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Summary:

Etienne Manac'h, reporting on a thaw in relations between China and Hungary, suggests that the PRC seeks "a greater zone of autonomy vis-à-vis the Soviet Union in Eastern Europe."

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Sino-Hungarian Relations and the Indochina Problem

I note that, in its bulletin of 30th October, Xinhua quoted at length editorials from the Hungarian press on the situation in Indochina. These articles, from 'Nepszabadsag' and 'Magyar Nemzet', denounce the proposals made on 7th October by President Nixon for a settlement of the Indochina conflict, as well as the decision taken by General Lon Nol to transform the Cambodian monarchy into a republican state. This publication should be noted since it is the first time that China, which is constantly trying to distinguish itself from the Soviet policy on the Indochina question, has quoted editorials from the official press of a state of the European Communist bloc, other than Romania, to support its viewpoint.

It seems that we must exclude the possibility that this is the start of a tactical rapprochement between the two Great Communist Powers, who are competing for Hanoi and who adopted diametrically opposed positions on the Cambodian affair.

From the viewpoint of Sino-Soviet relations, this initiative aims instead to further emphasize the USSR's diplomatic isolation. But it is mostly revealing for the new atmosphere of Sino-Hungarian relations. The aid given to the victims of the floods in Hungary in June 1970 had been a first sign of the Chinese interest for this state of the European socialist bloc. Since then, we were able to see several times that Hungary has a privileged spot amongst the various Eastern European states with whom China is trying to strengthen relations. It is in Budapest that Beijing sent the first of its newly nominated ambassadors in Eastern Europe. In return, the message of congratulations that the Hungarian Prime Minister sent on 1st October to the Chinese authorities, for the 21st anniversary of the foundation of the PRC, had a warm tone that contrasted with the message of the leaders of the other member states of the Warsaw Pact. He was the only one to use the term 'comrade' before the name of M. Zhou Enlai.

By underlining the convergence of views with Hungary on the Indochina problem, China has taken another step on the path of a rapprochement with Hungary, whose final goal could be, as in the case of Yugoslavia and Romania, to favor the establishment of a greater zone of autonomy vis-à-vis the Soviet Union in Eastern Europe.

Signed Etienne Manac'h