



UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA PRESS
Advancing Knowledge, Driving Change

Ideology and Organization in Post-Mao China

Author(s): Lowell Dittmer

Source: *Asian Survey*, Mar., 1984, Vol. 24, No. 3 (Mar., 1984), pp. 349-369

Published by: University of California Press

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2644071>

REFERENCES

Linked references are available on JSTOR for this article:

https://www.jstor.org/stable/2644071?seq=1&cid=pdf-reference#references_tab_contents

You may need to log in to JSTOR to access the linked references.

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <https://about.jstor.org/terms>



University of California Press is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Asian Survey*

JSTOR

IDEOLOGY AND ORGANIZATION IN POST-MAO CHINA

Lowell Dittmer

At the outset of the Cultural Revolution, there was a tendency in some quarters to conclude that all previous conceptualizations of the Chinese Communist political system were flawed, either because they had failed to predict this momentous upheaval or because the People's Republic of China (PRC) by 1966 had so radically departed from its previous incarnation. Inasmuch as the Chinese themselves have come to characterize the entire decade as a deviation from the historical tradition from which they now seek to derive their current state of affairs, these pre-1966 formulations may once again be perceived to have explanatory utility, while conceptualizations based on the Cultural Revolution fade into irrelevance—if, that is, the current leadership has succeeded in recapturing the past.

The purpose of this article is to relate post-Mao macropolitical developments to one of the more influential conceptualizations of the pre-1966 system, Franz Schurmann's discussion of the relationship between ideology and organization.¹ Schurmann's work has drawn telling criticism as well as praise,² and an essay in diachronic comparison of this sort need not assume it to be a fully satisfactory theoretical formulation.³ I do,

Lowell Dittmer is Associate Professor, Political Science Department, University of California, Berkeley, and in 1983–84, National Fellow, Hoover Institution, Stanford, California.

© 1984 by The Regents of the University of California

1. See Schurmann, *Ideology and Organization in Communist China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968 ed.); also *The Logic of World Power* (New York: Pantheon, 1974), and "Organizational Principles of the Chinese Communists," in *China Quarterly*, April–June 1960, pp. 47–59.

2. For example, see reviews by John Wilson Lewis, *American Political Science Review*, 61 (1967), pp. 168–169; Michel Oksenberg, "Accentuating the Negative," *New York Times Book Review*, July 16, 1966, pp. 1, 20; Albert Feuerwerker, *Political Science Quarterly*, 82:4 (1967), p. 623; and Richard Solomon, *China Quarterly*, December 28, 1966, pp. 133–136.

3. There are indeed serious problems with Schurmann's theoretical formulation. *Ideology* itself fails to bear out the promise of its title, leaving it for later writings (primarily *The Logic of World Power*) to explicate how ideology and organization are functionally related.

however, take it to be a broadly accurate empirical description of the structure and underlying dynamics of the Chinese Communist system as it operated before 1966.

This article proceeds in three sections. In the first and second, changes in the ideological superstructure and the organizational base of Chinese politics will be reviewed as they have evolved in the post-Mao period, the implicit questions being what has been inherited from the Cultural Revolution, what has been restored from the pre-Cultural Revolution era, and what has remained constant throughout these vicissitudes. The third and concluding section will attempt to compare post-Mao political developments with the original theoretical framework in an effort to illuminate both.

Ideological Deradicalization

Ideological development since the death of Mao has proceeded through roughly three phases: a first phase of overall thematic continuity with the Maoist era, a second phase of ideological secularization and liberalization, followed by a third phase of ideological retrenchment. Although this third phase sought to limit further ideological experimentation and form a neoorthodox consensus, the positive content of the dogma to which this consensus is expected to cohere remains so ill-defined that it seems safe to predict that further ideological change is in store.

The first phase of ideological development, marked by general continuity with the Maoist era, coincided roughly with the period of Hua Guofeng's relatively uncontested ascendancy in Chinese politics—from the fall of the Gang of Four in October 1976 until the first session of the Fifth National People's Congress in February 1978. Indeed, it was in February of 1977 that Hua Guofeng had Wang Dongxing publish the joint editorial in which the so-called two whatevers were set forth: Whatever Mao had said and whatever Mao had done should be treated as a binding precedent.⁴ Hua Guofeng was, however, not being entirely sincere in issuing such an unequivocal oath of fidelity, and hence it is not entirely fair to him to accuse him in retrospect of being hidebound in

Much of the empirical material presented in *Ideology* is not cogently linked to the generic concepts, but to discrete subtheories relating such dichotomous variables as vertical vs. dual rule, supervision vs. inspection, external vs. internal control, decentralization I vs. decentralization II, pure vs. practical ideology, natural vs. administrative village, faction vs. opinion group, and so forth. (To hold that these are all "contradictions" is to use that term to denote so many different possible logical relationships that its analytical utility is foregone.)

4. "Study Well the Documents, Grasp Well the Line" [*Xue hao wenjian, zhua hao gang*], *Renmin Ribao* (editorial), February 7, 1977.

adherence to Mao Zedong Thought during its last and most radical phase of development. It is true that he sought to maintain a recognizable continuity with the broad outlines of Mao's thought. In the first phase of the campaign to criticize the Gang of Four, this campaign was placed within the ideological framework of a "two line struggle."⁵ Hua Guofeng (and his patron, Ye Jianying) reaffirmed the value of the Cultural Revolution within the theoretical perspective of continuous revolution under the dictatorship of the proletariat, although the Gang of Four's distortion of these ideas was also stressed. At the Eleventh Party Congress, the "triumphant conclusion" of the Cultural Revolution was announced, and there was a strenuous effort to reaffirm the importance of the "key link" of class struggle even while emphasizing unity and stability: the slogan was "grasp the key link of class struggle and establish great order across the land."

