

# **Emotions and Popular Opinion on Stalin’s Death in the People’s Republic of China in 1953**

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Psychologists and anthropologists regard emotions as essential to understand human minds and behaviors and to decipher our private experience of the outside world. Historians, however, have paid relatively less attention to the function of human emotions. Emotions have been marginal, if not opposed, to the historical enterprise. The fact that historians downplay the study of emotions probably results from our overemphasis on “reason.” Since the Enlightenment, reason has been given priority over other ways of acquiring knowledge. As a result, emotions, as the negative conceptual counterpoint of reason, have seldom received much attention. Moreover, because emotions are regarded as biological and natural, historians often think that the influence of emotions is only limited to the private realm of individuals, faith, or fiction.

Believing that emotions are more or less socially regulated, some historians have studied issues related to emotions. The historiography of emotion in western societies has been concerned with laying bare the cultural and linguistic rules that classify, elicit, shape, encourage or discourage the expression of emotions.<sup>1</sup> So far, little has been

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<sup>1</sup> Barbara Rosenwein, “Worrying about Emotions in History,” In *American Historical Review*, 107(3) (2002): 821-845; William M. Reddy, *The Navigation of Feeling: A Framework for the History of Emotions*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001; Peter N. Stearns with Carol Z. Stearns, “Emotionology: Clarifying the History of Emotions and Emotional Standards,” In *American Historical Review*, 90(1985):

written on the role of emotions in Chinese social life. Different from the dichotomy of mind and body as the western way of understanding the relation between emotion and reason, emotion in the Chinese tradition was always associated with reason because philosophers believed that human action was guided by a single organ, the heart/mind (*xin*). The very term for “emotion,” for example, blurs the distinction between inner subjectivity and the external world, since it carries the dual meaning of love, desire, emotion and sentiment, on the one hand, and of circumstances or facts of the case on the other. In *The Book of Rites*, one of the five Confucian classics, human beings are claimed to have seven emotions (*qi qing*), namely the emotions of *xi* 喜, *nu* 怒, *ai* 哀, *jü* 惧, *ai* 爱, *wu* 恶, *yü* 欲. Roughly, *xi* 喜 means joy, *nu* 怒 means anger, *ai* 哀 means sorrow, *ai* 爱 means love, *wu* 恶 means hate, *yü* 欲 means desire, and *jü* 惧 means both fear and anxiety in western terms.<sup>2</sup> It is with the emotion of “*jü*” that this paper is concerned.

Western social scientists tend to distinguish between fear and anxiety. “Fear” is defined as the emotion one experiences when one feels oneself, or those one loves, to be threatened. As historian Joanna Bourke points out, “fear” refers to an immediate, objective threat, while “anxiety” refers to an anticipated, subjective threat. “Anxiety,” however, is described as a more generalized state, while fear is more specific and immediate. When in the state of fear, the “danger object” seems to be in front of one, while in a state of anxiety the individual is not consciously aware of what danger waits for him or her.<sup>3</sup> As Freud, arguably the creator of the modern concept of anxiety, put it:

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813-836; Jan Plamper, “The History of Emotions: An Interview with William Reddy, Barbara Rosenwein, and Peter Stearns,” *History and Theory* 49(May 2010), 237-265.

<sup>2</sup> Meng Peiyuan 蒙培元, *Zhongguo zhixue zhuti siwei* 中国哲学主体思维 [Subjective Way of Thinking in Chinese Philosophy], Beijing: Dongfang chubanshe, 1993, 70.

<sup>3</sup> Joanna Bourke, *Fear: A Cultural History*, Emeryville, CA: Shoemaker Hoard, 2006, 189.

“*Anxiety* relates to the condition and ignores the object, whereas in the word *Fear* attention is focused on the object.”<sup>4</sup> Anxiety and fear are different emotions, however, it is not easy to distinguish them, and probably this is the main reason why Chinese philosophers used one word “*jü*” to refer to these two different emotions. This paper uses “*jü*” to represent anxiety and fear, but for the convenience of narrative, anxiety and fear will also be used.

The present paper uses popular opinion on Stalin’s death to explore the nature of “*jü*” in the early days of the People’s Republic of China. My principal goal is to recover the voices of the ordinary people who were often silenced by the Communist Party. By doing this, I hope to further our understanding of how people emotionally experienced Communism in the early years of the PRC. A secondary aim is to reflect on what the apparent pervasiveness of “*jü*” tells us about the relationship between the Communist party-state and the populace in the early 1950s.

### *Secondary Literature*

Most research on the history of emotions in Maoist China focuses on the mobilization of emotions. In her article “Moving the Masses: Emotion Work in the Chinese Revolution,” Elizabeth Perry talks about all kinds of techniques the CCP used to mobilize different social groups, such as peasants, workers and intellectuals. She argues that the best example of how emotions could be purposefully utilized to mobilize the masses and seize political power is probably Mao Zedong and his Communist Party. If the CCP relied on systematized “emotion work,” a term referring to a series of techniques

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<sup>4</sup> Sigmund Freud, *A General Introduction to Psychoanalysis*, New York: Pocket Books, 1970, 103.

of mobilizing people's emotions, to make up for its military weakness before 1949, after the Communist takeover of the nation, it seems that the CCP was even more successful in applying these techniques to its state-building project. According to a study by Yu Liu, Mao and his Party stimulated people's enthusiasm for production through three kinds of "emotion work": provoking indignation through struggle campaigns, stimulating guilt through thought reforms, and arousing gratefulness in the education of social transformation. Although the studies of these political scientists demonstrate how the CCP used the emotion work as part of a conscious strategy of psychological engineering, both Perry and Liu fail to show how the populace responded to the mobilization of emotion. Did they respond in the way the CCP planned? If not, how did they respond emotionally? This paper attempts to adopt a bottom-up approach to reveal a complex picture of the social mentality in the early 1950s.

Steve Smith explored the nature of popular fears during the early years of the PRC by examining two types of rumors: those of a "secular" type that told of China's defeat in the Korean War (1950-1953), a third world war or an imminent nuclear attack; and those of a "supernatural" type that told of demons out to snatch vital organs or of the end of the world. Smith argues that the party-state did not coerce the populace as much as those in the totalitarianism school suggest.<sup>5</sup> In some ways inspired by Smith's article, this paper is also somewhat different from it. I utilize primary sources of popular opinion rather than only rumor. For those who want to reveal what the populace really thought under Communist rule, the most difficult thing is the accessibility of trustworthy sources. Rumor might show people's thoughts and beliefs in some way, but popular opinion

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<sup>5</sup> Steve Smith, "Fear and Rumour in the People's Republic of China in the 1950s," in *Cultural and Social History*, Volume 5, Issue 3, 2008, 269-288.

preserved in the surveillance reports offers better access to the inner world of ordinary people. Furthermore, “fear” and “anxiety” are sometimes interchangeable and not easily distinguished, making Smith’s argument that the nature of rumor in PRC was fear rather than anxiety not very solid. As mentioned, fear refers to an immediate, objective threat while anxiety refers to an anticipated, subjective threat. I argue that the social mentality during the early years of the PRC was both anxiety and fear since most time there was no immediate and objective threat ahead.

### *Primary Sources*

The major primary sources for this project are archival documents, news reports from the *People’s Daily*, and memoirs and diaries of selected individuals. Stalin’s unexpected death was a big blow to the new-born party-state. In the face of internal and external challenges, the CCP did not have a strong base in the early 1950s.<sup>6</sup> Both the Korean War and the ongoing state-building project made Stalin’s backing particularly significant. Probably informed by certain sources that the Eisenhower administration planned to use Stalin’s death as an opportunity to initiate so-called psychological warfare to weaken the Soviet Union, the CCP was afraid that the enemies would also use this opportunity to overthrow the PRC.<sup>7</sup> In this situation, the Party sought to understand and control popular opinion. In order to find out the popular attitudes and mood, the CCP ordered all the local branches of the “Sino-Soviet Friendship Association” (SSFA) to

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<sup>6</sup> On December 19, 1952, Luo Ruiqin, the Dean of the Security Department reported to Mao Zedong that the initial investigation showed that a part of the 18 serious emergency accidents in factories in 1952 had been made by the enemies. In *Writing of Mao Zedong Since the establishment of the PRC*, Volume.4, Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe, 1990, 5.

<sup>7</sup> Wang Jing 汪婧, “Sidalin shishi yu meiguo de fanying he zhengce” 斯大林逝世与美国的反应和政策 [US Response and Policies to Stalin’s Death], in *Shijie lishi* 世界历史 [World History], Volume 2, 2009, 26-36.

report details of the “thought situation of the masses.” The “masses” had broad scope, including workers, peasants, students, Youth League members, and local communist party members. These surveillance reports circulated only among ranking party and state officers. Peter Holquist points out that “[S]urveillance sought information on the whole population to amass aggregate data on attitudes in order better to act upon them.”<sup>8</sup> The surveillance reports were merely to provide information for high officials to use them to remold popular attitudes and values in accordance with the revolutionary vision. To investigate popular opinions, the surveillance reports I use in this paper are more trustworthy than the propaganda materials in party-newspapers. These reports were written by party propaganda departments to mold people’s minds. It is hard to know the details of how the local party propaganda departments managed the information collecting process. In 1950s’ China, local public security, party organs, Sino-Soviet Friendship Associations at all levels, trade unions, and the women’s federations, together with thousands of informers composed the network of information for the party-state. It is very possible that the propaganda departments also used this network to collect all kinds of detailed popular opinions.

