

From Moscow to Beijing:
Chinese Students Respond to Crises in the Soviet Bloc,
1956-57

Yidi Wu, University of California, Irvine



Communist Crises of 1956

Responses to the Secret Speech

Introduction: Mao

Critic: Hu Yaobang

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A Hungarian Revolution in China?

Mao's Double Take on Students

Genitive and Office: Students

Domestic Politics in China 1956-57

"Let the hundred flowers bloom" in 1956

"Bring the Anti-Rightist Struggle to the end" in 1957

Information Access

Daily Worker

Reference Materials

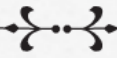
Reflections on the Hungarian Revolution

What I Saw with the Soviet

Students Skid with Hungary

Conclusion

Ultimately, both Mao and the students were doing the same thing - re-evaluating the Communist crises in the Soviet bloc and searching for a better socialist path for China - except they came up with very different interpretations. The "secret speech" was just as liberating and inspiring to Mao as to some Chinese students, and the Hungarian Revolution offered other Communist countries with an example they could either follow or prevent.



**From Moscow to Beijing:
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The Bigger Picture

- What happened between 1919 and 1989?
- Student activism in the early Mao era - the 1950s
- Interactions between political campaigns and social movements
- China in world history



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Communist Crises of 1956



Domestic Politics in China 1956-57

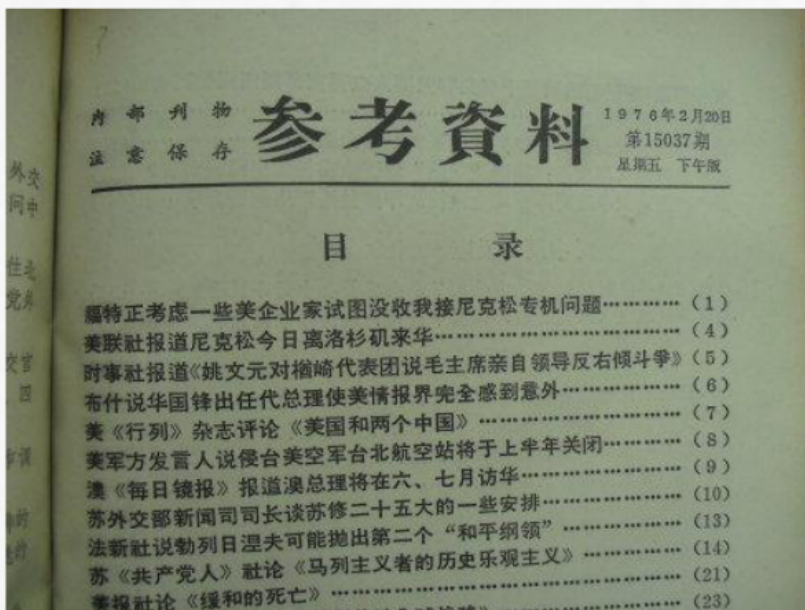


"Let the hundred flowers bloom" in 1956

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Reference Materials



Anna Louise Strong (1885-1970)

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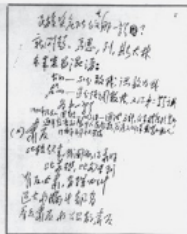
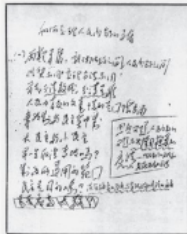
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Responses to the Secret Speech

Ambivalent Mao



"To expose the cult of Stalin, to tear off the lid, to liberate people, this is a liberation movement; but his [i.e., Khrushchev's] method of exposing [Stalin] is incorrect; [he] hasn't made a good analysis, clubbing [him] to death with a single blow."

-- On the Correct Handling of Contradictions among the People, February 27, 1957

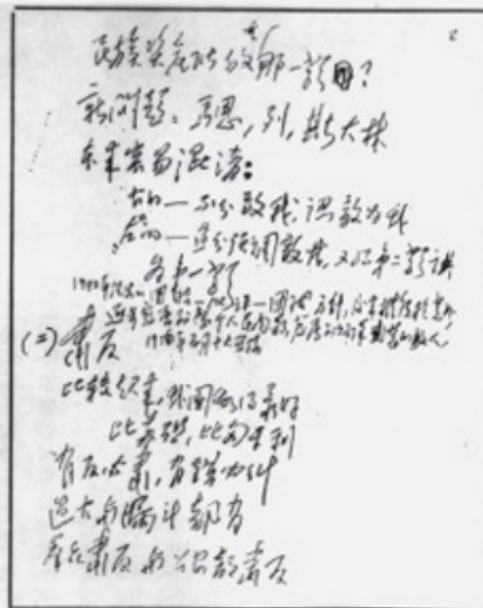
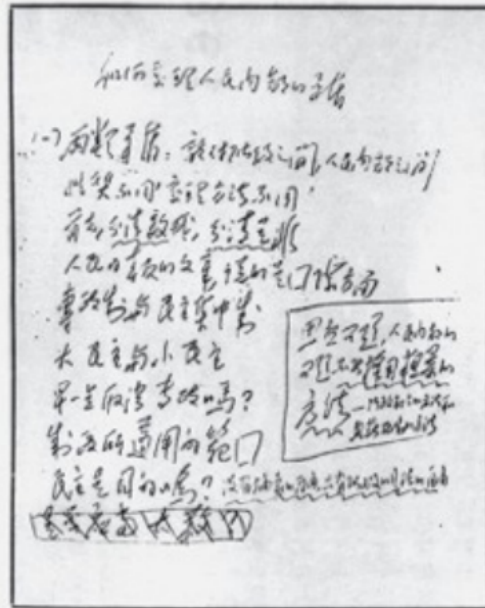
Critical Students

