Zhongdong Railway Incident and Great Repercussions
Caused by Letters from Chen Duxiu

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Abstract
Zhongdong Railway Incident was an unfortunate event that caused Sino-soviet war. The responsibility was on both sides, but China should take the main responsibility. Northeast local authorities and Zhang Xueliang were the main policy makers, and Nanjing government took an attitude of active encouragement and support. The dispute of two slogans “Supporting Soviet union” and "Guarding Soviet union with armed forces" was established four months later, and the resolution ended with expelling Chen Duxiu from the Party membership. Liu Shaoqi, Secretary of CPC Provincial Committee of Manchuria successfully led workers in winning the war under extremely dangerous and complex circumstance. He not only showed a firm proletarian position, rich fighting experiences and flexible struggle strategy, but also provided valuable experiences for CPC's leading workers to struggle in the white area.

Keywords: Zhongdong Railway Incident, CPC Provincial Committee of Manchuria, Zhang Xueliang, Chen Du Xiu, Two slogans

It has been exactly for 80 years since Zhongdong Railway Incident (Note 1) that broke out in Northeast China in 1929. People have had accepted opinions about the feature of anti-Soviet Union and the position taken by CCP in the incident, but opinions are widely divided about disputes of the two slogans within CCP at that time. In the history of CCP, there hasn’t been any characterization of a mistake by any one during any period as complicated as the characterization of the mistake made by Chen Duxiu during the Great Revolution. During the long time from 1927 before failure of the Great Revolution till now, characterization of the mistake made by Chen Duxiu during the Great Revolution has always been dynamically changing. (Note 2)

1. Reconsideration of features and obligations of Zhongdong Railway Incident

In July 1929, Zhang Xueliang ordered Chinese Army to take over Zhongdong Railway, and afterwards, Soviet Union sent troops, which resulted in extreme deterioration of Sino-Soviet Union relationship. This is the Zhongdong Railway Incident well-known at home and abroad. As for features and obligations of this incident, opinions are divided. There are mainly the following several viewpoints summarizing research results in the historian circle. Firstly, Whether Zhang Xueliang provoked this incident for “anti-Soviet Union and anti-communist” or for “safeguarding the national sovereignty”. Whenever scholars of the Russian historian circle mention the incident, they always get at China for its "mistake", and believe that Zhang Xueliang provoked this anti-Soviet Union incident under the instigation of imperialism for “anti-Soviet Union and anti-communist”. This viewpoint predominated the historian circle before 1980s. In the middle and later periods of 1980s, more and more people began to assert that, Zhang Xueliang was “patriotic” and “safeguarded the national sovereignty” in the incident, and this viewpoint began to predominate. Some scholars think that the feature of the incident is to recover the national sovereignty, and this is its main flow and essence. Other people define the incident as ethnic conflict, and believe that Zhang Xueliang taking back Zhongdong Railway was legitimate. (Note 3) Secondly, whether Zhang Xueliang was made a convenience of by Chiang Kai-Shek. In works about Zhongdong Railway issues, a large majority hold the opinion that Zhang Xueliang was made convenience of by Chiang Kai-Shek. For instance, the author of <<History of Northeast Army>> believed that, “subornation of Chiang Kai-Shek and the Central Kuomingtang Government was an important reason for launching the Zhongdong Railway Incident by Zhang Xueliang.” Still other scholars believe, Zhang Xueliang had been aware of subornation of Chiang Kai-Shek earlier, but the authority to launch this incident was in the hand of Zhang Xueliang after all. Therefore, it was not Chiang Kai-Shek who should take major responsibility, but Zhang Xueliang himself. Japanese scholar Dao Junyan
believed that, Zhang Xueliang should take the main responsibility for this dispute. But it was estimated that, Chiang Kai-Shek attempted to drive Zhang Xueliang into a corner by this dispute and took this as an excuse to send troops outside the Pass, in the hope to put Manchuria directly under his governance.

According to the author of this article, Zhongdong Railway Incident was an unfortunate event that caused Sino-soviet war. The responsibility was on both sides, but China should take the main responsibility. If we say Zhang Xueliang “struggled” against the incident for national obligation, then, this incident was purely conflict between the two countries. As a matter of fact, the case is not such. This particular relationship between CCP and Soviet Union at that period was already extremely obvious during the Zhongdong Railway Incident in 1929. This requires us to date back on how the incident broke out.

