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Foreign Ministry memorandum on the comparison of the main conceptions of Liu Shao-chi and Mao Tse-tung

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Memorandum

/for Comrade Erdélyi/

Subject: The comparison of the main conceptions of Liu Shao-chi and Mao Tse-tung

Concerning Liu Shao-chi's conceptions, we have three sources at our disposal.

- 1./ The criticisms he received during the Cultural Revolution.
/They have a rational core, but they tend to give a distorted picture/.
- 2./ Liu Shao-chi's statements before the Cultural Revolution.

/ They reflect the essence of his views in a transposed way. For their examination, it is necessary to consider the time of making or publishing of those statements and the political relations thoroughly /.

3./ Liu Shao-chi's meetings with diplomats.

/We have to treat these statements of his also carefully/.

The reconstruction of Liu Shao-chi's conceptions with absolute certainty is still an unsolvable problem in our days. We have an easier task when outlining Mao Tse-tung's conceptions.

Further on, based on the materials and experiences at our disposal, briefly, without the repetition of well-known facts, we will attempt to draw a parallel between the essence and character of the conceptions of Liu Shao-chi and Mao Tse-tung.

1./ Building of the economy

Liu Shao-chi is now criticized for wanting to restore the capitalist system, the farms of landowners and kulaks. This is not true.

Liu Shao-chi did not agree with the "Three red flags" policy. One may wonder how long and how intensively he had criticized the essence underlying this slogan. It is clear, however, that, seeing the first failures of the Great Leap, he stood up against it.

In his ideas concerning the economy, Liu Shao-chi took reality into consideration to some extent. He did not ignore the basic principles /the harmony of productive forces and production relations, progressivity and proportionality, the limited role of economic levers, a certain extent of financial incentives, the role of industry, etc./. In the period of settlement - of course not independently of Liu Shao-chi -, even some

vague reform ideas occurred to him in connection with the mechanism of economic direction /e.g. slight increase in the independence of provincial industrial administrative organs and companies, certain decrease in the industrial centralization of the huge country/, which, however, were not realized. Concerning agriculture, the core of his views was the slight extension of the free market, a small increase in the originally also small household plots, making production units interested in the profits or losses, the breakdown of production by families, mechanization and chemical processing according to the possibilities and the maintenance of group-ownership. He did not forget about raising the living standard to the absolutely necessary level either.

Liu Shao-chi's ideas concerning the economy lead us to believe that, to some extent, he was influenced by the historical experiences of other socialist countries, especially the Soviet Union. And although he was not a specialist and his ideas did not exceed the sphere of thoughts of an old-type sect-leader, if his ideas had prevailed - accompanied by Chou En-lai's execution skills - the economic laws of socialism would have worked and Chinese economy would not have become completely distorted. The period of settlement, at least, proves this. However, his views could not have had long-lasting results either. His eclectic, unsystematic, inflexible, unimaginative views, lacking elaboration completely and consisting mainly of the negation of mistakes, are regarded as positive ones only under the shadow of Mao Tse-tung's fiascoes.

Mao Tse-tung's economic conception is an adventurer's and voluntarist's idea to its core. Its essence: making up for the historical backwardness in a forced, "leap-like" way. The Cultural Revolution - at the level of the economy - means preparation for a new leap. Mao ignores the laws of economy almost completely. In order to develop the country's military potential as quickly as possible, he militarizes all walks of economic life /military discipline, military control/. He mystifies the subjective factors, the role of propaganda. He increases the intensity of work to the maximum. He concentrates central investments on the war industry, in other fields he applies the

principle of "self-effort", the maximal exploitation of local sources. This tendency prevails in industry clearly and in agriculture in a bit transposed form. The Maoist economic conception ignores the interests of workers. It keeps the standard of living at the minimum, poverty level.

2./ Party-life and party-building

Liu Shao-chi - in spite of his Confucian-feudal traits, maybe, because he started the movement as an agitator, trade-union leader among workers - was not able to give up certain basic principles. It is not that he represented the Leninist norms of party-life and party-building at any time. It is just the role he played at the Eighth Congress that shows the unprincipled parts of his character /at the Eighth Congress Liu Shao-chi was the precursor of Mao Tse-tung's power/. However, he was more party-minded than his opponents even under the circumstances of the political fight against him.

