APPENDIX: 1f

Zhou Enlai

THE COMMUNIST INTERNATIONAL AND THE CHINESE COMMUNIST PARTY

July 14 and 15, 1960


Source: http://www.marx2mao.com/Other/CI60.html

I have been asked by the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee to speak on international relations, particularly the relations between the Communist International and the Chinese Communist Party.

I wish to make six brief points:

1. It was necessary to establish the Communist International and it was also necessary to dissolve it. From its inception to its dissolution, the Communist International existed for 24 years (1919-43), which can be divided into three eight-year periods. Comrade Mao Zedong once commented that the Communist International functioned well during the first and third periods, but not very well during the second. By that, he did not mean that everything was good during the first and third periods and nothing was good during the second. There is no question that it was necessary to establish the Communist International, which played an important role in helping to form Communist Parties in various countries and in stimulating their growth. But by the time these Parties grew up and matured, there was no longer any need for the Communist International to exist.

During its initial days, the Communist International succeeded in expounding the theory and principles of Marxism-Leninism and in promoting worldwide development of the communist movement. Although Lenin enjoyed great authority at that time, the International made its decisions on the basis of democratic centralism, and there was a lively atmosphere in which the representatives of various Parties voiced their opinions freely. The International drew a clear line between the Communist Parties and the social-democratic parties, and at the same time it criticized the "Left-wing" infantile disorder. In the spirit of internationalism, it mobilized the revolutionary people of different countries to support the Soviet Union and promoted the revolutionary struggles and national revolutionary movements of various peoples.

Nevertheless, the dissolution of the Communist International also came at an appropriate moment. In 1935 it adopted a resolution to the effect that it should not interfere with the internal affairs of the various Parties, and after that it did give them a freer hand. But at the time, there was still reason for its existence, because it was playing an active role in the struggle to fight fascism and establish the united front. In June 1943, with the outbreak of the Soviet-German war, the Communist International was dissolved.
The weaknesses and mistakes of the Communist International, particularly during the second period, can be summarized as follows: it failed to conform its general calls with the realities of different countries, and it gave specific instructions to individual Parties instead of providing them with guidance in principle, thus interfering in their internal affairs and hindering them from acting independently and bringing their own initiative and creativity into play.

This is only a rough evaluation of the International.

2. A country’s revolution and construction depend on the practice of the people of that country. Only by integrating the universal truth of Marxism-Leninism with the concrete practice of the country can one enrich and develop Marxism-Leninism. It is essential to sum up one’s experience, both positive and negative, in the course of practice. The Chinese Communist Party has gained rich experience. In spite of the errors it has made by following "Left" or Right lines on different occasions, it has acquired important positive experience.

3. Each Party must think independently with regard to revolution and construction in its own country. Only independent thinking will prevent it from repeating the negative experience of other countries and enable it to draw on their positive experience. I understand that there are many people who do not think independently and who merely follow others blindly; it is not easy to change this mentality. Of course, independent thinking does not mean arrogance or arbitrariness and it does not mean refusal to accept the Communist International’s good ideas. Chen Duxiu was arrogant and arbitrary. So was Comrade Li Lisan, who held that we should try to take Wuhan and win victory first in one province or several provinces; that one or more victories of this kind would herald nationwide victory; that we should argue it out with the Communist International after we had taken Wuhan; that the Soviet Union should send troops to help when there was an upsurge in the Chinese revolution; and that with the success of the Chinese revolution, the capitalist class in Britain, the United States, France and other countries would be doomed and world revolution would begin. Comrade Li Lisan would certainly laugh at those ideas if he reviewed them now.

4. In revolution and construction, a country should act independently and rely on its own efforts. Comrade Mao Zedong once observed that both revolutions in the two big countries, the Russian October Revolution and the Chinese revolution, succeeded when the Communist International was not in existence. Under the present circumstances, if a new international organization should be established, it would be difficult to achieve political and economic equality among its members.

