CHAPTER IV

IDEOLOGY IN POST-MAO CHINA

Historical periodisation, generally, takes into account those points of departures where the structural coherency of political institutions breaks down. It acknowledges, in other words, a paradigm shift in the historical progression; a change in the relations between structures of political power, social classes and ideologies. Such developments do not occur abruptly at any particular point in history, except in revolution and coup d'etat. Nevertheless, there had been instances in history which delivered political cataclysm, relatively swiftly, but without being susceptible to those irreconcilable social agencies in conflict. The death of Mao Zedong in 1976 and the subsequent break away of China from its Maoist past was such an instance. The discreteness of this historical process lies in the fact that, notwithstanding the changes in the ideology and policy the political state retained its former structural organization and the language and symbols of legitimation.

In this context the present chapter will be an inquiry into the realm of political in post-Mao China, a terrain which competing CPC factions tried to appropriate. The CPC factions are not simply those groups of leading cadres with identical interests formed primarily for acquiring power; their historical visions are informed by the Chinese social reality and their own experience in revolution. In order to examine these competing perspectives this chapter revisits an important political site in China i.e., the official ideology.

Methodologically this chapter deviates from the standard approach of discussing key documents of various CPC meetings such as the National Congress and Plenary Sessions. Importance has been given to identify those motifs which define the
development of the official ideology. A brief note on the dispensation of political power within the CPC during 1976-78 will throw light on the background for discussion that followed. Unlike the pre-1976 period when the ideology of the CPC was strictly defined and the contestation of the same from without was virtually forbidden, the Party-State in the Post Mao era has displayed some amount of tolerance towards broader intellectual questions. To illustrate this point the debate over humanism and the Asiatic Mode of Production have been documented, albeit, concisely. The thematic organisation has entailed this chapter to break up into seven parts.

A POLITICAL CONFIGURATION IN TRANSITION

On 6 October 1976, a month after Mao Zedong's death, Hua Guofeng, Ye Jianying and Wang Dongxing combined their forces together and arrested the "Gang of Four". The four members of the "Gang" included Politburo members Yao Wenyuan and Jiang Qing, Politburo standing committee member Zhang Chunqiao and Party Vice Chairman Wang Hongwen. However, the arrest of the core leaders of the radical left by the Army unit 8341 i.e., the Praetorian guard of the central committee, commanded by Wang Dongxing, did not bring about any discernible shift in the official ideology of the CPC. On October 8, the central committee, the standing committee of the National People's Congress, the state council and the central military commission issued two joint decisions; first, to build a memorial hall for Mao Zedong's coffin in Beijing and second, to make preparations for the publication of the complete works of Mao Zedong and to publish volume V of the Selected Works.

1 For a detailed discussion, see Keith Forster, "China's Coup of October 1976", Modern China (Newbury Park, California), vol.18, no.3, July 1992, pp.263-303.
As a contribution to the second project Hua Guofeng himself wrote an article entitled *continue the Revolution under the Dictatorship of the Proletariat to the end - a study of volume V of the selected works of Mao Zedong*. It must be noted that at that time the targets of the "continuing the revolution" as maintained by the central committee included not only the "radical left" but Deng Xiaoping as well. Upholding the same political line, Wang Dongxing who was also in charge of ideological matters, distributed a central document *Expose the ‘Gang of Four’, continue the criticism of Deng, and oppose the Rightist Trend of Reversing the Verdicts*. On 7 February 1977, the editorials of the *People's Daily, The Liberation Army Daily*, and the *Red Flag* proclaimed, "Whatever policies Mao had decided, we should resolutely defend: whatever instructions he issued we shall steadfastly obey...."³ In the ensuing power struggle Hua Guofeng faction was criticised for advocating "whateverist" line.

In July 1977, the Third Plenum of the Tenth Central Committee, restored to Deng the powers he had lost following the Tiananmen Square incident in April 1976. His ignominy had lasted for one year and three months. Deng regained his positions as Party Vice Chairman, Vice Premier and the PLA chief of staff. The Eleventh Congress of the CPC held in August 1977. Besides reelecting Hua Guofeng as the Chairman this Congress added two more Vice Chairmen to the Party raising the number to four, they were in order of seniority, Ye Jianying, Deng Xiaoping, Li Xiannian and Wang Dongxing. At this congress Deng did not succeed in strengthening his power within the Party organization and his political position remained marginal. On the other hand the various policies proposed by Hua Guofeng in his political report were a continuation of

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the line adopted by the Tenth Party Congress. And, for one year from the summer 1977, Hua Guofeng commanded the leading role on the Chinese political stage.

POSTHUMOUS CULT AS POLITICAL CAPITAL

As Mao Zedong passed away in 1976, a collective leadership emerged under Hua Guofeng based on a number of difficult compromises. The CPC reformulated its priorities in favour of the economic and technological reorganisation of the nation. The promotion of the natural sciences was seen as the foundation of this new strategy. Nevertheless, this shift cannot be understood as a mere change in the economic policies. It rather indicates, at one level, the beginning of the CPC’s efforts to put an end to the incessant political and social movements which convulsed China during the last decade of the Maoist era. Given the complex configuration of the post-1976 Chinese polity, such anendeavour was, undoubtedly pregnant with a great deal of difficulties. As the new policy unravelled slowly, it became unmistakably clear that there is a consensus within the CPC to abandon the concept of ‘Mass line’ propounded by Mao Zedong. The new leadership cast aside the mass line as an effective political technique for radical social transformations. The continuance of the mass line, they felt, would definitely obstruct the socio-economic development in China.

However, this change in perspective was not introduced abruptly at the rhetorical level. It appears that, the collective leadership arrived at a consensus that the outward forms of propaganda have to maintain a continuity with the Maoist era. Hence, the ideological legitimization of the new socio-economic policies was made mainly by deploying Mao canons. However, the existence of conflicting political factions under the
facade of collective unity did not remove the possibilities of ideological changes in the future.

The personality cult of Mao Zedong was a joint product of China's imperial past and the communist revolution. The origin of this phenomenon can be traced back to the historic long march of 1935-36 during which Mao emerged as a legendary hero. It is an indisputable fact that Mao played a far greater role in shaping the destiny of modern China. Therefore, he occupies a prominent position in the Twentieth Century Chinese history.

All modern revolutions have produced their own heroes and historical paradigms. This would in turn provide an ideological-intellectual sources through which the new state legitimizes its existence. However it is a too familiar pattern for socialist revolutions in particular to create personality cults or supra historical figures with the active involvement of the ideological state apparatus. The Chinese society has been subjected to relentless bombardment of state propaganda replete with the ideas, language and images of Mao Zedong. Its intensity reached absolute saturation point during the mass campaigns of the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution. The popular masses adored the versatile personality of Mao, a national hero, a romantic revolutionary, a brilliant strategist, a poet and a calligrapher. The unbending rebel in Mao captured the imagination of the young Chinese to a great extent. The ideas of Mao became the only credible paradigm, a world-view and the common sense logic for most of the Chinese. The ideological Mao canon was effectively propagated through the media and mass campaigns with its technique of compulsory participation and study. After his death the new CPC leadership realized how tremendous that challenge would be to deal with the enduring cult of Mao and place him at a proper historical context.
Helmut Martin has distinguished Mao's texts at two levels. First, there are the selected writings of Mao Zedong which are the official text of state Maoism chosen for political campaigns and often altered by editors. Second, there is the historical Mao as he appears in his own writings and in the commentaries of eye-witness at particular moments in time. The former function on a distinctly different plane from the Mao texts in more original form. As Helmut Martin points out there exist a tension, at many levels, between these two in the sense that the official ideological Mao canon at times functions independently of him.4

From December 1976 to July 1978 the new leadership published eight individual Mao texts. Both the date of each new publication and the content of those texts, if read juxtaposed with the policy statement of CPC would explain the objectives of the new leadership. For instance, the first individual text, "on the Ten Great Relationships" appeared on Mao Zedong's birthday, 26 December 1976 in People's Daily about two months after the cultural revolutionary left was arrested. The publication coincided with the second National Agricultural Conference which put forth a long term modernization plan for agriculture. This text again figures as the key one in the volume V of Mao's Selected Works published in April 1977. This volume, in effect, down played the radical Mao of the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution. Instead, it highlighted those statement which expressed pragmatic approach to the socialism. Thus Hua Guofeng assigned a new function to the writings of Mao Zedong far separated from the historical importance of any particular text.

The publication of volume V of Mao's *Selected Works* was a literary event of that year. For the collective leadership the compilation of volume V was a complex process. It can hardly be argued that the compilation was based on any fundamentally scientific conception of history. Rather, it reflected the changed political line of the post-Mao Chinese leaders. More precisely, given the political constellation in 1976-77 it would be appropriate to borrow the words of Helmut Martin; "political editing" or 'history as the present projected into the past'.

The editorial collective of the volume V has bluntly criticized the representatives of the radical faction, particularly Jiang Qing, for the destruction that took place during the late Mao period. These radicals, so long supported by Mao were branded as "right wing" revisionists. The condemnation acquired a new political meaning as the volume V included Mao's writings against the opponents of the regime from the time of Hundred Flowers campaign and statements made during the campaign against liberal writers, neo-Confucianist philosophers and bourgeois literary scholars.