Liu Shaoqi (Note 4) was appointed Secretary of CPC Provincial Committee of Manchuria and came to Shenyang (Note 5) to take office, when the Zhongdong Railway Incident broke out. Zhongdong Railway was short for “Chinese Eastern Provincial Railway”. This T-shaped railway which crossed the three provinces of Eastern China was constructed to expand invasion and pillage on Northeast China. There were three major railway systems in Northeast China, one Zhongdong Railway System of Sino-Soviet condominium, taking Vladivostok from Manchuria, the second one South Manchuria System controlled by Japan, taking Lushun-dairen from Manchuria, and the third one Beining Railway System managed by China, taking Huludao (Note 6) from Manchuria. Major competitive target of Japanese aggressors was Zhongdong Railway. Once the Manchuria Railway Chairman Goto Shimpei came to his office, he proposed to extend Jichang Line defined by Russia further to a harbor of North Korea, and made it withstand against Vladivostok. (Note 7) Afterwards, continuous interest conflict between “Zhongdong Railway” and “South Manchuria Railway” reflected intense competition of strife openly and secretly between these two imperialism countries in their invasion and expansion in Northeast China. In confusion after the Russian Revolution, affiliation of Zhongdong Railway could not be determined. Not only Soviet Union and China, but also a lot of countries centered with America, participated in it, so Japan had to give great concern to its prospect. In 1918, under armed intervention of such imperialism countries as Japan, America, Britain, France and Italy, “condominium” was once adopted for Zhongdong Railway, and thus, Branko Horvat suddenly transformed himself into the political representative of “condominium”. In the spring of 1920, after intervening troops from America, Britain and Japan withdrawing from Siberia, the situation of “condominium” came to an end. Soviet Union Government made a declaration to Chinese Government twice, in which it declared to abolish unequal treaties signed during the period of Russian Empire; its government would abolish all privileges and all trade stations of Russian businessmen in China; it would return all it had pillaged from Chinese people. (Note 8) However, at that time, Zhang Zuolin adopted a unanimous standpoint with Triple Ententes, and refused to admit the political power of Soviet Union, so he missed the opportunity to take back Zhongdong Railway. In 1924, Zhang Zuolin, the Warlord of Feng, promised to negotiate with Soviet Union out of the need of launching a civil war (at that time, Zhang believed that Soviet Union would support Feng Yuxiang). On May 31 in the same year, the two countries established a diplomatic relation, and signed <<Sino-Soviet Russia Agreement to the Outline on Solving the Outstanding Issues>> and <<Protocol on Interim Management of Zhongdong Railway>>. However, because Zhang Zuolin refused to implement the two agreements, Soviet Union signed <<Protocol of Mukden>> with Zhang Zuolin under the veil of compensating depreciatory ruble that had been circulated in Northeast China, not supporting Feng Yuxiang and not publicizing communism, and regained the power to control Zhongdong Railway. The result of Sino-Soviet condominium was that, legislative superintendence was lost, and ownership of property and power over personnel were totally under control of Soviet Union. In the Protocol, it was stipulated, the two countries managed together Zhongdong Railway, and adopted the principle of equality among employees, but as a matter of fact, it was still Soviet Union that controlled the real power. It was estimated, Zhongdong Railway made a profit of 16.823 million Ruble, totally possessed by Soviet Union, but not shared by the two countries. When Soviet Union treated its relations with China, it often demonstrated an autocratic and overbearing style of work, which also aroused dissatisfaction from Northeastern local authority. Then, with instigation of Nanjing Government, Zhang Xueliang had the idea of taking back the sovereignty of Zhongdong Railway. Hence, he hid dangers for conflict between China and Soviet Union.

On May 27, 1929, Zhan Xueliang urgently ordered the Senior Official of eastern special district --- Zhang Jinghui to send military police to surround the consulate general and arrested 39 Russian people with the excuse of the Russian consulate general in Harbin was holding a meeting concerned with Comintern. (Note 9) On July 10, he took over the telegraph office of Zhongdong Railway forcibly, closed organs of Soviet Union and fired Russian employees. Thus, Lev Mikhailovich Karakhan, the Deputy diplomatic people’s committee, put forward the final diplomatic note of three days’ time limit to Xia Weisong, the representative of Chinese embassy in Moscow. 1. Soviet Union immediately started a negotiation; 2. Soviet Union cancelled illegal acts of China; 3. China should release all Russian citizens, and stop all anti-Soviet activities. Meanwhile, Soviet Union warned Nanjing Government to authorize to refuse serious results of this suggestion. (Note 10) Nanjing Government didn’t give any direct response to Russian note and suggestion, whereas Northeastern local authority still persisted in its old ways. Lv Ronghuan even employed lots of National members to hold a post in the railway under the veil of shortage of talents in the railway. On July 17, Soviet Government formally
declared to break off its diplomatic relation with Nanjing Government, and made the following decisions. 1. Soviet Union would call back its diplomats, consuls and all trade representatives in China. 2. Soviet Union would call back all its employees in Zhongdong Railway. 3. Soviet Union would stop all its relations with Chinese railways and traffic. 4. Soviet Union would order all Chinese diplomats, consuls and representatives to leave the border of Russia. Meanwhile, Soviet Union Government declared to retain all its rights in the two protocols signed with China and Feng in 1924. (Note 11) At the same time, outpouring Russian troops were concentrating nearby the border area between China and Russia, and there hid a potential of imminent crisis for a war. This was Zhongdong Railway Incident that made a great flutter.

Based on the anti-war pact signed by 15 countries including Soviet Union in August the previous year, aggravation of conflict between China and Soviet Union aroused great attention of American government. Furthermore, there were more needs for such imperialism countries as Britain and America to stir up Zhongdong Railway Incident. From the second half of 1928 to the first half of 1929, invasion of Japan on Northeast China became increasingly aggravated. Kanji Ishiwara, the major machinator of militarism, Brainman of Kwantung Army at that time and the chief instigator of September 18th Incident, pointed out in his <<Fundamental National Policy to Change the National Fage --- Resolutions to Issues of Manchuria and Mongolia>>, to resolve issues of Manchuria and Mongolia was the unique way out for Japan. Considering this situation, some imperialism countries, such as America and Britain, suborned the Nanjing government of Chiang Kai-Shek to support Zhang Xueliang to launch an incident, so that they could seize the opportunity to participate in the dispute on Zhongdong Railway under the name of “international arbitration”, and could curb expansion of Japanese invading power in Northeast China to realize their evil intention to partition Northeast China with Japan.

