

## THE POLITICS OF SILENT DE-MAOIZATION IN CHINA : ITS INITIAL PHASE DURING THE POST-MAO PERIOD

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**H**ISTORY has taught us what amazing political dramas ensue after a dictator, having built a unique polity and distinctive era, leaves the stage. Chinese politics in the post-Mao period illustrates such a drama. Mao's death, like Stalin's, has revealed that the ruler was deeply integrated with the political system which he dominated, and with the ideology and the policy by which the political system was sustained. In each case, the death of the dictator has caused what he built or was trying to build to remain "an unfinished revolution," confronted by pressure to change.

The so-called "Gang of Four," the ideologues embodying Mao's crisis-consciousness in his later years, were expelled from political life a month after Mao's death, and their purge was followed by the nearly total reorganization of the party leadership. Large-scale revision of the party's ideology and policy was undertaken at a surprisingly quick tempo, and with these revisions the mood of the society has drastically changed. Looking at the changed China of the present, we may well say that Mao's era has already come to be a historical one. The present party leadership is obviously looking for a way to depart from Mao's politics of the continuous revolution, realization of which was his eternal wish, and is carrying out a policy of technocracy which gives highest priority to the emancipation of productive forces and the modernization of agriculture, industry, national defense, and scientific technology. We should characterize these new trends as phenomena of a de-Maoization oriented toward further departure from such essential components of Maoism as the strategy for socialist construction.

However, the Hua Guofeng regime seems to be going its peculiar way—somewhat different from the path taken by the Soviet leaders immediately after the death of Stalin—in an earnest search for stability and governability during the transition from the Mao era to the future, a transition which is still strictly bound both by the legacy of the past era and by the pressure of new demands generated among the masses. The approaches taken toward the new era seem to reflect differences between Mao and Stalin in their contributions to nationbuilding, and differences between Maoism and Stalinism as systems of rule. Post-Mao China experienced drastic and dramatic changes of leadership and policy, on the one hand, while on the other hand the new leadership took maximum advantage of Mao's thought as an "integrative myth" and Mao as an idol of the Chinese people. We may acknowledge here a sophisticated manipulation of ideology in de-Maoization: the essential elements of Mao's thought were legitimately removed just by introducing another set of Mao's words, one which expressed ideas con-

tradictory to his essential views. Manipulation of quotations from Mao's remarks suggested that Mao's authority was still in the initial phase the most effective weapon by which his successors could defend the legitimacy of their new policies. As a result, the configuration of "de-Maoization" remained ambiguous, just as the concept of Maoism remained ambiguous during the whole period of Mao's rule.<sup>1</sup>

The joint editorial on the first anniversary of Mao's death stated "How great the changes were in the past year! Chairman Mao's behests have been fulfilled or are in the process of being carried out. His proletarian revolutionary line is being implemented fully and correctly" [16, p. 21]. And in the same editorial, the new chairman Hua Guofeng, who was alleged to be a promoter of great changes, was described as "a brilliant model person who studies and employs completely and rightly the thought of Mao Zedong." The political leaders in China today have no other choice but to assert that they are Mao's "loyal successors." The new leadership must maintain the facade that de facto de-Maoization is compatible with remaining Maoist doctrine, while it is searching for a fundamental transformation. The solution will be found only in a metamorphosis of the Mao myth, which would adapt the myth to the urgent needs of the leadership in "the new period of development." We may find significant similarities between Hua Guofeng's endeavor and Soviet policies of "silent de-Stalinization" in the early post-Stalin period, because his regime is following the strategy of iconography and icon-worship. But it should be noted that its steps are sometimes the reverse of, or are more ambivalent than, those of de-Stalinization.<sup>2</sup>

The process of transforming the thought of Mao Zedong in the post-Mao period will no doubt attract the interest of students who are concerned about the fate of revolutionary thought after its generator's death. The iconography of Mao promoted by his successors will also become a typical example of political maneuver in the transitional period, one to be studied by political scientists. These concerns will probably leap up to the final and basic question: what was Mao's role in the period of socialist construction in China? As the question "was Stalin really necessary?" was once introduced by Alec Nove, it may not be long before the analogous question concerning Mao will be discussed in China. This essay is intended to give an outline of the changing role of the Mao myth and some political implications of these changes.

## I. THE POLITICAL IMPLICATION OF THE PURGE OF "THE GANG OF FOUR"

As is generally recognized, the purge of the so-called "Gang of Four" was the

<sup>1</sup> The arguments on the conceptualization of Maoism in the period of socialism are given in [26, pp. 172-74].

<sup>2</sup> The gradual shrinking of the image of Stalin's role in the history of the Soviet Union and some actions for emancipation from him were said to have taken place in the Soviet Union immediately after his death. See [28, p. 55]. The words "silent de-Stalinization" were quoted from [13, p. 33].

most sensational event determining the tragic fate of Maoism in the post-Mao period. Hua Guofeng described it as "another great turning point in the revolutionary history of our nation" one year after the purge [9]: the present party leadership has no hesitation in stating officially that the purge marked a symbolic watershed in the history of Communist China. However, political maneuver has also been employed by the leadership to leave the genuine political and ideological implications of the purge unexamined, while a torrent of exaggerated denunciations against "the Gang" was loosed by the winners of the power struggle in Beijing.

We may assume that the "great transformation" was brought about as a logical consequence of the disintegration of the characteristic structure of the Maoist leadership, which took place through the purge of "the Gang." In order to clarify the political implication of the purge, it would be useful to summarize here the basic structure of the Maoist leadership during the period of socialist construction. As is often said, it was based on potential "pluralism" among the party subleaders who to some extent shared divergent ideology, policy orientation, and interests, and it suffered sometimes—and more often in the later period—from power and policy conflicts. Mao's presence integrated leadership and kept a balance of power among its members in successive periods, an indispensable function. However, there remained a problem: although "the thought of Mao Zedong" was supported among them as a general framework of the strategy for socialist construction, "the thought" itself was composed of contradictory and divergent approaches from which the leaders could extract convenient principles to legitimize their own choices of policies. Mao himself was known to have been wavering between the revolutionary and the realistic-adaptive approaches. But even in this circumstance, it was generally presumed that the presence of Mao helped to restrain group conflict among the party leaders, reflecting the versatile nature of Mao's thought, and that his very presence gave the appearance of consistency to party doctrine and organization.

