

The Chinese and Soviet Reassessment of Socialism:

The Theoretical Bases of Reform and Revolution in Communist Regimes

Yan Sun*

Department of Political Science, Queens College, CUNY, Flushing, New York 11367, USA (Tel: +1 718 997-5475)

This article makes a systematic comparison of the reassessment of socialism in China under Deng Xiaoping and in the former Soviet Union under Gorbachev, focusing on the official discourse on diagnosing the problems and failures of socialism as theory and practice and prescribing for their remedy. First, the evolving processes of the two reassessments are contrasted and the progressive differences in the direction and realm of reappraisal are discussed. Then the content of the two reassessments are compared in the three key areas of re-evaluation: the roots of past failures in the socialist system; the treatment of the individual person under socialism; and the position of the communist party in society. The article concludes with an explanation of the differences in the processes and contents of reassessment in the two cases and an interpretation that links the different discourses to the divergent reformist and revolutionary outcomes in the two systems.

Both Deng Xiaoping and Mikhail Gorbachev encouraged the reappraisal of socialism as a means to diagnosing past problems and articulating reforms. These efforts were expressed in such platforms as the “reconceptualization of socialism,” “renewal of socialism,” “new thinking,” and the “development of Marxism.” Since the disintegration of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) and of the Soviet Union itself in late 1991, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has attributed the “peaceful evolution” of the birthplace of the October Revolution to Gorbachev’s promotion of “new thinking” and “humanistic and democratic socialism,” and to his gradual “desertion and negation of socialism” during his six years in office (Jiang, 1990; Wang, 1991). To avoid experiencing the fate of socialism in East Europe and the Soviet Union, the CCP has issued documents among official bodies and workplaces to strengthen “socialist education” and to criticize the Soviet reassessment of socialism. These Chinese reactions raise the interesting question of the role played by ideological reassessment in the directions that the

*The author wishes to thank Germaine Hoston, Bill Rowe, Donald Blackmer, and Burton Zwiebach for helpful comments on an earlier draft of the paper.

Chinese and Soviet reforms have taken and in the different fates that socialism has experienced in these two countries.

The linkage between ideological transformation and empirical change suggested by the CCP is a relevant one, for the former is a decisive measure of changes in a system sanctioned by doctrine. The reassessment of socialism—the reappraisal of its track-record and inherent merits—is thus intimately tied to the type of remedies sought for its problems. A comparison of the Chinese and the Soviet cases will illuminate the character and impact of ideological reappraisal in these reforming Soviet-type societies, shed light on why the socialist ethos survived in one case but not the other, and elucidate the generic problem of theory and practice in socialist movements. China and the former Soviet Union provide ideal cases for a comparative analysis because both regimes came to power through a hard-won indigenous revolution and both undertook serious reassessment during the course of the reforms carried out over the past decade. The dramatic turn of events in China in mid-1989 and in the Soviet Union in late 1991 makes such a comparison all the more pertinent.

The remainder of this article will look first at the processes of reassessment in post-Mao China and in the Soviet Union under Gorbachev, will then examine the content of these reassessments and finally will conclude with an explanation of the differences in the processes, contents, and outcomes of the Chinese and Soviet reassessments.

The Process of Reassessment

The Initial Phase: Methodological Questions

In both the Chinese and Soviet cases, the rethinking of the established system and doctrine began with methodological questions, i.e. questions about appropriate approaches to the theory and practice of socialism. This focus was necessary to justify reform while pledging ideological commitment and continuity.

In the initial phase of the Chinese reassessment, epitomized in the controversy over the criterion of truth from mid-1978 to mid-1979, the principal target of rethinking was the blind adherence to Maoism expressed in Hua Guofeng's "two whatevers." These were: "Whatever policies Mao has made we will resolutely safeguard and whatever instructions Mao has given we will forever follow." The crux of these pledges was to uphold the policies and ideology of the Cultural Revolution and of Mao's late years. Thus they became the focus of contention between Hua's "whatever" group and Deng Xiaoping's veteran group.

Using Mao's own postulate "practice is the criterion of truth," the Deng group adeptly focused the controversy on the question of what approaches should be adopted towards Mao Zedong Thought, rather than on whether or not his thought should be upheld *per se*. (For the controversy over the criterion of truth see Schoenhal, 1991; see also Hu, 1988; Zheng, 1988; Wu and Sun, 1989.) This focus allowed the Deng group to repudiate the "whatever" approach to Maoism as guilty of "metaphysical idealism" that placed theory above practice, and to replace it with a new "dialectic materialist" approach that stressed the primacy of practice and the interaction between theory and practice. The new approach was then used to repudiate those key areas of Mao's ideology and politics which were deemed to be unsuited to Chinese practice: the pursuit of class struggle, the purification of production forces, and the exaltation of ideological incentives. Through the exposure of the fallacy of Hua's dogmatism and Mao's subjectivism, there developed a new approach to the understanding and construction of socialism that emphasized regard for the empirical context of the original theory and the host

society. Thereby the Dengist leadership delegitimated Mao's radical socialist project and began the historical shifting of the country away from it.

However, because the controversy over the criterion of truth was politically dictated, the monopoly of truth by the opposing side rather than the monopoly of ideology *per se* was a target of Deng's complaint. Soon his own "practice" criterion also became above discussion, as he spelled out the Four Fundamental Principles to circumscribe his "emancipation of mind" offensive at the theoretical work conference of early 1979 and went on to crack down on the Democracy Wall activists and discourage intellectuals who probed into the deeper sources of Mao's arbitrary rule (Deng, 1982, pp. 150–170; see also Goldman, 1991).

In the initial Soviet reassessment, from the late Andropov period (1984) to Gorbachev's first two years in office (1985–1986), the key target of rethinking was also dogmatism in the understanding of and approaches to established doctrine. Beginning in 1984, two credos began to be re-examined among intellectual and official circles: (1) the theory of "developed socialism" of the Brezhnev era, which denotes that socialism is fully mature in the Soviet Union and established on a thoroughly socialist basis, and (2) the notion of the "automatic adaptation" of production relations to production forces, according to which once socialism is established, its production relations will automatically adapt to production forces and create unlimited scope for the latter's growth.¹ Both tenets endorsed the fundamental soundness of the Soviet system and became "identified with the essential characteristics of socialism," as Gorbachev would later complain, "viewed as immutable, and represented as dogmas, leaving no room for objective scientific analysis" (Gorbachev, 1987a).