"In China, we hang portraits of Chairman Mao everywhere, yell 'Long Live Chairman Mao,' put the Chairman on the same level as the country, and say everything we do is for Chairman Mao; what is this if it is not a personality cult?" - A Shanxi student



"The cult of personality is a product of the social system. ... The problem of Stalin is not the problem of Stalin the individual ... I venture to say our society is a socialist one erected on a feudal foundation, an atypical type of socialism, and we must fight for real socialism!"
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Reflections on the Hungarian Revolution

Mao Sided with the Soviet

"Do you think the Hungarian incident was good or bad? I say [it] was both good and bad. Of course it was bad, since they had disturbances. But Hungary did one very good thing; the counterrevolutionaries really helped us. Since the end of the Hungarian incident, things have been more secure than before. Hungary now is better than the Hungary of the past when there were no disturbances." From MacFarquhar ed. *The Secret Speeches of Chairman Mao*, 177

"Big, nationwide riots like those that took place in Hungary will not happen in China." Mao at a conference of provincial-level Party secretaries on January 27, 1957

Students Sided with Hungary

"When the U.S. sends troops to other countries, [we] say that this is a violation of others' domestic politics; when the Soviet dispatches military, [we] say that it is offering help, but obviously the Soviet is intervening in others' domestic politics!" - A Yunnan University student

"Hungarian people's blood was not spilled for nothing! The tiny democracy that we have gained today is inseparable from them! The masses are not [pushovers]; to really solve problems, we need the makers of history - the masses - to take action!" - Lin Xiling

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A Hungarian Revolution in China?

Mao's Double Take on Students

The student movement “were not arranged by the party committees and proceeded like a ‘violent storm,’ which ‘actually had the flavor of ... the Hungarian incident in miniature.”

"Before [I] got to the root of [the student movements] in the four universities, I dispatched personnel to read the big-character newspapers [to figure out] how significant the influence of the Hungarian incident was. Only after 20 May when [I] found out the real situation did [I] truly stop worrying."

Genuine and Diverse Students

"Many cadres felt Beida was in complete chaos, even worse than that in Poland or Hungary. I want to give those nervous cadres a reassuring pill, that this is fundamentally different from the Hungarian Incident. ... I do not see the recent developments at Beida as dangerous. There were some radical and perhaps mistaken views, but no one intends to overthrow socialism." - Lin Xiling



"[T]here were students openly expressing their dissatisfaction and also some taking the Party stand (probably mainly Party and Youth League members and other activists). However, we can assume that the majority of the students stood somewhere in between, displaying a whole range of feelings from utter confusion and hesitation to semi-approval and unexpressed sympathy, an attitude which might be termed 'wait and see.'" - René Goldman

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Conclusion

Ultimately, both Mao and the students were doing the same thing – reevaluating the Communist crises in the Soviet bloc and searching for a better socialist path for China – except they came up with very different interpretations. The “secret speech” was just as liberating and reorienting to Mao as to some Chinese students, and the Hungarian Revolution offered other Communist countries with an example they could either follow or prevent.

My Fieldwork Adventure



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Communist Crises of 1956



Responses to the Secret Speech

Introduction: Mao

"The secret speech of Mao Zedong at the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China in 1956 was a landmark event in the history of the PRC. It was the first time that Mao had publicly criticized himself and the Party's leadership. The speech was a bold move, and it was widely expected that it would lead to a major reform of the PRC's political system. However, the speech was met with a mixed response. Some people were shocked and angry, while others were relieved and hopeful. The speech was a turning point in the history of the PRC, and it led to a period of relative stability and reform in the late 1950s and early 1960s." - [Source]

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A Hungarian Revolution in China?

Mao's Double Take on Students

"The double take on students was a result of Mao's complex relationship with the young generation. On the one hand, he was a strong supporter of the students' movement, and he saw them as a potential force for reform. On the other hand, he was also a strong supporter of the Party's leadership, and he was concerned about the students' demands for greater democracy and reform. This double take on students was a reflection of Mao's complex personality and his role as a leader in a revolutionary movement." - [Source]

Genitive and Office: Students

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1956

1957

1989

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Information Access

Daily Worker

Reference Materials

Wang Kang, 1956-1957

Reflections on the Hungarian Revolution

Was 1956 with the Soviet?

"The 1956 Hungarian Revolution was a major event in the history of the Soviet Bloc. It was a direct challenge to the Soviet Union's leadership in the region, and it led to a period of relative stability and reform in the late 1950s and early 1960s. The revolution was a turning point in the history of the Soviet Bloc, and it led to a period of relative stability and reform in the late 1950s and early 1960s." - [Source]

Students Skid with Hungary

"The students' movement in Hungary was a direct result of the revolution. It was a demand for greater democracy and reform, and it was met with a mixed response from the Party's leadership. The students' movement was a reflection of the students' desire for a better future, and it was a major force for reform in the late 1950s and early 1960s." - [Source]

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Ultimately, both Mao and the students were doing the same thing - re-evaluating the Communist crises in the Soviet bloc and searching for a better socialist path for China - except they came up with very different interpretations. The "secret speech" was just as liberating and enlightening to Mao as to some Chinese students, and the Hungarian Revolution offered other Communist countries with an example they could either follow or prevent.

