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# Deng Xiaoping: The Social Reformer

Martin King Whyte

Deng Xiaoping's legacy as a social reformer can be considered in the context of his ideas regarding the selection and promotion of human talent, and the implications of those ideas for the political and social order. Deng's ideas are contrasted primarily with those of Mao Zedong, even though at many times and in many of the utterances of both men there is little that can be distinguished.<sup>1</sup>

## *Approaches to Human Talent*

How do you select individuals worthy of positions of power, prestige and privilege? How do you educate and guide such individuals so that they will develop and contribute their talents to the full and be worthy of the public trust? How do you supervise them to see whether they are performing properly? How do you deal with misconduct by these chosen few? How much of the effort to create a desirable social order rests on such questions of personnel management; how much instead depends upon the proper design of the social order itself? In other words, are there alternative ways of constructing the political and social system such that one structure will produce better promotion of human talent than another? Might one set of structures incline even the most noble and talented to indolence and corruption, while another induce the devious and mediocre to upright behaviour? These are some of the questions that have to be faced in considering how to promote talent in any society.

In the United States, for example, the central stress in the political system is on creating the best set of structures rather than the best set of institutions for training and promoting talent. No strong role is given to the government in overseeing the creation and promotion of talent for the political system, not to mention for businesses, voluntary associations and other sectors of society. Much of the moral instruction of the population is supposed to take place elsewhere – in homes and churches, in particular. Institutions designed to foster competition and provide limits on power accretion are assumed to provide the best setting to motivate individuals to acquire training, work hard, seek promotion, and serve honourably. At the apex of this competitive process in the American political system, things are arranged so that lawyers, generals, oilmen, engineers, peanut farmers, haberdashers, actors and even professors can win the presidency. Hope that such a varied cast of characters will return the trust placed in them depends not on some prolonged process of moral

1. Describing what is distinctive about Deng's approach is difficult for a variety of familiar reasons. Most of his ideas have not been recorded for scholarly scrutiny, he worked closely for decades with Mao Zedong and others from whom I want to distinguish him here, and even his recorded speeches and writings may be the product of collective authorship and have in many cases been revised for publication in light of subsequent events. For all of these reasons, some degree of oversimplification is involved in trying to describe Deng's distinctive approaches.

and political training they have undergone, but on familiar American political institutions of checks and balances, a free press, opposition parties, term limits, competitive elections, and so forth. One way to describe this situation is to say that America opted for a system of “contest mobility” rather than “sponsored mobility.”<sup>2</sup> Rather than select a few individuals worthy of training and then sponsor their preparation for leadership, the American system encourages as many as possible to compete for elite positions, leaving it largely to each individual to acquire and sustain those qualities needed to succeed.

### *Mao Zedong’s Approach to Cultivating Talent*

Mao’s approach to the initial questions about how to detect and promote talent was quite different from the American one just described. It could be regarded as almost neo-Confucian, but with an important addition of several different types of class struggle. In contrast to the American approach, Mao’s emphasis was very much on developing specific mechanisms for personnel selection, training and supervision, rather than focusing primarily on perfecting the structures in which those individuals would serve. At least up until the Cultural Revolution the structures themselves were seen as relatively unproblematic. A set of Marxist–Leninist institutions was borrowed from the Soviet Union and modified, and the result was a social order that was similar to the imperial Chinese system, but more highly centralized, bureaucratic and penetrating. The CCP itself played the central role in detecting, training, supervising and disciplining talent throughout this hierarchical system.<sup>3</sup> To use the terminology introduced above, this was very much a system of sponsored rather than contest mobility.

Within this Party-led system, it was assumed that a central issue was how to develop and promote people with the correct ideas, and how to prevent them from developing the wrong ideas. As in the imperial Chinese system, it was assumed that a unitary set of political ideas and moral principles could be specified from above, and that if only people could be educated to absorb these ideas and live by them, society would become strong and prosperous. From this orientation came the impressive array of indoctrination instruments employed by the CCP: thought

2. These terms are discussed by Ralph Turner in his article, “Sponsored and contest mobility and the school system,” *American Sociological Review*, No. 25 (1960), pp. 555–567. The discussion above concerns selecting talent for high political office. As noted, leadership in other sectors of society is chosen in a variety of ways, and generally with little input from the government. In many of these other sectors the route to leadership is more via contest than sponsored mobility, but there are exceptions, such as in the U.S. armed forces and the Roman Catholic Church hierarchy.

3. At the higher reaches of the system, the CCP’s personnel management was exercised through the system of *nomenklatura* borrowed from the CPSU, under which power to appoint and approve lists of various officials in the state administrative hierarchy was vested in particular levels of the Party. See John P. Burns (ed.), *The Chinese Communist Party’s Nomenklatura System* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1989). However, the CCP’s power over personnel extended much further than the formal *nomenklatura* lists to include all positions of any power and influence in the PRC.

cultivation for Party members, required political study and mutual criticism for all citizens, special cadre schools, thought reform institutions, and so forth. Also impressive were the many mechanisms used to try to maintain the proper conduct and thinking of elites – rectification campaigns, manual labour stints, the mass line, May Seventh cadre schools, and so on. This personnel management system involved what could be called “close tutelage”: even though the CCP made the decisions about selection and promotion of talent, it still felt it had regularly and closely to monitor those selected to make sure that they were sanctioned or re-educated if they “deviated.” The central stress was on monitoring thinking – even when people’s behaviour was the focus of scrutiny, it was as an indicator of whether their thinking was good or bad.

All this sounds quite compatible with China’s Confucian heritage. One major difference from the neo-Confucian system concerned the process of selecting talent in the first place. Rather than assuming in principle that virtually anyone was capable of learning to think and behave in proper ways and thus could be cultivated for leadership,<sup>4</sup> Mao-era China employed a shifting set of class struggle policies to discriminate among individuals.

Initially after 1949 a class line was adopted in order to reverse existing patterns of privilege. Preference was given to former workers, poor peasants and early recruits to the Revolution, for example, and landlords, capitalists and those who had worked closely with the KMT were barred from office or discriminated against. However, during the 1950s, with a vast expansion of the bureaucracy, rapid urbanization and robust economic growth, this class line mostly worked in a relatively benign way in regard to China’s younger generation. Many individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds were promoted rapidly, but the educated offspring of former elite families mostly found their talents rewarded as well. Even though individual landlords, capitalists and others were treated harshly, if their children were old enough and far enough along in school, through a fairly superficial “drawing a class line” with their families and by pledging to support the Party, they could also take advantage of the many new opportunities being created.<sup>5</sup> In other words, during this period talent was still sought almost everywhere, despite the official class line of the new regime.