At the heart of the concept of "developed socialism" was determination of the basic tasks appropriate to the developmental stage reached. Based on unrealistic assessments of the stage reached at that time, two previous Soviet leaders had proclaimed extravagant goals for Soviet society and these had led to miscalculated economic policies. The 3rd Party Program of the CPSU, adopted under Nikita Khrushchev in 1961, designated a transitional period that would culminate in the attainment of communist society by the early 1980s. Accordingly it pronounced the full-scale construction of communism as the practical task of the country. At the 26th CPSU Congress in 1971, Brezhnev had to interpose a new and lengthy stage of "developed socialism" and postpone communism indefinitely. But the new concept still conveyed the success and soundness of the Soviet order, which was said to be "moving in just the right direction" (Scanlan, 1988, pp. 50–51). With no attention to the real problems of society, it again served to disorient policy and was as resistant to change as Hua's whateverism.

The Soviet reassessment thus started with a retreat from "developed socialism." From 1984 Andropov and Gorbachev began to describe the country as "at the beginning" of a lengthy stage of socialist construction. The task of the party then became to "improve developed socialism," signifying imperfections in the system and the need for reform (Andropov, 1983; CDSP, 1985). At the 27th Party Congress in March, 1986, a year after Gorbachev assumed the leadership of the CPSU, he criticized the concept of "developed socialism" for justifying complacency while overlooking failures in society. The Congress's new party program retained the concept, but made minimal references to this deeply entrenched tenet

1. These issues were first raised in the "Novosibirsk Report" (1984), a research project on the problems and the necessity of reform of the Soviet economy, headed by Tatyana Zaslavskaya. The then unpublished report was circulated among top official circles.

of Soviet ideology. (For the evolution and decline of “developed socialism” see Evans, 1987.) The term “developed socialism” soon disappeared altogether from the Soviet political vocabulary and Gorbachev spoke only of a “developing socialism” months later (Gorbachev, 1986a).

If the retreat from “developed socialism” acknowledged imperfections in Soviet society, the rejection of the “automatic adaptation” theory indicated the locus of these imperfections. In December, 1984, Gorbachev first disputed this idea by arguing that “the correspondence between production relations and production forces is not reproduced just by itself, but requires constant, purposeful work in the perfecting of the entire economic system of socialism.” This was so because aspects of socialist production relations could become obsolete and “may bring about a deterioration of the economic and social situation” (Gorbachev, 1985a). At the 27th Congress, he further refuted the “automatic adaptation” thesis by discussing the sources of the obsolescence of existing production relations. Placing the blame on the harsh historical conditions under which those relations took shape, he sought to distinguish those production forms from socialism itself.

In addition, Gorbachev began to promote “new thinking,” which, echoing some of Deng’s themes in his “emancipation of the mind” offensive, was intended to overcome dogmatism and inculcate a new approach to socialist construction. One theme of his “new thinking” was to reject dogmas and explore new notions of socialism. Another was to adopt a “Leninist” creative and realistic approach to accessing reality and adjusting policies (Gorbachev, 1986a). Still another theme was to have “dialectic thinking,” i.e. to view “reality in all of its aspects, in constant movement, with its contradictions, and as the new struggling against the old” (*Pravda*, 1986). As Gorbachev put it, “the new mode of thinking that all must master is dialectic thinking. As Karl Marx notes, dialectics does not revere anything and is critical and revolutionary by its nature (Gorbachev, 1986a). Despite the similar rhetoric, the Soviet leadership was more committed to the existing order at this stage than Chinese reformers. Soviet emphasis was on the “acceleration” of economic development through intensified technical progress, as opposed to the “stagnation” of the Brezhnev era, while “restructuring” was a secondary task (Gorbachev, 1986b, pp. 136–138; 1986c, pp. 36–37). Politically, the call for openness and democratization was largely instrumental, aimed at aiding the party’s economic agenda (Gorbachev, 1986b, pp. 146–147; 1986c, pp. 60–61). However, from the outset, the Soviet efforts were not circumscribed by an elaborately articulated set of “fundamental principles” to define the parameters of *glasnost*, rather Gorbachev’s primary targets were conservative officials.²

The Second Phase: Growing Divergence

In the next phase of reassessment, Soviet leaders moved further than their Chinese counterparts in pinning down the sources of the problems of the established system.

From the CCP work conference of April, 1979, to the eve of the comprehensive urban reform in 1983, the focus of the Chinese re-examination shifted to the mistakes and problems of Chinese socialism *beyond* those of Mao’s radical project. Proceeding from the empirical emphasis of the dialectic materialist approach, reform leaders turned their attention to the incongruence of an economic system

2. During Gorbachev’s first year in office, from April, 1985, to the 27th Congress in February, 1986, over 140 leading members of central and republic party and state organs were discharged and replaced. At the 27th Congress, 44 per cent of the 307 Central Committee members and 69 per cent of the 170 alternate members were new entrants.

and sectoral arrangement adopted from the Soviet Union but in Chinese conditions. The Soviet-type sectoral arrangement, which assigned growth proportions and ratios among economic sectors, was now blamed, especially by conservative reformers such as Chen Yun, for creating imbalances between agriculture and industry, light and heavy industry, and accumulation and consumption (Chen and Li, 1982, pp. 70, 72–75). The Soviet-type economic system, which dictated public ownership, central planning, and levelled distribution, came to be criticized for its rigid uniformity and its incapacity to suit variations in Chinese localities (Xu, 1979, 1982). These analyses, while serving to support the readjustment and moderate restructuring policies of 1979–1982, still affirmed the overall economic order and failed to question its centralized nature or political repercussions.

