CHAPTER 3

BLOOMING AND CONTENDING: COMMUNIST 'STRUGGLE' VERSUS CONFUCIAN 'HARMONY'. 1959-1964
CHAPTER 3

Economic constraints and problems have generally preceded relaxation of control in intellectual and cultural circles in China. Other factors play a role as well in contributing to liberalization but the connection between the economic factor and relaxation, is usually more direct. The reasons which led to the launching of the Hundred Flowers policy were many and multifaceted, but the economic situation of China in the mid-fifties certainly reinforced the resolve to allow greater freedom to the intellectuals. The First Five Year Plan (FFYP) launched with great fanfare in 1953, immediately ran into problems. By 1955, the inherent unsuitability of a heavy industry oriented planning and development became obvious but much before that, the Chinese planners had to stop and reexamine the FFYP for its unrealistic targets and lack of a clear cut sense of priorities. Besides, the bright promises held out by the rapid growth rate of the early fifties did not materialize and in the process of tackling the economic situation, the intellectuals were given far greater freedom so as to secure their involvement in the process of development.

The enthusiasm with which the GLF was inaugurated, petered out by the end of 1958. In the latter half of 1958 itself the drawbacks and shortcomings of the Leap had become apparent and were sought to be remedied. However, the Lushan Plenum in mid-1959 put paid to all attempts at a redressal of the Leap imbalances; on the contrary, the confrontation between Mao Zedong and Peng Dehuai resulted in an even stronger revival of the Leap policies. “The Leap was resumed, the problems were compounded and disaster was the result.”

The Lushan Plenum publicly revealed the ongoing struggle and differences within the CPC. The conflict was over differing perceptions of the suitability of putting politics in command in the economic sphere where, according to Peng Dehuai, laws and rules had to be applied in a scientific manner. Peng was not alone in his

opposition to the economic policies of 1958, which he said were characterized by "petty-bourgeois fanaticism." But although a large number of PLA leaders sided with him on the issue, the non-PLA party officials in the ruling group, especially those who were controlling economic affairs, did not extend any support to him. Liu Shaoqi by all accounts backed Mao at that stage, though in 1962 he called for a review of Peng’s case. Obviously, Liu’s rupture with the Maoist policies came later. More than the challenge posed by Peng’s opposition to the policies of the Leap, Mao was concerned about the undesirable tendency within the PLA to oppose the CPC. This could lead to a rather dangerous situation; the party just could not afford to lose control over the gun. The choice of Lin Biao to succeed Peng Dehuai as Defence Minister thus begins to make sense. As Mao’s most trusted comrade he could undoubtedly be counted upon to control such unhealthy tendencies.

The emphasis on steel making during the GLF had led to a disequilibrium in the agricultural sector. In 1960 the food situation in China started to cause serious misgivings and to make matters worse, a series of natural calamities came upon the country. Drought, followed by floods and typhoons, bringing pests and diseases in its train, placed China on the brink of misery and chaos. But that unfortunately was not all. Much before the launching of the GLF, China was having problems with the Soviet Union. Mao himself admitted that the Sino-Soviet dispute absorbed much of the attention of the CPC which considerably hindered attempts at tackling internal problems.

The Sino-Soviet dispute comprised diverse strains, spanned more than five years and was crowned in 1960 by a complete withdrawal of Soviet advisers in China who took back with them blueprints of ongoing and future projects. The Soviet action inflicted enormous losses on China’s development.

The foregoing is obviously not an analysis of economic development of China, as of 1958. Nevertheless, the above summary would have given some idea of the circumstances in China which prompted a change in

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4. MacFarquhar, n.2, p.293. He further elaborates: “Important domestic matters were shelved by senior leaders and party propagandists preparing for the next round with the Russians. Foreign affairs were the focus of six CC conferences in 1960 and probably a major topic of discussion at other central meetings. The two leading officials of the party secretariat, Teng Hsiao-p’ing and P’eng Chen, spent much of the period from June till early December abroad at international communist meetings, and presumably spent the intervals back in Peking consulting with colleagues on the dispute. One quarter of all politburo members in good standing were tied up in Moscow for the month long 81-party conference.”
the orientation and content of various policies, the moving spirit behind which seemed to be China's new President, Liu Shaoqi. Which is not to suggest that he masterminded, as it were, a whole new process of change - for there was an overwhelming consensus in favour of a retreat from the radicalism of the GLF which had resulted in considerable damage. This damage needed urgent attention and correction. Such measures as were taken did not necessarily imply a repudiation of the Leap policies as shall be seen later.

Mao Zedong played a rather subdued and quiescent role after relinquishing his position as head of state, retreating to the "second line" and placing administrative responsibilities in Liu's hands. The official explanation for Mao's resignation was that the Chairman desired "to concentrate his energies on dealing with the question of direction, policy and the line of the party and the state... to set aside more time for Marxist-Leninist study." Later he was to accuse the Party of having sidelined and neglected him after the GLF and that he was not consulted on any matter. Be that as it may, for the immediately foreseeable future, politics was not to be in command in tackling the manifold problems.

With Mao having retreated to the "second front", the party and state bureaucracies started to reassert their power, accompanied by a "reaffirmation of firm Leninist principles of political organization, particularly the cardinal Leninist principle of the critical role of the vanguard party." Such a course naturally implied a distrust, if not rejection of the "spontaneity" of the masses which formed the bedrock of the Maoist policies. In the post-GLF era, the ascendancy of the "typical organization man"', Liu Shaoqi, favouring stability over struggle, was therefore welcomed by not a few of the party leaders. It is during this phase that one observes a general though muted criticism of Mao, obliquely, through plays, historical analogies and other writings. (Although the emergence of this method of criticism and attack shall be discussed at their appropriate places and points of origin, the next chapter shall deal with the role of theatre in history and politics and how the two were linked together.) Thus it was that in this period, Mao became increasingly alienated from the party; he brooded over the eventual consequence of the dilution in the struggle ethics of the party and gradually turned to the PLA, which was under the command of his trusted comrade Lin Biao to help him realize his goal.

Meanwhile, the successful execution of the daunting tasks ahead - this time without any Soviet assistance-

very clearly required the wholehearted contribution of the Chinese experts and intellectuals. Which in turn required a policy which would remove the fears and apprehensions in their minds and ensure them a free working environment. This policy became very apparent by 1961, but the trend had started in mid-1959 in a government announcement that the anti-rightist 'label' had been lifted from 26,000 people and a number of prominent intellectuals like Feng Youlan, Zhang Bojun, Lo Lungji, Qian Duansheng, Xiao Qian and Fei Xiaotong were rehabilitated.9

For the historians, the relaxation was signalled by Chen Boda's article in the July 1959 issue of *Hongqi* - "Critical Inheritance and a New Investigation." In this article, Chen sought to provide a more flexible interpretation of the slogan "more emphasis on the present, less emphasis on the past." The circumstances and manner in which this slogan had first been brought out in March 1958 had brought almost all research on ancient history to a halt. That it was a serious predicament, was unmistakably disclosed in Chen's rebuttal concerning those people "who misunderstood emphasizing the present over the past, and were a little confused in their thinking. For instance, some people believed that, since we advocate more emphasis on the present than on the past, we can adopt a crude and scornful attitude toward the historical and cultural legacy. This is completely contrary to our original idea."10

The interesting part of Chen's speech is the advice he gave to historians of ancient Chinese history on how to steer between rightist and leftist deviation in their work. It is therefore quoted at some length.