Hua Guofeng's attempt to maintain a sense of continuity with the Maoist era was of course motivated not only by his deep loyalty to the Chairman, who had first noticed this obscure provincial official and raised him up, but by an awareness that the legitimacy of Hua Guofeng's own leadership rested exclusively on his selection by the Chairman. He had a vested interest in reaffirming Mao's reputation for infallibility, precisely because his own selection could be justified by that criterion and by no other. Nevertheless, Hua and his supporters did endeavor to modify the content of Mao Zedong Thought in subtle but significant ways. Although both revolution and economic reconstruction were orally affirmed, the latter received much greater emphasis in terms of current policy. And while the Cultural Revolution was also orally supported, the fact that the Gang of Four had been overthrown and was now subject to mass criticism required subjecting the Cultural Revolution to criticism also since the Gang had become so closely identified with the Cultural Revolution in the public mind. In subtle acknowledgment of the development that Mao's thought had undergone during his late years, Hua Guofeng and his supporters turned their attention to Mao's more moderate statements before the Cultural Revolution and neglected his more inflammatory subsequent remarks. The dominant Hua line was set by the tenor of the fifth volume of Mao's collected works (edited by Hua himself), which projected the image of a Mao still uncorrupted by the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution. Also dug out during this period were other articles that supported such programs as farm mechanization,

5. For example, in Hua Guofeng's Report to the Eleventh Party Congress (August 12–18, 1977), the Gang of Four were bracketed with Liu Shaoqi and Lin Biao. Negative reference to Liu Shaoqi gradually disappeared in 1978.

reliance on technology, and learning from the advanced experiences of others. The paradigmatic piece in this category, first published a full five months before volume five (and subsequently incorporated within it), was "On Ten Major Relationships," which advocated strengthening economic construction, development of heavy industry, and borrowing advanced technology from other nations.

Despite his attempt through selective citation to place a relatively constructive interpretation upon Mao's thought, Hua Guofeng's commitment to "whatever" Mao had said or done left Hua open to those on his left who might seek to reemphasize the voluntarist and even anarchist aspects of Mao's thought that had precipitated such explosive consequences in the past and about which most Chinese were presumably at this time rather leery. Thus throughout 1977 a series of publications from Mao's works continued to appear that featured his more revolutionary proclivities. These included Mao's note on the Anshan steelworks charter, the revival of his 21 July directive on the Shanghai machine tool plant, his commendation of the Jiangxi Communist Labor University, his call for simple living and hard work, and his characterization of reactionaries as paper tigers—all of which contrived to put politics back "in command."⁶

The phase of ideological secularization and liberalism coincided with Deng Xiaoping's emergence from the shadow of Mao's still impending condemnation to uncontested ascendancy, and lasted roughly from the First Session of the Fifth National People's Congress in February 1978 until the Fifth Plenum of the Eleventh Party Congress in February 1980. This period by no means distinguished itself sharply from the foregoing period, but rather melded imperceptibly together with it. In fact it is quite conceivable that Hua Guofeng shifted from his alliance with the more ardent Maoists such as Wang Dongxing into a temporary coalition with Deng Xiaoping, or that he may have sought to find a balance between the two. But Deng Xiaoping in certain crucial respects had different political interests from Hua Guofeng, and he pursued these interests with a directness and intensity that defied Hua's attempts to maintain a balance. Whereas Hua had an incentive to retain Mao's reputation for infallibility, Deng Xiaoping had a contradictory incentive to expose Mao's fallibility, for the Chairman had purged Deng not once but twice within the previous decade. The Tiananmen Incident put the

6. New China News Agency (NCNA), March 22, 1977, and September 10, 1977; Beijing Radio, July 22, 1977 (in *Summary of World Broadcasts* [SWB], FE/5575, July 29, 1977, pp. BII/5-8); and Beijing Radio, September 7, 1977 (in SWB, FE/5613, September 13, 1977, pp. BII/4-5).

two men on cross paths since it was in the wake of this incident that Mao decided to purge Deng Xiaoping from all positions inside and outside the party and to promote Hua Guofeng to the positions of premier and first vice-chairman that Zhou Enlai had previously foreseen for Deng Xiaoping.

The shift from ideological infallibility to its dialectical antithesis proceeded without any clear debate but in a gradual and subtle transformation of the consensus that defined and legitimated the leadership. First of all, the campaign against the Gang of Four was intensified noticeably after the fall of 1977, and as the exposure of their various excesses continued, in case after case, the Cultural Revolution itself began to seem more and more disreputable, and this of course also placed those who had experienced upward mobility as a consequence of the Cultural Revolution in a rather bad light. The ongoing campaign against the Gang of Four also placed Mao Zedong himself in an increasingly untenable position. The personality cult, without which the Cultural Revolution itself would probably have been impossible, was now explicitly repudiated in very strong terms, and beginning in December 1977 it became apparent that tighter controls were being placed upon the publication of Mao's works. There were fewer Mao quotations, these were not placed in boldface type, and Mao's name was not inevitably invoked in support of specific policies. Only three major writings by Mao were released in 1978: One was his 1962 speech to 7,000 cadres in which he discussed the importance of democratic centralism and offered his own self-criticism for his errors during the Great Leap Forward; the second, entitled "Uninterrupted Revolution" and written in 1958, stressed economic construction through technological revolution (Mao's two letters to his sons, published at about the same time, also stressed the need for science and technology); the third, Mao's 1941 talk to a women's group, upheld the primacy of actual practice and investigation in justifying a theoretical viewpoint. Other minor Mao writings served the ironical purpose of rehabilitating such once discredited figures as Peng Dehuai. On the second anniversary of Mao's death, only three poems were released; by the fourth anniversary, Mao was totally ignored in Beijing.⁷