He insisted on the principle "majority-minority", for example. He proclaimed that after the passing of a resolution, the minority should bow to the majority. As far as the character of the party was concerned, he emphasized the workers' role and importance to some extent. Liu Shao-chi more or less respected the elected organs of the party. His political fight within the party had constitutional limits.

Liu Shao-chi's party-political sectarianism manifested itself in connection with the above-mentioned as well, his consistency of principle was not unambiguous. But this becomes even more obvious from the way he interpreted the principle of democratic centralism. And because of this and the over-exaggeration of the majority principle, his ideal was stiff, stereotyped, dry, rigid iron discipline /by the way, this was characteristic of his private life as well/.

Mao's absolute lack of political inhibitions manifested itself mainly in the smashing of the Communist Party of China. For Mao only that principle is sacred which he himself declares - depending on the political necessities of the moment. It gives only the appearance of stability concerning his principles that in our days people refer to his statements of 20-30 years ago. It is because he has declared too many principles already and what he says is - mostly - not unambiguous. Mao was the leader of a social revolution of nationalist character, which also played the role of a national liberating peasant war. Of his party-ideal, much more characteristic are the traditions of Chinese secret societies than Leninist principles, which he either discards or drowns into sophism, tautology. Mao deprives the party of the main criteria of a proletarian party, he chooses not Marxism but his own ideological system as a theoretical basis for his party, he dissolves the proletarian element in the peasant character completely. Under such - and only such - circumstances could come into being in China a personal cult to such extent that has never been experienced in history before and which will probably be never repeated.

3./ State life

The above-mentioned has an influence on the field of state life as well. Liu Shao-chi - more or less - stood for the observance of traditional state frameworks and legal forms. He fought his fight for power also within these frameworks. / As president of the state, he attempted to seat his own people in responsible positions using means that might be regarded lawful/. But the idea of socialist democracy was strange to him. Parliament, e.g. did not play a serious role in his ideas, but he did not deny its existence as a ratifying organ.

Mao has reconciled the organization of the socialist state with the capitalist state machinery, and if it is required in his interests, he is ready to smash it without

thinking. In addition, he seems to be incapable of sensing the idea of democracy / In 1938, in his work entitled "On the Long-Lasting War" he wrote the following typical lines: "Democratization must be realized in the army to some extent, and mainly by putting an end to the feudal practice of the corporal punishment and abuse of common soldiers..."/.

4./ Army

Both Mao Tse-tung and Liu Shao-chi attribute great importance to the army. But while Liu Shao-chi remained within the frames of the traditional conception, Mao Tse-tung emphasized the internal political role of the army above all and to such extent that, after the smashing of the party, he made the army the only organized force in the country temporarily, and during the consolidation - on the militarist base formed in the transition period - he reorganized party, state and economic life on the model of military dictatorship.

The difference between their views concerning the development of the army seems to stem from this. Liu Shao-chi / and the dismissed military leaders/ - probably taking the Soviet experience into consideration - wanted to give more emphasis to modern military technology and the modern requirements of fighting efficiency. Mao Tse-tung embeds these current problems also in his views based on the experiences of the peasant war. Properly speaking, that is the point when Mao speaks of the primacy of politics and pushes the strictly speaking professional problems into the background. / Former Chief of Staff Luo Zhui-ching was sharply criticized during the Cultural Revolution because, among others, he conducted large-scale military exercises instead of the study of Mao's ideas/.

5./ Culture, art, education

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Liu Shao-chi laid great emphasis on the training of specialists and the raising of the general cultural level of the country. He wanted to introduce and realize universal, compulsory primary education, and by time, universal and compulsory education for the 10-12 age group, continuously extending secondary and higher education. In his ideas, teaching and educational activity was given a proportionate role.

Mao Tse-tung proclaims principles that surpass even the most extreme Prussian educational ideas. He uproots, with force, the ideological-political-moral element - which constitutes the system of his own ideas - from the dialectical unity of educational-teaching work, gives absolute role to it and for this, he sacrifices even the principle of the communication of knowledge and of ensuring the continuity of culture. His educational aim is to form the Mao Tse-tung-ist man-ideal.

In the field of science and arts, Liu Shao-chi represents a dogmatic position well-known to us, which means an obstructing factor in most respects, but still opens the way to some progress, and the most important is that it does not deny the great achievements of human culture categorically.