In order to get rid of interference from the third countries, the Soviet Union Government ordered the Consul General in Harbin Николай Николаевич Мельников to propose a formal negotiation with the Representative of Northeast China Cai Yunsheng, but Zhang Xueliang refused its requirement as a result of his wrong judgment of the situation. Such a result was out of the expectation of Zhang Xueliang’s local Northeast authority. Before the Zhongdong Railway Incident, Zhang Xueliang thought Soviet Union wouldn’t assault with armed forces in such a difficult time. Besides, Soviet Union just made verbal protest against China’s provoking actions of confiscating five or six consulates and taking back cultural relics bureau of Zhongdong Railway, and didn’t appeal to arms. Thus, Zhang Xueliang sent people in the summer resort of Beidaihe to tell Zhang Zuoxiang who was a peace party that, according to reports from all parties, Soviet Union would attack at all. Actually, the fact was exactly opposite to what he had expected. Soviet Union regarded China’s taking back Zhongdong Railway with arms as start of international imperialism’s attack, and decided to give powerful counterattack. On August 6, Soviet Union formally organized the special far east army with Blyukher (Note 12) as Commander-in-chief. Stalin assigned tasks to this army, that is, “to safeguard rights and interest of October Revolution and prevent Chinese landlords and capitalists from infringing on Soviet Union”, and ordered soldiers of the special far east army to “observantly concentrate on each action of counter revolutionists and to respond to attacks with extermination counterattack, so as to help our Chinese brothers, Chinese workers and farmers to break chains of their landlords and capitalists that constrained them”. Following orders from Stalin, the special far east army attacked Northeast China from the two directions of east and west, and the northeast army met the enemy attack hurriedly. Soviet Union army from the west attacked Harbin across the region of Manzhouli, and Hailar and Zhongdong Railway. At the frontline of Zhalannuower, the Han Guangdi Brigade of Northeast Army completely annihilated, Commander of the Brigade Han Guangdi fought to death, and the whole brigade was lost three fourths of the total soldiers. “The single power of Northeast China resisted the entire Soviet Union, which lasted for as long as four months, and finally sacrificed many brothers in arms due to too large disparity between power and insufficient army supply, which was really mortifying. However, whatever happened, we should do our utmost so safeguard our territory.” (Note 13) At the frontline of Manzhouli, the whole Brigade of Northeast Army Liang Zhongjia also completely annihilated, and several thousand soldiers below the Commander of the brigade were captured. In the east, Soviet Union army attacked across Suifenhe and Mishan. The commander of Cavalry Corps of Northeast Army Zheng Zesheng executed the commander of the brigade Rong Sandian for his unfavorable battle. After capturing Fujin, Soviet Union sent several warships to move upon Harbin. After being serious suffer from heavy casualties by Soviet Union, Zhang Xuelian was repentant of the situation, and accepted recommendations of Zhang Zuoxiang & Huang Xiasheng, etc, to send people to negotiate with Soviet Union in Khabarovsky. On November 26, the USA Secretary of State Henry L. Stimson again recommended intervening together by Japan, Britain, France, Italy and Germany, but government of Japan and Germany refused. In the earlier December, America, Britain, France and other signatory states of anti-war pact countries requested China and Soviet Union of a memorandum of ceasefire and peaceful resolution of disputes. (Note 14) On December 3, the Chinese representative Cai Yunsheng and the Soviet Union representative Сумановский, A. Signed “Ceasefire Protocol” (also termed as “Shuangchengzi Meeting Record”). (Note 15) Soviet Union Army temporarily stopped attack, and China and Soviet Union were allowed to conduct a second negotiation. On December 22, the two countries signed << Sino-Soviet Union Khabarovsky Meeting Protocol>>, namely, (“Khabarovsky Protocol”). The main content is as follows: 1. To
recover the original status of Zhongdong Railway, and the two parties respected the principle of joint management in “Sino-Soviet Union Protocol” and “Feng & Soviet Union Protocol” in 1924; 2). To recover railroad through transport between Zhongdong Railway and cisborder Soviet Union; 3). To recover positions of Russian employees who were dismissed or asked to resign after the incident; 4). To recover consulates, trade and commercial organizations of Soviet Union in various regions of Northeast China; 5). Soviet Union Government would release all Chinese arrested and officers and soldiers captured during the incident. (Note 16)

After <<Khabarovsk Protocol>> was signed, Zhang Xueliang ordered to dismiss Zhongdong Railway Supervisor Lv Ronghuan, appointed Director Guo Fumian as the substitutive supervisor, and ordered Zhongdong Railway Director Fan Qiguang to go back to his original position of Director. A lot of Russian employees who had been dismissed and expelled went back to their working positions in succession. Soviet Union promoted Yemissarov as Deputy Director-General. Zhongdong Railway recovered its status of Sino-Soviet condominium before July 10, 1929.

It should be said, Zhang Xueliang was immature in politics to provoke Zhongdong Railway Incident under incitation of Nanjing Government. However, from another perspective, Zhongdong Railway Incident also revealed the Great-nation Chauvinism pursued by Russia and its narrow ethnic egoism.

The year 1929 was an extremely unpeaceful year for Northeast China. Sudden incident, complicated contradictions and conflicts, confusing interest relations, unprecedented opportunities and challenges, all these presented severe test to CPC Provincial Committee of Manchuria which had been established for less than two years.

2. Great repercussions caused by one letter from Chen Duxiu

The second day when Zhongdong Railway Incident broke out, namely, July 12, 1929, The Central Committee of the Communist Party of China issued <<Declaration of CPC to Oppose Imperialism Attack on Soviet Union>>, which pointed out, “Superficially, Kuomintang promised to take back Zhongdong Railway when attacking Soviet Union. In fact, it was under total instigation of imperialism to seize rights of Soviet Union for imperialism.” “The name of taking back Zhongdong Railway was to start a war to attack Soviet Union.” (Note 17) It summoned the great masses to march on August 1st --- Red Day of international anti-imperialism, which was aimed at resisting imperialism against attacking Soviet Union, resisting the instrument of imperialism --- Kuomintang, and safeguarding Soviet Union.

On July 24, The Central Committee of the Communist Party of China issued <<No. 42 of Central Notice>>, in which “supporting Soviet Union” was evolved into “safeguarding Soviet Union with armed forces”; and which emphasized “resisting imperialism and Kuomintang against attacking Soviet Union and preparing to safeguard Soviet Union with armed forces is the central slogan to mobilize the great masses. “If imperialism and Kuomintang attack Soviet Union with armed forces, even if Chinese revolution hasn’t evolved into a high tide, we should also carry out direction revolutionary actions to call upon the great masses under the slogan of Comintern changing imperialism into an internal war and changing the war of imperialism attacking Soviet Union into a revolutionary war of supporting Soviet Union.” The Notice also indicated, in such a situation, whoever supervised the direction action of “supporting Soviet Union with armed forces”, he was tantamount to assisting imperialism. (Note 18)

Declaration and Notice of Central Committee of CPC were made according to Comintern’s wrong judgment on the global situation during that period, especially on features and prospects of Zhongdong Railway Incident. Prior to and after Zhongdong Railway Incident, Comintern gave directives several times to CPC to require them to “support Soviet Union --- the first working-class nation from the interest of world revolution” and to “eliminate imperialism war with internal class war and to change the reactionary war of attacking Soviet Union and partitioning colony into a revolutionary war of supporting Soviet Union and national liberation of colony”. (Note 19)

After Zhongdong Railway Incident, the Executive Committee of Comintern published <<Appeal on Zhongdong Railway>> to call upon laboring people from China and countries of the Pacific Ocean to “hold a protest demonstration”, “to support Soviet Union”, and to required CPC to “fight against the war on the side of Soviet Union”, putting forward the slogan of “forging ahead for safeguarding Soviet Union”.