"The struggle is on two fronts. One is against the rightists who revive the old. The rightist deviation is to consider everything that is old as good and deny it proper criticism. The other is against leftist infantilism. This leftist deviation is to adopt coarse, simplified methods in denigrating all history while condemning ancient people according to the standards of today's revolutionary proletariat, regarding past history as just an accumulation of mistakes, and refusing to inherit the legacy of human civilization. It is correct for Marxists to struggle along these two fronts, because Marxists have a historical perspective and analyze everything according to concrete historical conditions. As for the essence of the legacy (such as ancient materialism, simple dialectics, and various other progressive

9. Edgar Snow, *The Other Side of the River*, chp. 1, n. 54, p. 402, The source of this information was not mentioned.
elements in thought and culture). Marxists also treat this historically, recognize its position in history, distinguish correct paths from incorrect paths, and neither exaggerate nor minimize its historical function.”

An article in *Renmin Ribao* on August 5, 1959, contributed its bit in encouraging the intellectuals by viewing the preoccupation with ancient history as over and done with. “Before 1958 there was a short period characterized by a wicked current of exaltation of the classics. At that time, books were published with no control and a number of bad books saw light, exerting an exceedingly bad influence on the readers.” Then on 29 October 1959, *Guangming Ribao* brought out a “Summary Narration of Ten Years’ Research Work on Chinese History” by a group of writers. Its details do not concern us here, but its conclusion certainly does, for it obviously seems to have been written and compiled during the height of the Great Leap fervour. “...reactionary bourgeois history writing has suffered defeat,” but unfortunately “bourgeois views are still appearing: but they are gradually being purged through discussions with the masses and through self-criticisms.”

The message seemed to be that research should be resumed but the errors of the past were to be avoided.

The period from Chen’s speech till mid-1961 when the policy of hundred flowers was revived, can be considered a prologue to the halcyon days of 1961-62, which a researcher has termed as the second “golden period” of Chinese historiography. The rise of nationalism in the wake of the Sino-Soviet split and the general caution against bourgeois influence, combined to bring about among the Chinese historians a preoccupation with the Chinese past and Chinese history. Consequently, research on Confucius benefited directly - although there was no substantial increase in the variety of aspects of Confucianism (and concerning Confucius himself) which were now discussed as compared to the fifties. Undoubtedly there was a quantitative change in the amount of writing and publishing that was being done, but evaluations of Confucius proceeded along more or less similar lines as were observed in the fifties. But greater significance by far lay in the qualitative change that could be perceived. There was a heightened awareness of the concepts of ‘class’ and ‘class-struggle’ in investigation and analysis; the scrutiny of historical sources was deeper and more thoroughgoing and a greater sophistication was observed in the utilization of historical facts to buttress the stands taken.

11. Ibid., pp. 28-29.
13. Ibid.
14. B. Staiger, chp. 2, n. 89, p. 36.
Evaluations of Confucius were conditioned to a lesser or greater extent by the ongoing debates in historical circles depending on the extent to which these debates incorporated common concerns. One such debate was on the “re-evaluation” of historical figures and personalities, which, as mentioned in the last chapter, had been initiated by Guo Moruo in January 1959. Prominent historians discussed and wrote on this issue throughout 1960-63 attempting to arrive at a consensus on the parameters within which assessment of historical personalities should be made. This matter continued to be the topic of discussion and was in turn modulated at different stages, most prominently by the debate betwixt the proponents of class struggle and those holding a brief for historicism. Both these major debates were to transanimate discussions on Confucius. Wu Han was among the leading commentators on how a historical figure ought to be appraised. His writings which appeared variously in Renmin Ribao, Guangming Ribao and the historical journal Lishi Yanjiu, can be summarized thus:

1. Contemporary standards ought not to form the basis of evaluating historical figures;
2. The principle of class struggle should be central to one’s methodology;
3. Historians must always work with concrete facts;
4. Individuals are important in history but research should highlight the interests of the masses;
5. Whereas class struggle should be emphasised as the motive force in history, it should not be so applied as to automatically reject all representatives of the ruling class, nor should it be considered as the sole criterion of progress;
6. The ancients should not be assessed by the lights of the present day ideology.

These points more or less embrace the prevailing attitudes though they certainly did not inform the views of the younger and more radical historians and would be harshly condemned after 1965. But in the period 1960-63, this particular theme of debate in Chinese historical circles, given the political climate, was invested with far reaching implications. In the first place, the airing of such opinions most certainly lent credence to the official policy of allowing intellectuals greater latitude in their areas of work - and the leaders who presided

15. A word of explanation is required. The Chinese term in the debates was lishi zhuyi which would be transliterated as historicism or historism. However SCMM and SCMP translations render it somewhat cumbersomely, historicalism. It is not within the scope of this work to examine the nuances and various interpretations of 'historicalism', or 'historicism' which have been discussed by many western Marxist intellectuals, notably Karl Popper, The Poverty of Historicism, (London, 1963). This study shall confine itself to the Chinese usage in the debates of the early sixties and why it was viewed as standing in opposition to the class viewpoint. Jian Bozan who was criticized during the CR for propagating 'historicism' employed the term to emphasize the importance of context and complexity in historical interpretations, stressed objectivity and balance in judgement and relied primarily on an empirical and inductive methodology.

16. Wu Han’s articles translated in SCMP, Nos. 2721, and 2882.
over this phase of liberalization were Lu Dingyi, Director of the CPC Propaganda Department, Zhou Yang, the Assistant Director and Peng Zhen, the First Secretary of the Peking Party Committee. Secondly, the points of view reflected in the above summation virtually amounted to a criticism of the manner in which historical figures had hitherto been assessed and implicitly called for a fresh look. Thirdly, there was an attempt to synthesize divergent approaches to the appraisal of historical figures within a generally satisfactory framework. It also indicated an essay in applying the Marxist criteria more flexibly and thereby ended up becoming a major bone of contention between the senior scholars and their highly revolutionary junior colleagues. In the late sixties they would be at total loggerheads. Finally, the most striking feature of these debates was that they were not merely cotermiuous with the political liberalization but were mutually reinforcing each other as they went along.

Looking to the actual output in historiographical terms, it would not be amiss to say that the slogan, 'let a hundred flowers bloom, let a hundred schools of thought contend' seems more appropriate for the period 1961-62 than 1957. Indeed, this slogan was once again claimed as crucial to research. A Hongqi editorial in March 1961, “Let Hundred Flowers Bloom in Historical Research” announced that “the atmosphere becomes lively in any field so long as there are controversies, mutual exchanges of opinion and mutual criticism. Such an atmosphere is beneficial and necessary to science for raising the level of scientific workers. Questions of right and wrong in artistic and scientific circles should be settled through free discussion.”

In another article in Hongqi in June 1961, Li Xuchi admitted that progress in academic work could only be achieved by encouraging “all to debate and express controversial opinions over a problem.” He sought to remove misgivings among those engaged in research by pointing out that without the “necessary theoretical and practical knowledge about a certain problem,” the solution could not be found. It “should be clearly realized that academic discussion with thorough researches as the foundation will produce no negative effect but can only spur academic discussion and academic researches.”