5. When examining the experience of the Communist International, we should take an all-round view. Stalin was in charge for a long time, and there were many shortcomings and mistakes. But not everything during his period was wrong. Even in the second period of the International during Stalin’s late years, he did more to encourage than to discourage revolutionary movements. When we held our ground, he could still accept our views and implicitly acknowledge his mistakes. Once his doubts proved to be misplaced, he was willing to change his mind. For instance, he doubted if we were genuine Marxists and if we wanted to oppose the imperialists, but he changed his views at the time of the Korean war.[26] So Stalin was reasonable. It is true that he erred on the question of the Chinese revolution, but the Chinese comrades should take greater responsibility for the mistakes made in that
revolution, because we were the decisive factor. Moreover, we have already realized and corrected our mistakes, and our revolution has already succeeded.

6. Unity is paramount, and long live internationalism. This is a matter of principle now, just as it was in the past. By unity, we mean unity based on principle. If there are differences, we should try to proceed from the desire for unity and resolve them by means of appropriate criticism and struggle so as to achieve unity on a new basis. At the same time, criticism should be made on the right occasion and in a friendly way, and it should be based on facts and reasoning. If this approach doesn't work right away, one must be patient, because it takes time. The Chinese Party has had much experience in this regard. The Party committed "Left" errors three times in a period of eight years during the Second Revolutionary Civil War (1927-37), and it took us ten years, from the Zunyi Meeting in 1935 to the Seventh Party Congress in 1945, to correct them. If this is the case with a single Party, it is all the more so with the Communist International. We must hold high the banner of unity. That means unity with millions of Party members and 200 million other people in the Soviet Union, with members of other fraternal Parties and with the more than 90 per cent of the people throughout the world who want to make revolution.

Now I should like to deal with the relations between the Communist International and our Party in different periods.


In this period the Communist International was helpful to the Chinese revolution, although it made mistakes on a few questions of principle.

After its inception in March 1919, the International sent missions to different countries to visit prominent public figures and work on them. In China they approached not only Chen Duxiu and Li Dazhao but also Jiang Kanghu, Huang Jiemin and Dai Jitao; they called on Wu Peifu in the north and on Sun Yat-sen in the south. With the help of the International, the Chinese Communist Party was founded in a very short time, because the May 4th Movement had already laid the foundation for it. The Chinese Party soon identified itself with the struggle of the masses. By that time the International had begun to devote more time to China issues in its discussions. The question of revolution in the East was discussed at both its Second Congress in 1920 and its Third Congress in 1921. During its Fourth Congress the International held a serious debate on the Chinese revolution, and after that it recruited many Chinese intellectuals to study in Moscow. In 1923 it adopted a resolution on co-operation between the Kuomintang and the Communist Party, which allowed Party members to join the Kuomintang but stipulated that the Party should maintain its independence. It also discussed the possibility of launching an agrarian revolution in China and sent us instructions on the matter. When the Chinese Communist Party convened its Third Congress in June 1923, there were two dominant views, the "Left" and the Right. The Right view, represented by Chen Duxiu, was that the Chinese revolution was a bourgeois-democratic revolution and should therefore be led by the bourgeoisie, with the proletariat only playing a supporting role; and there was no mention at all of the question of leadership to be exercised by the proletariat. The "Left" view, represented by Zhang Guotao, was that only a few Communist Party members, and none from the working class, should join the Kuomintang. In fact, both views denied leadership by the proletariat. Although at its Fourth Congress the Party adopted resolutions criticizing

