

"Ten steps of a Giant". An important milestone in the history of Soviet-Chinese cultural relations

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Abstract. The article discusses in detail a special issue of the children's magazine *Koster* which was prepared jointly with Chinese friends and was published in October 1959. The article analyzes the materials of this issue, the conclusion of which suggests that this is a unique approach to the coverage of Russian-Chinese cultural ties in children's periodicals. It is proposed to continue this tradition and to prepare an issue of the magazine *Koster* together with Chinese children's magazines dedicated to the 75th anniversary of PRC.

1 Introduction

Cultural connections between Russia and China date back more than one century. The art of Chinoiserie manifested itself in the 18th century in collecting objects of Chinese art and architecture [1], [2]. Interest in China was reflected in book publishing too. N. I. Novikov's Printing Company published A. Agafonov's translations – *Jungin*, or the book about loyalty [3] and A Brief chronological schedule of Chinese khans: from the book of the *Universal Mirror* with an indication of the Chinese and Roman chronologies from the beginning of the Chinese Empire to 1786, published in the magazine *Drone*. A. Leontiev's translation of *Chenzi*, the Chinese philosopher's advice given to his sovereign. These publications were addressed primarily to the Russian imperial entourage and were necessary for innovations in domestic politics as a positive example of statehood [4]. Thanks to the activities of the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission in Beijing, the idealized and exotic image of China that emerged in Russia in the XIX century under French influence has changed significantly. A huge role was played by the head of the mission, Father Iakinf (N.Ya. Bichurin) [5]: he laid the foundations of regional studies with his translations of Chinese works. China has also undertaken the development of cultural ties. At the end of the XIX century, one of the most influential dignitaries who held the reins of China's foreign policy in his hands, Li Hongzhang [6] arrived in Russia as an official representative. The official reason for the visit was the coronation of Nicholas II. In the middle of the 20th century new political and economic ties emerged between the USSR and the PRC, which proclaimed a communist course in politics. This has affected the cultural exchange between the two countries. In the early fifties magazines in Russian People's China (USSR) and China (China) began to be published for Soviet readers. The periodical press of the PRC also widely covered the

life of the Soviet Union. In January 1958 the weekly magazine *Soviet-Chinese Friendship* began to be published and many Chinese newspapers gave detailed reviews of each issue of the magazine. The decade of the PRC's formation which was celebrated in 1959 became one of the main topics in the periodicals of both countries. Periodicals have played a special role in the development of cultural ties. All-Union children's magazines published at that time under the Central Committee of the *Komsomol Pioneer*, *Murzilka* (Moscow) and *Koster* (Leningrad) were also involved in the celebration of the Decade of the PRC. The Leningrad magazine *Koster* stands out for its holistic and comprehensive approach.

2 Results and discussion

The publication of a special "Chinese" issue is undoubtedly an important milestone in the history of the monthly children's magazine *Koster* and in the history of Soviet-Chinese cultural ties. *Koster*, celebrating its 85th anniversary in 2021, is a magazine with a difficult fate [7]. *Koster* has released a special issue which contains materials from authors of both countries, correspondents of TASS. The cover was made by Chinese artist Chen Zu-san. This is an isolated case in children's periodicals and undoubtedly an important milestone in the history of Soviet-Chinese cultural ties. Unfortunately neither Russian nor Chinese researchers have paid attention to this issue so far. In *Pioneer*, which surpassed *Koster* in circulation (500,000 copies) there are no materials about the decade of the PRC. In *Murzilka* (1,000,000 copies) only several centrefolds are devoted to this topic. It would seem strange that the *Komsomol Central Committee* provided such an opportunity to the magazine *Koster* which appeared later than the magazines *Pioneer* and *Murzilka*, the first issues of which were published in 1924. One can only guess that

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such an honor was given to the magazine *Koster* as a magazine published in Leningrad - "the cradle of the revolution". Or because the editor-in-chief was Kosareva who on the recommendation of the secretary of the first regional party committee Popov moved from the post of secretary of the regional committee for work with school youth and pioneers.