In the political domain, the Chinese re-examination during this period focused on the sources of the abuses and injustices of the Cultural Revolution. However, to insulate the party from fundamental criticisms such as those made earlier by the Democracy Wall activists and intellectuals, Deng endorsed a bifurcation of the nature and the forms of the socialist state. Under this scheme past abuses were attributed to the imperfect “forms,” rather than to the “class nature” of the state (Deng, 1982, pp. 214–215). The literary and intellectual exploration of the party’s arbitrary authority and its disregard for universal humanism as the sources of past abuses, which questioned the class dictatorship of the Chinese state, was suppressed in the anti-liberal campaigns of 1981 and 1983.

From the CPSU plenum in January, 1987, to the eve of its 19th All-Union Conference in July, 1988, the difficulty of reaching consensus at the top and of implementing reform at the bottom led Gorbachev to urge “a deeper understanding of the critical problems” of the Soviet system. For this purpose the January plenum of 1987, convened despite conservative resistance, formally started the re-examination of the roots of the Soviet system. For the first time Gorbachev explicitly distinguished true socialism from its current forms, which he traced to the Stalinist period. Moreover, he attributed the identification of these forms with true socialism to “a negative influence” in official doctrine that had helped to make them into immutable dogmas (Gorbachev, 1987a). No longer seeing them as simply imperfect and in need of improvement, he declared those forms to be “retardation mechanisms.” This assessment in effect called for the replacement, not just the reform, of existing production relations.

These themes of the January plenum stimulated a nation-wide rethinking of Soviet history, especially the Stalinist period. Truth and honesty were now urged in the writing of Soviet history to expose “encrustation and deformations.” Impeding forces in the restructuring process were traced to the bureaucratic and administrative-command legacy of the Stalin era; the excesses and necessity of the collectivization and other events in the early phase of Soviet socialism were debated; and the so-called “blank spots” in Soviet history were now explored. As the negative aspects of history were depicted as Stalinist “distortions” and reform was presented as a way to return to Lenin’s genuine socialism (Gorbachev, 1988a,b), these discussions still remained within the socialist framework. But in calling the roots of the Soviet system into question and in focusing on the human costs of that system, Soviet reformers began to go beyond their Chinese counterparts. Interestingly, the heavy industrial orientation of the economy that took shape in the extraordinary conditions of the 1920s and 1930s did not become a central or even a minor part of the historical re-examination.

In the political arena the Soviet divergence was still more pronounced. Openness and democratization were no longer treated as instrumental goals, but

as fundamental values. From the January plenum of 1987, Gorbachev depicted democratization as “the essence,” “the basis,” or “the soul” of restructuring. And he called for “thorough openness” that would not only better inform the public but also allow fundamental rethinking of the country’s past and present. To ensure genuine democratization and openness, he now advocated “pluralism of opinion within socialism” and opposed a monopoly of ideas under socialism. In line with his emphasis on socialism’s capacity to ensure diverse opinions and interests, he offered what would become a potentially destructive concept, humanism, declaring that the ultimate goal of restructuring was to display fully the “humanistic nature” of socialism (Gorbachev, 1987a). This humanistic goal was, moreover, juxtaposed to the “alienation” of the people under the pre-reform system.

Although both pluralism and humanism were still placed within the framework of socialism, no campaign was launched to suppress Gorbachev’s liberal opponents (the “left” in the Soviet case) who were growing impatient with the slow pace of reform and advocated more radical changes. The leading spokesman of this group within the party, Boris Yeltsin, was dismissed as First Secretary of the Party Committee of Moscow in November, 1987, but the major target of Gorbachev’s criticism remained the conservatives (the “right” in the Soviet case) (see for example, Gorbachev, 1987b, 1988a,c). By October, 1987, half of the 10 members who were in the Politburo at the time of Gorbachev’s inauguration had been replaced. Partly due to this curbing of the conservatives, the CPSU was able to negate the roots of the system and to advocate the pluralistic, humanistic direction of socialism forbidden by the Chinese leadership.

The Third Phase: Conceptual Departure

It was only during the third phase of the Chinese reassessment, from 1983 to 1986, that the reform leadership finally rejected the basis of the old economic system and began to pay attention to the link between economic and political reforms. Although empirical reform had gone much further in the Chinese case than in the Soviet case at the comparable stage (Dittmer, 1989), the Soviet-type economic system was negated in principle by the CCP only in the 1984 Resolution on urban reform, which endorsed “a planned commodity economy” to replace the planned economy and a separation of ownership and management to replace the state ownership.

In China, the basis of the political system came to be questioned only during the 1986 national discussion of political reform. As in the Soviet case, political reassessment was called forth by the demands of economic reform and was intended to serve the latter. The discussions of 1986 focused on the question of why the political system had become a barrier to economic reform and the link between a command economy and a command political system (see, for example, Chi and Huang, 1987). Yet unlike the Soviet case, political reappraisal did not take on a life of its own, nor did it lead to a fundamental re-examination of CCP history, especially the Cultural Revolution period. The Chinese leadership never lost sight of the instrumental role of political reform, as is reflected in its emphasis on a separation of the party and the state, but not in a change in the leading role of the party. Efforts by liberal intellectuals and reform theorists to advocate political democracy on the basis of a market economy were suppressed in another anti-liberal campaign in early 1987.

In the third phase of Soviet reassessment, from the 19th All-Union Party Conference in July, 1988, to the eve of the CPSU plenum in February, 1990, the Soviet leadership again moved ahead of the Chinese and in an entirely new direc-

tion of rethinking. Two key events marked the new direction of this period. First, the 19th All-Union Conference altered the focus of Soviet reform by shifting the party's priority from the economic to the political sphere. This shift was made as Gorbachev came to recognize the determining role of politics in a Stalinist system and its all-encompassing control over all aspects of society (Gorbachev, 1988d). Along with the prioritization of political reform, the 19th Conference made some conceptual breakthroughs in CPSU ideology. Going beyond the espousal of "pluralism of opinion" and "pluralism of interests," the conference advocated pluralism in the political system to facilitate "democratic expression" and the "formation of the interests and will of different classes and social groups." Pluralism was even elevated to the level of "democratization" and "openness," as one of the three "revolutionary proposals" of the CPSU. The conference also stressed the separation of the party and the state, but the emphasis on "all power to the Soviet" served only to hasten the decline of the vanguard role of the party. Finally, the conference formally proposed replacing the so-called "barracks-type socialism" with "humanistic and democratic socialism" (Gorbachev, 1988d). This new concept marked a fundamental change in the goal of Soviet reform from the improvement of socialism to the replacement of "deformed" socialism.