XXVIII
these views, the problem still remained. As we see it now, the criticism was not directed at the real issue. The mass movement was already in full swing at the time, but wrong decisions were made on major issues because the opportunism represented by Chen Duxiu still held sway. During the Second Congress of the Kuomintang, its right-wingers, such as the Western Hills Clique, became much more aggressive than before. But prior to that there had been a rapid increase in the strength of the left-wing forces in the Kuomintang, after its defeat of the Merchants' Corps in Guangdong and its Eastern Expeditions against Chen Jiongming. The policy of the period, which could have been successful, should have been to support the left wing while excluding the right wing. But Chen Duxiu insisted on the right-wingers returning to the Kuomintang and being elected at its Second Congress. As a result, the right-wingers became more arrogant. We also made concessions on military matters. Our Party was caught off guard when Chiang Kai-shek attacked us by launching the Zhongshan Warship Incident and destroyed part of our power base in the military. We were by no means weak and should have fought back, but we failed to do so. As a result, we only had the Independent Regiment in the National Revolutionary Army, which expanded into two divisions when it reached Wuhan. At the time of the Northern Expedition, we should have tried to gain the support of the masses and the military. But while the Northern Expedition was going on, our Party organ, The Guide, which was based in Shanghai and expressed Chen Duxiu's views, opposed the expedition, arguing that as it was a time of wars between the warlords, our people in Guangdong should not have started the Expedition, but should have defended themselves and engaged in mass struggle. Thus, our Party gave up its leadership in the Expedition. When the agrarian revolution was in full swing and Comrade Mao Zedong's article was published, the Central Committee gave them no support. At that time, Chen Duxiu was really afraid of the revolution and the masses. The Executive Committee of the Communist International likewise made an inaccurate analysis of the China question, and its Sixth, Seventh and Eighth Plenums made mistakes in their analysis of the strength of various classes in China. In particular, the Eighth Plenum, held in May 1927, concluded that the bourgeoisie as a whole had turned traitor. Furthermore, the International maintained that after the betrayal by the Wuhan Government, the petty bourgeoisie had also given up the revolution. As for the question of leadership, proletarian leadership was already in embryonic form during the period of Kuomintang-Communist co-operation in 1924, and by the time of the First Congress of the Kuomintang, the Communist Party had already assumed a leading role. As a matter of course, our Party should have taken hold of the army, and it was entirely possible for us to have done so during the time of the revolutionary regime in Guangdong, but the Central Committee gave up the leadership. Then Lenin died, and Stalin, preoccupied with his fierce struggle with the opposition in the Party, was entirely unable to formulate a precise policy because he was not well informed about the Chinese revolution. As the centre of the Chinese revolution was in Guangdong, the centre of the Party -- its headquarters -- should also have been moved there. But the Party was still headquartered in Shanghai, and Chen Duxiu simply refused to go to Guangdong when he was asked to. Thus, the two centres often came into conflict. It was long after Wuhan was taken that the Party's headquarters were finally moved to Wuhan. In view of all this, our Party's leaders should assume greater responsibility for the mistakes in the first period. At that time Comrade Mao Zedong had not yet established his authority; it was impossible for him to do so. Moreover, the leaders of the Party had not yet acquired a deep understanding of Marxism-Leninism, and there was factionalism among them, which was aggravated by Chen Duxiu's patriarchal style of work. All this hindered the political and ideological development of the Party.

During this period the line of the Communist International was basically wrong, and its influence on our Party was most serious. In July 1927 the Wuhan Government betrayed the revolution, exposing the bankruptcy of Chen Duxiu's capitulationist line. At this critical moment, the Executive Committee of the International sent a letter to our Central Committee. In this letter the Executive Committee expressed optimism about the future of the revolution but failed to make a correct analysis of its motive power and of the relations among classes, asserting that the bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie had all betrayed the revolution. It proposed seven tasks for the revolution: 1) to withdraw from the Wuhan Government; 2) to issue a declaration 3) to stay in the Kuomintang and organize a left wing within it; 4) to organize workers' struggles; 5) to arm the workers and the peasants; 6) to prepare for the possibility of going underground; and 7) to oppose opportunism. These tasks did not include organizing, armed forces, setting up local governments or deepening the agrarian revolution, which were precisely the things we should have been concentrating on.

The question of opposing Chen's opportunism must be related to the question of organization. The International sent Borodin to our Party, and at a meeting of the Political Bureau he directly interfered with our internal affairs by setting up a provisional-standing committee. This decision was approved in haste. A declaration issued by the Central Committee on July 13 only mentioned withdrawing from the Wuhan Government. At that time our Party still had some armed forces, such as those commanded by Ye Ting, so we decided to start the Nanchang Uprising. The aim of the uprising was to march south to Shantou, occupy the port there and then proceed to Guangzhou. It was a correct move, but the leadership did not understand the uprising correctly. They conceived of it as a purely military action, based on the view that the cities were of primary importance, without any notion of integrating with the local peasants to establish base areas in the countryside. The International sent a few representatives to China, and under the direction of B. Lominadze, a meeting of the Party was held in Hankou on August 7. At this meeting the Party took a clear-cut stand against opportunism, but it failed to make a correct summary, give correct instructions or set forth definite tasks in connection with such important questions as how to integrate our struggle with the agrarian revolution, how to push forward the mass movement and how to organize armed forces, governments and base areas. When Zhang Tailei came to Shantou to brief us on the meeting, he only criticized opportunism and didn't tell us how to do our work. As I still held the view that cities were of primary importance and had not drawn any lessons from the Shang-hai-Uprisings and the Nanchang Uprising, I did not see the need to go up into the mountains and engage in rural struggles.

