

Tirana builds an Internationale

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The struggle against modern revisionism

“Marxism-Leninism gives us the right to say our word and this law can take nobody away from us neither by political and economic pressure nor by threats or etiquettes which one fastens to us.”

(Enver Hoxha at the Meeting of 81 Communist and Workers' parties in Moscow on November 16, 1960)

In the early 1960s the dominant established and largely pro-Soviet leadership expelled communists like Jacques Grippa in Belgium¹ who sought to build a movement around the perception of Soviet Union's rejection of Marxism's main ideological tenets. The majority of organisations were small and isolated formed by members opposed to the 'revisionism' of the Communist Parties: exemplified in Britain by Michael McCreery's Committee to Defeat Revisionism, for Communist Unity and the Kommunistisk Arbejdsrets- Communist Working Circle - led by Gottfred Appel in Denmark.² Communists such as these identified with the Sino-Albanian side of the polemic largely because the arguments reflected their own concerns and criticisms of their own party leadership as well as in reaction to the anti-Stalin criticism of the CPSU under Khrushchev.

The initial wave of activists were anti-revisionists, defending an orthodoxy of Leninism and initially characterised by pro-Stalin sentiments, regarding criticism of Stalin, such as Khrushchev's 1956 'Secret Speech', as an attack on the experience of building socialism in the Soviet Union. In opposing the Soviet notion of a party and state "of the whole people", opponents were wary of anything that diluted a "Leninist" party focused on factory-based workers in domestic politics. They looked to Albania and China and saw their own concerns reflected in the criticism made of the Soviet Union's leadership and its policies.

Furthermore, Khrushchev was regarded as revising tried and tested Marxist ideas and analysis and moving to a position that spoke the language of Marxism but practiced something different: the politics of accommodation and complicity. Internationally the policy of "peaceful co-existence" under Khrushchev seemed more an accommodation with American Imperialism that contrasted with

¹ <https://www.marxists.org/history/erol/belgium-1st/index.htm>

² Appel eventually took the position that the whole of the industrial working class had been corrupted by imperialist super-profits and no longer had a revolutionary potential. The CPC broke off relations when the KAK condemned the events of May 1968 in France.

anti-revisionist rhetorical support for militant (so much the better if armed) struggles against Western imperialism.

As the ideological arguments were raked up, a new influx of activists saw the opposition on a different plane. The Albanian argument remained a basic defence of Marxist-Leninist doctrine, from China came a more nuanced response to the development of modern revisionism. Beginning in the early Sixties the conviction, far from an orthodox position, that class contradictions and class struggle continues in socialist societies, was examined by Mao. So the appeal of China to its Western supporters was never simply negative, the means to differentiate one's politics from the Soviet Union and the politics of the pro-Moscow Communists.

For those outside China, Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought involved big questions: it provided a framework of reference for fundamental Marxist concern such as what constitutes a revolutionary road. For them, (only after Mao's death was the term increasingly used by activists outside China) Maoism was not only provided a criticism of what had gone wrong: it provided an alternative. Even with visits to Albania by delegations from the newly-formed Marxist-Leninist organisations, it was the news seeping out of China in the early days of the Cultural Revolution that was to inspire the militant activists in Europe and elsewhere.

For these second wave activists Mao had an answer to maintain the revolutionary impulse, to stop the ruling party leadership from being conservative, staid and straying from the revolutionary path. Mao considered that if socialism had been overthrown in the Soviet Union, China could suffer the same fate and derail the historic struggle to go forward to build a communist society.

In 1966 Mao unleashed political chaos in launching the Cultural Revolution that challenged his colleagues of many decades standing, the authority of the ruling communist party and its policies.

The radicalised youth, in China and elsewhere, were to take up the baton as revolutionary successors. For the radical students of Western Europe, drawn to a pro-China position there was the immediacy of purposeful action, the requirement to act with the belief, not only, that it would be different this time, but also that the action of human intervention - the will to act - could bring about the desired transformation. China was different: activists could look at the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe and say, "that is not what we think socialism to be about".

From this milieu of mainly radicalised students, new overtly pro-Maoist (in all but name) organisations emerged across Western Europe that largely superseded the earlier organisations dominated by older ex-Communist party members. There were different cultural-political impulses towards an allegiance with a Maoist position. The second wave of Maoist activists were inspired by an idealistic zeal and fervour that could not be contained by the dominant "pro-Moscow left" enmeshed with their own legitimacy crisis with the Soviet occupation of Czechoslovakia. The context for Maoism's flowering was in the struggle around the Vietnam War, the Civil Rights and Black Power movements in America, while especially within Southern Europe, the Maoist appeal was built in the anti-fascist struggles against the military in Greece, Spain, Portugal and Turkey.

In Northern Europe, in Norway and Denmark, the militant anti-EEC movement radicalised young people. Maoist influenced student organisations - like the Revolutionary Socialist Student

Federation in London³, those at the Catholic University of Louvain in Belgium and the founders of AKP (m-l) who came from the SUF, or Sosialistisk Ungdomsforbund, the socialist student organization at Norwegian universities – saw in the crucible of that experience and expectations, commitments and values forged.