On July 21, the Executive Committee of Comintern published <<Declaration of Comintern against Attack on Soviet Union by Imperialism and Kuomintang>>. The Declaration pointed out, Zhongdong Railway Incident was launched by Kuomintang Nanjing Government instigated by imperialism to attempt to change China into an advance position of anti-Soviet Union. The purpose of the incident was to eradicate the first proletariat republic --- Soviet Union from the world. The Declaration required Chinese proletariats and Soviet Union people not to hesitate to make great sacrifices to “fight against the revolutionary war of anti-imperialism and support Soviet Union”, and to “construct the solidest battle line of defense to resist attacking on Soviet Union.” (Note 20)

Following the above directives, the Central Committee of CPC and the National Federation of Trade Unions decided to organize the great masses to hold a protest demonstration from cities of Shanghai, Guangzhou, Xiamen, Tianjin, Beijing, Fengtian and Harbin, etc, on the “August 1st International Red Day” in 1929. They held flight assembly, went on workers’ and students’ strike, and propagated such political stands as “supporting Soviet Union with armed forces”
and “safeguarding Soviet Union.”.

Declaration and Notice by the Central Committee of CPC and deployment for current tasks aroused attention of Chen Duxiu who had left the position of central leadership. Different from his supposed attitude of silence for long towards political problems after the Great Revolution, he wrote three letters in succession to the Central Committee of CPC respectively on July 28, 1929, August 5 and August 11 to make public his different views on features of Zhongdong Railway Incident, CPC’s publicity strategy, current political situation and revolutionary strategies of CPC since the Great Revolution.

On July 28, Chen Duxiu wrote the first letter to the member of standing committee with the title of <<Savon’s Opinions on Issues of Zhongdong Railway>>. In the letter, he mentioned that Zhongdong Railway issue was not simply dispute between Chinese and Soviet Union, but a primacord of international dispute”. If this dispute continued to evolve, then a war might be caused. However, whether it was a war of attacking Soviet Union or a war between imperialism to struggle for Zhongdong Railway, China would be chosen as the battlefield. And it was Chinese people who would be under direct ravage of the war. Of course, there might exist another impossibility, that is, to recover the original status of Zhongdong Railway --- a form of Sino-Soviet Union condominium. Chen Duxiu pointed out in this letter, “the lackey of imperialism Kuomintang deceived the public under a false face of supporting national interest for their publicity of taking back Zhongdong Railway, which had expected effects. Not only petty bourgeoisie were deceived, but also quite a large majority of laboring people were deceived, which was, without doubt, unfavorable to us”. According to Chen Duxiu, on the specific issue of taking back Zhongdong Railway, “our way of publicity cannot be as simple as that of other countries”, and “we cannot merely talk about general principles of world revolution, but not resolving realistic problems of the great masses required to be resolved.” He believed that, a large majority of the people were “beclouded by current specific national interest”, so publicity of CPC should, first of all, mention to the people that it was a delusion that China was capable of taking back Zhongdong Railway before overthrow of partition by imperialism, and that this delusion would necessarily cause disastrous catastrophe to China. After stating his views, Chen Duxiu then criticized notices and publicity outline. He said, “I feel that our publicity is too sententious, and monotonous, and it surpasses what the great masses can understand”, “sententious and monotonous publicity irrelative of concrete issues can only be accepted by the most conscious proletariats, but may make the great masses misunderstand we can only bring rubles, regardless of national interest.” He suggested, for publicity of Zhongdong Railway issues, opposition to the “quislism policy” or “endangering policy” of Kuomintang Government could be used to substitute the publicity slogan of “fighting against attack on Soviet Union” and “supporting Soviet Union. He also emphasized the concept of “endangering policy” could be deeply understood by the great masses. Then, on August 5, he wrote the second letter to the Central Committee of CPC, and put forward 12 recommendations in a systematic way on current political situation and revolutionary strategic issues of the Party. Furthermore, he expressed his sincerity to contribute his views to the Party.

Although the publicity slogan of “endangering the nation” proposed by Chen Duxiu to oppose Kuomintang to accroaching Zhongdong Railway didn’t necessarily mobilize the great masses rapidly, his strategic consciousness did have its rationality that he could pay attention to national issues of Zhongdong Railway Incident, and advocate breaking the false face of Kuomintang Government to support national interest so as to win support of more extensive masses. However, at that time, the Central Committee of CPC reposed too much confidence in judgment of Comintern on the global situation, so they not only didn’t absorb rational factors in his opinions, but believed that he was on the side of imperialism.

In <<A Letter from the Central Committee of CPC to Savon>> on August 3, Chen Duxiu was criticized for “having gone far away from the viewpoint of classes and walking towards the national viewpoint of Social Democratic Party (actually the Capitalist Class)”. “As a result, he contributed to propaganda of Imperialism and Kuomintang” and he was said to “be the out-party of left wing of the Capitalist Class because he opposed to the policy of endangering the country by Kuomintang Government”. Therefore, the Central Committee of CPC believed that divergence between Chen Duxiu and the CPC Central Committee was not discussion of partial strategy, but included quite serious issues of principle. “The Central Committee sincerely wishes to get your declaration of canceling these viewpoints after this letter is received”. (Note 21)

Chen Duxiu didn’t agree with criticism by the Central Committee in the letter, and reaffirmed his opinions on the issue of Zhongdong Railway. In his third letter to the Central Committee of CPC on August 11, Chen Duxiu expressed strong dissatisfaction with misunderstanding of the Central Committee. He said, “I don’t mean running with the laggard consciousness of the great masses and following them to take back Zhongdong Railway. On the contrary, I mean breaking down illusion of the great masses, smashing the false face of Kuomintang, winning the great masses on our side and attacking the counter-revolutionary power under our slogan.” However, the Central Committee “was lacking in the publicity strategy of wariness and observation. Although it didn’t follow the great masses, it didn’t win them over.” It seemed that Chen Duxiu lost respect and patience as he had in his previous two letters, and was full of violent
feelings between the lines. He criticized the Central Committee in his letter, “You mixed strategy and principle, which was not an accidental mistake, but a mistake of 'your principle'”, and “it is your fault of simplification and putschism not to explore into the fact, because you recklessly act with commandism and are not aware of the necessity to employ different strategies at different time and places.” (Note 22)

