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RFE NEWS AND INFORMATION SERVICE - EVALUATION AND RESEARCH SECTIONBackground Report
(Hungarian Research)THE HUNGARIAN PRESS AND CHINA

References to the Chinese example had begun in the Hungarian press by early October 1956. Referring to the VIII congress of the Chinese CP, the BUDAPEST dailies demanded the democratization of contacts between the Party and the masses and the start of a new, healthy people's front policy.

Zoltan MOLNAR in his "Irodalmi Ujsag" article entitled "A People's Front, but a Sincere One" demanded an increase in the control of the masses over the State and Party apparatus.

Today, when we have before us the Polish and even the Yugoslav road, but mainly after the VIII. Chinese Party Congress, it seems almost superfluous to debate the controlling role of the masses. In our country, however, where some of the KUCSERAs, as classified by Gyula HAY, have only hazy memories about the masses, this debate does not seem to be superfluous.

(IRODALMI UJSAG, 13 Oct 1956 p.1)

Referring to the Chinese example, Pal LENDVAI, correspondent of "Esti Budapest", demanded the right for Party members to have different opinions from those of the leadership.

With the gradual liquidation of Stalinist dogmatism, a refreshing atmosphere of free debates and constructive socialist conception entered the international workers' movement. Thanks to this new situation, the Chinese Party congress could become the international platform of a free exchange and recognition of socialist experiences.

The article continues by attacking the dictatorship of the RAKOSI era, which chastised with imprisonment those whose opinions differed from the Party leaders:

With an iron will, the Chinese CP is removing the scum repressing Party democracy and pulling out the roots of any kinds of personal cult. The PEKING events have also provided the Communists of the people's democracies with principles of a penetrating force which help them to fight bravely and stubbornly against any attempt to put a limit on the democratic rights of Party members, on individual thinking and

the self-assertion of socialist building, adapted to national peculiarities.

(ESTI BUDAPEST, 13 Oct 1956 p.3)

The weekly "Magyar Radio" also joined in the press campaign fought for the reorganization of the People's Front and wrote in its leading article:

The object of the People's Front is clear: to unite every progressive, constructive force in the nationwide interest...For a long time, we had forgotten that such an object can exist, but now it has re-appeared...It has come to us from China, in the form of a poetic proverb but which soon found a home in our country too: "Every flower should blossom, every bird should sing". This is the aim in whose service the radio too stands when it started its debate on the People's Front...If our program is successful, we will have dealt with the help of our people an additional blow at sectarianism and "the birds will not only sing more beautifully but also to a more beautiful tune."

(MAGYAR RADIO 14-20 Oct 1956 p.2)

Miklos GARDOS, one of the outstanding publicists of the "policy of thaw" wrote a leading article in "Magyar Nemzet", in which he referred to the Chinese example. In his article he used strong words of disapproval about the sectarian course followed by the RAKOSI regime and urges the quick realization of national unity.

Although it is certain that several of our troubles have their roots in the servile copying of examples of socialist building, I still have to refer to the congress held by Chinese Communists: it is admitted even by Chinese Leninists that if we wish to serve our country by honorable work, the members of the former ruling classes, too, have to be drawn into the socialist building program.

(MAGYAR NEMZET, 16 Oct 1956 p.1)

No other reference was made to "the Chinese example" by the Hungarian press in the pre-revolution period. The reason for this is that from Oct 18 on, revolutionary meetings at the universities had begun and people's interest was concentrated on these events.

After the revolution references to the Chinese example re-appeared in the Hungarian press.

"Nepakarat" published a series of articles by the journalist

Bela ELIAS on "Chinese Problems from a Hungarian Point of View".
The individual articles were entitled:

- I. Leaders, masses.
- II. Communists and non-Communists.
- III. Love, marriage, divorce.
- IV. Policy of free discussions.
- V. Reform of Chinese writing, illiteracy.

The aim of the articles was to call the attention of Hungarian readers to how Marxist-Leninist principles were put into practice in China. Although the problems discussed were specifically Chinese problems "they also cropped up and will crop up in Hungary".