As shown in the gradual collapse of the party leadership after the Cultural Revolution, however, this method of stabilizing within the leadership became more and more vulnerable as Mao's "crisis consciousness" grew alarmed and his ability to control the political situation declined, finally giving way to more explicit and sharp intra-party struggle. Then, in the last year of Mao's leadership, only a fragile party leadership dominated by "the Gang" was left, and the precarious power balance within this leadership disintegrated at a blow following Mao's death. The disintegration of the leadership and the following sharp change of political orientation imply the failure of Mao's hope, in his later years, to leave a broadly-based collective leadership which would maintain and promote his idea of continuous revolution. We may also see from the leadership's disintegration that the contradiction between the aims of the aged revolutionary, who believed in the compatibility of "grasping revolution" and "promoting production," was exposed as inherently insoluble immediately after his death. Once the "revolution" group, an important component of the Maoist leadership, was expelled, the genuine policies of the "production" group came to the fore with unusual speed and scale. This shift seems to indicate the severity of the antagonism, long ac-

cumulated, between the two groups. In this context, we may conclude that the purge of "the Gang" marked the beginning of the end of the Maoist leadership as a structure of governance, and at the same time it implied "the second death" of Mao (as one journalist put it) [5, p. 15]. "The Gang" were obviously the last political spearhead supported by Mao to maintain the continuous revolution, and their disappearance naturally opened up the way toward erosion of the central theme of Mao's thought since the Cultural Revolution, and toward the political death—following the physical one—of his thought.

## II. THE PROTOTYPE OF THE STRATEGY FOR "DE-MAOIZATION"

Probably Hua Guofeng, the winner of the succession struggle, faced a serious dilemma in legitimating his leadership. In the light of the location of power and authority at that moment, when he purged "the Gang" in cooperation with middle-roaders, the bureaucrats' group, and military leaders. The logic of the denunciation of "the Gang" had accordingly to be a "complicated and difficult" one. Hua Guofeng confessed this kind of problem in a sophisticated way in his remarks that "Chairman Mao's serious illness and death and the position and power held by the 'gang of four' were special circumstances that further heightened the complexity and difficulty of the latest struggle between the two lines" [8, p. 48].

Hua's difficult position was caused by the peculiar circumstance that his appointment to the chairmanship of the party was allegedly based on the honor of Mao Zedong's nomination in spite of the fact that he had then purged Mao's protégés including Mao's wife. Assuming the mantle of ideological orthodoxy, he employed such transparent tactics as excommunicating these protégés from the Maoist school in order to solve these problems. His first step toward achieving these aims was to "expose" that Mao and "the Gang" were not a unit, but especially since the spring of 1974, had opposed each other, as shown by Mao's repeated criticism of "the Gang." The second step was to deny completely their positive role as adherents to the thought of Mao Zedong since the Cultural Revolution. "The Gang" were described as four traitors against the idea of the Cultural Revolution and as anti-revolutionaries. The third step was to claim personally the major ideas of the Cultural Revolution and all of the valuable achievements and practices of the party and the masses produced since the Cultural Revolution. The final step was to establish his position as a perfect successor to the heritage of Mao Zedong thought, at least in terms of language. The logical conclusion of these endeavors was given by Hua's remarks that "smashing the 'gang of four' is yet another signal victory achieved in the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution" [10, p. 49].

The more detailed denunciation directed against "the Gang" immediately after the purge damn them as "the anti-party and ultra-right clique" pursuing "the counter-revolutionary revisionist line," in Hua Guofeng's term at the Party Congress, and "bourgeois conspirators and careerists like Khrushchov; they are typical representatives of the bourgeoisie inside the Party in the full sense and unrepentant capitalist-roaders still on the capitalist road," as on the editorial of the People's

daily [25, pp. 6–8]. It is ironical enough to see that the same words of condemnation against political enemies earlier uttered by “the Gang” were now directed against “the Gang” themselves. However, it does not seem likely that merely reversing the spear could save completely the “complicated and difficult” position of the new leadership seeking to be legitimated. As the breadth of the denunciation gradually enlarged from just “conspiracy” to seize power to other issues, serious questions could not but be generated about the relationship between Mao and “the Gang,” and about Mao’s responsibility and leadership capability. It was natural that the new leadership could scarcely make persuasive remarks on this matter. The fragmentary quotations scraped up from Mao’s words could not serve as decisive evidence to prove Mao opposed “the Gang,” because it was obvious that the remarks were arbitrarily snatched out of context, and the interpretation of some as expression of Mao’s intention to exclude “the Gang” was patently forced. Finally, it was rather tragic for the new leadership that some of their arguments jeopardized the base of their own legitimacy. One good example is an article published in *Hongqi*, which offered an amazing new interpretation. The article stated that “a series of Chairman Mao’s directives in recent years on studying doctrine and opposing and preventing revisionism was levelled directly against them [i.e., the Gang of Four]” [30, p. 23]. If that is the case, the new leadership would have to explain why it was possible for “the Gang,” who must have already been regarded as approaching “revisionism,” to commit such crimes as “abusing their authority,” “indulging in expanding bourgeois rights,” “blocking and distorting Chairman Mao’s directives,” and waging their factional power struggle extensively within the party and the government. And it should also be asked whence sprang their power as they “set up another ‘central committee’ and placed it above Chairman Mao and the Party Central Committee,” and “opposed and persecuted our great leader Chairman Mao, attacked and framed our esteemed and beloved Premier Chou [Zhou]” [19, pp. 8–10]. Another contradiction is to be found between the argument that “the Gang” were “isolated and feeble” [11, p. 15] and Hua’s political report to the Party Congress stating that “the confusion the Gang created in ideology, theory, and political line and their corrosive influence on our ranks must not be underestimated” [8, p. 73]. These inconsistent remarks lead us immediately to ask again what the real relationship between Mao and “the Gang” was. It is actually difficult for observers of the development of Chinese politics since the Cultural Revolution to fail to acknowledge Mao’s positive backing of “the Gang.”