In order to unify consciousness of the whole party to the “international line”, after receiving the third letter from Chen Duxiu, the Central Committee on one hand organized articles in Party publications to criticize opinions of Chen Duxiu, and on the other hand, printed and distributed the third letter from Chen Duxiu and the original letter with the anonymity of Savon to relevant Party organizations, asking them to discuss on the two letters and reported the results to the Central Committee. <<Hong Qi>>, the central official newspaper launched a special column named <<Two Slogans --- the Policy of Endangering the Country and Supporting Soviet Union>>, and publicized letters between Chen Duxiu and the Central Committee for the whole Party to criticize. Lots of critical articles had the tendency of doctrinairism, and was short of winged analysis of presenting the facts and reasoning things out. Wang Ming published an article entitled <<Opinions of Mr. Savon on the Issue of Zhongdong Railway>> in <<Bolsheviki>> in Vol. 2, No. 10, which buckled Chen Duxiu up with seven caps of “not understanding the essence of the war”, “not able to study issues of the war with the method of Leninism”, “not understanding the meaning of anti-Soviet Union”, and “setting the ‘specific national interest’ of China against ‘interest of the world revolution’”, etc, and framed up a lot of frightening accusations, such as, “suspecting Comintern”, “not conscious of the high tide of the revolution”, “being the tail of the Capitalist Class”, and “being slack in the work”, etc. In such a way, dispute between the two slogans, which was supposed to be divergence of specific publicity strategy within the Party, was upgraded artificially as general struggle of principles and lines. Afterwards, Chen Duxiu accepted viewpoints of Leon Trotsky, he was tracked in the liquidationism mistake in the issue of Chinese revolution, and participated in separatist activities of Trotskyite groups. Thus, his contradiction with the Central Committee evolved from original nonantagonistic into antagonistic. In order to maintain unification of the Party, the Central Committee of the CPC made the resolution to expel the party membership of Chen Duxiu on November 5, 1929. Finally, dispute between the two slogans which had lasted for four months ended up with establishment of “supporting Soviet Union” and “safeguarding Soviet Union with armed forces”.

For evaluation on Chen Duxiu, in recent years, the Party History Research Center of the CPC Central Committee has published in succession the first volume of <<Brief History of Communist Party of China>> and <<History of Communist Party of China>>, and has come to definite conclusions. Mistake of Chen Duxiu was mistake of the Communist Party of China made in its infancy, and was mistake made in exploration of Chinese revolutionary road.

3. Negative influences of the two slogans of “supporting Soviet Union with armed forces” and “safeguarding Soviet Union with armed forces”

The Communist Party of China played a significant role in Zhongdong Railway Incident. The Central Committee of CPC issued a directive letter to Provincial Committee of Manchuria on July 15 which emphasized, “the Provincial Committee should do everything in its power and should concentrate all its power to deal with this incident”. The letter asked the Provincial Committee of Manchuria to “make particular arrangement to the work in Harbin” and mentioned that “Liu Shaoqi was sent to Harbin to arrange and direct protest demonstrations of Zhongdong Railway Incident”. The directive letter required that, the Provincial Committee should concentrate all its power to deal with the incident. NO. 41 Notice of the Central Committee of CPC stipulated, “the conspiracy of Imperialism to instigate Kuomintang to attack Soviet Union has proceeded for two years. Firstly, they intend to suppress Chinese revolution; secondly, they launch publicity of attacking Soviet Union by fabricating all sorts of rumors; thirdly, they begin to attack and taking back Zhongdong Railway was the concrete action.” (Note 23) At that time, Liu Shaoqi was in illness, but the Provincial Committee had issued <<NO.2 Notice of CPC Provincial Committee of Manchuria>>, which said, “August 1st this year was the international red day, when all workers, farmers and laboring public all over the world launched a protest demonstration. Its task was to oppose to a war of world Imperialism, to oppose to attack on Soviet Union with armed forces, to oppose to partitioning China and to protect Chinese revolution”. The Notice required party and league organizations of all levels to hold a protest demonstration on ‘August 1st’ as long as there were comrades. It also declared that, “the Provincial Committee firmly opposed to believing our organization was too weak to cancel the protest demonstration, so that they wouldn’t agitprop or believed that this was a blind action”. (Note 24) After three days’ illness, Liu Shaoqi began to understand actual situation after getting down to his work, and proposed his own viewpoints to the Central Committee of CPC. On July 20, the CPC Provincial Committee of Manchuria pointed out in its report to the Central Committee of CPC. (1) Although Zhongdong Railway Incident was launched by Kuomintang warlords, it was still commence of attack by Imperialism on Soviet Union; (2) The view that Imperialism strengthening its contradiction with Soviet Union would alleviate contradictions among Imperialism was wrong; (3) The prospect of the incident would encourage outbreak of the world war and would shorten preparation period for the war. (Note 25) Liu Shaoqi also pointed out in detail in his report, “the Provincial Committee decides to hold a protest demonstration on August 1st. However, the first step to mobilize comrades was faced up with great difficulties. There were only 38 or 39 comrades (including their wives) in the Party and League in Fengtian. There were three branches in C·Y, and there were
four branches in the Party (cotton mill, railway, munitions factory and staff member). The Party and League has held a meeting for activists, and many of branches couldn’t be convened. Now, we have mobilized our comrades five to six days, but lots of comrades still haven’t conveyed the strategic planning of the Provincial Committee. At present, the Provincial Committee has no choice but to firmly continue to mobilize comrades to implement the plan that has been formulated… If a large majority of our comrades cannot be mobilized (then preparation for all work will be diminished), for anything I know, the Provincial Committee may be forced to cancel the protest demonstration.” (Note 26) Of course, he also believed that, “considering the situation for the time being, the demonstration may be held today, just a flight demonstration.” (Note 27) There had the risk of being arrested for twenty or thirty league members to line up for demonstration in the bustling downtown streets of Shenyang, but it might be easy for a flight assembly to deceive the local authority.

