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China May Return to the Soviet Bloc

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De-Maoization

As China makes progress in its effort to undo the excesses of Mao, the country is gradually turning away not only from Maoist internal administration but from Maoist foreign policy and world strategy as well. Recent Chinese moves toward a rapprochement with the Soviet Union are one result. Those who predict that the two communist giants will not make up are engaging in wishful thinking, either because they fear the implications of such a reconciliation or because they would like to see China aligned with the Western camp. I believe that China holds the key to a Moscow-Beijing reconciliation and that it is only a matter of time before the two countries repair their relations.

The period in which Mao sought his "utopia in poverty" is viewed by the Chinese masses as a dark and tragic era. No longer will they rally behind Maoist slogans. Now that the country is expanding its contacts with the outside world, its leaders realize that they must make China more affluent if they wish to retain the people's support.¹ It seems likely, therefore, that the Deng Xiaoping-Hu Yaobang-Wan Li dictatorship of party bureaucrats will continue to plot the course of change in Chinese society, and

that the cycle of moderation and radicalism hitherto latent in Chinese politics, whereby a major shakeup occurred every five years or so, will not be repeated.² The trend toward "de-Maoization" seems irreversible.

The fundamental change in political values that has taken place in China is aptly illustrated by the comeback of persons who were discredited and persecuted by Mao. In fact, China's present political leadership is dominated by the pragmatist group that was formerly headed by Liu Shaoqi, the foremost target during the Cultural Revolution.

Rule by pragmatists means a more orthodox socialist system run by party bureaucrats—a "nomenclature" or dictatorship of "Red aristocrats." Eventually Chinese society will come to resemble Soviet society. The fact that the functions of the secretariat of the Central Committee were greatly expanded and the secretary-general designated the country's highest official at the 12th Congress of the Communist Party of China in Sept. 1982 is clear indication that things are moving in that direction.

It is because of the nature of Chinese power that the CPC rejected Solidarity's request for support and sided instead with the Soviet-backed Jaruzelski regime. As far as Moscow was concerned, the Solidarity

issue was a test of the intentions of socialist states, since those opposed to the Soviet system could be expected to support the Polish movement. China's position delighted the Soviets and has caused them to soften their attitude toward the CPC.

The Deng Xiaoping-Hu Yaobang leadership has done much to de-Maoize national politics. Besides passing a resolution on "some historical problems of the party since the foundation of the People's Republic" at the 6th plenary session of the CPC Central Committee in June 1981, it has revised the Constitution and carried out a personnel shakeup in the State Council, China's government. The finishing touches were put on the drive at the 12th CPC Congress last year. Hua Guofeng, deprived of the post of party chairman and demoted at the 6th plenary session of the Central Committee, can safely be regarded as having lost his political life, although he is still nominally retained on the committee.

It goes without saying that the future of China after Deng will be insecure if de-Maoization is limited to the internal mechanism of the power structure and to documents of the Central Committee, because the death of a powerful Chinese leader has always been accompanied by a political reversal. For this reason, Deng and his associates feel that more sweeping changes are necessary. Having himself attended the 20th Congress of the Soviet Communist Party and witnessed the attacks on Stalin, Deng will not be satisfied until the country has been de-Maoized both institutionally and organizationally.³

There is resistance to Deng's line by those who still believe in the Cultural Revolution and by some elements of the People's Liberation Army, and that resistance can be expected to grow as de-Maoization progresses. But Chinese society no longer seems to possess the power to force a reversal of the present policy.

Deng's de-Maoization program is sup-

ported mainly by technocrats and bureaucrats, orthodox socialists who vow allegiance to the party. Their view of the Soviet Union differs fundamentally from the intensely anti-Soviet attitude of their predecessors during Mao's days. Significantly, the standard epithet "Soviet socialist imperialism" was not included in the party rules or the new Constitution adopted at the 12th CPC Congress. Moreover, the policies of Liu Shaoqi, sometimes called China's Khrushchev, and the group headed by Peng Dehuai, whose sympathies with Khrushchev were unmistakable, have been fully rehabilitated.

Peng, who as defense minister quarreled with Mao over the Great Leap Forward, people's communes and the modernization of the armed forces, was ousted at the Lushan Conference in Aug. 1959. Branded an anti-party, anti-revolutionary element, he was subsequently persecuted by the Red Guards during the Cultural Revolution and falsely accused of crimes, and died a miserable death. Today, however, he is widely revered as a hero who valiantly stood up to Mao. Symbolic of Peng's rehabilitation, his autobiography, which details what happened at the Lushan Conference and contains his letters to Mao, has recently been published.⁴

Huang Kecheng, former chief of staff of the People's Liberation Army, who was deposed with Peng, as well as men who were described as Peng's associates such as Xi Zhongxun and Zhang Aiping are back in positions of power. Huang is permanent secretary of the CPC Central Commission for Discipline Inspection, and Xi is vice-chairman of the National People's Congress and secretary of the CPC Central Committee. Zhang is defense minister.

