by the Soviet Road faction for support in the intra-party struggle (just as Mao's pronouncements provided support to Stalinists within the C.P.S.U.). Of course, while the communes and the leap forward policies remained successful, the conservative faction within the party had little chance of posing a serious threat to the "radical" faction. However, as soon as the policies began to appear to have been a failure, the radical faction was no longer safe from renewed attack within party organs such as the Central Committee.

It was in the C.P.S.U.'s interest to lend outside support to the conservative faction for at least two reasons. Firstly, because while the communes remained, they provided an embarrassing contrast to Soviet conservatism and revisionism, and provided an alternative model to that of Soviet socialist development. And secondly, because the conservative faction within the C.P.C., if it gained control of the party, would be more receptive to Soviet revisions of Marxist theory on the questions of peaceful coexistence, peaceful transition, and the inevitability of war.¹

From a very careful study of communist Chinese documents and of the Chinese press, it can be seen that the anti-"Three Banners" faction was composed of four main elements: economic planners, foreign affairs staff, military men and provincial party leaders. It has been surmised by a number of observers of the Chinese scene that the intra-party dispute was, and is, between factions led by Mao Tse-tung on the one hand and Liu Shao-chi on the other, or by Liu Shao-chi on the one hand and Chou En-lai on the other. The latter theory is by far the most prevalent, and has found among its supporters such people as Zagoria, McFarquar and certain Nationalist Chinese scholars.² The facts provide

¹This fact is documented later in the chapter.

²M. Kalb, Dragon in the Kremlin (New York: Dutton & Co., 1961), p. 208.

little justification for this latter view, however, and still less for the former theory. In actual fact it would appear that the opponents of the leap forward and the communes were led by Chen Yun, Peng Teh-huai and Wang Chen-tien; all three being members of the Politburo--the former being one of the seven members of the Politburo's standing committee, Peng Teh-huai being the former Minister of National Defence, and Wang being former Ambassador to Moscow. It may be true that Chou En-lai was somewhat less enthusiastic about these policies than Mao, Liu, Ten Haiaoping and Lin Piao, but the evidence shows that he was definitely not in the opposition camp.

The evidence tends to indicate that opposition to the "Three Red Banners" policies was not confined to merely a few members of the Central Committee. On the contrary, it would appear that the moderate faction was a relatively large group, and that Mao Tse-tung's association with the left wing faction was the deciding factor in giving this group control over party policy. This can be seen very clearly in the events surrounding the introduction of the Twelve Year Plan in 1956, which shed considerable light on the intra-party struggle over economic policy.

In the fall of 1955, following the Central Committee's October 11th directive to speed up formation of the advanced producers' cooperatives, an upsurge of socialization far exceeding that envisioned in the directive took place in rural

China. Flushed with this success, Mao wrote in the preface to the book Socialist Upsurge in China's Countryside on December 22, 1955 that "the problem facing the entire party and all the people of the country is no longer one of combatting rightist conservatist ideas about the speed of socialist transformation of agriculture."³ Instead, he asserted, it was one of combatting rightist conservatist ideas in the matter of production. He said:

The problem today is that rightist conservatism is still causing trouble in many fields and preventing the work in these fields from keeping pace with the development of the objective situation. The present problem is that many people consider impossible things which could be done if they exerted themselves.⁴

According to Liu Shao-chi "comrade Mao Tse-tung subsequently summed up the ideas in this preface in the slogan of building socialism by achieving 'greater, faster, better and more economical results'."⁵ Thus, it was Mao himself who was the author of the new party general line which was eventually adopted in September 1957. The immediate result of Mao's new radical outlook on the speed of national construction was his

³Mao Tse-tung, Preface to "Socialist Upsurge in China's Countryside," reprinted in Bowie and Fairbank, Communist China 1955-1959 (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1962), p. 117.

⁴Loc. cit.

⁵Liu Shao-chi, "Report on the Work of the Central Committee," Second Session of the Eighth National Congress of the Communist Party of China (Peking, F.L.P., 1958), p. 36.

formulation of a radical "Draft National Program for Agricultural Development, 1956-1967" which was adopted by the Politburo on January 26, 1956. As Liu later pointed out, it was:

a program for developing socialist agriculture by achieving 'greater, faster, better and more economical results'. Not only did it set great goals for rural work throughout the country, but it gave a correct orientation for development of the entire work of socialist construction.⁶

In the preface to the new Draft Program, Mao suggested that the proposed program should be studied throughout the party, "as well as by all departments concerned" (which indicates that Mao had drawn up the plan without consulting them) with a view to obtaining a wide range of views on it. "These views" he suggested, "should be collected before April 1, 1956, so that the program can be submitted for discussion and adoption by the seventh plenary session (enlarged) of the seventh Central Committee of the Communist Party of China which will be held sometime after that date."⁷ Clearly, Mao expected to get approval for his plan from the Central Committee; but, in fact, that approval was not forthcoming, as will be shown. Mao further elaborated the general theme of the Draft Program at an enlarged meeting

⁶Loc. cit.

⁷Mao Tse-tung, "Preface to the Draft Program"; reprinted in Bowie and Fairbank, op. cit., p. 119.

of the Politburo in April, in a report entitled "Ten Sets of Relationships". According to Mao's deputy, Liu Shao-chi, "The general idea of the report was to mobilize all positive factors and available forces for building China into a modern, prosperous and mighty socialist state within the shortest possible time."⁸ However, Mao's plans apparently met with stiff opposition from the more moderate elements of the Central Committee, since his Twelve Year Plan failed to gain approval at the Committee's session in September of 1956. This fact alone is enough to make it clear that the moderate faction was large enough and influential enough to forestall the proposed change in the party line.

At the Party Congress in September, shortly after the Central Committee's meeting, there was no mention of the Twelve Year Plan in the major reports. Instead, there occurred the introduction of the Second Five Year Plan, which was based on the same moderate economic philosophy as the First. The only allusion to Mao's program for leaping ahead in agriculture occurred in an unfavourable context: Chou En-lai made mention of it in connection with an economic disruption at the beginning of the year:

following the publication of the Draft National Program for Agricultural Development (1956-1967)
. . . in the construction work of some departments and localities there appeared a tendency

⁸Liu Shao-chi, op. cit., p. 37.

to do everything at once and do it everywhere, taking no account of actual conditions and running recklessly ahead Some departments and localities, impatient for success, attempted to accomplish within three to five years, or even one to two years tasks that required seven or twelve years to complete. These tendencies were all discovered and corrected by the Central Committee in good time.⁹

It appeared from Chou's report that the moderates had been powerful enough to retain control over the party line, in the face of the disruptions caused by the "leap forward in 1956".

There were clear indications in Chen Yun's address that he himself was firmly in economic moderates' camp. He urged the reintroduction of the free market at the village level, complaining that "there is no competition whatsoever, and . . . the result is a drop in the output of the (agricultural) commodities." He further argued that in general, "measures taken by state economic departments in the last few years, to restrict capitalist industry and commerce have now become unnecessary."¹⁰ Going even further, he urged that the party allow cooperative members to "have a bit more land

⁹Chou En-lai, "Report on the Proposals for the Second Five Year Plan," Eighth National Congress of the C.P.C. Vol. I (Documents) (Peking, F.L.P., 1956), p. 274.

¹⁰Chen Yun, "Speech to the Eighth Congress," Eighth National Congress of the Communist Party of China: Speeches, Vol. II (Peking, F.L.P., 1956), p. 161.

for their private use, so that they can plant crops for fodder to raise pigs and increase the production of subsidiary occupations," and suggested that "the state of affairs where everything is indiscriminately managed by the cooperative must be altered."¹¹ It was evident from these remarks that Chen Yun was poles apart from the thinking of Mao Tse-tung and the other economic radicals within the Politburo and the Central Committee.

After the radical group had succeeded in winning over the Central Committee to its point of view a year later (in September of 1957), Liu Shao-chi revealed the nature of the intra-party struggle between the two groups, by admitting that:

There were individual defects in our work during the leap forward in 1956 However some comrades at the time magnified these defects and underestimated the great achievements attained, and hence regarded the leap forward of 1956 as a 'reckless advance'. In a flurry of opposition to this so-called 'reckless advance', some people even had misgivings about the principle of 'achieving greater, faster, better and more economical results', and the 40-articles Programs for Agricultural Development.¹²

It was further revealed that "the struggle between the two methods in dealing with this question (of economic advance) was not fully decided until the launching of the rectification

¹¹Ibid., p. 168.

¹²Liu Shao-chi, op. cit., p. 38.

campaign and the anti-rightist struggle."¹³ At the September 1957 meeting of the Central Committee the radical line was endorsed and the eighteen-month-old Program for Agricultural Development revived.

Apparently, a number of those who had opposed Mao's leap forward policies switched camps in 1957. (It is possible, though by no means sure, that Chou En-lai was one of these.) According to Liu's statements in the spring of 1958:

Many of the comrades who expressed misgivings about the principle of building socialism by achieving 'greater, faster, better and more economical results' have learned a lesson from all this. But some of them have not learned anything. They say: 'We'll settle accounts with you after the autumn harvest'. Well let them wait to settle accounts. They will lose out in the end.¹⁴

These "comrades", to speak this way in party deliberations, must have had considerable prestige and support; otherwise they would not have dared to be so outspoken. Moreover, the fact that these members of the moderate faction were not more thoroughly denounced, indicated that their strength was considerable. The fact that they postponed further confrontation with the radical group until after the autumn harvest was also important since it indicated an implied challenge of "produce results or else". The group of moderates remained ready to challenge the leadership as soon as signs of

¹³Ibid., p. 34.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 39.

economic dislocation appeared.

During the party's rectification campaign many party officials, including a number of provincial governors and high party officials in the provinces were purged, and in the spring of 1958 numerous government officials were dismissed from office. Included in those directly linked with "rightist activities" were four members of the Central Committee, including Pan Fu-sheng, the first secretary of the Honan provincial committee of the party.¹⁵ At least two more alternate members of the Central Committee lost their government jobs in the February reorganization of the ministries: Wang Hao-shu, and Liu Lan-po.¹⁶ This brings to at least six, the number of Central Committee members who were openly affected by the rectification campaign. All six retained their positions in the Central Committee, despite losing their other posts and thus "lived" to fight another day against the radical policies espoused by Mao Tse-tung. Besides this group there was also the "tide watching group" and the "post harvest reckoning group" within the Central Committee. It is not apparent whether the military element in the Central Committee which was later to challenge the commune program, was involved with these two groups, or whether they made up a separate group.

¹⁵Summary of the Eighth Congress, Second Session; Second Session of the Eighth National Congress (Peking, F.L.P., 1958), p. 13.

¹⁶Keessing's Contemporary Archives; Week of March 8-15, p. 16062, 1958.

It is the existence of an anti-great leap faction within the Central Committee that explains a peculiar aspect of the introduction of the communes. As has been pointed out, opposition was apparently much stronger within the Central Committee than within the smaller Politburo; and this apparently explains why the original commune resolution (August 28, 1959) was passed by an enlarged session of the Politburo rather than the Central Committee. It may well be, moreover, that this bypassing of the Central Committee on such an immensely important issue as the communes led to a considerable exacerbation of the intra-party controversy. Although the Central Committee had endorsed the formation of larger collectives in May,¹⁷ it was only in December that the Central Committee was convened to consider the commune question, and this was after they had been in existence for over three months. It may well be that Mao bypassed the Central Committee purposely in seeking to obtain party support for his brainchild, the commune. Opposition from the moderate group within the Central Committee might well have been strong enough to postpone the radical new social unit's introduction, just as the Twelve Year Plan had been postponed. As it was, by the time the Central

¹⁷"Long Live the People's Communes," Red Flag, August 29, 1959; Appendix to, Chou En-lai's Report on Adjusting the Major Economic Targets of the 1959 Economic Plan (Peking, F.L.P., 1959), p. 40.

Committee was convened to consider the commune question, Mao himself had already reached a more moderate position in regard to the original claims which had been made on behalf of the new social unit.

It should be noted that the position of the moderates within the party necessarily depended on the success of the "Three Red Banners": if the radical policies were successful then the moderates had little grounds for opposition, but if these same policies failed then the position of the moderates would be greatly strengthened. As it turned out, with the bumper harvest and general leap forward of 1958 (attributed by the radicals to their policy of the "Three Red Banners") the moderates' position within the party was considerably weakened. However, as time wore on and successes turned sour, the moderates were able to argue increasingly forcefully for a repudiation of radical policies and for return to co-ordinated economic development of the Soviet type.

Economic Dislocation and Mounting Unrest Within the Party

It was clear by February of 1959 that severe dislocation of the economy had been caused by the great leap forward and the people's communes. The Central Committee had ordered the "consolidation" of the communes; food was already in short supply, grain remained unharvested in the fields; iron from the backyard furnaces was proving too poor to use; and overestimations of production figures were

beginning to come to light. This deteriorating situation began to put the radicals on the defensive. In an article in Red Flag on February 16, Tan Chen-lin, (a Vice Premier, Politburo member, and one of the most outspoken supporters of the radical party line in general and the communes in particular) revealed the nature of the unrest within the party, and identified several opposition factions. He said:

There are still some people who even as they doubted the great leap forward last year, are adopting a doubtful attitude towards the big leap forward this year . . . they are easily affected by rumours spread by the 'tide watching' group and the 'post-harvest reckoning' group If we do not solve the ideological problems of these comrades, the big leap forward this year will be severely affected.¹⁸

In short, it appeared that with conditions deteriorating the moderates were beginning to win back the waverers to their camp. Revealing the nature of the charges launched by the moderates, Tan Chen-lin noted that:

As to the 'tide watching' group and the 'account reckoning' group They say 'we have a wheat harvest but no flour for food. Grain production has increased and yet we have sweet potatoes. The big leap forward is unreliable.' They attempt to create chaos The 'tide watching' group also attempts to make use of the fact that the estimated outputs were excessively high in some areas in order to reject the achievement of the big leap forward.¹⁹

¹⁸Red Flag, February 16, 1959; Extracts From China Mainland Magazines, No. 165, p. 29.

¹⁹Loc. cit.

In the succeeding issue of Red Flag, Chen Yun wrote a lengthy article ostensibly discussing "Some Problems Concerning Capital Construction Operations", in his role as Director of the State Capital Construction Commission. However, much of the article was given over to criticizing reckless advance and its attendant economic dislocation. He argued forcibly that production figures were not everything--on the contrary, increases in production meant very little unless the products were of sufficient quality to be usable. "We must, he said, "oppose the deviation of laying stress only on speed, to the neglect of quality Because work will have to be done over again if the quality is poor, this will lead to a waste of manpower, material, and money."²⁰

At the beginning of April, the Central Committee met in its Seventh Plenary Session to ratify the decisions of the Politburo concerning the retreat to the three-levels-of-ownership system in the communes (taken at Chengchow in March)²¹ and to consider the production targets for 1959. The targets set were based on the 1958 statistics, which had still not been proven false at this late date. As a result, completely unrealistic targets were set for the 1959 leap forward.

²⁰Li Fu-chun, Raise High the Red Flag of the General Line (Peking, F.L.P., 1960), p. 3.

²¹Chen Yun, "Some Immediate Problems Concerning Capital Construction," Red Flag, March 1, 1958; Extracts from China Mainland Magazines, No. 166, p. 1.

As late as April 18, Chou En-lai delivered a report to the National People's Congress which was based on the inflated 1958 figures. Sometime between this date and the Central Committee meeting in August, when the revised figures were made known publicly, the huge errors were discovered by the party. The release of these revised figures gave a tremendous impetus to the arguments of the moderates since it was now shown that the great leap was mostly only a leap forward on paper. Whereas Chou had claimed in April that the production of food crops and cotton had more than doubled in 1958, the revised figures showed that the increases had been only 35% and 28% respectively.²² Moreover, most of the steel produced in the rural areas and included in the production figures, had proven useless. In this situation the radical group's position was undermined and threatened, and the moderate elements began to press home their attack. Floods and droughts also threatened huge areas of the country, and the revolt in Tibet continued to tie down a large section of the People's Liberation Army.

The Position of the P.L.A.

The People's Liberation Army itself played an immensely important role in the intra-party struggle over the "Three Red Banners" policies, and some of its leaders took a leading role in opposing the communes and the leap forward.

²²Chou En-lai, Report on Adjusting the Major Economic Targets (Peking, F.L.P., 1959), p. 19.

Ultimately Peng Teh-huai and Huang Ko-cheng were dismissed from their positions of Minister of Defence and Chief of General Staff respectively, and later their colleague Tan Cheng, Director General of the Political Department of the Armed Forces, received the same fate. The fact that the dismissals of Peng and Huang took place on September 17, 1959, immediately followed the stormy crisis within the party over the communes at the August Central Committee session, clearly indicated that these two men (the former a member of the Politburo, and the latter a full member of the Central Committee) were deeply involved in the opposition to Mao's communes. This was further substantiated by Lin Piao, Peng Teh-huai's successor, and a member of the Politburo's Standing Committee, who wrote in People's Daily on September 27 urging the Army to "March Ahead under the Red Flag of the General Line and Mao Tse-tung's Military Thinking". In this article he exposed the questions over which there apparently had been disagreement with Peng and Huang:

Is it still important for politics to be in command at this stage of the modernization of the Army? Concretely speaking, what place has political and ideological work? What attitude should members of the armed forces adopt towards the country's economic construction and the mass movements? What is the correct way to handle intra-army relations and to strengthen still further the Party's leadership of the army?²³

²³Lin Piao, "March Ahead Under the Red Flag and Mao Tse-tung's Military Thinking," People's Daily, September 27, 1959; Bowie and Farbank, op. cit., p. 579.

It was the third question which held the greatest significance in the actual intra-party struggle--and it was clear from Lin Piao's discussion of this question that Peng and Huang had lined up in opposition to the mass movements--including the communes:

What should our attitude be to this mighty mass movement? Should we plunge in and support the masses with all our hearts? Or should we stand outside the movement and pick fault with the masses here and there, or even stand in opposition to the movement and against the masses?²⁴

The latter was apparently the course taken by "some comrades".

There were a number of specific issues connected with the communes and the leap forward on which Peng Teh-huai disagreed with the party line, and which can be identified from the text of Lin Piao's article. The first was the question of the army's participation in production:

Some years ago there were comrades who regarded it as an extra burden for the army to participate in mass movements and assist the people in production. They held that only drilling and lectures constituted training while participation in practical socialist struggle was not training but an obstruction to training which would bring more loss than gain. Such a viewpoint is utterly wrong.²⁵

In 1958 the P. L. A. had been ordered by the party to participate extensively in the great leap forward and had contributed over 60,000,000 working days to industrial and agricultural production. This included those soldiers on active duty at

²⁴Ibid., p. 581.

²⁵Ibid., p. 583.

the "Fukien front".²⁶ It is not surprising, then, that Peng and Huang as professional soldiers should object to this policy, since from their point of view it would necessarily impair the army training program, morale, and combat readiness.

Moreover, the communes had two further deleterious effects upon the army. First of all, the mobilization of the peasants into labour armies and into communes (which threatened to disrupt traditional family life), necessarily had a negative reaction within the army, which is composed almost entirely of young peasants. As Lin Piao admitted:

since the overwhelming majority of the officers and men of our army come from the peasantry, unavoidably some comrades sometimes consider questions from the temporary, partial interests of small scale producers and do not clearly understand certain questions of socialist change.²⁷

In other words, the introduction of the communes and the great leap forward led to considerable unrest and loss of morale within the army; a situation which must have been a source of considerable alarm to Peng Teh-huai and other army leaders.²⁸ Secondly, there was the fact that the communes

²⁶Li Hsu-ku, "P.L.A. on the Industrial Front," Current Events, No. 3, February 6, 1959; Extracts from China Mainland Magazines, No. 167, p. 15.

²⁷Bowie and Fairbank, op. cit., p. 580.

²⁸Under these conditions of unrest within the P.L.A., officers like Peng Teh-huai might well have feared the

embodied a particular policy of defense which negated the role of the modern mechanized army. From the very inception of the communes, an integral part of the plan had been the formation of the "people's militia" which was not directly responsible to the army. As Lin Piao pointed out:

in the event of a war of aggression launched by imperialism against our country, the people's communes . . . are the mighty prop for the task of turning the whole population into fighting men, of supporting the front, of defending the country and overwhelming the aggressors.²⁹

This concept of relying on the "masses" as opposed to armed might and advanced military technology is, of course, one of Mao Tse-tung's most famous principles. But to the modern professional soldier in this era of modern warfare, such an approach is seriously out of date. Such, it would seem, was the point of view of Peng Teh-huai and his followers:

Some comrades take the view that modern warfare differs from warfare in the past They say that modern warfare is a war of technique, of steel and machinery, and that in the fact of these things, man's role has to be relegated to a secondary place.³⁰

possibility of a Kronstadt type of rebellion within the ranks. The experience of the Soviet Union was well known in this regard.

²⁹Bowie and Fairbank, op. cit., p. 582.

³⁰Ibid., p. 583; It is important to note that this military view held by Peng Teh-huai is also the view held by the CPSU. In the course of the Sino-Soviet dispute, Khrushchev was accused of ridiculing Mao's stress on man over machine and of saying that "an organized militia is not an

In Taiwan, for instance, the U. S. forces were armed with tactical nuclear weapons, and the Chinese army could have no hope of successfully assaulting Formosa unless they were similarly equipped.

It was apparently with this in mind that Peng Teh-huai met with Marshal Malinovsky in Moscow in November 1957. As a result of that meeting a secret agreement (revealed by the Chinese in the 1963 polemics) on "new technology for national defence" was signed by the two nations. This agreement provided for the Soviet Union to supply China with technical aid in manufacturing its own atomic weapons. However, in July 1958 Khrushchev and Malinovsky flew secretly to Peking and put forward "unreasonable demands designed to bring China under Soviet military control."³¹ In view of subsequent revelations, it would appear that the USSR decided to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons to West Germany by suggesting to the Chinese that they accept Soviet

army but cannon fodder." At the Bucharest Conference in 1960, Khrushchev said, "Let the Chinese comrades take no offence. Of course you have a great experience in war but mostly in guerrilla war The imperialist strategists now regard divisions as cannon fodder. What now counts with them is who has hydrogen bombs and combat planes and how many. (A Reply to Peking, London, Soviet Booklets, 1963), p. 19.

³¹"Origin and Development of the Differences Between the Leadership of the CPSU and Ourselves," Red Flag, September 6, 1963; Peking Review, No. 37, September 13, 1963, p. 12.

nuclear weapons under Soviet control, much like the joint control system within NATO. "These unreasonable demands were rightly and firmly rejected by the Chinese government,"³² and Mao Tse-tung apparently decided to rely more on the "masses" in national defence. In the light of the subsequent split between Peng Teh-huai and the supporters of Mao, it is likely that Peng was in favour of accepting the Soviet proposal, and opposed Mao on this point. To have to prepare for atomic conflict by setting up a rifle-armed "people's militia" under the control of the decentralized control of the communes, must have been distasteful to any professional military man, to say nothing of the man personally responsible for maintaining the country's defences. Thus it can be seen that the commune policy had a direct bearing on the party's approach to national defence and it was partly for this reason, therefore, that Marshal Peng stood in opposition to the new social unit.

The dismissal of the Chief of Staff, General Su Yu in October of 1958 also was apparently for his opposition to the communes, the use of the Armed Forces in domestic construction, and to the non-nuclear strategy of Mao Tse-tung in refusing to accept A-weapons under Soviet control. Articles appearing in the Chinese press in the late summer indicated that resistance to Mao's policies was widespread within the

³²Loc. cit.

P.L.A.³³ Accusations were made that certain military men laid too great a stress on atomic weapons and modern military techniques, and underestimated the importance of economic work to national defence; similar charges to those made by Lin Piao a year later. Su Yu's dismissal immediately after the introduction of the communes, and only a month after the "Generals to the ranks" program was begun, gave a very definite indication that he supported the professional elements within the P.L.A. And being a member of the Central Committee, he added yet another voice to the group of dissidents within that body.

Around the time when opposition to the "Three Red Banners" was mounting within the party, "the Soviet government unilaterally tore up the agreement on new technology for national defence and refused to provide China with a sample of an atomic bomb and technical data concerning its manufacture."³⁴ This was in June 1959. The Chinese saw this as an attempt to "curry favour with the U. S. imperialist,"³⁵ as part of a Soviet bid to reach a detente with the West, and thereby carry Khrushchev's "revisionist" policy of permanent peaceful coexistence into treaty form. This occurrence marked

³³Discussed in A. Hsueh, "Communist China and Nuclear Weapons," China Quarterly, No. 2, 1960.

³⁴"Origin and Development of Differences . . .," op. cit., p. 12.

³⁵Loc. cit.

the first open manifestation of the Sino-Soviet ideological rift over the question of peaceful co-existence and bloc foreign policy, and opened the way for a resumption of the commune controversy between the two parties. Formerly, the commune question had been a dispute in its own right; now it was re-opened by the Russians in an attempt to undermine the Chinese ideological authority as a whole, and to bring the radical element within the Chinese party into disrepute: for the authors of the commune policy were concurrently the authors of the revolution-oriented foreign policy adopted by the party in 1957.

The Intra-Party Debate Over Communes

Starting in May and continuing through June and July, articles appeared sporadically in Chinese newspapers and magazines which revealed a growing opposition to Mao Tse-tung's radical domestic policies. In an article in China Youth on May 16, for example, Chang Ch'ien-chung indicated that opposition to extremist policies existed within the Communist Youth League. Discussing the question "What Begets Absolute Egalitarianism," Chang asserted that "absolute egalitarianism is a radical and subjective desire of the petty bourgeois, and is a fantasy estranged from reality and never realizable."³⁶ (This statement was surprisingly

³⁶Chang Chien-chung, "What Begets Absolute Egalitarianism," China Youth, no. 10, May 16, 1959; Extracts from China Mainland Magazines, no. 178, p. 6.

similar to later charges made within the party that the communes were nothing but "petty bourgeois fanaticism.") Since "egalitarianism" was one of the charges levelled by the Soviet Union against the commune program, this article by Chang took on more than just academic significance, and assumed political and ideological importance, especially in the light of mounting intra-party conflict.

The next day another article appeared in Economic Research, written by the Vice Chairman of the State Planning Commission and entitled "On the Question of Proportion, Priority, and Rate of Growth in the National Economy". In his discussion of this central question of party policy, Yang Ying-chieh raised an issue which was of immense importance in the party controversy over the communes and its related phenomenon. This was the question of "Soviet experience". His own view was that "we should make a good study of the history of construction in brother countries, thus to take them as an important reference for our construction."³⁷ On the specific topic under discussion in the article, he argued that:

if the authorities for economic planning try to ignore a definite proportional relation, but demand high speed development only, the outcome would be contrary to what has been

³⁷Yang Ying-chieh, "On the Question of Proportion, Priority and Rate of Growth in the National Economy," Economic Research, May 17, 1959; Extracts from China Mainland Magazines, No. 178, p. 21.

expected. Economic maladjustment would emerge, thus forcing down the rate of economic growth.³⁸

Several articles by Hsu Hsin-hsueh appeared during this same period in Red Flag. Referring most favourably to Chen Yun's article the previous March, which had attacked "the deviation of laying stress only on speed," Hsu put himself squarely in Chen's camp, attacking "some comrades" who did not understand that since mechanization was lacking it was "improper to shift an excessive amount of manpower from the agricultural front to the industrial front." He made it known that despite the radicals' claim that the country's manpower was its greatest resource, "rural areas have experienced manpower shortages instead of manpower affluence." Moreover, reasserting Chen Yun's thesis in stronger language, he argued that "some comrades . . . have been entertaining an incorrect opinion--the belief that the solution of the question of quantity automatically solves the question of economic results--without realizing that on quality depends the extent of economic results."³⁹

But the most significant article of this period of growing opposition, leading up to the Central Committee meeting in August, was an article by Tao Chu the 1st Secretary

³⁸Loc. cit.