The failure of the Chinese revolution made the opposition faction attack Stalin more fiercely. In 1927 Stalin wrote a series of articles in an attempt to refute their views, but his theoretical analysis of the Chinese revolution and his appraisal of the situation were in large part incorrect. He maintained that the bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie had left the revolutionary camp one after the other, that the revolution would soon reach high tide and that it was rapidly turning into a socialist revolution. Influenced by the theoretical analyses and estimate of the situation made by Stalin and by the Communist International, the enlarged meeting of the Provisional Political Bureau of the Central Committee held in November 1927 adopted a putschist line, calling for insurrection everywhere and

XXX
insisting that the revolution was already at high tide. Organizationally, many people in the Party were
given disciplinary punishment, one of the outstanding cases being the expulsion of Tan
Pingshan. Comrade Mao Zedong and people like myself were all disciplined. At the November Meeting
the Central Committee decided to stage the Guangzhou Uprising, but without setting forth any definite
aims. A German and a man from the Soviet Union helped to direct the insurrection. After the failure of
the uprising and the death of Comrade Zhang Tailei, the Central Committee sent Comrade Li Lisan to
Hong Kong to direct the work in Guangdong Province. This was the zenith of putschism. Guangdong
suffered from it most, and the number of cadres killed there was the largest. Because the Party failed to
draw the lesson of the uprisings in Shanghai, Nanchang and Guangzhou, the political line still called for
insurrection everywhere, which resulted in a great loss of revolutionary strength, especially in the White
areas. Another mistake that was made, organizationally, was to replace the Party leaders with people
from the working class, which caused more confusion in the leading body and aggravated factionalism.
The root cause of this too lay in the instructions of the Communist International.

Now a few words about the Sixth National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party. The Sixth Congress
was convened in accordance with a resolution adopted by the Ninth Plenum of the Executive Committee
of the Communist International. A delegation from the Chinese Communist Party, including Xiang
Zhongfa and others had taken part in that Plenum. With regard to the Sixth Congress, there was first of
all a problem concerning the delegates who attended it. Because of the emphasis on working-class
origin, there were 41 workers among the 75 delegates. Fourteen of the 16 delegates who later turned
traitor were workers. The persons who directed the work of the Sixth Congress on behalf of the
Communist International included Bukharin, a French comrade and Togliatti, but the practical work was
under the charge of Mif. When members of the Central Committee were elected, too much emphasis
was placed on working-class origin. Many of the 20-odd members elected were workers, while some
comrades who really had high prestige in the Party were left out. After the Congress, Qu Qiubai and
Zhang Guotao stayed in Moscow to serve as executive members of the Communist International. In its
resolutions the Sixth Congress made a correct analysis of the nature of the Chinese revolution (a
bourgeois-democratic revolution) and its tasks (to oppose imperialism and feudalism), but an incorrect
analysis of class relations and so on; alleging that the entire bourgeoisie and the whole upper stratum of
the petty bourgeoisie had betrayed the revolution. On the land question, the resolutions stated only
that the land of the landlord class should be confiscated and handed over to a peasants conference for
redistribution, and the military question was given no special mention. After the Sixth Congress, the
faction in Sun Yat-sen University headed by Wang Ming mustered its forces to oppose the Chinese
delegation to the Communist International. Sun Yat-sen University, which was founded in Moscow in
1925 with Mif as its Vice-President, had enrolled some of our Party cadres from the period of the Great
Revolution and also some young people, including ones like Wang Ming and some left-wingers from the
Kuomintang. Factional strife was rife at the University, and it continued after the Sixth Congress. In
opposing the Chinese delegation, the Wang Ming faction was in fact opposing the Central Committee of
the Chinese Party, asserting that it was no longer competent and its members must be changed. Under
the influence of the purge carried out by the C.P.S.U.(Bolsheviks), things had gone from bad to worse in
1929 and 1930; people were expelled from the Party on the merest suspicion and some were even
banished.