We can find here a prototype of the strategy of de-Maoization—in an embryo stage—undertaken by the new leadership. This is the case even though legitimation of the purge was so questionable, and despite the fact that the existence of “Chairman Mao’s wish before his death” to purge “the Gang” remained totally doubtful. The three principles of the prototype were closely interrelated. The first principle was to remould the image of Mao by altering the understanding of his aims and role. In other words, it was a first step in the alteration of Mao’s political orientation. The second principle was to shrink Mao’s prestige as “the great helmsman” in order to ease steps to revise the thought of Mao Zedong

during the post-Mao period. In this endeavor another image of Mao was presented, in which the chairman's capacity to lead appeared to weaken under "the opposition and persecution" of "the Gang."<sup>3</sup> The last principle was to restore the prestige of the late Zhou Enlai, a move begun immediately after the purge of "the Gang." Through taking advantage of Zhou's popularity among the masses and creating the new legend of Zhou's identity with Mao in terms of "the party line, plan, and policy,"<sup>4</sup> the new leadership looked for a way to evade possible criticism of Mao in the anti-"Gang" campaign. The rehabilitation of Zhou was surely the most effective political weapon to rupture ideological barriers blocking de facto de-Maoization in the initial stage. The new legend identifying Zhou with Mao seems to have constituted the basis for the subsequent revised iconography of Mao, which enabled the new leadership to depart from Mao's politics of the continuous revolution by concentrating its denunciations against "the Gang" as a surrogate for Mao.

### III. THE POLITICAL ARTS OF THE SECOND REHABILITATION OF DENG XIAOPING

It is not clear what view of the successive development of Chinese politics the new leadership held immediately after purging "the Gang." Probably there was no clear unanimity within the Political Bureau concerning the policies to be taken in the new era, how to reconstruct the political system, or the speed of transformation. However, the circumstances in which the new leadership was to function shifted beyond its expectations. The radical changes of the political and social mood were somewhat comparable to those in the initial period of the Cultural Revolution, marked by the upsurge of the Red Guard movement and an enlarging confusion throughout the whole nation. As well as prompting an eruption of mass reaction akin to that seen in the Cultural Revolution, the new decisions of the party (once it had launched its full-scale criticism against "the Gang") liberated the huge forces of resentment against the Cultural Revolution which had lain latent within the society. The new leadership received the support of a wide range of the masses, who were celebrating "the second liberation," evidently because it had managed to expel "the Gang," (described as "noxious insects") although the legitimation of its victory in the succession struggle still remained uncertain. In such political circumstances, it was imperative for the new leadership to adopt a posture favorable to the real demands of the masses. Thus, Hua's leadership was speeded toward the new orientation by an irresistible surge of mass expectations arising from the roots of society, just as Mao's ability to control was temporarily lost in the unexpected eruption of mass rebellion at the onset of the Cultural Revolution.

The second rehabilitation of Deng Xiaoping was a symbolic event expressing the strength of irresistible pressures from below toward transformation and the

<sup>3</sup> A similar strategy is found in the shrinking of the Stalin's image referred to above.

<sup>4</sup> The article published by the theory group of the working room of the State Council seems to reflect this strategy most eminently. See [10, pp. 8-21].

swiftness of change in the political climate. While many China-watchers were skeptical of the possibility of his rehabilitation in view of the circumstances of his second downfall in the spring of 1976, this most perplexing question had to be faced as an urgent political issue within a few months after Mao's death, even though it might jeopardize the myth of Mao's infallibility. It was reported that in the Central Work Conference held in March of 1977, which marked the starting point of Hua's endeavor to reorganize his leadership, he suggested "on behalf of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee that the Third Plenary Session of the Tenth Party Central Committee make an official decision so that Comrade Teng Hsiao-ping [Deng Xiaoping] could resume work" [2, p. 5]. This manner of dealing with the matter implies that Deng's second rehabilitation had already been basically approved at the same time the reorganized Hua leadership was approved. As we know, Deng's resumption of his former office was realized in July 1977, in parallel with the formal ratification of Hua's appointment to the chairmanship of the Party and the chairmanship of the party's Central Military Committee.

However, logically speaking, the complete rehabilitation of Deng was bound to threaten the legitimacy of Hua's leadership. What was wrong with Deng had intentionally been left ambiguous while he was in eclipse. Actually, Deng was the most eminent victim of Mao's politics since the Cultural Revolution and is known to have kept his tough resisting spirit. On the other hand, Hua was elevated to the vice-chairmanship after Deng's downfall and was badly in need of appearing to be the defender of Mao's thought and directives. Above all, there remained the most serious problem that Deng's rehabilitation conflicted with the resolution of the Central Committee (April 1976) in which it was stated that "the nature of the Teng Hsiao-ping [Deng Xiaoping] problem has turned into one of antagonistic contradiction. On the proposal of our great leader Chairman Mao, the Political Bureau unanimously agrees to dismiss Teng Hsiao-ping from all posts both inside and outside the Party" [23, p. 3]. In this sense, it seemed extremely difficult to establish the propriety of Deng's second rehabilitation without damaging the myth of Mao's infallibility. In other words, the successful metamorphosis of the Mao myth depended upon how the new leadership dealt with Deng's case. The new leadership seemed to achieve initial success in navigating these waters through adroit argument and maneuver.

The Communique of the Third Plenum of the Central Committee (July 22, 1977) and the joint editorial of the party organs [15] provided an official interpretation of the circumstances of Deng's second downfall and second rehabilitation. The case was attributed to conspiracy and evil deeds by "the Gang": "going their own way contrary to Chairman Mao's directives, they feverishly attacked and fabricated accusations against Comrade Teng Hsiao-ping"; then "the anti-Party clique of Wang Hung-wen [Wang Hongwen], Chang Chun-chiao [Zhang Chunqiao], Chiang Ching [Jiang Qing], and Yao Wen-yuan wantonly tampered with Chairman Mao's great theory of continuing the revolution under the dictatorship of the proletariat, distorted the Party's basic line, deliberately reversed the relations between ourselves and the enemy in the historical period of socialism, and pushed an ultra-right counter-revolutionary revisionist line ideologically,

politically, and organizationally." It is interesting to see that, according to these remarks, Deng Xiaoping seemed to have been identified as "a friend" as a result of another "reversal" made by the new leadership. Hua Guofeng was also reported to have instructed the participants in the Central Work Conference held in March that "all slanders and unsupported accusations against Comrade Deng Xiaoping made by the Gang of Four should be repulsed." Still, it is plain that the communique and the joint editorial were carefully drawn to avoid clear or direct reference to Deng's innocence and righteousness, the presumed basis of his rehabilitation. The party wisely employed this subtle rhetorical devices to avoid the conflict, and also adopted the strategy of criticizing the critic, and attacked only the errors committed by "the Gang" without defending their target.