After 1956, with the completion of socialist transformation, there was a period of uncertainty and debate over whether class struggle would continue (see below). While initially it appeared that the regime would

4. The major exception to this universalism of the imperial system concerns the fact that leadership positions were only open to males. Minor exceptions concerned specific occupational and ethnic groups that were excluded from the imperial examination process, such as actors, boat people, soldiers, etc.

5. Highly publicized cases to the contrary, most children from former elite families did not have publicly to denounce their parents or cut off all contact with them, but only to promise not to let family loyalty interfere with obedience to the CCP. See the discussion in my chapter, “Urban life in the People’s Republic,” in Roderick MacFarquhar and John K. Fairbank (eds.), *The Cambridge History of China*, Vol. 15 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

“phase out” class struggle, this situation changed markedly after 1962, following Mao’s warning to “never forget class struggle.” Not only was it maintained, but the scope of its targets broadened. This occurred in several ways. In part it involved former middle groups (such as middle peasants, those with overseas relatives), being in effect recategorized as among the suspect “bourgeois classes.” It also involved the fact that the class labels which had developed were based not simply on former economic positions (such as landlord, merchant) but political behaviour (such as counter-revolutionary, bad element). Through a series of campaigns new class struggle targets were added (rightists, capitalist roaders, and so on). There were also repeated efforts to uncover hidden class enemies by investigations of personal and family history, resulting in a substantial number of “class demotions” into bad class categories in the 1960s and 1970s. In addition, since class and political labels were effectively inheritable, the stigma of bad status was passed on to millions of children and grandchildren of the (ever expanding) pool of class struggle targets. As a result of these expansions, the number of individuals and families who were subject to discrimination in employment, education, military service, Party membership and other realms was considerably broadened.

Not coincidentally, the 1960s and 1970s were characterized by retrenchment, slow growth, frozen wages and campaigns to send urbanites to the countryside. A narrower range of more reliable people was to be eligible for selection and promotion into desirable positions in the late-Mao era. What had been a “non-zero sum” form of class struggle in the 1950s became very much a “zero-sum game” subsequently, with fewer winners and many more losers.<sup>6</sup>

Other important changes in class struggle policy occurred in the 1960s and 1970s. Mao and others in the leadership, particularly those radicals who rose to prominence in the Cultural Revolution, were increasingly uncomfortable with the rigid, caste-like implications of the class label system developed in the 1950s.<sup>7</sup> Not coincidentally, Mao and the radicals were also increasingly unhappy with the ideas and behaviour of many Chinese who did not fall into the “bad class” categories. Their response to the problem of how to describe and deal with undesirable tendencies that did not fit into the established system of analysing classes was an effort to develop new class struggle rubrics. Two alternative frameworks emerged in Mao’s later years, one fairly fully after 1964, and the other more hesitantly and partially, mostly during the course of the Cultural Revolution.

The system of class struggle established in the 1950s may be designated as one which focused on “old classes,” since it was based on

6. On the worsening prospects for upward mobility after the Great Leap Forward, see my essay, “The politics of life chances in the People’s Republic of China,” in Yu-ming Shaw (ed.), *Power and Policy in the PRC* (Boulder: Westview, 1985).

7. The best account of the class label system and the debates surrounding it is Richard Curt Kraus, *Class Conflict in Chinese Socialism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981).

classifying people according to the property and positions their families held in the three years prior to 1949. In parallel fashion the two new class struggle frameworks might be termed systems of “thought classes” and “new classes.” Both frameworks implicitly rejected the idea that the position of one’s family prior to the Revolution was a good basis for judging potential for proper thought or the likelihood of bad tendencies in the 1960s and beyond. But they differed in their analysis of where bad ideas came from and who was most likely to display such ideas.

The “thought class” framework is a radically non-materialist way of dealing with issues of promoting talent. It assumes that certain correct ways of thinking and behaving can be specified, and these are labelled “proletarian.” Likewise, certain incorrect ways of thinking can be outlined, labelled “bourgeois.” Thought class analysis is closer than “old class” analysis to the Confucian paradigm in assuming that virtually anyone can under the proper circumstances develop proper ideas, but under unfavourable circumstances they may display bad tendencies. The task of personnel managers is then to monitor people’s thinking as regularly as possible (that is, with even closer tutelage than before), in order to determine whether to reward or punish them. People manifesting good thinking and behaviour can expect favourable treatment and promotion, while those displaying bad tendencies will receive extra scrutiny, re-education, and even demotion or other penalties. This sort of tutelage may operate without giving much consideration to whatever “old class” origins the individuals involved bear.

The result of this “thought class” analysis is an effort to create what Susan Shirk has termed “virtuocracy.”<sup>8</sup> Efforts are made to construct a system that rewards and penalizes people for their exhibited political and moral virtue. Although the rhetoric of social classes is used in thought class analysis, in fact there is no linkage required with any identifiable social positions. As noted above, everyone is considered potentially vulnerable to bourgeois tendencies.

The third and final form of class analysis to emerge in the late-Mao years may be called a “new class” framework. This term stems from the close parallels between the ideas involved and the critique of state socialism developed by the Yugoslav Marxist heretic Milovan Djilas.<sup>9</sup> In the Cultural Revolution and beyond, Mao and the radicals struggled to find ways to express their growing sense that holding high office and prestigious positions within the post-1949 system was a primary source of elitism, corruption and other undesirable tendencies. A variety of ideas that emerged in these years – for example, criticism of “people in power taking the capitalist road,” critiques of a “new bureaucratic stratum,” idealization of the Paris Commune, and the republication of Lenin’s utopian *State and Revolution* – conveyed a growing conviction that the

8. Susan Shirk, “The decline of virtuocracy in China,” in James Watson (ed.), *Class and Social Stratification in Post-Revolution China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).

9. See Milovan Djilas, *The New Class* (New York: Praeger, 1957).

concentration of power and privilege of the socialist order itself (and not improper thinking or fallible elites) was the basic source of the problems Mao and others wanted to eliminate. For the first time, then, the structure of Leninist institutions built in China after 1949 was seen as problematic.