And everywhere the identification was with the Third World and the mass democracy of Cultural Revolution propaganda that built the Cult of Mao.⁴ The appreciation of the Albanian contribution to the ideological struggle from their first public expression in Moscow in 1960 was overshadowed in the movement to some extent by an adherence to Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought. Albania led by Enver Hoxha was ritually mentioned, and reported upon in the Marxist-Leninist press, but it was China that inspired.

There had been a mushrooming of parties with several organisations vying for political dominance within each country. Italy provides a typical European example whereby the Chinese-recognised Communist Party of Italy (Marxist-Leninist) -PCI (ML) - having at least seven rival ML groups and factions claiming a Maoist allegiance throughout the early seventies. In Germany, students “went about forming any number of brand new Marxist-Leninist parties-a new party in every city, it sometimes seemed. That became a big tendency in West Germany, bigger than in France and the other countries of the West.” By early seventies the number of ML groups numbered some 152 alone for Germany. Selecting one organisation amidst that fragmentation would have been very difficult. Understandably, there was the general expression for Marxist-Leninists to ‘unite’, from the CPC.

There was an imitative adoption of domestic Chinese political expression and practice, with a stress (internally) on two-line struggle; the belief that a political position or strategy would involve developing opposition from within, and favouring a political focus for activity, with stress on militancy and class categories, solidarity with Vietnam and other national liberation struggles in the Third World, opposition to the Superpowers (increasingly Soviet hegemony), and engagement in anti-racist and anti-fascist struggles. There were key positions and characteristics that defined the movement.

As that young Marxist-Leninist movement took shape in the crucible of domestic polemical struggle it was in its international allegiance that it was identified in terms of being “pro-Albanian, pro-China”. While neither of these ruling parties instructed or controlled, their public positions did shape the movement’s responses.

Australian communist leader, Ted Hill recalled,

“The Chinese Communists in all my discussions have always developed this universal truth of each Party and people solving their own problems. They steadfastly refused to give advice on internal problems of struggle, for example, in Australia. And I am certain this is correct. Some may expect and hope as we did of the Soviet Union, that someone, in this case, the Chinese Party will come along and solve all your problems. It won’t happen. And the attempt once pursued, but never by the Chinese Party, resulted in very great harm.”

³ Widgery 1976

⁴ See: Tariq Alia and Susan Watkins account 1968 Marching In the Streets (1998) London: The Free Press

The impression was that, at the time, there was a much lower priority for the Chinese in maintaining fraternal relations: the International Department of the CPC Central Committee had been established in 1951 for contacts and exchanges with foreign communist parties. During the Cultural Revolution, the factional strife that it unleashed within China disrupted normal state functioning as well as virtually closing down the Communist Party operational structures.

There was no infrastructure to support an international journal, like the Prague-based “*Socialism and Peace*” which publicised statements from the supporters of the CPSU perspective, which would act as both an organizers and discussion forum for the young anti-revisionist movement.

International coordination for the European parties was ad hoc and the by-product of shared involvement in short-lived publishing ventures like the appearance of the non-party magazine *Revolution* that first appeared as a substantial monthly journal in September 1963. It was published in three languages – English, French and Spanish – and distributed from Switzerland. Acting as a liaison forum it reprinted editorials from anti-revisionist publications, although its content was a variety of radical orientated material; issue five from March 1964 included an interview with Malcolm X, reminiscences from Cuba’s industry Minister Che Guevara and the text of Liu Shao-Chi’s “How To Be A Good Communist”.

It was associated with the well-regarded Swedish Marxist, Nils Anderson, an authorised distributor of Chinese publications. Fellow director French lawyer, Jacques Vergès, a former French resistance fighter, communist party member and a leader in the anti-colonial student movement, had worked in Prague for the International Union of Students and was active as a lawyer for the Algerian Front de Libération Nationale. Vergès had visited China in March 1963 as director of the Algerian publication *Révolution-Africaine*. By July 1963 he was producing an English magazine, initially named, *Africa, Latin America Asia – Revolution*, after his emphases on the « Chinese model » had led to conflict and dismissal from *Révolution-Africaine*.

Vergès told the American *Newsweek* magazine that *Revolution* had two aims⁵:

“One aim is to ensure contact on a political level – and a perfectly legal one – between all revolutionary movements in the world. Two – to fight, within the socialist movement, modern revisionist tendencies which sacrifice revolution to collaboration with imperialism.”

Newsweek claimed that *Revolution* was “subsidised by a \$70,000 grant from the Red Chinese Embassy in Bern”. Richard Gibson claimed that the “top sale of any issue only came to 7,500 copies”⁶

Swiss government intervention saw the printing of *Revolution* move to Paris. In March 1964, issue seven was banned in France because of the publication of an article calling for the independence of the French overseas territories. In April 1964 (with issue No. 8) *Revolution* called for French anti-revisionists to co-ordinate their activities and a national conference of “Friends of Revolution” to be organised by the end of 1965. The return of Jacques Vergès to Algeria in 1965, following the fall of President Ben Bella, ended the publication of the magazine.