Using this style of argument, the party evaded examining plainly the propriety of "the proposal of Chairman Mao." The existence of "the proposal" and Mao's own will seemed to be either ignored or effectively revised. The communique took no notice at all of the Resolution of the Central Committee on the dismissal of Deng. Hua Guofeng also did not refer to Deng's dismissal in his Political Report to the Eleventh Party Congress held in August of the same year. But, on the other hand, Hua took the obviously audacious step of taking advantage of another "proposal" in the resolution passed simultaneously [22, p. 3] to defend his own interests. Hua referred to the decision to promote him, the counterpart of Deng's dismissal, by remarking that "on April 7, again upon personal proposal of Chairman Mao and its adoption by the Political Bureau, a decision was made on the choice of the First Vice-Chairman of the Central Committee and Premier of the State Council" [8, p. 19]. Thus, one of Mao's last formal directives was ignored, possibly to be eliminated from the official history of the Chinese Communist Party. This evasion completed the political camouflage of pretense. The joint editorial was even more tricky in stating that "Chairman Mao had long ago made a clear and all-round assessment of Comrade Teng Hsiao-ping" [15]. These words appear intended to suggest that Mao had a favorable appraisal of Deng (given their utterance in the context of Deng's rehabilitation), although the substance of Mao's appraisal remained ambiguous. To further assert Mao's trust of Deng, Hua said "Chairman Mao decided that Premier Chou should be responsible for the arrangement of personnel for the Fourth National People's Congress and the State Council. He also proposed that Comrade Teng Hsiao-ping be Vice-Chairman of the Party Central Committee, Vice-Premier of the State Council, Vice-Chairman of the Military Commission of the Central Committee and concurrently Chief of the General Staff, and later entrusted him with the responsibility of presiding over the day-to-day work of the Central Committee during Premier Chou's grave illness" [8, pp. 13-14].

The Fourth National People's Congress provoked speculation among China-watchers about the inner politics of the party leadership, because Mao was mysteriously absent for the first time in its history.<sup>5</sup> An entirely new image of this Congress was given by Hua Guofeng. He went further to establish the new image

<sup>5</sup> The analysis of the first session of the Fourth National People's Congress is given in [29, pp. 301-19].



in his Report, stating that "in accordance with Chairman Mao's instructions, the Political Bureau, with Comrade Teng Hsiao-ping in charge, severely criticized the 'gang of four.' Both earlier and later, the Political Bureau issued a number of documents<sup>6</sup> with Chairman Mao's approval to counter interference and sabotage by the 'gang of four,' strengthen the Party's leadership in all branches of work and implement Chairman Mao's revolutionary line" [8, p. 16]. Meanwhile, Hua still refrained from referring to Zhang Chunqiao's appointment as head of the General Political Department of the People's Liberation Army, probably "through Chairman Mao's own proposal." In short, it would be logical that the political distance between Mao and Deng be shortened by political maneuvers in which Deng was described as a trusted de facto successor of Zhou, Mao was identified with Zhou and distinguished from "the Gang," and finally, Mao was taken to be as a true supporter of Deng, the victim of the "reversal" and "betrayal" of his directives by "the Gang."<sup>7</sup>

#### IV. THE DE FACTO DESTRUCTION OF THE DOCTRINE OF CONTINUOUS REVOLUTION

Within several months after Mao's death, some conciliation of differences among the leaders may have been required: a part of the so-called Cultural Revolution Group still remained in the leadership and must have been perplexed by the rapid change of political direction. But it was evident that Deng had achieved a silent triumph over Mao through his complete resumption of office and the "reversal" of Mao's April 1976 appraisal of him. The deliberate ambiguity with which that reversal was stated in the communique should be taken as evidence suggesting conciliatory efforts within the leadership. Furthermore, Deng's triumph determined the orientation of Chinese politics in the post-Mao period.

<sup>6</sup> "A series of documents" seems to have been composed of three documents, drafted under the leadership of Deng Xiaoping in the autumn of 1975, which later were labelled "the three big poisonous weeds" by "the Gang": that is, "On the General Program for All Work of the Whole Party and the Whole Country" (in *Selections from People's Republic of China Magazines*, American Consulate General, Hong Kong, No. 921, April 25, 1977); "Some Questions on Accelerating the Development of Industry" (Discussion draft, September 2, 1975, in *Selections from People's Republic of China Magazines*, No. 926, May 23, 1977); and "Several Questions on the Work in Science and Technology" (Summary report, in *ibid.*).

<sup>7</sup> Deng Xiaoping's address was supported by the participants in the National Science Conference in March 1978, because he brought about a kind of "the problems which we could not refer clearly, even if we could refer."

Fang Yi appreciated "the major principle of the report of the Academy of Science" in his report to the conference, stating that it was actually a revolutionary manifesto, in the situation at that time, to impeach the activities of Lin Piao and especially the 'gang of four' who destroyed work in science and technology. "The State Council discussed this document. Chairman Mao went through this document." It is interesting to see the circumstances under which this report on "Several Questions on the Work in Science and Technology" was said to have been drafted: "in 1975 comrade Hua Guofeng was assigned to manage the activities of Science and Technology by the party center," and he gave a series of directives "along with Deng Xiaoping to the Academy of Science." If that is the case, we should ask which side Hua was standing on that time, Deng's or "the Gang's."