Gorbachev's article on socialism and reform in the November 26, 1989, issue of *Pravda* was another monumental event in this phase of Soviet reassessment, because of its novel discussion of the concept of "humanistic and democratic socialism." Here Gorbachev no longer saw reform as a way to correct distorted phenomena in the Soviet system but rather as a means to "fundamentally transform" the entire "social edifice." Moreover, he no longer depicted reform as a return to the "Leninist vision of socialism," but declared that even Lenin did not have a complete program for building socialism. Instead, he portrayed restructuring as a way to correct the main direction of the international communist movement that had gone astray for over a century. This last point in effect negated the history of the international communist movement. In this context, Gorbachev affirmed social democratic parties, which were dismissed as genuinely socialist by Lenin after 1914. He also equated the essence of socialism with humanism and set "humanistic norms" as the priority of all aspects of social life. This implicitly played down the class basis of political and social life in the classic conception of socialism. Finally, Gorbachev called for the ending of ideological confrontation between socialist and capitalist systems on the basis of a re-evaluation of contemporary capitalism. While the official Chinese reconception of capitalism stressed the historical and synchronic links between the two systems, Gorbachev saw the two systems as in an evolutionary process of a similar content and called for "cooperation" to replace "confrontation" (Gorbachev, 1989a).

In short, fundamental changes had by now occurred in Gorbachev's thinking on Leninism, socialism, capitalism, and international communism and these far exceeded the level of official Chinese rethinking at a comparable stage. Although Gorbachev still maintained a balanced opposition to both conservatives and liberals in rhetoric, his reaction against the former was far stronger organizationally.³

3. At the extraordinary session of the Central Party Committee in September, 1988, five senior leaders were retired and the leading conservative, Y. Ligachev, was demoted from the second ranking place in the party. In April, 1989, 110 retired members and alternate members of the Central Committee and members of the Central Inspection Committee were asked to resign from their remaining posts. By September, 1989, all who served in the Politburo when Gorbachev first assumed office had been discharged from it, except Gorbachev himself.

The frequent reshuffling of that group certainly helped to weaken political opposition to his “humane and democratic” socialism.

The Fourth Phase: Fundamental Departure

From mid-1987 to mid-1989, a new conception of socialism finally emerged in official Chinese thought, expressed in the idea of the “primary stage of socialism.” But instead of defining socialism in terms of new goals and content, this concept reflected a retreat to a supposedly earlier stage of classic socialism: the so-called primary stage was defined by China’s backward material base relative to its advanced socialist institutions and was intended to justify a single-minded pursuit of production forces. Based on a selective use of Marxist methodology to justify the centrality of the economic base, the notion of the primary stage deliberately neglected those aspects of Marxism that addressed humanistic concerns. Thanks to its material emphasis, the new conception did make a major departure from Marxism in the economic sphere by allowing a commodity economy in the so-called primary stage, but made minimal adjustments in the political sphere (Zhao, 1987, 1989).

Beyond the official framework, liberal intellectual discussions in this period reached the level of the Soviet reappraisal with its critique of the “totalism” of the Chinese state and its assertion of humanism and universally based democracy (see for example Yan, 1988; Luo and Gao, 1989). But the liberal line of analysis was not incorporated into official thought. Instead, it came to be attacked, in the anti-liberal campaign after mid-1989, as a key source of incitation in the student protest movement of spring 1989.

By contrast, the Soviet Union witnessed a complete departure from established socialism between the CPSU plenum of February, 1990, and that of July, 1991. Two key developments marked this historical phase of Soviet political development: the end of the communist party as the leading force of society and the transformation of this party into a political force on an equal footing with other political parties. The CPSU plenum in February, 1990, made major decisions concerning the status of the CPSU, including a constitutional revision to end the legally and politically superior status of the communist party, a creation of a multi-party system to accommodate the emergence of new political forces, and the establishment of a presidential system to replace the Politburo (Gorbachev, 1990a). These decisions were enacted at the extraordinary session of the Supreme Soviet held in the following month, among them the abolition of Article 6 of the USSR Constitution.

The 28th Party Congress of the CPSU, held in July, 1990, was another key event in the development of “humane, democratic socialism.” The congress was convened amid intense battles among liberal, centrist, and conservative forces within the party over the parameters of “humane, democratic socialism.” Conservatives, headed by Ligachev, opposed the weakening of the party’s ideological and organizational functions and of its commitment to the working class (Ligachev, 1990). Liberals, led by Yeltsin, wanted to change the CPSU to a parliamentary party, to renounce democratic centralism, and to endorse universal human values (*Pravda*, 1990b). Centrists, represented by Gorbachev, supported universal human values but unlike liberals, advocated a vanguard CPSU operating through parliament (Gorbachev, 1990b,c). Although the meeting preserved Gorbachev’s basic line, the outcome tilted toward the liberals’ “Democratic Platform” by formally redefining the goal of socialism and the nature of the party along the so-called universal human norms of individual and pluralistic

development. The Congress program integrated socialism with universal human values, a vanguard with a parliamentary party, and democratic centralism with the rights to have minority opinions and coalitions. It abandoned references to “planning” or “public ownership” and proposed the market economy as the “only choice” to replace the command economy (*Pravda*, 1990a).