³⁹Hsu Hsin-hsueh, "Learn a Still Better Way to Calculate Economic Results," Red Flag, No. 13, July 1, 1959; Extracts from China Mainland Magazines, no. 180, p. 24.

of the Kwantung Provincial Committee and member of the Central Committee. The article was reprinted in People's Daily on June 18, after appearing in Kwantung's Shang Yu, but only after heavy censoring of the original version. Even in the censored version, Tao Chu's charges rang out loud, if not altogether clear: "by showing some respect for objective possibility . . . we can prevent 'leftist' adventurism."⁴⁰ In the censored sections of the original version, Mao himself was brought under thinly veiled attack, as were his commune policies and the party's general line. Apparently making his remarks in the light of the recently discovered errors in production statistics, Tao argued that:

Our knowledge of the objective things goes through a process and always reaches perfection gradually from imperfection. That is why we say that a man is great not because he is 'consistently correct' (which is impossible), but because he is able to size up the situation and make decisions at the opportune moment and to discover problems and change his measures in the light of the objective situation. If he finds that objective reality does not correspond to his knowledge, he should change his original measures and throw away his original formula.⁴¹

⁴⁰Tao Chu, "The General Line and Methods of Work," People's Daily, June 18, 1959; Survey of the China Mainland Press, No. 2051, p. 3.

⁴¹
Loc. cit.

Not content with this sharp criticism of Mao, and this apparent demand to discard the "Three Red Banners", which constituted Mao's "original formula", Tao Chu went so far as to warn Mao to change his policies or face being overthrown:

Failure to supplement or change the established measures in the process of practice and along with the demand of the objective situation means rigidity of mind. He who does things this way will inevitably fall.⁴²

The Kwantung leader also indicated that he himself was among the school which asserted that "ideological work and political work can produce neither grain nor coal nor iron" (Liu Shao-chi's report to 2nd Session of 8th Party Congress, May 1958) and which had received the criticism of the radicals throughout the struggle to implement the radical party line. Thus, Tao asserted that "it will not do to confine ourselves to political work while their (the workers) material life is not bettered at all."⁴³ In other words, he was opposing the radicals' policy of substituting ideological incentive for material incentive, asserting that this policy had failed (as Khrushchev had predicted).

On the question of the communes, Tao Chu challenged Mao's public assertions that they were the product of the

⁴²Loc. cit.

⁴³Loc. cit.

will of the masses, and indicated that in fact they were supported only by a very few:

If the things we do fail to set the masses in motion and win support from only a small section of the masses, then our practice is definitely not a correct practice, even though the masses may pay lip service to it.⁴⁴

All these censored portions of Tao Chu's article indicated an important challenge to the leadership of Mao and the other radicals within the Politburo, and were no doubt instrumental in convincing the Soviet leaders that they should break the commune truce and provide the moderate elements with outside support and with ideological ammunition.

Two weeks after Tao's abridged article appeared in People's Daily, another article appeared in its columns, which shed more light on the inner party struggle carried on by the moderate minority against Mao Tse-tung. In an article entitled "How to Come From the Masses and Go Back to the Masses", the author Hsiao Pao criticised leaders who are "subjective", who don't listen to the minority opinion, and who force their opinion on others without allowing proper debate. In obvious reference to Mao, he asserted that "he should never think that other people agree with his advocacy and method . . . it is impossible that they agree to any question without consultation."⁴⁵ As has been

⁴⁴Loc. cit.

⁴⁵Hsiao Pao, "How to Come from the Masses and Go Back to the Masses," People's Daily, June 29, 1959; S.C.M.P. No. 2053, 1959.

mentioned, it was later admitted by Lu Ting-yi and others that the communes were the creation of Mao himself. Moreover, the entire general line was of Mao's invention, as apparently was the decision to move the communes from an experimental basis to a country-wide universal basis. In short, during the whole period from 1957 onwards Mao and the Politburo presented the Central Committee time after time with a "fait accompli" for its approval. Thus, Hsiao Pao was in effect criticising Mao for the same type of errors committed by Stalin during the period of the "cult of personality" and denounced by Khrushchev at the 20th Congress of the CPSU. In essence it was a charge of negating inner party democracy. Relating this specifically to party policy, Hsiao maintained that by ignoring the "different opinion of the minority, we are able to arbitrarily affirm our immature or even wrong ideas and experiences, following our own opinions stubbornly, fail to discover and correct mistakes in time, and commit still bigger mistakes."⁴⁶ It was clear that the "minority" was calling for an admission by Mao that his commune policies had been incorrect, had brought economic standstill rather than achieving a leap ahead. The "minority" was also calling for an abandonment of the communes and the other two "Red Banners" of the radical general line.

⁴⁶Loc. cit.

The Renewal of Soviet Criticism of the Communes

It was in the light of the growing unrest within the Chinese party, and the growing need for the CPSU to mute the radical policies of Mao Tse-tung that the Soviet Premier reopened the commune dispute on July 18, 1959. At this time, the Chinese party was in a ferment, partly precipitated by the new sobering statistics on the great leap forward, and partly by the break with the Soviet Union over the atomic weapons issue. As Chou En-lai pointed out in August, "some people, taking a bourgeois stand, greatly underestimate the great achievements of the great leap forward and of the people's communes This kind of thinking and sentiment has grown in the last two months."⁴⁷ Thus, it was a most opportune time for the Soviet leader to step in and throw his weight behind those within the Chinese party who opposed the radical line, both domestic and external. This was especially so, since a crucial meeting of the Central Committee was planned for the beginning of August in Lushan.

Until this moment Khrushchev had never spoken publicly of communes. Now, at a meeting of peasants in Poznan, Poland, the Soviet leader launched a deliberate public attack against them. Speaking of the Soviet Union's own experience, Khrushchev made it known that:

⁴⁷Chou En-lai, op. cit., p. 26.

The reorganization of individual farming into collective agriculture is, of course, a complex process. We have met quite a number of difficulties along this road. Soon after the civil war we began setting up not agricultural artels but communes. There were people who reasoned 'since we are fighting for communism, let us set up communes.' Apparently many people at that time had a poor understanding of what communism is and how it should be built.⁴⁸

Pressing home his point, the Soviet leader continued his assault on the communes:

We organized communes, although material as well as political conditions - I have in mind the consciousness of the peasant masses - were lacking at the time. The result was that everyone wanted to live well and yet work as little as possible for the common cause. 'Work when you feel like it, receive according to need,' as they say. Nothing came of these communes. The Party adopted the path pointed out by V.I. Lenin. It began organizing the peasants into cooperatives, into agricultural artels, where people live collectively and receive according to their work.⁴⁹

That this deliberate reopening of the commune issue was a conscious attempt to provide support for the "rightist opportunists" and moderates within the Chinese party, seemed clear. As the Chinese were to point out much later:

any fraternal Party which rejects the erroneous line and program of the CPSU and perseveres in the fundamental theories of Marxist-Leninism

⁴⁸N. S. Khrushchev, "The Cooperative Way is the Surest Way for the Peasant," Pravda, July 21, 1959; Current Digest of the Soviet Press, vol. XI, no. 29, p. 11.

⁴⁹Loc. cit.

. . . is looked upon as an enemy by the leaders of the CPSU, who oppose, attack and injure it, and try to subvert its leadership by every possible means.⁵⁰

From this moment on, the Soviet press reinforced the party decision by reverting to their policy, established in 1958, of ignoring the Chinese communes, even in feature articles on Chinese agriculture and Chinese rural areas.

The August Central Committee Meeting at Lushan:
Peng Teh-huai's Attack

The Central Committee met in its Eighth Plenary Session in Lushan from August 2 to August 16. In attendance were "75 members, and 74 alternate members of the Central Committee."⁵¹ (It may be significant that of a total membership of 190, only 149 were in attendance at this crucial meeting. It may be that some waverers declined attendance in this crucial meeting, in order not to have to make a firm stand in the ideological and power struggle.)

The Plenary Session re-examined the sky-high 1959 production targets in the light of the huge overestimations of the 1958 "leap", and reset the targets at a much lower level, and called for an extensive campaign to "increase production and practise economy." And in the final outcome the session:

⁵⁰"On the Origin and Development of Differences . . .," op. cit., p. 17.

⁵¹Eighth Plenary Session of the Eighth Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (Documents) (Peking, F.L.P., 1959), p. 1.

raised still higher the glorious banners of the general line, the big leap forward and the people's communes, enjoined the Party committees at all levels to resolutely criticize and overcome the right opportunist ideas of some cadres, and called upon the entire Party to strive to fulfill and overfulfill the leap forward plan of this year.⁵²

In short, the party leadership weathered the storm and overcame the opposition to their radical policies within the Central Committee.

According to the communique, the rightist opportunists continued as a great danger to the continuing leap forward. They "overemphasize the seriousness of certain defects which, owing to lack of experience, occurred in the two movements" (the leap forward and the communes) and which have been quickly overcome. They slander as 'petty bourgeois fanaticism' the great leap forward and the people's commune movements"⁵³ The latter charge was one taken from Lenin's Left Wing Communism: An Infantile Disorder in which Lenin had castigated bourgeois socialists who indulged in utopianism and were without a coherent program, but leaped in every direction at once. The actual Resolution of the Lushan Meeting made but brief reference to the rightists, but indicated that they were receiving support from outside the country: "Enemy elements hostile to the socialist cause of our country, both within our country and without

⁵²Chou En-lai, op. cit., p. 50.

⁵³Eighth Plenary Session, op. cit., p. 6.

have seized the opportunity to slander us in an attempt to influence certain unstable elements within our ranks."⁵⁴

The actual public documents forthcoming from the Central Committee meeting shed little light on the actual nature of the intra-party dispute. But the articles and statements which appeared immediately following the Lushan meeting exposed the exact details of the debate, and of the relation of the dispute to the Sino-Soviet rift. In a later overview of the events surrounding the Lushan meeting, Politburo radical Li Fu-chun recalled that the commune movement had:

evoked the enmity of the . . . modern revisionists (a euphonism for the CPSU). The right opportunists inside the Party, carried on factional activities to oppose the correct leadership of the Central Committee and Mao Tse-tung. They dubbed the vigorous mass movements 'petty bourgeois fanaticism' and the leap forward 'left adventurism'. They claimed that the people's communes were 'founded too early' and were 'in a mess', that the making of iron and steel in a big way had resulted in 'more loss than gain'; panic stricken and nonplussed in the face of certain local and temporary imbalances which could hardly be avoided in the big leap forward, they labelled such imbalances 'disproportions' in the national economy as a whole.⁵⁵

An editorial in People's Daily on August 29, entitled "Long Live the People's Communes" provided further insight

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 18.

⁵⁵Li Fu-chun, op. cit., p. 3.

into the charges of the "right opportunists". They "babble that 'the people's commune lacks objective material basis,' exclaimed the editorial. "They say 'it is not a natural product of objective reality but the fruit of the wishful thinking of a few men who have cooked it up out of thin air.' They say 'the people's communes were set up too soon and too fast and are in a mess.'"⁵⁶

Soviet Involvement with Peng-Teh-huai

In recent years, much important evidence has come to light concerning the actual nature of the assault by Peng Teh-huai and others on the commune policies and on Mao Tse-tung himself. Most of this evidence has been gathered by David Charles in interviews with communist Chinese refugees, and reported in the China Quarterly. According to Charles' information, the following picture of events can now be drawn:

We can now assert with confidence that Peng was the leader of an 'anti-party' group within the Politburo which made its challenge at the Lushan plenum, where Peng read a memorandum attacking the whole policy of the Party; that Peng's attack had been made with the knowledge of the Russians, for he, without the knowledge of the Politburo, had written a letter to the Soviet party criticizing the great leap forward and the communes for which Moscow had already revealed its distaste; that his principle associate was Chang Wen-tien, and that at Lushan or earlier he had

⁵⁶"Long Live the People's Communes," People's Daily, August 29, 1959; Appendix to Eighth Plenary Session, op. cit., p. 23.

enlisted the support of the veteran and highly respected Lin Po-chu; that Khrushchev refused to apologize for this intervention in Chinese domestic affairs.⁵⁷

Thus, at least three members of the Politburo were implicated in the attack on the communes; Peng Teh-huai, Chang Wen-tien, and Lin Po-chu. The fact that Chen Yun disappeared from public view at this time also suggests that he too was in some way involved with the criticisms levelled during the Lushan meeting.

The most important aspect of the anti-commune group was its connections with the Soviet Union. Peng Teh-huai, of course, was implicated by the letter which, it was discovered, he had written to the Soviet party apparently seeking support against Mao Tse-tung. Chang Wen-tien, who had been the first Chinese communist ambassador to Moscow, also had close Soviet ties, as did Wang Chia-hsiang, his successor,⁵⁸ who was dismissed along with Chang as Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs following the Lushan Plenum. In retrospect, the renewal of commune criticism by Khrushchev at his speech in Poland in July, clearly was intended, as has been suggested, to provide ideological support to the "anti-party" group headed by Peng and Chang.

⁵⁷D. Charles, "The Dismissal of Marshal Peng Teh-huai," China Quarterly, October-December 1961, p. 64.

⁵⁸D. W. Klein, "Peking's Evolving Ministry of Foreign Affairs," The China Quarterly, October-December 1960, p. 28.

The second immensely important fact about this anti-commune, anti-Mao faction was that it also saw eye to eye with the Russians on the vital questions of external bloc policies. According to Charles' information:

In March 1960 the Chinese resurrected Chang Wen-tien from the obscurity in which he had lived since his dismissal after Lushan, had him denounced as a right opportunist who had propagated the erroneous view that . . . peaceful coexistence in accordance with the Five Principles and Bandung should be the basis of China's foreign policy. Chang was said to have opposed the party's line which was that peaceful coexistence was a means to an end and not an end in itself, and that China should broaden the front in the fight against the enemy, United States' imperialism, by actively mobilizing the forces in neutral countries which were hostile to the imperialists.⁵⁹

In the fall of 1959, Khrushchev was openly seeking a detente with the West; and East-West relations improved radically with the meetings at Camp David between Eisenhower and Khrushchev. Thus, the Sino-Soviet dispute was increasingly becoming concerned with matters of foreign policy, and has continued so until the present day. The fact that the group within the Chinese party lined up with the Soviet Union both on the question of the communes, and on the question of peaceful coexistence explains the fact that the commune dispute was renewed over and over by the Russians in later years, even when the communes had largely been abandoned. However,

⁵⁹D. Charles, op. cit., p. 75.

this is not necessarily to say that the commune issue was not still a genuine one in its own right: it was the inordinate emphasis on this dispute which suggested its connection with the larger dispute over world revolution.

The Lushan Aftermath: The Debate Over Soviet Experience

Chou En-lai in his report to the National People's Congress made references to the charges made by the Peng Teh-huai group at the Lushan Plenum. But more important, he also identified another group who also opposed the communes. Apart from the "rightists" he said, "there are some people who pay lip service to socialism but find fault with this and that in the people's commune movement, which has the active support of hundreds of millions of people, and maintain that the people's communes have been set up prematurely and have gone wrong. We would ask: Aren't you afraid of being thrown over the borderline of the bourgeois rightists?"⁶⁰ The interesting thing about Chou's statement is that the "some people" referred to by him were making almost exactly the same criticisms as the denounced right opportunists. This would indicate that these people were powerful enough within the party to be able to make this kind of charge, and survive--people like Chen Yun and Lin Po-chu. Even so, Chou's statements were obviously a little-veiled warning that these moderates were courting disaster by challenging

⁶⁰Chou En-lai, op. cit., p. 11.

the communes and Mao's other radical policies in this way. To be labelled as right opportunists would mean probable expulsion for the moderates led by Chen Yun.

It was not until September 1 that any mention was made of the fact that the inner party struggle over the communes had involved the wider ideological question of "Soviet experience". Significantly, nothing ever appeared in the national press or the party's national theoretical journals concerning this vital question which had rocked the party. Only in two provincial party newspapers, the Yunnan Daily and the Szechuan Daily, did reports of the conflict over ideological authority appear. It is significant that both provincial party secretaries are members of the Central Committee, and therefore were reporting from first-hand experience. Li Cheng-chuan, 1st Secretary of the Szechuan Provincial Committee, is also a member of the allpowerful Politburo, and is the highest ranking provincial leader within the party's inner core. These two editorials then were highly authoritative, and were of the highest significance. They clearly defined the details of the dispute over the applicability of Soviet experience to the commune question, and firmly laid down Mao Tse-tung's position vis-a-vis the Soviet Union in the dispute over ideological authority.

According to the Yunnan Daily editorial which was the first of the two to appear, factions within the party had

used the ideological authority of Soviet experience to demand a return to the collectives. It was said that "some people maliciously assert: 'we must take a leaf from the experience of the Soviet Union which launched communes during the early post-revolutionary period but subsequently introduced collective farms.'"⁶¹ Of course, this is exactly what Khrushchev had said just two weeks before the Lushan meeting of the Central Committee, and indicated that Khrushchev's remarks had not gone unheeded within the anti-Mao faction of the party, but had been used to support their cause. In reply to this appeal to Soviet experience the editorial noted that, "considering the different conditions in our country and the Soviet Union, the unmodified transplant of Soviet ideas and institutions into our country is unwise and incorrect." Moreover:

the communes launched in the Soviet Union during the early post-revolutionary period were communes of a communist stature The communes in our country . . . are different in nature from those communist communes launched in the Soviet Union⁶²

Contrasting conditions in the two countries when each launched the communes, the Yunnan Daily noted that the Chinese party

⁶¹Yunnan Daily, September 1, 1959; Current Scene Reports on Communist China (Hong Kong, P. O. Box 5217, 1961), p. 8.

⁶²Loc. cit.

had total control over the countryside, whereas Soviet control was very loose in the period of war communism: "This draws another line of distinction between the conditions in our country and those obtaining in the Soviet Union. As concrete conditions are different, different lines of approach should be admitted."⁶³

The editorial then clearly lays down the alternatives--to follow Soviet experience or to follow Mao Tse-tung. Who is to be followed in matters of ideological interpretation: Khrushchev or Mao? Arguing that the party must follow Mao, the Yunnan paper stated that:

If we followed the Soviet Union as dogmatic Marxists, we would not have launched the people's communes. But learning from the Soviet Union in the correct spirit of Marxist-Leninism and the Mao Tse-tung ideology, we could launch the people's communes Those who outwardly claim to be learning from Soviet experiences but actually desire to crack down on the people's communes have forgotten such a great Marxist-Leninist principle. The people's communes are a creative endeavour of our people--a product of the creative blending of the universal truth of Marxist-Leninism with the realities of China by the great leader Chairman Mao.⁶⁴

Although hidden in the ideological jargon of "creatively applying" Marxist-Leninism to "the concrete conditions in China," it is clear that "creative application" in effect

⁶³Loc. cit.

⁶⁴Loc. cit.

means ideological autonomy, and freedom from any binding effect of Soviet practice or experience in socialist construction. Thus the communes, and one's attitude towards them, were central to the whole issue of ideological authority within the Chinese party, and within the Soviet bloc. Two months later, Lu Ting-yi was to crystallize the entire commune issue with the remark that the choice for all party members was "to obey chairman Mao or not."⁶⁵

The Yunnan Daily also went on to answer the criticisms levelled at the communes by those who held "Soviet experience" above the "creative applications" of Mao Tse-tung. It suggested that:

those who dub the commune movement as a 'pre-mature-born child' must either harbour the idea of sabotage or embrace the anti-socialist notions of rich peasants and the bourgeois It is sheer nonsense to claim that the commune movement is an 'attempt to leap to communism in one step.'⁶⁶

It should be remembered that Khrushchev had also "insinuated that China's socialist construction was 'skipping over a stage' "⁶⁷ and therefore, that these answers to comrades within the party were at the same time answers to the CPSU in the intra-party dispute over the same questions.

⁶⁵Cited in Bowie and Fairbank, op. cit., p. 36.

⁶⁶Yunnan Daily, loc. cit.

⁶⁷Origin and Development of Differences," op. cit., p. 12.

Khrushchev had noted at the 21st Congress that "property forms cannot be changed at will. They develop in accordance with economic laws and depend on the nature and level of the productive forces." He had further asserted that even with the high agricultural productivity within the Soviet Union, that the collective farm was still the appropriate production unit. Taking this same argument, "some people" within the Chinese party had charged that "as the current productivity level in the rural areas is still very low, it is too early to launch the people's communes."⁶⁸ In reply, the Yunnan editorial conceded that, "True, it is an objective economic law that production relations should be adapted to productivity," but on the other hand suggested that:

There are different views of productivity. Some see only the machine factor in productivity and overlook the human factor In discussing productivity one must take into consideration not only the role of machines but also the role of man . . . and the pattern of labour organization. Is the contention tenable that any change in production relations must wait for the emergence of new tools, or it constitutes a detachment from reality? If so, socialism would have been held off in such technologically relatively backward countries as Russia and China.⁶⁹

In the opinion of those opposed to the communes "the people's commune movement should not be launched until mechanization

⁶⁸Yunnan Daily, loc. cit.

⁶⁹Loc. cit.

has materialized." But according to those in control of party policy, mechanization is only one facet of "concrete conditions" relating to production. They claimed that "intensified socialist and communist indoctrination over a long period of time" had laid the objective conditions for the introduction of the communes. Here again we find the enormous emphasis on "ideological consciousness" which was one of the major characteristics of the "Mao Tse-tung ideology" and the related characteristic of negating the importance of material factors. This was one of the major sources of difference between Mao and Khrushchev in their separate approaches to the problems of socialist construction and the transition to communism, and proved central to their ideological dispute. Khrushchev emphasized material; Mao emphasized man.

The Szechuan Daily carried a parallel editorial only two weeks later. Carrying the question of "Soviet experience" versus "the Mao Tse-tung ideology" even further, the provincial party organ declared that "we cannot permit rightist opportunist ideology to use the historical experience of the Soviet Union to shield itself."⁷⁰ It revealed to the rank and file that:

⁷⁰Szechuan Daily, September 22, 1959; Current Scene Reports in Communist China, op. cit., p. 7.

rightist opportunists have attempted to negate the people's communes on the grounds of the historical experience of the Soviet Union and the absence of communalization in other socialist countries. They assert that since the Soviet communalization effort was a failure we should not countenance such an undertaking, and that absence of communalization in other countries should deter us from making the attempt.⁷¹

The Szechuan Daily counters this argument in a similar way to its brother paper in Yunnan, suggesting that the Soviet communes were introduced before conditions were ripe, while the Chinese communes grew out of different and more advanced objective conditions. The Soviet communes, it suggested, were introduced before "the well-to-do peasant class was obliterated" and while the "socialist consciousness of the peasants was at a low level", and this was the reason they failed. In China on the other hand, the landlord class had been obliterated, and the peasants had gone through a process of gradual collectivization which prepared them for the transition to the commune system. Moreover, it was argued that China as a nation differed vastly from the Soviet Union, and therefore Soviet experience didn't necessarily apply anyway. In this latter regard, Lenin was introduced as an ideological authority to substantiate the Chinese deviance from the Soviet road. The editorial notes that:

⁷¹Loc. cit.

The Party Central Committee and Chairman Mao, coordinating the universal practices of our revolution, have creatively discovered a brilliant and concrete organization pattern compatible to our development - the people's communes. Lenin predicted about our revolution long ago: 'The revolutions in those densely populated and socially complicated countries will be marked by many peculiar features'. Are not the people's communes one of the major 'peculiar features' of our revolution?⁷²

Here we see the germ of the idea which was to develop as time went on--that the Chinese party was setting not only its own precedents and establishing its own road to socialism, but was in fact setting down the "orthodox" road for all those "densely populated and socially complicated countries" of Asia, South America and Africa. Whereas the Soviet Union might be the vanguard of the industrialized nations, China was the first nation to blaze the path towards communism among the underdeveloped countries and could therefore claim leadership, ideologically, over these latter nations. By denying the applicability of Soviet experience to China on the basis that conditions were different in China, and that China belonged to a different class of nation, the Chinese party was able to proclaim ideological independence in matters of domestic importance while retaining the right to assume ideological authority over the methods of socialist and communist transition in the non-White world.

⁷²Loc. cit.

CHAPTER IX

THE ANTI-RIGHTIST CAMPAIGN AND THE OCTOBER CELEBRATIONS (FALL 1959)

Following the Eighth Plenary Session of the Central Committee a flood of articles appeared in party organs, exposing the criticisms made by the "right opportunists". This carried through until December, but only a few top party officials were exposed, demoted or dismissed during this autumn anti-rightist campaign. Many of the "rightists" in high positions had been weeded out in 1957 and 1958; and over a period of years Mao had placed men loyal to himself in many key party positions much as Khrushchev has done in the Soviet Union. From 1955 to 1958, for instance, eleven provincial party secretaries were removed and trusted lieutenants of the party chairman put in their place.¹ Thus, during the commune crisis Mao was able to rely on most of these men to stand firm, even though they were sometimes surrounded by moderates on the provincial committees. This situation where the key party men enforced the radical policies of the party leader, and overrode the wishes of the moderate majority naturally led to considerable strain within the party apparatus. In effect, a hard core of party radicals was resisting a great spontaneous pressure for more liberal

¹M. Kalb, Dragon in the Kremlin (New York: Dutton & Co., 1961), p. 205.

policies from the lower levels of the party and from the masses. (During this time even the so-called "middle peasants" who had been the ally of the party since the revolution were suddenly brought under fire for opposition to the communes and the leap forward--for conservatism.)² The fact that this opposition was strong at the lower levels was likely an important factor in the Soviet decision to speak out on the question of Soviet experience with communes. Articles during this post-Lushan period frequently spoke of "hostile elements at home and abroad"³ which were having a detrimental effect on "unstable elements" within the party. If Mao himself had not been standing firmly at the head of the radicals and bringing his enormous prestige to bear, the moderate elements may well have won the day with Soviet ideological support. As it was the radicals retained control of party machinery and party policy through their control of key party positions. Opposition to party authority being usurped by radical provincial 1st secretaries quite naturally came from within the provincial committees. As Liu Lan-tao (Alternate Secretary of the Central Committee) revealed on September 28:

²Tsinghai Daily, November 26, 1959; Current Scene Reports on Communist China (Kowloon, P.O. Box 5217, 1961), p. 39.

³People's Daily, August 27, 1959; Appendix to Eighth Plenary Session of the Eighth Central Committee (Documents), (Peking, F.L.P., 1959), p. 25.

The rightist opportunists know nothing about the harmonization between the collective leadership and the role of an individual (the harmony of a CCP Committee and its first secretary.) They are opposed to the practice of placing the first secretary in command, regarding it as 'dictatorship' and 'undemocratic'. In reality they only aim at bringing down the 'dictatorship' of the party in order to establish their own dictatorship.⁴

Liu rejects the idea that the practice of putting the 1st Secretary in command is a "move away from collective leadership."