⁵ *Newsweek* March 9th 1964

⁶ Comment. *The China Quarterly* No. 21 (Jan - March., 1965), pp. 179-182

François Fejto, the Hungarian political scientist, judged *Révolution*, "the best-produced and most effective publication of the pro-Chinese movement in France. Thanks to its English edition and forthcoming Spanish edition, the review's field of action stretches from France to Africa and even to the American continent. *Révolution*, with its articles contributed from all parts of the world, is looking more and more like a liaison journal for the groups and movements of the Maoist International now coming into existence."⁷

What inspired that judgment were developments on the international scene. In November 1964, on the occasion of celebrations of the 20th anniversary of the liberation of Albania, the most numerous group amongst the international guests were represented by the delegates from the self-identifying Marxist-Leninist organisations. There was a gathering of Communist party delegations from Romania – expressing its own "independence" in the polemic – three ruling Communist parties, the Chinese, North Korean and North Vietnamese, along with two major Asian parties, the Indonesian and Japanese communist parties.

There was some Western speculation that the Tirana "summit" meeting of "Marxist-Leninists" should be seen as the embryo of a Marxist-Leninist International in opposition to the Moscow centred organisations. The list of these delegations, as reported by Radio Tirana, included the Belgian Marxist-Leninist CP delegation, headed by Jacques Grippa; representatives of the New Zealand CP and the Communist Party Australia Marxist-Leninist; leading members of Marxist-Leninist groups and editors of Marxist-Leninist publications from Austria, France, Italy, Spain and Britain, and representatives from Chile, Ghana and Guinea.

The significance of the gathering of these Marxist-Leninist representatives was that this was the first time that a state event of a ruling Communist Party has been attended by the leading members of the newly emerging anti-revisionist forces. Whether there would be a declaration that formalised the political divisions - the split with Moscow - so as to likely leave a lasting imprint on the international Communist movement was an expectation that increased at the following years' Fifth Congress of the Party of Labour of Albania.

November 1st-8th 1966 saw among the parties and organisations observing the 5th Congress *twenty-four* Marxist-Leninist groups. The Congress also heard greetings from other Marxist-Leninist groups who were not able to attend, including ones from the Yugoslavia, Finland, West Germans and "other Marxist-Leninists."

The 5th Congress ratchet up the unfilled expectation when Belgian party leader, Jacque Grippa, introduced a new element to the Congress with a message from the new established illegal Polish Marxist-Leninist party. The significance of a split from a ruling party and creation of an illegal oppositionist Marxist-Leninist party was not repeated elsewhere in Eastern Europe, although publicity was given to 'the Stalin group' in the Soviet Union.

In the major report to the Congress, Enver Hoxha gave encouragement to the speculation when to the assembled Marxist-Leninists he called for a not- too- clearly defined "separate unity" composed of these forces. He did this by declaring that the PLA believed that "the creation of links of

⁷ François Fejto, A Maoist in France: Jacques Vergès and Revolution
The China Quarterly No. 19 (Jul. - Sep., 1964), pp. 120-127

cooperation and coordination of activities in conformity with the new present- day conditions was an indispensable and urgent matter.”⁸

Marking the Soviet October Revolution, a *Zeri i Popullit* editorial of November 7th, praised the role of the 5th Congress on the question of unity by quoting from Hoxha's report: "All the Marxist-Leninist parties and forces, as equals and independents, should form a bloc with the CCP and the CPR, a bloc of iron to break all our enemies."



The Chinese were equally fulsome in their public praise for the beacon of socialism in Europe:

"The glorious Albanian Party of Labour headed by Comrade Enver Hoxha is firmly holding aloft the revolutionary red banner of Marxism-Leninism while encircled ring upon ring by the imperialists and the modern revisionists.

Heroic people's Albania has become a great beacon of socialism in Europe.

The revisionist leading clique of the Soviet Union, the Tito clique of Yugoslavia and all the ether cliques of renegades and scabs of various shades are mere dust heaps in comparison, while you, a lofty mountain, tower to the skies. They are flunkeys and accomplices of imperialism before which they prostrate themselves, while you are dauntless proletarian revolutionaries who dare to fight imperialism and its lackeys, fight the world's tyrannical enemies.

The Soviet Union, Yugoslavia and every other country where the modern revisionist clique is in power have either changed colour or are in the process of doing so. Capitalism has been or is being restored there, and the dictatorship of the proletariat has been or is being changed into the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie. Against this adverse current of counter-revolutionary revisionism, heroic socialist Albania has stood firm. Persevering in the Marxist-Leninist, the revolutionary line, you have adopted a series of measures of revolutionization and consolidated the dictatorship of the proletariat. Taking the path of socialism, you are building your country independently and have won brilliant victories. You have contributed valuable experience to the history of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

"A bosom friend afar brings a distant land near." China and Albania are separated by thousands of mountains and rivers but our hearts are closely linked. We are your true friends and comrades. And you are ours. You are not like those false friends and double-dealers who have "honey on their lips and murder in their hearts," and neither are we. Our militant revolutionary friendship has stood the test of violent storms.

The truth of Marxism-Leninism is on our side. So is the international proletariat. So are the oppressed nations and oppressed peoples. And



⁸See Radio Free Europe Research report "Enver Hoxha Furthers the cause of "Marxist-Leninist "Unity, November 2nd 1966 by Iz.

so are the masses of people who constitute over 90 per cent of the world's population. We have friends all over the world. We are not afraid of being isolated and we shall never be isolated. We are invincible. The handful of pathetic creatures who oppose China and Albania are doomed to failure.