However, the situation was always changing. According to report from Provincial Committee to the Central Committee of CPC on August 8, until July 30, Shenyang which was the location of the Provincial Committee had been a place where “none of the public could be mobilized”, and where only 21 party and league members could be mobilized. Thus, the Provincial Committee held an emergency meeting and decided that, “all groups scattered on August 1”, and launched an action respectively in South Manchuria Station, Japanese consulate, inside the city, along the river banks and in munitions factory, just sending leaflets in the form of demonstration, without any slogan or speech.” (Note 28) Selection of such vital and flourishing occasions to send leaflets was safer than the previous plan.

However, on the early morning of August 1, the situation made a sudden change. The official government seemed to get the news in advance, and large streets and small lanes were heavily guarded. As a result, any plan for action couldn’t be carried out, and there were merely 11 party and league members who were actually mobilized. “Thus, the plan was changed to only send leaflets in South Manchuria Station, in Japanese consulate, along the river banks and in the city. And the form of sending leaflets was changed to throw upstairs, and to put them in packages in the waiting room and in places with many people. People were concentrated in the South Manchuria Station and would then go to the river banks after action.” (Note 29)

Although the “August 1” protest demonstration with changes for three times was smaller than estimated in its force, after all, the purpose was realized to disseminate opinions of the Party to the public of all hierarchies in Northeast China, and it disclosed the ugly misdeed of Kuomintang’s false patriotism and really endangering the country, which expanded its revolutionary influences. However, the demonstration was also launched at great cost, because a minority of provincial committee members, such as, Zhang Zian, were arrested and put into prison. Of course, compared the fact that a large quantity of leading cadres were arrested and killed after Jiangsu Provincial Committee of CPC launched and led “August 1” protest demonstration in Shanghai, this was lucky on the whole.

In accordance with directions from the Central Committee, the Provincial Committee of Manchuria held a serious discussion about the "two slogans", and the Secretary Liu Shaoqi presided over the discussion. Different from most critical articles in Party publications at that time which quoted the classics and magnifying a problem to become a question of principle, discussion of the Provincial Committee of Manchuria was conducted in close connection with actual situation and practical experiences of the Party in Northeast China at that time. After discussion for over two months, "<Resolution of the Provincial Committee of CPC on Discussion of "The Two Slogans">" was passed. The Resolution pointed out, "The Provincial Committee was totally in agreement with opinions of the Central Committee of CPC after witnessing discussion of the Central Committee and Mr. Savon on publicity strategy in the issue of Zhongdong Railway". In principle, the Resolution affirmed correctness and necessity of the slogan "supporting Soviet Union", and meanwhile, discussed based on practical situation in Northeast China what sort of work method should be adopted to gain a positive effect. The Resolution also pointed out, "At present, the great masses in the three provinces in Northeast China, especially students of petty bourgeoisie are not liberated under national prejudice and deception of the governing class. Even some of them run to the Imperialism camp to attack Soviet Union. It is right for us to be aware of and to take notice of their national prejudice in the publicity. That is, when we publicize to the general public, we should particularly stress the national significance of supporting Soviet Union, and should particularly explain necessity of opposing to the attack upon Soviet Union and of supporting Soviet Union if Chinese people intend to gain independence and freedom." On the contrary, if "we ignore the laggard consciousness of the general public and lack wariness regardless of the general public, and directly put forward supporting Soviet Union at the very beginning, without explaining the national significance of supporting Soviet Union so as to enable the general public to be aware of the necessity of supporting Soviet Union, then it is impatient recklessness isolated from the people." (Note 30) This Resolution made by the Provincial Committee of Manchuria not only criticized the wrong viewpoint of Chen Duxiu to cancel revolutionary struggle, but also absorbed his rational factors about publicity strategy, so it had obvious directive significance to work of the Communist party in Northeast Area in the future.

In practice, one of the important means to enlarge political publicity of supporting Soviet Union was to connect daily economic struggle of the general public with the political goal of supporting Soviet Union. Before the resolution on
discussion of the "two slogans", Liu Shaoqi went to Harbin for the first time on September 26, 1929, where workers of Zhongdong Railway were mostly concentrated. Zhongdong Railway at that time was already quite different from its original condition during the period of Sino-Russian Condominium. After taking over Zhongdong Railway, on one hand, Lv Ronghuan drove out all Russian employees and employed a large majority of White Russians; on the other hand, he began his designed attack on workers. All their treatment shared according to the Labor Law in Russia was cancelled, labor hours were prolonged and their living conditions worsened. Local authority sent a lot of inspectors to watch over their actions and behaviors, and the entire railway was shrouded in a white terror. Liu Shaoqi discovered after investigation that, although the struggle of workers in Zhongdong Railway was generally at a low ebb, struggle of each unit was out of balance. In the "Thirty-sixth Shed", (Note 31) the Communist Guo Longzhen conducted a lot of solid mobilization work, sent people to actuate in all factories to gain joint action, proposed the political slogans of "supporting Soviet Union" and "opposing warlords to accroaching Zhongdong Railway" in appropriate time, issued letters to all employees in the railway and all workers all over the country, and explained to his comrades in detail so as to expand his influences. In earlier November, almost seven hundred workers with the main force of workers from the "Thirty-sixth Shed" surrounded the section chief, put forward requirements of "opposing to reduction on workers' salary" and "opposing to substitution of sooty coal for crabstick", etc, and forced the section chief to take back the order to reduce workers' salary. Daily living demands of workers were also considerably satisfied. The Municipal Party Committee guided workers in time for their struggle, and combined appropriately opposition to deterioration of treatment and support of Soviet Union. The slogans of "supporting red westerners and opposing white westerners" were accepted by more and more workers. The economic struggle of Zhongdong Railway workers to oppose to deterioration of the treatment gradually evolved into a political struggle of opposing Chinese warlords to accroaching Zhongdong Railway and supporting the Socialism Soviet Union. This situation played a positive role in smashing the conspiracy of the banking consortium of five countries to secretly plot "Condominium" on Zhongdong Railway, in urging the local authority of Northeast China headed by Zhang Xueliang to sign in the "Khabarovsky Protocol" and in recovering the situation of Sino-Russian Condominium on Zhongdong railway.