Probably ordered by the central government, all the reports of the “thought situation of the masses” on Stalin’s death are in a similar format. The first part is the so-called “right thought situation of the masses,” which always pictures how the vast majority felt sorrow for the loss of Stalin. How did they respond physically and vocally? The second part is the “chaotic or wrong thought situation of a small group of the masses.” This part reports all kinds of dissenting opinions on “Stalin’s death,” “the world

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<sup>8</sup> Peter Holquist, “What’s So Revolution about the Russian Revolution? State Practices and the New-Style Politics, 1914-21,” in David L. Hoffmann and Yanni Kotsonis, eds., *Russian Modernity: Politics, Knowledge, Practices*, New York : St. Martin’s Press, 2000, p.91-92.

order after Stalin,” “the Sino-Soviet relationship,” “the future of the USSR,” and “rumors and vilification.” These reports reveal that the majority followed the party line while a small part of the people expressed dissident opinions, but both the “right thought situation” and “the chaotic thought situation” demonstrate in one way or another how anxious the populace was after the death of Stalin. Arguably required by the central government, all reports emphasized the speakers’ political background, such as CCP members, Youth League members, workers, students, “backward” people, people who had quit the CCP, Christians, former National Party members, former landlords, and so on. In the eyes of the CCP, the political backgrounds were closely related to emotions, as Marxism claimed. For people from the proletarian class, the CCP believed, it was very possible that they would have right attitudes on Stalin’s death. For those from the capitalist class, they would probably have wrong attitudes. It could be true that class background would influence emotions to some extent, but the reports did not show obvious influence when it comes to anxiety.

For this paper, I have chosen archives from both northern areas (Beijing and Tianjin) and southern areas (Shanghai and Suzhou) to represent the general situation in the nation. Party newspapers are also useful sources for my project. In Communist China, the party newspaper was a major tool used by the CCP to deliver its instructions on mass campaigns. Many of Mao’s orders and Party policies were first published in *People’s Daily*, the most influential newspaper of the CCP. That published by *People’s Daily* was also broadcasted on the radio, read by officials to a larger audience, and discussed among study groups in working units. *People’s Daily* presents a general picture of how the CCP launched campaigns for mobilizing and using emotions, and what

image of Stalin the party portrayed. In addition to archival documents and newspapers, I examine memoirs and diaries, which reveal individual feelings and experience.

The voices recorded in these official reports included those of local party members, Youth League members, workers, peasants, students and those with "problematic" backgrounds, but who were far from considered as enemies of the new regime.<sup>9</sup> The Suppressing Anti- Revolutionists Campaign was launched in 1950. It killed 700,000 people, jailed 1,200,000 and put 1,200,000 under serious surveillance. The enemies of the regime were eliminated, such as the soldiers and officers of GMD, bandits, landlords, core members of secret societies.<sup>10</sup> In other words, these voices were from "the people" in whose name the revolution was waged and those who did not belong to the category of "the people" because of their "problematic" but not "evil" enough background.

As pointed out by Davies, an analysis of popular opinion in a Communist country must take into account the role of propaganda and coercion in society, as Communist countries are famous for their intensive propaganda and censorship.<sup>11</sup> Since this paper mainly focuses on what the popular opinion could reveal about people's emotional experience rather than people's opinions on certain political issues, these sources could demonstrate people's emotions under intensive propaganda and coercion. The main concerns of the CCP at the time were people's responses to several issues such as

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<sup>9</sup> After the CCP came to power, they treated people from different classes differently. Workers and peasants were the classes the CCP relied on. Those had close relationship with feudalism, imperialism, capitalism were the enemies of the regime. By "problematic background," the CCP meant those who were born in a capitalist families or landlords' families, worked for the Republic government, ever joined in any organizations of the Republic Party, members of any secret societies but did commit any crimes and so on.

<sup>10</sup> Yan Kuisong 杨奎松, *Zhonghua renmin gongheguo jianguo shi yanjiu* 中华人民共和国建国史研究[A Research on the History of Establishing People's Republic of China, Vol.1, Nanchang: Jiangxi renmin chubanshe, 2010, 171-217.

<sup>11</sup> Sarah Davies, *Popular Opinion in Stalin's Russia: Terror, Propaganda and Dissent, 1934-1943*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997, 4.

“Stalin’s death,” “the new Soviet leaders,” “the future of Sino-Soviet relationship,” “the fate of the PRC.” This paper also focuses on these topics at least for two reasons. First, these topics were the major interests of both the government and the people immediately after Stalin’s death. The second reason is that most opinions preserved in the official documents are about these issues.

### *Mourning for Stalin*

On March 6<sup>th</sup>, 1953, shortly after the news of Stalin’s death reached Beijing and spread throughout the nation, all kinds of rituals were initiated to mourn for him.<sup>12</sup> Mao Zedong and high officials immediately went to the Soviet embassy to mourn for Stalin. In the same day, Mao Zedong announced the No.1 government order to inform the populace that the whole country would raise the flag at half-mast from March 7<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup>. During these three days, all factories, companies, regiments, government agencies, schools and all social organizations should stop banquets and entertainment activities.<sup>13</sup> The next day, a second government order was announced. It commanded that on March 9<sup>th</sup>, people in all cities, towns, and villages where radios were available should interrupt their normal schedules and mourn for Stalin for five minutes.<sup>14</sup> The central and local governments also held large-scale memorials on that same day. Millions of people were gathered together to pay their respects to Stalin. In Beijing’s Tiananmen Square, for

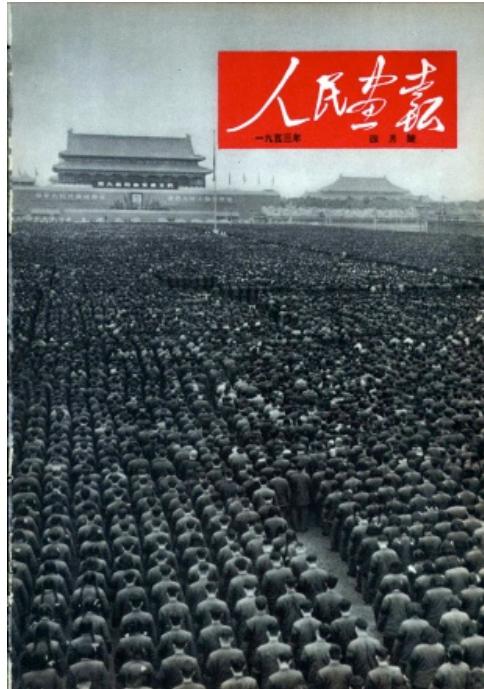
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<sup>12</sup> The moment that Stalin died is 9:50 pm on March 5, 1953 by Moscow time and 2:50 am on March 6 by Beijing time.

<sup>13</sup> Mao Zedong, *Writings of Mao Zedong Since the Establishment of the PRC*, Vol.4, Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe, 1990, 89.

<sup>14</sup> Liu haifan 刘海藩 ed., *Zhonghua renmin gongheguo guoshi quanjian* 中华人民共和国国史全鉴A [General National History of the People’s Republic of China], vol.1, Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe, 2005, 194.

example, 600,000 people attended the memorial. In Tianjin , 300,000 people attended, in Wuhan there was 200,000, and Shanghai had 800,000, to name a few.<sup>15</sup>



(Illustration 1, “600,000 people gathered in the Tiananmen Square to mourn for Stalin”)

Also on March 9<sup>th</sup>, Mao Zedong published an influential editorial in *People's Daily*, titled “The Greatest Friendship.” In this editorial, he praised Stalin for being “the greatest genius of the contemporary era,” “the greatest teacher,” and the Chinese people’s “sincerest friend.” He also said that the task for the Chinese people at this moment was to “turn sorrow into power.” By this, he meant that the Chinese people should maintain strong confidence in the future of Communist China, trust the new Soviet leaders’ ability,

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<sup>15</sup> *Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo rishi* 1953 中华人民共和国日史1953 [A Daily History of the People's Republic of China in 1953], Sichuan Chubanshe, Zhonghua renmin gongheguo ri shi, 2003,p.60.

resist cooperation with the enemies, continue to support the Sino-Soviet friendship and contribute to the socialist state-building project.<sup>16</sup>

A tremendous number of reports and essays in the Party newspaper reveal that the Chinese people from all walks of life demonstrated great sorrow for Stalin, but also successfully turned the sorrow into power, just as Mao had ordered them. Most news reports used titles such as “Beijing workers mourned for Comrade Stalin’s death with heart and soul and determined to unite, work harder, and study the advanced experience of the Soviet Union,” “Turn sorrow into power: the Chinese People’s Volunteer Army crushed enemies heavily—many armies prepared to launch a campaign to study Stalin’s heroic deeds and thoughts,” and “In memory of Stalin, the prophet of the Communist revolution for the working class in the world, we should use actual deeds.”<sup>17</sup>

This impression of powerful grief, however, was only superficial. If one digs through the archival documents, one would find that sorrow was not the only emotion triggered by Stalin’s death. Just as a death causes all kinds of emotions, official documents admitted that Stalin’s death precipitated a long list of emotions, such as sorrow, anxiety, depression, confusion, relief, happiness, and indifference. In this paper, I argue that “Jü,” in other words, anxiety and fear, were the most overwhelming emotions among the Chinese populace right after Stalin’s death, although the mourning process might involve all of these emotions.