The CPSU plenum of July, 1991, devoted to the draft of a new party program, saw the CPSU’s final effort to reassess and readjust socialism before its disintegration later that year. In his plenum report, Gorbachev went further than he had at the 28th Congress in reassessing socialism, communism, and the role of the party. On socialism, he went beyond his past criticism of “distortions” to negate its entire theory and practice, calling the Stalin era “a totalitarian legacy” and the post-Stalin era a legacy of “post-Stalinism.” On communism, he explained the abrogation of communism as the goal of the CPSU on the ground of its proven utopian nature: “It must be admitted that our experience, and others’ as well, gives us no reason to believe that this goal is realistically attainable in the foreseeable future” (Gorbachev, 1991).

On the role of the party the new party program made the most drastic change by de-emphasizing its class nature. As Gorbachev explained in his report, the party no longer saw itself as the political vanguard of class revolution and liberation but a party of “democratic reforms, political and economic freedom, social justice and universal human values,” and a party that would fight for “general civil concords” and its electoral victory. He endorsed the renaming of the party as the Social Democratic Party, a name which the Bolsheviks had departed from in the 1910s, although he did not approve of actually doing so because many party members had deep attachments to the concept of communism. These remarks, as some delegates at the plenum complained, practically amounted to “abandoning Marxism–Leninism” and “weakening the domestic communist movement.” This direction of events culminated in the attempted conservative coup in the following month which aimed at restoring the old order and led to the rapid disintegration of the Soviet regime after the coup’s failure.

The process of the Chinese and Soviet reassessments has shown several contrasting features. First, after the initial phase, Soviet reformers were a step ahead at each comparable stage of reappraisal. Second, although both began reassessment with the economic arena, the Chinese leaders focused consistently on this sphere, while the Soviet leaders turned from the economic to the political. Third, the Chinese liberal view, which approached the level and tone of the Soviet mainstream analysis, with its emphasis on the systematic problems of socialism and the valuation of man as the fundamental solution to them, was frequently suppressed by the CCP, whereas, despite Gorbachev’s consistent efforts to balance between conservatives and liberals, no political campaigns were ever launched by the CPSU to suppress liberal views in order to placate conservatives. On the contrary, the mainstream reassessment under Gorbachev increasingly tilted toward the liberal view.

The Content of Reassessment

These divergent processes were intimately related to the contents of the Chinese and Soviet reassessments. Here differences in three key areas distinguish the character and direction of the reappraisal in these two countries. These are the re-examination of past socialist experience, the treatment of the person under socialism, and the place of the communist party in society.

The Evaluation of the Past

Analyses of past socialist experience are indices to the nature and extent of change in reforming socialist countries, for they suggest the problems to be rectified and the remedies to be sought. In this sense the re-examination of the past is a prerequisite for appropriate reforms. From the beginning, Chinese reform leaders encouraged only a limited and partial reappraisal of the past. While forthcoming about the problems of the economic sphere, Deng Xiaoping opposed the liberal forces' re-examination of the political mistakes of the past, especially those of the Cultural Revolution and Mao's late years. Politically, Deng feared the potential divisiveness of such efforts and was aware of the need for national unity in the modernization drive. Ideologically he was mainly interested in promoting new ideas to guide and justify economic reform (Deng, 1982, pp. 137–139, 165–166). Partly to avoid division and dissent, the CCP eventually made a formal reappraisal of its past in the form of the Resolution of CCP history in 1981, but this document was intended to close a chapter of recent CCP history rather than to offer a guide to present reforms.

In analyses of the mistakes of the past and major tragic events, the CCP has been careful to insulate the fundamental Chinese system, political and economic, from any questioning. Instead, it has sought to place the blame for tragedies such as the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution on the blunders of individual leaders, on their mistaken approaches to socialism, or on the gap between Marxist theory and Chinese reality. That is, they were aberrations rather than intrinsic consequences of the system. Similarly, though much was made of the indiscriminate adoption of Soviet models and the premature establishment of certain production relations, there was no explicit consideration of whether the collectivization of agriculture should have been carried out in the first place, whether the heavy industrial model and the planned economy should have ever been copied, and whether socialist production relations should have been adopted at all.

In critiquing the mistakes of past leaders, the CCP has also been careful not to negate them in total. Mao's blunders were depicted as exceptions in comparison with his positive achievements. The only CCP leaders that could be completely negated were the "Gang of Four," although even here, the link between the Gang and Mao was carefully severed so as not to undermine the legitimacy of the CCP as a whole. Despite the CCP's negative view of past tragedies and of the blunders of past leaders, legitimate judgments could be made only within its own frame of analysis. The liberal line of critique, which linked the "aberrations" and "exceptions" to the fundamental system, was not to be permitted.

At first Gorbachev also seemed to be apprehensive about re-examining the past, for the same reasons that concerned Deng. "If we start trying to deal with the past," Gorbachev remarked in the summer of 1986, "we shall dissipate our energy." But at the January plenum of 1987, he admitted that the clarification of "some basic issues"—especially issues of the historical origins of the Soviet system—was essential to reaching a consensus about the urgent necessity of reform. Soon afterwards he proposed that there should be "no blank pages" in the history of "the years of industrialization and collectivization" (quoted in Ellison, 1991, p. 21). Rather than setting parameters on historical reassessment, Gorbachev permitted the opening up of the most troubling questions about the CPSU history, particularly the Stalin era, and he used his historical reappraisal to guide current reforms.

Thus, in analysing the mistakes and failures of the past, Gorbachev and like-minded reformers were willing to link them to the Soviet system and even to make

a wholesale negation of it. The usage of “deformed socialism” to describe the political and economic system created in the Stalin era clearly conveyed the idea of fundamental deficiency. Although initially utilized to suggest the influence of the Stalinist legacy upon the present, the term was later applied to Soviet socialism from Stalin to the present (Gorbachev, 1988d,e). Such characterization in effect delegitimized the foundation of the Soviet system and called for its total removal. Following the notion of “deformed socialism,” the entire history of the CPSU came to be characterized in terms of several models of socialism, none of which was judged as genuinely socialist: the “War Communism” of the 1910s, the “authoritarian–utopian socialism” of the 1920s, the “authoritarian mobilization-type socialism” of the 1930s and 1940s, and the “authoritarian–bureaucratic socialism” since the 1950s (Kurashvil, 1990). By mid-1991, the entire “theoretical and practical model of socialism” of past decades was declared “bankrupt” by Gorbachev. The Stalin era was then described even more negatively as a “totalitarian–bureaucratic system,” and the whole post-Stalin period became “post-Stalinism” because, while “the mass repressions were ended ... the basis of power and control remained in the same administrative-command system, based on the absolute supremacy of state ownership” (Gorbachev, 1991). The negation of the entire system and the de-legitimation of a greater part of Soviet experience after the Revolution could not but encourage the liberal forces to raise serious questions about the legitimacy of the CPSU itself. Yuri Afanasyev, historian and USSR People’s Deputy, for example, accused the CPSU of having “led the country nowhere” for 70 years (see *Pravda*, 1989a).