But even more important than the gradual fading of references to the Chairman was the gradual change in the rules of the game concerning the interpretation of his thought. At the first anniversary of his death, a spate of articles appeared stressing the need to view Mao's writings in their totality. For example, Nie Rongzhen wrote an important article arguing

7. In order of citation: NCNA, June 30, 1978; NCNA, December 25, 1978; NCNA, December 12, 1978; *Renmin Ribao* (*People's Daily*), January 16, 1979; NCNA, September 8, 1978; NCNA, September 7, 1978; *Renmin Ribao*, September 7, 1978.

that Mao Zedong Thought should be studied only in terms of its spirit, not through isolated quotations that disregarded their spatial and temporal contexts.⁸ This implicitly conceded that Mao's writings were internally inconsistent, but left open the question of how such inconsistencies might be resolved. This question was addressed in another series of articles concerning the "criteria of truth" that began in the spring of 1978. It is difficult to date the exact beginning of this debate, but the article "Practice as a Sole Criterion of Truth" is generally considered the inaugural piece.⁹ Not until ten months later was it revealed that this article was written by one Hu Fuming, Director of the Philosophy Department of Nanjing University and Deputy Secretary of the department's general party branch. Hu explained that the article had become necessary because after Mao's death many of his colleagues were constantly on tenterhooks about possible violation of some specific Mao quotation and therefore unable to decide the correctness of any policy strictly on the merits of the issue. Hu's article asserted that truth cannot become its own yardstick and must be validated anew each time in the course of practice.¹⁰ This is not to repudiate altogether the relevance of theory, but to make theory somewhat more flexible in the face of changing empirical circumstances; in new historical periods new problems will arise calling for new theoretical insights, and these can emerge only through one's deep involvement in reality.

For a time there was a tendency to affirm that truth is objective and exists independently of man's will and consciousness, even if there is no class truth. Finally, the more moderate position prevailed that truth in natural science is objective and independent of one's class standpoint, but that truth in the social sciences remains subjective and dependent upon class standpoint, and hence must remain under the guardianship of the Communist Party.¹¹ But there was a widespread tendency during this period to believe in the omnipotence of science, a science conceived in inductive rather than deductive terms, in which trial and error is inevitable and not necessarily sinful. Invidiously counterposed to this conception of science and truth are a dogmatic conception for truth associated with the cult of personality, unquestioning acceptance of authority, and religious superstition. For example, one article draws implicit parallels

8. *Renmin Ribao*, September 5, 1977.

9. *Guangming Ribao (Enlightenment Daily)*, May 11, 1978.

10. "Practice is the Sole Criterion of Truth," *Guangming Ribao*, May 11, 1978; NCNA, March 20, 1979.

11. "Implement the Policy of 'Let One Hundred Flowers Bloom and One Hundred Schools of Thought Contend,' Promote Academic Research," *Nanfang Ribao (Guangzhou)*, January 13, 1979, p. 2.

between the inquisitorial period of the European Middle Ages and the thought control practice in China during the period of the Gang of Four.¹²

The criticism of the Gang of Four and of the arbitrary and dogmatic authority that had allegedly led to the excesses of the Cultural Revolution served a number of political functions for Deng Xiaoping and his followers. Exposure of the frightful abuse of human rights by the radicals tended to justify rehabilitation of those who had been criticized and humiliated, which consisted primarily of veteran party and government cadres. These rehabilitated cadres, who began reappearing in prominent leadership positions in the hundreds of thousands in 1977 and 1978, felt a strong resentment against those who triumphed on the basis of their rhetorical accomplishments rather than the sort of patient bureaucratic time-serving that they had endured; and they felt a strong community of interest with the arch-rehabilitée, Deng Xiaoping. Repudiation of the cult of personality and the notion of infallibility upon which it was based finally led to a reversal of verdicts not only on the Tianamen Incident but on the Cultural Revolution in general.

The Third Plenum of the Eleventh Central Committee in December 1978 was a crucial watershed in these developments, but it was more important for its political repercussions than for its reformulations of the ideological basis of the regime's legitimacy. The Third Plenum announced a reversal of verdicts on Peng Dehuai, Tao Zhu, and Bo Yibo, inter alia, and confirmed the November 15 decision of the Beijing Municipal Party Committee that the Tiananmen Incident was an entirely revolutionary mass movement, since it had helped to mobilize a mass base for the overthrow of the Gang of Four. The cancellation of all documents issued under the Gang of Four's influence following the Tiananmen Incident had the important political implication that the decision dismissing Deng from all posts inside and outside the party was mistaken, and the communique also stated that during the period when Deng was running the State Council in 1975 there were "great achievements" in all fields. This reversal placed Hua's appointment in a rather bad light, and Hua reportedly made a voluntary self-criticism at the Plenum for failing to take sides in the campaign against Deng's line and for confusing enemies and friends at the time of the Tiananmen Incident. The Plenum reaffirmed the overall contribution of Mao but with subtle emphasis on his major contribution to the preliberation period, coincidentally noting that everyone has his share of errors and shortcomings.

12. Yan Jiaqi, "Religion, Rationality, and Practice: Visting Three 'Law Courts' on the Question of Truth in Different Eras," *Guangming Ribao*, September 14, 1978, pp. 3-4.

There was not yet a reversal of verdicts on the Cultural Revolution that Mao had launched in order to prevent the emergence of revisionism in China, although it was noted that in the course of the movement several mistakes had occurred and these would be summed up at an "appropriate time." The Plenum reformulated the party's perspective on class struggle, asserting that "turbulent class struggles of a mass character have in the main come to an end," thereby limiting the scope of class struggle to "a small handful of counter-revolutionary elements and criminals who hate socialist modernization." Class struggle should henceforth be carried through the courts, control commissions, and organizational forms, implying that it would henceforth be equated with criminal behavior.