### *Turning Stalin into an Icon*

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<sup>16</sup> Mao Zedong毛泽东, “Zui weida de youyi 最伟大的友谊 The Greatest Friendship,” in *The People’s Daily*, May 9, 1953.

<sup>17</sup> These three articles were published in *the People’s Daily* on March 8<sup>th</sup>, March 13<sup>th</sup>, March 5<sup>th</sup>, 1953.

Why did the Chinese populace feel so anxious for the death of a foreign leader, whom they had never seen in person? According to sociological theories, the severity of grief does not necessarily depend on social interactions between the two persons. An individual may grieve over the loss of someone with whom one has not actually interacted but has a strong sense of identification. The determining factor is not necessarily the proximity of the individuals or the social significance of the relationship, but rather the importance the griever assigns to the lost person.<sup>18</sup> Several reasons could explain Chinese people's unusual attitudes, but the backlash of the intensive propaganda regarding Stalin and the "Sino-Soviet Brotherhood" contributed most. It was the CCP's three-year intensive propaganda that made the Chinese people feel Stalin was significant to them.

In order to meet the challenges such as establishing and consolidating a new regime and reviving China's war-worn economy, the CCP desperately needed aid from the Soviet Union. On June 30, 1949, even before the Communist takeover, Mao Zedong declared that China had no choice but "lean-to-one-side," the Soviet side. Actually, for more than a decade, Mao Zedong and Stalin had many disagreements and even conflicts.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> John S. Stephenson, *Death, Grief, and Mourning: Individual and Social realities*, New York: The Free Press, 1985, 123.

<sup>19</sup> Mao Zedong disliked Stalin at least for these four reasons. First, Stalin doubted Mao's ability to be a Communist leader because he was not Soviet educated Bolshevik and Mao's way of leading Communist revolution was so different from the Soviet model. After Mao defeated the National Party and occupied China, Stalin still didn't believe Mao was a real Leninist. Second, during the wartime, Stalin supported the Republic Party by offering arms rather than bolstering the CCP. When the Communist victory over the National Party was around the corner and it was very possible for the CCP to take over China, Stalin forced Mao to stop the war. When the war between the CCP and the National Party happened, Stalin didn't show any confidence in the possibility that the CCP would be the winner. Third, Stalin always bossed around Mao, which made Mao feel he was treated unequally. When Mao visited Moscow in 1949, Stalin didn't welcome him warmly. On the contrary, Stalin snubbed him and even scolded him, making Mao feel being humiliated. Fourth, Mao hated Stalin's Chauvinist style. In Yang Kuisong, *Mao Zedong yu mosike de*

Furthermore, Chinese people in general had a negative impression of the Soviets for at least two reasons. Historically, Imperial Russia had invaded Qing China multiple times and occupied many Chinese lands. After the Japanese surrender, Soviet troops occupied Manchuria. They enraged the Chinese because Soviet soldiers raped women, plundered shops and shot local people.<sup>20</sup> In 1946, the delay of the Soviet withdrawal from Manchuria caused anti-Soviet demonstrations at the national level, which did not end until all the Soviet forces had left Manchuria.<sup>21</sup>

In order to pave the way for Mao's impending meeting with Stalin to secure aid from Moscow, the CCP needed to show Moscow its pro-Soviet attitudes. Moreover, the anti-Soviet social mentality among the populace also made molding people's minds an urgent task. If not, the populace would regard the "lean-to-one-side" policy as treasonous and the CCP would lose its political legitimacy. After the signing of the Sino-Soviet Treaty of Friendship, Alliance and Mutual Assistance on February 14, 1950, the Soviets lost many of their economic and military interests in Manchuria and the Sino-Soviet relationship declined to its nadir.<sup>22</sup> To prevent the new treaty from

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enenyuanyuan毛泽东与莫斯科的恩恩怨怨 [Mao Zedong's Relationship with Moscow], pp.478-9, Jiangxi renmin chubanshe,2008.

<sup>20</sup> Russian soldiers raped Chinese as well as Japanese and European women, plundered shops, and shot the Chinese mobs, who challenged them—on one occasion killing 750 Chinese. Meanwhile, at least one Russian general in China made a fortune trading in diamonds. Soviet forces also stripped the Japanese-built factories in Manchuria of almost every piece of machinery before they withdrew to Russian territory. In John Byron and Robert Pack, *The Claws of the Dragon: Kang Sheng, the Evil Genius behind Mao and His Legacy of Terror in People's China*, New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992, pp. 242-243.

21 Jiang Pei江沛, 1946 nian chun fansu yundong shuping 1946年春反苏运动述评[Summary of the Anti-Soviet movement of the Spring of 1946], 江西师范大学学报*Journal of Jiangxi Normal University*, 2003, Vol.1,pp65-72.

<sup>22</sup> Because Stalin wanted to maintain the interests the Soviets had gained in Manchuria from the Treaty of Sino-Soviet Friendship signed with the National Party in 1945, he declined Mao's requirement for a new treaty. Mao, in order to push Stalin to sign a new treaty, implied the Soviets that China would develop diplomatic ties with the Western imperialists such as America and the Great Britain if Stalin still didn't want to satisfy Mao's requirement. Because a good relationship between China and America would

becoming only a piece of paper and to gain as much aid as possible, the CCP had to launch even more intensive campaigns to repair Sino-Soviet relations.

To promote pro-Soviet attitudes among the populace, the Sino-Soviet Friendship Association (SSFA), a state-run organization, was officially formed on October 5, 1949. The headquarters of the SSFA were in the capital, Beijing, with Liu Shaoqi (1898-1969), the vice Chairman of the state, as its leader. Its branches were set in all cities and remote counties.<sup>23</sup> The main tasks of the SSFA were to increase its membership and to launch all kinds of propaganda campaigns, such as publishing propaganda materials, organizing exhibitions and mass movements, offering Russian lessons and promoting interactions between Chinese and Russians. With the establishment of these branches in 1953, the membership of the SSFA reached 68 million and the SSFA became the biggest mass organization in China.<sup>24</sup>

Propaganda would not have been so effective without eliminating conflicting voices. News offering alternative perspectives to the Communist line was prohibited right after the Communist takeover. Consuming news media overseas was regarded as

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challenge the Soviet Union, especially its interests in Asia, Stalin had to agree to sign a new treaty with Mao. As a result, the new treaty exacerbated the problematic Sino-Soviet relation and only after China entered the Korean War in 1950 just as Stalin required, the relationship improved. In Shen Zhihua 沈志华, “zhongsu youhao huzhu tongmeng tiaoyue tanpan zong de liyi chongtu jiqi jiejue 中苏友好互助同盟条约谈判中的利益冲突及其解决 [The Conflicts and its Solution on the Negotiation Process of the Sino-Soviet Treaty of Friendship, Alliance and Mutual Assistance], ” in Guo Dehong 郭德宏 ed., *Zhonghua renmin gongheguo zhuanli shigao* 中华人民共和国专题史稿 (1949—1956) [A Special History of the People’s Republic of China(1949-1956), Vol.1], sichuan renmin chubanshe, 2004, pp98-132.

<sup>23</sup> Li Wen 李文 and Ye Zhangyu 叶张瑜, “Gankai hua youchang ren san qu wei zhong: yuan zhongsu youhao xiehui zonghui mishu Zhang Zai fangtanlu” 感慨话悠长，人散曲未终：原中苏友好协会总会秘书张再访谈录 [An Interview on Zhang Zai, the Former Secretary of the SSFA], *Dangdai zhongguoshi yanjiu* 当代中国史研究 [Contemporary China History Studies], March 2007, pp.102-106.

<sup>24</sup> Kong Hanbing 孔寒冰, “Xin zhongguo yu sulian guanxi de teshu zaiti: zhongsu youhao xiuhui” 新中国与苏联关系的特殊载体：中苏友好协会 [Sino-Soviet Friendship Associate: The Mediator between the New China and the Soviet union], *Zhengzhou daxue xuebao* 郑州大学学报 *Journal of Zheng Zhou University*, January 2008, pp.41-44.

a crime. National campaigns urging people to refuse to listen to Voice of America (VOA) and the British Broadcasting Company (BBC) were undertaken after the outbreak of the Korean War. *People's Daily* criticized VOA as being even worse than a nuclear bomb because a bomb had its shape while VOA had no shape but did heavy harm to peoples' soul and spirit. VOA should be forbidden and people should no longer listen to it.<sup>25</sup>

Since Stalin embodied the Soviet Union, the propaganda campaign on the Sino-Soviet "friendship" was centered on the image of the God-like Stalin. Stalin's seventieth birthday became the first opportunity for the CCP to promote this image among the whole nation. In October of 1949, a series of campaigns were launched to celebrate Stalin's birthday. According to my calculation, the *People's Daily* published more than 193 articles about Stalin in this single month. Representative titles are: "Stalin: Today's Lenin,"<sup>26</sup> "Everyone should study 'the biography of Stalin,'"<sup>27</sup> "Stalin lights the revolutionary way for human beings, and people all over the world are enthusiastically preparing and celebrating this revolutionary leader's seventieth birthday,"<sup>28</sup> "Long life Stalin!"<sup>29</sup> "How Stalin supported Chinese people,"<sup>30</sup> "Thank you! Longing for you! Happy seventieth birthday, Stalin!"<sup>31</sup> and "All glory belongs to Stalin!"<sup>32</sup>

Furthermore, multiple propaganda handbooks appeared, such as *Sino-Soviet Friendship Study Materials, Why We Should Lean to One Side?, What Kind of Country is*

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<sup>25</sup> “清华大学工会会员掀起反对收听‘美国之音’运动 Members of the Tinghua University worker's union launched campaigns on refusing listening to VOA. !” *People's Daily*, November 21, 1950.

