A HISTORICAL EXAMINATION OF THE ISSUE OF SOVIET EXPERTS IN CHINA: BASIC SITUATION AND POLICY CHANGES

The dispatching of large numbers of experts and advisers to foreign countries was an important aspect of the Soviet Union's efforts to expand its political, economic, military, diplomatic and cultural influences among other socialist countries and in the Third World after World War II. This was also a special phenomenon in the relationship between socialist countries during the Cold War era. People have noticed that, no matter what the motives or original intensions, the result was contrary to what was wished for. In the case of Yugoslavia, Stalin's first reaction to the clash with Yugoslavia was to withdraw all specialists there. In 1956, during the Polish crisis, the first measure Gomulka adopted was to request that the USSR withdraw its advisers from Poland. And in 1960 the signal that revealed to the world the Sino-Soviet split was Khrushchev announcing the recall of all specialists from China. To a degree, similar phenomena also took place in relations between Yugoslavia and Albania, China and Vietnam, the USSR and Hungary. This alone is worth drawing the attention of historians to ponder all aspects of the question of sending of specialists between socialist countries.

This article will provide a concentrated discussion about the issue of the Soviet experts in China from 1949 to 1960.\(^1\) The Soviet Union dispatched large numbers of experts to China for longer than a decade.\(^2\) This practice played an unusual role in China's establishment of an economic system following the Stalin model. It is of great significance to study this issue, which

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1. Between 1947 and 1956 the USSR sent over 14,000 experts to its various allied countries (see People's Daily, Febr. 23, 1957). According to the Russian archive, between 1950 and 1956, 5,092 experts were dispatched to China alone. See Sergei Goncharenko, "Sino-Soviet Military Cooperation," in Odd Arne Westad, ed., Brothers in Arms: The Rise and fall of the Sino-Soviet Alliance (1945-1963) (Stanford, CA: Stanford Univ. Press, 1998), 155. In 1957 most Russian experts and advisers were withdrawn from Eastern Europe, but in the case of China they stayed for a few years longer and even more were sent.

2. Despite that Russian experts were all withdrawn in July 1960, nine experts were dispatched in 1961 and ten in 1962. See Р. В. Филипов, "Научно-Техническое сотрудничество между СССР и КНР (1949-1966)." Информационный бюллетень советско-китайские отношения. № 65 (1995), 49.
will help generate a better understanding of not only the phenomenon of Moscow's dispatch of experts abroad, but also the characteristics of the relationship between socialist countries, the causes leading to the Sino-Soviet split, America's strategy of driving a wedge between China and the Soviet Union, and China's path of development toward modernization.

Yet, up to the present time, scholarly circles, especially those of China and Russia, have not produced much work on the topic. Notwithstanding that almost all historians of Sino-Soviet relations want to bring up the question of Soviet specialists, monographic literature on it is quite scarce. The author in his investigation came to realize that the principal reason for this is that the relevant materials are few and dispersed. Original materials are scattered in various local archives. In order to understand the realities and specifics of the Soviet specialists work in China, it is necessary to go deeply into the grass roots of society.

In preparing this study, I have searched through relevant reports in Renmin Ribao (People's Daily) for the whole period, as well as consulted with existing secondary sources on the subject, and have conducted research at Beijing, Inner Mongolia, Liaoning, Jilin, and Xinjiang archives, and at the factories and institutions that had received Soviet experts. I have also interviewed many of those who had involved in this matter in the 1950s. This use of Chinese archival and other sources has been augmented by my use of extensive Russian archival materials that have been made available recently.

The main purpose of this study is, through the critical and careful use of original archival materials, to establish a basic narrative of how the Soviet Union dispatched experts to China, how China received the experts, and how the policies of the two sides altered with changing times and conditions. Hopefully this study will prepare the way for further and more profound studies in the future.

Satisfying China's political and economic needs

In the summer of 1948, the USSR had already dispatched a specialists' technical group to the Chinese Communist base area in the Northeast to help repair the railroads. During the next year Liu Shaoqi came back from his visit

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3. I have seen only one paper discussing the Soviet experts in China: see Deborah Kaple, "Soviet Advisers in China in the 1950s," in Westad ed., Brothers in Arms: The Rise and Fall of the Sino-Soviet Alliance (1945-1963). The author of the paper is a specialist in the history of Sino-USSR economic relations and has published a monograph on how China established its industrial infrastructure with Russia's help (Dream of A Red Factory: The Legacy of High Stalinism in China [New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1994]). The value of Kaple's paper lies in her extensive use of declassified Russian archives as well as her first-hand interviews with the experts themselves. Yet it is not surprising that it lacks original documentation from the Chinese side.