However, Mao Zedong was never willing to take the next logical step that a new class analysis led to by initiating a major reform of the hierarchical political order in the PRC. When Zhang Chunqiao and others came to him early in 1967 to have him approve their newly-established "Shanghai Commune," he torpedoed the idea on the grounds that this organizational form would leave no role for the Party to play.<sup>10</sup> Mao's attempted solution to the problem of how to pursue the implications of a new class analysis without reforming the hierarchical system was not very appealing: it involved the prospect of launching new cultural revolutions every few years to cleanse elites of the bad tendencies developed since the last cleansing. Because of the inability to reconcile new class analysis with the structures of Leninism, new class ideas remained only partially developed at the time of Mao's death and were denounced after the purge of the Gang of Four in 1976.<sup>11</sup>

These two alternative class struggle frameworks, of "thought classes" and "new classes," competed for influence with "old class" analysis during the final 15 years of Mao's life. The effect of this ideological confusion was, once again, to enlarge the scope of potential class struggle significantly. Now class enemies might be found not only among families who had held elite positions prior to 1949 or among groups later designated as suspect (such as rightists and counter-revolutionaries), but among all of those in positions of power and privilege (particularly cadres and intellectuals) and, under a thought class analysis, literally everywhere.

The obsession with finding new sources of hostile class tendencies was combined after the Cultural Revolution began with a dismantling of most of the incentive systems established during the 1950s (systems which existed in other socialist societies). The message conveyed was that if you want to motivate people to think and behave properly, you don't have to, and in fact you shouldn't, set up opportunity structures to reward the

10. See the discussion in Victor Nee, "Revolution and bureaucracy: Shanghai in the Cultural Revolution," in Victor Nee and James Peck (eds.), *China's Uninterrupted Revolution* (New York: Pantheon, 1975).

11. Chinese dissidents have, however, put forth more systematic ideas that have much in common with new class analysis. See, for example, Liu Binyan, *People or Monsters?* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983); Chen Erjin, *China: Crossroads Socialism* (London: Verso, 1984); Wei Jingsheng, "The fifth modernization," in James D. Seymour (ed.), *The Fifth Modernization* (Stanfordville, NY: Human Rights Publishing Group, 1980); Jonathan Unger, "Whither China? Yang Xiguang, Red Capitalists, and the social turmoil of the Cultural Revolution," *Modern China*, No. 17 (1991), pp. 3–37. For further observations on Mao's ultimate unwillingness to modify the political structure his regime had built, see my essay, "Who hates bureaucracy? A Chinese puzzle," in Victor Nee and David Stark (eds.), *Remaking the Economic Institutions of Socialism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1989). There I point out that the impression that either Mao or the Cultural Revolution was anti-bureaucratic is mistaken, since the initiatives Mao took in his later years enhanced, rather than reduced, structural bureaucratization.

favoured few. To do so would only encourage people to behave properly opportunistically and temporarily in order to gain personal advantages, thus actually reinforcing a central bourgeois value. Instead you should test people's moral purity by monitoring their thinking and behaviour closely in the absence of significant chances for material advancement.<sup>12</sup> Virtue was not quite supposed to be its own reward, but more so than in the past.

By the time of Mao's death it was increasingly apparent that the personnel practices that resulted from these Maoist approaches were causing serious problems. The neo-Confucian/old class combination of the 1950s had had a number of favourable consequences, particularly the recruitment and promotion of large numbers of people who felt they owed everything to the Revolution. However, the changes in approaches for detecting and promoting talent introduced after 1962 had a number of undesirable results. The opportunities for significant personal advancement were much reduced, while chances for negative treatment expanded greatly. Many groups and individuals who had felt quite secure and grateful toward the Party and willing to make great sacrifices for it in the past became very angry at the new anxieties and mistreatment they had to face. The effects of these shifts on popular morale and productivity were pervasive. In addition, the competition spawned by virtuocracy led to absurd phrase-mongering and diversion from work, academic learning and other practical pursuits. The inherent subjectivity of a virtocratic system made it very difficult to distinguish "genuine" from "sham" activists and proletarians, and as a result concentrated even greater arbitrary power in the hands of the bureaucrats who had to make the judgments involved.<sup>13</sup> By the time of Mao's death, China had become an overheated, inefficient and increasingly anxious society where fear and resentment replaced gratitude as the dominant source of political motivations.

### *Deng Xiaoping's Approach to Cultivating Talent*

Already during the 1950s there were signs that Deng Xiaoping had ideas on developing and promoting talent that differed in important ways from those promoted by Mao. As noted earlier, at the time of the Eighth Congress of the CCP in 1956 there were debates about the meaningfulness of class labels and class struggle in an era in which socialism was

12. Of course, no society can operate without some rewards and promotions, and in China of the Cultural Revolution decade people received not only moral incentives but also privileges and promotion into positions of power. On the internal contradictions of this effort to create virtuocracy, see Shirk, "The decline of virtuocracy in China," and her book, *Competitive Comrades* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982). During these years there was the bizarre phenomenon I have termed "competitive selflessness" – individuals who wanted to get ahead had to appear to be less concerned about getting ahead than everyone else. For example, the best hope an urban youth had to avoid being sent to the countryside was to be the earliest and most fervent in "volunteering" to go.

13. These are points stressed in the work of Susan Shirk cited earlier and in Andrew Walder, *Communist Neo-Traditionalism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986).

victorious and ownership of productive property by individuals was being phased out. The debate in China, as is well known, was influenced by developments in the Soviet Union, where 1956 was the year of Nikita Khrushchev's "Secret Speech" denouncing Stalin's crimes.<sup>14</sup> Khrushchev argued that Stalin's erroneous claim that class struggle intensified after socialist transformation had provided the rationale for the mass terror that enveloped the Soviet Union in the 1930s. Khrushchev eventually presided over the development of a new framework for describing Soviet society, which was characterized as a "state of the whole people." This odd formulation indicated a belief that hostile classes and class struggle had ceased to exist in the Soviet Union, which was composed of two main classes (state employees and collective farmers) and one "stratum" (the intelligentsia), all involved in non-antagonistic relationships with one another. This ideological shift formed the basis for the CPSU's development of a meritocratic or technocratic ethos under Khrushchev and Brezhnev.<sup>15</sup>

In Deng Xiaoping's speech to the Eighth CCP Congress in 1956, he struck several notes that can be described as meritocratic, and these are precursors of the policies he presided over after 1978. Deng was among the most outspoken advocates of phasing out discrimination based upon the "old class" system. Speaking specifically of the elimination of a class origin criterion for admission to the CCP, Deng stated:

The distinction previously made in the procedure of admitting new members has been removed because the former classification has lost or is losing its original meaning. Both before the Seventh Congress [in 1945] and for a considerable period after it was essential to have different procedures of admission for applicants of different social origin, and this served a very good purpose. But in recent years the situation has drastically changed. The difference between workers and office employees is now only a matter of a division of labour within the same class.... The vast majority of our intellectuals have now come over politically to the side of the working class, and a rapid change is taking place in their family background.... What is the point, then, of classifying these social strata into two different categories?<sup>16</sup>

Deng's argument was quite direct. Not only was the class label system losing its meaning, but continuing to discriminate on the basis of these labels would discourage those with bad class backgrounds from making a contribution to society.

