CONCLUSION
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The arrest of Jiang Qing and her associates, dubbed the 'gang of four', in September 1976 constitutes the second significant watershed in Chinese communist historiography. Even a casual glance at the historical and philosophical journals from 1977 onwards yields the impression that Confucius has once again found favour with politicians and academicians alike. But our investigations stop with the passing of Mao Zedong and his conception of anti-Confucianism. Before we delineate Mao's contribution, some general and overall assessments would be in order.

Most of the research outside China, which seeks to understand the rise of Communism in that country, can be classified into two categories. On the one hand there are those analyses which select the points of convergence between Confucianism and Communism and on that basis conclude that in essentials, nothing has changed in China and that the present system is no more than old wine in new bottles. A rather imaginative array of analogies can be enumerated from such writings. Thus, the Communists are the latest Dynasty, Mao is the Emperor with the 'Mandate of Heaven', the cadres are the old scholar-gentry-official bureaucracy flourishing anew, the works of Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin and Mao Zedong have been consecrated as the new "Classics" et al. Mao's use of old Chinese proverbs and Confucian sayings indicates that at heart he was basically a traditionalist and the use of historical analogies to criticize men and events in the present is similarly interpreted. The underlying argument seems to be, rather ironically, that people find it difficult to take drastic changes in their stride. It is obvious, even cliched, that a nation's culture cannot be changed by waving a wand and that even when conditions favour violence, upheaval and destruction, it is but a temporary phase. But that does not imply that things ipso facto revert to their old forms once the phase of violence is over. Revival of traditional structures is quite a different matter. It is one thing to say that all the changes desired or initiated by the Communists have not taken root or have not been readily implemented and quite another to posit the thesis that matters are still the same. It would certainly be more rational, even if nebulons, to admit that there is a substantial discrepancy between what the new leadership
claims and what actually is, for it is far more important to see the changes for what they are worth, rather than what they could be or what they remind one of. A second category of analyses admits the essential divergence between Confucianism and Communism but their conclusions are entirely negative. For them communism represents a destruction of all that was of value in Chinese tradition and culture. The basic and fundamental contradiction between the two systems implies that Communism would settle for nothing less than the complete eradication of everything that old China stood for.

Both the above points of view seem to miss the basic thrust of the concept of continuity. Neither the former, nor the latter approach can exclusively lead to a comprehensive understanding of China today. It is readily admitted that no absolute or total changes can be accomplished overnight. In fact, the stability of the whole is dependent on the link of the present with the past on the one hand and with the future on the other. Continuity thus becomes a link between various stages of development, its essence lying in the preservation of certain elements of the whole when this whole changes either as a system or in the process of transition from one stage to another. This study is based on the concept of continuity—intellectual, social and political which certainly does not amount to the revival or reincarnation of the old forms. Marx had pointed out that the ‘new’ society was formed in the womb of the ‘old’ one.

From continuity there is a logical progression to the concept of critical inheritance and assimilation. Evaluations and discussions of Confucius are predicated on an acceptance of continuity and the need for critical inheritance which admits the presence of both similarities and contradictions between the ideas of one era and the next. Given this premise, it was only to be expected that a certain amount of dichotomy would appear in the writings and works of many historians and intellectuals. But it would be fallacious to visualize this dichotomy as an instance of how the Chinese intelligentsia were being torn apart between the contradictory pulls of the old and the new.

The officially authorized and promoted view of history and the definite criteria by which historical personalities had to be evaluated certainly restricted the range of interpretations available to the historians. On the one hand, class struggle was to be the datum of historical change and development and on the other, individuals were to be shown as having played a "progressive" role in their respective eras, if their ideas, were to
be usefully inherited and assimilated. The criterion of "progressiveness" proved to be not only controversial but itself dependent on factors which had not yet been satisfactorily resolved - viz., periodization. For Confucius could be labelled "progressive" only when it could be determined which period he lived in and how his philosophy contributed to the development of the rising class at that time. The periodization of Chinese history was never satisfactorily settled and Confucius was variously seen as living in the final stages of the slave society, during the feudal period and during the period of transition from the slave to the feudal period.

These divergent approaches naturally led to differing perceptions of Confucius' role and the nature of his philosophy. Insistence on a rigid class analysis carried with it the dangers of rendering the Marxist theory irrelevant in understanding Chinese history - which was seen very often. Most of the senior Marxist historians were extremely dissatisfied with the state of affairs. They were of the opinion that a pluralistic and more complex approach was needed in the interpretation of the past. Some of them even attempted to point out that the relations among the different classes at different stages influenced many aspects of the entire society and in turn class relations themselves became conditioned by society. Hence, it was not class relations per se but class relations within society, which had to be considered. This would not mean a denial of their primacy but a recognition of their complexity.

But since the late fifties, history had come to be identified with the performance of very specific political functions. The diversity of viewpoints which could have advanced the process of the application of historical materialism to the understanding of Chinese history was ruled out. The result was that on the one hand the Marxist framework was stretched to accommodate the complexities of Chinese history, and on the other, facts were distorted to fit the theory or left out altogether.