For consequences and influences of Zhongdong Railway Incident, there have been the following several viewpoints through research in recent years: firstly, the incident made Japan come to know respective power of Soviet Union and Northeast China, and caused Japanese Kwantung Army to pay attention to Soviet Union and show contempt for Northeast China, speeding up its pace of invasion with armed forces in Northeast China. Most of historical materials about this viewpoint were foreign languages, especially Japanese; (Note 32) secondly, it is thought that the biggest mistake of Zhang Xueliang lied in his wrong selection of enemies. Still others think that, Zhongdong Railway Incident not only encouraged Japanese invasion arrogance, but also "weakened confidence of Northeast Army to oppose to foreign invasion, especially Zhang Xueliang; (Note 33) thirdly, the relationship between Zhongdong Railway Incident and Chen Duxiu. After the August 7 Meeting, there was a sort of resentment between Chen Duxiu and Comintern. Chen Duxiu proposed objection to the publicity slogan put forward by the Central Committee in accordance with instructions of Comintern, but just strategic discussion. However, the Central Committee of CPC still thought that Chen Duxiu took this matter to heart, so it regarded his opinions as continuity of his previous mistake, and believed he committed the mistake of liquidationism. Then, Chen Duxiu completely lost confidence in the Central Committee of CPC and Comintern due to their bureaucratic style of work, which raised the curtain for his Trotskyism activities. According to the author, Zhongdong Railway Incident reflected from an objective perspective the fact that Zhang Xueliang was instigated by Chiang Kai-shek. His action caused frontier conflict between China and Russia, and the fact that Northeast Army collapsed at the first blow during the war encouraged Japanese militarists' wild ambitions to invade China. Therefore, Japanese Kwantung Army had the face to launch the September 18th Incident just with ten thousands of armed forces. By this token, it has significant reference value to study on the history of Zhongdong Railway Incident and the September 18th Incident.

Dispute on the two slogans and establishment of the slogans of “supporting Soviet Union” and “safeguarding Soviet Union with armed forces” exerted far-reaching negative influences upon work of the Communist Party in Northeast China. According to the author, negative influences are mainly reflected in two aspects:

Firstly, the two slogans of “supporting Soviet Union” and “safeguarding Soviet Union with armed forces” set internationalism against patriotism, which was too highbrow to be popular, and which brought about hidden trouble to the work of united front of the Communist Party.

Secondly, the slogans were labeled with “international line”, which encouraged the doctrinairism of “relying solely on superiors’ instructions or books” within the Party.

It was fortunate that, a large majority of former leaders of CPC Provincial Committee of Manchuria could insist on the scientific attitude of matter-of-fact and could determine work strategy of the Party based on practical situation, so the above negative influences were overcome to a great extent in practice. Liu Shaoqi held his position in CPC Provincial Committee of Manchuria for eight months, when the Provincial Committee of Manchuria was in a quite difficult...
situation, but he received orders in that special time of crisis, and came to Northeast China with great trust of the Central Committee of CPC. “If it were not for damage of traitors, the general strike of workers in Zhongdong Railway would be realized, and then, the situation of the Communist Party in Manchuria would be better.” The Provincial Committee of Manchuria headed with Liu Shaoqi as the Secretary was an example of matter-of-fact, and made a significant contribution to formulation of the correct line of the Communist party in the White Area.

This year is the 80th anniversary of the outbreak of Zhongdong Railway Incident and we should learn experiences and instructions from this incident and from historical issues of Soviet Union. China and Russia are two friendly neighboring countries, with almost a thousand years of friendly association. Although unfortunate accidents involved with arms have never ceased, Zhongdong Railway Incident made us come to realize that, it was good for both of us and would damage both if a war happened. Especially today, under the background of the global financial crisis, the common subject today is peaceful development and mutual assistance and benefit. As for assessment on Zhongdong Railway Incident, Jiang, Zuobin, the Minister of China in Germany at that time, went right to the heart of the matter: Zhongdong Railway Incident was “provoked by China without reason and surrendered by China without reason, which brought humiliation to the country and which caused the country to lose its sovereignty. Thus, the international status of China declined and especially the reputation of the National Government fell into discreet!” Today, it should be mentioned, during the Zhongdong Railway Incident, Soviet Union occupied Heixiazi Island, a territory of China, which became the most difficult problems to resolve in later territorial disputes between the two countries. However, it has been resolved in a peaceful way and half of Heixiazi Island has been returned to China. It is proved that, the Five principles of Peaceful Coexistence have become a common sense for Chinese and Russian Government and people to deal with their mutual relationship.

References


Notes

Note 1. Zhongdong Railway, with a full name of “Eastern Provincial Railway in China”, which was named Chinese Eastern Railway, and which was a railway built, operated and invested by Russia in Northeast China after signing of <<Sino-Russian Secret Treaty >> by Qing Government and Russisches Reich in 1896. This railway was centered with Harbin, with Manzhouli to the northwest, Suifenhe to the east, Siberian Railway connected with it in the west, and directly reaching Dalian in Liaoning through Changchun in the south. After the Japan-Russia War, the section to the south of Changchun was occupied by Japan, and was called South Manchuria Railway; the section to the north of Changchun was named as Zhongdong Railway. In 1924, Chinese Government and Russian Government signed an agreement to change Zhongdong Railway into Sino-Russian condominium.