It is important to consider the status accorded to central political figures in volume V. Deng Xiaoping, who had been deposed twice, firstly, on the accusation of being a 'capitalist roader' and later, for his alleged involvement in the Tiananmen Square incident in 1976, has been given political respectability. This has been effected through Mao's familiar terms of address as "Comrade Xiaoping", or "our (Party) General Secretary

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5 ibid, p.62.
7 ibid.
8 For example, "Muster our Forces to Repulse the Rightists Wild Attacks" (8 June 1957), ibid, pp.448-50. "Wen Hui Pao's Bourgeois orientation should be criticized" (1 July 1957), ibid, pp.451-56. "Beat Back the Attack of the Bourgeois Rightists" (9 July 1957), pp.457-72.
Comrade Deng Xiaoping". 9 Whereas Liu Shaoqi, the former President of the PRC has not been accorded posthumous rehabilitation. Moreover, he has been condemned as the personification of all evils. Volume V completely negated the fact that Liu has been criticized only after 1960. Through a methodical falsification of history Liu has been portrayed as an enemy of the Party since 1948, 10 a convenient scapegoat for all those mistakes committed collectively by the CPC leaders over three decades.

Hua Guofeng's "whateverist" proclamation in Maoism and the publication of Mao's works, both individually and collectively, were generous contributions to the posthumous cult of Mao. Hua faction's strategy was to use this cult as political capital for its leadership. But that project failed disastrously as it did not receive popular support.

THE BREAKDOWN OF THE MAOIST GRAND THEORY

The foregone discussion has revealed that the official ideology of the CPC maintained its theoretical continuity with Maoism till the middle of 1978. The faction led by Hua Guofeng had an upperhand within the coalition of forces at the Party center. This faction projected itself as the true inheritors of the Maoist legacy. At both the level of ideology and policy this faction advocated the continuance of Mao Zedong's thought with some modifications. But the articulation of the same became problematical as it can easily be identified with the views of the radical left. Hua generously invoked the legacy of Mao Zedong as a means to legitimise his continuance in power. At the same time this exercise carefully maintained its theoretical antagonism towards the radical left. This

9  For example, ibid, pp.319 and 353.
10  ibid.
process primarily involved defining Maoism against the interpretations of the "Gang of Four".

Accordingly the theoretical writings during the immediate post-Mao years were generally characterised by their overwhelming hostility towards the ideological positions of the radical left. The "Gang of Four", as the caricature came to call them, made out to be the source of all negative and incorrect ideas from which originated in nothing but political catastrophes. No serious attempt has been made to locate them in a proper historical perspective. The "Gang of Four" has been subjected to a ferocious political revilement by the official media. A spate of articles and reports published after their arrest were replete with most contemptible political vocabulary employed against the "Gang of Four". These prefixes include a wide range of terms which refer to those villainous characters in the Chinese mythology and the post-liberation politics, such as "demons", "slanderers", "reactionaries", "ultra-rightists" and "counter-revolutionary clique".  

Immediately after the coup de'tat of October 1976 the establishment intellectuals close to Hua Guofeng and other leaders began to engage themselves in a polemic against the ideological 'Vestiges' of the radical left. They selected various themes from the theoretical formulations of the dethroned group and published critical essays on the ideology of the "Gang of Four". On the one hand it aimed at the eradication of the ideological influence of the cultural revolution and on the other it lend theoretical support to the policies of the Hua Guofeng regime. For example, 4 August 1978 issue of the

Peking Review carried an article by People's Daily special commentator, on implementing the principle of each according his work. This concept of distribution under socialism had been criticised by the radical left as the economic base and condition engendering capitalism and the bourgeoisie. The anonymous special commentator dismissed this charge as a "slanderous distortion" of the theories of Karl Marx, V.I. Lenin and Mao Zedong. The article cited Hua Guofeng's report on the work of the Government delivered at the first session of the Fifth National People's Congress which stated "throughout the historical period of socialism, we must uphold the principle's of 'He who does not work, neither shall he eat' and 'from each according to his ability to each according to his work'". According to that article the distribution of consumer goods under socialism, is regulated according to the objective economic laws. To quote:

This principle is at once a logical consequence and a manifestation of socialist public ownership. The system of distribution is not based on man's subjective will, but is determined by a particular form of the ownership of the means of production.

The radical left had challenged the implementation of this principle on the ground that Marx had referred to this in the Critique of Gotha Programme as a 'bourgeois right'. The special commentator explains that Marx used this term because the exchange of commodities under capitalism is exchange of equal values. Whereas the distribution according to work under socialism is exchange of equal amount of labour. However, the essay admits that in both the cases the principle in operation is the same i.e., the exchange of equal amount of labour.

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13 ibid, p.8.
14 ibid, p.9.
As the foregone discussion suggests, the official ideology of the CPC maintained a continuity with its pre-1976 intellectual lineages. Therefore, this chapter shall argue that, it remained within the broad Maoist Problematic. However, by the end of 1978 Mao Zedong thought as a grand theory which was the source of all political, economic and social policies of the CPC, breaks down at the official level. This development owes much to the failure of the CPC to resolve the tension between the Maoist theory and the Chinese socio-economic reality which had been accumulating since 1958. At one level Mao Zedong thought lost its intelligibility in terms of explaining the political-economy of the post-1976 China.

The collapse of the Maoist theory had, in fact, begun in the last decade of the Mao era when political became its overwhelming concern at the cost of all other all serious questions. What Hua Guofeng had inherited was the historical Mao; the national icon of the modern China. That was the main political capital of the Hua faction. The theoretical Mao, without revision, was not adequately equipped to address the Chinese socio-economic realities of the 1970s. Without making any distinction between the two Hua Guofeng proclaimed his ‘whateverist’ faith in Maoism, which curtailed not only his political career but the future of theoretical Mao as well.

The most crucial departure in the ideology of the CPC from the Maoist problematic took place at the third plenary session of the Eleventh central committee in December 1978. But this was not merely an outcome of the factional victory of Deng Xiaoping as many scholars prefer to argue. The socio-economic policies of the CPC underwent considerable changes in parallel with the ascendancy of Deng Xiaoping. The political climate under which the Third Plenum was held has been shaped by a host of factors. The prominent among them was an epistemological debate on the criterion of
truth. Stuart R. Schram has commented that this 1977-78 debate had a greater immediate political impact and played a crucial role in 'preparing the public opinion' for the Third Plenum.

At the centre of this controversy was an article written by Hu Fuming, the Vice-Chairman of the Department of Philosophy at Nanjing University, titled "Practice is the Sole Criterion of Truth" published in Enlightenment Daily on 11 May 1978. The original text underwent numerous revisions by Wu Jiang and Sun Changiang at the central party school in Beijing. The essay mainly argued that, the criterion of truth can only be social practice, the basic tenet of Marxist epistemology is that whether a theory correctly reflects objective reality, and whether it is the truth, can only be tested on the basis of social practice. The essay rejected the sphere of subjective and the sphere of theory as the site of the criterion of Truth. By citing the developments in natural sciences, the essay argued:

The criterion of truth must possess the specific property of linking human thinking to the objective world, otherwise it cannot be used for testing purposes. The social practice of human beings is an activity that transforms the objective world, and one whereby the subjective is manifested in the objective. Practice possesses the specific property of linking thinking and objective existence, and for this reason it is practice, and practice alone, that is able to fulfil the duty of testing the truth.

In the Spring of 1978 the theorists at the central Party school initiated a discussion of the slogan "Practice is the sole criterion of truth". It was immediately developed into a general public debate. The prominent view that evolved out of these numerous

17 ibid, p.32.
newspaper articles and other writings was a criticism of Mao's theories and practices; Michael Schoenhals has remarked that this debate indicated the first time since 1949 that Mao, his ideology and policies had been directly contested from within the political system. A preliminary survey of the 1978-79 Truth-Criterion controversy in China will reveal, despite all its pretensions, that Maoism will gradually be prevented from guiding the policies of the CPC. What is strikingly evident is an attempt to posit a break in the organic relationship between Maoism and the policies of the state. The use of the theoretical categories of Marxist political economy are made primarily for the ideological rationalization of the CPC's policies. Ironically this enterprise was punctured with the absence of the ideology of Marxism.

The debate overwhelmingly approved that practice (experience) is the sole criterion of truth. Practice has two levels of cognitive process i.e., as the source of all knowledge and the site for its testing. The practice referred to here is social practice consists of material production, class struggle and scientific experiments. Michael Dutton and Paul Healy have observed that the knowledge collapses directly back to the realm of social practice where there is no notion of an autonomous level of theoretical practice.

The Truth-Criterion debate which dominated by the intellectuals associated with the reform faction within the CPC, established the empiricist proposition beyond question. Most participants have made use of numerous references by Mao to the


criterion of practice to validate their position. The often quoted text was Mao's 1963 article "Where do Correct Ideas Come From?" Ironically, Mao's explicit reference to class struggle and its role in the criterion of practice had been deleted from the discussion. This in effect had displaced the political as the site of knowledge production. What accompanied this rejection of political was the re-emergence of Stalin's theory of productive forces with the economic as the determinate site of knowledge production.

The tendencies within the post-Mao Chinese Marxism indicate an inversion of Mao's epistemology. All levels of practice brought down to the realm of economics and empiricist epistemology has taken a predominance with experience as its basis. The campaign to promote 'practice' as 'the sole criterion of truth', and such slogans as 'seek truth from facts' testify this aspect.