Confucius posed a doubly difficult problem. Not only was his period uncertain, the sources of his philosophy were more so. The numerous contradictions in the Analects, which were possibly due to their compilation over a long period by different scholars were interpreted as characteristic of the time in which Confucius lived. In fact, there seems to be no acknowledgement of the uncertainty of sources and there is a near total absence of any authoritative opinion on the various texts which are considered to be the sources of the Confucian philosophy.
But some positive features emerged from the communist historiography on Confucius. The comprehensive manner in which research was conducted into the social and political conditions in Confucius' time, brought forth a wealth of data, even if the data was often selectively used to justify a particular stand or even if no definite conclusions were reached. Secondly, the discussion of the Confucian concepts of ren and li from the political standpoint, admittedly onesided, certainly widened the hitherto moral and philosophical discussion of the concepts. But in the discussion that followed, only a limited number of criteria for determining their progressive-ness or otherwise could be employed, hence we see a great deal of repetition over the decades.

Anti Confucianism in the PRC is no twentieth century phenomenon inspired by Western values. But at the turn of the century, the focus for the critics of Confucianism was still tradition. They attacked Confucianism to remove its defects, to shed its inconsistencies and to resurrect what they believed, were its enduring values. But in so doing they cut the ground from under the feet of the then entrenched Confucianists. So unprecedented was their criticism that it was, for that time, revolutionary. In a sense therefore, the later reformers and the May Fourth radicals and then the Communists, did not have to break new ground as it were. Unfortunately for the early Reformers, the swiftness with which they were overtaken by subsequent developments, rendered their efforts somewhat ludicrous. During the May Fourth Movement, anti Confucianism was motivated by the desire to strengthen China vis-a-vis the Western powers. Traditional culture was seen as the biggest barrier - and Confucius was wholly identified with it. The major issue confronting the communists in new China was economic development predicated on scientific and technical knowledge. It was therefore imperative that society be infused with totally different values.

With the establishment of the PRC, the problem of Confucius was sought to be dealt with in a more systematic and organized way. But the task accorded top priority was nation building and so although the ideological reeducation of the intellectuals was begun, the Marxist concepts had yet to be mastered and a sufficient number of historians yet to be trained to bring about the desired change in historical studies. Most of the senior Marxist historians who could have begun the process were employed in administrative posts in the educational system with the result that they were unable to devote enough time to research or teaching. This group played a most crucial role in the shaping of historical studies. The extent to which they were committed to the ideas of the new
leaders would determine their role in “revolutionizing” history. But this structure would generate tensions in due course as the inevitable question cropped up: how was Party control and intellectual freedom to be reconciled?

Meanwhile, the other problem which would come into sharp relief in the next decade was that the majority of the senior historians whose erudition and scholarship were well known found themselves at a disadvantage when required to utilize the Marxist categories in historical investigation. On the other hand, the young Marxist historians, not having had adequate training, were often at a loss when it came to examining historical records. While the former tended to use theoretical frameworks rather clumsily, the latter were prone to misrepresent historical facts. Both therefore failed to achieve the desired results. As mentioned earlier, historial materialism had considerably widened the options of the Chinese historians so that it was no longer necessary to adopt an iconoclastic attitude to Confucius. While tradition was still seen as the hurdle in the way of progress and had to be combated, the sense of impatience and feverish urgency which had characterized the May Fourth radicals was no longer there. The traditional and cultural legacy could be critically examined without being impelled by the necessity to overthrow it. This was the basis for the airing of tremendously wide ranging opinions which were the hallmark of the fifties and early sixties.

By the end of the fifties, nationalism had begun to figure as an extremely strong factor in Chinese politics. By this time also, while on the one hand, a committed group of young Marxist historians emerged on the scene considerably better acquainted with historical materialism, on the other, a rise in the study of ancient Chinese history and philosophy was observed. A decade of historical investigations had also made historians more sensitive to the complexities of Chinese history which also led to increasing vocalization of doubts regarding the wisdom of strictly following the Marxist periodization. This period also coincided with greater liberalization and relaxation of party control and historians turned to examining the legacy of Confucius - and what could be usefully inherited from it. Some very detailed and scholarly Marxist critiques of Confucius and the Confucian philosophy came about. A considerable number of historians also began investigations as to whether or not there were materialist strains in Confucianism. This attempt need not be interpreted solely in terms of making their work acceptable to the CPC for many of them genuinely believed that a materialist base would make a stronger case for inheritability. In the process, much oversimplification and distortion was indulged in.
The majority of the historians, under the broad rubric of 'critical inheritance' seemed to be advocating nothing less than an incorporation of the Confucian values—particularly 'Harmony'—in the present system. In the field of education as well, it was proposed that the pedagogic principles of the "paragon" of teachers—Confucius—would be of great value in modern China. The countinuing hold of traditional ideas in these two crucial fields—social relations and education—greatly exercised Mao. Although the charge of being modern-day Confucianists against those who were lavish in their admiraton of Confucius undoubtedly contains elements of exaggeration, it is fairly obvious that in their recommendation of certain traditional values, they were in effect negating the basic ideas of Mao's thought. Such views were moreover being protected and promoted by a group in the CPC leadership. Mao's anti-Confucianism was thus logically extended to contemporary figures who were not committed to carrying the revolution forward.

