

Letter from Maurice Dejean to Christian Pineau (Moscow, 16 November 1956)


Caption: On 16 November 1956, Maurice Dejean, French Ambassador to the USSR, sends to Christian Pineau, French Foreign Minister, a letter in which he describes the reactions in Moscow to the support shown by the French and Chinese Communist Parties on the day after the Soviet invasion of Hungary.

Source: Ministère des Affaires étrangères; Commission de publication des DDF (sous la dir.). Documents diplomatiques français. Volume III: 1956, 24 octobre-31 décembre. Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1990. 642 p. p. 328-329.

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T. Nos 4597 to 4600.

Moscow, 16 November 1956, 5.50 p.m.

(Received: 6 p.m.)

In the difficult circumstances now facing the international Communist movement in the wake of the Soviet clampdown in Hungary, the backing that some parties in the Communist fraternity have given to the Party in the Soviet Union is being used here to bolster the morale of party activists. The French Communist Party has been singled out for recognition of its unwavering support despite being the butt of 'Fascist taunts' ⁽¹⁾. However, it is the support given by the Communist Party of China that is most highly valued. Pravda's 15 November edition reprinted, apparently in full, the previous day's editorial that Jen Min Jih Pao had devoted to the events in Hungary. It reasserted China's whole-hearted support for the Soviet actions that were absolutely necessary and which in no way contradicted the 30 October declaration nor the principles of peaceful coexistence. It also asserted that, as soon as order has been restored, talks would take place 'on the stationing of Soviet troops in Hungary under the Warsaw Treaty' and stated that there could be no question of agreeing to any monitoring by a UN police force. The mouthpiece of the Chinese Communist Party, reflecting on the disquiet that the Hungarian crisis had provoked in the minds of western European Communists, concluded by comparing it to that caused by the mud-slinging campaign against the Soviet Union in 1939. This is a clear admission that the Soviet crack-down on the Hungarian uprising has sparked off a crisis in global, and especially European, Communism that is as serious as Stalin's collusion with Nazism that, for a time, was sealed by the German-Soviet Pact. However, the Chinese, in addressing Communists abroad with the increasing authority that they are now displaying, appeal to them to use dispassionate, Marxist realism when analysing these difficult and complex events and not to give in to despair or confusion. In Peking's opinion, the French Communist Party has provided a shining example of such courageous, intellectual clarity.

China's key role in the international Communist movement is thus becoming more and more apparent. By aiding and abetting the Soviet Union, by refusing to yield to the temptation of 'purism' and by being willing to 'get its hands dirty' in order to save the Socialist cause that has been compromised by the Stalinists' own errors, the Chinese Communists are ensuring that they will have a strong bargaining position in future talks with the Soviets held to set out the overall party line.

(1) Of all the European Communist parties, only the French Communist Party remained unwavering in its views. From the outbreak of the Hungarian crisis, the Central Committee tirelessly criticised the Hungarian Communists who had been behind Imre Nagy 'in his repeated compromises'. French Communist leaders claimed that the attitude adopted by the party leadership at the July congress in Le Havre (DDF 1956-II, No 58, note) was fully justified by subsequent events. The Communist Party welcomed the 'ultimate defeat of the counter-revolution' in Budapest. Several press releases repeated this unconditional support for the Kremlin line.