<sup>26</sup> *People's Daily*, December 15, 1949.

<sup>27</sup> *People's Daily*, December 16, 1949.

<sup>28</sup> *People's Daily*, December 16, 1949.

<sup>29</sup> *People's Daily*, December 18, 1949.

<sup>30</sup> *People's Daily*, December 20, 1949.

<sup>31</sup> *People's Daily*, December 22, 1949.

<sup>32</sup> *People's Daily*, December 30, 1953.

*the Soviet Union?, Strengthen the Sino-Soviet Friendship, Great Friendship* and so on. Local SSFA branches organized people from all walks of life to study these books, official news reports, and to listen to radio programs regularly. A song published on Stalin's birthday by the *People's Daily* demonstrated what kind of image the CCP wanted the populace to envision. Its lyrics were: "Stalin is the flag of victory. Stalin is the light for the youth. We are singing to our hearts' content to welcome the victory. We follow Stalin closely!"<sup>33</sup> The personality cult of Stalin was so popular that Zhang Yidong, then a student at Beijing University, recalled in his memoir: "During every meeting or speech, once Stalin's name was mentioned, all people attending the meeting would applaud for a long time or stood up and shouted loudly 'Ypa!', a Russian word roughly means 'long life!'"<sup>34</sup>

Many examples testify to the efficaciousness of the propaganda of the "God-like Stalin" in China. For example, when Mao Zedong visited a remote small village near the Yellow River in October, 1952, an old woman with bound feet ran to see Mao. She was very happy and said to him, "Chairman Mao! You've come! Has Stalin come too?"<sup>35</sup> To an illiterate old person living in a remote village who did not even know the exact geographic location of the Soviet Union, the "friendship" between Chairman Mao and Stalin in propaganda posters impressed her so much that she thought Chairman Mao must always be accompanied by Stalin.

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<sup>33</sup> *People's Daily*, December 22, 1953.

<sup>34</sup> Zhang Yidong, *My Fall from Leningrad University to Xinzhou Prison*, Black Series, Volume 18, pp.28-29.

<sup>35</sup> Wang Hebing 王鹤滨, *Zai weiren shenbian de rizi: Mao Zedong de baojian yisheng jian shenghuo bishu de huiyi* 在伟人身边的日子—毛泽东的保健医生兼生活秘书的回忆 (Days Accompanying Great Mao Zedong: Memoir of his health care doctor and life secretary), Beijing: Zhongguo qingnian chubanshe, 2003, p. 326.



(Illustration 2, a Propaganda Poster Used in 1950s)

It is no doubt that most Chinese people changed their attitudes on Stalin and the Soviet Union after the three-year intensive propaganda. What did Stalin mean to the populace? Did the people accept Stalin as "a great Communist leader," "the greatest genius of the contemporary era," "the greatest teacher of revolution," and Chinese people's "sincerest friend"? Certainly, people from different political backgrounds would have separate impressions of Stalin. A story told by an observer who had witnessed what happened to his neighbor could make good sense of how the populace envisioned Stalin. After the news of Stain's death was announced, all people were required to wear mourning bands to show their grief. An old woman not only refused to wear any mourning band herself, but forced her grandson, who was a high school student, to take off the band from his arm. She said to her grandson: "why do you wear the

unlucky mourning band? I haven't died yet! After I die, you can wear it!" When her grandson said that he should wear it because his teachers told him that the greatest revolutionary leader Stalin had died, she still did not change her mind. Not only was her grandson not allowed to wear the mourning band, but she urged all her family members not to wear it. When the district officers heard about this trouble-maker, they approached her. No matter how hard the officers explained why Stalin was so important for China and for what reasons everyone should wear the mourning band, the woman just refused. After exhausting all their efforts, the officers finally said to her: "Stalin was an emperor, you know? Shall you wear a mourning band when an emperor dies?" Suddenly, the woman understood it and responded: "Of course! Why did not you say this earlier?" She wore a mourning band promptly and kept it on her arm for many days. This story might reveal that both the populace and some local officers accepted Stalin as an emperor rather than a revolutionary leader. Because China had the emperor system for several thousand years and the system was abolished only in 1911, the easiest way for an old people to make sense of Stalin was to regard him as an emperor. In the early PRC period, the ideas of the communist revolution were too foreign for ordinary people to understand. The CCP still had a long way to go to make people believe Stalin was a revolutionary leader instead of a feudal emperor, a "backward" system that the CCP claimed to eliminate. When an "emperor" died, the subjects felt that the world had ended and they had everything to worry.

*Responses to the News of Stalin's Death*

On March 5<sup>th</sup>, 1953, the *People's Daily* published news on Stalin's illness and Mao Zedong's sending a telegraphy to converse with Stalin on his situation. Chinese people, however, still were not well prepared for learning of his death a day later. After reading newspapers, listening to radios and being informed by the emergency meetings organized by their working units, the majority of people were shocked.<sup>36</sup> In his diary, Li Rui, a Communist party member, admitted that the degree to which he had been shocked by the death of Stalin was similar to being shocked by the outbreak of the war between the Soviet Union and Germany. So far in his life, he confessed, his heart had never beaten so hard. He could not help crying all day and all night and nor could his comrades. Chinese communist society had not come to fruition, while the leader suddenly struck down. They were not prepared for the loss and felt it was the end of the world.<sup>37</sup> Many people, as the surveillance reports show, reacted in a similar way. When the news of Stalin's death came, most people did not believe it could be true. Someone went to doctors to confirm if Stalin's illness reported by the news could really cause his death. Some old illiterate people required whoever they could find to read newspaper for them to make sure what they had heard was not a lie.<sup>38</sup> The reports also offered a detailed picture of how people reacted physically. On hearing the news, a housewife in Shanghai who was making dishes put soy sauce in the food by accident. Workers at a sock factory could not focus on their work anymore and put the socks everywhere. An

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<sup>36</sup> Liu Jie, a professor in history department at Guangzhou, wrote in his diary that his university had hold an emergency meeting to announce Stalin's Death. In Liu Jie 刘节: *Liu jie riji* 刘节日记 [Liu jie Diary (1939-1977)], Daxiang Chubanshe, 2009, p.326.

<sup>37</sup> Li Nanyang 李南央 ed., *Li Rui riji* 李锐日记 Li Rui Diary (1946-1955), Fellows Press of America, Inc, 2008, p.436.

<sup>38</sup> “Shanghai shimin dui Sidalin tongzhi shishi de fanying” 上海市民对斯大林同志逝世的反映 [The Response of People in Shanghai to Stalin's Death], Shanghai Municipal Archives, file No. C-38-2-29, March 1953.

elevator attendant's hands shook so hard that he did not even have enough strength to operate the elevator. Teachers and students in Tianjin were so anxious that they could not concentrate on their teaching and studying. Those who were preparing for their exams were unable to continue.<sup>39</sup>

People also expressed their feeling vocally.<sup>40</sup> Some people exclaimed: "Damn it! Our enemies Chiang Kai-shek (1887-1975) and Truman (1884-1972) didn't die while our beloved teacher Stalin passed away. Why?"<sup>41</sup> According to the reports, the main reason why Chinese people didn't want Stalin to die at that moment was that Stalin could support China, especially during the Korean War. A worker in Suzhou, a city near Shanghai, expressed his regrets: "Why didn't Eisenhower (1890-1969) die? We are still at war with America in Korea. We have not totally won the war yet. However, we lost our world leader, Stalin! If he could have lived ten more years, China would be better off!"<sup>42</sup> Because Stalin was so useful to China, a child said: "I really want to die in the place of Stalin so that Stalin could live several more decades. I am too young to be of any use."<sup>43</sup> A worker also had the same idea. "Stalin is the leader of the world. Now,

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<sup>39</sup> "Guanyu Sidalin shihi hou tongxue de fanying" 关于斯大林逝世后同学的反映 [A report on students' response to Stalin's death], Tianjin Municipal Archives, file No. X48-C-300, March 6, 1953.

<sup>40</sup> "Shanghai shimin dui Sidalin tongzhi shishi de fanying" 上海市民对斯大林同志逝世的反映 [The Response of People in Shanghai to Stalin's Death], Shanghai Municipal Archives, file No. C-38-2-29, March 1953.

<sup>41</sup> "Guanyu Sidalin shihi hou tongxue de fanying" 关于斯大林逝世后同学的反映 [A report on students' response to Stalin's death], Tianjin Municipal Archives, file No. X48-C-300, March 6, 1953.

<sup>42</sup> "Sidalin tongzhi shishi hou dao xianzai de qingkuang" 斯大林同志逝世后到目前情况 [The situation in Suzhou City from Stalin's death till now], Suzhou Municipal Archives, file No. A32-6-63, March 21, 1953.