The so-called Democracy Movement that first emerged in the summer of 1978 and survived rather tenuously through the spring of 1981 arose as a direct result of Deng Xiaoping's ideological offensive. Many of the participants in the Democracy Movement were former participants in the Cultural Revolution, but often on the rightist or moderate side rather than radical side. Wei Jingsheng, for example, was a former member of the United Action faction (*liandong*), a rightist group in Beijing that attempted to forestall the attack on high cadres and even to launch a counterattack upon Jiang Qing and the central Cultural Revolution group, until he was arrested in February 1967. Thus, although these young activists had indeed been Red Guards, they were also often former victims of the Cultural Revolution who considered themselves entitled to rehabilitation as the former cadres and intellectuals who had been humiliated.

The denunciations of the Gang of Four's violations of human rights that legitimated this rehabilitation were eagerly embraced by the democracy activists and extended to their full logical implications, including demands for the right of assembly, freedom of the press, freedom of speech, and other so-called bourgeois rights. Certain activists even wrote letters to Ambassador Woodcock or to President Carter soliciting their support for the activists' demands for human rights. The inductive, trial-and-error conception of science that was being popularized at the time tied in nicely with the democracy activists' somewhat naive notions of democracy as a solution for all political problems. Although the concern for liberty and democracy remained at the heart of this movement, the movement engendered a host of investigations into a wide variety of areas quite consistent with the slogan for "emancipation of the mind." The prison system was examined in rather muckraking but empirically well-documented terms.¹³ An ideological rationale was provided

13. Liu Qing, "Prison Memoirs," in Stanley Rosen and James Seymour, eds., *Chinese Sociology and Anthropology*, 15:1-2 (Fall-Winter, 1982/83), 181 pp.

for decollectivization of the agricultural and industrial communes based on the interesting argument that “whole peoples’ ownership” did not involve control by the whole people at all but simply control by the state and subordination of the participants to the state’s commands; collectives actually offered greater ambit for worker participation.¹⁴ The legal system was searchingly scrutinized, including such sensitive questions as why laws were made and then not enforced.¹⁵ There was a wide blossoming of poetry and other literary “flowers,” of apparently unequal quality, and a reexamination of the criteria of literary criticism.¹⁶ There were radical critiques of socialist bureaucracy.¹⁷ Although it is difficult to draw distinctions between the underground publications and the official media during this period, so close is the interaction between them, it would seem to me that many of the issues at the cutting edge of the so-called reform faction from 1978–82 originated from the Democracy Movement.

Deng Xiaoping initially perceived a community of interests with the democracy activists, even going so far as to have his interview with Novak distributed as part of study material for cadres throughout the country in the fall of 1978 to make his position clear. But he rather quickly repented of his initial enthusiasm, issuing cautionary statements as early as January 1979 and making a major internal speech against the movement in March of the same year. Although it is interesting to note the coincidence in timing between the first appearance of anti-Deng Xiaoping Big Character posters in Beijing and Deng Xiaoping’s reversal concerning the value of the Democracy Movement, there are actually a number of reasons put forth for the short shrift given these idealistic but unruly activists.

By the fall of 1978, the Deng Xiaoping forces had reached their crest politically, but at the same time one might conjecture that they became increasingly vulnerable. They were, after all, now the “mainstream” faction, and were soon called upon to answer for an alarming deficit, a

14. Commentator, “On Collective Ownership and Its Future,” *Siwu Luntan (April Fifth Forum)*, No. 12 (September 9, 1979), pp. 1–8; translated in *Joint Publications Research Service (JPRS)*, 74909 (January 11, 1980), pp. 22–35.

15. Qiu Mu, “Why Laws Are Made But Difficult to Enforce,” *Tansuo (Exploration)*, September 9, 1979, pp. 9–14.

16. Anonymous, “On Human Rights,” *Qimeng (Enlightenment)* (Quiyang-Beijing), No. 3 (January 1, 1979), pp. 11–27.

17. Lu Min, “Gradually Abolish the Bureaucratic System and Establish the Democratic System Modeled After the Paris Commune,” *Beijing zhi chun (Beijing Spring)*, No. 1 (January 9, 1979), pp. 17–21; and No. 2 (January 27, 1979), pp. 43–45. See also, Lu Min, “Do Away With the Power of Administrator Leadership of Basic Level Party Organization in Factories, Mines, and Other Enterprises,” *Beijing zhi chun*, No. 2 (January 27, 1979), pp. 17–21.

high-risk military operation that was less successful than originally expected, and a democracy movement that was quickly getting out of hand. It was getting out of hand partly because it had acquired momentum as more and more publications sprang up, and new and ever more sensitive issues were seized upon to expose and boost circulation, and partly because this was a period of economic recession and political uncertainty in China during which the balance between “demands” and “support” was quite liable to tilt toward the former. Thus there were demonstrations involving several thousand persons in the streets of Beijing on January 8, 14, and 15, 1979. Demonstrators held banners reading: “We don’t want hunger. We don’t want to suffer any more. We want human rights and democracy.” Similar demonstrations erupted in Shanghai a few weeks later. The fact the protesters were being allowed to march into the large cities within the tightly controlled context of Chinese politics indicates that they were being “referred” to higher authorities with their complaints by local cadres, possibly because these cadres did not feel that they had the freedom of action to solve the problems at the local level, but possibly because these cadres intended to discredit these dangerous movements toward liberalization. There were widespread reports of unemployment (20 million by one estimate), and according to Li Xiannian, in his speech before a Beijing conference in April 1979, 100 million people did not have enough to eat. Deng Xiaoping was apparently personally attacked very strongly and was perhaps reacting in part out of self-defense.¹⁸

The attempt to assert greater political control over the Democracy Movement in the spring of 1979 did not mark a clear reversal of the regime’s liberalization policies. Throughout the remainder of the year, there was an extremely ambiguous situation in which no clear guidelines came from the center and something resembling a true debate reverberated through the public media. Although the underground publications were harassed, they were not yet outright forbidden, the Cultural Revolution was for the first time explicitly repudiated in Ye Jianying’s speech