Note 2. In recent years, as far as the author is concerned, there have been the following works on Zhongdong Railway Incident in Mainland China, including <<Dynamic Analysis of Chen Duxiu and All Parties Involved in Zhongdong
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Railway Incident>> in <<Historical Teaching>>, No. 11, 2000, (the last two articles are similar in content); Zhu, Hao: <<Divergence of Chen Duxiu from the Central Committee of CPC in Publicity of Zhongdong Railway Incident>> in <<Journal of Anqing Teachers College>>; Cui, Ping: <<Dynamic Analysis of Chen Duxiu and All Parties Involved in Zhongdong Railway Incident>> in <<Historical Teaching>>, No. 11, 2000; Mu, Xiangbin: <<Strategy of Comintern during Zhongdong Railway Incident and Influences of Chinese Revolution>> in <<Theory Journal>>, No. 3, 2003, and many biographies about Zhang Xueliang and Zhongdong Railway Incident. Works by Japanese scholars include: Ǘǽ ƼǑȉƸǁǍǎǵƑ: <<Eastern Province Railway of Ruirakhan Working in China>> (1923-1925); Hikotaro Ando: <<Japan and China in Modern Times>> in Old College, 1989; Li, Ming: <<Dispute on Zhongdong Railway between China and Soviet Union in 1929 and Zhang Xueliang>>, in <<Social Science Research in chukyo university, 6-2, 1986>>; Panzechuntai: <<Struggle among Japan, China and Soviet Union on the Right to Zhongdong Railway and Uprosurge of Regional Nationalism --- Manchuria Incident History>>. Works by Taiwan scholars include: Sun, Zihe: <<Longitude and Latitude of Zhongdong Railway Incident>>, in <<Journal of Left Opposition, No. 5, 1929. Zhonghua Book Company, Vol. 2, Book. 2, 515.

Note 3. Liu, Pinghua. (1989). Assessment on Right and Wrong of Zhongdong Railway Incident. The Northern Forum, No. 5. This viewpoint has been supported by many historical documents, such as, Zhang Xueliang’s Telegraph to Zhang Jinghui and Lv Ronghuan; the first volume of Collected works of Zhang Xueliang edited by Zhou, Yi. Hong Kong Tongze Publishing House, 1996, 182.

Note 4. In Summer of 1929, Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party held a meeting to send Liu Shaoqi to take up the post of Secretary of CPC Provincial Committee of Manchuria in Fengtian (Shenyang today). At that time, Manchuria mainly included the three provinces of Liaoning, Jilin and Heilongjiang in Northeast China.

Note 5. On January 29, 1929, Fengtian Province was renamed as Liaoning Province; on March 29 the same year, Fengtian City was renamed as Shenyang City.

Note 6. Huludao Harbor Construction was a port constructed by the Warlord Government at that time to control the Beining Railway in order to compete with the South Manchuria Railway controlled by Japan, or in order to attempt to break away from its dependence on South Manchuria Railway and Dalian Harbor. However, it was finished until 1931.


Note 8. The First Russian Declaration to China. 1979, July 25.


Note 12. Wassili Konstantinowitsch Blücher was born in Russia in 1892. In 1923, dispatched by the highest authority headed by Lenin, he came to China to take up the position of Military General Counsel of Guangzhou Government headed by Sun Yat-Sen, namely, the well-known Vasily Blyukher. He played a significant role in Sun Yat-sen’s establishing Huangpu Military Academy, training military talents and the Northern Expedition in 1926. Then, he held the position of Commanding Officer in the Far East Army of Soviet Union. Please refer to “Zhao Shangzhi and Blücher” and “guan dong bao guo zhen wen lu”, by Liaoning Nationalities Publishing House, June, 1996, 614-617.


Note 14. “Shidehara Kijuro”, (Kijuro Peace Financial Group, 1955) went into details about “Kijuro diplomacy” implemented by full-fledged members for Washington Conference and foreign ministers of the Cabinet, such as, Katou and Binkou, etc.. 388.


Note 17. Declaration of CPC to Oppose Imperialism to their Attack upon Soviet Union (July 12, 1929), in *Selected Works of Documentation on Comintern, CPSU (Bolshevik) and Chinese Revolution* (1927-1931), Vol. 11, Central Party Literature Publisher, 2002, 608.

Note 18. Hong Qi, No. 35, July 1929.


Note 20. Hong Qi, No. 40, August 28, 1929.


Note 24. NO. 2 Notice of the CPC Provincial Committee of Manchuria --- On Zhongdong Railway Incident and Work of “August 1st” (July 13, 1929). Composition of Revolutionary and Historical Files in the North-east Area, Vol. A3, 159-166. This file composition includes white books published together by Central Archives/Liaoning Province Archives/Jilin Province Archives/Heilongjiang Province Archives, and was done from August 1988 to August 1992, altogether 65 A(Books).

Note 25. NO. 29 Notice of Shenzi from CPC Provincial Committee of Manchuria to the Central Committee of CPC (July 20, 1929), Composition of Revolutionary and Historical Files in the North-east Area, Vol. A3, 181-182.

Note 26. NO. 29 Notice of Shenzi from CPC Provincial Committee of Manchuria to the Central Committee of CPC (July 20, 1929), Composition of Revolutionary and Historical Files in the North-east Area, Vol. A3, 182-183.

Note 27. NO. 29 Notice of Shenzi from CPC Provincial Committee of Manchuria to the Central Committee of CPC (July 20, 1929), Composition of Revolutionary and Historical Files in the North-east Area, Vol. A3, 184.

Note 28. Report from CPC Provincial Committee of Manchuria to the Central Committee of CPC about Work Situation of “August 1st” (August 8, 1929), Composition of Revolutionary and Historical Files in the North-east Area, Vol. A3, 240.

Note 29. Report from CPC Provincial Committee of Manchuria to the Central Committee of CPC about Work Situation of “August 1st” (August 8, 1929), Composition of Revolutionary and Historical Files in the North-east Area, Vol. A3, 241.

Note 30. Resolution by CPC Provincial Committee of Manchuria on Discussion of the “Two Slogans” (September 25, 1929), Composition of Revolutionary and Historical Files in the North-east Area, Vol. A3, 313-316.

Note 31. The Thirty-six Shed, substitution of Harbin General Factory of Zhongdong Railway. At the beginning of its construction, it was well known for constructing thirty-six shanties as neighborhood for workers. Please refer to “Letter from Liu Shaoqi to Provincial Party Committee of Manchuria and Forwarded to the Central Committee --- Patrol over Municipal Party Committee of Harbin and Struggle of Zhongdong Railway Workers” (September 26, 1929), “File Composition of Revolutionary History in the Northeast China”, A3, 319-326.