The debate on epistemology since 1976 have relied heavily on Mao's texts such as 'on Practice' and 'Rectify the Party's Style of Work'. Central to Mao's arguments as outlined in these works was the notion of experience. According to Michael Dutton and Paul Healy the reform faction has appropriated this notion in toto and clearly identifies experience in the real as the basis of knowledge. For instance Li Xuilin, Ding Yelai and Zheng Hangshang have maintained that:

In order to discover the laws of thing, to foresee the extent of their progress, it is necessary to participate personally in practice, to become involved in realising the struggle, to become immersed in the inner nexus of things... Unless one starts with reality, participates in practice, and comes into direct contact with the study of objective phenomena, it is not

20 See Appendix I.
21 ibid, p.44.
possible to discover the laws of things; nor is it possible to make accurate scientific predictions.22

The theory is not the product of thought process but a summing-up and generalization of practical experience. The inversion of Mao's theory of knowledge was effected through the appropriation of Mao's problematic. Lei Zhenwu's article is the best example of such arguments. Lei's attempt to resurrect Mao proved futile but nonetheless he succeeds in appear reminiscent:

We all know that in the shaping of a theory, no matter from what kind of practice or under how correct a guiding ideology, a processing by way of man's brain is always required. The function of such processing through thinking means arriving at the formulation of concepts and theoretical systems through steps as revising and regeneration on the basis of those rich, vivid sensual data derived from practice by absorbing the quintessential and eliminating the coarse, absorbing the true and eliminating the false, speculating from this factor to that factor, and penetrating from the superficial to the profound.23

What Mao had outlined in 'on Practice' is exactly this method; the process of 'leaping' from perceptual knowledge to rational knowledge. However Lei alludes to some process of interaction between perceptual data and the subjects 'standpoint', 'viewpoint' and 'approach'.24 Michael Dutton and Paul Healy level criticism against this proposition. They maintain that this process of interaction between 'direct experience' and the 'summing up and generalization of (previous) practical experience' is not theoretical; but clearly empiricist. This empiricist epistemology, according to them, sees the real as the raw material, the starting point of knowledge production; hence devoid of any conception. To quote:

24 ibid.
It sees the subject abstracting the essence (the quintessential, the true) of the real object, eliminating all that is inessential (the coarse, the false), thus producing knowledge. Knowledge becomes nothing more than the essential part of the real object. Abstract theory, this 'summing-up and generalization', becomes, at the very best, an approximation of reality. Clearly then, there is absolutely no conception, as there was in Marx and Lenin, of theoretical practice in the epistemology of the present Chinese leadership.25

According to Michael Sullivan, the importance of the Third Plenum should be seen at two levels. First, it put to rest Mao's theory of continuing the revolution under socialism. Second, the plenum rehabilitated the line of Eighth Congress of 1956.26 The ideological rehabilitation of these proposition at the level of state policy in 1978, albeit with modification, had serious implications in terms of the historical mission of the CPC. The communique of the Third Plenum announced that 'large scale turbulent class struggle of a mass character have in the main come to an end.'27 Moreover the communique redefined the priorities of the CPC with the effect that party's work should shift to socialist modernization. The basis of this argument was a claim by the CPC that the system of exploitation had been eliminated and that exploiters as social class no longer exist in the Chinese society.28

This view has been further elaborated by Ye Jianying:

We have abolished the exploitation of man by man, transformed the system of private ownership by small producers, set up comprehensive socialist public ownership of the means of production and initially put into practice the principle of 'from each according to his ability to each

25 Dutton and Healy, n.19, p.46.
according to his work', and thus it became possible for the Chinese people... to enter socialist society.  

This argument reduces the notion of socialism into a question of ownership of the means of production. Ye Jianying fails to acknowledge that the transformation of the means of production from private ownership to public will merely be a juridico-political condition for socialism and thus cannot be equated with socialism as such. This approach has left unexamined a wide range of issues closely pertaining to the socialist transition, like, political power, division of labour and the relations of production.

The denunciation of 'class struggle' at the Third Plenum signify three levels of meaning. First, it facilitated the progressive marginalization of Maoist themes from the official ideology. Second, the mass line politics was rejected for what is called stability, discipline and national unity. Third, one sided emphasis on economic in the political economic polarity.

The debate on the nature and scope of the political defined in terms of class struggle in socialist society has taken place against the backdrop of the re-evaluation of Mao's theory of 'continuous revolution'. This formulation has been upheld, temporarily, while its meaning was re-interpreted. Hua Guofeng, being the best known advocate of this line, accepted the need for continued revolution in the superstructure so that it 'will correspond better with the socialist economic base' and for continued revolution in the realm of relations of production so that they "will correspond better with the expanding productive forces".  

He also made passing reference to the notion of newly emerging capitalist forces and bourgeois elements, and of their existence within the party.


Along with the reform faction's ascendancy within the CPC, the emphasis on the political in Chinese socialist theory began to diminish. The new leadership perceived mass political mobilizations as detrimental to the modernization programme. The official pronouncements made its proclivity towards political stability and national unity more explicit. The theme of economic development gained pre-eminence marginalizing all other issues.

Hua Guofeng's perspectives on the question of correspondence between the economic base and the superstructure had been criticized and slowly silenced in the official press. For example, Wu Jiang, attacked Hua, albeit indirectly; 'it is inconceivable that shortly after building its own economic base, our socialist superstructure should, wholly or in great part, be in disharmony with its base.'\textsuperscript{31} While Wu's comments were directed specifically against the 'Gang of Four', his arguments rejected Hua's perceived need for continued revolution in the superstructure. According to Wu, there may be a need for 'readjustment' or 'change' in certain parts of the superstructure\textsuperscript{32} but the implication was that the revolutionary activity should primarily be restricted to the economic, specifically the development of the productive forces.

The sixth plenary session of the Eleventh Central Committee, held in 1981, totally rejected the theory of 'continuous revolution' maintained by Hua Guofeng. The sixth plenum's resolution in a way redefined the concept of socialist transition as an orderly process carried out within the system, not through class confrontation and conflict. Transition to socialism is a question of greatly expanding the productive forces which would automatically lead to the improvement and development of socialist relations of


\textsuperscript{32} ibid.
production and superstructure as well as the elimination of social inequalities.\textsuperscript{33} Technological advancement and the development of the productive forces, thus, became the privileged mechanism through which socialism can be achieved. The promotion of production was itself conceived as a revolutionary process. Ye Jianying has stated this position i.e., defining politics primarily as development of productive forces, modernizing and expanding technology and the promotion of production:

At present, the four modernizations constitute the pivot of our political life. The security of the state, social stability and a better material and cultural life for our people all hinge ultimately on the success of modernization, on the growth of production. Our work in every field must revolve around and serve modernization.\textsuperscript{34}

Maurice Meisner has observed that one of the most striking and persuasive characteristics of Chinese Marxism in the late 1970s is a newly found faith in the existence of objective laws of historical and economic development.\textsuperscript{35} Whereas the Maoist era was characterised by recurring mass movements born out of a voluntaristic faith in the ability of human agency armed with the proper will and consciousness to overcome all material barriers and shape the social reality accordingly. In contrast, the Chinese Marxist theoreticians of the late 1970s viewed history as a natural process governed by immutable laws which operate independently of human will. In a discussion held at the Institute of Philosophical Research of the Chinese Academy of social sciences, on 25 June 1980 a Chinese theoretician has commented that:

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\textbf{34} & Ye Jianying, 29 September 1979, \textit{Beijing Review}, 5 October 1979, p.23. \\
\textbf{35} & Maurice Meisner, \textit{Marxism, Maoism and Utopianism} (Wisconsin, 1982), p.27. \\
\end{tabular}
\end{table}
The laws of development of social history are objective laws which cannot be changed at will. They should be treated the same as the laws of the process of natural history.\textsuperscript{36}

These objective laws which govern social history, it is argued, can be discovered with a scientific accuracy as precise as research in the natural sciences. This theoretical proclivity to equate the laws of nature and the laws of social progress has a positivistic tinge. An article published in \textit{Philosophic research} repeated this gross positivistic reductionism in a more sweeping fashion: 'the development of society is just like the development of the material world and is determined by objective rules.'\textsuperscript{37} The contemporary CPC theoreticians have argued that as in the case of general objective laws whose operations are immutable there are specific economic laws which govern the development of socialist society. Only by discovering these "objective laws of socialist economic development" and pursue policies in accordance with them, can there be a progress in socialist society.