18. “It seems that I have caused a disaster,” Deng was quoted as having said in a report at a session of the Central Committee held in mid-March in Beijing, according to Nationalist Intelligence sources in Taiwan. Deng was referring to responsibility for three issues: the Big Character wall posters, the expedition against Vietnam, and the initiation of big reconstruction projects. “Any counterrevolution should be suppressed. Nevertheless, my view is: Let the people put up the Big Character wall posters. We can grab a few bad people with evidence against them, but leave the others alone. [By doing so,] at least we can keep [the wall posters] as advertisements for the consumption of the foreigners, if not for our own people.” *Agence France Press*, Hong Kong (June 15, 1979), in *JPRS*, 73862 (July 19, 1979), pp. 6–7.

on the occasion of the 30th Anniversary of the Founding of the State in October 1979, Liu Shaoqi was rehabilitated at the Fifth Plenum of the Eleventh CC in the spring of 1980, and finally the Gang of Four and the surviving members of the Lin Biao clique were placed on public trial in the fall of 1980. All of these developments suggest a consistent ideological movement from left to right, and even the harassment of the democracy activists was made consistent with this movement by reconceptualizing them as Cultural Revolution–style anarchists rather than rightists. But immediately following the trial of the Gang of Four, the Deng Xiaoping “reform” faction began to run up against unexpectedly stiff opposition. A politburo meeting was apparently held in mid-November of 1980, at which Hua Guofeng’s resignation from the chairmanship of both the Party and the Military Affairs Committee was accepted. But this resignation and the drafting of the resolution on party history then underway apparently raised more controversy than anticipated.

Presumably, most of the reformers’ proposals were met with reservations, objections, criticisms, and challenge. The trial of the Gang of Four was dragged out much longer than had been scheduled, and the convention of the Sixth Plenum of the Eleventh Party Congress, at which the results of these earlier meetings were to be announced, was postponed for about six months. When the Sixth Plenum was finally convened at the beginning of June 1981, the resignation of Hua Guofeng from his party positions was accepted, and the resolution on party history was approved with certain significant revisions. But this Plenum was preempted by an attack by the military leadership on a film script entitled “Unrequited Love,” by Bai Hua. This attack was supported by Deng Xiaoping, and after the rest of the publishing media were forced to fall into line, it was broadened to including a more broadly focused attack on “bourgeois liberalization” in various aspects of literature, art, and culture. A concurrent campaign was launched in the winter of 1981–82 encouraging support for “socialist civilization,” which seemed to imply better manners, more respect for authority, and other aspects of social civility. Although the slogans of “seeking truth through facts” and “emancipation of the mind” have never been explicitly repudiated, they are no longer repeated in official documents. The regime acted defensively and generally negatively to the experiment with democracy at the grass roots level in the fall of 1980, and although electoral reform continues it no longer arouses great expectations.

Organizational Reform

While the process of ideological development seems to follow a fairly clearcut pattern of thaw and freeze, developments in organizational

reform are somewhat more complex, with divergent tendencies being pursued at certain points. Just as Hua Guofeng had attempted in the ideological realm to maintain a semblance of continuity with the Maoist era, in terms of organizational reform no new initiatives were launched until Hua's eclipse in 1978. The focus in 1978–79 was on the rebuilding of the state structure and assigning it the main business of running the political-economic system. During the Gang of Four era, although Zhou Enlai had managed to keep the State Council intact and finally to convene the Fourth National People's Congress, the state's structure below the central level had been reduced to skeletal proportions. At the provincial and central levels the so-called revolutionary committees had replaced the old people's governments; these committees initially had contained party, army, and masses in a "three-in-one combination," but after the reestablishment of the party in 1971, they were very much subordinated to the party at every level. This was considered theoretically justifiable in terms of the "withering away" of the state and the rise of the proletarian dictatorship under the direct control of the Communist Party. In retrospect, however, it was considered premature to reduce the role of the state apparatus while China's economy remained so backward; because economic development had now become the first priority, the state was intended to become an institution of major importance.

Thus all the state organizations became more active than ever before. The National People's Congress met annually in 1978 and 1979, its Standing Committee in as many as eight sessions during the intervening period, and several state commissions were busy working out various proposals during this period. The State Council was busier than ever before with numerous new tasks, including calling national conferences in almost every important field for formulating guidelines. The old network of auxiliary organizations has been reestablished: the All-China Federation of Trade Unions held its Ninth Congress in Beijing on October 11–21, 1978, after an hiatus of 21 years; the Tenth Congress of the China Youth League was held on October 16–26, 1978, its first national congress since 1964; the Fourth National Womens' Congress was held in September 1978; and in October–November 1979, the Fourth Congress of Writers and Artists met for the first time in 19 years. These organizations are intended to function in tandem with the state organizations and may act as slate-making bodies to nominate representatives to the National People's Congress. The procuratorate was revived at the First Session of the Fifth National People's Congress, and at the Second Session Peng Zhen's Legal Commission introduced the People's Republic's first codification of laws.¹⁹

19. The National People's Congress adopted seven important laws: (1) an organic law of

All of these organizational developments were impressive indeed but constituted in themselves no more than a reconstruction of the structure that had existed at the time of the Eighth Party Congress in 1956. Beginning in 1980, however, the new leadership launched a highly ambitious attempt to restructure the party and state apparatus in fairly radical ways. It seems clear that the initial impetus in this reform movement was provided by Deng Xiaoping. In a speech given on August 18, 1980, and approved by the Politburo on August 31, Deng expressed the view that the over-concentration of power and failure to develop a set of institutions had been the source of China's numerous difficulties and mistakes in the past. Thus he proposed to separate the government from the party by restricting the practice of a single person holding responsible jobs in both hierarchies, replacing the cult of personality with collective leadership, and generally endeavoring to revive democratic centralism. In order to facilitate the retirement of veteran cadres and thereby make room at the top for younger and more highly qualified technical cadres, Deng proposed that new advisory committees be established in both party and government to function as transitional bodies for the graceful retirement of senior officials.²⁰