Then in August 1961 an important speech by Chen Yi, Vice-Premier of China, was delivered at the Peking Institute of Higher Studies. It was a major attempt to remove whatever remaining doubts there were in the

minds of the intellectuals as regards the tolerant attitude of the Party. This speech, published in *Guangming Ribao* on September 3, praised the contribution of the scholars which, Chen Yi felt, merited a greater regard from the people. He reiterated, as Zhou Enlai had in his 1956 speech, that there was greater confidence among the Party circles as regards the political credentials of the intellectuals. So much so that they, the intellectuals, could be exempted from manual labour and political indoctrination classes. "As long as experts show results in their profession and contribute to the construction of socialism, there should be no objection to their taking only a small part in political activity." Going far beyond Zhou's proposal that class origin and ideological conformity need not be rigorously scrutinized, insofar as intellectuals were concerned, Chen Yi averred that an intellectual ought to be judged primarily on the basis of his contribution to the development of modern industry, agriculture, science and culture and not just by his loyalty to the Communist Party. It was the former which should be considered "a manifestation of the politics of socialism," for without such an understanding, China's "science and culture will lag behind for ever." 19

The Socialist Education Campaign (SEC) which was launched in late 1962 was to denounce the increasing currency of this kind of thinking - that economic development must necessarily precede political commitment; indeed that a genuine political commitment was indicated only by one's contribution to economic progress. During the SEC, politics was once again elevated to a position of primacy over economics. As a *Hongqi* editorial pointed out, "Comrade Mao Tse-tung has always emphasized that politics is the concentrated expression of economics. Politics must take command of economics and not vice versa. The view that 'to be good economically means to be good politically' is wrong." 20

But to resume Chen Yi's speech. The *piece de resistance* was the following: that a through grasp of Marxism-Leninism and a deep commitment to Party ideology, and/or class origins were not the most crucial or determining factors in estimating the work of the intellectuals. Besides, the majority of the Party's Central Committee did not hail from worker and peasant families, but from landlord and middle class backgrounds. And above all, he, Chen Yi, himself continued to be influenced by the ideas of Confucius and Mencius as also bourgeois ideas. 21

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The period from the end of 1959 onwards was characterized by a relatively greater tolerance as regards the custodians of the ‘old’ culture. The recognition of Confucius as one of the most important thinkers of Chinese philosophy and as the most significant contributor to the shaping of Chinese culture and civilization, can be inferred not only from the increasing number of publications concerning him, but also from the space devoted to him in the press. More importantly, widespread Confucius worship was also witnessed with the authorities playing a quiescent role; if they did not encourage it, they did not prevent it either.

In May 1961 it was reported that Confucius’ residence, which over the centuries had become a temple for worshipping him, and his grave in Qufu, his birthplace, had been renovated for the first time since 1724. The same report also gave out the information that in April 1961, on the occasion of the Spring Festival when ancestors are traditionally honoured, twenty thousand people visited the temple of Confucius. In 1962, the Communist Party reintroduced, after a long interval, the traditional gathering of people at Confucius’ grave in which more than thirty thousand assembled. In May 1962, a Renmin Ribao article gave a meticulous description of Qufu as well as extremely detailed particulars of his temple and grave. On the 40th death anniversary of Confucius, many meetings were held in Qufu and in Jinan, the capital of the province of his birth.

It would be worthwhile at this juncture to list the numerous conferences which were held during this period - they are eloquent testimony to the quantity and quality of historiography on Confucius in the second decade of the People’s Republic.

(1) History Conference in Canton from 7-13 May, 1961.

(2) Conference of the Philosophical Society of China and the Philosophical Society of Beijing at the end of October 1961.

22. NCNA, 11 May, 1961, See also SCMP, No. 2486.
25. The extent to which Confucius had begun to dominate thinking is revealed in the seemingly unnecessary debate as to whether the 2440th death anniversary was in 1961 or 1962. Guangming Ribao on 2 November 1961 carried a notice about two conferences in Qufu in 1961 and Guangming Ribao on 6 June 1962, reported a meeting in Qufu in June, in NCNA, 19 November 1962, and SCMP, No. 2865, pp. 11-12.
26. This list has been taken from Staiger, chp. 2, n. 89, pp. 45-46.
(3) Discussion of the Teachers Training Institute of Xinjiang in November 1961. The consensus of opinion at this discussion was that Confucius was a 'moderate' and that reform in society dated back to his era. There were however divergent opinions as to whether the 'progressive' or 'conservative' aspects of his thinking were more prominent.\(^{29}\)

(4) Conference of the Philosophical and Historical Society of Kirin which probably occurred at the end of 1961 or the beginning of 1962. Prof. Jin Qingfang of the Faculty of History at the University of Kirin gave an extremely positive assessment of Confucius and enumerated his achievements as educator, historian and philosopher. Prof. Jin attributed the authorship of *The Spring and Autumn Annals* to Confucius, (reminiscent of Kang Youwei's belief), and praised Confucius for his pioneering role in history writing (viz, *The Spring and Autumn Annals*) which laid the "foundation in practice and in theory for the subsequent development of historical studies; and that therefore, Confucius was an outstanding historian in Chinese History."\(^{30}\)

(5) The Historical Society of Guangdong held three discussions and a meeting in Canton in June 1962.\(^{31}\)

(6) Conference of the Historical Society of Heilonjiang in conjunction with the Teachers Training Institute of Harbin. In this conference, Prof. Zhang Youfei of the Harbin Teachers Training Institute opposed Guan Feng's view of the eclecticism of Confucian philosophy and countered that it depicts a unified system of thought.\(^{32}\)

(7) The Qufu Conference of May 1962.\(^{33}\)

(8) In July 1962, at a meeting in Peking University, two leading scholars, Feng Youlan and Ren Jiyu propounded opposing views on Confucius. The former proclaimed Confucius to be a 'progressive' whereas the latter labelled him a 'conservative'.\(^{34}\)

(9) The Confucian Society of Tianjin held a conference in November 1962. The participants were almost unanimous in declaring Confucius to have played a 'progressive' role in Chinese

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33. See note 25.
history - particularly on account of his principle of ren.  

(10) But the most significant conference and the one which was to create quite a furore subsequently, was the Shandong History Conference from 6-12 November 1962. This was held in Jinan and the participants looked into the following aspects:

(a) Questions relating to the central idea of the philosophy of Confucius;
(b) Confucius’ relationship with the Six Classics;
(c) The political views of Confucius;
(d) Methodological questions pertaining to the further development of research and appraisal of the Sage.

Newspapers reported that at the conclusion of the Jinan Conference in which more than 150 historians and philosophers participated and over 110 papers were submitted, the participants travelled to Qufu in order to visit the temple of Confucius. It was also at this conference that Liu Jie, Professor of History at Zhongshan University, emerged as a strong - perhaps the strongest - proponent of ren. He is reported to have said that “...it cannot be said that ren is not needed in our age and society” and that “ren is always right in any age.” It was because of ren that China’s development had taken a path which was totally different to the Western path of development and hence class struggle was not an entirely adequate concept in the explanation of China’s past.

Cultural Revolution sources alleged that this conference had been arranged at the instigation of Liu Shaoqi by Zhou Yang, under the auspices of the Culture Department. This charge shall be dealt with more fully in the next chapter. The Jinan Conference was one of the last ones at which such unMarxist ideas were aired and the discussions on Confucius reached their climax manifested in the scholars’ visit to the temple of Confucius.