Once the strategic prototype of de-Maoization was provided, the next task for the new leadership was to achieve a prompt but careful departure from the ideology and policy which had dominated the party since the Cultural Revolution. In this venture, criticism against "the Gang" was still used as the most effective weapon to destroy the essential principles of continuous revolution. Hua assigned the bulk of his Political Report at the 1977 Party Congress to criticism of "the Gang." He urged that the influence of "the Gang" should not only be expunged from politics and organization, but also criticized from the viewpoint of philosophy, political economy, and the theory of scientific socialism, indicating that he was looking for a new interpretation of Mao's thought.<sup>8</sup> A more theoretical criticism was gradually emerging, while the official definition of "the Gang" as "ultra-right-clique" and "reactionary" had been given since the Third Plenum. Theoretical criticism focused on revision of the understanding of subjects such as "the character, the motive forces and the targets of the continued revolution." On "the reversal of the relationship of the people to the enemy" which was allegedly the most serious error made in their theory of the continuous revolution, the joint editorial charged that "they dished up a counter-revolutionary political programme which equated veteran cadres with 'democrats' and 'democrats' with 'capitalist-roaders,' fabricated 'a bourgeois class' inside the Party and altogether reversed the relationship of the people to the enemy. Their 'continued revolution' was in every sense a continued counter-revolution" [7, p. 60]. These words seem to imply a doctrinal basis to legitimize rehabilitation of the old cadres and to criticize the main theme of the Cultural Revolution.

Wang Che, in a rather theoretical article published in *Renmin ribao* in late 1977, considered the doctrine of the continuous revolution as held by "the Gang" in the broader context of examining the propriety of their strategy for socialist construction [29].<sup>9</sup> He argued that, "revisionistic alteration of Marxism such as the 'gang of four's' was not generated through negating the significance of the class struggle during the whole period of socialism, but through exaggerating, distorting, and revising, from the viewpoint of the 'left wing,' the idea of the class struggle which was picked up without paying much attention to the contextual consistency of the whole doctrinal system of Marxism, and through negating other basic principles of Marxism." A clear example of such alteration was allegedly to be found in the attitude of "the Gang" toward Mao's three important directives issued in 1974 on the doctrinal studies of the proletarian dictatorship, stability-unity, and the development of the national economy. Wang Che continued that "the 'gang of four' accepted only one item of the doctrinal studies of the proletarian dictatorship, while throwing away the other two directives beyond the cloud. . . . They denounced on a large scale the so-called 'theory of the productive forces' and 'the theory of the disappearance of the class struggle,' stressing the significance of grasping the key link of the class struggle. They actually intended

<sup>8</sup> Hua Guofeng had already referred to the same topics at the Dazhai Conference in December 1976.

<sup>9</sup> Wang Che in the article [29] remarked that Deng suggested understanding the three directives "comprehensively and persistently" in 1975.

to let their 'class struggle' take the place of the other directives and negated both the linkage among the three directives and the importance of stability-unity and development of the national economy." Therefore, the error of "the Gang" was finally described as exaggerating class struggle with the result that "they broke the whole system of Marxism to pieces, and inevitably transformed originally correct things into absurd ones."

Wang's argument on the ideological deviation of "the Gang" apparently reflected the new interpretation of the thought of Mao Zedong which the new leadership planned to establish. The central theme of this new interpretation was given in the indirect manner of negative affirmation of the importance of "taking class struggle as the key link." Wang seemed to have turned his argument away from class struggle itself when he wrote "class struggle has certainly not ceased to exist. But, the most dangerous enemies are phony Marxists who wish to struggle against the proletariat and the revolutionary people, while noisily lecturing on 'the class struggle.'" The same kind of argument was found in the editorial of the *Renmin ribao*, which stated that "'taking class struggle as the key link' is something entirely different from what the 'gang of four' advocated. They used it to persecute people so as to attain their criminal aim of usurping Party and state power" [20, p. 4]. We should note here that only "the distortions" made by "the Gang" were under attack. The question of Mao's actual idea of class struggle was not raised, if, indeed, Mao's understanding really was different from that of "the Gang."

The most definite statement of the new conception of class struggle was that given in a September 1977 analysis by the State Planning Commission which stated that "the struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie at present finds concentrated expression in the struggle waged by our Party against the 'gang of four'" [24]. Hua Guofeng also said in his Political Report that "the great class struggle to expose and criticize the 'gang of four' is the fundamental motive force now propelling our cause forward." It is ironical that the central theme of "grasping revolution" was recast in a contrary way to attack the very group which once placed such heavy stress on "grasping revolution." This kind of reversal no doubt marked the beginning of the substantial decline of Mao's thought on the class struggle.

Besides these indirect maneuvers to shift the ideological orientation of the Party, it is likely that the new leadership took more positive steps toward the plain modification of Mao's theory of the class struggle itself when it reexamined the theme of "the bourgeois class existing within the Party," which had been the central theme for Mao since the Cultural Revolution. In the Political Report, Hua revised the implication of Mao's remarks, stating, "when he said that the bourgeoisie was right inside the Communist Party, Chairman Mao was referring to the capitalist-roaders within the Party, and in no way did he mean there was a bourgeois class inside our Party" [8, pp. 37-38]. Just as any successors might be able to draw convenient conclusions from Mao's conceptually ambiguous arguments on this theme—which were rendered in fragments—Hua might also have been trying to achieve two purposes by exploiting a delicate distinction

between “faction” and “class.” One purpose was to stress the innocence of all of the rehabilitated old cadres, and the other purpose was to provide a doctrinal base to restrain continuation during the post-Mao period of intra-party struggle related to the “two lines.” The new doctrinal direction of the party, linked to the negation of Mao’s idea of the class struggle, was also set forth in the form of a review of the “two bad books,” *Political Economics* and *Socialist Political Economics*, allegedly compiled to suit the doctrine of “the Gang.”<sup>10</sup> The review article argued that these books “confined Chairman Mao’s directives on the theoretical questions to the question of restricting ‘bourgeois right,’” and “publicized erroneous arguments to the effect that the object of socialist revolution should be ‘mainly the capitalist-roader within the Party,’” and “publicized Zhang Chunqiao’s self-made erroneous arguments such as that leadership determines the nature of the ownership system.” It was also taken as “all extremely nonsensical and reactionary” and above all “a mockery of the essence of the socialist relation of production” that in these books “they dissolved the socialist relation of production into the two elements of communism and capitalism and emphasized that the contradiction between these two elements had reflected the struggle between the two classes and the two lines.” Perhaps some of these phrases are not altogether consistent with Hua’s language at the Party Congress. If so, there is a possibility that doctrinal criticism of continuous revolution advanced between August 1977 and April 1978.