In a lengthy report made on October 25, Liao Gailong, a member of the Policy Research Office of the party center and professor in the Institute of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought, interpreted and extended Deng's proposal. He suggested that there be a tripartite leadership consisting of the Advisory Committee, Central Committee, and the Discipline Inspection Committee (which he would rename the Central Control Committee), and that these should stand in a relationship of checks and balances to one another. Moreover, Liao proposed that the

the local People's Congresses and People's governments, which effectively abolished the Revolutionary Committees; (2) an electoral law for the National People's Congress and local People's Congresses, which provided for direct elections to the county People's Congresses in which more than one candidate could compete and even non-Communist parties could file nominations; (3) a criminal law; (4) a law of criminal procedure, which for the first time spelled out the entire legal procedure from accusation to judgement; (5) an organic law of the People's Courts, providing for the composition, power, and independence of the judiciary; (6) an organic law of the PRC on joint ventures with Chinese and foreign investment. Earlier during the year, the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress had also promulgated new regulations governing the arrest and detention of persons accused.

20. Deng Xiaoping, "A Speech at the Enlarged Meeting of the Politburo of the Central Committee" (delivered on August 18; passed after discussion by the Politburo of the Central Committee on August 31), translated in *Issues and Studies*, 17:3 (March 1981), pp. 81-103. For a perceptive analysis, see Shen Si, "Restoration, Not Reform: On the People's Republic of China's *Geng Shen* Reform," *Zhong Bao Yue Kan* (Hong Kong), No. 18 (July 1981), pp. 19-22.

Politburo be abolished and that its policy-making functions be performed by a standing committee of the Central Committee, leaving the Secretariat (*Shuqichu*) to handle day-to-day work. Each of these three organs should be made responsible to the National Party Congress, and if disagreements among them should prove irresolvable in a joint meeting, the matter should be referred to the Party Congress. Liao suggested that the unicameral system prevailing in the National People's Congress be replaced by a bicameral legislature. This would consist of a "territorial chamber" of 300 persons representing the various localities in China and a "social chamber" of 700 persons representing the various professions, occupations, and social strata. Not only would the two chambers supervise the work of the State Council, they would also check and balance one another.²¹

In the constitutions adopted by the Twelfth Party Congress and by the Fifth National People's Congress in 1982, it is possible to trace the impact, however diluted through the elaborate process of revision, upon structural reform. The general thrust of the reform proposals is toward the "institutionalization and legalization of socialist democracy" (*shehuizhuyi minzhu zhidubua faluhua*), and this thrust survives in the final drafts adopted. The specter haunting the reforms is obviously a recurrence of the Cultural Revolution; they are operating on the premise that this misfortune was caused by excessive concentration of power at the top, and that the concomitant solution involves dispersion of power among institutions designed to check and balance one another. Thus the party has eliminated the chairman system and has indeed divided the Central Committee into three concurrent organs: the Central Committee, the Committee for the Inspection of Discipline, and the Central Advisory Committee. The elimination of the chairman leaves the party secretary as de facto leader of the party, thereby bringing the Chinese leadership structure into greater structural conformity with Soviet and East European models. Formally, the secretary chairs only the Secretariat, however, and has only the power to "convene" meetings of the party Political Bureau and its Standing Committee, so his relative power (and the concomitant possibility of a renaissance of the "personality cult" problem) is reduced.

If this division of labor functions as designed, it should relegate the Politburo (which has obviously survived, contrary to the plans of the more ambitious reformers) to a role as a "board of directors." The functions of the Central Advisory Committee are vaguely defined, and whether its members will play an important role remains to be seen. The

21. Liao Gailong, "The Reform Plans of the Chinese Communists in 1980," *Qishi Niandai (The Seventies)*, No. 3 (March 1981), pp. 38-48.

difficulty of retiring senior officials is indicated by the refusal of such *doyen* as Ye Jianying (85 years of age) or Nie Rongzhen (83 years of age) to move to the advisory posts expressly created for them. Indeed, the average age of the new Politburo members (72.4) and of the Politburo Standing Committee (about 75) remains very high, though the average age of the more active Secretariat is a mere 64. The attempt to retire senior officials from the only game in town militates against the ethos of seniority and veneration for prestige that underlies the rather traditional political culture of the new regime and renders attempts to rejuvenate the leadership inordinately elaborate. The notion of "two fronts" in the leadership has been revived, with the Secretariat in the first front handling day-to-day business; but there is also some popular reference to no less than five fronts: (1) those on the first line are the actual decision makers (in this case, the Secretariat); (2) those on the second line are the senior party leaders on the highest level directing the basic orientation of the system (i.e., the Politburo Standing Committee); (3) the third line refers to the advisory positions; (4) those on the fourth line are retired, but still maintain influence on the operations of the original units; (5) the fifth line refers to complete retirement.²² This elaborate multiplication of steps testifies to the reluctance of senior officials to descend them.

The 1982 State Constitution, accepted in draft form by the Standing Committee in March and finally approved with very little revision at the Fifth Session of the Fifth National People's Congress in November, adopted a number of reform proposals such as functionally specialized standing committees, a fixed term of office (two five-year terms) for the prime minister, the president, and other top state officials (excepting only the chairman of the Central Military Commission who happens to be Deng Xiaoping). The list of civil rights of Chinese citizens has been extended to include equality before the law, freedom of worship, and protection from arbitrary arrest; the right to strike has been abrogated since the 1978 Constitution, and among citizen's duties is the "duty to practice family planning." Communes remain as economic units but have been replaced as administrative units by the township (*xiang*). The more ambitious proposals, such as a bicameral legislature, failed to survive the process of revision.