37. Guangming Ribao, 12 November 1962. Although papers presented at this conference are not available, quotations and excerpts were carried in Guangming Ribao, 17-18 August 1963 in SCMP No. 3070, p. 2.
38. NCNA, 19 November 1962.
41. Renmin Ribao, 10 Jaunary 1967. Also, criticism of this belief of Liu Jie’s in Ibid.
As remarked earlier, in their overall positive assessments of Confucius, the writings of the early sixties resembled those of the mid-fifties, but a few interpretations achieved a certain novelty on account of the somewhat superior argumentation and the historical facts cited to support it. Articles praising the Sage had begun appearing in late-59 itself with Liu Jieren postulating that the Confucian concept of  ren aimed at liberating the slave class. Feng Youlan wrote another article “On Confucius” in which he reiterated, that  ren, meaning love of the people, was basically a progressive concept.\(^{42}\) This sparked off a brief spurt of criticism of Feng Youlan by his own students at Peking University who denounced both  ren and  li as reactionary doctrines and quoted Mao’s famous statement that “There is no human nature which transcends class.”\(^{43}\)

This brief spell of criticism was very soon followed by the most luxuriant period of blooming and contending to date. Marxist historians such as Yang Rangguo and Zhao Jibin brought out detailed and extremely erudite articles which sought to establish the conservative and reactionary nature of Confucianism. By some extremely scholarly, textual and etymological analysis, Zhao Jibin concluded that the word  ren in the Analects was confined only to the upper classes, the slave owning aristocrats and did not include the larger masses who were only considered fit to be dominated.\(^{44}\)

Zhao’s hermeneutic exercise in fact impressed not a few of the younger generation of historians who were similarly inspired to investigate the historical records to authenticate their own assessments. In this manner, textual reference was encouraged leading to much useful research. Yang Rongguo was another historian for whom Confucius was no less than a reactionary. In a paper which he presented to the Shandong Conference, he upheld his belief, that Confucius represented the interests of the slave owning aristocracy and employed all his ideas and activities to furthering the interests of the slave owners.

Once again, appraisals of Confucius hinged on the periodization scheme adopted, but periodization did not generate any controversy. By and large, historians took up Guo Moruo’s division or that of Fan Wenlan, and then proceeded with their arguments. A few historians even attempted independent analyses of the ancient period and came up with a different scheme of periodization.\(^{45}\)

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43. Ibid.
44. For a detailed exposition of Zhao’s thesis, see Staiger, chp 2, n. 89, pp. 64-65 and 81-84.
45. For instance, Tang Lan, “Pinglu Kongzi shouxian yinggai bianming Kongzi suochu de shi shenmeyang xingzhi de shehui” [To Evaluate Confucius, it is First Necessary to Clearly Understand the Nature of the Society He Lived in] Cited in Kam Louie, chp 2, n. 37, p. 70.
Historical facts and incidents from the life of Confucius, or statements attributed to him, were however used freely. Often, the same fact or incident or statement served to corroborate two opposing points of view, justifying the statement ‘facts are sacred, opinion is free.’ A rather well known episode in Confucius’ life is his opposition to the inscription of legal codes onto tripods. Critics of Confucius took this to indicate Confucius’ antagonism against the emerging legalist forces and that it was motivated by his anxiety to preserve the older system of rule by rites. His admirers on the other hand claimed that in opposing the inscription of the legal codes, which were extremely oppressive in nature, Confucius, although a member of the slave owning class, had revealed his humanity and benevolent feelings for the slaves who would fare better under a virtuous ruler than under a harsh system of laws. Confucius’ hostility to the new, progressive trend of rule by law, which became an explosive theme during the ‘Criticize Lin—Criticize Confucius’ campaign, thus had its origins in the debates of the late fifties and early sixties. There is no denying that the above arguments are both equally convincing but convey the impression of capriciousness and to that extent detract from the validity of the arguments. Similar examples abound and interesting though they are, need not be dealt with.

Then again, the question of whether Confucius was basically an idealist or a materialist thinker was also discussed. Views were divided and once more, quotations from the Analects were used, to prove the rectitude of either points of view. By and large, historians seemed to veer towards investing Confucius’ thought with predominantly materialist strains, though there were important dissenters. Mention must be made of a rather lengthy article, “On Confucius”, by Guan Feng and Lin Yushi, published in the July issue of Zhxue Yanjiu. These authors had been indefatigable critics of Feng Youlan and had decried Feng’s enthusiasm for ren. In their article, surprisingly, Guan and Lin stated quite unambiguously that the absence of questions of ‘nature’ and of the theory of knowledge, provided them with no adequate grounds to discuss these aspects of Confucian philosophy. This was refreshingly contrary to the general practice of promptly labelling Confucius a materialist or an idealist because of the absence or presence of any particular strain of thinking. Articles such as Guan and Lin’s indicated that some historians were making serious attempts to understand their subject and recognize the limitations and drawbacks in historical investigations.

The reassessments of Confucius were closely allied to the larger question of the critical assimilation of China’s cultural and historical legacy. Thus, in the appraisal of Confucian values, those scholars who

46. Kam Louie, chp 2, n. 37, pp. 67-68.
47. ‘Cited in CNA, No. 398, 24 November 1961, pp. 5-7.'
considered Confucius' role in the shaping of Chinese culture and civilization as preponderant, utilized schemes of periodization somewhat flexibly. For, the argument ran, that the Confucian values transcended class divisions and hence were for the benefit of all the people. Some also asserted that personages such as Confucius who had played a seminal role in Chinese history could, and did, represent the interests of more than one class. Such a one was Feng Youlan and behind his belief lay the conviction, that there were certain timeless values in Confucianism which could considerably benefit modern China. Feng’s distinction between the ‘abstract’ or ‘universal’ and the ‘concrete’ or ‘particular’ meaning of an idea has already been discussed in the last chapter. Although he had been much criticized for his views, which had brought about certain modifications in his interpretation, he continued to propagate and further elaborate on the same in the early sixties. He rejected Zhao Jibin’s thesis that the meaning of ren extended only to relations within the aristocracy and in 1960, elaborated on ren much along the line he had taken in the fifties.48

Prof. Yang Rongguo held the totally opposite view. That there were elements in Confucianism which appeared to be progressive, he admitted, but without analyzing the social context and the philosophical content, no concept, he declared, could be thus termed. In any case, the presence of apparently progressive elements in his philosophy, did not per se put Confucius above the class struggle of his era.49 Yang argued that ren had been interpreted in a different manner by different people at different periods over the centuries. Thus, although the form had remained the same, the content varied in accordance with the changing needs. The social context therefore, was the crucial determining factor in arriving at its true meaning. To which Feng's rejoinder was, that despite being subject to changing social contexts, the form was possessed of certain universal characteristics and it was this universal aspect which ought to be inherited.

Ren continued to dominate discussions in 1961 and 1962. In yet another article, “Another Look at Confucius' Thoughts on Benevolence,” Feng quoted from Marx and Engels' German Ideology to support his theory of the universal validity of ideas.

“For each new class which puts itself in the place of one ruling before it, is compelled, merely

in order to carry through its aim, to represent its interest as the common interest of all the members of society, that is, expressed in ideal form: it has to give its ideas the form of universality, and represent them as the only rational, universally valid ones. The class making a revolution appears from the very start, if only because it is opposed to a class, not as a class but as the representative of the whole of society; it appears as the whole mass of society confronting the one ruling class.”