As we have seen, development of doctrinal criticism of “the Gang” reduced the significance of class struggle and reversed its orientation. In this changed political mood, it was natural that Maoist crisis consciousness (concerned about revisionism and the possible revival of capitalism)—which consistently underlay all of Mao’s doctrine—was apparently going to be forgotten: in its place arguments, claiming the necessity of “stability and unity” became prevalent. It is characteristic of these new arguments that they relied on the promise of a politically generous socialist society, a promise spun by emphasis on the homogeneity of political consciousness among social classes and strata. Then “the erroneous argument of ‘the bourgeois class within the party’” was totally discredited. A disputant wrote, as if he were denouncing Mao’s unusual emphasis on the role of political consciousness: “The revolutionary works were seriously damaged by the spreading influence of the idealism and metaphysics of Lin Biao and the ‘gang of four.’ They announced the philosophy of idealistic transcendentalism, which stressed the theme of ‘toward practice from cognition,’ and the erroneous theory of ‘man’s thought determines matter’” [12]. Other evidence of the de facto destruction of the continuous revolution was the revised concept of “going against the tide,” written in the party’s constitution adopted at the Eleventh Party Congress. The principle of “daring to go against the tide” was introduced into the

<sup>10</sup> According to the *Renmin ribao*, April 5, 1978, the titles of the two books are: “Zhengzhijingjixue” [Political economy] (in *Shehuizhuyi* [Socialism]), edited by the Institute of Economy, Department of Political Economy, Nankai University, Tientsin; and *Shehuizhuyi zhengzhi-jingjixue* [Socialist political economy], edited by the former writing group of the Shanghai Party Committee.

party constitution at the Tenth Party Congress as an expression of the revolutionary spirit of the Cultural Revolution. In the new party constitution, this provision reads that party members "must have the revolutionary boldness in daring to go against any tide that runs counter to" the three basic principles proposed by Chairman Mao: "Practice Marxism, and not revisionism; unite, and don't split; be open and above board, and don't intrigue and conspire." What matters is what kind of tide you dare to go against. It is clear that "going against" is permitted only within a specifically limited range, to attack conspiratorial groups which might seek to split the new regime. In other words, "going against the tide" was reintroduced into the new party constitution as a doctrine to defend the rule of the present power-holders headed by Hua. In this sense, we may conclude that in the August 1977 formula class struggle simply "finds concentrated expression in the struggle waged by our party against the 'gang of four,'" which was already completely defeated.

#### V. THE APPEARANCE OF PSEUDO-MAOISM

It is tragic for Mao that the promotion of continuous revolution from the onset of the Cultural Revolution brought on, inevitably, disruption of the socialist order in China now attributed to "the Gang." The article published by the State Planning Commission described one of the cases as follows; "the dark group hated badly the working people and the revolutionary mass movement, and destroyed madly the campaign to learn from Daqing for industry and to learn from Dazhai for the agriculture. They opposed the leadership of the party, and encouraged 'to promote the revolution, through kicking the party committee,' and instigated people to conduct the anarchistic and bourgeois factionalistic activities and stopping operation and production, and supported beating, breaking, and plundering, and knocked the masses down with sticks, labelled people, suppressed the whole positive elements, and carried out the fascist dictatorship" [24]. Then, according to an editorial in the *Renmin ribao*, "China's national economy approached the brink of collapse" [20]. These descriptions in official statements of the new leadership should not automatically be thought exaggerated. In this light, it would be legitimate for Hua's regime to confront the urgent task of reconstructing the socialist order by counteracting the unwelcome legacy of Mao's final period.

However, as shown above, the denunciations of "the Gang" failed to demonstrate their departure from genuine Maoism. Following the pattern of denunciation in past intra-party struggles, Hua's criticism of "the Gang" was of the sort used to invalidate losers. Tautologies appeared, e.g., "the Gang's" erroneous arguments are erroneous because they were made by the erroneous criminals. Logical defects, arbitrariness, and contradictory arguments on the part of the new leadership, seem proof of the fragility of its ideological legitimacy. The new leadership had no choice but to compensate by adapting Mao's thought boldly to suit its requirements, and keeping a monopoly on interpretation. Only by doing so could it pursue its intention to move into a new era.

In a sense, Hua Guofeng declared the liberalization of interpreting Mao's thought when, as a new party chairman, he proposed in his Political Report that "party members strive for a comprehensive and accurate grasp of Mao Tsetung thought as a system" [8, p. 76]. This implied self-authorization to revise "the revision" earlier made by "the Gang" to oppose the old Mao myth by a new and different one. Such a project of revision was considered by Nieh Rongchen to be achieved through "grasping its essence" (i.e., of Mao's thought)—and resolutely opposing citing quotations from Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong thought as dogma unrelated to the time, place, and conditions [18, p. 5].

Here we see that broad room was to be left to the sole authorized interpreter, who could decide how to weigh each principle, what to retain of Mao's thought, and what to discard as inconsistent with reality. The possibility of this kind of ideological manipulation was more clearly revealed in the joint editorial of the three party organs published one year after Mao's death. The editorial read that "this requires that we must not mechanically apply quotations from Chairman Mao's works in disregard of the concrete time, place, and circumstances, but we must grasp the essence of his work as a whole. Chairman Mao's statement on a particular question at a specific time and in specific circumstances is correct, as is his statement on the same question at other times and in other circumstances. But statements made on a particular question at different times and in different circumstances may sometimes differ in degree and point of emphasis and even in formulation. Therefore, when we deal with problems of a given aspect or in a given field, we must strive to get a correct understanding of them from the entire system of Mao Tsetung thought" [16, p. 22]. As argued above, Mao defended his leadership, as a realistic politician, by employing policies and operational principles flexibly in different conditions to promote his aims. In so doing, Mao was sometimes contradictory and ambiguous in his remarks and behavior, forced to be adaptive to objective conditions. The new leadership's reference to Mao's flexibility and inconsistency could conceivably imply that the new leadership itself sought sanction to employ divergent and flexible approaches when confronting problems, as Mao did.

Deng Xiaoping told the National Science Conference in March 1978 that transformation of thought and behavior was indispensable to realize the four modernizations. He urged that "to meet the requirements of the new situation and the new task, there must be corresponding changes in the center of gravity for Party work and in the Party's work style" [4]. In Hua's view, the transformation should be advanced through "having shattered the mental manacles 'the Gang' tried to fasten on them" [9]. We might well conclude that these endeavors of the new leadership present a Pseudo-Maoism as an ideology for the four modernizations.