In at least two respects, the Party Congress seems to have adopted a

22. *Foreign Broadcast Information Service*, March 9, 1982, p. K6, as cited in Hong Yung Lee, "Deng Xiaoping's Reform of the Chinese Bureaucracy," in *The Limits of Reform in China* (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, May 3, 1982), pp. 20-35.

more conservative stance toward reform than the National People's Congress. The system of permanent tenure of delegates was accepted by the latter, a reform intended to make the NPC a permanently functioning forum for legislative review, but an analogous proposal was rejected by the National Party Congress on grounds that "it is not only unnecessary but also impossible for the National Party Congress to hold meetings every year." And while the State Constitution stipulated limits to the tenure of office for most government leaders, the party rejects any such limits on grounds that the principle of lifelong tenure and adoption of generous retirement provisions and an opportunity to be "promoted" to advisory committees should be adequate to cope with the problem of protracted incumbency.

Ideology and Organization

What seems most striking, if the freeze-thaw cycle in the realm of ideology is juxtaposed to the reform cycle in the organizational sphere, is the extent to which the latter has survived the former. In the ideological sphere, a genuine "thaw" occurred that was sustained for a period of about eighteen months, even in the face of certain political costs. This is perhaps the longest such thaw in the history of the PRC, outlasting similar such periods in 1957 and 1962 by many times. It seems to have been motivated by a genuine desire to democratize the political system in order to ensure that something like the Cultural Revolution, based on the arbitrary whimsy of some supreme leaders, could not recur. During this period, the party-state apparatus retracted its penetration and control of civil society and even facilitated more extensive input from society into the political system through such devices as the secret ballot and an electoral system in which more than one candidate should stand for each vacancy. Although freedom of the press and freedom of speech was permitted only grudgingly at best, the society showed considerable ability to organize itself into groups and to express itself articulately, confounding fears that China's "feudal" political culture had left a pattern of servility towards authority that made meaningful political participation impossible. That participation, however, soon transcended the bounds of civility in the eyes of a leadership still smarting from the bruises of the Cultural Revolution, and after a fairly prolonged period of equivocation the thaw was refrozen. The government has reextended its mechanisms of control into society, and although these mechanisms are not as brutal or as thoroughgoing as during the high point of the Cultural Revolution or other mass movements in the past, they appear to have been adequate to stifle most internal dissent. There are no longer separate ad hoc campaign organizations parallel to the regular party and government

hierarchies, but through such forms as the work unit “study” (*xuexi*) and “criticism and self-criticism” meetings, the citizenry seems to have been brought into compliancy with the general principles of the Four Modernizations.

Although this may be nothing more than a reprise of a cyclical freeze-thaw phenomenon—“the more things change, the more they stay the same”—there do appear to be certain differences from earlier such periods. First, the penetration of the government into civil society does not appear to be as thorough and all-embracing as it was in the past. This may be intentional, a result of the greater respect shown by the “revisionist” wing of the Communist Party for the private lives of its citizenry. Or it may simply be an artifact of the present weakness of the party and the inability of its highly pragmatic and “realistic” ideological program to inspire the idealism of the Chinese people. Perhaps it is both. Second, society has not proven itself to be as easily cowed by the Communist Party as in the past. For example, during the campaign against Bai Hua’s “Unrequited Love,” although all the mass media eventually came into line in joining the criticism and none of the media ventured to publish the “counter-criticisms” of the authors as they were entitled to do, most of the leading authors did not themselves join in the criticism of their colleague, Bai Hua. The intellectuals appear to have developed a certain degree of corporate solidarity among themselves, although it would certainly be mistaken to exaggerate this. The general sense of passivity and fatalism in the face of the “weather” created by the movements of the higher authorities has been perhaps mitigated slightly, and may perhaps be expected to dwindle further as the importance of politics declines vis-à-vis economics and the various spheres of limited professional autonomy.

Although the party and government reform program did not meet the expectations created by the extremely ambitious reform proposals, they did result in the most extensive restructuring of the central leadership institutions since the Seventh Party Congress and the First National People’s Congress. This restructuring seems to have continued even after the ideological thaw was refrozen, and is apparently still in progress, although the role of mass participation in the overall scheme of things has undoubtedly lost priority. The initial thrust of these reform proposals seems to have been towards some form of check and balance system, although in the form ultimately adopted, few checks or balances remain and only a form of functional specialization survives. There appears to be no place for conflict in the organizational system, with a result that conflict will take a form of clandestine maneuvering among factions whose existence will be officially denied. Despite the heroic efforts of

the reformers who have considerably improved the logic of their governmental set-up, there remains a considerable degree of functional duplication and overlap, with the result that the relationship between formal authority and informal power must still remain a matter of conjecture. And it is still uncertain whether this elaborate proliferation of committees will indeed forestall the emergence of another supreme leader or whether it is in fact only a smoke screen for the informal hegemony of Deng Xiaoping. An examination of the policy-making process in the post-1978 period does reveal a more elaborate procedure involving the review of future policies by many qualified officials in different functional areas, and thereby presumably forestalling the kind of off-the-cuff decision making by a single autocrat that apparently led to the formation of the People's Communes. All the same, it does seem that Deng Xiaoping is "in command" and that those in nominally superior positions are informally beholden to him.