The Cult of Mao

In these autumn months there was a tremendous upswing too in emphasis in party organs on the ideology of Mao Tse-tung. The cult of Mao was extensively cultivated and Mao was extolled as the greatest living Marxist-Leninist theoretician. In a particularly idolatrous passage, Liu Lan-tao raised Mao almost to the heights of a God:

In the absence of the guidance of Comrade Mao Tse-tung and his thinking, our revolution will fail and our construction will meet handicaps. In the course of long revolutionary struggles, our Party and the people of the whole country have discovered Mao Tse-tung as their own great leader Comrade Mao Tse-tung is the most outstanding exponent on the heroic proletariat of our country, the most distinguished representative of our superior traditions in the entire history of our great nation, a

⁴Liu Lan-tao, "The C.C.P. is the Supreme Commander of the Chinese People in Building Socialism," People's Daily, September 28, 1959; R. R. Bowie and J. K. Fairbank, Communist China 1955-1959 (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1962), p. 575.

beacon on our road to Communism, and the most outstanding contemporary revolutionist, statesman, and theoretician of Marxist-Leninism. He has creatively enriched the treasures of Marxist-Leninism on a series of important questions.⁵

According to Liu Lan-tao, Mao was even more than this:

The six hundred million people of our country have placed in him their hopes for their own happiness and future and consider him the incarnation of Communism and truth and the symbol of invincibility. The influence, wisdom, and experience of Comrade Mao Tse-tung and the system of thought created by him by combining Marxist-Leninism with the actual practices of Chinese revolution are the most valuable treasures of our Party and people. The warm affection for the party leader is in full conformity with our ardent love for our Party, class, people and great Motherland.⁶

This overwhelming adulation heaped upon Mao at this time was not just accidental. There were both domestic and international reasons motivating this massive buildup of Mao's image. Domestically the radicals needed to cultivate the cult of Mao in order to counteract the influence of the moderates and "bourgeois rightists". By cultivating a mystic faith in Mao the radicals were also cultivating mass support for the radical policies which they and Mao espoused. At the same time they were also shoring up Mao's position as party leader, which had been challenged during the "rightist opportunist" attacks. In the domestic sphere the dispute

⁵Ibid., p. 576.

⁶Loc. cit.

over "Soviet experience" had been in effect a conflict over who was the source of ideological authority for the Chinese party: Khrushchev or Mao; and Mao's position had been challenged. Relating to this situation was the question of Mao's ideological stature within the Soviet bloc. Ever since Mao had differed with Khrushchev over the question of communist foreign policy in Moscow in November 1957, the question of ideological authority within the bloc had become increasingly contested between the two leaders. With the Soviet Union undermining Mao's ideological stature by subtle criticism of his domestic commune policies, it became increasingly important for the Chinese leadership to cultivate Mao's image as an ideological leader within the communist commonwealth. This, then, was to be the second reason motivating the sudden upsurge in the "cult of Mao" in the latter half of 1959. The claim by Liu Lan-tao that Mao was the greatest contemporary Marxist-Leninist theoretician was clearly aimed at vaulting Mao over Khrushchev into the position of ideological Pope of the communist world.

And although the dispute over revolution and peaceful coexistence gradually replaced the commune issue in 1959, as the leading ideological point of contention between Moscow and Peking, it is significant to note that, from the Chinese point of view, domestic ideological issues still were of foremost significance in the relations between the two parties,

at the time of the Chinese 10th Anniversary celebrations in October of 1959. Since the party was still in the midst of an internal ideological dispute over the communes and the policy of leaping forward, naturally the question of Soviet opposition to these policies remained extremely significant. On the other hand, the Soviet Union was more concerned with the international issues in dispute with the Chinese and for them the communes had become a secondary issue, having renewed significance in the light of the more general question of ideological authority within the bloc.

Tenth Anniversary Speeches

This situation is clearly reflected in the speeches made by Soviet and Chinese leaders, and the articles appearing in the communist press on the occasion of the 10th anniversary celebrations. The Soviet leader, who had only just returned from his visit to the United States (which the Chinese had viewed with alarm) and his Camp David meetings with Eisenhower, flew immediately to Peking to attend the anniversary celebrations. His speeches in Peking were significant in terms of Chinese domestic policy only insofar as they were completely devoid of the laudatory remarks about domestic construction and socialist transformation which are customary on such occasions. In his main address at the state banquet, Khrushchev deliberately drew attention to the fact that his speech ignored the communes, the leap forward and Chinese

domestic policies. At one point he suggested that his reason for not discussing these customary topics was that it was just a "short speech" and later on made the excuse that "it is not for me, a guest, to come to China . . . and talk of your successes."⁷ He concentrated instead on international issues and bloc foreign policy, which to the Soviet Union had now superseded the communes and other domestic issues in importance. Thus while he expressed his continuing displeasure of Mao Tse-tung's domestic policies through a policy of deliberate silence, he openly (though subtly) criticised the Chinese policy of confrontation with the West. According to official Chinese recollection,

By innuendo he openly maligned China as warlike and guilty of 'adventurism', and so on and so forth. Back from the Camp David talks, he went so far as to sell China the U. S. plot of 'two Chinas' and, at the state banquet celebrating the Tenth Anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China, he read China a lecture against 'testing by force the stability of the capitalist system'.⁸

On the other hand, the major address by the Chinese leadership to a Soviet audience on the occasion of the 10th Anniversary, dealt almost exclusively with questions of ideology concerned with domestic construction and the communes. Teng Hsiao-ping,

⁷N. S. Khrushchev, "Speech at the State Banquet," Peking Review, No. 40, 1959, p. 7.

⁸"Origin of the Differences Between the Leadership of the CPSU and Ourselves," Red Flag, September 6, 1963; Peking Review, No. 37, 1963, p. 12.

Chinese Party Secretary, and member of the Politburo's Standing Committee was appointed to the task of writing an article for Pravda in honour of the Chinese National Day, and of thus presenting Mao Tse-tung's position to the rank and file of the Soviet party. The most noteworthy aspect of the article was that it was almost entirely devoted to a defense of the communes, mass movements and the radical general line of the Chinese party. Moreover, it contained a strong criticism of the rightist opportunists within the party and a refutation of their charges. The explanation for this type of article being directed at a Soviet audience was that the C.P.C.'s domestic policies and internal disputes were of bloc-wide significance, and that the Soviet party had made similar charges to those which Teng Hsiao-ping took time to refute. In fact, the nature of Teng's article was evidence in itself of the scope and nature of the inter-party commune dispute. In essence, it can be looked upon as a reply by the C.P.C. to the criticisms, open and implied, made by the Russians in regard to the communes and related domestic policies. And it must be remembered, too, that Teng's assertions about the correctness of the mass movements and the communes had important ideological and political significance within the Soviet party and the Soviet nation, since both Russian and Chinese parties claimed to espouse the identical guiding ideology: a defense of Chinese radical policies amounts in effect to a criticism of Soviet conservative policies.

Thus, Teng Hsiao-ping flatly asserted that:

The strength of the proletarian dictatorship lies in the fact that it makes the broad mass of labouring people the real masters of the country and is built on the initiative of hundreds of millions of people. Hence it is obviously an erroneous view to ignore the initiative of the masses, to maintain that it is no longer necessary to organize mass movements since everything can be done by relying on the state apparatus.⁹

Where, one might ask, are the mass movements in the Soviet Union? Doesn't the Soviet Union rely overwhelmingly on the "state apparatus" of which Teng speaks? Although ostensibly replying to critics within his own country, his statements are concerned with the general question of socialist construction and therefore are of general significance for all socialist countries, including the Soviet Union.

In the same vein Teng continued, "in our own ranks some people cannot see the socialist initiative of the masses and therefore entertain doubts about mass movements. They always think that the masses are not conscious enough and that mass movements are unreliable."¹⁰ This, of course, was the point of view of the Soviet leaders who disputed that

⁹Teng Hsiao-ping, "The Great Unity of the Chinese People, and the Great Unity of the Peoples of the World," Pravda, October 1, 1959; Bowie and Fairbank, op. cit., p. 597.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 598.

the commune movement was a creation of the masses. To them and to the Chinese "right opportunists", the communes and other mass movements were a creation of Mao's socialist initiative and not by any means the peasants'. Teng, however, argued that these mass movements also served to rapidly raise the peasants' "socialist consciousness" and therefore prepare the way for the introduction of higher forms of socialism. Here again, Teng's words have significance for the Soviet Union, since one of the tasks laid down at the 21st Congress was the raising of the Soviet citizens' ideological consciousness and communist morality--a prerequisite to the transition to communism.

In discussing "socialist consciousness" as an important factor in economic construction, Teng Hsiao-ping touches on that area of Sino-Soviet ideological differences having to do with material versus ideological incentives. The Chinese 1st Secretary argued that "those who deny the role of mass movements in construction, view political work and economic work as absolute opposites" ¹¹ In this regard, only a few months before in a speech at a Central Committee plenary session called to discuss improvements in industry, Khrushchev made the following remarks:

One comrade here sent me a note saying:
Comrade Khrushchev, all the speakers talk
about industry and industry and no one says
anything about Party work. My dear comrade,

¹¹ Ibid., p. 599.

if at the factory where you conduct Party work a defective article is produced while you are giving a lecture on the establishment of communism in our country (stir in the hall), wouldn't it be more useful if you organized the people for scientific, better quality work? This is precisely what Party work is, when everyone knows his trade, produces good parts and assembles good machines.¹²

The Soviet Premier thus took a similar attitude to those "right opportunists" in the Chinese party who denied that political and ideological work could produce either grain or steel. The ideological gulf between the Chinese and Soviet leaders on this question is obvious.

Turning his attention specifically to a defense of the Chinese communes, Teng Hsiao-ping substantiated this deviation from Soviet practice on the basis that it was born out of conditions peculiar to China. He claimed that:

When hundreds of millions of people start to move under the Party's leadership they . . . break down the out-moded rules and regulations, go by the logic of life itself and discover various kinds of appropriate new forms for our cause. It is no accident that the broad masses of the Chinese peasants have created a form of social organization, that is, people's communes.¹³

He asserted that the former agricultural producers' co-operatives became outmoded by the big leap forward and had

¹²Current Digest of the Soviet Press, vol. XI, no. 27, p. 7.

¹³Teng Hsiao-ping, op. cit., p. 599.

to be discarded. And making it very clear that the Chinese leaders had no intention of bowing to pressure from the Soviet Union and from factions within the Chinese party, Teng adamantly declared that "such a large-scale mass movement which conforms to historical laws cannot possibly rise all of a sudden under the orders of a few people, nor will it vanish in the face of opposition by a few."¹⁴ He admitted that the "right opportunists" had charged that the people's communes are "moving backwards" and that the only way out is to dissolve them, but he indicated that the party leadership were determined to hold firm on the commune issue and retain them indefinitely.

More importantly, he had a few words of importance to say about the significance of Chinese domestic policies to other nations. First, he referred to the commune movement in the Chinese countryside as "historically significant". Then he went on to say that:

Under the leadership of the proletariat, the Chinese people have carried the anti-imperialist and anti-feudal democratic revolution to the end and, through the socialist revolution and construction, are rapidly getting rid of poverty and backwardness, providing an example of moving from the democratic revolution to the socialist revolution in a colonial and semi-colonial country, and of the transformation of a backward agricultural country into an advanced industrial country.¹⁵

¹⁴Loc. cit.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 600.

Thus, Teng Hsiao-ping was reviving the claims made immediately after the revolution by Liu Shao-chi: that China was a model for all the underdeveloped countries. In essence, this was a clear warning that China was seeking ideological leadership over the underdeveloped world. And coupled with the remark in the Yunnan Daily of September 1 that Russia had been a "technologically relatively backward" country like China, it had even wider significance for the ideological position of the Soviet Union vis-a-vis the communist world.

Taken as a whole then, this important article by the Chinese 1st Secretary revealed that Soviet opposition to Mao Tse-tung's radical domestic policies still played a vital role in Chinese thinking, and still remained an important item in the growing rift between the two parties. It is significant that Teng used his Pravda article to place before the Soviet party rank and file these domestic issues connected with the communes and the CPC internal dispute, rather than to defend the deviant Chinese position on communist international policy. It indicated that the question of Chinese deviation from Soviet experience was still a very real issue within the bloc.

CHAPTER X

THE NEW UPSURGE OF COMMUNES AND THE CONTINUING POLEMICS

The Tightening Up of the Rural Communes

Throughout this entire latter half of 1959, and concurrent with the C.P.C.'s campaign to oppose rightist conservatism, a tightening up of the communes took place throughout the rural areas. This was another concrete manifestation indicating that the moderates and rightist opportunists had been overcome quite firmly at the Lushan meeting, despite their strong attempt to reverse party policy. (However, the opposition was apparently strong enough that the Politburo neglected to convene the Central Committee for over eighteen months--the next plenary session did not occur until January 1961). The most significant occurrence in the tightening up campaign was the decision to take a firmer stand on the question of communal mess halls. Originally, in the first flush of enthusiasm, the mess halls where peasants were forced to eat their meagre meals had become almost universal, and were the foundation of the "communist shoot" of the free supply system. The mess hall was also an extremely vital part of the communes in other ways, too, since it was envisioned by the party as the center for collective life, where the peasants could be easily indoctrinated and controlled. It was also supposed to prepare the way for the style of communal living which would exist in the future

communist society. But from the peasants' point of view these mess halls were an unparalleled encroachment on traditional family life and appeared to be aimed at the breakdown of the family system. This is one of the important reasons why the communes received such a considerable degree of peasant resistance and sabotage. Connected, too, with the mess hall system was the whole question of increasing totalitarian control, which from the Soviet point of view was something Stalinist and undesirable. This "total control" manifest in the mess hall system was the very thing the Soviets were moving away from in their period of de-Stalinization, and was thus completely alien to the current trend of Soviet ideology.

Integrally associated with the mess hall system was the question of the peasants' private plots of land. In the initial formation of the communes these had been confiscated, since all food was to be controlled through the mess hall system; and vegetables grown on these plots were expropriated for use by the communal kitchens. In April 1959, in the face of an extremely tight food situation and the need to stimulate food production, private plots were returned to the peasantry for their own use. At the time, red cards were issued as title deeds, and carried the notation: 'This private land belongs to you and your family permanently, and crops grown on it shall be disposed of by you only.'¹ About the same

¹Southern Daily, December 23, 1960; Current Scene Reports on Communist China (Kowloon, P.O. Box 5217, 1961), p. 294.

time, the party put the mess hall system on a voluntary basis. Thus, on June 25, Teng Tzu-hui, Director of the party's Rural Work Department, declared that, "We must allow the masses to decide for themselves whether to join community mess halls or not. Those who do not want to take part in them must be allowed to withdraw from them and to take food home to be cooked by themselves."²

But following the Lushan meeting the mess hall program began to receive new impetus. Between April and September many mess halls had been completely abandoned because the sentiment against them had been so strong³ but in the late autumn the party began to take a stronger stand on the issue. On September 22 the People's Daily reported that "a struggle centered around community mess halls is being waged" in the rural areas between the party and the peasants, and concluded that in the long run the party would win out.⁴ Then, in December the party began once more to confiscate the peasants' private plots and turn them over to the mess halls. Throughout the winter and campaign gained momentum, and by March the mess halls were back in business

²Teng Tzu-hui, "Strive to Run the Community Mess Halls Well and Follow the Principle of Voluntariness," New China Half Monthly, No. 12, 1959; Extracts from China Mainland Magazines, No. 179, August 5, 1958, p. 1.

³People's Daily, September 22, 1959; Current Scene, op. cit., p. 1.

⁴Loc. cit.

on a universal basis.⁵ In Yunnan, for instance, it was reported that by March "over 97% of the commune members in the province and their families, are eating in the mess halls."⁶ And a few days later it was reported in People's Daily that in Honan "all the rural population without exception eat in the mess halls which are permanent establishments."⁷

The re-establishment of the communes' mess halls must be viewed within the context of the economic situation at this time. It had been revealed by the People's Daily on September 22, 1959, that the reason why many of the mess halls had been closed in the spring and why the principle of voluntariness had been introduced was that peasant resistance and opposition from rightist opportunists within the party had forced the party to relax its policy temporarily. This, of course, was in April before it was known that the production figures for the 1958 harvest had been grossly exaggerated. At the Lushan meeting in August the errors became known, and the critical food situation became obvious to all. Therefore, the plenum urged the country to "increase production and practise economy." It was immediately after this that the People's Daily began to extoll the virtues of the mess hall

⁵People's Daily, March 26, 1960; Current Scene, op. cit., p. 81.

⁶Loc. cit.

⁷People's Daily, March 30, 1960; loc. cit.

system in regard to conserving grain. In its September 22 editorial it made special note of the fact that:

According to statistics gathered from some 7000 community mess halls in Honan province, 780,000 catties of food grain (390 metric tons) was saved in the recent three months . . . mess halls use 30% less fuel . . . and the expenditure for replenishing kitchen utensils can be reduced by about 60% each year.⁸

Thus the re-establishment of the commune mess halls was born out of economic necessity--the need to conserve and ration grain.

The Introduction of the Urban Communes

At this same time, and born partly out of the same reasons, mess halls began to be set up in the urban areas, and the whole program of urban communes was rejuvenated and populatized. In the original commune upsurge in 1958 a number of experimental urban communes were established including the model Yangch'uan People's Commune in Shansi province, and the Chengchow People's communes in Honan.⁹ In the general commune retreat which occurred at the end of 1958, it was decided not to introduce urban communes on a universal basis for the time being. The December 10 Central Committee resolution directed, for various reasons:

⁸Current Scene, op. cit., p. 2.

⁹H. J. Lethbridge, China's Urban Communes (Hong Kong, Dragonfly Books, 1961), p. 5.

we should continue to make experiments and generally should not be in a hurry to set up people's communes on a large scale in the cities People's communes should be established on a large scale in the cities only after rich experience has been gained and when the sceptics and doubters have been convinced.¹⁰

Throughout 1959 little or no mention was made of the urban communes, although experiments in various areas continued, and mess halls were set up on a large scale in a number of the larger cities including Peking, Shanghai and Tientsin. The January 1st 1960 issue of Red Flag provided the first real indications that the urban communes were to be universalized. The party journal reported a "high tide" in the establishment of so-called "street industries". It noted that:

the development of industries operated by the street inhabitants . . . enables the state to guide the economic life of the people according to socialist principles and to make proper arrangements for the inhabitants in the matter of distribution and consumption.¹¹

Giving away the fact that the tight control of consumption in the face of shortages was the key motivation behind the communalization of urban life, Red Flag added that:

¹⁰"Resolution on Some Questions Concerning the People's Communes," Sixth Plenary Session of the Eighth Central Committee (Documents) (Peking, F.L.P., 1958), p. 15.

¹¹Red Flag, January 1, 1960; Current Scene, op. cit., p. 84.

in view of the fact that the increase in consumption frequently exceeds the increase in production, the successful carrying out of planned distribution exchange and consumption is of great significance When the market is temporarily short of certain commodities, the rational distribution of these commodities can be effected through the street service organizations . . . the rate of consumption should be cut whenever commodities are in short supply.¹²

Ideological and political control was also mentioned as an important motivation behind the renewed urban commune movement. Red Flag noted that:

Production, living and thinking are indivisibly related to each other. The economic activity of the people and their political activity frequently influence each other We must gradually, resolutely and unremittingly enforce communist discipline and carry communist labour into effect.¹³

On March 30, Li Fu-chun, Chairman of the State Planning Commission (and a Politburo "radical"), made the first public announcement confirming that the activity in the urban areas was part of a determined program to introduce urban communes, as such on a universal basis. He told the National People's Congress that:

All the cities are now setting up People's Communes energetically running neighbourhood industry, suburban farming, public welfare services and community dining rooms, extensively organizing the city dwellers and

¹²Loc. cit.

¹³Loc. cit.

emancipating millions of housewives from household chores so that they can take part in social labour.¹⁴

And a few days later, Minister of Commerce Yao I-lin told the same People's Congress that there were two main reasons for establishing urban communes--to make use of the labour potential and to control consumption. (In the words of the Central Committee, to "increase production and practise economy.") Accordingly, Yao declared that "in order to exploit the labour potential of the cities . . . it is necessary to further organize the urban people's economic life." And referring to the public mess halls, he explained that "these . . . enable us to conserve large amounts of food, fuel, water, electricity and labour."¹⁵

By April, it was reported in People's Daily that over 20 million urban dwellers had been organized into communes. According to a later report in the China Youth, there were by the end of July some 1,064 urban communes in existence with a total membership of 55.5 million.¹⁶

In total perspective, the urban communes and the tightening up of the rural communes can be viewed as an attempt to solve China's domestic problems and to advance further

¹⁴Cited in Lethbridge, op. cit., p. 2.

¹⁵Current Scene, op. cit., p. 85.

¹⁶People's Daily, September 1, 1960; cited in Lethbridge, op. cit., p. 23.

towards communism through the use of the radical economic and social policies developed by Mao Tse-tung. The first half of 1959 had seen a widespread retreat from these policies, but with the onset of winter millions of peasants were once again mobilized for construction and irrigation projects, private land was confiscated once more, and the commune-ization of the nation extended to the urban areas. This renewed effort to implement "mass movements" within China only served to heighten Soviet opposition to Mao Tse-tung and to his radical policies. The introduction of the urban communes was especially significant in this regard since it served a final notice to Soviets and Chinese alike that Mao had no intention of eventually disbanding the communes; on the contrary, his intention was to carry them as fast as possible to their logical conclusion--pure communism. In a sense, too, the urban communes were also a new ideological challenge to the Kremlin leaders, since the Soviet had taken hardly any steps at all to collectivize urban life as they had rural life. It raised for the Soviet Union the thorny ideological question of how the CPSU intended to prepare the way for future communal life within Soviet cities.

Growing Sino-Soviet Polemics: Winter and Spring 1959-60

On December 1, 1959 Khrushchev delivered a speech to the Hungarian Party Congress in Budapest which contained

thinly cloaked criticisms of Mao's domestic policies. Khrushchev made a critical appraisal of the Stalinist regime which had controlled Hungary before the 1956 revolution, and suggested that "other communist and workers' parties cannot but heed "the mistakes of the Rakoski era"¹⁷ (i.e. of Stalinism). Of course, China was at this time the only bloc country which still prominently displayed Stalin's portrait and which still held him in high public esteem. All the other bloc countries, excepting perhaps Albania had liberalized considerably since the denunciations of Stalin at the 20th Congress of the CPSU; China had become even more totalitarian than ever--this totalitarianism being exemplified by the commune system. Obviously referring to the Chinese leader, and echoing some of the charges of the "right opportunists" within the C.P.S., Khrushchev verbally attacked "armchair leaders" who are in the habit of "disregarding objective conditions" and of ruling by "decree" and who "order the masses about."¹⁸ Using almost the exact words of the right-inclined Tao Chu, Khrushchev declared that "one must have the courage to openly admit one's mistakes and to correct them in time." He also echoed Tao Chu's assertion that no socialist leader was faultless and immune to mistake; no

¹⁷N. S. Khrushchev, "Speech to the Hungarian Party Congress," Pravda, December 2, 1959; Current Digest of the Soviet Press, vol. XI, no. 50, p. 3.

¹⁸Loc. cit.

one could be "consistently correct" as had so often been claimed on behalf of Mao Tse-tung.

In another passage clearly directed at the Chinese leader, Khrushchev declared:

If we become conceited, if we commit mistakes in our leadership, if we distort the teachings of Marxist-Leninism on the building of socialism and communism, these mistakes can be exploited by the enemies of communism as was done in 1956.¹⁹

Here we should recall that Khrushchev had warned against "levelling" at the 21st Congress asserting that it would lead to "the discrediting of communism." And, too, in actual practice, the introduction of the totalitarian communes in China had done much to tarnish the aura of humanism which communism was attempting to project to the West in the aftermath of Stalinism. Khrushchev's words also suggested a warning to Mao that his radical policies in domestic construction might well lead to peasant unrest and revolt, as had the Stalinist policies in Hungary.

Continuing, Khrushchev argued that:

We must be masters of Marxist-Leninism. We must not fall too far behind or go too far ahead. We must, figuratively speaking, synchronize our watches. If the leadership of this or that country becomes conceited, this can only play into the hands of the enemy. In this case, the socialist countries themselves, the leadership itself, will help the enemy to fight socialism, fight communism and this cannot be allowed.²⁰

¹⁹Loc. cit.

²⁰Loc. cit.

This frontal assault on Mao's domestic policies was the most frank yet, and it left no doubt that the rift between the two leaders and the two parties was becoming increasingly serious. At this time, of course, the split over bloc foreign policy was rapidly worsening relations between the Russians and Chinese, and this along with the resurgence of Mao's radical policies provided the spark for Khrushchev's unprecedented outburst.

The next important outbreak of polemics specifically relating to the communes and Chinese domestic construction occurred in April of 1960, on the 90th anniversary of the birth of Lenin. The Chinese, particularly, made this relative inauspicious occasion the excuse for publishing an extremely thorough and widespread refutation of all Soviet charges and of all Soviet revisionisms. In fact, later in the dispute, the Soviet Union accused the Chinese of making the intra-party conflict public knowledge through the publication of the "Long Live Leninism" articles at this time, and even suggested that their publication marked the real beginning of the Sino-Soviet split.²¹

Lenin Anniversary Statements on the Transition to Communism

For the most part, the three articles in question dealt with the questions of "peaceful coexistence",

²¹Open Letter of the Central Committee of the C.P.S.U., (July 14, 1963), Peking Review, No. 30, 1959, p. 30.

revolution, imperialism and other facets of bloc foreign policy which were under dispute. This indicated that the differences between the parties had now definitely shifted ground, and that the commune dispute, although still unresolved, had taken second place. Nonetheless, the "Long Live Leninism" articles still devoted considerable space to a defense of Chinese domestic policies and to a refutation of charges made against the prime unit of Chinese society--the commune.

Whereas Khrushchev had intimated that the Chinese "distort the teachings of Marxist-Leninism on the building of socialism and communism," the People's Daily replied that:

Lenin held that life in socialist society is a genuinely mass movement . . . in which the great majority of or even the entire population takes part. He held that such vigorous creative power of the masses is the basic factor in socialist society²²

The article maintained that they were advancing economically at a high speed precisely because they had as Lenin said, extensively mobilized millions upon millions of people to take part in the construction of the country, and because they had formulated the radical policies of the general line which included "the consolidation and development of our rural people's communes and the present establishment of

²²"Forward Along the Path of the Great Lenin," (People's Daily, April 22, 1960), Long Live Leninism (Peking, F.L.P., 1960), p. 60.

urban people's communes on an extensive scale." And reiterating that the communes were "in accordance with the common laws of socialist construction", and were "precisely the product of integrating the universal truths of Leninism with the concrete reality of China", the editorial further noted that Lenin had predicted that the revolutions in the Oriental countries would "display even greater peculiarities than the Russian revolution."

In conclusion the editorial addressed those "who say that our general line, the big leap forward and the people's communes are products of 'petty bourgeois fanaticism', failing to see that they are precisely products of the revolutionary spirit of Marxist-Leninism." It urged these "foreign and Chinese philistines" to wait for ten years and witness the vindication of these policies. And quoting Lenin, the article charges that the people "have completely failed to understand what is decisive in Marxism, namely, its revolutionary dialectics."²³

The third article in the "Long Live Leninism" series was written by Lu Ting-yi as an address to the Central Committee on the Lenin anniversary. Laying much more emphasis on the defence of domestic policies than the other two, Lu's article sets out a detailed summary of the Chinese position and offers implied criticism of Soviet conservatism. Lu noted that:

²³Ibid., p. 63.

Our Party's general line has not only been attacked by the imperialists and modern revisionists, but has also been slandered by some philistines as 'petty bourgeois fanaticism'. But facts remain facts. Our general line for socialist construction is a Marxist-Leninist general line.²⁴

Moreover, he noted that "as communists we must in accordance with the Marxist-Leninist doctrines of uninterrupted revolution and the development of the revolution by stages, actively create conditions for the realization of communism as we carry on socialist construction,"²⁵ and he suggested that through the communes and the other radical policies formulated by Mao these conditions could be created, and that "the speeding up of socialist construction will inevitably promote the realization of communism."