14. According to one of Deng Xiaoping's biographers, Uli Franz, Deng was one of two representatives of the CCP (the other being Zhu De) who attended the CPSU's 20th Party Congress and heard the secret speech, barely eight months before China's Eighth Party Congress was convened. See his book, *Deng Xiaoping* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1988), p. 142.

15. See, for example, David Lane, *The Socialist Industrial State* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1976); Jerry Hough, *How the Soviet Union is Governed* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979); Allen Kassof, "The Administered Society," *World Politics*, No. 16 (1964), pp. 558-575.

16. Deng Xiaoping, "Report on the revision of the constitution of the Communist Party of China," 16 September 1956, in Deng Xiaoping, *Speeches and Writings* (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1984), pp. 29-30.

In the same speech, Deng also denounced excessive reliance on seniority in the promotion of talent, and in very similar terms:

... there are still serious defects in the selection and promotion of cadres. The chief of these is that even today many comrades still use "seniority" as the criterion in selecting cadres. Party members of long standing with a rich store of experience are undoubtedly a valuable asset to the Party. But we should be making a very grievous mistake if we value this asset to the exclusion of everything else, because our revolutionary cause is advancing and the number of cadres required is increasing all the time, while the number of old Party members is necessarily falling. This being so, if we don't resolutely and confidently employ carefully selected new cadres, what other outcome can there be except harm to the cause of the Party and the people?<sup>17</sup>

There are two elements visible in these ideas. First, as with the Confucian approach or Mao's virtuocracy, competition for advancement should be open to all or virtually all. However, unlike these approaches, the basis for evaluating and promoting individuals should be not their thinking and political virtue, but their contributions to society. Here the meritocratic aspect can be seen. What is important is how hard you work, how much special training you acquire, whether you introduce useful innovations, and whether you take on extra responsibilities. Later Deng's ideas on this issue were revealed in his less formal but more famous 1961 statement: "White cat, black cat, what does it matter as long as it catches mice?"

A large number of the changes Deng presided over after 1978 can be related to his attempt to replace the personnel policies of the Mao era with a more meritocratic system in order to restore morale and improve incentives: bonuses and piece rates banned under Mao were restored, and frozen wages were unfrozen. Competitive examinations and grade-based academic practices of the pre-Cultural Revolution schools were reinstated, with direct entry into colleges and urban jobs available to middle school graduates. Entire new categories of educational opportunities were opened up – to enrol in graduate study, earn advanced degrees and go overseas to study. A mania for testing and credentialism emerged, with candidates for large numbers of jobs and other opportunities now selected on the basis of competitive examinations. Incumbents in positions such as teaching who had started work in the late-Mao era also had to pass tests in order to hold on to their jobs. The bureaucracy was pressured to change recruitment policies so that ever-higher percentages of officials holding college degrees could be reported. Mandatory retirement for officials was pushed through, using arguments that follow directly from Deng's 1956 statement quoted above. The "iron rice bowl" provided by permanent employment in state enterprises was attacked, and efforts were made to replace it with a contract labour system, with new possibilities of demotion, termination, salary cuts and even enterprise bankruptcy. The entire Maoist ethos of selfless service and moral incentives was repudiated in favour of an emphasis that "it is good to get rich," with

17. *Ibid.* p. 34.

conspicuous consumption by the successful serving to motivate others to try to catch up.

The class label system used for 30 years was officially repudiated, and not only former class enemies and their descendants, but millions of other victims of the Mao era were rehabilitated and encouraged to contribute to the “four modernizations.” The class struggle campaigns of the Mao era were characterized as a grave mistake which subjectively and arbitrarily stigmatized millions of worthy citizens. (Deng refused to repudiate the anti-rightist campaign of 1957–58, in which he had played a central role, but he did acknowledge that the scope of targets of even that campaign had been unfairly expanded.) The era of such mass campaigns was formally declared to have ended. It was also claimed that China did not possess a “new bureaucratic stratum,” and that bureaucrats, intellectuals and other elites were all members of the working class. Therefore there was no valid reason to encourage class struggle against such people. In other words, after 1978 an analysis of Chinese society emerged that sounds very much like Khrushchev’s “state of the whole people.”

One of Deng Xiaoping’s clearest statements of these views is contained in his speech at the National Conference on Science in March 1978, where he took up again the ideas he had expressed at the Eighth Party Congress 22 years earlier:

How should the mental labour involved in scientific research be regarded? ... generally speaking, the overwhelming majority of [mental workers] are already intellectuals serving the working class and other working people. It can therefore be said that they are already part of the working class itself. They differ from the manual workers only insofar as they perform different roles in the social division of labour. Everyone who works, whether with his hands or with his brain, is part of the working class in a socialist society.<sup>18</sup>

In the same speech, Deng attacked those who argued that intellectuals were not to be trusted and required constant inspection of their political thoughts and heavy doses of political study. He argued that intellectuals needed political study and criticism and self-criticism no more than those who would impose these activities on them: cadres doing political work and long-time Party members. Moreover, Deng explicitly gave his approval for a sharp reduction in political tutelage of intellectuals:

Scientists and technicians should concentrate their energies on their professional work. When we say that at least five-sixths of their work time should be left free for professional work, this is meant as the minimum requirement. It would be better still if more time were made available. If someone works seven days and seven nights a week to meet the needs of science or production, it shows his lofty and selfless devotion to the cause of socialism. We should commend, encourage, and learn from such people.... We cannot demand that scientists and technicians, or at any rate, the

18. Deng Xiaoping, “Speech at the opening ceremony of the National Conference on Science,” 18 March 1978, in Deng, *Speeches and Writings*, p. 43. It was noted at the time that the speech by Hua Guofeng at the same conference was much more “virtuocratic” and less “meritocratic” than this speech of Deng’s.

overwhelming majority of them, study stacks of books on political theory, join in numerous social activities and attend many meetings not related to their work.<sup>19</sup>

The same speech also stressed another of Deng's favourite themes – the search for people with talent who can be promoted into scientific careers should be very broad, with no groups and strata discouraged from applying.