There is now a consensus among the masses in China that the country should have followed the policies of Peng. It can be said that the Khrushchev line has fully regained its former status. The change in Chinese thinking indicates clearly that Deng's de-Maoization policy is taking hold.

Particularly significant is the reappearance en bloc of the leaders of the Stalinist Gao Gang group, who were expelled from the party as anti-revolutionary elements after they attempted to turn Northeastern China into an independent state in the first half of the 1950s.⁶ Guo Feng, then deputy organization chief of the Northeast Bureau of the CPC Central Committee and director of personnel affairs of the Northeast People's Government, has been appointed first secretary of Liaoning Province, a key section of the Northeast region. Similarly, Zhao Dezun, who was rural work chief of the Northeast Bureau of the Central Committee, has been named first secretary of Heilongjiang Province, an area of crucial importance in that it adjoins the Soviet Union. He concurrently serves as chairman of the standing committee of the provincial people's congress of Heilongjiang. Many others, including two of Gao Gang's former aides—Zhang Xiushan and Ma Hong—were appointed to the newly created Central Advisory Commission and the Central Committee at the 12th CPC Congress.

In addition, officials who have a good knowledge of the Soviet Union are gaining increasing prominence. For example, at the 12th CPC Congress, Vice Foreign Minister Qian Qichen, a leading authority on Soviet affairs at the Chinese Foreign Ministry, was appointed alternate member of the Central Committee, an unusual promotion for a diplomat. It should perhaps be recalled in this connection that Deng himself studied at Zhongshan (Sun Yat-sen) University in Moscow when he was a young man.

The above facts plainly show that de-Maoization, while profoundly changing China's politics and society, is steering the country toward rapprochement with the Soviet Union.

The Four Modernizations

China's present national target, the "four modernizations"—in agriculture, industry,

national defense, and science and technology—spells out the course the country will follow in the post-Mao era.

The four modernizations plan was conceived by the late Premier Zhou Enlai as a means of de-Maoization. Embracing Zhou's idea, Deng and his associates decided to depart from the Maoist quest for a "utopia in poverty" after workers in Hangzhou staged a strike in support of their demand for a wage increase in the summer of 1975. Members of the Deng group were criticized as "capitalist roaders"—pragmatists following the path of capitalism—by those who were to be known later as the Gang of Four.

But after Zhou's death in Jan. 1976, criticism of and resistance to the Maoist system erupted in a series of popular revolts, starting with the disturbances at Beijing's Tian An Men Square early that year. With Mao's death on Sept. 9, 1976, a split developed among his aides over the issue of succession. Power changed hands on Oct. 7 of the same year, when the Gang of Four was arrested. In a kind of pre-emptive coup, Hua Guofeng and Wang Dongxing—rightists among those who had pushed the Cultural Revolution—seized power. But the Hua regime was eventually succeeded by the Deng-Hu leadership.

The four modernizations plan was formally proposed in a political report Zhou made to the 1st session of the 4th National People's Congress in Jan. 1975. It was then clearly set forth in the new party rules, which were adopted at the 11th plenary session of the CPC in Aug. 1977, and came to symbolize efforts to get the country out of the Cultural Revolution.

For some time, a dual system prevailed as Hua and his associates continued to stress Maoist thoughts, class struggle and the Cultural Revolution slogan "Learn industry from Daqing and agriculture from Dazhai." Eventually, however, the influence of the Hua group was greatly reduced, at the 3rd plenary session of the 11th CPC Central

Committee in Dec. 1978, paving the way for the emergence of the Deng-Hu leadership.

At the session, Chen Yun, a veteran party leader with great influence on China's economic policy, was elected vice-chairman. At the same time, the appraisal of those who had been ousted and had died under Mao's rule such as Peng Dehuai and Tao Zhu was officially reversed and the four modernizations established as a national target.

When the four modernizations program became official policy and ceased to be merely a slogan for political struggle, adjustments became necessary to make it work. A drive to make China a law-based society got under way after the 2nd session of the 5th National People's Congress, which took place in June and July of 1979. Thirty years after the foundation of the People's Republic, China finally became an "accessible" country. Since the four modernizations plan arose in response to social and historical needs, China's course seems irreversible.

At the 5th plenary session of the 11th CPC Central Committee, the late Liu Shaoqi was fully rehabilitated while the Cultural Revolution moderates who had taken part in the Oct. 7, 1976, coup, such as Wang Dongxing, Ji Dengkui and Wu De—the group who believed Mao could do no wrong—were dismissed. In Jan. 1981 a political trial of the Gang of Four was carried out, resulting in death sentences against Jiang Qing and Zhang Chunqiao.