The great importance attached to this issue is evidenced by the fact that the magazine opens with a greeting from Zhu De, Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress. In his greeting to readers, he expresses confidence in the significance of the holiday of the Decade of the PRC for the entire Soviet people: "The Soviet Union and China are brothers, and Soviet and Chinese children are as close as the fingers of one hand". In the editorial there is no appeal either from the leadership of the USSR or from the Central Committee of the Komsomol. This is obviously a conscious approach because the author of the following material *Ten Giant Steps* about the proclamation of the Declaration on the Formation of the PRC by Mao Zedong on October 1, 1949, was not an employee of the editorial board of the magazine *Koster*, but a translator who was in the 30-40s a special correspondent of TASS in China, Vladimir Nikolaevich Rogov (1906-1989), a man whose biography is closely connected with China [8]. Rogov has done a lot to study the problems of modern China and made a significant contribution to the study of modern Chinese literature, especially the works of its founder Lu Xin. Also he has done a lot to familiarize the Chinese public with the works of Russian classics, in particular, with the works of M. Gorky. Thanks to the founding of the magazine *Shi Dai* by Rogov in Shanghai, the Chinese could get acquainted with the works of Russian writers for five years. All of the above fully explains the lively language of the essay, which tells about the life of Chinese children before and after the formation of the republic, and speaks of the high choice of editors and the importance attached to the quality of children's periodicals.

Note that the magazine *Koster* in all the years of its existence was an example of highly artistic literature, distinguished by a careful selection of printed materials [9]. The vector of the whole issue is set by Vladimir Rogov's essay. Much of what is mentioned there is revealed in separate materials. "Ten steps of a Giant" - so allegorically the author meant the first decade of a new path. The text gives the main milestones of China's achievements for children ("compulsory primary education has been introduced", "a pioneer organization has been created", and so on).

Artistically adapted agitation is laid out in the sections of prose and poetry of a children's magazine. So, the story of the benefits of people's communes is told in the work *Rain* by Zhang Zhou. The story is told on behalf of pioneer Xiao-lan, the eldest son of a poor peasant, the only one who refused to join the cooperative. The son's reading of textbooks causes his father's rage: "All my life I see that people eat bread or rice, but I have never seen them eat hieroglyphs!" (p. 6). This is the beginning of the theme of combining study

and work, which runs linearly through many materials of the magazine. The figurative structure of the story is designed to connect specific ideas with external natural phenomena, to create a visual picture of the new correct world in the reader's mind. The optimistic and edifying message of *Rain* is presented to young readers of the magazine as an immutable truth.

The phenomenon of the Great Leap Forward (an economic and political campaign in China aimed at strengthening the industrial base and a sharp economic recovery) is devoted to many different genre materials in the magazine.

The traditional spread "Our seven-year-plan 1959-1965" contains material about the Big Leap with an accessible explanation of the term itself and why 1958 is called "an extraordinary year, a year of miracles", comparative figures of coal mining, steel smelting are given, figures of estimated production and production in 1959 are indicated. The figure shows an annual increase in production of 135 ml. tons of coal, China needed one year, USA 14 years, England 37 years. "Now China produces more coal than England – the oldest industrial country in the world". The comparison with England is not accidental, because the goal to catch up and overtake Great Britain in the production of steel and other important types of industrial products in fifteen years was put forward by Mao Zedong at an international meeting of representatives of Communist workers' parties in Moscow in November 1957 in response to Khrushchev's promise to "catch up and overtake America." Through images and comparisons, unexpected turns of the topic, it is said about the unprecedented feat of enthusiasts building irrigation canals: "Every day a hundred million people went out to build with picks, shovels, wheelbarrows. They removed and moved fifty-eight billion cubic meters of soil. This land is enough to build... three hundred and eighty-seven Great Chinese Walls". The Big Leap became a campaign that attracted almost the entire population of the country. This is confirmed by an episode from the life of a delegation of Soviet film workers, when the "cheerful companion" young film actress Qin Wen said, "I can't go with you today. I have to cook steel".