The official theoretical writings repeatedly argued that the laws which determine the course of history cannot be altered by the will of man. And for that matter, even by the subjective will of the Party.\textsuperscript{38} It implies, in other words, that men must recognise the restraints imposed upon them by objective laws of history and must abide by those rules instead of challenging them. The Maoist notion that the "superstructure" might play a decisive role in historical progress is now condemned as a "reactionary theory" propagated by Lin Biao and the "Gang of Four."\textsuperscript{39}

\textsuperscript{36} Cited in ibid, p.218.
\textsuperscript{37} Cited in ibid.
\textsuperscript{38} Meisner, n.35, p.226.
\textsuperscript{39} ibid.
The cultural revolutionary criticism that the CPC has become a new bureaucratic class, continued to remain as a serious theoretical problem for the post-Mao official ideology. On the one hand the cultural revolution battered the concept of a selfless, incorruptible party revolutionaries serving as a vanguard for the masses. The Party's loss of prestige was part of a more general "crisis of confidence". The official Chinese press felt compelled to acknowledge the fractured image of the party and to discuss it openly. The high tide of reform in the early 1980s also marked with retrenchment and growing sense of insecurity among the working class. The argument that the leading party members have become a 'new class' and that basic contradiction in the Chinese society is that between this 'new bureaucratic class' and the people as a whole, had serious theoretical potential to challenge the pretensions of the reform era. Such ideas vigorously propounded by the rebel Red Guard groups in the late 1960s found expressions in the writings of some of the Democracy Movement activists. The official press responded to this theoretical legacy of the radical left with a blanket refutation of the charge, that a new class exist within the CPC. In an article published in China Youth News, Wang Hongchang and Liu Mengyi argued that bureaucratism represents a force alien to the socialist system. According to them the phenomenon of bureaucratism that exist in China is a legacy of feudal despotism of the old era. Another causal factor is the backward economy of China upon which bureaucratism breed itself. Certain defects exist in the economic and cadre management system coupled with backwardness in education failed to perfect democracy and legal system. Hence the persistence and development of bureaucratism:


120
Under socialist system... we cannot immediately get rid of bureaucratism. First, socialist society has managed to emerge from the old society and inevitably embodies the remnants of the old society. The new China has been established and developed on a semi-feudal and semi-colonial basis... the bureaucratism rooted in Chinese officialdom for several thousand years could not possibly have disappeared with the establishment of the socialist system. Like a ghost, it still haunts our political life. Secondly, a backward economy is what bureaucratic relies upon for its existence and as its breeding ground.... Third, owing to certain defects existing in the leadership of the Party and the state and in the economic management system and the cadre system, coupled with the backwardness of our education, science, and technology, we have found it difficult to improve upon and perfect the democratic system and the legal system, thus providing a chance for the existence and development of bureaucratism.41

Wang and Liu do not seem to have made any attempt to examine the Red Guard's criticism in the light of the realities of political power China. Their downright refutation of the view that the socialist political power as it structured in China can produce a new bureaucratic class is representative of those too familiar theoretical practice of the official ideologues under "actually existing socialism". 41

In the context of a paradigmatic shift in the ideology of the CPC since 1978, locating Mao Zedong became an extremely difficult political strategy. Especially when the new socio-economic policies of the regime were largely at variance with Mao Zedong's views on socialism. In 1981, the CPC come out with an authoritative assessment of Mao in the shape of "Resolution on certain questions in the history of our party since the founding of the People's Republic of China" adopted by the Sixth Plenary Session of the Eleventh Central Committee, on 27 June 1981. The CPC leadership had two objectives; to reclaim the legacy of historical Mao which can lend political legitimacy to their leadership and to tame the radical Mao wherethrough make it politically harmless. The Resolution apparently had achieved this twin objectives, with

41 ibid, p.43.
the aid of a theoretical manoeuvre which separated Mao Zedong thought from its author; and defined it as the collective wisdom of the CPC:

Mao Zedong thought is Marxism-Leninism applied and developed in China; it constitutes a correct theory, a body of correct principles and a summary of the experiences that have been confirmed in the practice of the Chinese revolution, a crystallization of the collective wisdom of the Chinese Communist Party. Many outstanding leaders of our party made important contributions to the formation and development of Mao Zedong thought, which are synthesized in the scientific work of comrade Mao Zedong.42

Secondly the resolution posited a break in the political career of Mao; that his contributions to the Chinese revolution till 1957 have been assessed positively. Whereas he has been criticized for committing "left error" after that period.

The official Dengist interpretation of the CPC history has accorded canonical status to the third Plenary Session of 1978. The Resolution proclaimed that the Plenum has resolved the political uncertainties tormenting the Party since October 1976 and began to "correct conscientiously and comprehensively the 'left' errors of the 'Cultural Revolution'."43 Thus, the new line in the official ideology canon has been defined primarily against what is called the 'left effort'. The epistemological core of this canon rest on three postulates; practice is the sole criterion of truth, emancipating the mind by using brains and seeking truth from facts. As corollary of correcting 'left error', the plenum, states the resolution, firmly discarded the slogan "take class struggle as the key link".44 It also made a strategic decision to shift the focus of work to socialist


43 ibid, p.100.

44 ibid.
modernization. With the replacement of the key link by the notions of modernization, development and stability, the de-Maoization of the official ideology completed a full circle.

REINVENTING MARXIST HUMANISM

The Third Plenum brought about a relatively liberal political climate in China. A brief interlude following the ascendancy of Deng Xiaoping has been remarkable for the C.P.C. ideology showing some amount of tolerance with respect to the theoretical debates that took place outside the official Marxist Canon. During this period much has been written particularly in the West about a "crisis of faith" in Marxism in China. The C.P.C. establishments also complained about the general apathy towards Marxism in the society. On the other side of this loosening of interest in Marxism there was a tide of counter intellectual currents: that social Darwinism, religion, and the ideologies of the capitalist West attracted more attention and generated interest among the youth.

It shall be argued that What is called the "crisis of faith" in Marxism was not merely a creature of the Western print media. It has to do more seriously with the prevailing political realities of the popular China. It would be rewarding to probe, briefly, into the factors which produced this crisis of faith in official Marxism in the popular consciousness.

The failure of the Cultural Revolution resulted in a general political disillusionment and cynicism. The political life in China degenerated into an abysmal level during the last years of Mao Zedong's regime. The factional wars fought in the name of socialism inflicted irreparable damage to people's confidence in the official ideology. Recuperating the original vision of Marxism from the over-simplified, straight
jacketed and reductionist Mao Canon become extremely difficult. The stifling political climate under Mao produced its own anti-thesis i.e., the rejection of or indifference to the state Maoism.

Maurice Meisner has observed that, this phenomenon often described as the "crisis of faith" has been accompanied by a less notified, but politically and intellectually significant counter-current, i.e., the revival of faith in Marxism.\textsuperscript{45} The disillusioned Chinese intelligentsia of the Maoist era undertook a detour to the original writings of Marx and Engels. There has also been a growing interest in the entire Western Marxist tradition. The thinkers such as Karl Kautsky, Georg Lukacs, Antonio Gramsci and the scholars associated with Frankfurt School were given particular attention. The Chinese scholars began inquiries into such officially forbidden areas as the writings of young Marx, Marxist humanism, Western Marxist aesthetics, the concept of alienation, the Asiatic mode of production and a wide range of topics in modern Chinese history and philosophy. Maurice Meisner has termed this most intensive and serious era of Marxist scholarship in the history of the People's Republic as the Marxian renaissance.\textsuperscript{46}

It may appear a paradox that the Marxist theory suffered serious distortions as it was 'developed' by the establishment intellectuals of the post-revolutionary state. All ruling Communist Parties or states which zealously profess their adherence to Marxism invariably foreclosed it within the narrow one-dimensionality. Marxism has been invoked, permanently, without examining the incongruities between the political realities and their ideological representations.


\textsuperscript{46} ibid.
In China, Marxism has been defined with certain qualification; that it is intertwined with the theories of Lenin particularly with those of engineering a revolution through a Party organization. This interjunction between the works of Marx and Lenin in which Lenin's theory of Party organization and its revolutionary tasks accorded more importance in turn obscured the relevance of Marxism as a philosophy. The history of all post-revolutionary societies suggests that there exist a tension between the writings of Marx and that of Lenin. This does not necessarily mean that the writings of these thinkers belong to two different intellectual traditions. But the intention is to restore the specificity of their work and to argue that the enrichment of the each is possible only by entering into the freedom of Marxism.

No socialist states formally acknowledge the existence of such a problem. This omission or the refusal to admit it did not prevent those Marxists from exploring the forbidden zones of inquiry. The result was that all socialist states forced themselves to suppress the resurrection of any such debates. This was a strange political battle between the ideas of Karl Marx and the institutions which born out of Marxian inspired revolution.

In conformity with the Leninist reading of Marx, the CPC's ideological construction denied legitimacy to the concept of "humanism". The historical origin of this concept can be traced back to the libertarian ideas of the European bourgeoisie when it confronted the political reaction of Eighteenth century feudalism. The early writings of Karl Marx had recuperated man from the metaphysical traditions of the bourgeois humanism and made him as the central concern of social inquiry. But, this 'humanist problematic' so called, is absent from the works of Marx in the post-1845 period. One of the main concern of the Leninist interpretation of Marx was to restore scientificity to
later's works, in that process cast aside humanism against science. Taking the cue from
Lenin the Chinese communists viewed humanism as an intellectual product of
revisionism. As revisionism acquired more political notoriety in parallel with the
growing revolutionary Zeal of the ruling CPC many intellectuals and their works in the
field of literature and art have been severely criticised. And thus, a political climate was
created under which any attempt to discuss humanism in the positive light will be
tantamount to committing a grave ideological sin. In this context, the late 1970s Chinese
debate on "Alienation of Power" and "Humanism" are important political episodes.