In other speeches during the early years of the reforms, Deng again attacked the practice of relying heavily on seniority in judging and promoting personnel:

Some comrades argue that it is better to promote cadres one step at a time.... We shall never repeat the mistake [of the Cultural Revolution period] of elevating cadres so quickly that they soar like a rocket or a helicopter.... But we can't stick to the old concept of a "staircase" forever.... In future [*sic*], many positions will be filled and titles granted solely on the basis of examination. Only by doing away with the outdated concept of the "staircase," or by creating new staircases suited to the new situation and tasks, can we boldly break through the conventions in promoting cadres. But whether the staircases are new or old, we must not just pay lip-service to the necessity of promoting young and middle-aged cadres. We must see to it that the really outstanding ones are indeed promoted, and promoted in good time. We must not be too hasty in this matter, but if we are too slow we will retard our modernization programme.... Exceptional candidates should be provided with a sort of light ladder so they can come up more quickly, skipping some rungs. It is to make room for the young and middle-aged cadres that we have proposed reducing concurrent posts and eliminating over-concentration of power. How can they come up the staircase if all the steps are occupied, or if they aren't allowed to occupy the empty ones?<sup>20</sup>

The other side of Deng's emphasis on promotions due to merit, as already indicated, was a reduced emphasis on ideological remoulding. At various points during Mao's final years official pressure for political study often reached frenetic heights. There were efforts to encourage daily political study and even to foster rituals of confessing personal failings to live up to Mao's ideals at the end of each day's activities. Mandatory political study sessions did not disappear from work units during the 1980s, but in keeping with Deng's speech at the 1978 National Science Conference, they did become notably less frequent, generally no more than once a week. Their content also shifted away from intense scrutiny of personal ideology and towards general discussions of current Party policy or even of recent work problems. The atmosphere altered as well, making superficial participation and even bored indifference more acceptable than in the past. The clear message of the times was that, while political tutelage would not be dropped entirely, what determined

19. *Ibid.* pp. 47–48. Of course, it could be debated whether Deng meant these ideas to apply to intellectuals generally, or only to "hard" scientists and technicians. Nevertheless, the comments were interpreted by Chinese as calling for a general reduction of the burden of political study activity for all intellectuals.

20. Deng Xiaoping, "On the reform of the system of Party and state leadership," 18 August 1980, in *Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1984), pp. 306–307.

how people were treated and promoted was not so much their perceived ideological purity as their test scores, work records and credentials. Efforts to make sure that this new emphasis stuck required that the individuals making personnel evaluations be changed as well. This was done both by the recruitment on a more meritocratic basis of new administrative leaders and by the effort to remove Party secretaries from primary control over personnel decisions.

All the aspects of Deng's reforms mentioned so far do not involve basic changes in the structure of the political system, only in the criteria that were supposed to be used to detect and promote talent. To oversimplify somewhat, it could be said that Deng wanted "expert" criteria to be used more in personnel decisions, and "red" criteria less. Another change from the Mao era was that in the 1980s a full range of material rewards was used without apology in order to provide incentives and compensate the talented. However, the centralized hierarchical structure persisted into the reform era, with bureaucrats monopolizing the power to make most personnel decisions.

### *Going Beyond Meritocracy?*

Other aspects of Deng's reforms did make some dent in this hierarchical system. The wide variety of market reforms introduced reduced the role of the party-state in controlling access to all rewards and opportunities. By allowing private enterprise, foreign investment, economic activity outside the plan, and particularly the household responsibility system in agriculture, the potential for fundamental changes in the structure that rewarded talent was created.

To understand the implications of these changes, the most important of these reforms, the dismantling of collectivized agriculture, is considered. Deng and his leadership group could have tried to implement meritocratic reforms in the countryside without such a fundamental change, and for a few years in the late 1970s and early 1980s this appeared to be their aim. Communes would still have operated, but with most managerial decisions decentralized to the production team. Efforts to award work points based upon political enthusiasm or community evaluations (as in the repudiated "Dazhai model") would have been scrapped in favour of piece rates and other incentive schemes designed to heighten work effort and skill enhancement. In essence this would have been an effort to return to the collective system of the "60 points" of 1962, wiping away the virtuocratic and levelling innovations introduced in the countryside during the Socialist Education Campaign and the Cultural Revolution.<sup>21</sup> Such changes would have preserved bureaucratic control. Peasants still would have passively waited to be assigned to particular farming chores by local cadres, and the rewards they would have received for those chores would

21. See the discussion of the 60 points in William L. Parish and Martin King Whyte, *Village and Family in Contemporary China* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), p. 34.

have depended on the evaluations of their work by those cadres. But the criteria and rewards would have been more meritocratic than under Mao, and perhaps more work effort would have been stimulated. The point is that one can imagine a system that is both meritocratic and bureaucratic – the prototype effort to create such a system, as noted earlier, was Brezhnev's Soviet Union.

Of course, that is not how things worked out in the Chinese countryside. Within a brief time span the collectivized system was swept aside in favour of the household responsibility system. The reformed rural system differed from the communes in many ways, but one distinction is central: the main rewards did not require any evaluation and decision by bureaucratic superiors. After meeting basic agricultural production and delivery quotas (areas in which cadre oversight persisted), peasants could cultivate other crops, engage in non-agricultural jobs, market their own produce, and sell their services to willing buyers. Whether they prospered or not depended much more on their own efforts and on market conditions, and less on cadre decisions, than during the commune era.<sup>22</sup> In substantial ways, then, the incentives for people to behave in the desired ways were built into the very structure of the reformed system, rather than depending upon indoctrination, supervision and evaluation by bureaucrats. The success of the Chinese rural reforms illustrates the potential of the alternative to “close tutelage” via system design which was discussed at the outset of this article. If a social system can be organized in such a way that it provides an attractive range of realizable opportunities for those who display desirable behaviour, then there is less need for the heavy hand of bureaucrats.