Letters from Chinese schoolchildren about the construction of a new factory to become "the leaders of labor", about the radio circle, which was decided to create after the USSR launched the satellite, were posted in the heading "By the Fire".

The study of the Russian language became widespread after the formation of the PRC [10]. Here it is worth mentioning the material by V. Skorobogatov About Vova and his friends from Alma-Ata, who decided to study Chinese. At first, he learned hieroglyphs with the help of a Chinese primer that his grandfather, a traveler, brought. Then he sent a letter to Beijing (the manuscript of the letter is given in the text). The correspondence began. The letters from the Chinese correspondents were in Russian. This is evidenced by the fact that back in 1941, at the initiative of the CPC, a Russian language school was established. At the end of 1951, the All-China Committee for the Management of

the Study of the Russian Language began to publish the magazine Russian Language. And in 1959, Russian was studied in almost all secondary schools in Northeastern China, bordering the USSR, and in Beijing in 59 schools.

The new transformations are indicated by the appearance of new names: Ken-huang, which means "development of virgin land" and Chun-chuang, which means "collective farm". These names symbolized an inseparable part of the new society, a new harmony with the environment. Literally, we read "Death comes to sandstorms! This is because a new Great Wall stretches across the country – the Great Green Wall. This giant forest belt, one and a half kilometers wide and 1,600 kilometers long, was built during the years of Soviet power." By the time the PRC was formed in 1949, the forest area was only 8% of the country's territory. Then this figure also decreased, because during industrialization there was a need for fuel. The rapid development of industry has had a negative impact on the environment. The forest belt was extremely necessary. But now we are curious about the following - the term "Great Green Wall" appeared in the magazine in 1959. The decision to create a program of forest protection strips in the northern regions was made by the Government in 1978. And officially, the term was introduced by Deng Xiaoping, the great architect of Chinese economic reforms in 1989 as the name of a sandstorm protection project operating until 2050. This name refers to the forest protection strips stretching for thousands of kilometers along three regions of China parallel to the Great Wall of China. It should be noted that taken as a unit of measurement, the most iconic historical structure - the Great Wall of China, both in the example of the Great Green Wall and the example of construction and irrigation canals described above, speaks about the scale of the planned transformations, their strategic significance and constant appeal to historical memory. This is another facet of the appeal to the general history, not only for the participants of the events described, but also as a personal discovery for the reader in the documentary section "Do you know that ..." (p. 55).

The journalistic section in the magazine traditionally consisted of essays on scientific and industrial achievements of the USSR. The issue dedicated to the PRC was no exception. It fascinatingly tells about the achievements of the PRC over a ten-year period and about projects realized jointly with the USSR.

The proclamation of the PRC marked the beginning of official cooperation between the countries. Back in early 1949, during A.I. Mikoyan's stay in China, one of the most discussed issues was the issue of providing support in economic construction. This visit set into motion the collaboration in various fields, which are reflected in the pages of this issue. On July 28, 1951, the parties signed an agreement on the establishment of the Soviet-Chinese shipbuilding joint-stock company Sovkitsudstroy on a parity basis for a period of twenty-five years in the city Dalny. The Chinese government made a commitment to exclusive cooperation with Soviet "related parties", thus Chinese shipbuilding was purposefully included in the system of the Soviet

economy. About the new equipment of factories "in Shanghai and Dalny", about the construction of new shipyards in Qingdao, Tianjin, Canton is described in the essay New ships of China (p. 29). The plants are called the "school of new technology". The essay is illustrated by a large photo of the MIR-28 ocean vessel coming off the stocks of the Dalny shipyard. It was built in three and a half months (for comparison, it is explained that similar ships are built in England for six months). The article also mentions the built vessels MIR-25, Democracy and the huge ocean ship Jump (assembled in an incredibly short time – fifty-eight days). "What about the dragon boats? The Imperial boat has been put into the museum for a long time". The summary of the brief review is summed up.