XXXI
After the Sixth Congress, the Communist International sent a Polish comrade and a German comrade to China. In 1929 four letters came from the International. In the first letter it enjoined us to oppose the Right tendency, in the second to oppose alliance with the rich peasants, in the third to make the Red trade unions public and in the fourth to oppose the Reorganization Clique (Wang Jingwei and Chen Gongbo) and the third force. All these letters had an influence on Li Lisan's line. The fourth letter claimed that the situation was growing ripe for direct revolution and called for political strikes to prepare for it.

I went to the Communist International in March 1930. In July I saw Stalin, who was closely following the military struggles in China. A resolution about the China question was adopted by the Political Secretariat of the Executive Committee of the Communist International, with the six resolutions of the Far Eastern Bureau attached to it as an appendix. Stalin said that there were too many resolutions for China to implement, that it would be better for us to consider them as mere drafts. In China, on June 11, the Li Lisan line was adopted. According to this line, the Party should win victory first in one or more provinces, and such a victory would mark the beginning of the revolution in the whole of China. At the same time, plans were made to stage insurrections throughout the country and to seize Wuhan, Nanchang, Changsha and other big cities. Later, Changsha was taken, and two enlarged meetings of the Political Bureau were held in succession on August 1 and 3. Li Lisan said that he would argue it out with the Communist International after seizing Wuhan. Although the Li Lisan line was followed for only three or four months, it brought great losses to Party organizations in many places. The Central Committee therefore convened its Third Plenary Session in September. There were still "left" influences because the seven resolutions of the Communist International were relayed to the Session. Xiang Zhongfa and I made reports, Qu Qiubai delivered a concluding speech, and Li Lisan gave a talk. Li Lisan was sharply criticized at the Session, but the wording in the final resolution was not so sharp. The Third Plenary Session also made some mistakes. For example, He Mengxiong was criticized and so was Chen Shaoyu (Wang Ming). Some of the criticisms were correct but others were not. At the Session a number of people were added to the Central Committee, but He Mengxiong was not among them. In fact, however, many of He's opinions were correct. The practice of sending inspectors to local areas like imperial envoys also started with the Third Plenary Session. At that time, the Communist International complained that the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party was not paying enough attention to the Soviet areas. Accordingly, the Central Committee sent quite a few people to those areas, adversely affecting the work there.

In October 1930 a letter came from the International saying that the Central Committee was wrong and was following a "line of conciliation". Wang Ming and others began to make trouble. Furthermore, the coming of Mif threw the Party into crisis. Wang Ming wrote a pamphlet asking the Central Committee to hold an emergency meeting and change its leadership. Hence the Fourth Plenary Session. The Session rejected the draft resolutions we had prepared and Mif himself drafted new ones. The Third Plenary Session had followed the resolution on China adopted by the Political Secretariat of the Executive Committee of the International. The Fourth Plenary Session did likewise and, backed by the letter from the International, took an ultra-"left" approach opposing Li Lisan's "left" line and adopted a resolution condemning it. After the Fourth Plenary Session, Wang Ming's pamphlet became increasingly influential. Taking an even more "left" stand, he opposed Li Lisan's so-called Right tendency and the "line of

XXXII
conciliation" of the Third Plenary Session and formulated an even more "Left" line. This, together with the betrayal of some leading members of the Central Committee, caused great losses to our Party.