Paralleling this defence of Mao's commune policies was a thinly-veiled criticism of Soviet bourgeoisization and of the relatively conservative policies implemented by Premier Khrushchev. Lu Ting-yi held that:

There is a kind of theory which holds that there exists in human society only contradictions between ourselves and the enemy but no contradictions among the people;²⁶ that in socialist society, between the relations of production and the economic base there is only the aspect of mutual

²⁴Lu Ting-yi, "Under Lenin's Revolutionary Banner," Long Live Leninism, p. 95.

²⁵Ibid., p. 96.

²⁶This theory was later fully developed by Khrushchev at the 22nd Congress of the C.P.S.U.

conformity and no aspect of contradiction; that in construction we need only to rely on technique and not on the masses; that there is no need to develop the socialist system but only to consolidate it and even if it is to be developed, to go forward to communism, still there is no need to undergo a struggle and to pass through a qualitative leap; and thus the process of uninterrupted revolution goes up to this point and no further. This, in terms of philosophic thought is a metaphysical viewpoint, and not a dialectical materialist viewpoint.²⁷

This passage is a clear indictment of the conservative Soviet attitude towards the transition to communism. The so-called "qualitative leap" is, of course, the change in the relations of production from collectives to communes, as originally envisioned by Lenin and Stalin, and as implemented by the Chinese. Also clearly apparent is the Chinese criticism of Khrushchev for relying on "technique"--that is to say, on mechanization and automation--rather than on the masses which is the Chinese alternative. And finally, there is the charge that the Soviets have brought the revolutionary transition process to a halt--that only the standard of living is continuing to rise, while ideological consciousness and the relations of production remain stagnant.

On the same day as Lu Ting-yi's speech, Presidium member Otto Kuusinen spoke in Moscow on a parallel topic. Although he dedicated a good part of his speech to proving

²⁷Lu Ting-yi, op. cit., p. 94.

that Soviet foreign policy was truly Leninistic, he led off his speech with a discussion of "the Leninist Path to Communism". He made very few new points in regard to the dispute over Chinese domestic policy, but he did reassert that:

Fidelity to Leninism requires that our party be responsible to the working class, to the Soviet people as a whole, and to the international communist movement. Our party, after all, thanks to its wealth of experience, is setting the example of successful accomplishment of the supremely complex tasks of socialist and communist construction.²⁸

Thus Kuusinen makes clear that Soviet experience and the Soviet example in socialist construction provides a model for the entire communist movement, and has significance for all parties everywhere.

But the main attack on Chinese policies by the CPSU did not come on the Lenin anniversary, but rather "On the 40th Anniversary of the Publication of V.I. Lenin's Book 'Left-Wing Communism: An Infantile Disorder,'" some two months later. The article, which appeared in Pravda on June 12, was written by well-known theoretician, Matkovsky, and contained a blunt attack on Chinese practices in domestic construction.

²⁸0. Kuusinen, "Translation of Lenin's Ideas into Reality," Pravda, April 23, 1960; Current Digest of the Soviet Press, Vol. XII, No. 24, p. 4.

Matkovsky emphasized that socialist construction in all bloc countries is governed by general laws, and that "Consignment of these general laws to oblivion or under-evaluation of them leads to erroneous conclusions and serious mistakes."²⁹ Moreover, he emphasized that Lenin taught communist parties "to be fearless in baring and correcting mistakes committed." Taken together, it is obvious from the context that Matkovsky was accusing the Chinese of breaching the general laws of socialist construction under the guise of "creative application" of these laws. He was also suggesting to the Chinese that they admit their mistakes and reverse their radical non-Soviet domestic policies.

The Soviet theoretician then went on to point out that the "left-wing" communists who Lenin attacked in his book, had forgotten a basic truth about Marxism:

Vladimir Ilyich cited the views of F. Engels, who in his day had criticized the Blanquists for wanting to skip over all the way-stations and move straight to communism, disregarding the course of historical development and fancying that 'if power turns up in their hands, communism will be instituted the day after tomorrow.' Engels described as childish naivete the Blanquist attempts to represent their own impatience as a theoretical argument.³⁰

²⁹N. Matkovsky, "The Ideological Weapon of Communism," Pravda, June 12, 1960; Current Digest of the Soviet Press, vol. XII, no. 24, p. 4.

³⁰Loc. cit.

In contrast to those "Blanquists" who want to skip historical stages, the CPSU at its 21st Congress "laid down a sound full-scale program for the transition from socialism to communism," claimed Matkovsky. He said that Khrushchev characterized "the consistent regularity of the process by which socialism grows into communism" at the 21st Congress, quoting Khrushchev to the effect that one "must not be in a rush to introduce that which is not ripe. This would lead to distortions and compromise our cause."³¹

Matkovsky was especially critical of the Chinese subjectivism, and lambasted them for introducing the communes prematurely when objective conditions were not ready. He declared that:

The course of social development is objective. The contentions of present day "leftists" within the international communist movement that, having power in one's hands, one may forthwith introduce communism by bypassing certain historical stages in its development are erroneous and incorrect.³²

Moreover, he denied that the Chinese "leftists" had any basis in Marxist-Leninism for their policies of introducing rural and urban communes at this stage of development. The contentions of the "leftists", he asserted, contradict Leninism:

³¹Loc. cit.

³²Loc. cit.

Lenin taught that to try in practice to anticipate the future result of a fully-developed, fully consolidated and formed, full-scale and fully-matured communism is like teaching higher mathematics to a four-year-old.³³

Thus Mao's commune policies were thoroughly attacked, denounced and condemned as inconsistent with Leninism--the same Leninism whose purity the Chinese "leftists" claimed to be safeguarding against the "revisionism" of the Soviet Union. And the same article struck out at the "left-sectarian" deviation of the Chinese who:

mistakenly regard the policy of working for the peaceful coexistence of countries with different political systems, of struggling to put an end to the arms race and to strengthen peace and friendship among peoples, and of talks between the leaders of the socialist and capitalist countries as some kind of departure from Marxist-Leninism.³⁴

The Confrontation at Bucharest

It was clear from the intensity of the polemics between the two parties, and especially those on the question of foreign policy, that some kind of concrete manifestation of the dispute between the two states must soon appear. The Rumanian Party Congress held in Bucharest from June 24 to June 26 proved to be the forum wherein the Soviet Union attacked the Chinese 'deviations' in the presence of party leaders from the entire bloc. The CPSU offered to the bloc

³³Loc. cit.

³⁴Loc. cit.

the opportunity to use the Congress for discussions on international policy. At Bucharest, Khrushchev "unleashed a surprise assault on the Chinese Communist Party, turning the spearhead of struggle against us and not against U. S. imperialism."³⁵ He publicly issued a "Letter of Information", dated June 21, from the CPSU Central Committee to the Chinese Central Committee, which "groundlessly slandered and attacked the C.P.C. all along the line."³⁶ Moreover, in his speech:

he wantonly vilified the Chinese Communist Party as 'madmen', 'wanting to unleash war', 'picking up the banner of the imperialist monopoly capitalists', being 'purely nationalistic' on the Sino-Indian boundary question, and employing 'Trotskyite ways' against the C.P.S.U.

For their part, the Chinese replied that they would "never submit to erroneous views which run counter to Marxist-Leninism," and disputed Khrushchev's right to interpret ideology, and set bloc policy.³⁷

And according to information gathered by David Charles, Khrushchev defended the right of the Soviet party to have confidential consultations with dissidents within the Chinese, or any other party, thus refusing to make any apology for the C.P.S.U.'s dealings with Peng Teh-huai, and for helping him

³⁵"Origin and Development . . .," op. cit., p. 13.

³⁶Loc. cit.

³⁷Loc. cit.

to oppose Mao's commune policies in the summer of 1959.³⁸
It was evident from these proceedings at the Bucharest meeting that open breaks in relations between Russia and China were not far off. The withdrawal of Soviet technicians was just such an event, occurring only weeks after the Bulgarian Party Congress.

³⁸Loc. cit.

CHAPTER XI

WITHDRAWAL OF TECHNICAL EXPERTS AND THE EVOLUTION OF THE COMMUNE SYSTEM

Following the open clash of ideological positions at the Bucharest meeting, "the Soviet Government suddenly and unilaterally decided to recall all the Soviet experts in China within one month, thereby tearing up hundreds of agreements and contracts."¹ The Soviet Union claimed that its experts had been "placed by the Chinese authorities in conditions which ruled out the possibility of doing normal work and which were humiliating to their human dignity,"² and that therefore the Soviet Union had no choice but to recall its 1300 experts. This action has an important bearing on the question of the Chinese domestic policies for a number of reasons. In the first place, it had been admitted by the Chinese on numerous occasions that Soviet technical assistance had been the cornerstone of their rapid industrialization program, and especially during the First Five Year Plan. On the occasion of the signing of the new 1959 technical aid agreement, People's Daily had referred to Soviet-built enterprises as "the spine of China's construction." The moderates

¹"The Origin and Development of the Differences Between the Leaders of the C.P.S.U. and Ourselves," Red Flag, September 6, 1963; Peking Review, no. 37, 1963, p. 14.

²A Reply to Peking (Soviet Government State of September 1, 1963), (London, Soviet Booklets, 1963), p. 13.

within the party laid considerable stress on this technical help and realized that ideological deviations from the Soviet line necessarily endangered this assistance. Writing in March of 1960 before the technical experts were withdrawn, moderate Kwantung Party leader Tao Chu wrote an article in which he stressed that the way to speed China's construction was to increase this aid from the Soviet Union. He argued that:

Because of this, our basic interest lies in strengthening the solidarity of the socialist camp headed by the Soviet Union and the international solidarity of the proletariat. We must make our utterances and actions beneficial to international solidarity This is the only way to insure the smooth progress of our construction.³

In short, he was arguing that in order to maintain and increase the badly needed economic support of the Soviet Union, the Chinese party should accommodate itself to the C.P.S.U. line. The withdrawal of Soviet support in July meant that the moderates could no longer use this argument to urge a change in the party policies, although they could now argue that the radicals had undermined the country's whole program of economic construction through their ideological hardheadedness, both domestically and internationally.

On the other hand, the radical party leadership could, and did now use the Soviet Union as a scapegoat for the

³Southern Daily, May 13, 1960; Survey of the China Mainland Press, no. 2277.

failure of their radical economic policies. As the Russians later argued,

the attempts of the Chinese leaders to justify difficulties in the development of the Chinese economy by reference to the recall of Soviet specialists is absolutely artificial, all the more so since not a single Soviet specialist is known to have worked in Chinese agriculture
⁴

And it was definitely agriculture where the Chinese were experiencing the greatest economic calamities.

In fact, the very timing of the Soviet withdrawal of technicians and advisers lends considerable weight to the possibility that it was timed to coincide with the poor results of the summer harvest in China. Despite claims in 1959 that food production had increased about 10%, it was later admitted that "farm production declined in 1959."⁵ As a result of this decline, due partly to widespread flooding and drought, there occurred the acute food shortage which lasted throughout the winter and spring, and caused the party to undertake severe rationing and to resurrect the communal dining halls. The 1960 harvest was also subjected to severe natural calamities, and as a result farm production "fell even further in 1960."⁶ Reports of mediocre harvests began to appear in the Chinese press around the second week in July, and only one day after the Soviet Union had declared

⁴A Reply to Peking, loc. cit.

⁵Fang Chung, "All-Round Improvement in China's Economy," Peking Review No. 34, 1963, p. 8.

⁶Loc. cit.

its intention to withdraw its technicians the party issued a directive calling on the whole country to plant and grow vegetables immediately "to prevent possible famine."⁷ On June 20, the People's Daily declared that "production of autumn vegetables in large quantities will effectively safeguard certain areas from possible famine if stricken by drought or flood."⁸ Despite the bleak outlook in agricultural production and the possibility of famine, the party took no immediate steps to relax the commune system and to revert to the incentive system advocated by the moderates throughout the abortive leap forward. It was not until the party had verified that the autumn harvest was too poor to measurably alleviate the critical food shortage that it took concrete steps to introduce more incentive into the agricultural system.

Further Retreats in Commune Policy

Articles appearing in Red Flag and People's Daily in August and September indicated that debates over the communes and the general line were once more taking place within the party. Articles by radical Tan Chen-lin and Agricultural Minister Liao Lu-yen set out the different points of view. Tan suggested that the agricultural problem could be overcome

⁷Current Scene Reports on Communist China (Kowloon, P. O. Box 5217, 1961), p. 190.

⁸Loc. cit.

through maintaining emphasis on industrialization and on producing agricultural machinery to mechanize farming,⁹ while Liao argued that emphasis must be switched from industry to agriculture. "Without the development of agriculture," he said, "it is impossible to develop industry." Moreover, he urged the party to divert far more labour "to strengthen the agricultural front and reinforce the manpower engaged in field work."¹⁰ Contrary to what Tan had said, the Agriculture Minister argued that:

Since agricultural production in our country is at present still done mainly by manual labour, the key to bringing about a continuous leap forward in agricultural production is to see to it that agricultural production, and first of all grain production, gets the manpower it needs.¹¹

It was the formation of the rural communes, he noted, which had drawn off too much labour to engage in non-agricultural activities and he urged that commune members be taken away from their rural factories and put back in the fields.

In November the outcome of the debate was decided and the party decided on an overall retreat and liberalization in the rural communes:

⁹"On the Technical Transformation of China's Agriculture," People's Daily, August 26, 1960; Current Scene, op. cit., p. 213.

¹⁰Liao Lu-yen, The Whole Party and the Whole People Go For Agriculture in a Big Way, Red Flag, No. 17, 1960 (Peking, F.L.P., 1960), p. 15.

¹¹Loc. cit.

Faced with the possibility of widespread famine, Mao and his comrades could equivocate no longer. Swift and sweeping action (embodied in a 12-point directive issued by the party in November) was taken in November to conserve food and conserve energy expended by the population. Trade policy was reversed: food exports were drastically curtailed, and arrangements were made to import between five and six million tons of grain from Western countries during the coming year.¹²

As far as the communes were concerned, a further retreat towards the collectives and the lower co-operatives was made. More ownership and more responsibility and initiative was given to the production brigade and production teams. In some heavily populated provinces, ownership was put on a four-level system which included the 20-household Work Team unit, which was formerly the Mutual Aid team. According to the December 21 issue of People's Daily:

In the future the commune may make proposals . . . however, a commune should by no means rigidly assign crop acreage, carelessly raise production targets and mechanically stipulate technical measures . . . much less go so far as to transfer carelessly the manpower and means of production away from the production brigade.¹³

Moreover, the production brigade was to have complete control over the distribution of its own harvests, it being directed that "all income of a production brigade should be distributed

¹²P. P. Jones and T. T. Poleman, Communes and the Agricultural Crisis in China (Stanford, Food Research Institute, 1962), p. 15.

¹³People's Daily, December 1, 1960; Current Scene, op. cit., p. 284.

within the brigade concerned." Formerly, a commune-wide "levelling" of income had taken place. Moreover, despite the fact that the mess halls were to be retained (under the control of the production team) private plots were once again distributed to the peasants, together with "the odd pieces of land around their houses."¹⁴

Throughout the following months the huge construction projects of the previous winters were discontinued. The peasants either worked in the fields in the traditional manner, engaged in private side-line activities, or did nothing. "Over much of China," wrote the Minister of Agriculture in mid-winter, "many peasants are conserving their strength as they tide over the famine."¹⁵ As private plots and spare time occupations produced food and consumer goods, the village market economy was permitted to reopen, thus finally returning to what Chen Yun had advocated at the Congress in 1956. It was a hard won victory.

The Ninth Plenum of the Central Committee

On January 14, 1961 the Central Committee was convened in plenary session to give 'socialist legality' to what had already been done by the Politburo. It had not met for

¹⁴Loc. cit.

¹⁵Jones and Poleman, loc. cit.

over eighteen months--its last meeting being the 1959 Lushan meeting where the radicals overcame moderate and "rightist opportunist" opposition and reaffirmed the consolidated communes and the general line. Although confirming the retreat by the party back down the path of collectivization and returning more ownership to the lower levels, the Central Committee also repledged its faith in Mao Tse-tung's general policies, declaring that:

The great achievements of our country during the past three years show that the party's general line for socialist construction, the big leap forward and the people's communes suit the realities of China.¹⁶

The communes were defended as having allowed the Chinese to mobilize the peasants during the severe floods and drought, and thus avert the kind of famine and disasters which had resulted from these phenomena in previous decades.

The Central Committee's communique also made note that "among party and government functionaries, more than 90% work faithfully and conscientiously for the people." It was admitted that the remaining 10% opposed the party policies. But for the time it was pointed out that this 10% included "leftists" as well as "rightists". The leftists, it was said:

¹⁶Communique of the 9th Plenum, Current Scene,
op. cit., p. 299.

are inadequate in their ideological consciousness. They lack the fundamental understanding of the fundamental policies of the Party and the government; they lack sufficient understanding of the distinction between socialism and communism, of the distinction between socialist ownership by the collective and socialist ownership of the people as a whole, of the three level ownership of the people's communes with the production brigade as the basic level, and of the socialist society's principles of exchange of equal values, of 'each according to his work' and of more income for those who work more.¹⁷

The communique called for a rectification campaign to rid the party of this kind of leftist thinking, and indicated that a good deal of the work had already been done. This exposure of a leftist deviation within the party was the surest sign that Mao had undertaken an extensive retreat from his original radical policies. Except for the public dining halls, about all that remained of the original communes was an administrative structure. The actual organization and ownership systems in the rural areas, as of 1961, had returned almost completely to the pre-commune stage of collectivization. However, despite the long series of ideological and organizational retreats, Mao had not given up his faith in the future of the commune and the party still espoused in theory the radical general line. The long-range aims and the ideological commitment still remained.

In the spring of 1961, the Central Committee issued an authoritative 60-article "Draft Regulations for Work in

¹⁷Loc. cit.

the People's Communes" which specifically set out the party's retreat in the rural areas, and even went so far in decentralization as to delegate a number of responsibilities for actual farm production to "squads" of about ten men each. Material incentives were also heavily emphasized.¹⁸ But this was not the end. The 1961 harvest was as bad as, if not worse than the year before; "for the second consecutive year a decline was recorded in the early summer harvest of wheat and other fall-sown grains."¹⁹ As a result, the party dropped the compulsory mess hall system and terminated the other last hold out from the commune system, the free supply system. Moreover, ownership in the three-level system of collectivity was switched downwards more towards the production team--the former lower cooperative made up of about eighty families.

Currently, therefore, the organization of the rural areas in China still consists of administrative commune units, but the actual unit of production and consumption is the production team. In November of 1963, Agriculture Minister Liao Lu-yen described the organization of China's rural areas as follows:

¹⁸People's Daily, August 29, 1961; Survey of the China Mainland Press, No. 2574.

¹⁹Jones and Poleman, op. cit., p. 17.

There are now more than 74,000 people's communes in China Generally speaking, land, draught animals, farm tools and other means of production are all owned and managed by the production teams, and income is distributed in a unified way with production teams as the basic unit People's communes also allow their members to cultivate a certain amount of garden plot, raise pigs and poultry, and follow other domestic sideline occupations as a supplement to the collective economy.²⁰

The Minister also added that:

During the entire historical period of socialism they will continue to implement the principle of 'to each according to his work, and more income to those who work more' They are the basic social organization for the entire historical period of socialism and for the future period of communism.²¹

This is the present state of the Chinese commune system--a far cry organizationally from what was envisioned in 1958. But the underlying ideology has still not been revised. The communes are a permanent part of the Mao Tse-tung ideology, and still remain the vehicle by which China plans to evolve along the road to communism.

²⁰Liao Lu-yen, "Collectivization of Agriculture in China," Peking Review No. 44, 1963, p. 9.

CHAPTER XII

THE DEVELOPING DEBATE: 1960 - 1962

The 1960 Moscow Conference

In order to consider the extensive ideological rifts between China and the Soviet Union, the eighty-two Communist and Workers Parties met in Moscow in November of 1960. Although most of the debate was concerned with the bloc's strategy against the capitalist world and related questions, there was also consideration given to the "correct" forms of the transition to socialism in bloc countries. Although the Chinese succeeded in modifying to a considerable degree the Russian ideological outlook on the question of revolutionary strategy and of peaceful coexistence¹, the Soviet position on domestic construction came through unscathed. As a result, the declaration which emerged from the conference asserted that "Lenin's cooperative plan" was the correct plan to implement in both the developed and the underdeveloped nations.² In other words, it had universal application. Of course, it could be said from the Chinese point of view that they, too, had followed Lenin's cooperative plan but had

¹"Origin and Development of the Differences Between the Leaders of the C.P.S.U. and Ourselves," Red Flag, September 6, 1963; Peking Review, no. 37, 1963, p. 15.

²Statement of the Meeting of Representatives of Communist and Workers Parties, Moscow, 1960, World Marxist Review, vol. 111, no. 12, December 1960, p. 8.

progressed beyond that stage now, and were passing on to the higher stage which had long been envisioned by the fathers of Marxism--the commune. Thus, in a sense, the wording of the declaration is such as to leave the Chinese an escape and therefore can be seen only as a hollow victory for the C.P.S.U.

On the question of the transition to communism, the wording of the declaration indicates a definite Soviet touch. It stresses that a strong material base is the cardinal prerequisite to communism, and that this material abundance could best be achieved through "strict observance of the Leninist principle of providing material incentives," and through mechanization and state planning.³ Thus the declaration notes that:

To provide a material basis for the transition of the socialist countries to communism, it is indispensable to achieve a high level of production . . . without which it is impossible to provide the abundance of consumer goods required of a communist society. On this basis, it is necessary to develop communist social relations, vigorously promote the political consciousness of the people and educate the members of the new, communist society.⁴

One victory which the Chinese won on a related topic had to do with economic integration and Chinese economic isolationism. With the withdrawal of Soviet technicians from China, the Chinese had embarked on a policy of cutting back trade and relying on their own resources, and had moved

³Ibid., p. 9.

⁴Loc. cit.

even nearer towards economic independence from the bloc. When this question came up at the Moscow meeting the Soviet Union's "wrong thesis about opposing the policy of 'going it alone' on the part of the socialist countries, which in effect meant opposing the policy of relying mainly on themselves in construction, was rejected."⁵ However, the declaration did call for the "continuous improvement of the international system of the division of labour through the coordination of national economic plans, specialization and cooperation in production"⁶ which was a restatement of the desirability of achieving Chinese economic integration with the rest of the bloc. The thesis put forward by Khrushchev concerning the "more or less simultaneous transition of all peoples of the socialist system to communism" was also stated as official bloc policy, while linked to the idea of greater bloc economic integration.

At the same time as the fraternal parties were meeting in Moscow, a noteworthy article appeared in the World Marxist Review, which set forth in very strong terms the Soviet position of the transition to communism, and especially the overriding importance of increasing production. Entitled "The Main Link in the Transition to Communism," and written by A. Sobolov, the article was very clearly directed to refuting the position held by the Chinese, and to discrediting their attempt to leap toward communism.

⁵"Origin and Development of Differences," loc. cit.

⁶Statement, loc. cit.

Striking back at those who "claim that the Communist Party of the Soviet Union is superficial in its treatment of theoretical questions, that it adopts a narrow utilitarian attitude," Sobolov declared that:

In the view of these 'defenders' of theory, social science is developed by abstract juggling with dialectical concepts and quotations, armchair ruminations and the thinking up of abstract conceptions. Such "theory" has nothing viable about it; it is dogmatic and cannot be a weapon in the struggle for communism.⁷

He went on to suggest that the development of Marxist-Leninism by the C.P.S.U. had proceeded in recent years on the basis of generalizing the experience of communist construction, and thus was based on life itself. Thus, the Soviet Union had enriched and developed Marxist-Leninism and provided the world with "a teaching scientifically substantiated and verified in practice, on the laws of the transition from socialism to communism, on the organizational forms of communist society."⁸ Implicit in this statement was the suggestion that the Soviet path was the correct one for the whole of mankind, and that the communes were not the proper organizational forms for communist society.

⁷A. Sobolov, "The Main Link in the Transition to Communism," World Marxist Review, Vol. III, No. 11, November 1960, p. 2.

⁸Ibid., p. 3.

Sobolov argued that the "transition to communism does not call for the destruction of socialist relations, laws and principles" but rather a "development" and "consummation" of them. This was in direct contrast to the Chinese view that the transition to communism demanded a qualitative change, not just quantitative, and was merely a substantiation of Khrushchev's decision to retain the collectives, to retain material incentives, and to increase commodity exchange.

Turning to the Chinese position on the relative speed of the transition to communism, Sobolov declared that the transition must be gradual. While suggesting the possibility of speeding up the process through correct policies, he berates the Chinese attempts to leap forward too quickly, noting that:

Experience has shown, however, that incomplete stages cannot be skipped; it is harmful and even dangerous to carry out measures that have not matured, and for which the way has not been paved by the march of time. In the final analysis this slows down the tempo of socialist development.⁹

As opposed to the frenzied leap forward undertaken by the Chinese the author indicated that the correct method of evolving toward communist society was through "harmonious and planned" economic construction, such as that undertaken by the Soviet Union in its Seven Year Plan.

⁹Loc. cit.

The main theme of the article was that the establishment of a vast material and technical base was the overriding prerequisite to communism, and that somehow all the other prerequisites would naturally evolve from the material base. Defending the Soviet Union's preoccupation with raising production and standards of living, Sobolov declared that:

The C.P.S.U. has advanced and substantiated the proposition that the main link in communist construction, the decisive prerequisite for the transition from socialism to communism is the creation of a powerful material and technical base. All other questions--big or small, those having a close bearing on the material base or those relatively independent of it--will be settled either in the process of laying the material foundation or on the basis of it.¹⁰

Giving this proposition the binding force of dogma (in Soviet eyes), it was asserted that the above proposition "flows logically from the laws governing economic development and the Marxist-Leninist concept of the essence of socialism, and is therefore the only correct and genuinely scientific conclusion."¹¹

Such a conclusion was directly contrary, however, to the Chinese view which held that organization changes and ideological consciousness were vital to the realization of communism, and that the party had to struggle for the non-material prerequisites just as hard as for the material base.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 4.

¹¹Loc. cit.

The Chinese party also held that certain communist measures could be implemented on a relatively undeveloped economic base, and had attempted to implement this idea with the communes. Sobolov called this type of program, one of the "vulgar concepts of communism"; "concepts which the C.P.S.U. has had to combat and which it is still combatting." He termed the commune-type program an:

egalitarian-ascetic view according to which the main link to the transition to communism is distribution, the introduction without delay of communist principles in this sphere, irrespective of the level of production. Those who hold this view reduce the communist ideal to egalitarian distribution.¹²

Thus, as opposed to the Russians who emphasized that an abundant material foundation was the prerequisite to the introduction of certain communist principles, the Chinese had attempted through the free supply system to introduce partial communist distribution of products which were relatively abundant. At the time the article was written, the part-supply system still remained in effect, and thus remained as a challenge to the C.P.S.U. ideology. As the author pointed out, "in one form or another egalitarian sentiments are now and again still encountered among people in the Soviet Union."¹³ Thus, it can be seen quite clearly that the communes were not a dead issue by any means in the Soviet

¹²Loc. cit.

¹³Loc. cit.

Union, and that their continued existence in China constituted a continuing challenge to C.P.S.U. domestic policy.