<sup>43</sup> "Shanghai shimin dui Sidalin tongzhi shishi de fanying" 上海市民对斯大林同志逝世的反映 [The Response of People in Shanghai to Stalin's Death], Shanghai Municipal Archives, file No. C-38-2-29, March 1953.

he died. It is a huge loss. If my death could be exchanged for his resurrection, I would definitely do it for him.”<sup>44</sup>

In Stalin’s memorials held by governments at all levels, people expressed their emotions in extreme ways. A middle-age official of the Women’s Association in Kaifeng in North China wept so hard that she fainted when giving a speech in front of the large group of mourners.<sup>45</sup> The reports show that what happened to this female official was not unique. In a high school in Tianjin, more than twenty female students fainted, while in another high school, five female students did the same. A student cried so desperately that he became insane, shouting “Comrade Stalin, Farewell! Your doctor could not cure you, but I will cure you!” Some students even cried out: “Let’s go and look for Stalin!”<sup>46</sup>

After people recovered from the shock, they began to ask questions that the Communist party did not expect. The reports reveal that most people repeated the same question: “The CCP told us that Stalin could live for more than a hundred years. Why did he die when he was only around 70?”<sup>47</sup> A worker in Tianjin also asked a similar question: “The newspaper informed us that the Soviet doctors had already guaranteed that Stalin could live for 140 year. Why did he pass away at so early an age?” With this question in mind, people began to ask more dissident ones. “The party told us that medicine in the Soviet Union is super-developed, however, why couldn’t doctors there

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<sup>44</sup> “Sidalin tongzhi shishi hou dao xianzai de qingkuang” 斯大林同志逝世后到目前情况 [The situation in Suzhou City from Stalin’s death till now], Suzhou Municipal Archives, file No. A32-6-63, March 21, 1953.

<sup>45</sup> Guo Ya 国亚, *Yige putong zhongguo ren de jiazu shi* 一个普通中国人的家族史 [The family history of an ordinary Chinese], Beijing: Zhongguo guangbo dianshi chubanshe, 2005, p.60.

<sup>46</sup> “Guanyu Sidalin shishi hou tongxue de fanying” 关于斯大林逝世后同学的反映 [A report on students’ response to Stalin’s death], Tianjin Municipal Archives, file No. X48-C-300, March 6, 1953.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

cure Stalin?”<sup>48</sup> By doubting the level of the medicine in the Soviet Union, people began to doubt if the science and technology in the Soviet Union was really as advanced as the Party told them. The reports show that “admiring the science and technology of America and Europe while despising that of the Soviet,” a certain social mentality suppressed during the Korean War, resurfaced among some social groups.<sup>49</sup>

Probably influenced heavily by the anti-enemy education required by the oversensitive government and the anti-spy stories which were always best-sellers in China at the time, those who could not accept that Stalin died naturally dug further for the cause of his death. A Youth League member in Tianjin believed that Stalin had not been killed by an illness but conspiracy. “If Stalin had not been assassinated,” a worker asked, “why did he die at night?” Another worker expressed similar doubts: “After I got the news, I had been thinking all the time that if Stalin had actually been assassinated. Even the publication of the diagnostic report cannot get rid of my doubts.”<sup>50</sup> The suspicion, however, was not without evidence. Several months earlier, the Party newspaper published a news story of the so-called “doctor plot” of 1952, informing that several soviet Jewish doctors had been trailed by the Soviet government as spies. Some people who had read the news asked: “Since the Soviet Union used to have some spy doctors, is it possible that Stalin was killed by his doctors?” Based on this kind of belief, some

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<sup>48</sup> “Gongshang dangweihui guanyu shijie weida de geming daoshi Sidalin tongzhi shishi hou ganbu sixiang qingkuang de tongbao” 工商党委会关于世界伟大的革命导师斯大林同志逝世后干部思想情况的通报 [A report from the Committee of the Administrative Bureau for Industry and Commerce on the thoughts of Party cadres after Stalin’s death], Tianjin Municipal Archives, file No. X32-C-21, June 30, 1953.

<sup>49</sup> “Guanyu daonian Sidalin tongzhi wenjian de xuexi yu xuanchuan gongzuo de zongjie baogao” 关于悼念斯大林同志文件的学习与宣传工作的总结报告 [The final report on the effects of studying and propagating the central government’s document of mourning for Stalin], Suzhou Municipal Archives, file No. A3-1-5, May 12, 1953.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

doctors in Tianjin suggested that Stalin's doctors should be arrested because they were responsible for his death.<sup>51</sup> The main function of news is to inform people of what is occurring beyond their direct experience, which engenders in the reader a sense of security, control, and confidence.<sup>52</sup> Such opinions reveal that the distrust of the official media was commonplace.

The explanation offered by the government for why Stalin, who was supposed to live more than 100 years, died in his early seventies, was not satisfying and various rumors began to spread. Reports from Shanghai offered details of how different versions of rumors on the origins of Stalin's death came into play. Most Chinese people at the time were exposed to the news of Stalin everyday though they knew nothing about his daily life. Influenced by the stereotypes of the lives that Chinese emperors led, people believed that everyday Stalin would have consumed lots of expensive food while not having to work hard. A worker told people that Stalin got a cerebral hemorrhage because he had been sitting all day while drinking too much tonic. Someone also claimed: "Stalin died because he had eaten too much Chinese meat." Some rumors were related to supernatural matters which were the popular belief then. Someone fabricated a story that Stalin died because a solar eclipse had appeared during the Spring Festival (Chinese New Year), which was an inauspicious sign. Another rumor was spreading in Shanghai. A dog just gave birth to a monster which had a dog's head but a human body. Therefore, Stalin died. A bus driver explained: "This year is the year of the snake (according to the Chinese zodiac), and Stalin, Mao Zedong and Eisenhower all shared the same zodiac, snake. These three snakes had been fighting hard and finally the snake representing

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Bill Kovach and Tom Rosenstiel, *The Elements of Journalism: What Newspaper Should Know and the Public Should Expect*, New York: Three River Press, 2007, p.1.

Stalin died.” Right before Stalin’s death, American president Eisenhower took office. In some Chinese people’s eyes, it was not just a coincidence. “Stalin lost his life because two kinds of ‘stars’ which represented Eisenhower and Stalin separately were struggling against each other. Stalin’s star was defeated finally.” People with little education were not the only purveyors of rumors. Some well-educated people were also circulating rumors. A student from a university in Shanghai believed that Stalin lost his life because we Chinese people had said “long life” too much.<sup>53</sup>

If these rumors just demonstrate anxious or even scared people seeking to gain a certain sense of security, control and confidence by circulating rumors, the story told by an observer could reveal how anxiety engendered by Stalin’s death turn into fear. The day when a memorial was held in Yan Die county, someone there stared at a one-hundred-year old tree for a while and felt it was about to fall. This person then shouted: “Run away! The big tree was falling!” A thousand people in the memorial rushed out and several children and old women were trampled to death. After the emergency, people found that the tree was still standing. Some people believed that “Stalin made a supernatural appearance during the memorial.”<sup>54</sup> This story shows that anxiety can turn into fear easily since they are interchangeable.

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<sup>53</sup> “Shanghai shimin dui Sidalin tongzhi shishi de fanying” 上海市民对斯大林同志逝世的反映 [The Response of People in Shanghai to Stalin’s Death], Shanghai Municipal Archives, file No. C-38-2-29, March 1953.

<sup>54</sup> Wang Lide 王力德, “Xiao xuesheng yan zhong de Sidalin qushi 小学生眼中的‘斯大林去世’” [Stalin’s Death in the Eyes of a Elementary School Student], [http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog\\_53c57b9d0100ponq.html](http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_53c57b9d0100ponq.html).

Among high officials, Stalin's sudden death engendered another question – whether Mao, who at that time was more than sixty years old, would also die soon? Therefore, who would be Mao's successor became the hottest topic among Mao's close comrades in 1953 though no one dared to speak of the question publicly. Such concerns even caused factional strife among the vice chairmen of the CCP and led to the well-known "Gao Gang Affair."<sup>55</sup> Though the populace knew nothing about what was going on among high officers, those anxious that something bad would happen after Stalin's sudden death also began to worry about the health of Mao Zedong. A citizen in Shanghai said: "Because Chairman Mao is Stalin's true friend, now he must be very sad for the loss of Stalin. We'd better tell Chairman Mao not to be too sad because too much sadness could harm his health."<sup>56</sup> A college student at Fudan University suggested that the Central committee of the CCP should enact a resolution to prevent Chairman Mao from overusing his brain. Another college student at the same university, informed by the Party newspaper that Mao had lived a frugal life, suggested that Mao not live as frugal a life as he used to. Otherwise, the student claimed, Chairman Mao's health would decline.<sup>57</sup> Some students in Tianjin even wrote to the Hygiene Department of the Central Government, suggesting that the Department should pay enough attention to Mao's health, including his eating, drinking, living, and walking.<sup>58</sup> For those desperate people,

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<sup>55</sup> Zhao Jialiang 赵家梁 and Zhang Xiaoji 张晓霁, *Banjie mubei xia de wangshi: Gao Gang zai beijing* 半截墓碑下的往事: 高岗在北京[The Past under the Half of the Tombstone : Gao Gang in Beijing], Hongkong:dafeng chubanshe, 2008,p.105 .