We are now in a great new era of world revolution. The revolutionary upheaval in Asia, Africa and Latin America is sure to deal the whole of the old world a decisive and crushing blow. The great victories of the Vietnamese people's war against U.S. aggression and for national salvation are convincing proof of this. The proletariat and working people of Europe, North America and Oceania are experiencing a new awakening. The U.S. imperialists and all other such vermin have already created their own grave-diggers; the day of their burial is not far off.

Naturally, the road of our advance is by no means straight and smooth. Comrades, please rest assured that come what may, our two Parties and our two peoples will always be united, will always fight together and be victorious together.

Let the Parties and peoples of China and Albania unite, let the Marxist-Leninists of all countries unite, let the revolutionary people of the whole world unite and overthrow imperialism, modern revisionism and the reactionaries of every country! A new world without imperialism, without capitalism and without any system of exploitation is certain to be built.”⁹

The position expressed in the Political Report to the 5th Congress of the Party of Labour of Albania stated:

“It is the belief of our party that presently of greatest importance is not a reconciliation and unity with the revisionists but a break with them, a definite separation from revisionism

Today we have no time for aimless academic discussions. Instead we must engage in unselfish, brave, militant, and revolutionary actions regardless of sacrifices.”

Then after having pointed out that "world communism in our times must be characterized by the revolutionary inspiration of the heroic times of Lenin's and Stalin's Comintern," Hoxha suggested,

“Of course times have changed and we cannot talk about adopting or copying the forms and methods of work of the organization and direction of the Comintern which were applicable in those days with their positive and negative aspects. But the creation of relations for cooperation and for unity of action under current new conditions is in the judgement of our party, an imperative and urgent issue.”

A more favourable attitude towards a new international was discernible in the Albanian position. The PLA was more assiduous about maintaining relations with only one party in every state in the manner of the Comintern. Fraternal party delegations were invited to PLA Congresses, evident at the 6th Party Congress (November 1971) when more than thirty organisations participated in celebrating the 30th anniversary of the PLA , and other meetings such as those of the Albanian trade

⁹ Mao Tse-Tung, Chairman of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China October 25, 1966. *Peking Review*, No. 46, November 11, 1966

unions, unlike the CPC without fraternal delegations attending Party Congresses or meetings during 1960-1980.

Unlike the Chinese assessment of the Comintern, Enver Hoxha had a much more positive and uncritical evaluation; "it is a crime to attack the great work of the Comintern and the Marxist-Leninist authority of Stalin." There was even western media speculation that the new building to house the Soviet Embassy in Tirana was to become a centre for a new international headquarters of anti-revisionists/pro-Chinese communists. Enver Hoxha's argued, in 1966, that the newly-emergent ML organisations must consolidate their co-operation and they must work out a common line and a common stand on the basic questions, especially in connection with the struggle against imperialism and modern revisionism, in connection with the new alliances concretized in the real conditions of the actual situation but always based on Marxist-Leninist principles.

For the Chinese communists, the relationship with a party engaged in armed struggle, such as the Malayan, and those operating elsewhere seem to have been on similar principles. Chen Ping remarks that the Chinese comrades sought to avoid involvement in "internal party affairs" and that even though to varying degrees reliant on Chinese largess "fraternal parties had the freedom to work independently of Peking's directions..."

The Albanian party had suggested to a visiting Malayan delegation in January 1965 that following the fall of Khrushchev:

"One of the current methods of the fight of the revisionists against us is to try to stop the polemics and struggle. Thus, what they want is that the Marxist Leninists should no longer attack the treacherous views and stands of the modern revisionists. Their desire and aim is to stop the polemics, because they have seen that the struggle of our parties is soundly based, has exposed them badly, has not ceased, and has not left them free to act and realize their plans."¹⁰

The Albanian party had nothing to lose hinting at the setting up a separate international association of like-minded organisations. It would mark the eventual formalising of the split in the international communist movement. There was a fundamental misreading of the Albanian Party by some Western commentators who regarded it as something akin to acting as "China's bridgehead on the European continent", and "a Trojan horse within the international communist movement". Neither of these analysis understood the independent role that the Albanian party saw for itself in the struggle against modern revisionism.

A formalised international re-groupment would emphasise their de facto co-leadership and enhance the prestige of the anti-revisionist groups concerns. The arrival in Tirana of delegations from the various ML parties and organisations was a constant feature following the initial Polemics. Through the late 1960s, Albania was an easier destination, and often extended invitations for its national celebrations more readily than the Chinese authorities. The Albanian news media provided publicity to the views of overseas Marxist-Leninists (who in turn advertised the frequency of Radio Tirana and quoted from *Zeri I Popullit*), and there was a steady stream of visitors to Albania:

¹⁰ Marxism-Leninism is the guide and leader of every party and not Krushchev's conductor baton. From a conversation with a delegation of the CP of Malaya, January 20, 1965

August 1967, the arrival of Austrian ML party delegation headed by the First Secretary Franz Strobl coincided with that of the French Marxist-Leninists led by Jacques Jurquet and Politburo members, Raymond Casas, Claude Combe and Gilbert Mury. The August 13th *Zeri I Popullit* editorial noted that the conditions had been created by the French Marxist-Leninists for “the founding of a truly Marxist-Leninist Communist Party. This party will be the leading staff of the French proletariat and of all the French working people in their fight for the victory of the great cause of revolution, of socialism.”