In a further attempt to refute the specific idea of the communes, Sobolov appealed to the experience with communes in the early post-revolutionary period. His argument is contained in the following passage:

Egalitarian-consumer views--the idea of the 'kitty' were fairly widespread in the Soviet Union during the early days of Soviet construction. Communes were set up in both the countryside and in the towns. Each member of the commune, irrespective of whether he was a skilled worker or apprentice, put all his wages into the 'kitty' and each received the same share. These views reflected a narrow consumer outlook at a time when the productive forces were insufficiently developed and there were not enough consumer products to go around; they minimized the role of material incentive in the matter of improving skills and raising labour productivity. The introduction of these principles of distribution was an attempt to by-pass stages of development and this always gives rise to negative phenomena.¹⁴

Herein, one can discover nearly all the Soviet objections to the Chinese communes: they were set up prematurely, they practised egalitarianism, they dampened incentive for self-improvement, they dampened incentive to produce more and were a vain attempt to skip over necessary stages and will ultimately end in failure because they violated objective laws.

¹⁴Loc. cit.

Sobolov also developed the Soviet conception of solving the difference between mental and manual labour, disparaging the Chinese idea of having skilled people do manual labour on the grounds that it would lower productivity, and asserting that the answer lay in automation which would make all labour the same, and through greater education for all. The vast difference between the Soviet and Chinese views concerning this vital prerequisite to communism is obvious. It is noteworthy, too, that the measures taken in China to begin the obliteration of differences between mental and manual labour (leaders and office workers and students going to the fields to do manual labour) was criticized in China on similar grounds to those proposed by Sobolov: that these people were needed by the country in their proper places, not in the fields.

With the appearance of Sobolov's article, it was evident that there was still much more fire left in the commune issue than a perusal of the 1960 Declaration might indicate. The 22nd Congress of the C.P.S.U. confirmed this, and further developed the Soviet ideology on the question of the correct path to communism.

The 22nd Congress of the C.P.S.U.: The Soviet Path to Communism

Immediately before the 1961 Congress of the C.P.S.U. the Chinese domestic situation was at a particularly low ebb,

with the third successive bad harvest being recorded and with the communes modified to such an extent as to exist practically in name only. At this point there was very little for the Chinese to hold up to the world as a challenge to Soviet domestic policy and to the Soviet collectives; especially since the Chinese had recently reverted for all intents and purposes to the collective stage. No radical ideological claims about the communes were any longer forthcoming from the Chinese, and with the distribution of the Draft Program of the C.P.S.U. which dwelt almost exclusively on the practical plan to evolve within twenty years to communism in the Soviet Union, the Chinese had very little basis to criticise the Russians for being conservative and for not advancing to the next state.

Thus, in Liu Shao-chi's speech on the fortieth anniversary of the party's founding, delivered on June 30, there was virtually nothing radical said concerning the communes. He even suggested that Soviet experience had been drawn upon in drawing up "the general line for China's socialist construction."¹⁵ As far as the communes were concerned, he merely said that "in our countryside there have emerged the people's communes formed by agricultural co-operatives joining together."¹⁶ Here was a master

¹⁵Liu Shao-chi, Address at the Meeting in Celebration of the 40th Anniversary of the Founding of the C.P.C. (Peking, F.L.P., 1961), p. 8.

¹⁶Loc. cit.

understatement; not an element of the radical claims which heralded the introduction of the communes. But he did defend the commune policy as correct, and at the same time urged the party members to follow through the directives to liberalize the communes and, "place the people's communes, with ownership by production brigades as their basis, on a sound footing and consolidate them, and bring into full play the superiority of the people's commune system in promoting agricultural production."¹⁷ And to the party cadres he suggested that they study, along with the writings of Mao on domestic construction "the experience in socialist construction of the Soviet Union and other fraternal countries." Significantly, he added none of the riders that usually went with such advice.

The 22nd Congress of the C.P.S.U.

The 22nd Congress of the CPSU was called to formulate a new party program for the transition period to communism. As a result it dealt with a number of the points at issue between the Chinese and Russian parties, and elaborated on many of the problems of achieving the prerequisites to communism, which had been discussed by Khrushchev in a preliminary way at the 21st Congress. The speeches by the Soviet leader at the Congress and the text of the program adopted by

¹⁷Ibid., p. 11.

it contained little of the thinly-veiled anti-Chinese passages which had characterized the proceedings of the preceding Congress in 1959.

The fact the Chinese remained ideologically committed to the communes as the best form for the transition to communism meant, however, that they still posed a certain ideological threat to the Soviet Union. Thus there are a number of passages in Khrushchev's report to the Congress and in the new C.P.S.U. program which have important bearing on the Chinese deviation from the Soviet road, as well as some passages which expand on Khrushchev's previous ideological arguments with the Chinese over the communes.

On the question of the road to socialism and the applicability of Soviet experience and "general laws" as opposed to "creative application" of these laws, for instance, the adopted C.P.S.U. program makes a number of observations. Emphasizing the Soviet view that general laws and Soviet experience are the main thing in all countries, while "national peculiarities" can justify only minor deviations, the program notes that:

As a result of the devoted labour of the Soviet people and the theoretical and practical activities of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, there exists in the world a socialist society that is as a reality and a science in socialist construction that has been tested in practice. The highroad to socialism has been paved.¹⁸

¹⁸ Program of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, (Moscow, F.L.P.H., 1961), p. 20.

Moreover, the program adds that:

It has been borne out in practice and recognized by all Marxist-Leninist parties that the processes of socialist revolution and construction are founded on a number of basic objective laws applicable to all countries entering on the socialist path.¹⁹

So-called "national peculiarities" emphasized by the Chinese to support their deviations are not even mentioned.

On the important point of the closely related point of the general ideological relevance of the planned Soviet road to communism, both Khrushchev and the program make far-reaching claims. Thus, Khrushchev claims that:

The draft program marks a new stage in the development of the revolutionary theory of Marx, Engels and Lenin. The program furnishes explicit answers to all the basic questions of theory and practice of the struggle for communism, and to the key questions of present day world development.²⁰

In short, Khrushchev reiterates the Soviet claim that since the C.P.S.U. is the first party to experience the building of communism it alone has the authority to interpret and develop Marxist theory on the question of the evolution from socialism to communism. The program adopted by the Congress is only slightly less sweeping in its statements on this question. It notes that:

¹⁹Ibid., p. 21.

²⁰N. S. Khrushchev, Report on the Program of the C.P.S.U. (London, Soviet Booklets, November, 1961), p. 18.

In building communism, the people of the Soviet Union are breaking new roads for mankind, testing their correctness by their own experience . . . and selecting the best forms and methods for communist construction.²¹

However, the program itself does recognize the possibility of certain adaptations to local conditions, and therefore is slightly more flexible than Khrushchev's statements. It declares that:

Since the social forces . . . in the Soviet Union and in the other socialist countries are of one type, there will be common basic objective laws for communist construction in the U.S.S.R. and in those countries, with due allowance made for the historical and national peculiarities of each country.²²

On the question of the premature introduction of communism, the program is also somewhat more accommodating than Khrushchev's speech, in that while condemning it, it bows in the direction of the Chinese thesis that it is "wrong to halt at an achieved level and thus check progress." Specifically, it asserts that:

The C.P.S.U., being a party of scientific communism, proposes and fulfills the tasks of communist construction in step with the preparation and maturing of the material and spiritual prerequisites, considering that it would be wrong to jump over the necessary stages of development²³

Khrushchev's language is much stronger on this question, arguing that:

²¹Program, op. cit., p. 120.

²²Loc. cit.

²³Ibid., p. 61.

It would be a fatal error to proclaim the introduction of communism before all the necessary conditions for it have matured. If we were to announce that we were introducing communism at a time when the bowl was still far from full, we would be unable to take from it according to needs. In that case we would merely discredit the ideas of communism, disrupt the initiative of the working people and slow down the advance to communism.²⁴

"Communism," he added, "is a higher and more perfect stage of social life and can develop only after socialism has been fully consolidated." The Chinese, of course, had attempted to introduce communist forms and "shoots" before socialism had been fully consolidated in their country.

Khrushchev also developed at the 22nd Congress his plans for the future evolution of the collectives and the state farms, which the Soviets had counterposed to the commune as the correct form for the transition to communism. In the only clear reference to the commune form as such, he made the forthright declaration that "Communist society is not an association of self-contained independent economic organisms." No, he said: "Communist society, more than any other, will need unified economic planning, the organized distribution of labour and regulation of working time."²⁵ The general idea behind the communes, of course, was that they should become the basic economic and social units of a decentralized

²⁴Khrushchev, op. cit., p. 22.

²⁵Ibid., p. 20.

communistic society. In fact, much of the economic upheaval of the 1958 period in China had been attributed by the Chinese themselves to this over decentralization of which Khrushchev spoke. In the Soviet view, the self-sufficient commune system was completely unrealistic as a socio-economic structure for future communist society.

Speaking of the plans for the future development of the kolkhoz and the state farm, Khrushchev reiterated his plan to bring the two forms gradually together. He acknowledged that:

The property of the whole people is the basis of life for the entire population, the collective farm peasantry included. At the same time, the features characteristic of the property of the whole people arise and take root in co-operative-collective farm property. Life itself is steadily bringing the national and co-operative forms of property closer together, with the ultimate perspective of the emergence of a single Communist property and a single Communist principle of distribution.²⁶

As before, he does not explicitly say that collective property will evolve into property of the whole people, which is the clear publicized aim of the Chinese party. Moreover, he does not make it at all clear what "communist property" is. Of course, there is a sharp difference in the property situations in China and the Soviet Union. In Russia all the land is in theory nationalized already, and the

²⁶Ibid., p. 55.

collectives merely occupy the land. Thus, in a sense, the Soviet Union is on relatively safe ground ideologically.

Tackling the problem of equalizing the incomes of the rural proletariat, the Soviet party program announced that in the future poor kolkhozes would be brought up to the level of the most advanced, and in the long run the state would "effect a transition to a guaranteed monthly income." And on the question of the individual private plots remaining in the rural areas, the program somewhat unconvincingly suggests that when collective production has been raised, these plots will become unnecessary and the peasants "will give it up on their own accord."²⁷

The whole theoretical problem of the elimination of the differences between town and country was also dealt with in the program. The Chinese answer to this problem had been expressed during the introduction of the people's communes; the Soviet plan was considerably different. The future development of Soviet society was to proceed in the following manner:

As the kolkhozes and state farms develop their production ties with each other and with local industrial enterprises will grow stronger . . . Agrarian-industrial associations will gradually emerge . . . in which . . . agriculture will combine organically with the industrial processing of its produce The kolkhozes

²⁷Program, op. cit., p. 77.

will . . . turn into highly developed mechanized farms Gradually, the kolkhoz villages will grow into amalgamated urban communities with modern housing facilities, public amenities and services, and cultural and medical institutions. The rural population will ultimately draw level with the urban population in cultural and living conditions. Elimination of socio-economic and cultural distinctions between town and country and of differences in their living conditions will be one of the greatest gains of communist construction.²⁸

In short, Khrushchev's plan was to solve the contradictions between town and country by developing so-called "agro-cities", mainly through the process of increased mechanization and a rising standard of living. The other related problem--that of the contradiction between mental and manual labour was also going to be solved "naturally" through the introduction of mechanization and automation: ultimately everyone would be working with machines.

Perhaps the final important point emphasized at the 22nd Congress which would have a bearing on Chinese domestic policies was that of incentives. The position of the Chinese radicals was, and is, that the raising of ideological consciousness can stimulate production. The Russians, on the other hand (and the C.P.C. moderates) discount this theory and emphasize the vital need for material incentives. In Khrushchev's words, "it is the proper combination of material labour incentives and increasing distribution through public

²⁸Ibid., p. 78.

funds that will lead to the fulfillment of the principles of communist equality."²⁹ This remained a point of some disagreement between the two fraternal parties. It must be noted, however, that the program did make mention of the need to develop "moral incentive" as well.

In Chou En-lai's short speech to the Congress, he made the normal ritualistic commendation of the successes of the C.P.S.U., then reiterated China's determination to maintain the policies so severely criticized by the Soviet party, declaring that:

The Chinese people under the leadership of the Central Committee of the Communist Party headed by Comrade Mao Tse-tung, and holding high the three red banners--the banners of the general line, the great leap forward, and the people's communes--are struggling to turn China into a socialist country with modern industry, modern agriculture and modern science and culture.³⁰

In private conversations Chou "also frankly criticized the errors of the leadership of the C.P.S.U." However, according to Chinese accounts "Khrushchev flatly turned down our criticisms and advice and even expressed undisguised support for anti-party elements in the Chinese Communist party."³¹

²⁹Khrushchev, op. cit., p. 21.

³⁰Chou En-lai, "Speech to the 22nd Congress," Pravda, October 20, 1961; Current Digest of the Soviet Press, vol. XIII, no. 49, p. 11.

³¹"Origin and Development of Differences," op. cit., p. 17.

These anti-party elements", of course, were Chang Wen-tien and Peng Teh-huai who had been routed at Lushan in their attempt to reverse the commune policy, along with the other two "red banners". Even at this time, Khrushchev was apparently hoping for the overthrow of Mao Tse-tung from within the Chinese party, and obviously had not repented or apologized for his associations with Peng Teh-huai's attack in 1959.

Post-Congress Polemics

Not long after the 22nd Congress, Academician P. Fedoseyev, a member of the Central Committee, wrote an important article in Pravda which indicated that there was still considerable controversy within the Soviet party concerning the correct road to communism, and which provided evidence for the fact that the Chinese communes still figured in the debate. He noted that there was an element within the party which believed "that the simplest thing would be to turn all the collective farms into state farms as rapidly as possible, thus arriving immediately at a single form of property."³² Such a plan, of course, is one much more closely aligned to the dictates of Marxist-Leninism than Khrushchev's plan to retain the collectives, since it involves the upgrading of collective property to property of the whole

³²P. Fedoseyev, "Way to a Classless Communist Society," Pravda, December 1, 1961, Current Digest of the Soviet Press, vol. XIII, no. 48, p. 12.

people--a step which the Chinese hoped to achieve through the communes. The existence of this group within the C.P.S.U. made the Chinese communes a continuing factor to reckon with:

Everyone remembers that at the height of collectivization certain hotheads from among both theoretical and practical workers attempted to force the setting up of 'communes' with levelled distribution in order to accelerate the transition of the countryside to communism. If the Party had not rebuffed these utopian exercises, we would have disrupted the implementation of the Leninist co-operation plan and would have destroyed its basic principle: material incentives combined with personal public interests. This was a matter of the fate of socialist construction in the countryside and the Party settled it in a Leninist manner.³³

The basic principle behind both the commune plan put into effect by the Chinese and the state farm plan put forward by dissidents within the C.P.S.U. was that an organizational change was necessary in order to fulfill the prerequisites to communism: a qualitative change in the relations of production. However, from the Soviet point of view, "the problem of merging the two forms of property is not an organizational and technical one but a large social problem that must be solved on the basis of highly developed productive forces." Therefore, the C.P.S.U.'s plan was to maintain the status quo in production relations by "developing and perfecting both forms of socialist production: the state farms and collective farms"³⁴ To the Chinese and to the dogmatic

³³Loc. cit.

³⁴Loc. cit.

elements within the Soviet party, such a plan necessarily amounted to halting the revolutionary advance in production relations, and to the advance towards true communism.

Khrushchev's Central Committee Report on Agriculture, March 1962

The next major development in the continuing polemics over the communes and the transition to communism occurred in the following spring, with Khrushchev's report to the Central Committee on the "Present Stage of Communist Construction". In the light of later reports of a renewed attempt by Chinese party moderates to attack Mao's policies at the National People's Congress in May, Khrushchev's report takes on added significance since it involved a comprehensive repudiation of the policies espoused by Mao Tse-tung and embodied in the communes. It further indicates that Chinese charges of conservatism were continuing to sting the C.P.S.U.'s ideological sensitivity. As Khrushchev pointed out:

The opponents of scientific communism, standing on idealist positions, have always tried to ridicule and discredit the sober and realistic approach of Marxist-Leninists to the people's vital needs, to the satisfaction of their material requirements. Our opponents have tried and are trying to represent the concern of Communists for the people's welfare in a vulgar and extremely distorted form.³⁵

³⁵N. S. Khrushchev, "The Present Stage of Communist Construction and the Party's Tasks in Improving the Management of Agriculture," Pravda, March 6, 1962; Current Digest of the Soviet Press, Vol. XIV, no. 8, 1962, p.3.

Answering the question apparently posed by the Chinese comrades--"Do we not belittle the role of communist consciousness and ideological conviction when we present communism as a cup of abundance?"--Khrushchev replied by castigating the egalitarianism and the emphasis on ideological consciousness which characterized the Chinese position. He berated the principles embodied in the people's communes as alien to Marxist-Leninism and ridiculed Chinese efforts to advance prematurely to communism:

The preaching of equality in the spirit of the first Christian communities, with their low standards of living, their asceticism, is alien to scientific communism. Communism cannot be conceived as a table with empty plates at which sit 'highly conscious' and 'fully equal' people. To call this 'communism' is like inviting people to eat milk with an awl (stir in the hall). This would lead to a caricature of communism.³⁶

Defending the Russian emphasis on satisfying human needs, Khrushchev quoted Lenin to the effect that the goal of communism is the "well-being and free rounded development" of the human individual. "To forget this," he declared, "means to depart from a material presentation of the question, to fail to understand the objective laws of the development of society, to slip into subjectivist, idealist positions."³⁷

Supporting his arguments with texts from Lenin's works, Khrushchev defended the party's program for achieving

³⁶Loc. cit.

³⁷Ibid., p. 4.

communism as strictly Leninist, and argued that "Our party acted in a strict Leninist way when in the new party program it defined as its chief economic task the building of the material and technical base of communism." He suggested, with obvious reference to the Chinese, that "not to follow this path means to abandon the task of eliminating poverty." Moreover, he declared that "it is incorrect to portray the movement towards communism only as a path requiring constant sacrifices and deprivations," which was the course the Chinese leaders were following.

On the question of material incentives, on which there was major disagreement with the Chinese, Khrushchev answered his Chinese critics by charging that "it would be radically incorrect to see in this principle a certain 'concession' to 'bourgeois ideology'" and emphasizing the "exceptional importance of the Leninist principle of material incentive for the cause of communist construction." Tackling the Chinese belief that "moral" incentives are perhaps even more important than material incentives, the Soviet leader argued that:

It is equally incorrect to counterpose material incentive to moral ones, and material interest to ideological-educational work. V.I. Lenin teaches that it is possible to build socialism and bring tens of millions of people to communism not on enthusiasm directly, but with the help of the enthusiasm born of a great revolution, on personal interests, on personal incentive, on cost accounting.³⁸

³⁸Ibid., p. 5.

Khrushchev declared that to depart from Lenin's emphasis on material incentive, and substitute "the revolutionary enthusiasm of the masses" can only "inflict serious harm on the cause of socialism." Moreover, in the period of building communism, the same principle was said to apply, and "any counterposing of them (material and moral incentives) can only harm the cause of communist construction."³⁹ Stripped of its semantic niceties, Khrushchev's statements reveal the same kind of position as that taken on the transition to a higher form of property relations--it will be remembered that Khrushchev also had said that it was wrong to "counterpose" collective and public property. Thus, in fact, Khrushchev was denying the need to change over gradually to "moral incentives" and the "communist style of work" which the more orthodox Chinese leaders viewed as an absolute necessity to the transition to communism. In essence, Khrushchev's "ideological position", if one can call it that, was that with material abundance, "there takes place and will take place the moulding of the man with high communist awareness and morality," in a natural process which obviates the need for the kind of mass movements to raise ideological consciousness which the Chinese advocate. Khrushchev based his position on the statement by Marx and Engels that, "It is not consciousness that determines life, but life which determines consciousness." In other words, the society will mould the man, not the party.

³⁹Loc. cit.

In his speech to the Central Committee session, the Soviet leader also revealed one of the important reasons for his intense displeasure with the Chinese communes and related domestic policies--a reason which was bound up closely with his "revisionist" theories of peaceful coexistence and the peaceful transition of the non-communist world from capitalism to socialism. If the transformation was to be carried out by peaceful means, then it was not enough for a small minority to be convinced of the advantages of communism; instead communism must have a popular appeal. Thus, its image abroad is vital: it must not only achieve excellent economic results, but must also give the appearance of an attractive society to live in--not just a totalitarian slave camp. In this light, the communes and their attendant totalitarian aspects, along with the subsequent economic failures, were highly detrimental to the prestige of the communist bloc, and of communism, in the capitalist world. Khrushchev thus presented his argument in the following manner:

The force of example of socialism and communism acquires special importance also because in our epoch hundreds of millions of people in the countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America have entered the arena of independent development Socialism by concrete examples, is showing the people who have won national independence the advantage of a planned socialist economy--an economy of progress and prosperity It is obvious in this way that every socialist country that is achieving real successes in economic development, in raising the standard of living will make its international contribution to the triumph of the ideas of Marxist-Leninism and thereby speed the victory of communism on a world wide scale.⁴⁰

⁴⁰Loc. cit.

This, of course, was the whole basis of Khrushchev's philosophy: if the Soviet Union could outstrip the West in material abundance and show its economic superiority in competition with the West, then the capitalist nations would be inevitably won over to communism:

Today it is not only revolutionary appeals to class consciousness, but above all the example of the fast-growing material living standard of the broad popular masses of the socialist countries that is exerting an ever-greater influence on the working people of the capitalist countries⁴¹

The premature attempt to negate material incentives and to introduce communes in China could only hurt the communist bloc's image in the West--as in fact it did. In the eyes of most Westerners, the communes were equivalent to slave labour camps, and the failure of the economy in the succeeding three years was interpreted as a failure of the communist system, just as have the Russian agricultural failures in recent years. Thus Khrushchev's point was well founded.

Khrushchev continued his barrage against the Chinese throughout 1962, sometimes even in interviews to Western newsmen such as Gardner Cowes of Look Magazine. Khrushchev told Cowes:

If Communism is proclaimed where there is, say, one pair of pants per ten persons, and these pants are divided equally into ten parts, we shall all be going without pants. We reject such pantless communism.⁴²

⁴¹Loc. cit.

⁴²New York Times, April 20, 1962, p. 10.

Moreover, he proclaimed, in obvious reference to Mao's determination to retain the communes come what may: "It sometimes happens that someone adopts a wrong decision and then displays obstinacy and refuses to correct this wrong."⁴³ Significantly, this argument was almost exactly the one which appeared in People's Daily in the pre-Lushan criticisms of Mao and the communes: according to some reports, a new attempt to reverse Mao's domestic policies occurred not long after Khrushchev's interview with Cowes. Later in the year, the dismissal of Huang Ko-cheng and Tan Cheng from their positions in the party secretariat indicated another struggle had indeed taken place within the party hierarchy. Both men were connected with the army, and of course, Huang had been one of those implicated in Peng Teh-huai's 1959 attack on the communes. Their replacement by three members of the radical element within the Politburo--Lu Ting-yi, Lo Jui-ching, and Kang Sheng, indicated a further victory against "rightist" elements. However, at the same time, Chen Yun returned to the limelight in 1962, reflecting the fact that his more moderate economic policies had gained ascendancy despite the retention, in theory, of the "three red banners". Whether or not the Soviet Union was again directly involved in the dismissals of Huang and Tan is not known, although the possibility should not be ruled out.

⁴³Loc. cit.

CHAPTER XIII

OPEN DISPUTE (1963)

After the almost complete return to the collective system in 1961, the next year's harvest showed some improvement and the 1963 harvest was better still.¹ But the bitter sacrifices to keep the country from starvation, including the radical cut back in industrial output, caused an even greater enmity to build up against the Soviet Union:

As China grappled with her temporary economic difficulties, the modern revisionists . . . rejoiced over China's difficulties and took advantage of them to launch a frenzied campaign of slander against China. They went on from this to . . . activities designed to aggravate China's difficulties and weaken and isolate her.²

As the result of her self-reliance which brought her through the bad years, the Chinese built up an even stronger dogmatic belief in their communes and general line. Thus the People's Daily New Year's editorial at the beginning of 1963 had the following to say about the commune system:

The facts of the past few years also show even more clearly the tremendous superiority of the people's commune system. If we had not relied on the collective economy of the people's communes our agricultural production could not have improved so rapidly and the livelihood of

¹Fang Chung, "All Round Improvement in China's Economy," Peking Review, no. 34, 1963, p. 8.

²Loc. cit.

the several hundred million people in the countryside, as well as the whole people, could not have remained so stable in the face of several consecutive years of such extraordinary natural disasters as have rarely occurred in the past century.³

The editorial drew the conclusion from these statements that the communes have proved their worth:

This has again proved conclusively that the direction taken by the people's communes is absolutely correct and that the series of policies and measures adopted by the Party concerning the rural people's communes have been perfected. Whatever the slanders and distortion by our enemies at home and abroad, the Chinese people will continue . . . to hold high . . . the people's commune⁴

Moreover, the People's Daily suggested that the modern revisionists who had hoped China would be "crushed under the weight of hardships", were now "glum" in the face of the bettering conditions in China. It would be recalled here that the Soviet Union apparently was not adverse to hoping that economic deterioration might force a changeover in the Chinese leadership; at the 22nd Congress "in his conversation with the delegation of the C.P.C., Khrushchev . . . even expressed undisguised support for anti-party elements within the Chinese Communist party."⁵

³"On to New Victories," People's Daily, January 1, 1963; Peking Review, no. 1, 1963, p. 7.

⁴Loc. cit.

⁵"The Origin and Development of Differences Between the Leaders of the C.P.S.U. and Ourselves," Red Flag, September 6, 1963; Peking Review, no. 37, 1963, p. 17.

A few months later, at the June Plenary session of the Central Committee of the C.P.S.U., Khrushchev fired another polemical broadside at the Chinese commune policies, and defended Soviet domestic policy against Chinese charges. Thus, he asserted that the transition to communism:

demands enormous efforts and the selfless labour of the people. Some people think that this can be done relatively easily and rapidly. One cannot play at Communism: the development of society has its laws, and one must know them and take them into account. He who thinks he can ignore the laws of development will be punished by life itself.⁶

Khrushchev maligned the Chinese by innuendo, stating that it is folly to attempt to achieve the work of twenty years within five. He called an approach which attempts to do this "subjective" and completely opposite to the "objective scientific" approach taken to domestic construction in the U.S.S.R. He bitingly pointed out that "if you conceive a desire to obtain more than is possible, you may even lose what you have If you take on too much, you will overtax your strength, will roll backwards, and life will cast you aside."⁷ At this point, of course, Khrushchev would have liked nothing better than for life to cast aside Mao Tse-tung--or better still, for the Chinese party to cast him aside.

⁶N. S. Khrushchev, "Speech to the Plenary Session of the Central Committee," Pravda, June 29, 1963; Current Digest of the Soviet Press, vol. XV, no. 25, p. 3.

⁷Loc. cit.

Referring to the great achievements won by the Soviet Union in its attempt to fulfill its economic development program, Khrushchev exclaimed himself to be "delighted" with his country's success. Apparently, however, the Chinese party had no hesitation in pointing out certain Soviet economic crises--particularly in agriculture--for Khrushchev demanded of his audience: "How could a person who backs our common cause say that this joy is a varnishing of reality?"⁸ Thus, it appeared that the Chinese were using the same economic arguments as Khrushchev to support their ideological position on domestic construction: the proof of the pudding is in the eating.

A particularly significant statement in the resolution passed by the Central Committee Plenum added fuel to the flames in the debate over the transition to communism. It noted that:

The chief result of the party's activities is that during the years of Soviet rule, socialism has triumphed fully and completely in our country, the man of communist ideals and high moral principles has been reared.⁹

Thus, the C.P.S.U. was claiming to have already achieved one of the great goals of communist society--the man of communist ideals--while to the Chinese, Soviet man was becoming more and more like bourgeois man every day. And the Soviets were

⁸Loc. cit.