Feng was forthwith denounced for selectively picking passages to justify his stand. In an article in Zhexue Yanjiu, Fang Koli also quoted from German Ideology the passage immediately preceding the one Feng Youlan had quoted, which indeed put an entirely different complexion on the matter.

“If now in considering the course of history we detach the ideas of the ruling class from the ruling class itself and attribute to them an independent existence...if we thus ignore the individuals and world conditions which are the sources of the ideas, we can say, for instance, that during the time that the aristocracy was dominant, the concepts honour, loyalty, etc., were dominant, during the dominance of the bourgeoisie the concepts freedom equality, etc. The ruling class on the whole imagines this to be so.”

The two radical critics of Feng Youlan - Guan Feng and Lin Yushi - rejected the possibility of inheriting ren. It was wrong to pick up historical concepts and consider their assimilation in the contemporary situation, for the social context had undergone a revolutionary transformation. Whereas ren had been propounded by Confucius to restore the old Zhou rites which were on the decline. The interesting aspect of this article was the theme of ‘restorationism’, implying an attempt to stop the march of progress. This feature foreshadowed one of the most important debates of the ‘Criticize Lin-Criticize Confucius’ campaign.

As pointed out in the last chapter, during the mid-50s, the area in which there was near unanimity in the context of the present day relevance of Confucius, was education. This was to be seen again in the early sixties. The developments in the field of education, the debates over educational policy among the leadership and the process of reform and change in the system and content of education, once more form the background of his-

toriography on Confucius' pedagogic ideas. This does not imply a direct connection between those who advocated an adoption of Confucian principles in education with those among the leadership who were less enthusiastic about radical changes in China's educational system. Nor should it be inferred that articles lauding Confucius as educator were being written only for propagating the views of a section of the CPC leaders and under their aegis. There is ample evidence to do so, for, the dictum that history must serve politics was often very loosely and simplistically applied, particularly by the younger generation of Marxist historians. There was certainly a major difference of opinion on the extent to which changes were desired and needed in the educational structure as a consequence of differing perceptions of China's requirements in nation building. Our objective is to emphasize the flux in both historical and policy making circles, not to deny any connection between the two.

At the other end of the spectrum there were the 'educated' people who had been conventionally accorded an extremely privileged and enviable status. They were a group set apart, respected and revered universally - and sometimes feared. It would be unhistorical to assume that such influences did not linger on or were not preponderant among those intellectuals who had been educated in the traditional manner. The egalitarian ideals of the CPC which had deprived them of their elite status and the various re-education campaigns which had subjected them to much abuse, allied with the nationalist zeal which had swept the country, could only have spurred them to appreciate anew a tradition which had conferred on them much honour and glory.

In the general shift away from the Great Leap Forward policies in the early sixties, education - as also culture - is one of the fields which reveal the emergence of a polarization within the leadership, on the issue of China's road to modernization, though, at this stage, it was not as clear cut a division as was alleged in the late sixties. But, it indeed seems to be the period in which differences crystallized into actual policy measures, which were entirely different from the mass-based line of Mao Zedong. A case can well be made for Mao's belief that the increasing bureaucratization of the CPC had effectively thwarted his ideas from being translated into action. For the record, the early sixties were a retreat - not repudiation - of the mass-line policies of the

53. The older marxist historians such as Jian Bozan, Wu Han and others, especially those working on peasant rebellions in Chinese history, were also debating this proposition. How should history serve politics, to what extent in what manner? Before any consensus could be arrived at, the Cultural Revolution swept China and matters simply went out of hand.
GLF. And that retreat inevitably called for a stress on quality. It has been pertinently pointed out, that such an emphasis, predicated on the need to develop a pool of high level scientific and technological skills, cannot be but at the expense of "egalitarian ideals."55

Nonetheless, the stress on quality was not an overnight phenomenon. As has been mentioned earlier, by mid-1958 itself, a rethinking as regards the policies for intellectuals had taken place. After Lushan, there were attempts to reinfuse the people with the euphoria with which the GLF had been launched, but it was accompanied with an awareness of the shortcomings of the Leap. This combination made 1960 quite a complex and confusing period. Speeches and articles sought to keep up the spirit of 'faster, better and more economically', but policies and actions were initiated advocating "unified... plans and systems" and the "allocation of manpower and material supplies and financial resources within a certain compass..."56

Revolutionary changes in education continued to be urged with a concomitant stress on quality. Then from January to March 1959, there was a work conference on national education in which Lu Dingyi, the Propaganda Chief of the CPC admitted that the "feverish headiness and inept ideological methods" had led to some serious errors in the "great educational developments of 1958."

"What has happened to cultural and educational work in the great leap forward? Speaking on the whole it was a great leap; speaking specifically, some have leapt, others not, and still others retrogressed."57

Documents prepared during the Cultural Revolution by the Maoists revealed how Lu Dingyi attempted to "sabotage" the revolutionary transformation of education by stressing educational improvement rather than reform and the cultivation of centres of excellence.58 Lu Dingyi was also quoted as having said in 1961 that

54. Despite a virtual and wholesale change in the Leap policies with "material incentives in order to restore production" and despite much criticism of the disastrous effects of faulty implementation, no CPC leader renounced "the mass-line strategy upon which the GLF had been based." Chalmers Johnson, in Ping Ti-ho and Tang Tsou eds., n. 20, p. 433. At one level, this could possibly imply a fairly widespread belief that those policies were essentially correct, if rather premature.
it was necessary to “speak less of universalization and more of raising quality. We must energetically raise the standards of key schools.... Stress raising quality.”

As a result of the work conference, proposals for the reform of education were initiated in 1960. More research needs to be done to discover the factors which operated against revolutionization of education - for it does not stand to reason that the opposition of some of the top leadership or the lack of initial success would be so deterring as to bring a halt to long cherished objectives. There was obviously a certain amount of dragging of feet at the level of those in charge of implementing the policies. Besides, in a situation which emphasized stability, the likelihood of disruptions, resulting from radical changes could have been an inhibiting factor. Most certainly also, there was reluctance on the part of those teachers who were still imbued with old ideas and values regarding education.

Later findings have revealed that most of the proposals aimed at achieving a ‘leap’ in education, although begun to be practiced, were never properly institutionalized, which could have ensured their continuance and genuinely brought about a transformation in ideas, attitudes and practices. The purpose of education was viewed by the then dominant faction (Mao having retreated to the second front), as contributing to scientific and technological advancement. Among a host of other factors, it was to ultimately lead to the emergence and propagation of such values as were identified as bourgeois. Thus, the hurdle of entrance examinations persisted and benefited only a minority, the recognition of the greater importance and superiority of expertise put a premium on high academic standards and excellence and a corresponding honour attached to the attainment of higher grades, the privileged status of managers and technical experts led to granting a greater importance to the full-time schools and universities which produced them, implicitly downgrading the status of the Maoist innovation - the work-study schools. This diminishing enthusiasm for the work-study schools in real terms discouraged the entrance of students from worker and peasant backgrounds. Furthermore,

60. Ibid., p. 279.
61. After 1960, many of the work-study schools just ceased to function. By early 1964, there were only 8 left in Tianjin as compared to 35 the year before which itself was a significant drop from 1960. In 1959, focal universities, Peking, Qinghua and others directly controlled by the ministry, re instituted a unified national admissions policy, which was contradictory to the 1958 spirit. For more details, see Ibid., p. 268.
62. That these schools had indeed been useful was revealed in an indirect manner in various letters to newspapers written by a number of peasants. These schools had been imparting reading, writing and accounting skills to young and old alike in rural areas. Initially, the peasants had boycotted them, but soon realized its benefits and in letters, regretted their closure. *Renmin Ribao*, 18 May 1960 in *SCMP*, No. 2275, p.11, *NCNA*, 17 November 1961, in *SCMP*, No. 2629, p.25 and *NCNA*, 24 January 1962, in *SCMP*, No. 2671, p 13.
although ideological education and manual labour was still viewed as crucial in developing a proletarian outlook, in practice new educational policies tended to lay more stress on "concentrated courses, theory and basic knowledge and less on politics and labour."