Pledging that the Party of Labour “true to the principles of proletarian internationalism, has supported and will continue resolutely to support the new Marxist-Leninist forces”, the editorial quotes Enver Hoxha’s address to the 5th Congress, that:

“We deem this [support] as our lofty internationalist duty, for in the growth and development of these revolutionary forces we see the only just road to the triumph of Marxism-Leninism and to the destruction of revisionism.”

The PLA acted to facilitate the contacts and ties within the revolutionary Marxist-Leninist movement, to organise and co-ordinate the joint actions of the revolutionary vanguard in order to hasten the revolutionary process and liquidation of the revisionist order. This was clearly seen in its advocacy of armed resistance in the wake of the Soviet occupation of Czechoslovakia in August 1968. The encouragement, openly evident since 1963, for communists to break with revisionist organisations went even further with regard to those anti-revisionists in Eastern Europe. There was an unrestrained appeal for Czechoslovak communists to establish a new communist party in an editorial from *Zeri I Popullit* with its call to reject both "the Novotny clique of veterans" and the Dubcek-Svoboda "capitulationism and traitorous revisionist clique".

“The present time is a complicated one, but also favourable to the creation of a party of Czechoslovak Marxist-Leninists and to the organisation of the revolutionary struggle of the Czechoslovak people. First and foremost this is dictated and favoured by the national moment. The situation in Czechoslovakia is electrified. The popular resistance against foreign occupation, against the Soviet .revisionist occupiers, for liberation and national independence, has affixed its seal to the country's whole political life. It has become the main axis around which events are rotating. This is a determining internal factor, a vital moment on the basis of which the Czechoslovak Marxist-Leninist revolutionaries can and must unite the broad masses of the Czechoslovak people

... these problems can be settled only by a Marxist-Leninist Party, even if under existing circumstances it will have to be built and act illegally, although without neglecting legal means when they are allowed by the circumstances.”

No one was regarded as too small to cultivate: The appearance of a Finnish anti-revisionist tendency, fronted by Mikko Kinnunen was noted in *Zeri I Popullit* (November 8th 1968):

“A number of Marxist-Leninist Union study groups were formed in Helsinki on September 2. These circles study the important works of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin. The members of these groups are resolutely struggling against all revisionist currents, including that of the “Communist” Party of Finland. The Finnish Marxist-Leninists have a great task ahead of them..”

Enver Hoxha regarded the expansion and consolidation of the ML movement as a necessary and urgent task. In January 1969, he asserted it had entered a more advanced stage of development reviving the idea of a ML international. The idea raised at the 5th congress had been neglect – partly due to the disruption in relationships during the Cultural Revolution.

“ The re-organisation of the revolutionary communists in the new Marxist-Leninist parties constitutes an overt detachment from modern revisionism and from the old communist and workers parties that betrayed Marxism-Leninism. This is the picture of a new revolutionary situation in the fold of the international working class which is splitting and at the same time being re-organised.”

The idea that the establishment of a separate Albanian-Chinese headed international communist movement being reformed in response to the scheduled Moscow meeting of Communist parties in May 1969 was a basic misreading of Chinese intentions and an over-estimation of the Albanian ability to bounce the movement into such a structure.

The failure to arrange a structured constellation of ML parties and organisations was not an oversight but a deliberate policy choice, on the behalf of the Chinese communist party, not to replicate a Comintern relationship with those who constituted the ML Movement.

A great many activists and organisations uncritically adopted the positions of the Communist Party of China led by Mao, looking towards Beijing as much as previous communists had looked to the Soviet Union for inspiration and guidance. Most of the European Maoist groups had gain impetus after the start of the Cultural Revolution period, inflated in size by the short-lived radical student movement; in its formative years, the pro-China groups were militant, romantically visionary, even utopian, and purposefully revolutionary. What these groups were not, with a few notable Nordic exceptions, was consolidated into organisations capable of national political interventions; they were largely marginal within their national political scene¹¹ .

The relationship between the small Europe-based organisations and the CPC illustrates that, regardless of what pro-China communists might desire, the Communist Party of China did not seek to reproduce the ‘Socialist camp’ as it had existed with an unquestioned “leading” party. Instead an anti-revisionist trend arose from the Sixties that were not consolidated on an organisational basis. There was no “Beijing centre” to rebuild and lead component sections of a “Maoist International”

If China was said to have “friends all over the world”, the nature of those ‘friends’ were changing throughout the 1970s for Dittmer’s view describes China’s actions (in the Seventies) as “eclectic, even promiscuous, tending to detract from China’s ideological credibility”.

A textual analysis undertaken by O’Leary (Brugger 1978) suggests a downgrading of the Marxist-Leninist parties within the capitalist countries by the Chinese. A comparison of the reports given in 1969 (by Lin Biao) and (by Zhou Enlai) at 1973 Congress suggests:

Lin talked of uniting ‘to fight together with them’, in their capacity as ‘advanced elements of the proletariat’ while Chou merely sought unity with them in the context of carrying on ‘the struggle against modern revisionism’.