⁹Ibid., p. 6.

claiming to have achieved this important goal without the aid of communes or mass campaigns or the collective living which the Chinese believe to be an absolute necessity. Thus the debate continued to be renewed by ever more extravagant Soviet claims as to their successes in building communism.

During 1963, as is well known, the Sino-Soviet dispute became public knowledge, and a number of the letters between the two Central Committees were made public through the Chinese and Soviet press. Although these letters dealt almost exclusively with the main point at issue--the bloc's policy vis-a-vis the non-communist world--there was some peripheral debate bearing on the commune issue and related topics.

The March 30 letter of the C.P.S.U. for example, touched on the question of deviations in domestic construction; it declared to the C.P.C. that:

We do not close our eyes to the fact that different construction and the international communist movement, may occur between socialist countries This is possible, for the countries making up the world socialist system are at different stages in the construction of a new society One should not exclude the possibility, either, that differences may result from different approaches to the solution of some questions of Marxist-Leninism in individual fraternal parties. To exaggerate the role of national, specific features may lead to a departure from Marxist-Leninism. To ignore national features may lead to a breaking away from life and from the masses, and do harm to the cause of socialism.¹⁰

¹⁰"The Letter of the Central Committee of the C.P.S.U. to the Central Committee of the C.P.C.," Peking Review, no. 25, 1963, p. 30.

Thus it can be seen that the question of reconciling differences in domestic policy had still not been solved. As the C.P.S.U. pointed out, "All this necessitates constant efforts to find ways and means to settle the differences arising . . . with the least damage to our common cause." The problem of ideological authority thus remained a key point in the dispute between the two parties; and in practical terms, they still had not resolved the controversy over the variant path to communism.

In their reply on June 14, the Chinese came to grips with the problem of permissible deviation in domestic construction, and the question of the binding force of Soviet experience. They reiterated their stand that parties must:

independently work out and apply policies and tactics suited to the conditions of one's own country. Errors of dogmatism will be committed if one fails to do so, if one mechanically copies the policies and tactics of another communist party, submits blindly to the will of others, or accepts without analysis the programs and resolutions of another communist party as one's own line.¹¹

Vilifying the Soviet position, the letter charges that:

some people . . . describe as 'universal Marxist-Leninist truths' their own prescriptions which are based on nothing but

¹¹"Letter of the Central Committee of the C.P.C., June 14, 1963," Peking Review, no. 25, 1963, p. 20.

subjective conjecture and are divorced from reality and the masses and they force others to accept these prescriptions unconditionally.¹²

Other criticisms within the June 14 letter attacked the 22nd Congress theses concerning the ending of the dictatorship of the proletariat in Russia and declaring the country a state of the "whole people". The Chinese brought up the question of those "antagonistic" elements within Soviet society, such as the bourgeois "hangers on", "swindlers", "speculators" and so on. Moreover, they noted that "the difference between ownership by the whole people and collective ownership exists in all socialist countries without exception, and that there is individual ownership too,"¹³ and that therefore there are different categories of labourers in the U.S.S.R., and also differences between workers and peasants. All this means that the dictatorship of the proletariat is still required. And despite the fact that the Soviet Union's plan was to reach communism within eighteen years of 1963, the Chinese letter declared that "all socialist countries are still far, far removed from the higher stage of communism.

On July 14, some four weeks later, the C.P.S.U. published an open letter to its members outlining the dispute with the Chinese party. In this letter, it was made clear

¹²Loc. cit.

¹³Ibid., p. 17.

that their respective interpretations of the correct road to communism was an important issue under dispute. It noted that:

Soviet people find it strange and outrageous that the Chinese comrades are trying to smear the C.P.S.U. program, this grandiose plan of creating a communist society.

Alluding to the fact that our party proclaims for its task the struggle for a better life for the people, the C.P.C. leaders hint at some kind of 'bourgeoisization' and degeneration of the Soviet society. To follow their line of thinking it comes out that if a person walks in bast sandals, eats watery soup out of a common bowl--this is communism, and if a working man lives well and wants to live even better tomorrow--this is nearly tantamount to the restoration of capitalism; And they want to present this philosophy to us as the latest revelation in Marxist-Leninism.¹⁴

Thus, the Chinese had revived their earlier charges which had appeared during the commune euphoris--that the Soviet Union had become conservatized and was degenerating in terms of communist principles and communist goals. And the Russians quickly snapped back with countercharges of egalitarianism in China and a naive approach to communism.

The Open Letter added that:

We are convinced that not only the Soviet people but also the peoples of other countries of socialism are capable of great labour exploits--it is only necessary that a correct

¹⁴"Open letter of the Central Committee of the C.P.S.U. to all its party organizations at all levels and to all its party members" (Pravda, July 14, 1963), Peking Review, no. 30, 1963, p. 38.

guidance of the working class and the peasantry be ensured; it is necessary that the people implementing this guidance would reason realistically and make decisions that would . . . channel the strength and energy of the working people along the correct way.¹⁵

In other words, the C.P.S.U. considered Chinese domestic policies to be completely unrealistic and to have been disastrous in terms of accomplishing any great labour exploits. All the Chinese had to do was to follow the Soviet path, and all would be well.

Finally, on October 1, the Chinese National Day, Red Flag issued an editorial which revealed an important factor motivating the Soviet attacks on the communes and on Chinese domestic policy, and which to the Chinese explained Soviet actions since 1959:

The modern revisionists attack China's socialist construction for the sole reason that the Chinese Communist Party has adhered to Marxist-Leninism, exposed their policy of capitulationism to the U.S. imperialism, torn away their Marxist-Leninist cloak, and so made it all the more difficult for them to push forward their revisionist line.¹⁶

Nevertheless, it can be said without fear of contradiction that this is not the whole story. Differences over the correct social forms and over ideologically orthodox policies in the domestic evolution towards the communist goal still inevitably lead to conflict, and will as long as ideological authority is

¹⁵Ibid., p. 39.

¹⁶Peking Review, no. 40, 1963, p. 15.

not clearly delineated within the bloc, and as long as the domestic policies of one party have repercussions within the ranks of another.

CHAPTER XIV

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE COMMUNES TO CHINA AND THE C.P.C.

In order to appreciate why the communes were introduced into China, and why despite strong pressures from the Russians and Chinese party moderates, the communes were not disbanded, it is necessary to examine some of the reasons why this social form commended itself to the Chinese leadership. In general, three basic groups of factors were involved: domestic, international, and ideological.

Domestic Considerations

A number of domestic considerations appear to have carried considerable weight in the Chinese decision to introduce, and to steadfastly maintain, the communes. As has been noted earlier, at the time of the decision to establish communes throughout the whole of rural China, reference was made in official party documents to both ideological and practical advantages inherent in this new social unit. Indeed, it is readily apparent from a study of the domestic situation in China immediately preceding the introduction of the communes that the practical advantages of the communes must have been an important consideration in the decision to depart from the Soviet road: advantages of both a political and an economic nature.

When looking for the practical foundations of the Sino-Soviet dispute, one of the very important facts to take into consideration is the fact that the two countries are at vastly different stages of economic and political development. Because this is so, it is clear that economic and political policies that may be appropriate for one, will almost certainly not be entirely appropriate for the other--just as modern Soviet domestic policy would not have been appropriate in the Soviet Union forth years ago. After nearly fifty years in power, the Soviet party is now in a position where it is so solidly established that it can afford to relax its grip and begin to introduce far more freedom for the Soviet people. The Chinese, on the other hand, are still waging a continuing struggle against antagonistic elements within their society, and have yet to fully conclude the civil war. Thus, there is a need for much stricter political control in China at the present time than in the Soviet Union: one could almost say that there is still a need for Stalinist policies within China.

From an economic point of view, the difference in the degree of development between China and the Soviet Union is also very great. In terms of per capita output, China is still some fifty years behind the Soviet Union, and still teeters on the subsistence level in terms of agricultural production. The Soviet Union, on the other hand, has been building its economy at a rapid pace for over forty years,

and is now in a position to cut down on the personal sacrifice asked of its people in order to build the country into a great power. Now the Soviet Government can afford not to drive the Russian people so hard, and the latter are able to enjoy some of the fruits of their own labour now that the industrial base is built. Thus, policies that may have been necessary for the Soviet Union during the period of War Communism were discarded long ago; but in China these policies of strict economic control may still be required.

One can expect, therefore, that the Chinese may find useful, and sometimes necessary, policies--both political and economic--which the Russians dispensed with as obsolete, many years ago. The added important factor regarding these policies is that many of them are regarded in the Soviet Union as undesirable, since they are associated with the oppressive Stalin era.

With this background, it can be seen that it is almost inevitable that the Chinese communists should implement policies of a more radical and totalitarian nature than those obtained in the Soviet Union. The introduction of the communes bears out this analysis.

At the Party Congress in May of 1958 (while the communes were still in the experimental stage) Liu Shao-chi made a series of statements which indicated some of the reasons motivating the adoption of radical economic and political policies. He pointed out that:

Surely one should be able to see that a really terribly tense situation would exist if more than 600 million people had to live in poverty and cultural backwardness for a prolonged period, had to exert their utmost efforts just to eke out a bare living and were unable to resist natural calamities effectively, unable to put a quick stop to possible foreign aggression and utterly unable to master their own fate.¹

Thus, Liu concluded, a policy of "speeding up construction to the utmost" is an absolute necessity for China. From these remarks it is clear that Mao and Liu realized that if living standards were not raised at a fairly rapid pace and if economic stability were not attained in short order, that peasant unrest might easily topple the regime--especially with Chiang Kai-shek and the United States waiting offshore to turn unrest into counter-revolution. In 1958 China was still at a low level of production and a bad harvest or severe natural calamities could cripple the economy and provide conditions for mass revolt. Moreover, considering the regimentation imposed by the communist regime, the only way the communists could retain the peasants' sympathetic support was to provide economic progress commensurate with the sacrifices demanded.

During the First Five Year Plan, agricultural output rose by only about 25%.² Moreover, a population increase of

¹Liu Shao-chi, "Report on the Work of the Central Committee," Second Session of the Eighth National Congress of the C.P.C. (Documents) (Peking, F.L.P., 1958), p. 44.

²Chou En-lai, Report on the Work of the Government, April 18, 1959 (Peking, F.L.P., 1959), p. 3.

about 12% during this period cancelled out much of the increased production, leaving very little tangible improvement in the food situation for the peasant. At such a slow rate of per capita increase, it would be generations before abundance would be achieved. And without that abundance, communism would remain only a dream. At the same time, beginning in 1956, China had to begin repaying the Soviet Union for the credits extended during the first part of the Five Year Plan,³ which meant that large amounts of agricultural produce had to be exported from the country.

Thus, there were three main factors motivating a radical increase in agricultural production: peasant unrest, population increase, and the need to repay the Soviet Union for aid received. And since in the long run, the speed of industrialization was directly linked with the increase in agricultural output, this, too, was a factor. On the opposite side of the coin, rural China was burdened with massive unemployment, since the peasants were mostly idle during the winter months. By 1957 "men working in higher cooperatives were still only working the equivalent of 161 days a year,"⁴ or less than half of the total days of a year. Here was a vast reservoir of labour power waiting to be tapped. The communes, because of their larger size were able to finance and organize large-scale construction projects which mobilized

³O. Hoeffding, "Sino-Soviet Economic Relations in Recent Years," Unity and Contradiction (New York, Praeger, 1962), p. 302.

⁴F. Greene, China (New York, Ballantine, 1961), p. 127.

many thousands of men during the winter months. And the military discipline involved in the communes, allowed the party cadres to deploy the labour force in useful talks throughout the working day. Moreover, by instituting communal dining halls, creches and kindergartens, the communes succeeded in releasing millions of women for productive labour in the fields and in construction.

Thus, the communes were an answer to the pressing domestic problems of increasing output and mobilizing labour. For the Chinese, therefore, deviation from the Soviet road had definite economic advantages.

As far as political advantages are concerned, the communes' chief usefulness was in enabling the party to maintain a much tighter control over the peasantry. In 1957, Mao Tse-tung revealed that:

In 1956, small numbers of workers and students in certain places went on strike. The immediate cause of these disturbances was the failure to satisfy certain of their demands for material benefits In the same year, members of a small number of agricultural cooperatives also created disturbances and the main causes were also bureaucracy on the part of the leadership⁵ and lack of educational work among the masses.⁵

Later in the year, Mao discovered that a widespread discontent lay just under the surface of Chinese society and had to call a hasty halt to his policy of letting a "hundred flowers"

⁵Mao Tse-tung, On the Correct Handling of Contradictions Among the People (Peking, F.L.P., 1960), p. 59.

bloom and contend. Even subversive secret societies had been discovered during the Hundred Flowers period. One answer to the potential danger of all this discontent was to tighten up political control and ideological "education", and this is exactly what the communes were able to accomplish. By instituting total control of the lives of the peasants, the party was able to prevent the formation of clandestine organized opposition as well as to undertake constant indoctrination in the communal dining halls. With such tight political control, and constant propaganda, the chances of planned opposition occurring--even in periods of economic difficulty--were greatly lessened. The party's increased control over the peasants' minds also facilitated efforts to persuade the commune members to work harder, and to generally increase their communist consciousness and selflessness.

Thus, in the light both of the need to increase agricultural production and the need to exert greater political control over the basically conservative peasantry, the communes provided considerable advantages. Moreover, these advantages were borne out particularly in the face of the natural calamities in 1959, 1960 and 1961, when the peasants were mobilized by the millions to protect crops against floods and drought. Not only did the communes prove useful in minimizing the effects of natural calamities, but they also allowed the party to maintain generally firm control over the nation in politically-critical times.

International Considerations

Besides having economic and political significance, the communes also have considerable military significance. In Moscow in 1957 Mao Tse-tung made the following statements in regard to nuclear warfare:

If we fight, atomic and hydrogen weapons will be used. Personally I think that in the whole world there will be such suffering that half of humanity and perhaps more than half will perish In China construction has not yet begun in earnest. If the imperialists impose a war on us, we shall be prepared to terminate the construction: let us first have a trial of strength and then return to construction.⁶

Only a few days earlier the Russians and the Chinese had concluded an agreement on "New Technology for National Defence" which included the passing along of nuclear "know how" to Chinese scientists⁷--thus China would soon have nuclear capability and would be ready for any "trial of strength" that might come, including one with the Americans in Formosa.

On the assumption that China would probably become involved in a nuclear war with the Western "imperialists" sometime in the future, and believing in the inevitability

⁶U.S.S.R. Government, A Reply to Peking: Soviet Government Statement of September 21, 1963 (London, Soviet Booklets, 1963), p. 21.

⁷"The Origin and Development of the Differences Between the Leadership of the C.P.S.U. and Ourselves," Red Flag, September 6, 1963; Peking Review, no. 37, 1963, p. 12.

of such a conflict, it is only natural that certain defensive measures should be taken. While it is not clear whether the communes were in part a direct response to the threat of nuclear war, it is certainly true that the communes were of considerable strategic significance. In the first instance, the communes involved the formation of a people's militia with the slogan "every man a soldier", and in the second instance they involved a decentralization of government and the economy. These two factors combined to put China in an extremely good position to face and absorb a nuclear attack. As Li Fu-chun pointed out, the decentralization of industry involved in the commune program had the result of "ensuring still better the security of our national defence."⁸ As for the people's militia, it could be of immense value in civil defence work, and in maintaining order. With each commune existing as individual economic and governmental units, on a highly organized and disciplined basis, China was as well prepared for atomic attack as she was for battling natural disasters. Whether or not defence reasons actually played any large part in the decision to introduce communes, it is quite possible that in Soviet eyes the communes were intimately connected with Mao's views on foreign policy, and his belief in the inevitability of war.

⁸Li Fu-chun, Raise High the Red Flag of the General Line and Continue to March Forward (Peking, F.L.P., 1960), p. 25.

Ideological Considerations

As disciples of the Marxist ideology, the Chinese communists have as their goal the creation of a communist society in their own country and in the world. Since the victory of their revolution in 1948, they have been actively working towards those ends gradually implementing policies that will bring them nearer to the final goal. During the period before the communes were introduced, the Chinese Communist Party nationalized all industry, and stage by stage introduced collectivization of the land on a socialist basis. The land itself was not nationalized as it had been in the Soviet Union; instead, it was first distributed to the peasants to gain their favour, and then gradually collectivized. Some Machine Tractor Stations were also established, as were a number of state farms, both being state-owned. Thus, in order to complete the building of the socialist stage, all collective property had to be raised to the level of state property, and the vestiges of private property eliminated. As far as the distribution of commodities are concerned, the Chinese claimed to have already organized their society on the principle of "each according to his work."⁹

Once the building of a socialist society had been completed it would be necessary to begin the transition to

⁹It should be noted that in the light of Leninist theory this claim is somewhat dubious, since a wide range of incomes still prevailed in China, as did a seven-level wage scale.

communism, which would involve the establishment of the major prerequisites: material abundance, abolition of the differences between town and country, the integration of mental and manual labour, universal education, and the raising of the ideological consciousness of the people.

For all these problems which had to be overcome in the future, the commune was the answer. Moreover, the commune was not something pulled out of thin air--it had long been discussed as the likely unit of future communist society, by the founders of the ideology, as was pointed out in the opening chapters. As People's Daily noted in the fall of 1958:

. . . the people's commune is the most appropriate organizational form in China for accelerating socialist construction and the transition to communism. It will become the basic social unit in the future communist society as thinkers--from many outstanding utopian socialists to Marx, Engels and Lenin--had predicted on many occasions.¹⁰

Of course, the striking thing about this particular statement is that Stalin is not included in the list of commune supporters. As has been pointed out already, this can be attributed to the fact that Stalin severely criticized the premature introduction of communes and laid down very strict conditions under which they would arise: those

¹⁰"Hold High the Red Flag of the People's Communes and Continue to March On," People's Daily, September 3, 1958; People's Communes in China (Peking, F.L.P., 1958), p. 20.

conditions did not exist in China. Instead, the Chinese were putting forward the commune as a means of achieving those preconditions more quickly.

The new theory put forward by the Chinese was that the communes would go through two distinct stages: the people's commune would carry the domestic revolution forward to the completion of the socialist stage, and the "advanced people's commune" (entirely communist in character) would take over when the stage of pure communism was reached.¹¹ The purpose of the first stage--the people's communes--was to establish the prerequisites for the advance to communism, including the achievement of a much higher level of production:

With the leap in production, the products of society will grow abundantly. And following the advance of the technical and cultural revolutions, the people's communes will grow and become units combining cities with the countryside. Differences between town and country, between worker and peasant, and between mental and physical labour will gradually disappear. The communist awakening of the people, the new high morality, consciousness in the observation of discipline will increase and strengthen. When that time comes, the people's commune can pass from the socialist principle of 'from each according to his ability to each according to his work' to the communist principle of 'from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs.'¹²

¹¹Lin Tieh (1st Secretary of the Hopei Provincial Committee), "The People's Commune Movement in Hopei," Red Flag, no. 9, 1958; People's Communes in China (Peking, F.L.P., 1958), p. 56.

¹²Ibid., p. 55.

Thus, the people's communes were designed especially to meet the dictates of the Marxist-Leninist ideology, on the question of the transition to communism. In the first place, they were designed to release the nation's productive forces by changing production relations. By amalgamating the collectives into larger units, more rational use of resources and labour could be achieved, and production increased. The faster production was raised, the sooner communism would be achieved. The interconnection between increased output and the changeover to communist principles was particularly stressed when the communes were introduced. Specifically, it was stated that where communes had a high rate of production, distribution of commodities could be put on a semi-communist basis. The original commune resolution declared that "the system of distribution should be determined according to specific conditions. Where conditions permit, the shift to a wage system may be made."¹³ The free supply system which was termed a "bud of communism" was also determined by the prevailing level of production:

By semi-supply is meant that grain is supplied gratis to members according to the standard stipulated by the state, or, a step further, that members can eat in the communist canteen free of charge The adoption of the combined system of grain or meals supply and wage payment marks the beginning of the gradual

¹³"Resolution of the Central Committee of the C.P.C. on the Establishment of People's Communes in the Rural Areas," People's Communes in China (Peking, F.L.P., 1958), p. 8.

transition to the stage of 'from each according to his abilities to each according to his needs.' It ensures that everyone in the commune can equally eat his or her fill.¹⁴

Where the state determined the quantity of food to be consumed, this was still socialist distribution of food; but where production was high enough to allow everyone to eat his fill "according to his needs," this was communist distribution. In the same passage it was specifically pointed out that because of the low level of production and communist consciousness still prevailing, the wage system (with bonuses given to hard workers) must be retained. That is to say, until production was greatly increased along with ideological consciousness, distribution of food must still take place partly according to labour performed. As production increased, so could the proportion of commodities and services distributed free. Thus, the Chinese communists were ideologically consistent in this phase of the commune movement, and they were clearly motivated by ideological considerations.

In other regards, too, the communes were clearly designed to fulfill the dictates of the ideology espoused by China's leaders. It has been pointed out, for instance, that one of the chief prerequisites to communism laid down by Marx, Engels and Lenin, is the abolition of the distinctions between town and country, peasant and worker, and

¹⁴Lin Tieh, op. cit., p. 55.

between different types of labour; a particularly difficult problem faced by any society moving towards communism is how to find a solution to these prerequisites. The communes embodied the Chinese solution. By decentralizing industry and integrating town and country within one unit, a gradual "urbanization" of the rural areas was to take place and the problem overcome. An important aspect of the communes was the formation of countless small local factories with little capital investment, and often make-shift in terms of equipment. There was a massive campaign at the same time to introduce the peasantry to machinery in order to remove its mystique, and to induce them to set up their own crude machines and introduce primitive mechanization into their work. One part of this campaign was the party's backyard furnace program which was taken up almost fanatically by people and cadres everywhere. Although in the long run, much of the iron produced by the backyard furnaces was of low quality and quite often of little use, the whole program did break down the mental barrier which had kept the peasants in awe of industrial wonders. Moreover, with the peasants working at the blast furnaces in their spare time (and often when they should have been in the fields harvesting the crops) they became both peasants and workers, thus temporarily obliterating the distinction between the two. The same result was achieved by implementing Marx's directive concerning the "establishment of industrial armies, especially for

agriculture,"¹⁵ and mobilizing millions of peasants to do construction work during the winter months.

On the question of the resolving of distinctions between mental and manual labour, the communes also were to play a vital role:

Apart from economic activities the people's commune undertakes culture and education (running primary, secondary and technical schools, carrying out scientific research, etc.) so as to make its members people with high educational level and gradually eliminate the difference between mental and manual labour.¹⁶

The communes were to create, through their educational systems, highly educated all-round individuals who would be trained for mental as well as manual labour, and could transfer from one to the other with ease, just as Engels' architect could leave his drawing board at a given moment and assume the duties of a porter. As propaganda chief, Lu Ting-yi pointed out:

our educational work must not go in the direction of divorcing mental and manual labour but in the direction of combining mental with manual labour and education with productive labour.¹⁷

He suggested that the new upsurge in education taking place in the communes was working towards creating the "all round individuals" who would be needed in future society:

¹⁵Communist Manifesto.

¹⁶"How to Run a People's Commune," People's Daily, September 4, 1958; People's Communes in China, op. cit., p. 81.

¹⁷Lu Ting-yu, "Education Must be Combined with Productive Labour," Red Flag, no. 7, 1958; Peking Review, no. 28, 1958.

In the future when communist society is fully consolidated, developed and mature, men will be trained in many kinds of work and will be able to undertake many professions while specializing in selected fields. This is what we aim at. We must march to this goal. In our country's present conditions we can train people to do many kinds of work, but cannot yet train people to be capable of undertaking any profession.¹⁸

With the upsurge of the communes, directives were issued for functionaries and officials to spend time among the masses in manual labour. Practically the entire Politburo spent several days working on the Ming Tombs reservoir project outside of Peking, and even army officers were made to serve in the ranks for a short period of time. At the same time, those most intimately concerned with mental activity--students and teachers--were encouraged to take part in manual labour on large projects and to integrate the schools and universities with industry with a view to combining learning with production. On the other hand, workers and peasants were encouraged to become literate, and to attend school in the evening hours. Shortly after the communes were established, it was reported that:

Besides colleges and universities, the communes have established 1.4 million schools which had enrolled 81.44 million students up to mid-October.¹⁹

¹⁸Loc. cit.

¹⁹Peking Review, no. 40, 1958, p. 16.

From an ideological point of view, all these policies associated with the communes were directed towards the gradual elimination of the distinction between mental and manual labour, and particularly through having everyone engage in them both. This was the basis of Marx's teaching on this point: occupational mobility was the key to the solution, rather than necessarily making all labour of one particular type.

The other major ideological prerequisites to communism, as laid down by Marxism-Leninism, is the heightening of communist consciousness and social morality. If the state is to gradually wither away, then an inbred morality must be cultivated so that when coercive forces are withdrawn from society, man will continue to work according to his abilities, and will conduct himself in a socially responsible manner. At the time of the initial formation of the communes, this prerequisite was duly recognized, and was said to have been taken into full account in the formation of the communes. Thus in a New China News Agency release from Honan during the initial upsurge, it was stated that, among its other major attributes:

the people's communes are helpful to the wiping out of the old ideology and habits of the bourgeoisie, the heightening of the people's socialist and communist consciousness and the establishment of communist ethics.²⁰

²⁰New China News Agency Release, September 1, 1958; Current Background, No. 517, p. 16.

On the one hand there was the physical aspect of collective living, embodied in the "five togethers": eating together, sleeping together, living together, working together, and studying together. This was to prepare people for the kind of collective life pattern of future communism. On the other hand, there was the educational-indoctrinational aspect of the communes, which subjected the peasants to an increased barrage of Marxist-Leninism and the thoughts of Mao Tse-tung, thus raising their ideological consciousness to a higher level. An outstanding feature of the communes, in this regard, was that they encouraged voluntary labour of the "subbotnik" type, which Lenin had hailed as communist in nature. In fact, one of the chief factors called upon to justify the introduction of the people's communes in the first place was that the whole nation was riding a wave of subbotnikism. As Liu Shao-chi pointed out in his Party Congress report:

In the city and the countryside, people vie with each other in joining all kinds of voluntary labour All this is, as Lenin said, 'the actual beginning of communism, the beginning of a change which is of world historic significance.'²¹

The upsurge of voluntary labour associated with the communes and the backyard furnace campaign were considered further developments of the communist consciousness on the part of the masses. Reports of commune members engaging in dawn to

²¹Liu Shao-chi, op. cit., p. 28.

dusk labour without thought of remuneration were particularly widespread during the euphoric stage immediately following the introduction of the communes. In November, Red Flag published a comprehensive article dealing with the "Communist Working Spirit" which had reportedly gripped the land. According to the author:

Marxist-Leninism holds that communist labour is voluntary labour, without set quotas, done without expectation of remuneration Voluntary labour has now become a large-scale mass movement in our country . . . the communist spirit is growing vigorously throughout the country and labour without quotas is becoming the general practice of our society Today, the application of the principle 'from each according to his abilities', and bringing the communist working spirit into play is the decisive factor in preparing conditions for the transition to communism.²²

Thus, in all phases of the communes and the leap forward, the dictates, of the communist ideology, were fully taken into account, and policies were clearly very closely connected with ideology, being fully consistent with the attainment of the recognized prerequisites to communism.

In a summation of the obstacles to be overcome before the transition to communism could take place in China, the Red Flag article just cited, listed all the major preconditions which the party's policies were designed to attain in succeeding years:

²²Wang li, "The Communist Working Spirit," Red Flag, November 16, 1958; Peking Review, no. 38, 1958, p. 6.

