

Ylber Marku
**Jacques Grippa against the Cultural
Revolution**

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In November 1966, Jacques Grippa, the leader of **the Communist Party of Belgium** (m-l), participated in the Fifth PLA Congress and met with the Albanian leaders on many occasions. He reported to have organized meetings in Belgium with students and other youths to inform them about the Chinese Cultural Revolution. Youth attendance at these meetings was high, but high also was the number of those who were not fully convinced of the good intentions of the Cultural Revolution. ¹⁵⁰



Even Grippa was not fully convinced. When he went on vacations with his wife in Albania in August 1967, he vented his great dissatisfaction with certain Chinese policies. He had been in China during 1966, and lamented the fact that not only had he been kept completely uninformed about the Cultural Revolution, but he was also not allowed to meet the Indonesian communist party officials in Beijing.¹⁵¹

Grippa was not alone in his frustrations over the lack of information. Kazimierz Mijal told similarly of his meetings with Chinese diplomats in Tirana, that the information provided about the Cultural Revolution was 'very vague', or sometimes clearly inaccurate, as it was when he was told the Cultural Revolution would be over within the year (1968).¹⁵²

China contributed very much to the communists' suspicions in Europe about the Cultural Revolution, when for instance they refused to allow Mijal to visit China again in 1968, claiming the Chinese leaders were too busy.¹⁵³ China might have thought that Mijal was used by Albania to extract information from China that it did not otherwise have.

Grippa's divergences with Chinese comrades dated back to 1964, mainly regarding the criteria upon which assistance was granted or denied to communist groups in West Europe. Grippa complained of China's lack of distinction between authentic and imposter Marxist-Leninist groups. Furthermore, 'in dealing with us, China's representatives in Europe were not ideological comrades, but bureaucrats, who feared the consequences of contacting with us'.

He brought as example the fact that China did not protest when French communists were arrested in Switzerland, 'just because they had visited Chinese embassy in Berna'. Grippa had thought that the Cultural Revolution in China would have positively impacted the CCP's foreign relations, 'but it did not happen instead', lamenting that in 1966 China had impressed him negatively with respect to his visit in 1962.¹⁵⁴

As he explained, when he visited China in August 1966, he had an overt polemic with Kang Sheng regarding which principles new Marxist parties in Europe should follow. Kang told Grippa that sometimes they should work even with groups that have different ideas, while Grippa showed more dogmatism. At the end Kang suggested Grippa to concentrate more on Belgian affairs, rather than expanding his contacts.

This visit of Grippa, in a few words, was a complete failure, and divergences with the CCP seemed to be difficult to repair. It was about all this that he reported to Ramiz Alia, Hoxha's close comrade in Tirana. Although CCP leaders used to inform Tirana often about their relations with other communist parties, regarding Grippa it seems that the CCP did not inform Tirana. This can be deduced from the warm welcome Grippa received in Tirana when he returned from China. Considering how he was later criticized for his standing against China, he would have not been so well-received had Albanian leaders known in advance his divergences with Beijing. Grippa criticized some of the slogans being promoted by the Cultural Revolution in China. For instance, he did not agree, and refused to publish in his newspaper in Belgium, the Chinese slogan "It's right to rebel", as he considered it too vague and could even be used to rebel against communists. He also criticized the little space Chinese propaganda had reserved for the communist struggle in Europe. This, for him, was due to China's disregard for the urban working class in Europe, in favor of, he believed, rural mobilization. He was also disappointed with the marginal role the Cultural Revolution seemed to reserve for the working class, compared to the grand emphasis placed on students and peasants. On this point, Hoxha's view was identical to Grippa's. Grippa also opposed the Chinese slogan "one splits in two". For him the Chinese comrades did not explain with this slogan the difference between the antagonist contradiction and the non-antagonist contradiction. ¹⁵⁵

Following his talks with Alia, Grippa planned a meeting with Hoxha. After learning of Grippa's many criticisms of China, almost the same arguments Hoxha had made in private conversations with close comrades, Hoxha refused. Commenting on the conversation between Grippa and Alia, Hoxha rejected completely Grippa's criticism of the Chinese Cultural Revolution, and a week later he sent to the Chinese embassy the records of the conversation between Alia and Grippa. ¹⁵⁶