Meanwhile, a review was launched of economic relations with Japan in an attempt to bring bilateral trade, heavily in Japan's favor due to China's importation of large industrial plants, back into balance. The study was made under the direction of Vice-Chairman Chen Yun, who had assumed responsibility for the country's economic management. It was an attempt to lay the blame for the failure of the "Leap forward with Western aid" policy on the Hua group. It was after these events that Hua was de-

moted and the resolution on "some historical problems" of the party was adopted at the 6th plenary session of the CPC Central Committee.

Specifically, what is the goal of the four modernizations plan? In a word, it is to increase China's per-capita gross national product from the present level of about \$250—one-fortieth that of Japan and number 130 in world per-capita GNP standings—to \$1,000 by the end of the century. It is a modest target when one realizes that Japan's economy grew fortyfold in 20 years, but given China's massive economic woes, it will be a difficult one to achieve. Even Deng Xiaoping has begun to sound pessimistic, admitting that the country will be lucky to raise per-capita GNP to \$800.

Even if the four modernizations are successfully executed and the goal of \$1,000 per-capita GNP is attained, China will probably be further behind its neighbors than it is now. The surrounding countries such as Hong Kong, South Korea and Singapore—not to mention Japan—already have GNPs 10 to 20 times larger than China's. That gap will probably more than double by the end of the century. For this reason, it is certain that China's economic stagnation will continue to pose a problem for mankind—perhaps the most serious North-South issue of this century.

Moreover, the projected rise in per-capita GNP will be possible only if China's population stays at the present level. Should the growth rate exceed 2 percent as in the past, the country's population could swell to two billion by the end of the century. In such an event, per-capita GNP would probably remain below \$500, raising the specter of as many as two billion people living in abject poverty.

Looked at in this way, the establishment of the four modernizations as a new national target is hardly cause for celebration. Those Japanese politicians and businessmen looking forward to the prospects of making

economic inroads in the Chinese market will surely be disappointed.

What then are China's options? Now that the experiment to achieve economic development with Western assistance has clearly failed, the country does not have many options left. Some in the West would like to think that China will continue to give priority to economic cooperation with Japan, the United States and other Western countries. It is more likely, however, that it will act to strengthen its relations with the Soviet Union and other socialist countries, whose systems are more in tune with its own.

In Search of a Model

China's takeoff from a closed country to an accessible one does not signify a switch to the Western system of liberalism. Changes can take place only within the bounds of the CPC-led socialist system. Despite the system's limitations, Chinese society will no doubt move to a stage where the structure of social and political organization will count more than ideology, as was once the case with Soviet society.⁶ Orthodox and realistic party bureaucrats like Deng Xiaoping and Hu Yaobang are probably best suited to lead such an ideologically disinclined society.

The situation in China is such that the country cannot afford to delay long-term economic construction—that is, industrialization. The lure of materialistic affluence is the government's only hope for overcoming the distrust of politics and the social indifference that is spreading among the masses. The danger in this, however, is that with an open-door policy, foreign influence is quickly taking hold in Chinese society. This accounts for the re-emergence of the traditional characteristics of utilitarianism and hard-bargaining in Chinese society today and explains the Chinese tendency to hold foreign countries in high esteem.⁷

If Chinese leaders really want to build a new country, a cultural revolution in the true sense of the term is needed. Eventually

there must be accommodation between socialism and capitalism, Chinese society and the outside world and the traditional and the modern. That is what the Cultural Revolution should have been concerned with. Because of that revolution's tragic ending, Chinese leaders are unable now even to discuss a genuine cultural revolution.⁸

Under these circumstances, China's path is severely circumscribed. Now that the leadership is leaning toward Soviet-style socialism, the best option seems to be to pattern the Chinese system on the Soviet model.

Having made two trips through the Soviet Union, Mongolia and China, in 1975 and 1981, I have had a chance to compare the Soviet and Chinese systems. Above all, I was struck by the many similarities, especially the bureaucratic rigidity in the service areas and middle-management sectors of both countries. Not only do the two countries' hotels, schools and hospitals resemble each other in terms of architectural style, scale and lack of upkeep, but they are similarly inefficient, as are railways, airlines and other means of public transportation. What is more, shoppers in both countries must wait in lines. The similarities—not surprising in view of China's de-Maoization drive—are sure to become greater as the four modernizations policy makes headway. In a sense, it is as if the Soviet Union's age of the New Economic Policy of the 1920s and the age of de-Stalinization of the 1950s have arrived in China together.