In the course of some years, the 'three great conditions' will gradually and at length be brought into being. These are: a great abundance of social products; a great raising of the communist consciousness and communist moral character of the whole people; popularization and elevation of education among the whole people. Moreover, the three big differences that are inherited from bourgeois society must be gradually and at last completely eliminated. They are the difference between city and countryside, between workers and peasants, and between mental and physical labour.²³

Clearly, the Marxist-Leninist ideology was not merely ex post facto as far as the communes were concerned. The characteristics of the communes and the policies attendant to them were quite certainly determined by the ideology espoused by Mao Tse-tung. Certainly, other factors, such as those outlined in the early part of the chapter, also played a role in motivating the Chinese leader to conceive the social unit known as the commune, but ideology appears to have played by far the most important role.

The only puzzling aspect of the communes, from an ideological point of view is the people's militia. If Mao's purpose in establishing the people's communes had been to achieve tighter control over the peasantry, he would hardly have trained them in armed combat and given them weapons and ammunition. In actual fact, when conditions became very bad economically in 1960 and 1961, the people's militia in Honan and nearby provinces did rise up against the party. According to People's Liberation Army documents in the hands of the United States²⁴ government:

²³Ibid., p. 7.

Serious disturbances of the peace were reported in six of the seven districts in Honan. Provincial civilian militiamen were said to have led the protests, killing communist party members, wrecking communications lines, and stopping military convoys.²⁴

To put arms in the hands of the peasants was a calculated risk then on Mao's behalf; and we can discount the theory that the communes were motivated by a desire to hold down peasant revolts. On the other hand, there must have been important considerations for Mao to have taken the risk involved in forming a peasant militia. These considerations, it would appear, were fundamentally ideological in nature.

One of the ideologically-derived considerations has already been suggested in the discussion of the international factors involved in the formation of the communes. This relates to Mao Tse-tung's orthodox Leninist position on the inevitability of wars begun by capitalist nations, and the belief that the imperialists will not step down from the stage of history without a violent struggle. If Mao really believes in the inevitability of a U.S.-sponsored attack on the mainland sometime in the future, then his people's militia assumes both ideological and military significance. Clearly, if Mao sincerely holds to this fatalistic view of Lenin's,²⁵

²⁴New York Times, August 5, 1963, p. 1.

²⁵" . . . the international policy of finance . . . inevitably engenders new imperialist wars It is impossible to escape imperialist war and imperialist world . . . which inevitably engenders imperialist war--it is impossible

then the domestic risks involved in the formation of a people's militia, would be far outweighed by military considerations: especially if one has a mystical faith in the peasant-worker "masses", and if one is also steeped in the tradition of guerrilla warfare.

An even more clear-cut ideological consideration can be discovered to explain the communes' militia. As has been demonstrated in the formation of the communes, policies were formulated with careful reference to dictates of Marxist-Leninism. On numerous occasions, passages from Lenin's The State and Revolution were quoted at length in the Chinese press and party theoretical journals, in explanation of the various aspects of the communes. A perusal of this work by Lenin sheds considerable light on the ideological roots of Mao's people's militia. Speaking of the transition to communism, Lenin asserts, in a passage oft' quoted by the Chinese during the commune polemics:

By what stages, by what practical measures humanity will proceed to this higher aim-- we do not and cannot know. But it is important to realize how infinitely mendacious is the ordinary bourgeois conception of socialism as something lifeless, petrified, fixed once for all; whereas only under socialism will a rapid, genuine, really mass forward movement embracing first the majority and then the whole of the population, commence in all spheres of social and personal life.²⁶

to escape that inferno, except by Bolshevik struggle and Bolshevik revolution." (Lenin, Selected Works, vol. II (Moscow, F.L.P.H., 1947), p. 570.

²⁶ Lenin, op. cit., p. 209.

It is noteworthy that in the succeeding paragraph to the one just quoted, Lenin made specific mention of introducing a type of people's militia into socialist society. It is certain that Mao is familiar with this particular passage, which asserts that after the proletariat has overthrown the bourgeois, it is to:

wipe off the face of the earth the bourgeois, even the Republican bourgeois state machine, the standing army, the policy and bureaucracy and to substitute for them a more democratic state machine but a state machine nevertheless, in the shape of the armed mass of workers who are being transformed into a universal people's militia.²⁷

Thus, according to Leninism, Mao was following the dictates of the communist ideology in establishing a people's militia in China. In the Civil War in France, Karl Marx also makes mention of a universal militia in regard to the plans of the Paris Commune. In his praise-filled analysis of the measures instituted and planned by the commune, Marx noted that:

the commune was to be the political form of even the smallest country hamlet, and that in the rural districts the standing army was to be replaced by a national militia and with an extremely short term of service.²⁸

Thus, the militia idea was not something pulled out of thin air by Mao Tse-tung. It was something clearly prescribed

²⁷Loc. cit.

²⁸Marx and Engels, Selected Works, vol. I (Moscow, F.L.P.H., 1958), p. 520.

by both Lenin and Marx for the transitional phase. Therefore, in establishing the people's militia in the people's communes, Mao was being quite consistent with the prescriptions of the communist ideology.

Thus, whether one views the people's militia as motivated by Mao's orthodox ideological views on the inevitability of war during the epoch of imperialism, or as resulting from the direct prescriptions of Lenin and Marx, it is evident that this particular aspect of the people's communes, like the other aspects, may be viewed as consistent with the communist ideology, and ideologically derived.

It is apparent, then, that of all the motivating factors, ideological ones were the most important in the introduction and formation of the commune system; and that once instituted the significance of the communes to the Chinese leaders was primarily ideological.²⁹

²⁹It is significant in this regard that those members of the Politburo who supported Mao's communes wholeheartedly were those with the highest "ideological consciousness": those who are the most capable Marxist-Leninist theoreticians. These include Liu Shao-chi, Teng Hsiao-ping, Peng Chen, Chen Po-ta (editor of Red Flag), Kang Sheng, Tan Chen-lin, Ko Ching-shih, Lu Ting-I (head of the party's Propaganda Department), and Li Fu-chun, among others. In every case, when writing on the subject of the people's communes, the Politburo members exhibited an extensive knowledge of Marxist-Leninist theory, and documented their statements with references to statements by Marx, Engels and Lenin. It is noteworthy that Teng Hsiao-ping, Peng Chen and Kang Sheng were the three members of the Politburo chosen to represent the party in the ideological discussions with the Russians in Moscow in 1963, which gives an indication of their capabilities as theoreticians.

CHAPTER XV

THE COMMUNE CONTROVERSY IN PERSPECTIVE

The controversy over the communes can be seen in perspective as involving three separate sets of issues. The first involves questions concerning the speed, the methods and the forms, of the transition towards communism. The second set involves questions which relate to the wider issues now dominating the Sino-Soviet dispute: the question of how capitalist states are to arrive at socialism. The third set of issues involves questions of ideological authority, and the relations between communist states.

The greater part of the dialogue over the communes, and the principles which they involved, was concerned with arguments over the transition to communism, and the correct way to accomplish this transition. It has been suggested earlier that there would appear to be a causal link between the conservativization of Soviet domestic policy during 1957 and 1958 and the decision taken by Mao Tse-tung to introduce the communes into China, particularly in the light of Mao's visit to the Soviet Union in November of 1957, and his sudden reversal of collective-farm policy in the early spring of 1958. The other factors involved appear to have been chiefly related to the realization that the communist revolution must either move ahead, or be dragged back by the force of "spontaneous capitalism" which had reversed the tide

of socialization in the countryside between 1956 and 1957; and the desire to take full advantage of the high tide of enthusiasm engendered during the 1957-1958 winter in order to make this move ahead to the next stage of socialization. Factors such as the abundant harvest of 1958 were also evident in the timing of the commune decision. But chiefly it was the realization that the affluence of the Soviet Union (and the long awkward period since any qualitative change in production relations had taken place), had rendered revolutionary advance towards communism almost impossible, even if desired by the C.P.S.U. leaders. This is why, in Mao's historic Preface to "Introducing a Cooperative" written in early 1958, he described the fact that the Chinese were "poor" and "blank", as a good thing rather than a bad thing: poor people, he said, want change. And this is why, in Liu Shao-chi's words, the party was "putting forward revolutionary tasks in good time, so that there is no halfway halt in the revolutionary advance of the people," and so that the "revolutionary fervour of the masses will not subside with interruptions of the revolution." Thus, because the C.P.S.U. had adopted a "revisionist" line in domestic policy in 1957 (following the overthrow of the "anti-party" group who had opposed these new policies), and because the introduction of the communes was motivated partly by a reaction to the conservativization of Soviet society, an ideological dispute over the correct way to achieve communism was an almost inevitable result of the introduction of the communes in China.

A particularly important point in the Soviet re-organization of the Machine Tractor Stations, in the ending of compulsory deliveries, in the decision to reject the commune as an appropriate unit for future society, and in the decision to give more material incentive to Soviet citizens, was that all these pragmatic reforms were made in the name of Marxist-Leninism, and with reference specifically to achieving communism in the shortest possible time. In substantiating the pragmatic domestic reforms designed to stimulate production, Khrushchev inevitably had to interpret Marxist-Leninism in his own "creative" way and had to assume some positions which were heretical to dogmatic followers of Marxist-Leninism, such as the Chinese. It was because Khrushchev addressed himself in his reforms to substantiating his positions on the basis of the ideology common to both the Russians and the Chinese that there arose a real basis for dispute. The fact that Khrushchev had to "creatively interpret" the common ideology in order to support his policies, and that he also claimed to be laying down new postulates of general significance on the basis of the Soviet Union being the vanguard of the communist movement, also provided the groundwork for a dispute with the more ideologically orthodox Chinese.

There were many specific questions involved in the long debate which has gone on between the two parties since 1958, over the transition to communism. These have been

exposed in the evidence presented in the previous chapters, but have yet to be gathered together in a comprehensive whole, with the two sides to each question counterposed. Therefore, the specific areas of dispute and the opposing arguments supporting the Chinese and Soviet points of view will be taken into consideration and examined in some detail.

Issues Relating to Socialist Construction and the Transition to Communism

One of the chief, and most frequent charges, made by the Russians was that the Chinese had introduced higher production relations prematurely, before objective conditions were ripe. This had been one of the chief arguments used by Stalin in his critical appraisal of the communes introduced in the Soviet Union after the revolution. Stalin himself had laid down stringent conditions under which communes would be introduced in the future, and among these was that of material abundance. According to the Soviet view, because objective conditions were not ripe, the communes were imposed by party leaders, rather than being the spontaneous desire of the masses. It will be recalled that Teng Hsiao-ping, in his 10th Anniversary article specifically rebutted this argument, asserting that it was fallacious to say that the communes were the creation of a few men, and had been imposed on the peasants against their will. It was said on many occasions by the Chinese that the introduction of the communes was not "fortuitous", and that "it was in circumstances of a

great development of rural economic activity and a great heightening of the peasant's political understanding that the rural people's communes emerged."¹

At the very beginning of the original commune resolution, it was expressly noted that the economic leap forward and the rising ideological consciousness of the peasant formed the basis for the introduction of the communes. Of course, one of the important implications of the Chinese stand that the communes were totally in accordance with the level of production and that the collectives had become obsolete in the face of rapidly expanding production forces, was that the collectives in the Soviet Union did not correspond to the level of the productive forces, and that advance to higher production relations was required. This implication is most important since Stalin had said in 1952 that the collective system was already beginning to hamper the productive forces, and that changes in production relations must come soon. It was one of Khrushchev's specific revisions of Stalinist theory, that the collectives were hampered only by bad management, improper price system, and lack of incentive, and that they had not by any means exhausted their potential productive capacity. In fact only a few months before the communes were officially introduced, Khrushchev had declared that the collectives had "inexhaustible reserves

¹"Long Live the People's Communes," People's Daily, August 29, 1959; Appendix to Chou En-lai, Report on Adjusting the Major Targets of the 1959 Economic Plan (Peking, F.L.P., 1959), p. 41.

for advancing production."² This, then, was one of the points most hotly contended in the commune dispute: the Russians charging the Chinese with introducing higher production relations prematurely, high handedly and without an objective basis; and the Chinese defending the communes as "an inevitable product of historical development" brought on by the objective basis of the big leap forward, and implying that the collective system in the Soviet Union was long overdue for an advance to higher production relations.

A related aspect of the introduction of the communes was the Chinese claim that "change in old relations of production can facilitate the growth of productive force,"³ and that therefore, if the communes were introduced, a higher rate of production would be unleashed. The Soviet Union countered this argument with the declaration that the premature introduction of new production relations could only lead to a slowing of the process of production, rather than speeding it up. In attempting to pass over to communist production relations prematurely, the Chinese, it was said, were committing "Blanquist" errors. Believing that the state can accelerate the introduction of measures not yet matured,

²N. S. Khrushchev, "On Further Developing the Collective Farm System and Reorganizing the M.T.S.," Pravda, March 28, 1958; Current Digest of the Soviet Press, vol. X, no. 13, p. 14.

³Tan Chen-lin, "Factors that Bring Farm Production to a High Tide," Study, no. 6, March 18, 1958; ECMM, no. 131, June 9, 1958, p. 33.

just because it has the power to bring them into force, is a "leftist" deviation according to the C.P.S.U. The communes were an example of just such a deviation, committed by the Chinese leadership.

Another aspect of the communes which formed the basis of a particularly strong clash of opinions, and which was hotly contended, was the method of commodity distribution. From the very beginning of the commune dispute, one of the chief Soviet charges was that the Chinese communes, like the early communes in Russia, practiced an "egalitarianism" which was decidedly alien to Marxist-Leninism and which was absolutely impermissible. Again it is noteworthy that Stalin had particularly criticised the early Soviet communes for this deviation, calling "petty-bourgeois equalization" the "weakest side of the commune."⁴ Throughout the commune dispute, Khrushchev has repeatedly stressed the view that the Chinese concept of communism revolved around the nation of egalitarianism, and that the communes were of an "egalitarian-ascetic" nature. The reference is to the "free supply" system instituted in the communes, by which "grain is supplied gratis to members according to the standard stipulated by the state."⁵ Thus, the "free supply" system resulted in everyone receiving equal distribution of certain important items,

⁴J. Stalin, Report to the Seventeenth Congress of the C.P.S.U. (Moscow, F.L.P.H., 1951), p. 95.

⁵Lin Tieh, "The People's Commune Movement in Hopei" (Red Flag, no. 9, October 1, 1959), People's Communes in China (Peking, F.L.P., 1958), p. 54.

rather than according to his work, or according to his need. In the community mess halls, for instance, everyone got the same meal in a similar quantity, just as in the old egalitarian communes in the U.S.S.R. Among other things, the Soviet party charged that this egalitarian distribution negated the socialist distribution principle of "each according to his work" and substituted the petty bourgeois principle of "distribution according to mouths."

The Chinese never really successfully countered these arguments concerning the egalitarian measures practiced in the communes, and inherent in the free supply system, although they did assert that equal distribution in the supply sector of distribution was only a halfway house on the way to distribution according to needs--a transition phase. They argued that the wage sector of distribution was still governed by the principle of "each according to his work", and that therefore, on the whole, the dictates of Marxist principle were met. However, while declaring the wage-supply system to be in essence a form of "socialist distribution", they continued to maintain that the free supply system embodied "the first shoots of communism", and that it "contains the first shoots of the communist principle of 'to each according to his needs'."⁶ It was argued that the

⁶C.P.C. Central Committee, "Resolution on Some Questions Concerning the Rural People's Communes," Sixth Plenary Session of the Eighth Central Committee (Documents), (Peking, F.L.P., 1958), p. 21.

free meal system involved distribution according to need, since all the members of a family were entitled to eat in the dining hall: this meant that a large family received more food than a small one, even though both had one wage earner. Of course, the Soviet objection was that since the state set the standard of "need", making everyone "eat watery soup out of a common bowl", so to speak, this was a mockery of the principle of distribution according to need.

Related to the conflict over the "egalitarian" aspects of the communes, was the argument over the Chinese claim that they were introducing communist principles during the socialist period. According to the Chinese point of view, the free supply system was a bud of communism of the kind which Lenin had discussed in his essay, "A Great Beginning". Taking Lenin as their authority, the Chinese asserted that buds of communism could and would arise in socialist society; and as Lenin said, they "will not wither, they will grow and blossom into complete communism." In essence, their argument was that communist principles--and in this case, communist principles of distribution--"can be gradually realized,"⁷ starting at a relatively low level of the productive forces. They rejected the idea "that only after the complete realization of 'automation' and 'atomization',

⁷Hsu Li-chun, "Have We Already Reached the Stage of Communism?" Red Flag, November 16, 1958; ECMM, no. 156, 1958.

and other such conditions will its thorough enforcement be announced some day."⁸ The part-wage, part-supply system was seen as a method whereby communist distribution according to needs would be gradually increased as production gradually rose, with the wage sector based on distribution according to work, gradually tailing off. This process was seen as being hastened by the heightening of the political consciousness of the commune members.

In Soviet eyes, the premature introduction of the communist principle of distribution was an heretical attempt to leap into communism before conditions were ripe and to "forthwith institute communism, by-passing certain historical stages of development."⁹ As far as the C.P.S.U. was concerned, the Chinese leadership held to a position "according to which the main link in the transition to communism is distribution, the introduction without delay of communist principles in this sphere, irrespective of the level of production."¹⁰ But, as the Soviet party pointed out, the introduction of communist principles of distribution in the period of socialism, can "only impair the work of building

⁸Loc. cit.

⁹N. Matkovsky, "The Ideological Weapon of Communism," Pravda, June 12, 1960; Current Digest of the Soviet Press, vol. XII, no. 24, p. 4.

¹⁰A. Sobolev, "The Main Link in the Transition to Communism," World Marxist Review, vol. 3, no. 11, November 1960, p. 4.

communism."¹¹ Necessarily, the Russians argued, the premature introduction of distribution according to need, at a time when material abundance has not been achieved, can only result in egalitarian distribution, "would eat up our stock-piles, make extended reproduction impossible, and block the successful expansion of the economy."¹² Relying on Lenin as an authority, the C.P.S.U. asserted that a qualitative difference existed between the two distinct stages of socialism and communism, and that this qualitative difference was embodied in the two distinct principles governing distribution. Throughout the socialist period, it was argued, the principle of distribution must be 'to each according to his work', and that any attempt to pass over to the communist principle of distribution was an abortive attempt to skip the socialist stage--a stage which the Chinese had only embarked upon in 1956, having consummated the bourgeois-democratic phase. On a more practical plane, the Soviet charge that the premature introduction of distribution according to needs would lead to a depletion of reserves was fully substantiated by Chinese experience, as recorded in an earlier chapter. In the initial upsurge of commune enthusiasm, the commune members ate three good meals a day, and very quickly depleted the stores of grain created by the excellent 1958 harvest. Within a few months a severe

¹¹N. S. Khrushchev, Control Figures for the Economic Development of the U.S.S.R., 1959-1965 (Moscow, F.L.P.H., 1959), p. 115.

¹²Loc. cit.

shortage set in, and strict rationing had to be enforced. The ideological and practical arguments of the Soviet leaders were thus extremely forceful.

On the other hand, the Chinese argument that there must be no "Great Wall" between socialism and communism, and that communist forms and principles must be introduced as soon as conditions allow, had important significance for the C.P.S.U. leadership, since it amounted to a criticism of the slow Soviet advance towards communism. The question of why the C.P.S.U. had not begun to introduce a more communistic system of distribution now that it had embarked on the phase of "communist construction" was one of current debate within the Soviet Union; and the Chinese arguments could do nothing but strengthen the position of those who questioned Khrushchev's apparent reluctance to introduce qualitative change. As Khrushchev noted at the 21st Congress:

In articles and lectures, some scientific workers allege that distribution according to work signifies application of bourgeois law to a socialist society. They ask whether the time has not come to shift from this principle to equitable distribution of the social product among all working members of society. We cannot agree to that.¹³

Thus, it can be seen that the Chinese move to introduce a system of distribution which involved elements of the communist principle of distribution, and upon a material base much less

¹³Loc. cit.

advanced than that existing in the Soviet Union, gave direct ideological support to those elements in the Soviet Union who were challenging Khrushchev's conservatism. The Chinese specifically raised the question of whether the new leaders of the C.P.S.U. had brought the Soviet revolution to a halt at the socialist stage, and had begun to substitute liberalism for Marxist-Leninism.

Khrushchev's argument was that the communist principles of distribution could be not introduced until such time as absolute material abundance had been achieved. His contention was that:

The main condition ensuring an abundance of material and spiritual benefits for the people, without which it is impossible to change over from socialist to communist distribution, is the creation of the material and technical base of communism.¹⁴

Thus the introduction of the principle "to each according to his needs" has been postponed in the Soviet Union for an indefinite period. It should be recalled that the Chinese specifically repudiated the view of those who stress "automation" and "atomization" as prerequisites to implementing communist distribution principles, and thus firmly rejected the Soviet position.

¹⁴N. S. Khrushchev, "The Present Stage of Communist Construction: Pravda, March 6, 1962; Current Digest of the Soviet Press, vol. XIV, no. 8, p. 4.

Fundamentally the Chinese attitude is that the socialist principle of distribution should gradually be superseded as production of certain commodities achieves a reasonable level, and not introduced all at once in the distant future when automation and abundance have been achieved. Moreover, they assert that the buds of communist distribution should be encouraged to develop even in socialist society: this, they say, was Lenin's position in regard to the buds of communism. The Soviet position is diametrically opposed to this, and criticizes the Chinese for implementing communist distribution prematurely, in the period of socialism. According to Khrushchev and the C.P.S.U., any negation of the principle "to each according to his work"--even in the period of communist construction--will jeopardize labour productivity, use up reserves, and slow down the creation of the material and technical base needed for the transition to pure communism.

A closely related point of dispute between the two parties, again arising out of the introduction of the people's communes was the question of material and moral incentives. In the previous chapter it was demonstrated how the Chinese Communist Party laid special emphasis on the role of the "communist style of work" in the communes, and upon voluntary labour and moral incentives rather than material incentives. They stressed that while material incentives were necessary during the period of socialism, they should be

gradually phased out, and that the ideological consciousness of the peasants and workers should be raised by a mass campaign organized by the party. Their motto was that "ideological and political work can produce iron and coal and grain." To the radical elements of the Chinese leadership, material incentive is something "bourgeois", something decidedly inferior to moral "communist" incentive, and something to be discarded at the earliest possible moment. In this light, the free supply system introduced into the communes was a move away from material incentive, rendered possible through the upsurge in ideological consciousness among the peasantry.

This negation of material incentive by the Chinese was of the most bitterly contested aspects of the Chinese communes, and one which continues to receive special attention from the leader of the C.P.S.U. It should be noted that the chief reason for this is that the dominant aspect of Khrushchev's agricultural reforms is his stress on increased incentives. Material incentives have formed the foundation of Khrushchev's program to increase production in the Soviet Union; thus, this question is of vital interest to the C.P.S.U.

Khrushchev's argument against the Chinese stress on ideological consciousness and moral incentives was chiefly that the "weakening of incentives (is) inept and wrong."¹⁵ He

¹⁵N. S. Khrushchev, "For New Victories for the World Communist Movement," World Marxist Review, vol. 4, no. 1, January 1961, p. 9.

argued that any negation of the "Leninist principle of material incentive" would lead to a slowing of the pace of production, and a lengthening of the time taken to achieve communist abundance:

Neglect of the material needs of the working people and putting emphasis chiefly on enthusiasm and political consciousness, on social and moral forms of encouragement and reward, (are) detrimental to the growth of production and raising the standard of living.¹⁶

Khrushchev, in countering the Chinese argument that material incentives were a lower form of incentive than moral and ideological ones, stressed that it is "incorrect to counterpose material incentives to moral ones, and material interest to ideological-educational work."¹⁷ He concluded that "any counterposing of them can only harm the cause of communist construction." Moreover, he pointed out that Lenin had specifically noted that the building of socialism and communism can be achieved "not on enthusiasm directly but with the help of enthusiasm born of a great revolution, on personal interest, on personal incentive, on cost accounting."¹⁸ In short, the "enthusiasm of the masses" stressed so much by the Chinese, must rest on the principle of material incentive.

¹⁶Loc. cit.

¹⁷N. S. Khrushchev, "The Present Stage of Communist Construction," op. cit., p. 5.

¹⁸Loc. cit.

On the question of the egalitarian distribution implemented in the communes, the Soviet leader emphasized that such measures were contrary to the principle of material incentive. "Distribution according to work," he argued, "ensures a material incentive, an interest in the results of production," and "stimulates productivity, higher skill and technical progress."¹⁹ If one neglected to encourage greater effort through material incentives, there would be a slackening of labour enthusiasm, Khrushchev declared, and the advance to communism would come to a halt:

Lenin forthrightly stated that without a material incentive giving every worker an interest in the results of his work, there could be no question of raising the country's productive capacity or of building a socialist economy and leading the millions towards communism.²⁰

With the economic setbacks which plagued the Chinese economy in the three years following the introduction of the communes, the leaders of the C.P.S.U. claimed their warnings to have come true. They asserted that China's economic problems were a result of the violations of the principle of material incentive, and other "objective laws":

the real reason for the dire state of the Chinese economy lies in the fact that Leninist principles of managing the socialist economy were flagrantly

¹⁹N. S. Khrushchev, Control Figures, op. cit., p. 123.

²⁰Ibid., p. 121.

violated there and grave mistakes were made for which the Chinese people are now having to pay.²¹

Similarly, it could be pointed out that the gradual revival of the Chinese economy since 1962 coincides with the reinstatement of material incentives and with the virtual abandonment of the communes.

In replying to Soviet charges of negating material incentives and being overly concerned with ideological consciousness, the Chinese have criticized the C.P.S.U. for too great a concern with establishing the material prerequisites to communism, and of neglecting "spiritual" aspects such as moral incentives and communist consciousness, which are equally necessary to communism. Recognizing this serious charge, Chairman Khrushchev posed the following question in the course of the Sino-Soviet commune polemics:

Do we not belittle the role of communist consciousness and ideological conviction when we present communism as a cup of abundance to which all have access and from which they will all be able to satisfy fully their material and spiritual requirements?²²

His answer was that "Communism cannot be conceived as a table with empty plates at which sit 'highly conscious' and 'fully equal' people."²³ In short, his argument is that factors

²¹Soviet Government Statement of September 21, 1963 (London, Soviet Booklets, 1963), p. 13.

²²N. S. Khrushchev, "The Present Stage of Communist Construction," op. cit., p. 3.

²³Loc. cit.

of the mind such as "communist consciousness" are secondary to material factors, and that it is perfectly permissible to sacrifice these secondary factors for the sake of achieving material abundance: since material abundance is the chief prerequisite, then nothing should stand in the way of achieving this abundance in the shortest possible time. In the course of events, he suggests, these other factors will take care of themselves, and will be fulfilled on the basis of the achieved material abundance.

Another charge made by the C.P.S.U. against the communes in the course of the polemics was that they overly stressed the public interest at the expense of individual interest. Accordingly the spokesman for the C.P.S.U. counterposed "the Leninist cooperation plan" to communes and argued that the communes undermined the basic principle of Lenin's plan: material incentives combined with personal and public interest. By personal interest, or as Stalin put it, "the individual everyday interests of the collective farmers," was meant such things as private ownership of poultry, small livestock, a cow, grain, or household land. In the Soviet collective farms, small private plots were still thriving at the time of the introduction of communes in China and the "appurtenances of life" were still retained in private ownership by the peasants: thus a certain degree of individual interest was maintained.