In critiquing major tragic events under CPSU rule or the mistakes of past leaders, Gorbachev did not avoid linking these to the Soviet system. At first he accepted Stalin’s collectivization drive with reservations about the excessive coercion used, while rejecting Bukharin’s position on the matter as failing to appreciate the “time factor.” But soon he came to acknowledge the negative consequences of collectivization, especially the destruction of the peasantry (Ellison, 1990, p. 26). This change of attitude encouraged public inquiries into major milestones of the Soviet socialist experience, including the collectivization of agriculture, the early phase of industrialization, the purges of the 1930s, and the coercive internal policies of the post-war years (Ellison, 1990, p. 21). Even the dissident critiques of previously repudiated figures, such as those of Bukharin, were revived.

The Soviet leadership was even more willing to negate past individual leaders in whole or in large part. Stalin was completely repudiated by the depiction of his reign as “a period of personality cult” and “a totalitarian legacy.” Khrushchev came to be viewed in a more positive light, but greater emphasis was still placed on the negative effects of his subjectivism and bureaucratism. The Brezhnev era was labeled “a period of stagnation,” suggesting an overall failure (Kurashvil, 1990). In this way, Lenin was left as the only positive leader in CPSU history who had genuine socialist visions, if not completely correct designs. This kind of official approach, not surprisingly, encouraged some liberals to attribute the deeper roots of Stalinism to the founding father Lenin himself and, eventually, to the original theory of Marx (Selyunin, 1988; Tsipko, 1988).

The Treatment of Man under Socialism

What fundamentally distinguishes the Chinese and Soviet reassessment, not only in their re-examination of the past but also in their formulation of present and

future goals, was the evaluation of the treatment of the individual under socialism. In the Chinese case, the leadership has never used the human factor as a yardstick of past failures and current reforms. In analysing the root cause of CCP failures in the past, Chinese leaders emphasized the misorientation of the party's agenda away from the economy and the adoption of improper production relations and political forms. In analysing the consequences of past policies, accordingly, the CCP emphasized the excesses of class struggle and their impediment to the growth of production forces. The remedies, therefore, lay in the reorientation of the party's agenda and the rectification of those aspects of production relations and superstructure that obstructed economic development. The CCP has rejected the alternative analysis of past and current maladies offered by social critics and liberal intellectuals, which views the de-emphasis of man and the class orientation of the party as the sources of misprioritized policies and arbitrary abuses. This liberal analysis sees the alienation of the individual as the principal consequence of past policies and it proposes democracy based on a universal conception of man as the key solution (see Wang, 1983; Sun, 1989). This view has been dismissed by the CCP as propagation of bourgeois values with their own class biases (Deng, 1987, pp. 28–30; Hu, 1984).

In the Soviet case, by contrast, Gorbachev adopted the concepts of alienation and humanism as the key frame of reference for the reappraisal of Soviet socialism. The designation of “deformed socialism,” above all, was based on the judgment that the annihilation of the humanistic potential of socialism had occurred under the “authoritarian–bureaucratic system” (Gorbachev, 1988a,b). In this context, the alienation of man became a key measure of the CPSU's failures in Soviet analysis. As Gorbachev noted, socialism should consist in ending “the social alienation of man ... from power, from the means of production, from the results of his labor, from his spiritual values” (Gorbachev, 1988a,b), yet in reality many of its practices “suppress the initiative of the people, alienate them in all spheres of vital activity and belittle the dignity of the individual” (Gorbachev, 1989b). This alienation was identified by Soviet social scientists in the political, economic, and ideological spheres: in the alienation of the working people from political power due to the administrative-command system; from the means of production because of state ownership; from the results of their labor because of leveled income distribution; and from spiritual values because of the incongruence between words and deeds (*Pravda*, 1989b; Gorbachev, 1990d; *Soviet Sociology*, 1991). Tatyana Zaslavskaya, perhaps the best-known Soviet sociologist and reform theorist, argues that the ruling stratum of party officials had in effect become a new “ruling class” through its control of the political and economic system, thus causing the alienation of the people from power (Zaslavskaya, 1990; *Soviet Sociology*, 1990, 1991). Others concur that if “commodity fetishism” causes the alienation of man under capitalism in Marx's analysis, then “fetishism of power” is at the root of alienation under socialism. That is, “the source of the new alienation is not property in the means of production, but a form of political and ideological control over the means of possessing this property” (*Soviet Sociology*, 1990).

Although such alienation was attributed to “deformed socialism” rather than to socialism itself, the collective (class-based) and teleological orientation of socialism was held responsible for the disregard for the individual, much as in the analysis of Chinese liberal intellectuals. In the Program Statement of the 28th Congress, the CPSU thus acknowledged the impact of the class orientation of socialism on the disregard for the individual: “New forms of man's alienation from property

and power ... (have been engendered) by the statization of all aspects of public life and *the dictatorship exercised by the top party and state leadership in the name of the proletariat* (emphasis added)" (*Pravda*, 1990a, p. 16). Elsewhere, Gorbachev admitted the harm of the teleological orientation of socialism. Speaking about socialism at the CPSU plenum in February, 1990, he remarked, "... We are moving away from a dogmatic understanding of that idea, refusing to *sacrifice people's real interests to schematic constructs* (emphasis added)" (Gorbachev, 1990a). The question was even raised as to whether a socialist society of workers' direct government and cooperative labor could indeed eliminate alienation. One social scientist suggested that such a society would not be equipped to do so because here "the individual is reduced to a cog in a wheel" and any endeavor for human rights would be suppressed. In his view the provision of civil rights would offer more genuine prospects for "the emancipation of labor" (*Soviet Sociology*, 1990).