Ru Xin's article, "Is Humanism Revisionism?" merits appreciation as it tries to
restore humanist credentials of Marxism. In the context of Chinese experience Ru Xin
put forward four propositions vis-a-vis the relationship between Marxism and humanism.
1. The separation of humanism from Marxism on the basis of an assumption that they
represent two world outlooks that are absolutely opposed and incompatible with each
other, is theoretically untenable. 2. The concept of humanism is so central to the
Marxist theory. 3. There is a continuity and development of Marx's ideas of humanism
from young Marx to matured Marx. 4. Humanism cannot be treated synonymous with
revisionism.47

Ru Xin substantiates his arguments by citing abundant textual evidence from the
writing of Karl Marx. His article rediscovers the centrality of man in the works of
Marx by a thematical reconstruction. He cites Marx's criticism of capitalist society for
its essentially anti-human character in Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844
in which Marx states: "The devaluation of the world of men is in direct proportion to the

47 Ru Xin, "Is Humanism Revisionism?", in Su Shaozhi et al, eds., Marxism in
China (Nottingham, 1983), pp.78-94.
increasing value of the world of things.\textsuperscript{48} The assertion in \textit{The German Ideology} that the abolition of private property presupposes the free development of individuals. The imagined role of the proletariat in the \textit{Communist Manifesto} to make itself the ruling class, sweep away the old conditions of production thus eliminate the source of class antagonism where "we shall have an association, in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all".\textsuperscript{49} The humanist vision in Engel's \textit{Anti-Duhring}, a text which has the full approval Marx about the status of man in the future society where "humanity leap from the realm of necessity into the realm of freedom."\textsuperscript{50}

An anthology of controversial writings on alienation and humanism entitled \textit{Man Is the Starting Point of Marxism} was published in Beijing in 1981. This collection, edited by the philosopher and journalist Wang Ruoshui, included two articles by an obscure associate professor of philosophy and former "bourgeois rightist" from Lanzhou University by the name of Gao Ertai. In 1983, a Central Party Circular criticized Wang and Gao by name for arguing that alienation is no less common under socialism than under capitalism, and that humanism transcends class interests. But in the wake of the CPC centre's denunciation came growing popular recognition of Gao's intellectual status. "An In-Depth Examination of Alienation" is one of the most political and intellectually demanding critique of Chinese socialism in general and the Cultural Revolution in particular.

\textsuperscript{48} ibid, p.82.  
\textsuperscript{49} ibid, p.88.  
\textsuperscript{50} ibid.
Theoretically Gao is here informed by a close reading of Marx's earlier works. The principal targets of Gao's criticism are the perpetuators of the Cultural Revolution lumped together as "the Lin Biao, Jiang Qing Crowd." They, argues Gao, assumed a feudal-like posture to criticize capitalism and directly forced constant sacrifices from the population which turned everyone into an instrument of exploitation and arbitrary manipulation. As a result, people's labour assumed the contrary attributes as an object that went unrewarded. To quote:

Throughout the Lin and Jiang era, people were deprived of equitable pay for seventeen or eighteen hours of arduous labor per day.... With their innermost beings split and estranged from themselves (i.e., alienation), people contributed not only all their labour, but also their total selves to Lin Biao and Jian Qing. The greater their labour, the larger became the world created by their own hands, from which they were estranged and alienated, and the more barren became their inner world, in which fewer and fewer things belonged to themselves.51

Gao has pointed out that the exploitation of labour and enslavement of the Cultural Revolution era, totally destroyed people's ability to appreciate beauty, morality and all connection with the outside world. The spiritual side of individuals was separated from society and hence, they became machines whose only ability was to follow instructions.52 Gao also argued that in order to perpetuate their individual rule Lin Biao and Jiang Qing attempted to restore the political fetishism that existed under feudalism. They claimed that only by "destroying selfishness" the public interest can be established. And sacrifice was declared as the highest virtue. Gao has commented that, "The most sublime passions and vulgar instincts of humanity were awakened and


52 ibid, p.8.
mobilized to promote all sorts of sacrifice, from bloody battles involving fatalities to the silent and never-ending arduous labour that yielded neither reward nor consolations."

THE DEBATE ON ASIATIC MODE OF PRODUCTION:
IDEOLOGY AND HISTORIOGRAPHY

In the Spring of 1980, the dogmatists in the military got organized with like-minded elements in the Party to launch an attack on the waves of reforms that were fast approaching the cities. The slogan to be deployed for this purpose was; "Promote Proletarian Ideology and Eliminate Bourgeois Ideas." The most important figures in this campaign were Hu Qiaomu and Wei Guoqing. On 1 April 1980 Hu Qiaomu launched his first diatribe against what appeared to him as liberal trend in cultural and ideological field. While participating in a discussion at central propaganda department forum Hu forcefully argued that:

The problem now is to launch an attack on liberalism. We must show a militant spirit (Jingongde Jingshen). Propaganda constitutes a battlefront. The Propaganda Department must behave like a police to ferret out the targets for attack. For example, I am personally acquainted with all sorts of bad movies, foreign literature, publishing, and music, but the Propaganda Department has to go out and find these targets. As soon as they have found them, they have to attack them. I was shocked to discover that a certain publishing house is in the process of issuing the Collected Essays of Hu Shi. Why do this? I firmly oppose it and I am ready to wage a war without mercy! This kind of a thing, like the publication of Gone with the Wind or detective stories, shows that the ideological front must establish whether it's Marxism or liberalism that guides us.

On 18 April 1980, at the All Military Conference on political work that he chaired, Wei Guoqing put forth the slogan, "Promote Proletarian Ideology and Eliminate

53 Hu Shi was a liberal, intensely anti-Communist intellectual in the May Fourth period.

Bourgeois Ideas. These vehement attacks on "bourgeois/liberal" ideology by important figures in military and the party aroused strong reaction across the PRC. It created an impression within the Chinese society that yet another campaign for cultural and ideological monocracy is in the offing. But, according to Ruan Ming, a personal intervention by veteran party leader Li Weihan who addressed directly to Deng Xiaoping arrested the emerging movement for ideological orthodoxy. Ruan Ming reports that, Li persuaded Deng Xiaopin to drop the slogan to "Promote Proletarian Ideology and eliminate Bourgeois Ideas" and directed himself, instead to the reform of the political system in line with the 1978 Third Plenum. Following his talk with Li Weihan, on 31 May 1980, Deng gave an important speech which addressed three major themes; rural politics, the elimination of the influence of feudalism, and the problems of the international communist movement. The main focus of the speech was the second subject, that of feudalism.

Deng agreed with Lei Weinhan that the main task on the ideological front is not to go on criticizing bourgeois ideas, but instead, the elimination of the influence of feudalism. To quote:

... Feudalism is a system anchored in the life of the society and close to the masses. Its influence is considerable, even in the bottom of the Party. It should not be underestimated.

By its victory, the democratic revolution has eliminated the system of exploitation. But the anti-feudal mission has not been fully accomplished.

Neither Mao, nor Lui Shaoqi, nor Zhou Enlai completed it. Our people and our Party have been influenced quite severely by the plague of feudalism, because we have never really considered its elimination as one of main tasks.

55 ibid, p.78.

56 "Draft Record of Deng Xiaoping's May 31, 1980, Speech", CCP Propaganda Department Reprint. See ibid, p.79.
After having pondered over the subject of feudal influence in such a forthright way Deng opened another front of attack against patriarchal system which, according to him, has severely disturbed normal party life. Following Deng's speech the Politburo standing committee convened particularly to discuss the issue of eliminating the issue of feudalism.

As for the concept of "feudalism" it is certainly vague, especially in view of the differences between Chinese and western feudal societies. Ruan Ming maintains that when one speaks of Chinese feudalism, one is referring to an imperial autocratic system that goes back to the time of Qin Shihuang in the third century B.C. and ideological despotism of both thought and culture. This combination of the traditional despotic system of great centralized feudal empire and the Stalinist type of communist totalitarian system, constitute the particular political and cultural characteristics of the empire of Mao Zedong, especially after the Korean war in 1950. As he puts it: "One can go back to the expression of Mao himself, 'Marx plus Qin Shihuang', but it would be more appropriate to speak of 'Stalin plus Qin Shihuang'."57

The historiographical debates in China have never been strictly academic. This is not to suggest that academic inquiries are value neutral. But in the case of China, all major political conflicts have provoked debates on historiographical issues. The 1978-82 debate on "feudal despotism" as an ideology of culture and political practice merits serious academic security.58 At one level it attempts to reveal the striking similarities between the Maoist political system and the feudal despotic rule of the imperial China.

57 ibid, p.80.

In fact that defines its contemporary political relevance. What has been discussed below is an equally important concern of the controversy i.e., the Marxist debate on Asiatic mode of Production (hereafter AMP).

According the orthodox reading of Marx's historical writings, as it happened both in the former Soviet Union and in China, only three pre-capitalist modes of production existed in all societies. These were the primitive communal, ancient (slave) and feudal mode. But in the 'Preface' to his *critique of Political Economy* Marx explicitly listed AMP as one of the four pre-capitalist modes: "In broad outlines Asiatic, Ancient, feudal, and modern bourgeois modes of production can be designated as progressive epochs in the economic formation of society." 59

With the publication of *Grundisse* in 1957-58, the concept of AMP rose to prominence in the Marxist historiographical writings. The AMP as defined by Marx in *Grundisse* had the following characteristics:

1. Lack of private ownership of land.
2. Isolated, self-sufficient village communities in which agriculture is mixed with handicraft and commodity production.
3. A centralised, despotic state as a sole land owner based on combining ground rent and tax (or alternatively, state as marking real communal ownership of land) and as unifier or isolated communities (whether necessary and real or mythical and parasitical). Thus, the state appearing as a direct instrument of exploitation or a ruling class in itself.