Part of the journalistic material is traditionally served through the visible significant image laid down in the magazine by S. Ya. Marshak [7]. The battle with another dragon is mentioned in N. Maksimov's text The Battle with the Black Dragon, which is dedicated to joint work on deepening the Amur (the Black Dragon River, as the Chinese call it (p. 35)) near the village of Soyuzny, which is situated between Khabarovsk and Blagoveshchensk. In a brief and accessible form for young readers, it tells about the unique technology of deepening. An example of mutual assistance between Soviet and Chinese workers and the courage of the Chinese icebreaker Ti Teng-fyn.

Traditionally, the magazine published materials dedicated to prominent party figures of the USSR not only as part of an editorial, but also an essay adapted for children. I would like to mention the texts dedicated to specific personalities who left their mark on the history of the CPC: the essay Comrade Qu Qiu-bo and an excerpt from the memoirs of Tao Cheng. M. Mamedov's essay Comrade Qu Qiu-bo tells about a prominent figure of the Communist Party of China, publicist, novelist and literary critic Qu Qiu-bo (real name Qu Shuang) during his visit to the Soviet Union. In an artistic form the author draws a portrait of a Chinese communist who works in the editorial office of the newspaper Chenbao and arrived as its correspondent in 1920 in Moscow "so that he could get acquainted with the life of the young Soviet republic and tell Chinese readers about it" (p. 44). Qiu-bo made a significant contribution to the introduction of Russian and later Soviet literature to the Chinese people. His translations included works by Pushkin, Gogol, Lermontov, Tolstoy, Chekhov, Gorky, Lunacharsky, Bedny, Gladkov, Pavlenko and others.

From the first lines, the author of the essay, Mamedov, creates the atmosphere of late Moscow autumn. As you know, the IV Congress of the Comintern was held in Moscow in the autumn from November 5 to December 5, 1922, in which Qiu-bo took part and what is further discussed in the essay. However, looking ahead, let us pay attention to the indication at the end of the text for 1920. Perhaps the author was referring to the time of Qiu-bo's first appearance in Moscow, since the Second Congress of the Comintern was held in Petrograd and Moscow in the summer of 1920. He draws a portrait of a young journalist, quotes from Qiu-bo's notes: "... Let's leave aside for now the fact that Russia has nothing

to eat, nothing to wear... that it lives in hunger and cold... it is, after all, the first country in the world to have made a socialist revolution...", comparing them with the assessment given by H. G. Wells. Further in the text, the author explains to the young reader, "H. G. Wells looked at Moscow through the eyes of a foreign tourist. Qu Qiu-bo - through the eyes of a friend. He saw many things that escaped the Englishman's gaze, because he looked further than that.

The episode about the golden watch of Qu Qiu-bo is interesting. When the journalist read in the newspaper "the appeal addressed to all citizens to hand over gold things, because the state was experiencing economic difficulties, there were not enough funds to restore the economy", "without hesitation, he took his only jewel to the reception point". The question is natural: where does a poor Chinese journalist get such luxury? It is known that Choi was the eldest child of Qu Shivia, a native of a noble aristocratic family, at the time of the birth of the firstborn, who had fallen into decline. In place of the golden Qiu-bo watch, another watch was presented "in a strict steel case - as a sign of the unity of the peoples of Russia and China. This clock can still be seen today in the Museum of the History of the Chinese Revolution".

Six centrefolds (the largest printed volume in the issue) are occupied by the memoirs of the Chinese communist Tao Cheng, *The Chick from the Eagle's Nest*. This is an excerpt from the autobiographical story *My Family*, published in 1959 in the translation by P. Ustin and S. Frolkin in the series *Mass Worker's Library*. The text of the narrative is richly informative, but thanks to a large number of emotional dialogues and vivid episodes, it is easy and fascinating to read. In fact, it is addressed to the young reader, because Tao Cheng wrote it for her grandchildren, who "want to hear about real people, real deeds...".