<sup>56</sup> "Shanghai shimin dui Sidalin tongzhi shishi de fanying" 上海市民对斯大林同志逝世的反映 [The Response of People in Shanghai to Stalin's Death], Shanghai Municipal Archives, file No. C-38-2-29, March 1953.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> "Guanyu Sidalin shihi hou tongxue de fanying" 关于斯大林逝世后同学的反映 [A report on students' response to Stalin's death], Tianjin Municipal Archives, file No. X48-C-300, March 6, 1953.

in order to seize a sense of security, they had to depend on the blessing of the God-like leaders. Since they had already lost Stalin's backing, which brought their life all kinds of uncertainties, they did not want to lose Mao's.

### *On the Soviet Union and its New leaders*

Since Stalin embodied the Soviet Union, Chinese people were afraid that his successor, Georgy Malenkov (1902-1988) might not be able to control the Soviet Union as well as Stalin did, not to mention carrying on the world revolution. The reports demonstrate that some local cadres and populace applied what the officers criticized as “a theory of qualification” (zige lun) to judge Malenkov’s ability to be the Premier. By this “theory,” Malenkov was not qualified to carry on Stalin’s cause as a Communist world leader for many reasons: Some people believed that Malenkov was too young to lead the Soviet Union. Others argued that since Malenkov had neither high reputation, authority nor his own philosophy as Stalin did, he was not the right person to be successor.<sup>59</sup> Some people in Tianjin used to think the best successor for Stalin would be Molotov. When they learned that Malenkov was the next Premier, they could not resist their temptation but to ask: “Can he handle it?”<sup>60</sup>

Lacking confidence in Malenkov’s leadership, people began to worry about the future of socialism in the Soviet Union. A citizen in Suzhou believed that socialism in

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<sup>59</sup> “Guanyu daonian Sidalin tongzhi wenjian de xuexi yu xuanchuan gongzuo de zongjie baogao” 关于悼念斯大林同志文件的学习与宣传工作的总结报告 [The final report on the effects of studying and propagating the central government’s document of mourning for Stalin],” Suzhou Municipal Archives, file No. A3-1-5, May 12, 1953.

<sup>60</sup> “Gongshang dangweihui guanyu shijie weida de geming daoshi Sidalin tongzhi shishi hou ganbu sixiang qingkuang de tongbao” 工商党委会关于世界伟大的革命导师斯大林同志逝世后干部思想情况的通报 [A report from the Committee of the Administrative Bureau for Industry and Commerce on the thoughts of Party cadres after Stalin’s death], Tianjin Municipal Archives, file No. X32-C-21, June 30, 1953.

the Soviet Union would definitely be reduced in one way or another. The evidence the speaker applied to support his or her argument was that Stalin not only had created a socialist theory by himself, but he had also had gone through all kinds of difficulties and struggles, while Malenkov was simply a follower of Stalin.<sup>61</sup> A Youth League member in Tianjin even claimed that the socialist state-building process in the Soviet Union could no longer continue: “the Soviet is over once and for all!”<sup>62</sup> Someone worried that Stalin’s death would cause a big change in the Soviet political system since the leader was changed.<sup>63</sup> A citizen in Shanghai was wondering if this tragedy would cause any struggles between different factions in the Soviet Communist party and if the Soviet leadership would no longer be united but split.<sup>64</sup>

With these doubts in mind, people began to worry about the future of socialism in the Soviet Union. A student in a college in Hebei asked: “Without Stalin, is it possible that the Soviet Union will be in uncertainty and chaos?”<sup>65</sup> Some people had even more pessimistic views on the future of Malenkov’s Soviet Union. They believed that it was impossible for the new Soviet government to keep socialism on the right track following Stalin’s death. Therefore, in their eyes, both the Soviet Union and Communism were

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<sup>61</sup> “Sidalin tongzhi shishi hou dao xianzai de qingkuang” 斯大林同志逝世后到目前情况[The situation in Suzhou City from Stalin’s death till now], Suzhou Municipal Archives, file No. A32-6-63, March 21, 1953.

<sup>62</sup> “Gongshang dangweihui guanyu shijie weida de geming daoshi Sidalin tongzhi shishi hou ganbu sixiang qingkuang de tongbao” 工商党委会关于世界伟大的革命导师斯大林同志逝世后干部思想情况的通报 [A report from the Committee of the Administrative Bureau for Industry and Commerce on the thoughts of Party cadres after Stalin’s death], Tianjin Municipal Archives, file No. X32-C-21, June 30, 1953.

<sup>63</sup> “Shanghai shimin dui Sidalin tongzhi shishi de fanying” 上海市民对斯大林同志逝世的反映 [The Response of People in Shanghai to Stalin’s Death], Shanghai Municipal Archives, file No. C-38-2-29, March 1953.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> “Guanyu Sidalin shihi hou tongxue de fanying” 关于斯大林逝世后同学的反映 [A report on students’ response to Stalin’s death], Tianjin Municipal Archives, file No. X48-C-300, March 6, 1953.

over.<sup>66</sup> Because of the reasons mentioned above, at that time people believed that no one could stop imperialism from invading China in the future, and now the Socialist camp was in danger.<sup>67</sup>

### *On the Sino-Soviet Relationship*

Being one of the poorest countries in the Socialist camp, the new-born PRC desperately needed the support from the Soviet Union. This was even more so after China entered the Korean War. The support from the Soviet Union played a key role in both the state-building project and the war in Korea.<sup>68</sup> Most people in China were afraid that, following Stalin's death, China would not obtain any Soviet aid. After some Soviet specialists left China for Moscow at the news that their leader died, Chinese people from all walks of life began to worry even more about the fate of the Sino-Soviet relationship in the post-Stalin era. Equipped with very little modern diplomatic knowledge, people tended to believe that the diplomatic relationship between two countries worked in the way a friendship between two Chinese people did. As the reports reveal, most people tended to use a Chinese idiom, "the friendship could only exist when both of the friends

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<sup>66</sup> “Zhonggong tianjin xianwei guanyu Sidalin tongzhi shishi de baogao tigang” 中共天津县委关于斯大林同志逝世的报告提纲 [An outline from Tianjin County on the popular opinions about Stalin's death], Tianjin Municipal Archives, file No. X39-C-247, May,1953.

<sup>67</sup> “Sidalin tongzhi shishi hou dao xianzai de qingkuang” 斯大林同志逝世后到目前情况 [The situation in Suzhou City from Stalin's death till now], Suzhou Municipal Archives, file No. A32-6-63, March 21,1953.

<sup>68</sup> The aids from the Soviet Union for the early PRC were all around, including offering large amount of loans with low interests, assisting China to build up important heavy industries, developing mutual economic relationship, offering technology assistance, sending specialists to help China, training Chinese specialists, helping China to make economic plans and so on. In Shen Zhihua沈志华 and Li Danhui李丹慧, *Zhanhou zhongsu guanxi ruogan wenti yanjiu: laizi zhong'e shuangfang de dang'an wenxian*战后中苏关系若干问题研究：来自中俄双方的档案文献 [Several Issues on the Sino-Soviet relationship after the Second World War: According to he archives from both Chinese and soviet sides], Renmin chubanshe,2006,p.125.

are alive,”(ren zai renqing zai) in explaining the Sino-Soviet relationship in the future. Since Stalin was dead and people believed that Mao Zedong’s relation with Malenkov was not as deep as that with Stalin, the Sino-Soviet relationship would definitely decline.<sup>69</sup>

The reports also demonstrate that people, no matter how different their political backgrounds, kept on asking the same question: “Will the Soviets still back China?” A Youth League member in Tianjin wanted to know if the Soviet diplomatic policy on China would remain the same just as when Stalin was alive. Some even lost their confidence in China and the Soviet Union’s mutual friendship.<sup>70</sup> People in Shanghai asked: “Will the Soviet Union still send their specialists to China?” If so, “will these specialists take as much effort to help China as they used to?” Workers in Shanghai believed that the Sino-Soviet relationship would change for the worse. As a result, the large-scale state-building project in China would be influenced negatively.<sup>71</sup>

#### *Opinions on a third world war*

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<sup>69</sup> “Guanyu daonian Sidalin tongzhi wenjian de xuexi yu xuanchuan gongzuo de zongjie baogao” 关于悼念斯大林同志文件的学习与宣传工作的总结报告 [The final report on the effects of studying and propagating the central government’s document of mourning for Stalin],” Suzhou Municipal Archives, file No. A3-1-5, May 12,1953.

<sup>70</sup> “Gongshang dangweihui guanyu shijie weida de geming daoshi Sidalin tongzhi shishi hou ganbu sixiang qingkuang de tongbao” 工商党委会关于世界伟大的革命导师斯大林同志逝世后干部思想情况的通报 [A report from the Committee of the Administrative Bureau for Industry and Commerce on the thoughts of Party cadres after Stalin’s death], Tianjin Municipal Archives, file No. X32-C-21, June 30,1953.

<sup>71</sup> “Guanyu daonian Sidalin tongzhi wenjian de xuexi yu xuanchuan gongzuo de zongjie baogao” 关于悼念斯大林同志文件的学习与宣传工作的总结报告 [The final report on the effects of studying and propagating the central government’s document of mourning for Stalin],” Suzhou Municipal Archives, file No. A3-1-5, May 12,1953.