¹¹ As argued by Mehnert 1967 and Alexander 2001.

Despite the reputation for genuflecting at whatever decisions and changes occur in what was regarded as the leading socialist countries (as part of the internationalist duty to support existing socialism and revolution), the Maoist Left was not as servile as occasionally portrayed.

In the Seventies CPC had retained relations with parties that did not fully agree with its analysis. Thus while the AKP (ML) shared the CPC's concerns about Soviet intentions it sharply differed with the Chinese admiration of European Unity, publically criticising the Chinese ambassador in 1972 for his favourable remarks regarding European co-operation and were prominent in the 'No Campaign' in the referendum against Norway becoming part of the European Community.

Dittmer is not wholly correct in asserting that, "these 'Maoist' factions were of dubious diplomatic value, their radical orientations as likely as not reflecting domestic political issues rather than a conscious ideological choice between rival worldviews, and the CPC was unable to control them." When Chinese leaders were reported as meeting "with representatives of the minuscule and politically insignificant self-styled Marxist-Leninist organisations of various countries", it was a practical manifestation of proletarian internationalism. Control of these groups was not the objective; this would have been facilitated by the prestige of exclusive political recognition. The Chinese Party would acknowledge the existence of numerous organisations within any given national territory while repeating its position that Marxist-Leninists should unite.

Whether they were capable of challenging the local bourgeoisie was not mentioned in 1973. The difference in the 1970s was that the loci of struggle shifted in diplomatic terms for China, now restored to its place in the United Nations, was towards the institutional actors – the nation-states after the stalling of the 'people's revolutionary movement'.

Albania was more insidious in promoting and cultivating those parties and groups who had formed an embryonic oppositional communist movement. The Albanian party tended to give exclusive political recognition to an organisation in each country emulating the practice of the Comintern. At the Fifth Congress Enver Hoxha had emphasized the right of independent action for the 'pro-Chinese parties' within their national boundaries on domestic issues, answering the charges that the Chinese leaders demand that their adherents copy them blindly, Hoxha also reaffirmed the theory of 'the complete equality of parties, 'big or small, old or young,' and furthermore, that they all can learn and profit from each other's experience. He said:

"Our confidence and determination in the victory of world proletarian revolution become strong and we rejoice when we see the formation and consolidation everywhere of the new communist Marxist-Leninist parties . It is a great experience which we gain from the joint experience of all the communist Marxist-Leninists parties, big or small, old and young.... The great Marxist-Leninist unity between Marxist-Leninist revolutionary parties is being tempered in struggle and in revolution."¹²

¹² Hoxha's New Ideological Basis for the "Marxist-Leninist" Forces
Radio Free Europe Research, Albania: Ideology (9th January 1969)

Whilst 'Beijing Review' would echo that last sentiment, Chinese relations with "all the communist Marxist-Leninists parties, big or small, old and young" were set upon a different template. As long ago as 1943, Mao argued that it was "not necessary, at the present time, to have an international leading centre", indeed, it was impractical as the internal situation are more complex and change more speedily and Mao argued, correct leadership must therefore stem from a most careful study of these circumstances. Commenting on CPC-Comintern relations, in a 1960 speech, Zhou Enlai, said the Comintern failed in

"its general calls with the realities of different countries and it gave specific instructions to individual Parties instead of providing them with guidance in principles, thus interfering in their internal affairs and hindering them from acting independently and bringing their own initiative and creativity into play."¹³

Comrade Mao Tse-tung further pointed out: 'Revolutionary movements can be neither exported nor imported. Although there has been help from the Communist International, the creation and development of the Chinese Communist Party were a result of the fact that there is a conscious working class in China itself. The Chinese working class had itself created its own party.'

China's ideological allies, lacking the multi-lateral structures that would co-ordinate political line, did not comprise an organised international bloc but maintained bilateral ties with the CPC and other fraternal groups. These relationships were more suited to the argument for equality and non-interference in other parties' affairs. China's relations with ideologically sympathetic organisations were to be characterised by self-reliance, not the relationship of a patriarchal father party and son party and with the corollary of non-interference in party relationships.

The often expressed notion that 'revolution could not be exported' did not preclude support for fellow revolutionaries throughout the world. Behind the rhetoric there was material support with training visits by would be Third world revolutionaries and those engaged in national liberation struggles¹⁴.

Chou En-Lai's comments to a 1970 Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) delegation were that the Communist Party of China was not leading struggles outside of China and that regardless of his international prestige as a revolutionary, Chairman Mao led no other party other than the Chinese Party.¹⁵

¹³ *Selected Works of Zhou Enlai* (1989) Vol. II, pp. 306-19.

¹⁴ The Peruvian communist leader, 'Chairman Gonzalo', (party name of Abimael Guzmán) recalled receiving political and military training, on strategy and tactics, ambushes and demolition in China in the Sixties: "They were masterful lessons given by proven and highly competent revolutionaries, great teachers. Among them I can remember the teacher who taught us about open and secret work, a man who had devoted his whole life to the Party, and only to the Party, over the course of many years--a living example and an extraordinary teacher. For me it is an unforgettable example and experience, an important lesson, and a big step in my development--to have been trained in the highest school of Marxism the world has ever seen." Interview with Chairman Gonzalo. http://www.redsun.org/pcp_doc/pcp_0788.htm
See also : Van Ness 1970; Hutchinson 1975

¹⁵ Indian Maoists was seen as drawing on an extrapolation of the Chinese experience expressed in *Long Live the Victory of People's War* published in 1965 and mechanically applying "China's Road" in India. The slogan, for Indian Maoists, both opposed Indian chauvinism and signalled agreement with Chinese views on 'modern revisionism'. However, in rejecting the significant of patriotism and nationalism, it ignored important elements inherent in the Chinese revolutionary experience.