The most successful parts of Deng's reforms involved not simply substituting meritocratic for political criteria and adding material rewards within the existing bureaucratic structure, but some modification of that structure, as described above. The messages conveyed by this success were, however, complex. Much of the dynamism and productivity lost in the late-Mao era could be restored. However, to do so the basic features of the system would have to be modified or undermined. The central implication of this success is that leaving power in the hands of bureaucrats to tell people how to behave always leads to problems, even if the bureaucrats are telling them to behave meritocratically.

There are several things that China's Leninist leaders fear from any effort to change the structure and not just the rewards and reward criteria. In a less structurally bureaucratized system people have much more unsupervised time, resources and activity which they may use in ways that officials feel are undesirable. For example, peasants who prosper as a result of the reforms often spend their new wealth on fancy houses, elaborate tombs and expensive weddings, rather than on soil improve-

22. The extent of this change should not be exaggerated, however. Rural cadres still held considerable power, and they could often affect peasant livelihood in ways that were both positive (e.g. granting contracts and concessions for use of village resources) and negative (e.g. demanding payoffs, imposing new “taxes”).

ments or new tools. People can also decide to leave their present organizations and either switch to other organizations or go off on their own. In either case their behaviour gives rise to the ominous (to a Leninist) possibility of individuals escaping from official tutelage and exercising personal choices that may not match official preferences. Additionally, weak tutelage means that some people get ahead for the “wrong” reasons – not because they work harder or are more entrepreneurial, but because they can use connections and trick their way into easy profits, for example. But as already noted, the main lesson the success of the market reforms conveys is that many bureaucrats and bureaucratic structures left over from the Mao era are not only superfluous, but actually harmful. Obviously this is not a lesson devoted Leninists are anxious to learn.

This is not to claim that the sensible alternative to China’s current system of dealing with talent promotion is some sort of totally non-bureaucratic or purely market system. Obviously no such system exists anywhere in the world, and no modern society can function without extensive bureaucracies and numerous bureaucrats. The problem arises in the way in which various individuals and organizations are knitted together to make up the overall system. In non-Leninist systems there is a wide variety of competing and fairly autonomous bureaucratic structures. Within any one organization there may be bureaucrats who make decisions about whom to hire, promote and dismiss. However, they devise their own rules and procedures for managing personnel, rather than having the central government or some political or religious authority monitor everything. Furthermore, the members of these organizations generally have the option to leave and start again elsewhere, and the organization itself may operate in a competitive environment in which keeping members satisfied and motivated, and also remaining efficient and meeting the needs of clients or customers, can affect its very survival. In this sort of institutional setting there is at least some likelihood that bureaucratic excesses and arbitrariness will be held in check. In China’s Leninist system, in contrast, very serious constraints on the “exit” option for staff members and dominance over personnel decisions by the *nomenklatura* produce an institutional setting ready-made for bureaucratic arbitrariness and the undermining of meritocratic principles.<sup>23</sup>

During the heady days of the early 1980s, it seemed as if Deng and his advisers were willing to confront normal Leninist fears and consider more basic structural changes. They advocated attacks against concentrated bureaucratic power in political as well as economic institutions. At

23. In his perceptive work, *Exit, Voice and Loyalty* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970), Albert Hirschman discusses exit (i.e. leaving the organization) as well as voice (internal dissent) and loyalty (currying favour) as mechanisms subordinates within organizations use to gain some autonomy and influence vis-à-vis their superiors. The virtual impossibility of exercising either exit or voice in most contemporary Chinese organizations leaves loyalty as the only real possibility. Reliance on that option leads to the sort of subordinate dependency and superior arbitrariness detailed by Andrew Walder in his book, *Communist Neo-Traditionalism*.

this time Deng Xiaoping was one of the most forceful critics of the over-concentration of power in the political system, as shown particularly by his August 1980 speech on reform of the system of Party and state leadership:

Many places and units have patriarchal personages with unlimited power. Everyone has to be absolutely obedient and even personally attached to them.... The patriarchal ways I have described are partly responsible for the grave mistakes some cadres make.... It is true that the errors we made in the past were partly attributable to the way of thinking and style of work of some leaders. But they were even more attributable to the problems in our organizational and working systems. If these systems are sound, they can place restraints on the actions of bad people; if they are unsound, they may hamper the efforts of good people or indeed, in certain cases, may push them in the wrong direction. Even so great a man as Comrade Mao Zedong was influenced to a serious degree by certain unsound systems and institutions, which resulted in grave misfortunes for the Party, the state and himself.... I do not mean that the individuals concerned should not bear their share of responsibility, but rather that the problems in the leadership and organizational systems are more fundamental, widespread, and long-lasting, and that they have a greater effect on the overall interests of our country.<sup>24</sup>

Deng Xiaoping followed this sociologically astute (and very un-Confucian) statement in subsequent years with more calls for political reform. As late as 1986 he stressed the critical importance of the effort to reduce power concentrations:

The last time I talked with some comrades about economic work I called their attention to the necessity of reforming the political structure, including the need to solve this problem of Party interference.... While we are demanding that powers be transferred to lower levels, they are taking them back. I am told that some comrades think there were also man-made causes for the lower economic growth rate in the first half of this year, and that this tendency of higher levels to take powers back was one of them. Our policy is to continue the devolution of powers, but many institutions are resisting it. As a result, the enterprises are deprived of their powers and their initiative withers. So this is one of the reasons why the growth rate has gone down.... In the final analysis, all our other reforms depend on the success of the political reforms, because it is human beings who will – or will not – carry them out.... Without political reform, economic reform cannot succeed, because the first obstacle to be overcome is people's resistance.<sup>25</sup>

Despite such sentiments, Deng ended up repeating Mao's failure to make fundamental alterations to the over-concentration of power in the political system. Deng appears to have recognized the need to make such changes more clearly than Mao ever did, but whenever the debate over political reforms led to discussion of modifying core elements of the

24. Deng Xiaoping, "On the reform of the system of Party and State Leadership," pp. 313–16. At about the same time, some of Deng's advisers were making even more pointed critiques of their Leninist legacy. See Liao Gailong, "Historical experiences and our road to development," translated in *Issues and Studies*, No. 17 (1981), especially pp. 89–90.

25. Deng Xiaoping, "Reform the political structure and strengthen the people's sense of legality," 28 June 1986, in Deng Xiaoping, *Fundamental Issues in Present-Day China* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1987), pp. 147–48.

Leninist system, Deng and those around him recoiled and shut off discussion. In response to the student demonstrations of 1986–87 and then the much larger ones of 1989, China's conservative leadership re-emphasized the need for strict hierarchical control, and any talk of "political reform" was reduced to superficialities.