After the Chinese government participated in the Korean War on 25 October 1950, anxiety that the third world war would happen spread all over the country. With many details, Smith's article demonstrates that all kinds of war-related rumors were circulating everywhere after China's entry into the conflict.<sup>72</sup> As the reports reveal, Stalin's death triggered more anxiety on the possible changes in the world and the possibility of a third world war, not just among the populace, but the CCP and Youth League members.

A CCP member in Tianjin claimed: "Since Stalin died, I think the situation both at home and in the world could be changed."<sup>73</sup> A person in Shanghai had the same opinion: "Since the imperialists know that Stalin passed away, they will become wilder. Therefore, the world order will not exist in this way anymore but in a big mess."<sup>74</sup> The populace echoed their statements by being worried that the imperialists in general and the United States in particular would take advantage of Stalin's death. Another CCP member in Tianjin asked: "What can we do if America uses this opportunity to attack Korea?" A citizen in the same city was also wondering if "there will be more tensions between the socialist camp and the capitalist camp and the war in Korea will also be enlarged." Another citizen in Tianjin was pretty sure that "the Korean war will become more

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<sup>72</sup> Steve Smith, Fear and Rumour in the People's Republic of China in the 1950s, in *Cultural and Social History*, Volume 5, Issue 3, 2008, pp. 269-288.

<sup>73</sup> "Gongshang dangweihui guanyu shijie weida de geming daoshi Sidalin tongzhi shishi hou ganbu sixiang qingkuang de tongbao" 工商党委会关于世界伟大的革命导师斯大林同志逝世后干部思想情况的通报 [A report from the Committee of the Administrative Bureau for Industry and Commerce on the thoughts of Party cadres after Stalin's death], Tianjin Municipal Archives, file No. X32-C-21, June 30, 1953.

<sup>74</sup> "Shanghai shimin dui Sidalin tongzhi shishi de fanying" 上海市民对斯大林同志逝世的反映 [The Response of People in Shanghai to Stalin's Death], Shanghai Municipal Archives, file No. C-38-2-29, March 1953.

brutal.”<sup>75</sup> A female factory worker in Shanghai claimed: “Stalin died and the world lost its leader. People all over the world will rebel.”<sup>76</sup>

Many opinions focused on the possibility of a third world war. Students in Tianjin asked: “Stalin died! Is it possible that the third world war will break out? Stalin’s death threatens the stability of the world peace. The lamp (Stalin) that used to light our way is out. What can we do?”<sup>77</sup> Probably influenced by a radio program from Taiwan, a person was spreading a rumor: “I have heard that a Taiwan radio station is saying that the United States plans to remove its No. 7 fleet and attack mainland China.”<sup>78</sup>

After the anti-Japan war (1931-45) and the civil war (1945-49), Chinese people did not want to be involved in any additional wars. In order to legitimize the war in Korea, the CCP justified the invasion of Korea by the need to “defend our home and fight for the country.” The death of Stalin made people believe that the Korean War would become a world war which worried them greatly.

### *Opinions on the Future of Socialism in China*

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<sup>75</sup> “Gongshang dangweihui guanyu shijie weida de geming daoshi Sidalin tongzhi shishi hou ganbu sixiang qingkuang de tongbao” 工商党委会关于世界伟大的革命导师斯大林同志逝世后干部思想情况的通报 [A report from the Committee of the Administrative Bureau for Industry and Commerce on the thoughts of Party cadres after Stalin’s death], Tianjin Municipal Archives, file No. X32-C-21, June 30, 1953.

<sup>76</sup> “Shanghai shimin dui Sidalin tongzhi shishi de fanying” 上海市民对斯大林同志逝世的反映 [The Response of People in Shanghai to Stalin’s Death], Shanghai Municipal Archives, file No. C-38-2-29, March 1953.

<sup>77</sup> “Guanyu Sidalin shihi hou tongxue de fanying” 关于斯大林逝世后同学的反映 [A report on students’ response to Stalin’s death], Tianjin Municipal Archives, file No. X48-C-300, March 6, 1953.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

People's confidence on the future of the Socialism in China declined in many ways after Stalin died. The reports criticized the "capitalists" (most of them were factory owners and merchants) who didn't care if Stalin's death harmed the future of the revolution, but only cared whether the impending change of the world order would influence their business and if the invasion of the imperialists would threaten their property and lives.<sup>79</sup> Such criticisms imply that rich people in China at that time might have been anxious to some extent about losing their property and even their lives as well. But some people did care about the future of socialism in China, though most of their opinions were not what the CCP wished. When Stalin died, the First Five Year Plan (1953-1957), an economic plan copied from the Soviet Union, was only a plan. China needed significant economic support from the Soviets in order to turn the plan into reality. Stalin's death put a big question mark on the future of the Sino-Soviet relationship and gave people thousands of reasons to worry. Both people in Shanghai and Tianjin voiced their concerns: "Stalin as a flag is down. How is our Five Year Plan going? Will it still be fulfilled?"<sup>80</sup> A factory worker opined: "If Stalin would have died ten years later, by which time we could have finished two Five-Year-Plans, it would have been wonderful! Unfortunately, the Socialist construction in China has to be slowed down!" Another worker believed: "The fulfillment of the Socialist construction in China

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<sup>79</sup> "Zhonggong tianjin xianwei guanyu Sidalin tongzhi shishi de baogao tigang" 中共天津县委关于斯大林同志逝世的报告提纲 [An outline from Tianjin County on the popular opinions about Stalin's death], Tianjin Municipal Archives, file No. X39-C-247, May, 1953.

<sup>80</sup> "Gongshang dangweihui guanyu shijie weida de geming daoshi Sidalin tongzhi shishi hou ganbu sixiang qingkuang de tongbao" 工商党委会关于世界伟大的革命导师斯大林同志逝世后干部思想情况的通报 [A report from the Committee of the Administrative Bureau for Industry and Commerce on the thoughts of Party cadres after Stalin's death], Tianjin Municipal Archives, file No. X32-C-21, June 30, 1953.

will be delayed at least 10 years!”<sup>81</sup> Not only was the state-building project in trouble, people in Shanghai were wondering if “the Chinese soldiers in Korea will feel depressed” without Stalin’s blessing.<sup>82</sup>

In some people’s eyes, not only would the first Five Year Plan be delayed, so would the revolution. Without Stalin, some people felt that they became the orphans of the revolution. A person in Tianjin asked: “Stalin has died. Who will take care of the revolution in China?” Some people wanted to know: “Shall we continue the revolution in the future?” “Without Stalin, will the Chinese revolution still be on the right track?”<sup>83</sup>

The anxiety also focused on whether the CCP could survive without Stalin’s backing. People in Tianjin asked: “Will the imperialists come back?”<sup>84</sup> Some people who had suffered terribly under the rule of the Japanese in wartime worried if one day the Japanese would reoccupy China. An old worker in Shanghai asked: “Comrade Stalin has died. Is it possible that we will have to suffer once again the bitterness under the rule of the Japanese?”<sup>85</sup> People in Tianjin even asked: “We don’t have Stalin anymore. Will the nationalists (The Party had ruled China before being defeated by the CCP in the Chinese

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<sup>81</sup> “Zhonggong tianjin xianwei guanyu Sidalin tongzhi shishi de baogao tigang” 中共天津县委关于斯大林同志逝世的报告提纲 [An outline from Tianjin County on the popular opinions about Stalin’s death], Tianjin Municipal Archives, file No. X39-C-247, May, 1953.

<sup>82</sup> “Shanghai shimin dui Sidalin tongzhi shishi de fanying” 上海市民对斯大林同志逝世的反映 [The Response of People in Shanghai to Stalin’s Death], Shanghai Municipal Archives, file No. C-38-2-29, March 1953.

<sup>83</sup> “Gongshang dangweihui guanyu shijie weida de geming daoshi Sidalin tongzhi shishi hou ganbu sixiang qingkuang de tongbao” 工商党委会关于世界伟大的革命导师斯大林同志逝世后干部思想情况的通报 [A report from the Committee of the Administrative Bureau for Industry and Commerce on the thoughts of Party cadres after Stalin’s death], Tianjin Municipal Archives, file No. X32-C-21, June 30, 1953.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> “Shanghai shimin dui Sidalin tongzhi shishi de fanying” 上海市民对斯大林同志逝世的反映 [The Response of People in Shanghai to Stalin’s Death], Shanghai Municipal Archives, file No. C-38-2-29, March 1953.