In the communes of China, on the other hand, private interest was almost entirely subordinated to public interest. Private plots were turned over to the commune, and their produce made available to the communal mess halls; live-stock belonging to the peasants and privately owned poultry was generally collectivized; private fruit trees were expropriated for public use; and even houses, stoves and utensils were collectivized in some communes. The socialization of items such as household goods not classifiable as means of production was, in the Soviet view, alien to Marxism. The eclipsing of individual interest in the socialist phase, in terms of small private holdings, was in the Soviet view, a violation of Lenin's cooperative plan. In the Soviet view, private holdings should not be arbitrarily socialized and confiscated by the commune or the state; these private holdings will be given up by the peasants "of their own accord",²⁴ at such a time as collective farming can produce the necessary abundance, to make supplementary farming unnecessary. The whole emphasis of the Soviet leaders was upon voluntariness and the bankruptcy of a policy of coercion. Indeed, Lenin had stressed on numerous occasions the need to persuade rather than coerce the peasantry, saying that "coercion would ruin our whole cause" and asserting that:

²⁴Program of the C.P.S.U. (Moscow, F.L.P.H., 1961), p. 77.

Prolonged educational work is what is required. We have to give to the peasant, who not only in our country, but all over the world, is a practical man and a realist, concrete examples to prove that the commune is the best possible thing.²⁵

Khrushchev's argument was that by force or example over a long period of time, collective production would prove its superiority by satisfying the needs of the people fully, and would render private production obsolete.

In the Chinese view this policy was tantamount to retaining small scale capitalism in the rural areas, and amounted to a refusal to consummate the socialist revolution, since the chief task of the socialist period is to socialize all the means of production. As one C.P.C. leader pointed out:

. . . the people's commune movement clearly foreshadowed the imminent and final extinction of capitalist economy and individual economy in our country. This evoked the enmity of reactionaries both at home and abroad and of the modern revisionists.²⁶

The collectivization of the remnants of private property by the communes was an exceptionally important aspect in terms of its ideological significance. Its importance was twofold. First, it drew sharp attention to the fact that the Soviet Union continued to allow private

²⁵V. I. Lenin, Selected Works Volume II (Moscow, F.L.P.H., 1947), p. 462.

²⁶Li Fu-chun, "Raise High the Red Flag of the General Line and Continue to March Forward" (Peking, F.L.P., 1960), p. 3.

ownership of the means of production, despite the fact that it claimed to have achieved socialism and to have progressed to the stage of building communism. By stressing the Marxist principle that all private ownership of the means of production must be abolished, the Chinese party openly exposed the obvious lag of the production relations of Soviet society and cast serious doubt on the ideological conviction of the Soviet leaders. Secondly, by abolishing the last remnants of individual ownership, the Chinese Communist Party was clearly placing production relations at a more advanced stage than those existing in the Soviet Union, and therefore providing a direct challenge to the Soviet lead in the advance towards communist society--if not in standards of living, then in maturity of production relations. In short, through the communes, the Chinese were the first nation to achieve the absolute abolition of the remnants of capitalism and of private ownership. In terms of Marxist ideology, this gave them a claim to be in the lead, in actual terms, in the transition to communism.

Closely related to the question of the abolition of the private sector of the economy, was the question of the evolution of collective property into property of the whole people. This again was a matter of the transition to higher forms of socialist production relations. In the spring of 1958, shortly before the introduction of the communes in

China, Chairman Khrushchev had conceded that "public property is the highest form of property." This is how Lenin understood it.²⁷ Moreover, Khrushchev specifically declared that "public property has a higher, and collective property a lower, degree of socialization."²⁸ However, Khrushchev's reorganization of the Machine Tractor Stations, and the sale of state machinery to the collectives, involved a transfer of a section of the means of production from a higher level to a lower level--to the collective level. Thus, not only were the socialist property forms not advancing to a higher stage in the Soviet Union, but they were taking steps backward.

It was in this context that the communes were introduced in China. In themselves, they embodied a higher form of property and production relations since the collective unit had expanded greatly until it encompassed a whole township. Moreover, some communes federated on a county scale which was an even greater advance towards the realization of the ideal of public property. But more importantly, the original commune resolution stressed that China would achieve "ownership of the whole people" universally within just a few years, and characterized the communes as already having

²⁷N. S. Khrushchev, "On Further Developing the Collective Farm System," op. cit., p. 11.

²⁸Loc. cit.

"some elements of ownership of the people as a whole." These latter elements included such things as stage banks and factories which were placed under the jurisdiction of the commune. Moreover, even at the time of the initial formation of the communes on a universal basis in the rural areas, it was declared that already "ownership of the means of production by the whole people has been instituted by a few people's communes on the basis of the full agreement of their members." As for the rest of the communes, it was declared that:

The transition from collective ownership to ownership by the people as a whole is a process, the completion of which may take less time--three to four years--in some places and longer--five to six years or even longer--in others.²⁹

The Soviet position in the policy clash over collective and public property, was that the Chinese were attempting to advance prematurely towards property of the whole people. Answering the challenge to Soviet policy implied in the Chinese determination to achieve the extermination of collective property within a very few years, Chairman Khrushchev charged that:

Property forms cannot be changed at will. They develop in accordance with economic laws and depend on the nature and level of the productive

²⁹"Resolution of the Central Committee of the C.P.C. on the Establishment of People's Communes in the Rural Areas," People's Communes in China (Peking, F.L.P., 1958), p. 7.

forces. The collective farm system fully accords with the present level and development requirements of the productive forces in agriculture.³⁰

In the Soviet view, elements of ownership of the whole people would gradually increase in the collective farm system as a natural course of events, gradually bringing "closer together the collective farm and public forms of socialist property." According to the leadership of the C.P.S.U.:

. . . The features characteristic of the property of the whole people arise and take root in co-operative-collective farm property. Life itself is bringing the national and co-operative forms of property closer together, with the ultimate perspective of the emergence of a single communist property³¹

Thus, the C.P.S.U. rejected the stand of the Chinese party that an extensive program must be undertaken to reorganize rural society in order to make the transition to property of the whole people. According to the arguments put forward by Khrushchev, this was not an overly important matter since "Lenin never counterposed public property and co-operative property" and looked on both as socialist forms of property. Khrushchev thus denied the "contradiction" between the two forms of property, and charged the Chinese with attempting to change property relations before the appropriate level of

³⁰N. S. Khrushchev, Control Figures, op. cit., p. 124.

³¹N. S. Khrushchev, On the Communist Program (Moscow, F.L.P.H., 1961), p. 77.

productive forces had arisen. This was the crux of his position in criticisms of this aspect of the people's communes.

It was shown in the previous chapter that the communes were specifically designed with the idea in mind of overcoming the distinctions between mental and manual labour, between worker and peasant and between town and country. These were problems which had virtually been ignored by the C.P.S.U. before the communes were introduced, despite the fact that Marx and Lenin had made the overcoming of these contradictions a prerequisite to achieving communism. With the Chinese laying so much emphasis on the role of the communes in overcoming these contradictions in socialist society, it became necessary for the Soviet Union either to accept the Chinese solution to these problems, or to reject the commune and set up a realistic alternative policy. The C.P.S.U. chose the latter course.

It argued that a massive reorganization of society such as that undertaken in the communes was wrong and unnecessary. Since the "main link" in the transition to communism and the chief prerequisite was material abundance (in the Soviet view) therefore the solution to the three "contradictions" must be based on the process of "laying the material foundation, or on the basis of it." In other words, the distinctions between mental and manual labour,

worker and peasant, town and country, could only properly be erased on the basis of a very high productivity and an advanced technology. Thus, in the Soviet view, two conditions are necessary before the distinction between mental and manual labour can be overcome:

First, the scientific and technological revolution and above all, comprehensive automation of production, as a result of which labour itself is transformed. Manual labour will be made easy and the monotony of some kinds of mental work eliminated. Second, the carrying through of a new stage in the cultural revolution, as a result of which people's consciousness will be deepened and all will be in a position to acquire a higher education.³²

Thus, technology will provide the solution to the contradictions between the two types of labour. In criticising the Chinese position which stresses the need for the same individual to do both mental and manual work, the C.P.S.U. spokesmen have argued that "if scientists, artists, qualified engineers, and designers are made to do manual work this will not get rid of the distinctions between the two types of labour."³³ Moreover, it has been suggested that "using highly qualified people for low-efficiency work runs counter to the needs of the economy and is of no benefit to society, for it will receive fewer material and cultural values." This view, of course, is directly contrary

³²A. Sobolev, op. cit., p. 8.

³³Loc. cit.

to the view of the Chinese leaders who see job mobility as the solution to the problem; it is also contrary to the directives laid down by Engels and Marx who did not advocate making all work of one type, but advocated the free moving of individuals between a wide variety of jobs, both manual and mental. Thus, the Soviet party's position is ideologically vulnerable in the light of communist theory and is a relatively weak response to the challenge of the communes.

As far as overcoming the differences between worker and peasant is concerned, the Chinese program within the commune system was to have the peasants engage in industrial activity in the backyard furnace program, to have the peasants work on irrigation and construction projects, to decentralize industry and encourage native factories, and to have workers engage in small-scale agriculture. Again, the Soviet party denied that such a radical program was necessary and emphasized that the correct solution to overcoming the differences between worker and peasant would be found in mechanization and automation whereas the Chinese leaders stressed the need of reorganizing society and the need for mass movements to overcome the distinction between worker and peasant. The C.P.S.U. denied this need and charged that such an unnecessary program could only upset the economy and cause inefficiency and retard production.

The third distinction which it is intended that the communes overcome is the distinction between town and country.

By taking in both urban and rural areas, both industry and agriculture, both town and country, and merging them into one social unit, the Chinese expect to develop the future unit of communist society. The Chinese argue that purely agricultural units such as collective farms and state farms merely perpetuate the differences between town and country and that a new social form--the commune-- is required. The Soviets, of course, reject this argument and deny that it is necessary to reorganize society into communes in order to erase the differences between town and country. In the view of the C.P.S.U., the aim of communists should be "to convert the collective farm villages into modern urban-type communities supplied with all the latest municipal and cultural facilities,"³⁴ and deny the need for any kind of decentralization of the cities. According to Chairman Khrushchev:

the merger of collective-farm-co-operative property with state property into an integral public property is . . . the solution to the cardinal problem of bridging the essential difference between town and country.³⁵

The question of family life in the communes of China was one of the chief aspects seized upon in the Western world as deserving comment and criticism. The reaction of the

³⁴N. S. Khrushchev, Control Figures, op. cit., p. 126.

³⁵Loc. cit.

C.P.S.U. was not greatly different, and during the commune polemics, the Soviet Union made it known that any negation of family life was to be deplored, and that the policy of replacing family life with collective life was not at all consistent with the ideology of Marxist-Leninism. As Khrushchev pointed out in his speech to the 22nd Congress:

People who would say that the significance of the family drops during the transition to communism, and that it disappears entirely with time, are absolutely wrong. In fact, the family will grow stronger under communism. Family relationships will be completely disencumbered of material considerations and will become very pure and lasting.³⁶

In other words, the Chinese policy of negating family life and of undermining the family unit could not be justified, and was a particularly undesirable aspect of the communes. The Chinese countered with the argument that their intention was only to destroy bourgeois family relations and feudal aspects of the family and not necessarily the family as such. Nevertheless, the C.P.S.U. maintained a critical attitude towards the communes' negative policy towards the traditionally closely knit Chinese family system.

Related to the fate of the family in the communes, is the wider question of personal freedom. As has been pointed out in previous chapters, one of the most striking aspects of the communes was the accent on tight military-like

³⁶N. S. Khrushchev, On the Communist Program, op. cit., p. 93.

discipline and on total control of the members' existence; in other words, its totalitarian aspect. It has been pointed out that, whereas the Soviet Union was proceeding on a course of gradual liberalization and was introducing more and more freedom in place of the totalitarianism of the Stalin era, the Chinese were moving in exactly the opposite direction through the communes. Such a policy could hardly avoid coming in for Soviet criticism. Thus, the C.P.S.U. declared that "the transition to communism means the fullest extension of personal freedom and the rights of Soviet citizens,"³⁷ rather than a narrowing of them as occurred in the communes. On numerous occasions, Mao was accused by the Russians of wanting to employ policies and tactics characteristic of the "cult of personality" period in the Soviet Union. Thus, the totalitarianism of the communes was another important point of dispute between the two parties.

In the Soviet Union there existed "dogmatic" elements within the party who espoused ideological views similar if not identical to those of Mao Tse-tung. Thus, the C.P.C.'s introduction of the communes, which embodied many principles of Marxist-Leninism either ignored or revised by Khrushchev, gave these orthodox elements a rallying point and a voice of ideological authority which could not be silenced. The

³⁷Program of the C.P.S.U., op. cit., p. 96.

fact that the anti-party group of Molotov, Kaganovitch and Malenkov had opposed Khrushchev's "revisionist" domestic policies, and had only just been overcome when the communes were introduced made the Chinese display of dogmatic orthodoxy especially inopportune.

It should be noted that particularly important was the fact that in both China and the Soviet Union dissident elements were allowed to remain in the party without being liquidated. In Russia, for instance, as a reaction to the oppression of the Stalin era, even "anti-party" elements like that headed by Molotov were not immediately expelled from the party, and thus were in a position to take advantage of the ideological support offered by a strong fraternal party. In China, the same sort of situation exists on the strength of Mao Tse-tung's policy of "treating the disease to save the patient" and of looking at intra-party disputes as "contradictions among the people" which must not be solved by force.

Thus, the threat of the communes, and the principles they represented, is very real to the leadership of the C.P.S.U. which has embarked upon what the more dogmatic Marxists consider to be a liberal, revisionist approach to the question of achieving communism. And to the Chinese leaders, Soviet support of the "anti-party" group--consciously or otherwise--is an important factor to be reckoned with,

which explains in part why the C.P.C. has attacked Soviet domestic policies. For both parties the existence of "anti-party" elements has been one of the key factors in the commune controversy.

Questions Involving Ideological Authority

Besides the questions concerning the correct path to communism, the commune controversy raised a number of important questions regarding ideological authority in matters of domestic construction. Two aspects, particularly entered into the dispute: the applicability of "Soviet experience", and the permissible deviation from the Soviet model under the guise of "national peculiarities".

The question of Soviet experience played an important part in the Soviet criticisms of the communes, and in the attempts of the Peng Teh-huai faction to have the communes abandoned. The C.P.S.U. charged that the Chinese "did not take into account the experience of our party and state"³⁸ in regard to communes; and the Peng Teh-huai group "attempted to negate the people's communes on the grounds of the historical experience of the Soviet Union and the absence of communalization in other socialist countries."³⁹ The Chinese

³⁸ Soviet Government Letter, op. cit., p. 13.

³⁹ Szechuan Daily, September 22, 1959; Current Scene Reports on Communist China (October 1959-April 1961) (Hong Kong, P.O. Box 5217, Kowloon, 1961), p. 7.

reply to the charge of not taking Soviet experience into account, was twofold. First they asserted that "we should consistently keep on studying the experiences of the Soviet Union, but we are opposed to the unanalyzed and dogmatic study and acceptance of Soviet experience."⁴⁰ This meant that in the final analysis it was the Chinese party who would make the decision as to whether Soviet experience was applicable, not the C.P.S.U. Secondly, the Chinese took pains to point out that the Chinese and Soviet communes were different in nature and were introduced under different conditions, and for this reason Soviet experience was not applicable. The C.P.C. argued that while the Soviet communes were communist in nature and purely agricultural, the Chinese communes were socialist in nature and were concerned with aspects of society and the economy other than just agriculture. On the matter of differing conditions, it was pointed out that the Soviet communes were launched before the socialist revolution into the rural areas had been consummated and when socialist consciousness was at a low level. In China, on the other hand, ideological consciousness was high, collectivization had been already achieved, and the party was in firm control of the peasantry. These differences, it was claimed, were solid reasons for not strictly abiding by Soviet experience and for going ahead with the communes. It can thus be seen that "Soviet experience" carries enough ideological

⁴⁰Loc. cit.

weight to be used by dissident Chinese factions and to be respected and "creatively" applied by the party leaders. However, in the long run, it is the party leadership who decides whether Soviet experience is applicable under Chinese conditions and thus whether Soviet experience carries any ideological authority. This is the lesson of the commune controversy.

The other general question involving ideological authority revolves around the question of how far "general laws" can be stretched in a party's "creative application" of them to meet "national peculiarities". In the Moscow Declaration of fraternal parties in 1957, and again in the Statement of the 1960 meeting, it was emphasized that while general laws of socialist construction must be creatively applied ("Mechanical copying of the policies and tactics of the communist parties of other countries . . . is bound to harm the cause of socialism"),⁴¹

exaggeration of the role of these peculiarities, and departure under the pretext of national peculiarities, from the universal Marxist-Leninist truth regarding socialism . . . construction will inevitably harm the socialist cause.⁴²

⁴¹"Declaration of the Conference of Representatives of Communist and Workers' Parties," Pravda, November 22, 1957; Current Digest of the Soviet Press, vol. IX, no. 47, p. 5.

⁴²Loc. cit.

Nowhere does it state in the Declaration or the Statement, who is to decide when a party has overstepped the bounds; this leaves the question of ideological authority open. Since this is the case, although the C.P.S.U. expressed the view at the 21st Congress that "the question of methods and practice in socialist construction is the domestic affair of each country,"⁴³ the C.P.S.U. has repeatedly implied during the commune polemics that the C.P.C. has implemented domestic policies, including communes, which cannot be substantiated on the grounds of national peculiarities, and which have overstepped the bounds justifiable under the "creative application" of the general laws of socialist construction.

In practice, the C.P.C. has repeatedly used the argument that the communes, although deviating from the Soviet path, can be explained on the basis of national peculiarities.

In perspective, it can be seen that the commune controversy has raised many questions concerning ideological authority, and concerning who has the power to be the interpreter of Marxist-Leninism in matters relating to the transition to communism. Most of these questions remain unsolved, and separate parties go their own way in questions of interpretation. As it stands, the two largest parties--

⁴³N. S. Khrushchev, Control Figures, op. cit., p. 136.

the C.P.S.U. and the C.P.C. stand as opposing sources of doctrinal interpretation on questions of the transition to communism and other parties look either to one or the other for ideological leadership. This has the effect of splitting the camp even further into two ideological factions.

Questions Relating to the Wider Dispute

The third set of important issues raised by the communes are issues relating to other areas of the Sino-Soviet dispute, and notably to the dispute over revolution and peaceful coexistence. According to Chairman Khrushchev's "revisionist" point of view, the communist bloc should not risk war for the sake of advancing the communist revolution in the capitalist countries. On the other hand, he advocates in the place of revolution, peaceful coexistence and peaceful competition with the West. His argument is that by showing the innate superiority of the socialist system, the capitalist countries can be won over to the communist cause by peaceful means. This side of Khrushchev's stand should be strongly emphasized, since it has an important bearing on his attitude towards the Chinese communes. It should be realized that if one rules out revolution as a means to achieve communism in the capitalist world, the only effective weapon left to the dedicated communist is the force of example: this is the point of view assumed by the Soviet leader.

In this light it can be seen what exceptional importance attaches to the speed with which socialist societies advance with respect to capitalist countries, and to the popular image of the socialist countries among workers in capitalist countries. This is especially true of the U.S.S.R. which stands as a model to the advanced capitalist countries, and of China which stands as a socialist model to the underdeveloped nations of the world. Thus it is no wonder that the C.P.S.U. criticized the Chinese for introducing such a damaging policy as the commune program. Not only did the communes evoke an image of totalitarianism in the capitalist world, but they also (so the Soviet charge) were responsible for dislocating the Chinese economy and for crippling production for several years, thus doing irreparable damage to the whole socialist cause.

As the Sino-Soviet dispute has developed, the C.P.S.U. has put more and more stress on the need for the communist countries to make their societies attractive models which will appeal to proletarians in the non-communist world. The following statement shows just how far the C.P.S.U. has gone in substituting the policy of "the force of example" for revolution:

To wage a struggle with imperialism in deeds,
to safeguard peace and to help in every possible
way to advance the world liberation movement
means for the socialist countries, above all--

to develop socialist society successfully,
in the first place steadily advancing the
economy.⁴⁴

The need to display a steadily advancing economy, of course, is essential to a victory for the Soviet bloc in peaceful competition with the West. Disruptions such as those which followed on the heels of the communes in China can do the bloc irreparable harm. The other facet--that of making bloc countries as appealing as possible in their way of life--is also clearly set out in Soviet statements:

The prototype of the future of all mankind is being created in the socialist countries. And the peoples of our countries are called upon by all their activities to make this prototype even more attractive, so that every working person who looks into the way of life in any socialist country can say: 'Here is my splendid tomorrow which is worth working for unstintingly.'⁴⁵

Again, the implication for the Chinese is clear. The totalitarian commune system, based upon military discipline, is hardly anyone's idea of a "splendid tomorrow".

Thus, it can be seen that the communes had ideological significance far beyond merely questions concerning the correct road to communism. The fact that the Chinese leaders still intend to push ahead with the communes when economic conditions improve, indicates that disagreement over the matter of making Chinese society "attractive" for the sake

⁴⁴"Let Us Strengthen the Unity of the Socialist Movement," Pravda, January 7, 1963; Current Digest of the Soviet Press, vol. XV, no. 2.

⁴⁵Loc. cit.

of the non-violent victory of communism in the capitalist world will become increasingly intense in the years ahead.

Another facet of the communes which appears to have a bearing on the dispute over war and peaceful coexistence, is their military significance. Two specific features of the communes have important implications in this regard: the people's militia and economic decentralization. Both these factors have been pointed out by the Chinese party as important to national defence in the event of an attack by Chiang Kai-shek and/or the imperialists. From the Soviet viewpoint, it is likely that the military significance of the communes was surely realized and interpreted as a move by Mao Tse-tung to prepare the nation for a war against the imperialists--especially in the light of his statement at the 1957 Moscow conference that:

In China construction has not got underway in earnest. If the imperialists impose war on us, we shall be prepared to terminate construction; let us first have a trial of strength and then return to construction.⁴⁶

With the signing of the "Agreement of New Technology for National Defence" in the fall of 1957, which made provision for giving the Chinese the information required to manufacture atomic weapons, the people's communes must have taken on ominous significance to the C.P.S.U. There is a distinct

⁴⁶Quoted by Soviet Government in, Soviet Government Statement (September 21, 1963), op. cit., p. 2.

possibility that the military implications of the communes were instrumental in convincing the Russians to renege on the Agreement and refuse to supply China with samples of atomic weapons.

The people's militia was also an aspect of the communes which was strongly criticized by the Russians in the course of the controversy. According to the Chinese, Khrushchev declared at the 1960 Bucharest meeting that "an organized militia is not an army but cannon fodder."⁴⁷ In making this statement, Khrushchev was arguing that in modern warfare it is atomic weapons and combat planes which determine military strength, not manpower as the Chinese have suggested. Thus, the clash over the people's militia involves the wider question of how one determines one's own strength and the strength of the imperialists whether indeed the West is a paper tiger, and what the result of an open conflict with imperialism would be.

Perhaps one of the most significant factors, linking the commune controversy with the disputed issues of war, revolution, and peaceful competition which now dominate the Sino-Soviet dispute, is that of the "anti-party" factions. It has been shown that the anti-commune faction in the C.P.C. was led by men who held similar "revisionist" views on international questions to those of the C.P.S.U. leadership.

⁴⁷Loc. cit.

This situation was immensely important since it meant that by supporting the "anti-party" group's attempts to seize the leadership over the commune issue, the C.P.S.U. also had the chance to vault into power those members of the Chinese party sympathetic to the Soviet policy of peaceful coexistence and peaceful competition. This may partly explain why the commune issue has continued to be fanned into flame by the C.P.S.U., despite the considerable ideological retreat undertaken on this issue by the Chinese leader.

By the same token, "dogmatic" elements in the C.P.S.U. oppose (as do the Chinese) Khrushchev's revisionist policies, on both the domestic and international scene. In the case of the anti-party Molotov, Malenkov, Kaganovitch group, it has been revealed by the C.P.S.U. that this group "waged a struggle against the Leninist line of the party, against the political course adopted by the 20th Congress and against the party's urgent and vitally needed measures in domestic and foreign policy, and slipped onto a policy of schismatic activity."⁴⁸

Thus, support given by the Chinese to Molotov and his sympathizers on ideological questions concerning domestic construction, also proved to be support to the group which stands opposed to peaceful coexistence. This gives the Chinese replies to Soviet criticism of the communes much wider ideological significance than would appear on the surface.

⁴⁸O. Kuusinen, "The Charter of Unity of the World Communist Movement," Pravda, November 22, 1958; Current Digest of the Soviet Press, vol. X, no. 47, p. 40.

Conclusion

In perspective it can be seen that the commune dispute involved a whole range of ideological issues, and was not confined only to questions involving the transition to communism. Also included in the dispute were issues of ideological authority, and issues relating to the vitally important dispute over war, peaceful coexistence, revolution and peaceful competition. Moreover, the existence of "anti-party" groups within both parties was instrumental in taking the dispute from a merely theoretical plane to a practical level, and in increasing the debate's significance.

It can be seen that the commune debate is far from over, both because the Chinese are determined to push ahead with the communes as conditions permit, and because of the communes' relation to the wider aspects of the Sino-Soviet dispute such as war, peaceful coexistence, revolution and peaceful competition. Indeed, it can be expected that in 1965 when the C.P.C. plans to renew the commune program, the issues involved in the commune dispute will again erupt with increased vigor. Moreover, as the C.P.S.U. continues to depart "creatively" more and more from the orthodox Marxist concept of future communist society, Peking will increasingly become the center of "bookish-dogmatic communism" whose vision is still of the utopia of Engels and Marx, and whose followers consider themselves to be "defenders of the faith".

Should the commune system prove in the long run to be capable of advancing economic growth at exceptionally high speed, then the ideological strength of the Chinese position would be remarkably strengthened. Given also the possibility of a prolonged slump in Soviet economic growth, the people's commune may become a much greater threat to the leadership of the C.P.S.U. and their "creative" policies: for Khrushchev's policies have been substantiated chiefly on the grounds of economic pragmatism and the promise of greater abundance. If the Chinese model should prove over a longer period of time to create faster economic growth than the Soviet system, then the ground would virtually be cut from under the C.P.S.U. leaders--just as the Soviet leaders hope that their own rate of economic advance will undermine the appeal of the capitalist system in the West.

At the very least, in a situation where the commune system produced good results--results superior to those in the Soviet Union, then the Chinese model would become increasingly attractive to the underdeveloped nations of Asia, Africa and Latin America despite the fact that it embodied certain totalitarian characteristics. In the communist world, a vindication of the commune system over a number of years could only strengthen the ideological position of the "dogmatic" section of the world communist movement vis-a-vis, the revisionist sector, and could have important effects on the balance of power, both within individual parties, and within the communist system as a whole.

In the debate over the communes, the Soviet Union has won only a tentative victory--its ideological position over the communes apparently being supported, and its predictions borne out, by China's economic failures in the three years following the introduction of the communes. However, to the degree that the Chinese economic setbacks were indeed the result of natural calamities and the withdrawal of Soviet technicians rather than as the result of factors inherent in the commune system, the Chinese people's communes may yet prove Khrushchev and the C.P.S.U. to be wrong.

Thus, the dispute over the commune system and the ideological issues--both internal and international--which it represents, is by no means concluded. The Soviet Union has won a temporary victory; but the Chinese have yet to admit defeat.

With its vital connections to the Sino-Soviet dispute as a whole and with its immensely important independent ideological significance, the controversy over the people's communes and the principles which they represent, should continue as an important issue within the communist movement for many years to come.

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