The problem of "Leaders, masses" is a specifically Chinese one but could also be Hungarian. Chinese Party and State leaders mix a lot with the people and do not move about in PEKING in tanks. They go to the villages and talk to the peasants and the youth. MAO TSE-TUNG wrote his September speech "with the people".

The personal cult does not exist in China. "The leaders are popular because the people like them... Popularity is expressed by respect and love and not by organized ovation and applause".

The Chinese Communist Party pursues the policy of the "masses". "Chinese leaders are willing to listen to the people.. " This policy can -- according to ELIAS -- be applied in every socialist country without modification.

Under the heading "Communists and non-Communists" the writer states that non-Party members also took part in the 1956 Party Congress and pointed out the mistakes committed by the Party.

MAO TSE-TUNG teaches Chinese Communists to be modest... They should be the masters of the country; not alone, but with the other parties and with non-Communists. This policy today is called the policy of mutual control and co-operation between Communists and non-Communists, between the Communist Party and the democratic parties.

The writer then deals with the Chinese process of "peaceful transformation of capitalism" which was achieved with the help of the true word.

In the article entitled "Policy of Free Discussions" ELIAS expounds on the Chinese literary, artistic and scientific policy of "Let every flower blossom and every bird sing".

The application elsewhere of this Chinese policy is desirable only if it fits into the respective country's national characteristics, culture and art. Tibor TARDOS made use of the possibilities of this policy "but did not come near to its real spirit".

LAO SO, Chinese writer, advises against the application of this

policy in Hungary as...

...the traditions and problems of Chinese and Hungarian culture are fundamentally different.

(NEPAKARAT, April 18,19,21,25 and 28)

In an article entitled "New Movements in China" Anna BEBRITS summarizes recent Chinese developments and establishes that so far the Hungarian press has not reviewed, studied or taken a stand on them. She first deals with MAO's theory on "contradictions originating from among the people" which can be applied to Hungarian conditions.

Due to the fact that for many years no differentiation was made between antagonistic and non-antagonistic contradictions, frequently methods suitable for the solution of antagonistic contradictions and for the oppression of the enemy were used to eliminate contradictions within the people and the Party. In many respects leaders of the HWP repeated this mistake. The application of wrong methods contributed to the fact that counter-revolutionary forces were able to make use of non-antagonistic contradictions between the leaders and the masses to attack the popular democratic order.

The writer also mentions the movement of "Let every flower blossom".

Of Chinese movements in recent months that which has spread in the field of literature, art and science, i.e. "let every flower blossom" is the most widely spread in Hungary. It is now in its second blooming. In its first stage it was attacked for leading to the liberalization of intellectual life and to the repression of Marxism and of the weeds pushing aside the cultivated plants. Comrade MAO TSE-TUNG, who is familiar with the Chinese intelligentsia and knows that its majority is loyal to socialism, defended the slogan of "a hundred flowers".

In connection with the application of Chinese methods in Hungary BEBRITS says that...

...after the sad experiences of the past it is perhaps just as well to guard ourselves against the idea of realizing Chinese methods in Hungary. The Chinese comrades would protest against it most vehemently.

Hungarian events undoubtedly played a part in realizing the necessity of putting into the foreground the democratic side of proletarian dictatorship.

(NEPSZABADSAG, May 26 pp. 10-11)

In the article entitled "The Essence of Socialist Production Methods and Economic Policy in our Society" Zsuzsa ESZE, assistant lecturer, applies MAO's theory on contradictions without actually making a reference to MAO TSE-TUNG.

(KOZGAZDASAGI SZEMLE, April 1957)

At the June 9 BUDAPEST Party active Tamas MAJOR, director of the National Theater, stated that...

...some of the intelligentsia who committed grave mistakes behave as if nothing happened. As a result of counter-revolutionary action the principle of "Let every flower blossom" turned into "Let every weed grow". We will put an end to this situation.

(NEPSZABADSAG, June 11 p.5)

The June issue publishes an article entitled "On Contradictions Occuring Among the People" which appeared in the April 14 issue of "Zsenminzsipao", official organ of the Chinese Communist Party.

(NEMZETKOZI SZEMLE, June.)

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