What is a children's magazine without a fairy tale? The tradition of children's periodicals before the magazine *Koster* dates back at least two centuries [11]. The magazine presents the fairy tale *The Monkey King*, which originates from folk legends, the main character of which is Sun Wu-kun - the king of the monkey people. The fairy tale is beautifully designed by I. Harkevich with a color illustration on the pasting and feather drawings inside the text. The illustration occupies the left page and together with the text on the right page forms an open book. The presentation of the beloved heroic character on the pages of the magazine naturally weaves into the canvas of the issue, implicitly reinforcing the idea of the people's struggle.

It is difficult to imagine a full-fledged cultural exchange in a children's magazine without folk wisdom, extremely concentrated in proverbs. Some Chinese proverbs (p.21 and p.52) are synonymous with Russian folk proverbs, for example, "A picture is worth a thousand words".

For readers of a country that occupies a huge space, materials about sports have always been an important link of cultural exchange. In this issue, the boundaries were not just expanded, but also unwittingly tied to the traditional culture of Wu-shu. A young reader who has read the fairy tale *The Monkey King* will surely

remember how Wu-kun "commanded all monkeys - both old, young, and small - to do u-shu gymnastics" and will find an explanation here. "U-shu - military art, but this is not a fight. This is only an image of a fight in which athletes compete not in striking, but in the beauty of movements, ingenuity, and memory". The author writes that gymnastics is the most favorite sport in PRC and thousands of people gather every morning in Beijing's Sun Yat-sen Park to exercise "taijiquan", and for those who are younger there is another kind of "houquan" - "monkey exercises".

The magazine *Koster* invariably had poetic pages. The "Chinese" issue is no exception. Poetry is represented by poems by Lu Jiang translated by V. Toropygin (p. 24-25), Luan Ya-ping translated by A. Andreev (p. 36) and Zou Lin-yu translated by A. Andreev (p. 41), as well as poems by Chinese schoolchildren. With the formation of the PRC, children's literature in general, and poetry in particular, became the object of close attention from the government. The new hopes associated with the formation of the republic gave the poets a common theme - the glorification of a new homeland and a new life, the glorification of the party and its leaders. Almost all aspects of life found poetic embodiment in the form of a panegyric (p. 56).

The interaction of cultures is a visible process. Examples of Chinese fine art in a special issue of the magazine *Koster* suggest that Chinese artists often acted as poets, since calligraphy occupied an important place in the painting, which helped the artist to express his thoughts more fully, often in poetic form. The October issue of the magazine *Koster* in 1959 introduces the reader to the art of China. N. Zykov's article *What is Go-hua* tells about traditional Chinese painting, draws attention to its complexity and uniqueness: "every stroke is final: you can't change anything else, you can't fix it". The article is accompanied by a foldout page with drawings by the famous artist, laureate of the International Peace Prize, Qi Bai-shi: *Official*, *Parrot*, *Plum blossom*. Note that all the drawings of Qi Bai-shi are marked with seals (which is not mentioned in the article), the art of creating which was also very important in China: the seal indicated belonging to a person, their prints were used as an author's signature. Sometimes the seals contained poetic lines, aphorisms and well-wishes. The ability to combine the art of an artist, poet, calligrapher and seal cutter was considered the highest skill. It is Qi Bai-shi who owns the words: "I have poetry in the first place, engraving in the Zhuan style in the second, calligraphy in the third, painting in the fourth".