There were more than diplomatic niceties in China's criticism to the raising in India of the slogan "China's Chairman is our Chairman, China's Path is Our Path": It illustrates the approach of China's communists to the (anti-revisionist) international communist movement that emerged under the influence of the Cultural Revolution of the late Sixties. In its practice and pronouncements, the Communist Party of China offered no encouragement to the resurrection of a Comintern like structure to its foreign supporters (Talk 1980).

The importance, reflected in Chinese propaganda, of "greetings" attributed to organisations was as evidence of the existence of China's friends worldwide. Chinese interest in the European Marxist-Leninists saw support for them manifest itself in a number of standard approaches. As with the Albanians, political recognition took the form of quoting exchanges of greetings (sent to the CPC) and organization views by the official Chinese Xinhua news agency and in the political weekly (then Peking, now) *'Beijing Review'* from Western European groups.

In the early 1970s divergent views were seen to have emerged between Peking and Tirana, certainly on certain aspects of the "Marxist-Leninist" movement in South America which was to prove a stronghold of pro-Albanian support in the latter half of the decade. There was the background of the impact that Chinese-U.S. détente was beginning to show in the analysis of individual ML organisations.

August 1971 saw Marxist-Leninist delegations from Brazil and Ecuador visiting Albania, and commentaries carried in the official Albania press afterwards specifically from *Classe Operaia*, the organ of the CC of the Communist Party of Brazil contained some implications of the international communist movement ideological disarray. The article, written on the occasion of the forthcoming Albanian 6th Party Congress "whose importance," it was noted, in the introduction, "is not confined to the country's borders."

In appraising the internal and external policies of the Albanian Workers Party, the Brazilian publication makes a point of emphasizing the "exemplary" role of the Albanians while conspicuously avoiding any reference to the Chinese. Thus, on the domestic scene:

"Albania is blazing new trails, finding out wise and convenient solutions to the complex problems of socialist construction, creatively carrying out in practice the doctrine of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin. Thereby the Party of Labor of Albania has enriched this powerful and brilliant doctrine."¹⁶

There was no reference whatsoever either to Mao Tse-tung or the Chinese Proletarian Cultural Revolution. With regard to the Albanians' solidarity with the "Marxist-Leninist" forces, the article said that the Albanians "have never hesitated to resolutely and openly support all the Marxist-Leninist -forces," and that they have "always fearlessly raised high the great banner of the anti-revisionist unity of the communist movement." Praising Albania and ignoring China's role, provided by its omission implicit complaints about a lack of Chinese resoluteness in the struggle against modern revisionism. Once again one may find in this the implied complaint that whereas Tirana has been in favour of creating an anti-revisionist bloc within the international communist movement others have been reluctant to do so.

¹⁶ Albanian Telegraphic Agency September 17 1971

There was earlier in the year, another indication that relationships were souring as on 8 July, the Communist Party of Bolivia (Marxist-Leninist) issued a statement claiming success in mobilizing peasants through an ancillary organization called the Union of Poor Peasants -- UCAPO); it added that much of this success had come about since the expulsion from the party of Jorge Echazu - Alvarado, who was said to have been working for - "counter-revolutionary forces" and trying to weaken the party. The significance of this comment lies in the fact that Echazu had a role as the New China News Agency correspondent in Bolivia.

Coupled with the impression that Peking's solidarity had toned down appreciably as a result of China's increased conventional diplomacy in South America and elsewhere, there was growing unease of a divergence of their interests from at least some of the Marxist-Leninist forces of Latin America who are now finding "exemplary" guidance in Tirana.

Disequilibrium in what were often low level contacts in the first place, saw a disentanglement by some organisations as there was an overshadowing issue that all the Marxist-Leninists had to consider, and that was the change in the relationships that the Chinese party had initiated with revisionist parties. This contrasted with the Albanian refusal to countenance such political relationships.

Some of the Marxist-Leninist organisations agreed with the Albanian stance without publically criticising Mao and the Communist Party of China.

The Spanish Marxist-Leninist implicit rebuke to the Chinese for having re-established relations with "the revisionism of the renegade, anti-patriot and agent of the oligarchy, Santiago Carrillo," argued that:

"One of the principal tasks of Marxist-Leninists is that of carrying on and intensifying 'the struggle against every kind of revisionism and opportunism, wherever it may arise, regardless of the mask that it may don....

For this reason it is not possible to support, to deal with or to reach agreements with one type of revisionism in order to combat another kind) since they are all linked by the common denominator of enmity to the revolution, to Marxism-Leninism, and are all instruments of reaction, imperialism and social-imperialism. The divergences between revisionists are nothing but a matter of struggles between rival cliques and constitute a proof of their bourgeois ideology and degeneration."