Just as the alienation of man was used as the yardstick of past failures, so was its elimination upheld by the Gorbachev leadership as the goal of restructuring. This new humanistic emphasis was summed up in the concept of "humane, democratic socialism," and was specifically reflected in three reformulations. First, in this new conception, the development of the individual man became the highest goal of social development. As early as 1986 in his 27th Congress report, Gorbachev had already elevated human life and the full development of man to "the highest value," and more important than the implementation of socialism itself. "If progress in one area is accompanied by human loss," he remarked later that year, "not just psychological or political loss but also physical loss, then the system that causes such loss should be doubted" (Gorbachev, 1986d). Since then he has repeatedly described the purpose of restructuring as to display the "genuine humanism" of the socialist mode of life, the "humanistic potential of socialism," and the "full development of man." The Program Statement of the 28th Congress in 1990 declared that "the object of social development is the individual; (that) living and working conditions worthy of present-day civilization are created for him; (that) his alienation from political power and from the material and spiritual values he has created is overcome, and (that) his active inclusion in social processes is ensured."

Secondly, in "humane, democratic socialism" universal human values were emphasized over class-based values. Addressing an Italian audience in 1989, Gorbachev spoke of establishing "the priority of universal human values in the world" (Gorbachev, 1989c). At the 28th Congress, he stated more explicitly that the new ideology of socialism would "assimilate anew universal human values, not as something that is alien in a class sense, but as something that is normal for normal human beings. These values have been worked out over centuries and millennia, after all, and we know what neglecting them has brought us" (Gorbachev, 1990e). Accordingly, although the CPSU continued to pledge allegiance to socialist and communist goals, it no longer emphasized the building of a classless society. Instead, even the communist future came to be defined in the non-ideological terms of universal humanism. As the Program Statement of the 28th Congress stated, "The Party's social ideal incorporates humanistic principles of human culture and the age-old desire for a better life and social justice." Or as Gorbachev remarked in July, 1991, "the realization of the socialist ideal and movement ... can be achieved successfully only in the course of the general development of civilization" (Gorbachev, 1991).

Moreover, the means of achieving these ideals also changed for the CPSU. It was no longer necessary for the masses to transform an unjust society to a just

one through violent struggle and revolution, or, in Gorbachev's words at the July plenum in 1991, "with a forcible coup, the establishment of the proletariat, and class struggle, carried through to eliminate the hostile classes." This was so, he explained, because the masses had had no other means at their disposal in the past, but changes in economic well-being and social structure and the presence of democracy and trade unions had now made it "possible and necessary" to achieve socialist goals through reforms (Gorbachev, 1991). In a socialist society, the means of achieving those ideals also changed from the construction of proletarian production relations and superstructure to the use of "everything valuable that exists in other societies, in their economies and social sphere, political life, organization of production and everyday life, science and technology, culture, and spiritual and intellectual creativity" (Gorbachev, 1990d).

A third aspect of "humane, democratic socialism" was that the new socialism posited itself as part of the overall civilization of mankind, rather than as the ideology of an exclusive camp that split mankind into opposing groups. The embracing of "universal human values," Gorbachev pronounced at the 28th Congress, meant the entrance of socialism into "the stream of worldwide transformation" and its inclusion in "the overall progress of civilization" (Gorbachev, 1989c, 1990e). The recognition of the commonality of human progress also became the basis of ending the demarcation of socialist and capitalist modes of thinking and development. Because of reforms in both capitalist and socialist systems to correct their respective flaws and because of an increasing array of common issues facing mankind as a whole, noted Gorbachev and Soviet reform theorists, there was an increasing "convergence" between socialism and capitalism (Gorbachev, 1989a; *Pravda*, 1989b). Therefore, Gorbachev remarked in February, 1990, "We must renounce everything that led to the socialist countries' isolation in the mainstream of world civilization, and an understanding of the paths of progress as a constant confrontation with a socially different world" (Gorbachev, 1990d). This new thinking, moreover, was aimed at "uniting the world, not splitting the world" (Gorbachev, 1990e).

Thus the new ideology of the CPSU no longer emphasized the guidance of Marxism-Leninism in all its activities. Rather, the emphasis was now on a commitment to socialism as broadly defined, incorporating both the thought of classic masters and the revolutionary experience and empirical changes of the 20th century. As the 28th Congress Program Statement asserted, "The CPSU favors a creative approach to the theory and practice of socialism and their development along lines of a constructive comprehension of the historical experience of the 20th century and the legacy of Marx, Engels, and Lenin, free of dogmatic interpretation." This new socialism would embrace "the best achievements of human reason and the world's accumulated experience in effective economic management, the solution of social problems and the development of democratic institutions." These words suggest little concern about whether those other schools of human achievements were non-Marxist or anti-Marxist. Ultimately, this assertion of the universality of human beings and human values led to the de-ideologization of socialism.

The Place of the Communist Party

The place of the communist party in society has remained another taboo area in the Chinese reassessment of socialism. Three issues have been particularly important here. These are the (class) nature of the party, the basis of the party's vanguard status, and the legitimacy of alternative political interests and views. On

each of these issues, the CCP has refused to make fundamental reformulations. Although it has renounced class struggle as a major phenomenon of Chinese society, the party still retains the class nature of the party (i.e., the dictatorship of the proletariat) to justify its rightful vanguard role. Although it has reduced the use of ideology as the basis of legitimacy, the party is reluctant to accept the legal and institutional basis of power and is more willing to cling to the historical basis of its dominant status. Although it has broadened the framework of political and intellectual discourse, the party still rejects non-class based rule to allow political opposition. In short, the place of the party cannot be questioned to erode its monopoly on power and truth.