Civil War) come back?”<sup>86</sup> An old local official in Tianjin even claimed: “I didn’t expect that one day we would have to go back to the mountain to use guerrilla warfare (a military tactic used successfully by Mao Zedong and the People’s Liberation Army in the Anti-Japanese War and Chinese Civil War) to fight against the nationalists once again!”(It means the CCP will lose its power and have to fight once again)<sup>87</sup> People felt desperate and this social mentality was revealed by someone in Tianjin who said: “Everything we have achieved is gone!”<sup>88</sup>

### *Turning Sorrow into Power*

The CCP was very sensitive to these dissident voices because the Party worried very much that the enemy of the regime would take advantage of this opportunity to challenge the Communist government. All these surveillance reports reveal how worried the CCP was. As the reports from both Tianjin and Suzhou show, the central government was scared at the amount of anxiety of the populace. To channel people’s anxiety in a productive way, the CCP asked the local cadres to use the propaganda machine more intensively. The central government also ordered that the whole country study the propaganda materials on mourning Stalin (such as the editorial written by Mao Zedong,

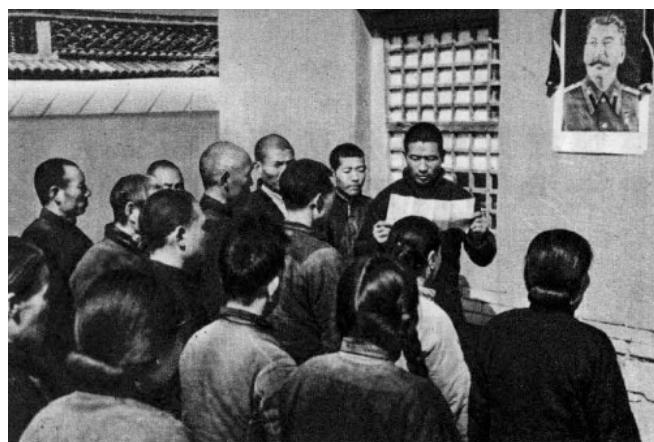
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<sup>86</sup> “Gongshang dangweihui guanyu shijie weida de geming daoshi Sidalin tongzhi shishi hou ganbu sixiang qingkuang de tongbao” 工商党委会关于世界伟大的革命导师斯大林同志逝世后干部思想情况的通报 [A report from the Committee of the Administrative Bureau for Industry and Commerce on the thoughts of Party cadres after Stalin’s death], Tianjin Municipal Archives, file No. X32-C-21, June 30, 1953.

<sup>87</sup> “Zhonggong tianjin xianwei guanyu Sidalin tongzhi shishi de baogao tigang” 中共天津县委关于斯大林同志逝世的报告提纲 [An outline from Tianjin County on the popular opinions about Stalin’s death], Tianjin Municipal Archives, file No. X39-C-247, May, 1953.

<sup>88</sup> “Gongshang dangweihui guanyu shijie weida de geming daoshi Sidalin tongzhi shishi hou ganbu sixiang qingkuang de tongbao” 工商党委会关于世界伟大的革命导师斯大林同志逝世后干部思想情况的通报 [A report from the Committee of the Administrative Bureau for Industry and Commerce on the thoughts of Party cadres after Stalin’s death], Tianjin Municipal Archives, file No. X32-C-21, June 30, 1953.

“The Greatest Friendship”) for two weeks or even longer.<sup>89</sup> As the leader in Tianjin emphasized in a meeting, the key work they should do was to raise the spirits of the activists, on whom the Party heavily relied.<sup>90</sup> The government required and organized workers and peasants to promise to Stalin that they would work harder and called on people to use this ritual. All working units should make detailed plans on how to “turn sorrow into power.”<sup>91</sup> Those who didn’t follow the party order would be punished. In Tianjin, several CCP members who had fallen asleep at the memorial services or turned to entertainment were punished harshly.<sup>92</sup>



濟南市郊二區黨員也學蘇東互助組的全體組員，在斯大林同志追悼前莊嚴宣誓，保證努力生產，實現全年增產計劃。

<sup>89</sup> “Zhixing zhongyang guanyu xuexi daonian Sidalin tongzhi de wenjian de tongzhi yijian” 执行中央关于学习悼念斯大林同志的文件的通知意见 [Carrying out the central government’s order on how to study from and mourn for Stalin],” Suzhou Municipal Archives, file No. A1-2-6 March 12, 1953.

<sup>90</sup> “Guanyu Sidalin tongzhi shishi zhihou ying zuo de gongzuo” 关于斯大林同志逝世之后应做的工作 [The work needs to be done after Comrade Stalin’s death], Tianjin Municipal Archives, file No. X48-Y-317, March 10, 1953.

<sup>91</sup> “Guanyu daonian Sidalin tongzhi wenjian de xuexi yu xuanchuan gongzuo de zongjie baogao” 关于悼念斯大林同志文件的学习与宣传工作的总结报告 [The final report on the effects of studying and propagating the central government’s document of mourning for Stalin],” Suzhou Municipal Archives, file No. A3-1-5, May 12, 1953.

<sup>92</sup> “Neimao dangwei guanyu Sidalin tongzhi shishi hou de ganbu qingkuang chuli baogao” 内贸党委关于斯大林同志逝世后的干部情况处理报告 [A report from the Department of Domestic Trade in Tianjin City on how to punish the cadres who have wrong attitudes on Stalin’s death], Tianjin Municipal Archives, file No.X32-C-17, May 12, 1953.

(Figure 3 “Peasants were swearing to Stalin to promise that they would work harder to fulfill the plan of increasing grain production.”)

Did people turn “Jü” into power as the CCP ordered? Several people recalled in their diaries or memoirs that after Stalin’s death, they determined to join the communist party and submitted their applications or studied Russian much harder.<sup>93</sup> The reports, however, offered many details on people’s negative reaction to this. A Youth Member in Tianjin said to his coworker who asked him to join a meeting: “I know what they want to tell us in the meeting. It is nothing but the clichés—‘turn sorrow into power!’ ”<sup>94</sup> When the propaganda department in Suzhou began to call on people to channel their emotion to a more positive condition about three weeks after Stalin’s death, some people responded: “That person (Stalin) has been dead for a while. Now we don’t need to feel sorrow anymore not to mention turning the sorrow into power.”<sup>95</sup> In this case, a local propaganda department had to confess that most people promised that they would turn their sorrow into power, but they just said so instead of doing anything. When being asked to sign contracts with the government in order to ensure that people turned sorrow

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<sup>93</sup> Shao Yanxiang邵燕祥, *Zhao Linghun: Shao Yanxiang siren juanzong 1945-1976*找灵魂: 邵燕祥私人卷宗 1945—1976 [In Search for My Soul: Shao Yanxiang’s Personal File 1945-1976], Guilin:Guanxi shifan daxue chubanshe,2004, p.148-149; Liu Shien刘世恩: *Haoqing huisou hua rensheng: Chen Fujie fangtanlu*豪情回首话人生:陈福接访谈录 [An Interview on Chen Fujie], <http://www.lovenudt.com/detail.asp?fileid=749>.

<sup>94</sup> “Gongshang dangweihui guanyu shijie weida de geming daoshi Sidalin tongzhi shishi hou ganbu sixiang qingkuang de tongbao” 工商党委会关于世界伟大的革命导师斯大林同志逝世后干部思想情况的通报 [A report from the Committee of the Administrative Bureau for Industry and Commerce on the thoughts of Party cadres after Stalin’s death], Tianjin Municipal Archives, file No. X32-C-21, June 30,1953.

<sup>95</sup> “Guanyu daonian Sidalin tongzhi wenjian de xuexi yu xuanchuan gongzuo de zongjie baogao” 关于悼念斯大林同志文件的学习与宣传工作的总结报告 [The final report on the effects of studying and propagating the central government’s document of mourning for Stalin], Suzhou Municipal Archives, file No. A3-1-5, May 12,1953.

into power, some local cadres complained: “Turn sorrow into power? Shit! What they really want from us is to make us do more work!”<sup>96</sup>

## Conclusion

On September 25<sup>th</sup>, 1949, Mao Zedong held a meeting with their comrades and specialists to decide which song should be used as the national anthem. Though most people agreed to use “March of the Volunteers”, a song which had been written during wartime, as the national anthem, some suggested revising the lyrics to better match the image of the progressive PRC. They strongly suggested revising the lyrics, “As the Chinese people faces its greatest peril,” because Chinese people were now safe forever thanks to the leadership of the CCP. Zhou Enlai, the then premier, insisted on using the original one. He claimed: “The original lyrics could mobilize people’s emotions. If revised, it would no longer trigger that kind of emotion when singing it.”<sup>97</sup> During the early years of the PRC, the CCP always felt challenged. To keep the new regime safe, besides seeking support from the Soviet Union, the only thing the Party could do was to mobilize the emotional sources. What the primer said about the lyrics shows how crucial emotion mobilization was for the PRC. William Reddy may go too far in asserting that “emotional control is the real site of the exercise of power,” but if it can be said of any regime, it can surely be said of the PRC.<sup>98</sup> The popular anxiety and fear triggered by Stalin’s death and the Party’s emotion engineering project could be solid evidence for Reddy’s statement. The anxiety shared by the populace caused some to either disobey or

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> Pang Xianzhi 逢先知 and Jin Chongji 金冲及 ed., *Mao Zedong Zhuan(1949-1976)* 毛泽东传 (1949–1976) [Biography of Mao Zedong (1949-1976)], Vol.1, Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe, 2003, p.5.

<sup>98</sup> William Reddy, “Against Constructionism: The Historical Ethnography of Emotions,” *Current Anthropology* 38(3) (1997): 335.

distrust the authority, but it would be too extreme to argue that people hated the Communist government and sought to ferment rebellion just as the totalitarianism school believes. However, it could be fair to argue that “Jù” (as shown by the dissident opinions) triggered by Stalin’s death and the inefficient emotion mobilization forced Mao to launch a series of mass movements, such as the Anti-Rightist movement launched in 1957 and the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), to mold people’s minds until his own death.

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