The basic framework of this Pseudo-Maoism can be demonstrated, much as we exposed the principles by which "the Gang's" doctrine was reversed. We can summarize here the outline of Pseudo-Maoism, drawing from some representative Chinese sources.<sup>11</sup> In the first place, the new doctrine assumes that productive forces are the final decisive force in the development of history, while class struggle

<sup>11</sup> This summary is mainly based upon the following articles: [24] [8] [20] [4].

is the motivating force in the development of class society, and continuous revolution is eventually required to develop the productive forces. Therefore, the three great revolutionary movements of class struggle, the struggle for production, and scientific experiment are to be pursued simultaneously. The three great revolutionary movements form a whole; and each campaign is an organic component of continuous revolution under the proletarian dictatorship. Each has a certain independence, its own characteristics, and rules, and so none can replace another. Class struggle should surely be the key link and the direct motive force for advancement, but revolution cannot take the place of production, even if revolution can promote production. The production struggle also has its own rules, especially because it is an extremely difficult and complicated task to organize a large modern production system. As much of the daily work in the new period of development should be the work of production, an earnest revolutionary spirit must be linked to a serious scientific attitude based on understanding the objective rules of production. Without this kind of linkage, the theme of "politics takes command" would turn out to be empty. What matters is to strengthen the material base of the proletarian dictatorship through development of productive forces; the building of a modernized socialist country would be the very condition to prevent the restoration of capitalism.

It can be clearly seen in these arguments that the new leadership shifted the emphasis from class struggle to production and science, although the three great revolutionary movements were to be "linked skillfully and firmly" and advanced "in parallel." Deng Xiaoping was most outspoken on this issue when he addressed the National Science Conference. He provided there a generous political principle encouraging intellectuals and scientific technicians to become, so to speak, "red" through being "expert," stating that "to devote oneself to our socialist science and contribute to it is an important manifestation of being red, the integration of being red with being expert." "Scientists and technicians should concentrate their energy on scientific and technical work. When we say that at least five-sixths of their work time should be left free for their scientific and technical work, this is meant to be the minimum demand. It is still better if even more time is available for this purpose" [4, pp. 14-15]. It makes sense that the role of scientists and technicians was judged significant, since the present leadership emphasized that "the four modernizations depend mainly upon the modernization of science and technology." Here we find an interesting device to legitimate the de-politicization of technocrats: "the Gang" is said to have violated the principle of "the socialist division of labor." The new stress on the division of labor has invited restoration of titles and a promotion system for technical employees, finally rendering the theme of "simultaneously waging class struggle" almost senseless.

The actual policies of the four modernizations which have been carried out since the Eleventh Party Congress and the Fifth National People's Congress, are simply the common principles of industrialization. They will no doubt be firmly legitimated by the Chinese people, who are in search of ways to modernize the nation. However, this turn has led China to be oriented toward "economism" and technocracy, which are skew to Mao's concern before his death for the state

of man's spirit and behavior. It is correct to assume that Mao had been looking toward building the "material base" of socialism in China, but he was probably more motivated by his dream to realize a certain type of society [27]. Mao's image of the society to be built up appears to have been quite different from the simple materialistic image of Chinese socialism—devoid of any unique ideas—promoted by Hua and Deng. Developing science and technology as "the crux of the four modernizations," for example, departs from the spirit of Mao's "May 7th Directive" which aimed to reduce the gap "between mental and manual labor and train a new generation of people with both communist consciousness and an all-round development" [6]. And the strategy for technological progress which was prevalent in the Cultural Revolution conflicts sharply with the present scholarly position, which lays stress on the "many theoretical research topics with no practical application in plain sight for the time being" [4, p. 10], and that argues concerning talented personnel that "on the talented people, we must particularly stress the need to break with convention in the discovery, selection, and training of those with outstanding talent" [4, p. 15]. The promoters of the Cultural Revolution endeavored to connect scientific research directly to society: they proposed to encourage science through cooperation between trained staff and ordinary laborers, and to teach science and technology to the people through mass campaigns, and so change the situation in which "the scientific and technological field was dominated by the exploiting classes" [17, p. 6]. Even though Mao's thought on continuous revolution actually generated the tragic collapse of the socialist system in China, some of the ideas on modernization held by the ideologues of the Cultural Revolution may make sense, if only in terms of doctrinal argument, in spite of the fact that they are now completely ignored by the critics of "the Gang." One disputant spoke on modernization, saying "the difference between us and Teng Hsiao-ping is not whether or not we should develop production and achieve the four modernizations but which orientation and line we are to follow to achieve this" [3, p. 18]. The question of what kind of socialism should be realized may well remain a question long into the future.

Meanwhile, however far from Mao's revolutionary approach, the ideology and policies of Hua's leadership may have shifted, they have to be uttered in Maoist terminology. Just as the Soviet ideologues, in the atmosphere of silent de-Stalinization during 1953–54, were in search of new doctrine in Stalin's works written in the early 1920s, according to Robert Tucker [28, p. 59], the ideologues in post-Mao China seemed to look for the underpinnings of their new theory of political and economic reconstruction in Mao's works authored between 1945 and 1957.

The doctrine of the emancipation of productive forces, which became a major theme after the Dazhai Conference (December 1976) and the Daqing Conference (May 1977), has been legitimated by citing Mao's "On Coalition Government" (1945) and another work written in early 1956. Quoted from the former was this statement that "in the last analysis, the impact, good or bad, great or small, of the policy and the practice of any Chinese political party upon the people depends on whether and how much it helps to develop their productive forces,



and on whether it fetters or liberates these forces," and from the latter was that "the change-over from individual to socialist, collective ownership in agriculture and handicrafts and from capitalist to socialist ownership in private industry and commerce is bound to bring about a tremendous liberation of the productive forces" [14, p. 6]. The idea of constructing a flexible and tolerant political system was also supported by quotations from Mao's "On the Correct Handling of Contradictions among the People" (1957). In short, convenient excerpts from Mao's works—principally those written during the first five-year plan—were fully exploited in announcing new policies, so as to legitimate them. The manner of legitimation itself was very similar to that of "the Gang," despite the fact that the ideas expressed in these quotations from Mao were largely contrary to the stated policies of "the Gang." Even if some of Mao's remarks during the Cultural Revolution were quoted, they were now used to criticize "the Gang" or to support the principle of "stability and unity"; consider, for example, use of the quotation that "I think that over ninety per cent of the cadres are good or relatively good." Mao's image was transformed: he became the consistent supporter and advocate of the modernization line, and every important decision on modernization during Mao's life was alleged to have been made under the Chairman's personal care and sanction.