Eventually the theoretical and ideological differences with the Soviet Union will dissolve, bringing a party-level reconciliation and opening the way for a full-fledged rapprochement between the two communist giants. Despite the many dissimilarities between the two countries, China will pattern itself on the Soviet model. Of course there is no guarantee that the four modernizations will then succeed, but what other option does China have under the present circumstances?⁹

For a time just after the adoption of the

four modernizations policy, China attempted to introduce the Japanese management system and the mechanism of the market economy. The efforts all proved futile. The problem was that the Japanese economic system is based on the principle of capitalistic free competition. The attempt to emulate the efficiency of Japanese society alone without emulating its underlying principle was bound to fail.

There are indications that China once thought of patterning itself after Yugoslavia, a socialist country with a mixed economy. For China to imitate Yugoslavia, which it vehemently denounced first for "nationalistic deviationism" and later for "modern revisionism," is a historical irony in itself. Yet the Yugoslavia model is not well suited to China either.

Yugoslavia has introduced self-management of farms by individual farmers and is making various attempts to socialize production without nationalizing companies. Democratic features include workers' councils. Moreover, foreign capital is actively introduced and there are a number of joint ventures with foreign countries. In China, though people's communes are being dissolved, it is questionable whether individual self-management will ever be realized in view of the country's political and cultural traditions.

Although it would appear that the Soviet Union offers the only practical model for China, it is my hope that it will develop a system of its own. But before that is possible, the country must experience a genuine cultural revolution, just as Japan did in the 19th century.

The first thing they must do is to consider what went wrong with collectivization, how agriculture, in which 80 percent of the country's population is engaged, should be organized so as to raise productivity. For the Chinese economy to take off, agricultural stagnation must be overcome. Mere institutional and organizational change will not

be enough. The problem is deeper, rooted in Maoist philosophy.

When China rejected the Confucian "personal property" bureaucracy, it also rejected Taoist values, including the importance of freedom, rest and pleasure. All festive elements are gone from the Chinese countryside. Family graves, grave markers and symbols of ancestor worship are nowhere to be seen. Collective rural life, denuded of its folk customs, is incredibly dry. Farmers are forced to work like slaves while they are denied indulgence in the joys of production. Unless something is done about the quality of rural life, there is no hope for raising productivity.

There is a slim possibility that the "special economic zones" being established mainly in the coastal provinces will offer China another way out of its economic predicament. The coastal provinces are the homeland of overseas Chinese, many of whom have amassed fortunes and retain their identity as Chinese. If the government succeeds in its attempts to entice them to invest and manages to industrialize one or more provinces, the effect might conceivably transform the entire Chinese society. Especially promising are the special economic zones being built in Guangdong and Fujian.

Needless to say, such zones run counter to the spirit of Soviet socialism. Would the Chinese leaders allow them to flourish? Since they regard the capital of overseas Chinese as fundamentally different from that of Western capitalists, they might be willing to tolerate the zones while pursuing the Soviet model.

Because the eventual outcome of de-Maoization is the wholesale rejection of Maoist politics, the process necessarily involves the rediscovery of what Mao rejected. That includes the Soviet brand of socialism. Although there is an outside chance that China will develop its own socialist model, it is much more likely that it will pattern itself after the Soviet Union. The more the two

powers come to resemble each other, the greater the chances of a reconciliation.

Notes

¹ The change from closed to "accessible" country occurred after a transitional period that lasted from 1975—the final days of the Mao Zedong regime—to 1978, when Deng consolidated his hold on power. Since the change was prompted by internal needs in Chinese society, it has a historical parallel in the transition the Soviet Union made after throwing aside the yokes of the Stalinist system.

² For my views on the political dynamics and oscillations in China's internal politics, see "The Cycle of Chinese Politics and Time Divisions" in Nakajima Mineo, *China: History, Society, and International Relations* (Tokyo: Chūō Kōron Sha, 1982).

³ One of Deng's projects is the "Genshen Reform," an administrative reform plan drafted in 1980 by his brain trusters, including Deng Liqun and Liao Gailong.

⁴ *The Memoirs of Peng Dehuai* (Beijing: People's Publishing House, 1981).

⁵ For details on how the Gao Gang affair

affected Sino-Soviet relations, see "The Gao Gang Affair and Sino-Soviet Relations" in Nakajima Mineo, *The Sino-Soviet Confrontation and the Present Age: A Reappraisal of Postwar Asia* (Tokyo: Chūō Kōron Sha, 1978).

⁶ See Erich Fromm's *May Man Prevail? An Inquiry into the Facts and Fictions of Foreign Policy* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1969, p. 137).

⁷ On the traditional traits of the Chinese people, Max Weber's views are still valid.

⁸ For a commentary on the Cultural Revolution, see Nakajima Mineo, *Peking in Flux*, 2 vols. (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 1981).

⁹ Significantly, *Chi Shi Nien Dai* (the 1970s), a leftist magazine published in Hong Kong and reportedly affiliated with Deng Xiaoping, has printed a thesis in its July 1982 issue entitled "China Should Learn from the Soviet Union," the slogan the Chinese heard so often in the first half of the 1950s.