### *Unanticipated Consequences of Deng's Reforms*

Deng Xiaoping's failure to follow through with the effort to introduce major political reforms is related to a larger blind spot. Throughout his career Deng has shown talent for dealing with the pressing problems of China's political economy. However, he has been quite inept at anticipating the social consequences of the reforms he has presided over. At times it has seemed that Deng was trying to outwit his Marxist heritage by ignoring the changes in the superstructure that were being unleashed by transformations of the material base of China (through economic reforms).

Some of the unanticipated consequences of the reforms, of course, posed no great threat to Party control. For example, market reforms fostered a reluctance of many work units to employ women and a tendency of rural parents to withdraw their daughters from school early, thus jeopardizing the fragile gains for women that had been achieved in earlier years.<sup>26</sup> Decollectivization of agriculture brought with it the collapse of most rural co-operative medical insurance systems, contributing to growing inequality in this area and endangering the impressive gains in health care and life spans made after 1949.<sup>27</sup> Market reforms and the relaxation of migration restrictions led to the mushrooming of the "floating population" as millions cascaded into China's large cities and across provincial boundaries looking for greater opportunities. This increased mobility made it more difficult for the authorities to keep track of people and enforce regulations such as the official "one child" policy.<sup>28</sup> Social trends such as these produced anxious commentary and criticism in the official media, but no major efforts to reverse reform.

The reforms designed to alter the system of selecting and promoting talent were quite another matter. They inevitably brought in their wake consequences that directly threatened the Party's control over Chinese society. Promotion more by "expert" than "red" criteria produces individuals in influential positions who feel they have some basis for making independent judgments about their society's problems, rather than people willing to rely entirely on Party and leader dictates. Market reforms produce more individuals and families whose livelihood depends in

26. See the rich discussion in Emily Honig and Gail Hershatter, *Personal Voices* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988).

27. Gail Henderson, "Increased inequality in health care in China," in D. Davis and E. Vogel (eds.), *Chinese Society on the Eve of Tiananmen* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990).

28. See the discussion in Dorothy Solinger, *China's Transients and the State: A Form of Civil Society?* (Hong Kong: Chinese University of Hong Kong, 1991).

whole or in part on their own efforts, rather than solely on the resources monopolized by their *danwei* and bureaucratic superiors. The attempted shift in the basis for legitimizing the system from pursuit of socialist goals and class struggle to the quest for modernization and raised living standards carries related perils for the Party. Ordinary citizens have no basis for independently judging whether their leaders are successfully pursuing lofty political goals. However, economic trends can be judged by all, and any citizen is competent to form an opinion about whether his or her life is improving materially.

The 1980s reforms thus contributed to growing possibilities that Chinese would have enough autonomy to form critical judgments about economic and other trends. The reforms also provided new ideas and contexts within which such critical judgments could be framed. The various aspects of the “open door” policy showed that there were alternatives to the system of rule in China and suggested that Party dominance might be an obstacle to economic improvement. The flood of information and ideas from the outside world also created an awareness that Leninist political institutions in places like Taiwan and the Soviet Union were in the process of being dismantled. The reforms helped to break down China’s isolation not only from the outside world, but also from its own recent past. The mass rehabilitations and restoration to prominent positions of many victims of the Mao era resulted in some of China’s best critical minds once again finding a voice and an audience in the 1980s.<sup>29</sup> The critical views raised by these older, rehabilitated intellectuals and the many young protégés they inspired had a dramatic effect on popular thinking during the 1980s. To these developments was added the Party’s own self-imposed restraint (prior to 1989), which expanded the “zone of indifference” for ordinary citizens.<sup>30</sup> Although the reasons for this restraint were once again primarily economic – to allow expertise and innovation to flower without excessive interference and tutelage – one consequence was that the risk of sharing independent ideas and critical opinions was dramatically reduced in comparison with the Mao era.

As a consequence of the reforms designed to foster meritocracy, then, a set of changes occurred which fundamentally altered the Party’s ability to dominate opinion formation within Chinese society. During the Mao era, the Party’s overwhelming control produced a situation in which individuals who felt abused by, and alienated from, the system perceived themselves as isolated – surrounded by activists and intensely loyal supporters of the regime. They were unable to voice critical views beyond a very narrow circle of family members and intimate friends. Many victims

29. Of course, how rehabilitated rightists, victims of the Cultural Revolution and others reacted to their new opportunities varied. Some, such as the writer Ding Ling, seemed so grateful that they became ardent defenders of Deng Xiaoping’s rule. However, many others, in an almost Rip Van Winkle fashion, resumed critical commentary broken off more than two decades earlier. The prototypical case is Liu Binyan, but there are many similar examples.

30. See the discussion in Tang Tsou, “Back from the brink of revolutionary-‘feudal’ totalitarianism,” in David Mazingo and Victor Nee (eds.), *State and Society in Contemporary China* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983).

of the system, given this setting, ended up blaming themselves for being out of step with the masses who were marching triumphantly toward socialism.<sup>31</sup>

By the mid-1980s, the situation had changed fundamentally. Individuals with critical views perceived that they were no longer alone. Voicing complaints to whomever would listen became a common part of everyday life. Even the official media carried increasingly searching critical examinations of what was wrong with the system. Now it was the dwindling number of activists, many of them true believers who had come of age in the 1950s, who felt isolated. As the decade wore on, a variety of informal grassroots associations arose that were at least to some extent removed from the Party's "transmission belt" control system. Some of these were completely apolitical, but many were intensely concerned with debating China's fate. Within the context of an increasingly autonomous public opinion and the rudiments of a "civil society," the most free-wheeling discussion that had occurred since the May Fourth era was nurtured.<sup>32</sup>

The Party leadership reacted to these developments with a variety of efforts to proclaim limits, with Deng Xiaoping taking the lead. The elimination from the constitution in 1980 of the right to display wall posters and freely engage in public demonstrations, the similar elimination in 1982 of the right of workers to strike, the proclamation of the Four Cardinal Principles that were supposed to be beyond any criticism, the launching of campaigns against "spiritual pollution" and "bourgeois liberalization" – these and similar efforts were intended to enable the Party to maintain control over popular attitudes. They failed miserably in their aim to bottle up discontent, as the recurrent waves of demonstrations, culminating in the events of 1989, demonstrate. Here again we see in Deng an ironic reflection of Mao's efforts earlier. Both leaders criticized bureaucratic rigidity and launched reforms that checked bureaucratic control and promoted greater autonomy at the grass roots, but both were unable to countenance the fact that many would use their increased autonomy to form and exchange "unacceptable" opinions.