Such a metamorphosis of the Mao myth may have sought to establish the fiction that the real Mao was not the man who had advocated intense class struggle since the anti-rightist campaign (1957), but a man who was a sensible advocate of modernization, searching for a Chinese way in the earlier years when the influence of the Soviet model of socialist construction was strong. But we cannot fail to see that the new image does not represent a genuine Mao worthy of his name as we understand it, because the hallmark of Mao Zedong's strategy for socialism was his emphasis on the primacy of politics and continuous class struggle, formed and elaborated from late 1957 in his criticism of Stalin's concept of the primacy of the productive forces and technology. It would not be terribly misleading to conclude that the new leadership observed with great enthusiasm the first experimental model for Chinese socialism, formulated more than twenty years earlier, one with considerable similarities to the approaches of the Soviet model. It is quite understandable, given the large-scale reversal which later took place, that Hua Guofeng published officially for the first time Mao's "On the Ten Major Relationships" (April 1956) in December 1976, immediately after his appointment to the chairmanship. This work concerned issues existing at the start of socialist transformation. The subsequent publication of the fifth volume of *the Selected Works of Mao Zedong*, drawn mainly from the period of the first five-year plan, would also serve as an ideological weapon for the new leadership.

## VI. CONCLUDING REMARKS

The great transformation has brought about an impressive metamorphosis of the Mao myth, although the myth itself seems still to be dominating the nation. On the other hand, the possibility cannot be neglected that the new leadership could

not—in the transitional period—completely overcome dissent and resistance within the party and the society, related to the question of how to transform Mao's thought and accordingly how to "grasp the essence."<sup>12</sup> Ironically speaking, critics of Hua's doctrine may be justified in imitating the logic of Hua's criticism of "the Gang," as published in a joint editorial of the party organs, that "resorting to pragmatic tricks, the 'gang of four' quoted Chairman Mao's works out of context and distorted them at will to meet the needs of their counter-revolutionary intrigues, thus fragmentizing Mao Tsetung thought beyond recognition. They even went so far as to forge directives of Chairman Mao" [16, p. 22].

The unusual exaggeration of the cult of Mao which emerged both in the Eleventh Party Congress (1977) and the new state constitution (1978) should be taken to be a political maneuver, employed in a paradoxical way, to protect transformation of the Mao myth. Mao is known to have discouraged the personal cult around himself from about 1971. The reproduction of Mao's cult against Mao's will was probably intended to serve two purposes: providing the background to produce the cult of Hua Guofeng, on the one hand, and maintaining the facade of the inheritance of Mao's thought on the other. That Hua might attempt to produce his own cult was suggested by the fact that Stalin took advantage of the cult of Lenin to produce a personal cult around himself immediately after Lenin's death. However, obviously many dilemmas remained to be solved in order to establish the new myth and even to protect the Mao myth in general. Further examination of the actual relationship between Mao and "the Gang" would inevitably endanger the authority of Mao, and the increasing criticisms of the policies of "the Gang" are logically linked to skepticism about Mao's strategy and policies since the Great Leap Forward. In such circumstances, it is not easy to decipher the hidden political implication of articles published in China today, which employ the extremely elaborated esoteric language of politics much as before. We can find there fairly transparent implicit criticisms of Mao as well as more complicated implicit ones (in which his well-known unwelcome behavior and leadership are implicitly criticized beneath Mao quotations approved by the new leadership).

Hua stated in his Report to the National People's Congress: "Chairman Mao's revolutionary line has held sway on all fronts throughout the past 28 years, including the 17 years prior to the Cultural Revolution, despite the interference and sabotage of Liu Shao-chi [Liu Shaoqi], Lin Piao [Lin Biao] and, in particular, the 'gang of four'" [8, p. 18]. This remark could lead observers of Chinese politics to some confusion. Since it acknowledges that Mao's own leadership was "interfered with"—from which we may conclude it was not fully effective—from the 1960s, the theme that his "revolutionary line has held sway" would have appeared doubtful to his listeners. And above all, in view of the significance of the major principles and practices produced in "the Cultural Revolution, which was launched by Chairman Mao," which were going to be almost neglected or denied, the value of Mao's "leading position" would also have become ambiguous. In this sense, we have no description of the position of the late Chairman Mao in this phase, other than as the shaken icon. Other ominous signals regarding the

<sup>12</sup> See, for example, [21].

fate of Maoism are given in the criticisms of "the Gang" as a surrogate. One editorial read, "our struggle against the 'gang of four' is a decisive battle of historic importance. Both in depth and breadth it is a battle of rare occurrence in the history of our Party" [1]. Also, Hua stated in the National People's Congress, "the overthrow of the 'gang of four' has removed the biggest obstacle in the way of our advance." Another article also had such a passage: "to recover the lost time and the serious damage caused by the sabotage of the 'gang of four'." Judging from the arguments presented through such elaborate rhetoric, the position of the Mao myth in China seems to be strange. Probably Hua Guofeng will have to continue, for the time being, to hold "the banner of Chairman Mao" higher and longer than anybody else. However, it seems to be obvious to anybody in China that Mao's successors are putting Mao in the position of a "Lenin of China," and he was described artificially to be an embodiment of all the successful experiences of Chinese communism and the consistent holder of the leading position. Meanwhile, responsibility for all the unsuccessful experiences was shifted onto "Lin Biao and especially the 'gang of four'." We may hypothesize that the reason for this is that the Chinese people are accepting the new myth of Mao, even if they know how false it is, because they recognize China still requires an integrative myth. Now, up to the spring of 1978, in Tienanmen square in Beijing the magnificent memorial hall of Chairman Mao stands tranquilly overlooking the visitors, as if it is telling them that the era of the emperor Qin Shihuang is gone.

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