Chen Yi's 'Speech to this year's Graduates from Peking's Higher Institutions' in August 1961, published in the number 17 issue of Zhongguo Qingnian (China Youth), thus seemed to harmonize with the prevailing mood.

"To study a specialised subject, one should study it with concentration and absorption, even to the seemingly foolish extent of forgetting to eat and sleep. One should take an interest in one's specialized subject and be totally involved in it for eight years, ten years, or even the whole of one's life. Only then can one achieve something. All great ancient scholars had this spirit of devotion. Kongzi 'was so absorbed in reading that he forgot to eat,' Dong Zhongshu 'did not look at his garden for three whole years,' Boddhidrama 'faced a wall for nine years.' We should learn from their spirit in searching for knowledge."

At about the same time an article in Hongqi by Guang Yarning, the Party Secretary of Nanjing University, also invoked traditional ideas in another important aspect of student life—the teacher-student relationship—and recommended that much could be imbibed from those ideas.

"The ancients thus regarded respect for the teacher as an indication of love for studies and attention to knowledge... For his part the teacher should 'learn without ever feeling tired of learning and teach without ever feeling tired of teaching,' love his pupils and set higher standards for them. Kongzi said, 'If you love somebody, will you not work hard for him? If you are loyal to somebody will you not advise him?' (Xian Wen, Analects). To be sure, the teacher-student relationship in society, like any other kind of relationship between one man and another, bears class impressions. But it has also left behind many useful and reasonable things for us."

The field of education and the difficulties in the way of revolutionizing it, are thus far too multifaceted and the "two line struggle", held by the Maoists in the mid and late sixties, as the root of all evil, cannot be the sole explanation and undoubtedly requires to be further explored. With the benefit of hindsight it is clear

63. Lofstedt, chp 2, n. 81 p. 111.
64. As quoted in Kam Louie, chp 2, n. 37, p. 84.
65. Ibid., p. 86.
that the early sixties did represent the period when the Maoist policies in the field of education were being gradually dismantled and the Maoist innovations were in places discontinued and in others simply neglected. Complications arise due to the fact, that most of the speeches and writings of that time continued to hail the spirit of the GLF. It has been pointed out that Liu Shaoqi had devised the “two track” educational system which retained the regular academic schools but expanded part-time schools to provide vocational training to innumerable people. Mao was in overall agreement. Certainly, he was dissatisfied - “the present state of affairs won’t do” - yet, he was of the “opinion” that the “line and orientation in education are correct, but (it is only) the methods (which) are wrong and must be changed...” And while such changes were going on in the field of education, historians were hailing the pedagogic views of Confucius.

Of the nearly two score articles written specifically on Confucius’ educational thought between 1949 and 1963, more than half a dozen were written in the short space of 1961-62. Chen Yi’s speech was soon followed by other works. On October 27, 1961, Gu Weijin, in an article in Guangming Ribao hailed the Confucian principles of learning and declared them as the best way yet to attain wisdom. Quoting the first line of the Analects, ‘Study and practice often’, Gu wrote that if Mao’s works were studied over and over again, following the above principle, it would enrich one’s ideas and perceptions. But students would benefit most of all by adopting Confucius’ attitude towards knowledge:

“Knowledge is to realize that you know something when you know it; and to be aware that you do not know something when you do not.”

Lauding the role of one of the outstanding philosophers of China would seem to satisfy nationalist aspirations at one level. At another, it was intended to argue for an induction of some Confucian values in the Chinese system of education. The Sino-Soviet split had ruled out the incorporation of the Soviet model; in any case, considerable displeasure and irritation had been vented on imitating the Soviet Union. The radical changes visualised in the Leap now seemed to be premature for China and in such a situation there was a possibility of Confucius’ ideas providing some inspiration. One of the ways in which this was sought to be

66. As quoted in F. Teiwes, n. 1, p. 500. Cultural Revolution sources would denounce the “two-track” educational system as a “revisionist” plot to “condemn the masses to inferior education while the academic schools produced a new bourgeois elite.
done was to seek correspondence between the fundamental principles of the CPC's educational policy and the views of Confucius.

A few historians began by refuting the charges of elitism levelled at Confucius, by showing that he was the first to make education available to all the people, provided they had the capability and the means; and that the majority of his disciples were commoners. He was a pioneer in making teaching a profession and in popularizing education. Two of his oft quoted remarks served to further enhance his appeal: "In teaching there should be no class distinction" and "from him who has brought his simple present of dried meat, seeking to enter my school, I have never withheld instruction."

Scholars critical of Confucius, such as Tang Yijie also appreciated Confucius' role in spreading education but which he said was more of a compulsion on Confucius' part rather than an act of volition. The chaotic conditions of the Spring and Autumn Period required able men to deal with the disorders of the time. This could only be done by drawing on all talent, irrespective of its origin. In this manner, Confucius played an important role in promoting the development of society. As in the fifties, once again Confucius' pedagogic methods were appreciated as being akin to the modern approach in understanding an individual student's level of knowledge and teaching accordingly. Confucius was praised for his ceaseless and indefatigable devotion to his profession and for his compilation of texts such as the Book of History and The Spring and Autumn Annals for the edification of his disciples. Some writers even argued that Confucius' educational ideas had become distorted in practice in later times (an argument again reminiscent of Kang Youwei). Shorn of those distortions, the Confucian educational system could easily prove useful in contemporary times.

The other aspect which was taken up to augment Confucius' relevance in modern China was the incorporation of physical education in the academic curriculum. Physical Education was generally considered to be the outcome of Western influence. Writers now tried to show how the Confucian tradition had also laid stress on sports - it was not the exclusive prerogative of Europe and the West. One historian in particular, Xin Lan, waxed eloquent on how Confucius was not only a sports enthusiast himself, but how he had included archery and charioteering among the courses he taught. Obviously, Xin Lan urged, much

69. See chp. 2.
research needed to be done on the Confucian tradition of sports.\textsuperscript{71}

Confucius, it was said, considered good physical health very important in life and he took adequate care of basic matters such as hygiene, proper regulation of eating and sleeping habits and even stressed the importance of a proper posture. Thus it was that he lived a fit life of 73 years. Most historical accounts depict him as tall and strong with a penchant for walking, fishing and hunting. Above all he was imbued with a fine sense of sportsmanship. It was only in dynasties subsequent to Confucius’ time that the status of physical culture and education was downgraded and only the literary aspects were emphasized. It was therefore important to bring out this aspect of the Confucian educational system.\textsuperscript{72}