These observations point to the misleading nature of the claim that

31. Accounts of former rightists are filled with descriptions of the self-doubt that gripped them as a result of the attacks they received in 1957–58. See, for example, Yue Daiyun and Carolyn Wakeman, *To the Storm* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985).

32. See the discussion in my article, "Urban China: a civil society in the making?" in Arthur Rosenbaum (ed.), *State and Society in China* (Boulder: Westview, 1992); Clemen S. Ostergaard, "Citizens, groups and a nascent civil society in China: towards an understanding of the 1989 student demonstrations," *China Information*, No. 4 (1989), pp. 32–36; Solinger, *China's Transients and the State*. These developments were most visible in China's urban areas. Similar changes took place in rural areas, but there the new personal and intellectual autonomy often took other forms besides direct criticism of the system – for example, revivals of traditional religious practices and enthusiasms for new religions and charismatic cult figures. It should be noted that some of this new autonomy to think and share critical opinions began even during the Mao era, fostered by the disorder and suffering of the Cultural Revolution. That earlier trend helps to explain the 1976 Tiananmen demonstrations. See comments in my article "Urban China."

Deng's reforms produced qualitative changes in the economic system while preventing anything but minor changes in China's political system. Of course, the strategy of Deng and others was precisely that, his occasionally more exuberant calls for political reform notwithstanding. However, what such claims about the disjunction between economic and political reform overlook is the unintended consequences of Deng's programme. The changes implemented in order to create a more meritocratic social order have steadily and pervasively undermined the ability of the CCP to dominate society and prevent critical views from circulating. As a result, the system has been psychologically undermined, even though the Leninist structures still stand and proclaim their dominance. This undermining of the Party's totalistic control and the rise of more autonomous social life and public opinion is a qualitative transformation of the political system, albeit an unintended one. Even though the post-1989 crackdown has raised fears and increased caution among critics of the system, there seems to be little evidence that it has been able to reverse the situation and enable the Party to regain its former dominance over society.

### *Conclusions*

Analysts debate whether a reformed socialism is a viable system or an oxymoron, a temporary stop on the way toward more fundamental changes. Whatever the merits of each side of this theoretical debate, the current system for handling talent in the PRC does not appear to be workable in the long run. Preserving centralized bureaucratic allocation via a *nomenklatura* system at the core of the social order and trying to install meritocratic criteria for bureaucrats to use in promoting talent has a number of fairly obvious drawbacks. Bureaucrats with close to unlimited authority to make personnel decisions are not disinterested industrial engineers, willing to appoint and promote the most talented. They are political animals who will inevitably want to do what is necessary to preserve and enhance their own power. While at times such considerations may lead them to promote experts and the entrepreneurial, at other times they may want to select sycophants, children of high officials, those willing to make payoffs, or simply individuals much like themselves.

Those who possess merit and have made contributions are not likely to display maximum initiative and creativity when their careers continue to depend upon the whims of bureaucratic superiors rather than on any sort of external or professional validation. They are not likely to show much enthusiasm for their organizations and their jobs if they continue to operate under something like indentured servitude (through the *danwei* "ownership" system). The precedent of Brezhnev's USSR can hardly be encouraging to China's would-be designers of technocracy. Even though theoretically it may seem possible to combine centralized bureaucratic control with a meritocratic personnel system, in practice in the USSR the

result was declining efficiency and morale and increasing corruption. The *perestroika* programme launched by Gorbachev after 1985 was designed to counteract such problems, but in retrospect it was too little and too late.<sup>33</sup>

In China's partially reformed and marketized society there are new routes to rewards that are not fully dependent upon bureaucratic approval (such as in new private entrepreneurial firms, in foreign joint ventures). These alternative mobility channels make the continued need of the majority who labour in the less reformed parts of the system to curry favour with their superiors all the more obvious and onerous. The competition for advancement and the very real increase in material rewards unleashed by the reforms generate suspicion and resentment wherever control remains in the hands of bureaucratic gate-keepers. Perceptions that individuals are getting ahead not because of competence and merit, but because of connections, favouritism or outright corruption are inevitable in such a partially reformed system. The result is that the reformed system is seen in the public's eyes not as genuinely meritocratic, but as hypocritical and corrupt. Given the qualitative change in the political system noted above, such critical views can now be shared fairly widely, resulting in a growing conviction that further changes in the political system are called for. As this conviction spreads, the likelihood of social unrest and protest activity grows.<sup>34</sup>

Deng Xiaoping has tried to use reforms to preserve the political system to which he has devoted his life. He hoped that by introducing meritocratic reforms within that system it could regain legitimacy and be preserved. However, like Mao Zedong before him, his effort to confront the problems of Leninism has failed. Indeed, his reforms have unintentionally accelerated the process of undermining the Party's rule. In the wake of Tiananmen, Deng and his fellow gerontocrats have presided over a temporary and enforced stability. However, under the surface the trends his reforms unleashed continue to create fertile ground for future challenges to the system. Given the failure of both Mao and Deng to deal

33. A generation ago Soviet specialists debated whether the increasing reliance on experts and managers in the post-Stalin USSR would undermine the Party's control and lead to "convergence" toward the democratic West. At the time the dominant view was that hope for such convergence was misguided, and that the Party would be able to dominate the technocrats and prevent pluralistic trends from emerging. See, for example, Jeremy Azrael, *Managerial Power and Soviet Politics* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1966). In retrospect this conclusion was premature. The system of Party control was being undermined in the USSR from the 1950s onward, although it took longer for the process to be completed than some champions of "convergence" hoped. Given the demise of the system in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, the task of preventing the undermining of Leninism in China becomes even more difficult. For further thoughts on this issue, see my article, "Prospects for democratization in China," *Problems of Communism*, Vol. 41, No. 3 (1992), pp. 58–70.

34. As noted earlier, these observations on the popular mood primarily apply to China's urban areas, and particularly her large cities. Conditions of life in the countryside produce their own discontents, but these are not as likely to accumulate into a "pressure cooker" of demands for change as is the case in urban areas.

effectively with the problems of China's Leninist system, it seems unlikely that any successor will be able to do much better. If this conclusion is borne out, then history's verdict on Deng Xiaoping's personnel reforms will be that they were intended to save the system but instead hastened its collapse.