The subsequent ritual reference to "all the Marxist-Leninists of the world, headed by the Albanian Party of Labor and the Chinese Communist Party" -- indeed, the order (Albanians first, Chinese second) might be regarded as further evidence of a shifting of loyalties from Peking toward Tirana.

Even in their closest period there were visible differences in the emphasis of the PLA and CPC. These political cleavages came to the forefront in 1977-78 but have their seeds in the Sino-American rapprochement at the start of the Seventies.

In a pivotal moment of modern history in February 1972 the leaders of China and the United States of America were exchanging handshakes in mutual recognition; China could argue it had broken the imperialist blockade and isolation of the country, while America had established a counter-weight in the strategic relationship with the Soviet Union. The perception of the Soviet Union as constituting a

major threat to China's security was certainly seen by the American government as offering policy openings.

The Soviet diplomatic push for a system of 'collective security in Asia' fed the Chinese fear of an attempt to isolate China. Li Fenglin, a veteran Chinese diplomat who served in the Chinese Embassy of Russia and East European countries, as well as in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for 40 years, observed,

From the 1960s to the 1980s, China made several foreign policy adjustments, and the core motive of all these was national security. The question was to decide from which direction the main threat to China was coming. A secret, high-level military report in January 1969 argued,

"The Soviet revisionists have made China their main enemy, imposing a more serious threat to our security than the U.S. imperialists."

That strategic view was adopted and had significant impact on the direction and conduct of Chinese foreign policy. The Soviet leadership was charged with "social imperialism" following the 1968 Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia under the justification of the 'Brezhnev doctrine' of protecting the "socialist community" and "limited sovereignty" of its national members. The 1969 border clash provided a strong impetus to rethinking China's geopolitical strategy. It was Mao who used Edgar Snow to convey a private invitation to Nixon to visit. The Albanians claimed to have expressed, in an unanswered letter sent to the CPC (dated August 6 1971), strong disapproval of the new attitude towards the US.

We regard your decision to welcome Nixon in Peking as incorrect and undesirable, we do not approve of, nor do we support it... [it] has many drawbacks and will have negative consequences for the revolutionary movement and our cause.¹⁷

The resentment and brooding mistrust was subterranean: That relations were strained for some time had been something Enver Hoxha had recorded in his diary ; an entry for August 15 1971 reads: "For the International communist movement, of course, this opportunist revisionist line of the Communist Party of China is not good, because it weakens and confuses it. But everything will be overcome."¹⁸

"In the summer of 1971, Albania, considered the closet ally of China, learned from foreign news agencies the report spread all over the world that Kissinger had paid a secret visit to Peking. Negotiations, which marked a radical change in the Chinese policy, had been held with Kissinger.... China did not deem it necessary to hold preliminary talks with the Party of Labour of Albania and the Government of Albania, too, to see what their opinion was. The Chinese leadership put others before an accomplished fact, thinking they had to obey it without a word."¹⁹

¹⁷ It Is Not Right to Receive Nixon in Beijing. We Do Not Support It
Enver Hoxha, Selected Works, Vol. IV, The "8 Nëntori" Publishing House, Tirana, 1982

¹⁸ Reflections on China (1979) Tirana. Vol 1: 598

¹⁹ Halliday, Jon (1986) The Artful Albanian: the memoirs of Enver Hoxha London: Chatto & Windus p40

None of this concern was evident at the 6th Party Congress held that year. There is anecdotal evidence that when the Marxist-Leninist Party of Austria approached the PLA with its concerns over Nixon's visit to China, the advice it received was to continue to support the CPC and discipline those in the organization who were arguing for the Party to publicly condemn what they characterized as the CPC's capitulation to imperialism. (Anecdotal source)²⁰

Prominent French Marxist-Leninist Patrick Kessel argued (with hindsight) that divergences between the CPC and PLA had been evident in 1965: "in France, for example, during the presidential election that opposed DeGualle and Francois Mitterand, where one organization resolved to vote for De Gaulle in the name of his anti-americanism emphasized by Peking Review."²¹

Kessel recalls a visit to Tirana in 1972, and the discreet manner of the PLA's objection to the role of the army in China during the Cultural Revolution and Nixon's visit. The new element, evident since the 7th Congress, was, for Kessel, "the directly questioning of the part played by Mao Zedong".

In retrospect, the PLA concluded that,

"with Nixon's visit, China joined the dance of imperialist alliances and rivalries for the redivision of the world, where, China, too, would have its own share. This visit paved the road to its rapprochement and collaboration with US imperialism and its allies."²²

²⁰ From the 6th Party Congress onwards, the PLA argued the CPC reduced contact, turning relations between the two parties into a purely formal relationship. While welcoming reactionaries to China with pomp, it avoided high-level Party visits. In January 1974 the PLA proposed top level delegation to China. It was eventually in June 1975 that an economic delegation, led by Politburo member Sarcani visited China and had talks with vice Premier Li Xiannian.

²¹ Kessel, P. On the role of the Party of Labour of Albania and of Enver Hoxha in the struggle against modern revisionism. [Http://ciml.250x.com/archive/hoxha/english/comment/kessel.html](http://ciml.250x.com/archive/hoxha/english/comment/kessel.html)

²² Reflections on China [Vol 1 : 41]