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4. The state carrying out large-scale irrigation and other hydraulic and public works projects (again, whether necessary or only taking credit for work of lower communities).

5. The stagnation of essentially administrative, rentier cities.

6. A cyclical, stagnant development of AMP societies.60

The later works of Marx and Engels paid little attention to the AMP. Engels had not even mentioned AMP in his *The Origins of Family, Private Property and the State* (1884). After Georg Plekhanov raised the 'spectre' of 'Asiatic restoration' in Russia as a response to Lenin's 1906 proposals for land nationalisation, the first debate on AMP was silenced by Stalin in 1931. His 1938 essay *Dialectical and Historical Materialism* rejected AMP as an un-Marxist concept. The second debate on AMP began in the late 1950s with Karl Wittfogel's *Oriental Despotism* (1957): Wittfogel claimed to have found a basic similarity between ancient hydraulic societies, especially in Russia and in China, and modern Communist 'totalitarianism.' Such similarities were mostly based on both systems use of total terror as a means to support the domination of a bureaucratic ruling class over a society with little or no intervening private propertied class or institutions. The centralised state in both systems was based on huge irrigation and other public works projects.

The concept of AMP acquired political sensitivity primarily because its anti-communist use in the writings of Karl Wittfogel. He argued that Marx and Engels had 'sinned against science' when they dropped the AMP in their polemic with the anarchists of the nineteenth century. Because, Wittfogel contended that, Marx and Engels preferred

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to evade the anarchist criticism that a Marxist "managerial state" would produce, inescapably, a bureaucratic despotism.\textsuperscript{61} The obvious resemblance of AMP and Marxist-Leninist regimes is revealed to many democratic Marxist intellectuals, as they attempted 'recapture' the AMP concept from Wittfogel's anti-Communist use of it. Alwin Gouldner had pointed out that, the AMP may demonstrate a basic anomaly in Marxist theory of state. That is the AMP, "far from being depended on classes controlling the dominant means of production, the state itself controls these and other classes and depended on it."\textsuperscript{62} Hence the Marxist historians who uses the AMP implicitly raises the possibility that the managers of a Leninist Party state could dominate and exploit directly as a bureaucratic class.

Ernest Gellner has argued that AMP contradicts both state socialism as the solution for the evil of exploitation and the Marxist expectation that the state will disappear with the end of class antagonism. By eliminating the prior universal evil of economic exploitation and class domination, it follows that the idea of despotism in the AMP also "cannot be exercised by the canonical methods of that orthodoxy specifies." The AMP contradicts the fundamental premise of Marxism. To quote Gellner:

\begin{quote}
... There is indeed no room for the AMP in a Marxism that requires the state to be endogenously generated by class conflict, nor in one that is to give use faith in the state's essential disappearance under conditions of classlessness. In other words, the very notion of the AMP contradicts both the story of the Fall and the hope of salvation.\textsuperscript{63}
\end{quote}

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\textsuperscript{62} Cited in Rapp, n.58, p.719.

\end{flushright}
The question of AMP has become politically sensitive whenever it was raised. The *Grundrisse* was published in Chinese in 1979 as a part of volume 46 of the collected works of Marx and Engels. The publication of *Grundrisse*, the single most important text on the subject, has relegtimated the concept of AMP and was made available for use by dissident intellectuals in China. The AMP debate resurrected in China during the late 1970s at a time when the intellectual tide over this issue has almost been died down in the former Soviet union, Eastern Europe and the West.

An open political deployment of this concept was made by the Democracy Wall activists, albeit in passing, in 1980. Liu Xiling, a 1950s critique of Mao and the Chinese Party state, wrote a letter of protest to Deng Xiaoping, after her release from prison, in which she mentioned the legacy of the AMP for the despotism of the Maoist era. She wrote:

Feudalist follies came one after another: personality cults for leading high officials, deification, patriarchy, one man's dictatorship, prerogatives and hierarchy, suppression of political dissidents and ideological culprits, the policy of keeping the people in ignorance, literacy inquisitions a news blockade, extended classification, repression of political freedom of expression, publication, association, and assembly, repression of religious faiths and of emotional love and matrimonial relations, no protection of human rights mercenary marriage in veiled form, and marriage between people of equal social status. There is no equality among citizens politically or before the law.... Bureaucratism, sectarianism, autocratic dictatorship, absolute despotism... the utter lawlessness of arbitrary physical chastising, house breaking, and sacking; disruption of the legal system and institutions; book-burning and scholar interring; hostility toward literacy and the mad persecutions against intellectuals - are not these malpractice, evils, and expressions of sinister temperament falling under the category of feudalism? Are they not the necessary products of the thousand-year-old Chinese feudalistic economic and political system.64

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The articles published in the journal *Historical Studies* represented mainly the traditional Stalinist-inspired perspectives. The only academic 'opposition' figure who has given space in the journal was Wu Dakun. Nevertheless, his article did not justify the Marxist use of the AMP, except by implications, but denounced Wittfogel's concept of "Oriental despotism". For the most part, from 1982 to 1986, the AMP was only mentioned in its Stalinist or neo-Stalinist guise. The debate ended abruptly with the beginning of the conservative intellectual tide linked to Hu Qiaomu and Deng Liqun that culminated in the anti-spiritual pollution campaign of 1983. According to John A. Rapp the dominant school of thought in the debate on AMP in China were the conservative with whom majority of historians sided and the reformists who were in a minority. The conservative view was, in the main, an articulation of Stalinist universal unilinear paradigm which explained the historical development of all societies. Although the conservatives maintained diverse views, their arguments were organised together a broad consensus that AMP represents a variation of an earlier pre-capitalist mode of production beyond which China had progressed long ago.

The Stalinist unilinear theory was elaborated by Lin Ganquan in his article, "The AMP and Ancient Chinese Society: A Criticism of Umberto Melotti's Distortion of Chinese History" in his *Marxism and the Third World*. Here Lin argues that Marx and Engels in their early writings developed the concept of AMP primarily as an economic category within the primitive mode. And they abandoned the AMP thesis after reading Lewis Morgan's work on primitive society and after studying the survival of primitive

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65 Rapp, n.58, p 722.
communal forms in Russia. Since then Marx and Engels spoke of "Asiatic forms" as a transitional category of class society between the primitive and slave modes of production. In the light of Melotti's writing on the subject John A. Rapp examines Lin's views:

Though Lin recognises that primitive communal forms linked to "Asiatic forms" did survive for a longer period in China and Russia than in the west, he insists that any link of AMP to China ended with the rise of private landlords at the end of Western Zhou dynasty and the beginning of the centralized Qin (221-206 B.C.) and former Han (202 B.C.-9 A.D.) dynasties. Thus he takes advantage of Melotti's failure to distinguish between the decentralized, diffused political power under the late Western Zhou and the highly centralized bureaucratic empires of later dynasties, thereby dismissing any attempts of Chinese historians to apply the AMP and its legacy of despotism to the recent imperial epoch.

John A. Rapp has observed that the Chinese opposition to the rigid Stalinist view of unilinear progression had a fractured theoretical consensus on multilinearity and state autonomy.

Wu Dakun, like others in the multilinear school attempts to retain a link to unilinear scheme. He achieved this by dividing the AMP into two stages, ancient oriental society (thus linked to slavery) and the Asiatic feudal (fengjian) system:

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67 Rapp, n.58, p.722.

68 ibid, p. 725.

69 Wu Dakun clarifies the reason why the Chinese historians prefer the phonetic transliteration of fengjian to the customary translation 'feudal'. Because, although the term fengjian is usually translated into "feudal", Chinese fengjian-ism is not the equivalent of feudalism in English, for actually the latter refers to what was described by Marx as the Germanic form of property in Western Europe while the former refers to the advanced stage of what was described by Marx as the Asiatic form of property.
... not all the oriental states of the Bronze Age underwent timely, corresponding changes when new productive forces and new production relations had emerged in society. Obviously, after they had entered the Iron Age, such oriental states of the Bronze Age as ancient Egypt and those in Mesopotamia were conquered by others before they could conduct any reforms. China was, therefore, truly a rare example in world history, for, as an ancient oriental state of the Bronze Age, it went through corresponding changes after entering the Iron Age and then became a despotic *fengjian* state of the Asiatic type.  

By locating these dimensions Wu claims legitimacy for his version of the AMP in Mao Zedong's thought. China's *fengjian* past finds recurring references so frequently in Mao's writings. Wu reminds us that Mao had always emphasised the patriarchal clan authority that led to a Chinese pattern of familial exploitation on top of class exploitation:

For another thing, the patriarchal system, which existed throughout Chinese *fengjian* society, was also inherited from and developed out of patriarchy in ancient times. Such close integration of *fengjian*-ism in Western Europe. Comrade Mao Zedong paid great attention to this point. He called it clan authority, which was confined with the political authority, the religious authority and the authority of the husband as the "embodiment of the whole feudal (*fengjian*) patriarchal system and ideology" as "the four thick ropes binding the Chinese people, particularly the peasants."  