In August 1931 Mif returned to the Soviet Union. In August the Communist International adopted a resolution that criticized the Third Plenary Session of the Central Committee, asserting that the Chinese Party was much strengthened after the Fourth Plenary Session when, in fact, it was in greater disarray. The Fourth Plenary Session retained me in the Political Bureau but expelled Qu Qiubai. Later, Wang Ming went to the International, Zhang Guotao and Chen Changhao to the Hubei-Henan-Anhui Soviet Area and I to the Central Soviet Area. At that time, only a few people were left in the central organ, most of the members having been sent to different places to seize power. A provisional central leadership of the Party was formed in Shanghai with the approval of the International. It adopted a resolution on the September 18th Incident of 1931, and in January 1932 it adopted another which called for winning victory first in one or more provinces and seizing major cities. Some comrades who held correct views, like Mao Zedong and Liu Shaoqi, were accused of being guilty of "Right deviation". After the Ningdu Meeting, Comrade Mao Zedong was removed from the leadership of the army. In 1933 there was another struggle against the Luo Ming line and against Deng Xiaoping, Mao Zetan, Xie Weijun and Gu Bai -- all the comrades who held correct views were attacked. Jiangxi Province suffered the most, because in early 1933 the provisional central leadership was moved there to carry out the line of the Communist International. As a result, the Party lost almost 100 per cent of its strength in the White areas and 90 per cent in the Soviet areas. On military matters, Li Teh, though just an advisor, acted like an overlord and had the final say. He agreed with the military line of Bo Gu, and his line prevailed until the Zunyi Meeting. The implementation of that line ended in the withdrawal from Jiangxi Province and the forced Long March. Looking back, we must admit that there was no alternative. It was at the Zunyi Meeting that Comrade Mao Zedong corrected the erroneous line on military matters and saved the Chinese revolution. But for the Zunyi Meeting, the success of the Chinese revolution would have been delayed indefinitely. After the Meeting, although the Party suffered losses during the Long March and was shaken by Zhang Guotao's attempt to split it by setting up a separate "central committee", it weathered storms and difficulties under the leadership of Comrade Mao Zedong and surmounted the crisis it was in.

So in its second period the Communist International made serious mistakes in directing of the Chinese Party. During this period the Chinese Party too made many mistakes that brought great losses to the revolution. Surely we Chinese should bear the responsibility for our mistakes, but the Communist International also had much to do with them.


In this period the Chinese Party maintained fewer contacts with the Communist International. The International held its Seventh Congress in July-August 1935. Stalin was more concerned with domestic problems, and Dimitrov was in charge of the International. A resolution was passed to the effect that the Executive Committee should shift the focus of its work to formulating the basic political and tactical lines for the international workers' movement and that in general it should not interfere in the internal affairs of the Parties in various countries. At that time the International developed the Anti-Fascist United Front, which coincided with the formation of the anti-Japanese National United Front in China. When
Zhang Xueliang and Yang Hucheng arrested Chiang Kai-shek in the Xi'an Incident, the International openly declared that Zhang was a running dog of the Japanese imperialists and that the arrest of Chiang Kai-shek suited the needs of Japan. This judgement was completely wrong. Our own approach to the Xi'an Incident was, on the whole, correct.

Although Comrade Mao Zedong was in charge of the Chinese Party during this period, the Communist International still had its influence. The main problem was the reappearance of the Wang Ming line. Wang Ming came back from the International at the end of 1937 and said that he had talked with Stalin. Claiming to speak for the International, he proposed that "everything should go through the united front" and declared that the Kuomintang, like the Communist Party, had rallied excellent young people around it. After his return Wang Ming was placed in charge of the Changjiang Bureau. He deceived a number of people and pushed through his line a second time. Though this line was implemented for only a short time, it had an influence on the north, on the New Fourth Army and on Shanghai. It cannot be denied that the reappearance of the Wang Ming line had something to do with the Communist International. Stalin trusted Wang Ming, and Dimitrov was on friendly terms with him. Later, when I went to Moscow to talk about Wang Ming's errors, Dimitrov was surprised by what I had to say. After the Zunyi Meeting a new situation appeared in our Party under the leadership of Mao Zedong. At the Sixth Plenary Session of the Sixth Central Committee Wang Ming was criticized, and as many cadres began to know him better, he gradually became isolated. Even Chiang Kai-shek rejected him, refusing to make him a minister. Comrade Mao Zedong said that things would have been worse if Wang Ming had been given a ministerial post.

In 1939 Hitler's Germany launched the Second World War. The mutual non-aggression pact signed by the Soviet Union and Germany placed the Parties in the capitalist countries in a difficult position and caused much ideological confusion. On September 1 Comrade Mao Zedong gave his "Interview with a New China Daily Correspondent on the New International Situation", a transcript of which I brought to the Communist International to be distributed to the other fraternal Parties. The International thought very highly of it, saying that the leaders of the Chinese Party were right and giving them great support.

During this period the Communist International still interfered to some extent in the internal affairs of our Party, even on organizational matters. But it interfered less than in the first period and much less than in the second period. After the war broke out it interfered very little. Also, by that time our Party had become mature and maintained little contact with the International. In 1943 the Communist International was dissolved.