The iconoclasm against Confucius which erupted once again in the seventies testifies at one level to the strength and persistence of old values. At another, it was a clear avowal of failure to satisfactorily resolve the problem of critical inheritance. Terms such as 'restorationists', 'revisionists', 'capitalist-roaders' and 'bourgeois royalists', (apart from their role in the power struggles) in the context of anti-Confucianism were all directed against those intellectuals and Party members who espoused old values still.

The relationship between the CPC and the historians witnessed many fluctuations and vissicitudes revolving around the question of party control versus intellectual freedom. Since 'history' played a very prominent role in communist ideology and historians were required to perform some very basic and essential political functions, the attitude of the Communist Party toward the historical establishment was influenced by a variety of factors. The political situation at any given point largely determined the alternately rigid and relaxed policy toward intellectuals in general and historians in particular. The manner in which history was to serve politics only very gradually achieved maturity but at critical junctures got thoroughly involved with the politics and power-struggles which resulted in undermining scholarship. In times of upheaval, the tendency was to impose rigid parameters which historians could ignore only at their peril. This led to considerable periods of stagnation. Strict control with no allowance for divergence—the theory of the unilinear pattern of historical development for example—as was witnessed during the sixties, totally discouraged attempts to consider the peculiar and individual pattern of
Most historians—especially the senior ones—did attempt to resist this tendency. Much of the fluctuations in historical circles in the fifties and sixties was the result of the efforts by the senior historians to make research more academic opposed by the radical young historians’ attempt to politicize it. Finally, the matter was decided in favour of the latter and class struggle was enshrined as the only basis for historical study while ‘historicism’ was totally discredited. Mao singled out the historians who had been identified with using the historicist approach and criticized them for going “from bad to worse.” Even though Mao’s own approach could easily be termed historicist, yet he recognized that the defect of such a method (which could judge a value or an idea as positive by placing it within its historical context) lay in its providing the ground for a positive assessment of the ‘old’ values in the present and therefore relevant as well. This is also why he consistently attacked empiricism; although once again, he could be easily considered the most empirical of analysts. But Mao totally rejected the empiricism of those historians who failed to relate the part to the whole. To evaluate ren on its own terms and in its own context was, in his opinion, wholly misleading.

In the new society visualized by Mao, it was not the values of the Confucian tradition, but the new socialist values, which would be the unifying force and the source of inspiration, pride and unity. His anti-Confucianism was therefore, basically a response to very definite problems and tendencies which would prove detrimental to the formation of the new society. Thus, from the late fifties onwards, the activities of men such as Deng To and Wu Han and subsequently Liu Shaoqi, the 1962 conference on Confucianism which saw a surprisingly strong advocacy of Confucian values, the down playing of class struggle and the overall direction of debates in the historical field were not isolated events. For underlying each of them was a set of issues which reflected a clear divergence in thinking patterns. In their writings, Deng To, Wu Han, Yang Xianjen and others were not just reflecting on current politics but also propagating an entirely different approach in the field of Art and Culture; in his economic and educational policies, his views on the role of the CPC and his ideas regarding the nature and training of the cadres, Liu Shaoqi was seen as standing in opposition to what Mao stood for and in their attitude to history and the cultural heritage most of the senior historians had begun to effect fundamental departures from Mao’s conceptions and directives. All of these together amounted to the propounding of harmony in society.
paramountcy of Party leadership and in the matter of critical inheritance, stressed synthesizing and reconciling of ideas and values despite their basic contradiction. These trends were identified with a particular group of people who were attacked during the Cultural Revolution as “capitalist roaders”, not because they were desirous of implementing capitalism, but because, as Mao perceived it, they had embarked on a course of action which would only obstruct and oppose socialism in the “super structure” and unless checked, would in due course undermine all efforts at building socialism. The wheel turned full circle once again; the only solution seemed to be total rejection of the old — of Confucius.

Confucius has straddled the centuries with remarkable elasticity, if not ease. It would be pointless to deny that in the PRC, the numerous campaigns against him have undoubtedly destroyed the myth around him. No matter how haloed or reverential a figure may be or how sacred his ideas and values, both lose much of their sanctity if vile epithets are hurled at them and they are subjected to thorough ridicule. Besides, the social and historical context in which Confucianism flourished, has undergone a sea change — the old values are unlikely to re-assume either their dominance or their role as guides to social action. Mao wanted to impress upon the Chinese people that Confucius was just another human being, a member of the exploiting class of his time and who definitely did not espouse the hopes and aspirations of the masses. Yet it must be remembered that tradition, particularly, a dominant tradition, takes its own time to crystallize into new forms. The process may certainly be hastened - or it can be temporarily slowed - but it cannot be stopped or achieved in a day.