In addition to the color drawings of Qi Bai-shi, the article contains two drawings of Xu Bei-hong *Flying Eagle and Horses*. Like Qi Bai-shi, the artist was a true innovator in the field of go-hua, but his innovative searches were aimed at using the experience of world realistic art and introducing it into national culture. Xu Bei-hong also actively promoted the ideas and methods of Soviet art. The artist was one of the first to introduce young Chinese painters to the techniques of oil painting, taught life-drawing. Like many Chinese painters, Bei-hong was attracted to animalism, but even in this

traditional genre he found new ways of expression, filled the image with a different meaning, not contemplative, but participatory and active. In his works, the energy of the animal world no longer exists by itself; it transmits its active principle to a person. It is enough to look at the drawings presented in the magazine to appreciate what has been introduced. Both the flying eagle and grazing horses are drawn in a deeply realistic way, and the expressiveness and lightness of the linear stroke of go-hua – in the movement of grass, in the silhouettes of animals - speaks about affiliation to tradition, fear of breaking it. The author of the article emphasizes that the main theme of creativity for artists of the PRC "became the everyday life of the great six hundred million people". "The method is old – the content is new. The ancient go-hua is getting younger, the author sums up.

The color pasting with engravings is also interesting. Even during the period of the national liberation movement, this kind of art, which became widespread, was used for propaganda purposes. Under the influence of the ideas of the great October Revolution, a new engraving appeared - the only kind of art addressed directly to the people. The first person who saw the engraving as a tool to educate was Lu Xin, who, together with Qu Qiu-bo, sought to bring culture from his country out of national isolation and to acquaint the people with the best achievements of the world, especially Soviet art. At the initiative of Lu Xin, the skill of the artists-engravers was revived. At his own expense, Lu Xin published albums of reproductions and collections of Soviet prints in China. The significance of the engraving for the new society is indicated by the fact that the Kuomintang authorities were arrested only for belonging to the society of engravers. The engravings created during the PRC period and presented in the magazine can also be called propaganda leaflets aimed at maintaining the party's course of "Combining education with work". The work transformed from punishment into a joyful common cause is the educational mission of these engravings, and the realistic method of image informs the observer-child about his possible involvement and personal significance for the new society.

It is impossible not to mention the role of the Soviet Union in the formation of a new realistic art of the PRC. On July 5, 1956, the "Agreement on Cultural Cooperation" was signed in Moscow. It laid the foundations for further cultural exchange between China and the USSR. In particular, Soviet artists contributed to the development of a new art form for China – oil painting. Professor of the Moscow Art Institute named after V. I. Surikov K. M. Maksimov came to China to teach at the invitation of the Ministry of Culture in 1954. In two years of work, he has trained a large group of young artists. In 1959, the Union of Chinese Artists organized an exhibition by Luo Gongliu of one hundred and fifty paintings, educational works made during his stay at the Leningrad Institute of Painting, Sculpture and Architecture named after I. E. Repin.

3 Conclusion

The conversation about fine art would not be complete if attractive material was not posted, opening up new boundaries of cultural exchange, according to the best tradition of the magazine, involving readers themselves in creativity. At the end of the issue there is a note "Paper Lace" about the folk art of China – the art of paper clippings, which many schoolchildren are also fond of. Such clippings from colored, often red paper, decorate the window frames for the spring festival "Chunze". The note is illustrated with silhouette drawings. These images – a cockerel, a teapot, a bull, a man with a birdcage, a talking couple - are an example of lively, original and amazingly beautiful art. Interestingly, 52 silhouette drawings are placed at the bottom of the page in a reduced scale. It is noteworthy that such a design technique is used only in this "Chinese" issue of the magazine (many years later, in the 21st century, the design in the form of the letter "K" in the lower corners of the pages reappeared in the magazine Koster). The issue ends with instructions for creating a homemade paper lantern in the shape of a fish (such fish lanterns are carried on poles during carnival in China). The publication of a separate issue dedicated to the tenth anniversary of the People's Republic of China is a unique phenomenon, undoubtedly an important milestone not only in the history of the monthly children's magazine Koster, but in the history of Soviet-Chinese cultural ties. The tenth issue of 1959 has not lost its significance today as an example of a high professional integrated approach in cooperation between representatives of the two countries on the pages of one issue. The magazine Koster is still published; magazines addressed to children's audiences are also published in China. In the interests of continuing cultural exchange, it would be an important event to create a joint issue for the 75th anniversary of Russian-Chinese ties.

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