But Grippa reminded Alia that, after all, the BCP (m-l) was not a branch of the CCP, and Grippa therefore had the right to publish whatever he considered appropriate. Hoxha noted that perhaps the message was also to the PLA, in a clear attempt to challenge Albania to rethink its position. What worried Hoxha most about Grippa was the latter's defense of Liu Shaoqi. Although Grippa did not take Liu's position in the internal CCP struggle, he wondered, 'are all the accusations against Liu well-founded?'. ¹⁵⁷ For Hoxha this was too much. Despite most likely sharing similar concerns, privately, Hoxha accused Grippa

of taking Liu's – meaning the revisionist – side, instead of defending Mao. He could not but reject Grippa's position as anti-China. One week after sharing his sincere thoughts, Jacques Grippa was called in Tirana to meet Alia again. Alia read a note he claimed was written by Hoxha, which considered Grippa's view on China, 'deeply wrong, not based on arguments, was an attack to the great revolutionary Mao Zedong and completely anti-Marxist'.¹⁵⁸

Alia told Grippa that Hoxha and the PLA considered the Cultural Revolution as a great contribution to the communist cause. He invited Grippa to call a meeting of the central committee of his party in Belgium, to hold a session of self-criticism and revise his position towards Beijing.

Grippa, on the other hand, rejected Albanian accusations, and kindly warned that 'If our party is mistaken the repercussions are limited, but if you instead are wrong the repercussions abroad are more severe, and if the CCP is wrong, then the repercussions internationally are even greater'.¹⁵⁹

With this meeting Grippa was dismissed, and a letter from the PLA was sent to Paris to the Albanian ambassador (covering also Belgium) recommending him to keep an eye on Grippa.¹⁶⁰ If Grippa had warned Albanian leaders of repercussions, he had not imagined that he would be the first to suffer from them. Immediately after his return to Belgium, within his party emerged a group that opposed Grippa's line. Eventually, not long after his sojourn in Albania, he faced a putsch and was expelled from his own party.

Although there is no clear evidence that Albania was behind this, the timing and the accusations against Grippa by the new faction seem to leave little room for alternative interpretation. This is reinforced also by the fact that the new group rushed to send a letter to Hoxha after Grippa's dismissal, in which they rejected entirely Grippa's position on the Chinese Cultural Revolution, and fully supported it as a great event for the world communism.¹⁶¹

In December 1967, Grippa was expelled from the party, mainly for having attacked the Chinese Cultural Revolution, as shown in the declaration of the central committee.

149 In a meeting of Behar Shtylla with the Belgian communist Hauvert Arnord Pierre, in July 1966, Shtylla affirmed that too much trust should not be put on the African students (and militants), in National Archives of Albania (AQSH), F.14, AP-MPKB (M-L) e Belgjikes, Jacque Grippa, V. 1966, D6, f.1.

150 Grippa told in Tirana that in one meeting with around 500 students in Brussels, one third of the participants did not show much enthusiasm, in "Records of the meeting of comrade Hysni Kapo and Ramiz Alia with comrade Jacque Grippa, 11 November 1966", in AQSH, F.14, AP-PKB (M-L) e Belgjikes, Jacque Grippa, V. 1966, D9, f.15. 202

151 AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKB (m-l), Jacque Grippa, V. 1967, D5, f.28. 152 AQSH, F.14, AP-PKB (m-l), V. 1968, D17, f.2.

153 "Information from the meeting of comrade Mijal with the Chinese Charge d'Affaires in Tirana, 23 March 1968", in *ibid.*, f.3.

154 Quotations of the paragraph in: AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKB (M-L), Jacque Grippa, V. 1967, D5, f.30. 203

155 He expressed all this criticism in the same session of talks with Alia, who was very surprised. In AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKB (M-L), Jacque Grippa, V. 1967, D5, f.34-43.

156 Hoxha wrote his opinions on the notes extracted from the records of Grippa-Alia meeting. In, AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKB (M-L), Jacque Grippa, V. 1967, D6. 204

157 *Ibid.*, f.12.

158 AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKB (M-L), Jacque Grippa, V. 1967, D7, f.1.

159 *Ibid.*, f.14.

160 AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKB (M-L), Jacque Grippa, V. 1967, D8.

161 "Declaration and the resolution of the Belgian Communist Party (M-L): On the denunciation of the revisionist line of Jacque Grippa; On the solidarization with the Great Chinese Cultural Revolution", in AQSH, F.14, AP-MPKB (M-L), V. 1967, D1. 205