Wu's essays remains as the most compelling scholarly work on the subject emerged during the debate. However, as it happens always in China all academic inquiries into history will in a way reflect the intricacies of contemporary political realities. John A. Rapp comments succinctly on the politics of Wu's historiography of China:

By dividing the AMP into two stages, Wu is also able to deny the characteristics of "stagnation" after ascribed to AMP societies. Thus he remains loyal to the notion of a progressive Chinese revolution and avoids

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70 Wu Dakun, "The Asiatic Mode of Production in History as Viewed by Political Economy in Its Broad Sense", in Su Shaoshi et al, eds., n.47, p.67.
71 Ibid, p.70.
THE CHINESE CHARACTERISTICS REINVOKED

As the economic strategies of the post-1978 period gradually shifted away from the original vision of socialist construction, the theoretical justification of such policies became increasingly problematical. The incongruity between the policies of encouraging private commodity production and the declared objective of socialism was strikingly evident. The CPC made strenuous attempts to explain these incompatibility in terms of an invented theory of socialism which made indiscreet revision in the concept of socialism. The most important component of this theoretical invention was a one dimensional emphasis on what is called the "Chinese characteristics" of socialism. Although this formulation was not a discovery of the ideologues of Deng Xiaoping the elevation of the same as the central conceptual category was a post-1978 phenomenon. The history of this notion can be traced back to 1927 when Mao Zedong made a call for the "sinification" of Marxism. The Maoist theory maintained that the application of Marxism must take into account the concrete national peculiarities of China. The objective was to prevent a mechanical reading of Marx in the context of the Chinese revolution. The crucial point to be noted here is that the ideology of Marxism functioned as a theoretical qualifier of "Chinese characteristics". Mao was strictly discriminate in his approach to this problem. After 1949 revolution, the subject of Chinese characteristics, had a relatively insignificant countenance in the official ideological pronouncements.

72 Rapp, n.58, p.726.
The socio-economic programmes of the CPC under the leadership of Deng Xiaoping reinvoked the concept of Chinese characteristics of socialism, but for a different purpose. The ideological underpinnings of the recent use of the term need to be examined critically. In the post 1978 formulation, socialism has no theoretical bearing upon the national characteristics of China. On the contrary an uncritical notion of the Chinese characteristics qualifies, the economic strategies of the CPC.

Charles Burton has noted the difficulties involved in defining what China’s political elite’s call "socialism with Chinese characteristics" a formulation which forms the core of the official ideology of CPC since 1982. However clear statements about the connotations of this form of "socialism" in the Chinese press and theoretical journals remain elusive. According to a commentary in People’s Daily, adoption of this formulation as a "guiding principle" is "firm and unshakable" and certain to succeed. However, as regards to the concrete implementation of this programme the paper informs us that it is to be on the basis of "take one step and then decide on the next step." This ambiguity on the true of socialism is well evident in the statement of Hu Yaobang. In an article written to commemorate the ninety-eighth anniversary of the birth of Mao Zedong he maintains that:

Some comrades ask: can you give us a standard ready answer to the question of what socialism with Chinese characteristics is all about? To that we say, we don't have any preconceived ready answer, and it is not likely that we would. We can only increase our knowledge of this by continuous practice under the direction of correct theory... Practice is a great school. Let us develop the revolutionary style of daring to expose

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74 Cited in ibid.
by practice, and exert our efforts in scaling the new heights of Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong thought.\textsuperscript{75}

For a more elaborated articulation of the subject one may justifiably presume that the central Party school is the most authentic source. But the theoretical works of the school do not explain as to what would be the ideology of "Building socialism with Chinese characteristics". In terms of conceptual clarity these works do not offer any explanation beyond the literal meaning of the formulation. For example, the two relevant passages (pp.1&2) quoted below are representatives of such works.

p.1 By Chinese characteristics, we mean that our socialist system should show various characteristics and advantages which derive from the combination of the universal truth of Marxism and the actual conditions of China, and we do not mean that these Chinese characteristics must be unique and distinct from the characteristics of other countries. The key issue of building socialism with Chinese characteristics is to "go our own way". History has proved that socialism does not exist in a uniform mould and cannot be built from a single fixed mould. Conditions of various countries differ in thousands of ways. In the matter of socialist construction, each country should proceed from its own conditions and explore and select the socialist road that is suited to its conditions and characteristics.\textsuperscript{76}

p.2 The socialist system with Chinese characteristics should show the generality of socialism as well as the peculiarity of China's national conditions, so it should be a unity of generality and peculiarity. The term 'national conditions' has wide connotations. It refers to a country's population, land, resources, the level of economic and cultural development, its social and state system, and its national traditions.\textsuperscript{77}

The Chinese characteristics was defined against what is known as the "Western".

In an aptly titled article, "Chinese-style socialism misjudged", Tong Gang criticised the Western "misunderstanding" of the Chinese socialism. In his critique of a New York

\textsuperscript{75} Cited in ibid, p.436.

\textsuperscript{76} "Building socialism with Chinese Characteristics", compilation Group of the scientific socialism Teaching and Research office of the Central Party school, \textit{Foreign Broadcast Information Service}, 26 September 1984, p.38.

\textsuperscript{77} ibid.
Times editorial commenting on China's economic reforms as a departure from Marxist ideology, Tong Gang claims that what is happening in China is formation of a unique brand of socialism. He explained that:

A socialist economy is a planned economy and today China recognizes that the best results come from a planned market-oriented economy. To invigorate the economy, China must put life into the market. But westerners tend to think of the market as something peculiar to a capitalist economy. This is hardly the case. A market economy must exist both capitalist and socialist societies.  

The CPC redefined its own programmes of "building socialism" by accommodating many aspects of capitalist economic practices into China's economy. However the official ideology of the Party argued that the changes that have been introduced into the Chinese economy are socialist in nature. A spate of articles appeared in the CPC's ideological journal Red Flag made new theoretical innovations in the concept of socialism. The main feature of these theoretical writings was the overwhelming emphasis on the "Chinese characteristics" of building socialism. The economic theory of socialism put forward by the CPC defined socialism as a planned commodity economy. The ideologues of this formulation proclaimed that their proposition represents an important development in the economic theories of socialism. But a close examination of the Chinese economy under the reform era will reveal China's departure from the socialist path. 

As a result of the new economic policies the ownership patterns in China have been diversified progressively. Along with the socialist and collective ownership, there emerged individual and private ownership. Liu Shibei argues that the diversified character of the structure of ownership pattern illustrates corresponding nature of interest

78 Tong Gang, "Chinese-Style Socialism Misjudged", in Burns and Rosen, eds., n.40, p.37.
relations. This is tantamount to acknowledge that the Chinese society of the reform era is in the process of producing different social strata whose interests are incompatible with one another. Liu Shibei further elucidates what is called the socialist commodity economy which shares many theoretical assumptions with bourgeois economic theory. According to him the diversification of the system of ownership and the corresponding changes in the interest relations:

... determines that man's mutual exchange activities should be based on equal value, which in turn, determines that the products are objects of value, that is, are commodities. At the same time, an enterprise as the basic unit in socialist production is a relatively independent commodity producer.

Thus, Liu presents commodity production as a special feature of Post-1978 Chinese socialism. The operation of the commodity economy is controlled and regulated by a market mechanism which determines the value of commodity. A *Red Flag* article while attempting to elucidate this formulation took exception to conventional economic theories on the ground that they locate commodity production antithetical to socialism. To quote:

Traditional economic theories have always placed socialist planned economy and commodity economy in opposition and taken the law of value as an alien force. On the basis of this theory, many socialist countries have set up an economic management structure which is highly centralised, relies mainly on administrative controls and rejects the use of commodity monetary relations. For a long period, this has even been considered as the only workable form of a socialist economy. However, though several decades of actual practice, people have increasingly felt that this management structure does not fully comply with the objective laws of socialist economic development, has various drawbacks as specially and clearly manifested in the entirety of socio-economic activities.

80 ibid, p.70.
lacking life and vitality, and is responsible for low and economic results.\textsuperscript{81}

The article maintained that it is necessary to reform the centralised economic structure. The main content of such reforms is the ability to fully utilise commodity monetary relationships and market mechanism so as to improve the economic organization and management.

\textbf{THE CANONIZATION OF DENG XIAOPING THOUGHT}

The ideology of the CPC is comprised of two analytical components. "Theory" and "thought". Theory refers to what is termed as the "universal truth" of Marxism-Leninism which provide China with its \textit{Weltanschauung}. The interpretations and application of "theory" to the Chinese conditions is called "thoughts". Accordingly "thought" enables the translation of "theory" into a concrete programme.\textsuperscript{82} Needless to mention, the ideas of Mao Zedong were accorded with the status of "thought" in the ideological formulation of the CPC.