Since the facet of Confucius most pilloried by the Marxists was his disdain for physical manual labour, many historians even attempted to distance Confucius from the tradition of an educated elite who looked down upon those who worked with their hands (even though there is ample evidence for it) by arguing that Confucius did not possess any disrespect for manual labour. He just did not do it himself. Writing in Yangcheng Wanbao (Canton Evening News) on 22 March 1962, Li Yinnong appreciated Confucius’ praise of the Sage Emperor, Shun, who had ploughed the fields, made pottery and fished for the welfare of the people, thereby constituting a model for emulation. Confucius also reportedly praised a woman who went against her husband’s wishes and carried on the task of weaving. The arguments presented by Lin to exonerate Confucius for “looking down slightly” on manual labour and the laboring people due to his “historical position” for which he “could be forgiven” were not convincing, and read more like an apology for Confucius, quite apart from being totally un-Marxist in approach.\textsuperscript{73}

Li Yinnong felt that Confucius had discouraged his disciples from engaging in manual labour and activities such as farming, on account of his political ambitions. The virtuous society he wished to create required such talents as would further the political goals. Li pointed out that society in that period was undergoing transformation and there was much upheaval. Confucius had contributed greatly to the shaping of society and in such circumstances, criticism of Confucius by those involved in manual labour\textsuperscript{74} was not

\textsuperscript{71} Xin Lan, Konzzi zai tiyu fangmian de shijian he zhuzhang [Confucius’ Actual Practice and Proposals Concerning Sports], Xi11 Tiyu [New Sports], no.8, 1962. As cited in Karn Louie, Ibid., pp. 86-87.
\textsuperscript{72} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{73} Li Yinnong, Lun Kongzi du laodong de taidu [On Confucius’ Attitude Towards Labour] in Ibid., p. 87.
\textsuperscript{74} This refers to the story in the Analects in which Confucius was criticized by three farmers for not participating in materially productive work. See the translation by James Legge, The Four Books (Hongkong: The Chinese Book Co. undated), pp. 276-78.
appropriate for those who had merely laboured and had left no lessons for later generations. Traditional ideas were rooted very strongly it seemed.

But by and large, both categories of historians, those who praised him and those who denounced him, seemed to be in agreement broadly, when evaluating his overall contribution to education. Even Guan Feng and Lin Yushi conceded progressive elements in Confucian education, despite many drawbacks. Similarly, Yang Rongguo, who still believed that Confucius' pedagogic views were primarily an instrument of his reactionary ideology, added to the general praise by granting Confucius his due in popularizing education. He even approvingly quoted the Sage: “I never get tired of learning and I never get wearied of teaching.” Ren Jiyu concluded that none could deny “the historical significance of Confucius. Being a great educator, historian, and learned scholar, Confucius occupies an extremely important place in ancient Chinese history. His teachings made a positive contribution to the feudal culture and education of China.”

By the end of 1962, the blooming and contending on China's greatest philosopher had begun to dwindle. The outstanding features of the year were the debate on the inheritability of the feudal ethics and a definite downplaying of class struggle as a factor in historical analysis. 1963 was another confusing period and the various trends in operation need to be identified to get the overall picture. At the Tenth Plenum of the Eighth CC on 24 September 1962, Mao Zedong's speech revealed his basic preoccupation: the dilution of class consciousnes and class-struggle in Chinese society. The liberalization set in motion since 1959 had brought China to a pass, from where it could move "towards its opposite". Obviously, stricter ideological control was needed. But the move to control or circumscribe the limits of intellectual activity in the second phase of blooming and contending was in no way comparable to the action seen in the aftermath of the hundred flowers period of 1957. Perhaps, the leaders in charge of Culture and Propaganda, did not wish to bring on another period of chaos, or maybe a situation where intellectual activity would once again cease. Or possibly, as Mao later accused, and which is discussed in the next chapter, the bureaucratization that had set in within the CPC, discouraged attempts to disturb the status quo. The upshot was that a good deal of rhetoric on class struggle was heard but no one was taken to task.

A commentator in Hongqi cautioned that “Dregs Must Not Be Taken for Essence.” This could be done

75. As quoted in Kam Louie, chp. 2, n. 37, p. 88.
only by following Mao’s direction: “place the political criterion first and the artistic criterion second.” 76

Shortly afterwards, an editorial in Xin jianshe declared, “In academic research, scholars of any subject including those of Marxism have no authority to consider their views absolutely correct and suppress views at variance to theirs.” 77

By the summer of 1963, a new campaign was underway - the SEC. Originally intended to deal with capitalistic tendencies in agriculture such as individual farming, it soon expanded, with the slogan of the Four Cleans, to combat erroneous activities of the Party cadres. It lasted well into 1966 and its principal themes were “to learn from the PLA, from Tach’ing and from Tachai, to conceive of socialist construction as a new revolution “to revolutionize all thinking and above all to learn from the thought of Mao Tse-tung.” 78

By mid-1963 also, Confucius was heard of less and less. In historical circles, emphasis once again shifted to the present and the more recent past. In schools and colleges, students were encouraged to think in terms of a history of the masses and begin the process themselves by writing the history of their village, commune, factory and family. It must be noted that this was not a novel experiment. This manner of history writing had been initiated in the late fifties by the Historical Research Institute of the Academy of Science which had sent historians to the villages. In an article in Xin jianshe in April 1959, Guo Moruo had welcomed this innovation as a unique contribution toward the eventual construction of a ‘people’s history’ or a ‘history of the masses’. 79

Through most of 1963-64, an interesting methodological debate was going on between the proponents of historicism and those who championed the class stand and viewpoint. This debate is not a new one in Chinese communist historiography - it was seen in the mid-fifties and before that during the twenties and thirties. But in 1963-64, particularly in its initial stages, the serious investigation of ideological premises offered hopes that Chinese communist historiography was finally coming of age. Chronologically, this debate began when the active ‘blooming and contending’ insofar as Confucius was concerned, was over and

78. Chalmers Johnson in Ping Ti-hou and Tang Tsou eds., n.20, p.433.
79. Cited in CNA, No. 326, pp. 4-5.
it preceded the Cultural Revolution of 1965-69. The outcome of the debate was to influence historiography in the late sixties and early seventies, but as it proceeded, it also attempted to sum up the premises of many of the arguments of 1960-62 and thereby helps in gaining a deeper insight into those early writings.

The adherents of the class viewpoint believed that "class division (was) the most important datum in the interpretation of the past and regarded the struggle of the oppressed against their oppressors as the motive force of history ...historical events be evaluated chiefly, if not exclusively, in terms of their attitude toward and contribution to class struggle." The proponents of historicism on the other hand admitted the centrality of class analysis, but "objected to this view which ignored all aspects of history except the allegedly unabated conflict between the exploiters and the exploited. Historicism...helped reveal the complexity of class structures in history, and the attenuations of relations between classes, by placing historical events in their temporal social context." 81

The debate opened in May 1963 with an essay deploring the current tendency to downgrade class struggle in historical investigation, implicitly criticizing the influence of the senior historians who had questioned a mechanical use of the concept. Lin sought to establish that historicism was implied in class analysis, so that if correctly applied, would be sufficient unto itself. Stressing historicism only "betrayed Marxism by adopting the objectivist (keguan zhuyi) standpoint toward history." 83

The senior Marxist historians such as Jian Bozan, Wu Han and others advocated a combination of the two approaches, for class analysis by itself could not tackle the tremendous complexity of Chinese history. As early as 1962 Jian had stated, (which he now reiterated), that,

"Class viewpoint and historicism must be combined. If class viewpoint is adopted and historicism disregarded, it is easy to negate everything onesidedly; if historicism is adopted and class viewpoint

82. The historian this was definitely aimed at was Prof. Liu Jie who had reportedly queried in November 1962: "In brief, the theory of class struggle is practical and effective when applied in current politics but when applied in the interpretation of ancient historical events, is it necessary to use the theory in such a dogmatic manner and so mechanically?" Quoted in Renmin Ribao 18 June 1963. Cited in A. Feuerwerker, chp. 2. n.1 p.vi.
disregarded, it is easy to affirm everything onesidedly. Only if the two are unified is it possible to
produce a full and fair judgement on historical events." 84

These debates could not remain long immune to the increasing demands by the Maoists to stress class
struggle which in turn increasingly diminished the academic nature of the debates and gradually narrowed
their scope. Simultaneously, it widened the gap between the older and the younger generation of historians,
as the historical establishment also became caught up with the ongoing power struggles. The aim with which
the debate had begun - to settle the issue of the correct historical method - soon gave way to the advocacy of
class analysis as the only proper approach to the study of Chinese history.