Mao Tse-tung represents denial, destruction, anarchy in these fields too. Out of these fields of science, he spared only those to do with national defense. In the field of arts, already in his Yan'an speech of 1942, he proclaimed the policy of primitive popularism, which is characterized by unsophisticated contents on the one hand, and by the vulgarization of the criterion of clarity and the formal requirements connected to this on the other hand. In the field of social sciences and arts, he put an end to all positive changes.

6./ Foreign policy

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Mao Tse-tung's and Liu Shao-chi's conceptions about foreign policy show the most similarity. Liu Shao-chi's foreign policy during the years preceding the Cultural Revolution proves that he also proclaims nationalist, great power ideas.

Concerning realization, however, there are considerable differences between them. Liu Shao-chi relied more on realities, he assessed China's power and international power relations more precisely. Therefore he was more sober-minded, careful and patient, and it did not seem impossible that the foreign political experiences of the socialist camp might have an influence on him. Liu Shao-chi approved of the policy of Aidit, for example, but he warned everybody to be careful and he found the *modus vivendi* with Sukarno. Today Mao criticizes the catastrophe-policy of the former leaders of the Indonesian Communist Party from the left.

During the Cultural Revolution, one of Liu Shao-chi's "parables" about the Soviet Union became a common saying: "The color of the cat does not matter. If it catches the mouse, it is a good cat." Mao led China to the break-off of relations with the Soviet Union.

In his foreign policy, Liu Shao-chi did not endeavor to break up the unity of action against imperialism by all means and completely. He did not make a principle out of the break-off.

Mao Tse-tung carries on an open political fight against the Soviet Union concerning every important question of international politics. Concerning the question of peace and war, he represents an adventurer's policy. From his ultra-revolutionary position, he denies the possibility of peaceful co-existence even with the non-aligned countries, at the same time, because of his defenselessness resulting from his self-created standing

alone, he pursues a policy lacking principle concerning the leading imperialist powers / the non-liberation of Hong Kong, treating the Taiwanese question as a basic problem of Chinese-American relations, etc./. Mao Tse-tung, in the shadow of the Soviet nuclear shield, carries on overstrained nuclear development, which puts the country's economic strength to a test, openly proclaiming that all this is directed against the USA and the Soviet Union. It may be debated what further distortions can be expected in Chinese policy concerning the question of war and peace in case of the long-lasting continuance of the Mao policy.

The steps to the acquisition of hegemony also seem to have been different in the case of Liu Shao-chi and Mao Tse-tung. At first, Liu saw an opportunity to achieve a leading role in the Third World, but Mao started offensives on all fronts at the same time /Third World, socialist camp, international communist movement/.

To sum up:

Liu Shao-chi pursued more or less the same goals as Mao Tse-tung. When Mao's name was still a guarantee for the achievement of these goals - at the Seventh Congress -, Liu Shao-chi gave all support to Mao's policy. His practice, based on taking reality into consideration, however, made him rebel against Mao to the extent adventurous, unrealistic elements increased in Mao's policy. But as he did not stand on firm Marxist-internationalist grounds, he could not feel a firm base behind him, he was not able to work out such a uniform program and well-defined plan of action which could have ensured his victory. This is proved by his account given at the first session of the Eighth Congress and by his policy pursued after the Congress and, finally, his conduct after the defeat of the Great Leap, in which - belated - one can sense the radical re-evaluation of his attitude concerning Mao's conception. Liu Shao-chi belongs to the type of the old, dogmatic leader, as a matter of fact, with peculiar Chinese nationalist

traits. His double-faced character can be best seen in the role he played at the two above-mentioned congresses.

Mao is an extraordinarily dynamic political personality, who is characterized by the "flexible" treatment of principles, quick understanding of the situation and courage turning into adventurousness. This, together with his elaborated program of action and his demagogy deceiving the masses even today, ensured superiority for him from the very first in the fight against Liu, whose ideas he attacked from the left and the right at the same time.

In perspective, both conceptions are deemed to failure. But while Mao is rather dangerously uninhibited, Liu is rather obsolete drawing back others too. Based on the principle of "the lesser evil" it would have been more favorable if Liu had taken the upper hand in their fight, as within the framework of his conceptions, although in a repressed form, some realities would have made their influence felt and the conditions of a positive change could have slowly come to maturity or, at least, they could have been preserved. Liu did not completely turn away from Marxist theory and the international experiences of the movement.

Mao is willing to take China to the brink in order to liquidate the conditions of favorable change so that his ideas could be preserved among the second, third and further generations.

Budapest, 11 December 1968.
