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STALIN'S SHORT COURSE AND MAO'S SOCIALIST ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION OF CHINA IN THE EARLY 1950s

Introduction

It is generally agreed among scholars studying Sino-Soviet relations that China followed a Stalinist path to socialism in the early 1950s. The ways in which Mao adopted and applied the Soviet model have, however, not been well documented due to lack of information. It has also been unknown whether he relied mainly upon personal consultations with Soviet leaders or upon written works for guidance. With the publication of previously unavailable archival information and other materials in both China and the former Soviet Union in recent decades, scholars can now begin to understand more about these important issues. My research suggests that Mao's emulation of the Soviet model depended upon both his consultations with Soviet leaders and his readings of Soviet written works.1 In the early 1950s, Mao consulted with Soviet leaders, especially Stalin, whose advice served mainly as a constraint on Mao's radical plan to create a socialist system in China as rapidly as possible.2 Mao also, however, consulted a number of Soviet texts. Stalin's Short Course, the most important of these works for Mao, exercised a profound impact upon his thinking in formulating and pursuing a Stalinist path to socialism. In this article, I will restrict my discussion to Mao's reliance on Stalin's Short Course in establishing a Stalinist economic system in China in the early 1950s.

To emphasize the importance of the Short Course does not diminish the importance of other sources of ideas during this period, including the writings of Lenin, other writings of Stalin, speeches and political reports by Soviet leaders in the early 1950s, and oral advice provided by Stalin and by Soviet leaders, planners, and officials. The importance of the Short Course is that it served as a road map for building socialism in China, and it can be said with-
out exaggeration that the post-1949 socialist transformation of China largely followed the stages described in the *Short Course*.

A few Western scholars have made mention of the impact of Stalin's *Short Course* on Mao and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Benjamin Schwartz, for example, commented on Mao's uncritical acceptance of the image of "socialism" as described in the *Short Course*, while Tony Saich described Mao's effort to rewrite past CCP party history during his rectification campaign (1941-44) as inspired by what Stalin had done with the *Short Course*, i.e., to have a party history based on a Maoist discourse. Agreeing with Schwartz, I believe that in the early 1950s Mao adopted the view of "socialism" described in the *Short Course*. I go further, however, in arguing that Mao also created a Stalinist economic structure, largely following the steps outlined by Stalin in the *Short Course*. Mao relied on Stalin's radical ideas of the 1920s and 1930s, expressed in the *Short Course*, especially Stalin's ideas about the steps that needed to be taken to destroy the old economic structure and to establish a new socialist system in its place. Mao paid particular attention to Stalin's discussion of the conditions under which capitalism could be eliminated and the time required to complete the process of socialist transformation. While essentially following the steps outlined in the *Short Course*, Mao was ready to take shortcuts so that he could complete each step on the road to socialism in China faster than Stalin had in the Soviet Union.

What does Mao's heavy reliance on the *Short Course* tell us about Mao and his ideological orientation, his commitment to a Stalinist road to socialism, and his capabilities as an independent thinker? To set the stage for my discussion, I will first briefly introduce the *Short Course*. I will then discuss the history of the application of the *Short Course* in China and Mao's relationship with this work.

The *Short Course*

Largely unknown in the West, the book is usually referred to simply as the *Short Course*, in place of its full title, *Short Course of the History of the All-Russian Communist Party (Bolshevik)*. The *Short Course* was first published in Moscow in 1938. It was written under the supervision of Stalin and then heavily edited by him. Stalin's actual contribution was limited to only one section of Chapter 4, where he wrote about dialectical and historical materialism, a subject in which Mao was interested. After World War II, Stalin claimed sole authorship of the entire work and the Chinese communists con-

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