As mentioned earlier, Mao's call for emphasizing class struggle in September 1962 had not yielded
immediate results. It was only in October 1963 that Zhou Yang, in a speech to the faculties of Philosophy
and Social Sciences of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, came out strongly in favour of Mao and censured
the unwillingness and lack of enthusiasm among the intellectuals to apply class struggle in their work. He
then denounced those historians and philosophers who had been championing the cause of 'timeless
concepts', 'abstract values' and 'supraclass concepts'.

"Completely discarding historical materialism, the modern revisionists substitute the bourgeois
theory of human nature for the Marxist-Leninist teachings on class struggle and proletarian
dictatorship. They have equated the concept of humanism so-called with that of scientific
Communism... We are firmly opposed to substituting the theory of human nature in the abstract and
the preaching of fraternity for the standpoint of class analysis and class struggle. We are against
describing Communism as Humanism and against placing humanism above Communism". 85

As the methodological debates came to an end towards the end of 1964, the strife within the CPC had
become all too obvious. On June 27, 1964, Mao issued a directive which removed any doubts as to his

84. Jian Bozan, "Muqian shixue yanjiu zhong cunzai de jige wenji" [Some Problems of Contemporary Historiography] in Jian
Bozan 'xueshuo lunzhu ji [Collection of Jian Bozan's Theoretical Essays] (Shanghai wenhuibao 1966), p. 30. As cited in
Dirlik, n. 80, p. 468.
dissatisfaction and displeasure with the functioning of the Party, in particular with the Cultural Bureaucracy.

“In the past fifteen years, most of their publications ... and by and large the people in them ... have acted as high and mighty bureaucrats, have not gone to the workers, peasants and soldiers and have not reflected socialist reality and socialist construction. In recent years they have slid right down to the brink of revisionism. Unless they remould themselves in real earnest in the future, they are bound to become a group like the Hungarian Petofi Club.”

Following this directive, a rectification campaign was launched - but it was not directed against the historians, beyond general criticism of erroneous concepts. It was not until 1966 that they would become the targets of major criticism campaigns. The rectification campaign was not comprehensive enough or thoroughgoing to satisfy Mao who then determined to bypass the Party channels in his endeavour to revolutionize Chinese society.

The most striking feature of historiography in China, in the period 1959-1964, was the emergence of a corps of young historians, strongly and ideologically committed to the Maoist approach to history. Increasingly, developments in the field of historiography came to be influenced and modified by the interaction and clash between them and the senior historians, which hinged on the extent to which 'class' was emphasized in defining the role of history in the ongoing revolution. This generational gap continued to widen as political demands on the historical establishment intensified and as the relationship between politics and history took a critical and controversial turn.

Secondly, a considerable degree of sophistication and refinement of the ideological parameters within which history was being studied, surfaced. A decade of political study and the wider dissemination of Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought, produced results. Unlike the fifties, when dialectical materi-

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86. Revisionism was beginning to loom very large in Chinese politics and society. In his Tenth Plenum speech Mao had called attention to the existence of right wing opportunism in China and suggested that “it should be called Chinese revisionism.” Schram, Chp. 1, n. 60, p. 192. The First Secretary of Honan province, Zhang Pinghua stated that the aim of the SEC, which was launched shortly after the Tenth Plenum, was to “prevent revisionism” Chalmers Johnson in Ping Ti-ho and Tang Tsou eds., n. 20, p. 433. Revisionism, in the course of the SEC broadened to include all manner of bourgeois thinking and style of living, the desire for an easy-going life, corruption, extravagance and other capitalistic tendencies.
alism, historicism and class struggle were utilized in a rather perfunctory fashion, a more confident and assured handling could now be observed. Even intellectuals like Feng Youlan, whose analysis could by no means be termed Marxist, incorporated these concepts in their work with greater advantage.

Side by side, emerged another realization: that the complexities of Chinese history and the ancient concepts and ideas demanded a more thoroughgoing enquiry into the past and that the appraisal of historical figures especially, needed more than the application of the class stand and viewpoint. These intricacies led, on the one hand to a greater and more through research into historical sources and as a consequence brought about an appreciation of China's rich and varied cultural legacy on the other. The prevailing nationalistic fervour undoubtedly played a substantial role.

As in the fifties, so now, extremely positive assessments of Confucius were made. Of course, conceding the greater competence of the Chinese historians in handling Marxist criteria does not imply the absence of drawbacks and problems. Very often the same historical facts could be used to support totally different views and while subscribing to the same scheme of periodization, two entirely different conclusions could be drawn.

The difference between the appraisals of Confucius in the fifties and the early sixties, lay in the approach and orientation of the historians to the question of inheritability of the values and ethics of the past. What could be usefully assimilated from the past and how was it is to be done exercised their minds. The chaos and dislocations caused by the GLF, the continuing hold of the past and traditional ways of thinking - all played their part in moulding their attitude to their past.

In the late sixties, no subtlety was employed in the advocacy of the class viewpoint. There was also no ambiguity as to whether dissenting approaches would be either tolerated or allowed. The demands of the on going power struggle were taken very seriously by the radical historians and they would admit no divergence. So there was no question of debate. Whereas, the discussion of the fifties and early sixties had definitely been motivated by the determination to evolve a correct and satisfactory methodology. The fact that the ruling communist party espoused a particular point of view does not imply that advocates of a different viewpoint at once necessarily stood in direct and open contradiction. Western analyses have sought to portray the Chinese historical establishment as sharply divided into opposing groups contending with each other and those who
wrote against the official position were committing an "ideological sin." It is one thing to suggest that the applicability or the suitability of the application of class struggle in the analysis of Chinese history was questioned by many historians and quite another to say that these historians consequently advocated historicism in total conflict with the class viewpoint. Wu Han and Jian Bozan had recommended that the two approaches be blended. Hence, questioning class struggle did not *per se* make one a champion of historicism and *vice versa*. A closer scrutiny of historical writings of the period also does not bear this out. Even Liu Jie, a strong proponent of ren had objected to the use of the theory of class struggle "*in such a dogmatic manner and so mechanically?*" (emphasis added)

In the end, the issue was decided - for the time being - by the political climate and by the fact that almost no articles expressing dissenting or contrary opinions were written. Henceforth, the class method and standpoint and class struggle was to be the only anvil on which Chinese historical figures would be judged and Chinese history be examined.

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88. Albert Feuerwerker, chp. 2, n. 12, p. vi.
89. See n. 82.