How are post-Mao developments in the realms of ideology and organization to be assessed in the light of Schurmann's theory—and how is the latter to be evaluated in the light of recent developments? On the one hand, one might argue that the whole sequence of events making up the reform wave confirms Schurmann's conception of the significant actors, functions, and causal dynamics of the Chinese political system.²³ The ideological "thaw" that began in the spring and summer of 1978 (though its first stirrings were explosively manifested at Tiananmen in 1976) occurred in response to an overwhelming mood of aversion to the Cultural Revolution among those who felt somehow victimized by that trauma, which seems to have comprised a large majority of the Chinese population at one time or another. The artificially induced series of campaigns sponsored by the Gang of Four gave rise to a genuine mass movement, which was initially negative in thrust but eventually gave rise to a fairly elaborate positive ideological program—and to a displaced intellectual elite determined to actualize that program. The ideological program was essentially liberal in character, emphasizing "seeking truth from facts" and "emancipation of the mind" in economic, cultural, and political arenas. The intellectual elite most committed to this ideology overlapped into established government positions and was hence able to

23. According to Schurmann, the function of "society" is to project certain general needs, and it is the function of "leadership" to give thematic coherence to popular needs in the form of "ideology." "Organizations" also have needs, which Schurmann designates as "interests," but the inherent purpose of organization is defined not by its interests but by the ideology that gives the organization its *raison d'être*. "Ideology generates organization, which then joins the realm of interests." *The Logic of World Power*, p. 45.

maintain the reform momentum well after the suppression of its (relatively small) mass base. The sequence was from masses to ideology to organizational reform, where it now seems to be nearing the end of its cycle.

Yet there are also many contrasts between Schurmann's theory and contemporary Chinese political reality, most of them occasioned by the ongoing reevaluation of "Maoism" that has been in progress. The role and function of ideology has been perhaps most profoundly transformed. According to the conception of ideology implicit in the critique of the Cultural Revolution era, ideology should more or less reflect existing economic realities and not attempt to project beyond them. In reaction to the continual manipulation of ideology and to the disappointing or even adverse effects of this during the Cultural Revolution era, there seems to be a pervasive suspicion of ideology and a doubt that it really articulates popular needs or desires. The notion seems to have arisen that what actually corresponds to popular needs and desires is not abstract ideas but an increase in living standards, and that ideology is a way of cheating such expectations. This accounts for the rising importance of the government, which is immediately responsible for the management of the economy, and for the concomitant decline in the importance of the Party, which becomes functionally superfluous. Electoral reform, affecting only government offices, has emerged to supplant the discredited "mass line" as an empirical embodiment of popular expectations. According to Graham Young, the Party itself has come to concur with the devaluation of the ideology that legitimates its own "vanguard role":

Although the Party's explicit superiority in the understanding of the guiding Marxist-Leninist theory has been reaffirmed, the significance of this superiority has been undermined. Truth has to be verified through practice, and the criterion for successful practice has been defined increasingly as growth in economic production. This has eroded the most central rationale of vanguard leadership which formerly justified the leading position of the CCP—the need for a Party superior both theoretically and organizationally which could thereby guide the process of theory-directed revolutionary change.²⁴

The lower status of ideology coincides with a suspicion of "charismatic" leadership—i.e., the Carlylian hero-leader who has the "vision" to make unilateral ideological innovations. The relationship between ideology and organization has been reversed: the function of organization is no longer to conform to ideologically defined purposes, but to manage

24. Graham Young, "Non-Revolutionary Vanguard: Transformation of the Chinese Communist Party," in Bill Brugger, ed., *China Since the "Gang of Four"* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1980), p. 82.

economic affairs in a reasonably practical and competent way so that concrete popular needs can be satisfied. "Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought" has been redefined to be an expression of the institutional interests of the Party-government establishment, meaning whatever the leadership says it means on any given occasion (even if that happens to conflict with what Mao himself might have said at one time or another). Coordination and consensus have taken pride of place over contradiction and struggle. The force of organization has reasserted itself, introducing various checks against renegade leadership: collective leadership, coequal executive departments (central committee, discipline inspection committee, advisory committee), strict secrecy laws. As a result, the leadership is more effectively disciplined than at any time since the 1950s—leadership disputes and elite factionalism continue to exist, but policy differences are resolved without airing the issues to the public allegorically, and purges are effected without disruptive factionalism (in fact without mass participation of any kind). Leadership thus seems little inclined to initiate ideological innovation or to project visionary plans for the future that might gainsay organizational interests.

What are the theoretical implications of these rather striking differences between Schurmann's theory and contemporary practice? They imply either that Schurmann basically misconceived the Chinese political system or that contemporary political realities are not so much a restoration of some pre-Cultural Revolution Paradise Lost as they are a radical new departure in Chinese politics. Inasmuch as the consensus of scholarly opinion was—and, I think, still is—that Schurmann's theory is a generally accurate conceptualization of Chinese politics in the 1950s, the first possibility can perhaps be discarded. This means that the reforms are not a rectification of a catastrophic but temporary detour from a hallowed political tradition, but rather are a bold new departure from previous political practices and assumptions.

The Chinese political system has been fundamentally reconceived, an event Western China-watchers have perhaps overlooked because of the restorationist rhetoric in which this reconceptualization has been clothed. And to my mind, the underlying political reality to which this reorientation responds is the end of the Chinese revolution. Whereas this revolution succeeded in a military and political sense in the 1950s, its life had been artificially prolonged for several decades beyond, during which time it remained the definitive touchstone of legitimacy. Although the political agenda changed often and sometimes profoundly during that period, it was consistently rationalized in terms of continuing the revolution. Not until June 1981, in the Resolution on Party History, was the "theory of continued revolution under the dictatorship of the pro-

letariat” officially repudiated, and even then it could not be admitted that the revolution itself was dead (despite the implied contradiction involved).²⁵ The new legitimating touchstone for Chinese political arrangements is economic development, the “Four Modernizations.” At this point this remains on a programmatic level, a confused congeries of aspirations and programs—some highly successful, some working at cross-purposes, some already aborted—in search of their theorist.

25. *Resolution on CPC History (1949–81)*, (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1981), pp. 33 *et passim*.