The ideas of Deng Xiaoping and their programmatic implementation were catalyst in deviating China from the socialist path. From 1978 onwards the reformist ideas of Deng have been the guiding source for the CPC. At the initial stage the CPC's theoretical literature did not identify those ideas as "thought". Instead they were referred to as the "line", or the "reformist thought".\textsuperscript{83} However, it assumed the status of

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{81} "Reform Must Meet the Need to Develop the Socialist Commodity Economy", \textit{Foreign Broadcast Information Service}, 3 July 1986, p.66.
\item \textsuperscript{82} Franz Schurmann, \textit{Ideology and Organization in Communist China} (Berkeley, 1966), pp.23, 24.
\item \textsuperscript{83} For example, "'Deng Xiaoping Line' See, Victory for Reformers", \textit{Foreign Broadcast Information Service}, 18 February 1992, p.27.
\end{itemize}
thought, theoretically equal to that of Mao Zedong, during the early 1990s. Premier Li Peng was the first PRC official to publicly employ the expression "Deng Xiaoping Thought", in a conversation with the Prime Minister of Holland in 1992. The Fourteenth congress of the CPC held in October 1992 decided to inscribe "Deng Xiaoping thought" into both its work report as well as the revised constitution of the CPC.

Contrary to the repeated admonition against the personality cult of Mao Zedong, the CPC leaders began to give lavish public accolades to Deng Xiaoping. During the late 1970s and early 1980s the official media had launched a series of campaigns criticising the phenomenon of Mao cult. Deng Xiaoping himself had given a call to "emancipate mind" from the clutches of individual worship. A section of the CPC's theoretical circle had squarely blamed the Chinese peasantry and the small scale production as the causal agents which help to promote the cult of personality. After having established the primacy of immutable objective laws in history against the subjective will of the individual leader the official media turned volte-face by describing Deng as a "history-making greatman" and a "warm spring breeze blowing across the great land of China". The CPC General Secretary Jiang Zemin in his report to the Fourteenth Party Congress called Deng "the chief engineer of the reform and modernization of Chinese socialism". All across China the official media trumpeted that Deng Xiaoping thought as the guiding spirit of socialism. Huge billboards of Deng Xiaoping with the caption of "Advance along the road of socialism with Chinese characteristics" sprang at many places in Beijing and other cities. There were also a documentary film, books and tapes on the biography of Deng Xiaoping, replete with those inflated language only to be found in the literary genre of eulogy.

The elevation of Deng to yet a higher plane occurred in 1993 when his ideas have been accorded the status of "theory". In a speech at the 13th National Congress of the Chinese Communist Youth League, standing committee member Hu Jintao characterised Deng's collection of ideas on "building socialism with Chinese characteristics" as "theory" that the union of Marxism and the concrete realities of China. He maintained that it was the "Marxism of contemporary China an effective ideological guidance for us to accomplish our new historical mission,... young people should seriously study and master the theory." By implication Deng's ideas are no longer "thoughts", they have attained the status of "theory" previously accorded only to Marxism-Leninism.

In November 1993, the third volume of Deng's Selected Works has been published. The CPC made use of this occasion for a nationwide campaign to "conscientiously study" his ideas. The scope and method of this campaign were reminiscent of the past ones that exalted Mao Zedong. In October 1993, Lui Huaqing and Zhang Zhen, Vice Chairman of central military Affairs Commission have opined that Deng's theory of building "socialism with Chinese characteristics" was the "successor and developer of Mao Zedong thought." Moving a step further Party elder Bo Yebo stated that "Deng found the road towards building socialism with Chinese characteristics which Mao Zedong tried in vein to find back then."

Deng Xiaoping's ideas had played very prominent role in shaping the destiny of the post-Mao China. It had practically become the official canon of the PRC. What is referred as Deng Xiaoping thought/theory underlie the economic reforms which is underway over the last two decades in China. In China field, Deng's thought define a  

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85 Foreign Broadcasting Information Service, 6 May 1993, p.17.
central concern whose understanding is essential in any academic inquiry into the Post-Mao China. What follows below is an examination of Deng's views and an attempt to locate the political Deng in relation to the Chinese revolution.

Maria Hsia Chang argues that Deng successfully transformed Marxism-Leninism into a developmental nationalist ideology by returning to the fundamental precepts of classical Marxism. Hsia Chang links the ideas of Deng to the Matossian theory of delayed industrialization. One of the most important element in "Deng's ideology of delayed industrialization" is the redefinition of the historic mission of the CPC. In contrast to the earlier emphasis on an egalitarian society, as its future goal, Deng identified the historical mission of the twentieth century Chinese revolutions, including that of 1949, as the economic development of China. He maintained that the fundamental purpose of the Chinese revolution led by the CPC was the elimination of poverty through the "emancipation of the productive forces".

In his opinion, from 1957 until the death of Mao Zedong in 1976, the CPC was not "able" to figure out what socialism is and how to build it and thus made "a lot of mistakes". With an explicit reference to Mao Zedong he argued that these mistakes had its origin in the ideas and policies of the "left" which "plagued" China for two decades. As a result the Chinese economic development suffered serious setbacks. Deng's critical comments read as follows:

Many strange things happened in those days.... People were told that they should be content with poverty and backwardness and that it was better to be poor under socialism and communism than to be rich under capitalism. That was the sort of rubbish peddled by the Gang of Four. There is no

such thing as socialism and communism with poverty... According to Marxism, communist society is a society in which there is overwhelming material abundance. Socialism is the first stage of communism it means expanding the productive forces....

The redefinition of historical goals implies the abandonment of a set of policies and putting forward another set of priorities through which the newly formulated mission can be achieved. Therefore Deng believed the fundamental task that confronts the PRC was the economic development which required accelerated technological modernization, increased productivity and managerial competence. In articulating his ideas he sought the help of the language and concepts in classical Marxism. Thus "the development of productive forces" had become a central theme in the official ideology of the CPC. The theoretical explanation of the economic reforms found expression in the language of Marxist-Leninist orthodoxy.

The point of contention between Deng Xiaoping and the Maoists on the theory of productive forces was centred around a crucial issue that whether China has successfully become socialist by 1956. The debate over this question brought into conflict two visions about socialism. For Mao socialism was a sustained and arduous process in which the abolition of private property was merely a first necessary step. During that long historical period, socialism will be continuously imperiled from within by the constant reproduction of "new bourgeois elements". Therefore, the principal contradiction under socialism is the struggle between the "proletariat" and the "bourgeois". Mao anticipated this conflict to be protracted, complex and at times employ violence. These arguments lie at the core of the theory of continuing the revolution, which was adopted as the official ideology of the CPC in 1969 and reaffirmed in 1973. On the contrary Deng

89 ibid, p.121.
90 Sullivan, n.26, pp.71-72.
conceived socialism as a system which can be constructed, consolidated and perfected under the vanguard role of the Communist Party. As early as 1956, in his "Report on the Revision of the constitution of the CPC" Deng has maintained that China had become socialist because of the abolition of private ownership and the socialization of the means of production. Accordingly a fundamental change has taken place in China's class relations; the working class had become the "leading class" and the "bourgeoisie" as a class on its "way to extinction".91 As a consequence, Deng argues that the discussion about the classes in socialist society had become pointless. Reiterating the Eighth Party Congress resolution Deng maintained that the principal contradiction in the Chinese society is that between the backward level of productive forces and the advanced relations of production. The resolution of this contradiction lies in the implementation of the reform programme and socialism can be consolidated only by modernizing and developing the productive forces.92

The thought of Deng Xiaoping, to be precise, was instrumental in China's structural integration with the global capitalist economy93 which itself is organised around the interests of those multinational corporations originating from North America, continental Europe and Japan. The two decades of China's economic reforms, if assessed against the capitalist economic indicators like Gross National Production (GNP) and Per Capita income and so on will reveal the remarkable achievements of the Chinese economy. However, the social consequences of this widely acclaimed 'rapid economic

91 Cited in Maria Hsia Chang, n.85, p.383.
93 This point has been argued well in Michael Chossudousky, *Towards Capitalist Restoration: Chinese Socialism After Mao* (London, 1986).
growth' have been equally enormous. The reforms have produced a 'new class' of *nouveau riche* comprised of the CPC cadres, individual entrepreneurs, factory managers, business executives and technocratic elites within the Chinese society. At the same time, they made the working class defenceless in terms of wages, social security and labour rights. The migrant labourers, slum dwellers and destitutes constitute most marginalised sections of the urban society in China. Against this background some discernible trends in the official ideology of the CPC are available. In way of an epilogue, this chapter makes three tentative propositions vis-a-vis the official ideology. (1) The Social realities of the reform era cannot be described in terms of the conceptual categories of socialism. The official ideology cannot afford to remain insensitive to the worsening social contradictions. But, a correspondence between ideology and society entails the abandonment of the historical vision of socialism. (2) Over the last one decade the official rhetoric has generously accommodated and even articulated the interests of the global finance capital whose steady inflow is a crucial factor in the reform project. At the same breath, the CPC has aggressively invoked the Chinese nationalism and removed the hostility towards traditional Chinese culture. (3) The idea of progress which the CPC currently propounding celebrates an uncritical notion of modernity in which a technocratic 'new class'\textsuperscript{94} has been perceived as the main agency. This brief postscript will provide a forward to the next chapter which shall examine the ideologies of the post-Mao dissent movements, explore the interpretative possibilities of the Chinese state and attempt to relate dissent, hegemony and the state.

\textsuperscript{94} Genealogy of this concept has been discussed in Ivan Szetenyi and Bill Martin, "The Three Waves of New Class Theories", *Theory and Society*, vol.17, September 1988, pp.21-38.