The Soviet reform leadership, on the other hand, fundamentally rethought the place of the party in society. First, the renunciation of the class nature of the party practically delegitimated its rightful class dictatorship. With the adoption of “humane, democratic socialism” since July, 1988, the idea of the individual gradually replaced that of the working class as the leading force and the purpose of socialism. The party’s new commitment to “universal human values and humanist ideals” also helped to obscure the class orientation of the Soviet party (Gorbachev, 1990d; *Pravda*, 1990a). Eventually the party of the working class came to be defined as “a voluntary union of like-minded people,” though its policy still professed to express “the interests of the working class, the peasantry, and the intelligentsia” (Gorbachev, 1990d). The CPSU’s abandonment of its class nature, most significantly, made it no longer ideologically tenable to exclude segments of society from political life or to target them as enemies of the state.

This renunciation in turn enabled the CPSU to affirm the popular and institutional bases of political power. The Program Statement of the 28th Congress stipulated that “[the] sovereign will of the people is the only source of power,” while the state, under the control of society, cannot act above society but may only “guarantee the protection of individuals’ rights and liberties and their honor and dignity regardless of social status, sex, age, national origin, or religion.” Further, political power should derive from electoral contestation and the rule of law, i.e. “free competition [should be] exercised by all public-political forces operating within the framework of the law.”

The recognition of the popular and institutional basis of power also legitimated the equality of expression by competing political interests and forces, not just the monistic expression of the party or pluralistic expressions within socialism. The 28th Congress Program Statement put other political organizations on a par with the CPSU as political forces that “express the political and occupational interests of the working class, the peasantry, the intelligentsia, young people, servicemen, and veterans” (*Pravda*, 1990a). In proposing the removal of the constitutional guarantee of “the leading role of the CPSU” and the party as “the nucleus of the political system,” Gorbachev remarked in May, 1990, that there should be “equal opportunities for the CPSU and other political and public organizations to take part in legal and democratic forms, naturally—in public and political life and to struggle for the implementation of their programmatic aims” (Gorbachev, 1990f). Although the CPSU still “intends to struggle for the position of ruling party,” he said on another occasion, “it intends to do this strictly within the framework of the democratic process, renouncing any legal and political advantages” (Gorbachev, 1990d). The legitimation of alternative political forces and opinions, in turn, delegitimated the party’s monopoly on power and truth.

In sum, the contents of Chinese and Soviet reassessment of socialism have diverged in three major areas. First, the CCP has encouraged an incomplete re-examination

of the past in that it avoided a total discrediting of established socialism or a linkage of past mistakes to it. The CPSU's rethinking of the past, on the other hand, acknowledged the fundamental deficiency of the Soviet system and attributed past failures to it. Secondly, the partial approach of the Chinese leadership led to its emphasis on the level of production forces as the key measure of past problems and the basis for current reforms. The more thorough approach of the Gorbachev leadership led it to view the treatment of the individual human being as the key measure of past failures and of socialism's reconstruction. Finally, the CCP's incomplete analysis of the past and the de-emphasis of man, in turn, failed to lead to a fundamental rethinking of its role in society. But the restoration of man as the fundamental goal led the CPSU to renounce its dominant place in society *vis-à-vis* other organized groups.

Conclusion

This comparison of the Chinese and Soviet reassessments of socialism has revealed two major differences. First, the Soviet reappraisal did not experience a zig-zag course as in the Chinese case. In the Soviet case there was not a deliberate lag in the political sphere nor periodic campaigns to check the impulse of officially sponsored reassessment. Rather, this impulse was allowed to develop in directions that may not have been originally intended. Second, in terms of the content of reassessment, the Soviet reappraisal went beyond the major "taboo" areas of the Chinese case. It uprooted the foundation of the old system, political and economic, by pruning it down to its Stalinist core. It removed the normative basis of that system by establishing the individual as the goal of political life and social development. Finally it delegitimated the vanguard party of that system by legitimating competing political opinions and interests.

Why have the Chinese and Soviet reassessment evolved differently? Why did the Soviet leadership go further than the Chinese leadership in the content of its reassessment? Answers to these questions provide important clues to the issue of why the socialist ethos survived in China and not in the Soviet Union. One explanation, somewhat ironically, lies in the soundness of China's initial economic reappraisal and economic reforms. Both countries started with changes in the economic arena. After renouncing the Maoist path, the Chinese leadership began to critique and scale down the Soviet-type sectoral model, i.e. the heavy industrial strategy, on the one hand, and the planned economy on the other. The resulting twin processes of readjustment and reform, one to shift investment and growth to agriculture and light industry and the other to introduce the "supplementary role" of the market and non-public ownership, proved successful. The empirical success in turn encouraged Chinese leaders to continue focusing on the economic sphere. It also encouraged the belief in the possibility of a separation of the economic from the political sphere, permitting a lag in the latter.

In the Soviet case, it was the lack of success in the early periods of economic reform that forced the leadership to turn to the political sphere. From the Chinese perspective, three major factors contributed to the initial failure of the Soviet economic reform. First, the Soviet leaders failed to reassess and readjust the heavy industrial model at the outset of reform. Thus, investment and growth patterns remained distorted in that they still focused on the heavy industrial sector, including the defense industry. Second, micro-economic reforms at the enterprise level were not accompanied by proper macro-economic ones at the center, leading to chaos in the economy. While Chinese reforms encouraged competition among production units but preserved necessary macro-economic controls, Soviet reforms

emphasized increased autonomy of enterprises and the dismantling of state plans without effective pricing, financial, and tax policies to retain macro-economic control and ensure micro-level competition. Third, the implementation of economic reforms was half-hearted and ineffective in the Soviet case (see Guan, 1991). The Soviet leadership did pay attention to this third problem but viewed it as the result of cadre resistance and public inertia. This perception led to the eventual shift to political reform in order to overcome bureaucratic foot-dragging. However, once political reform became the focus of national attention, Chinese conservatives would claim, change in the political sphere grew overheated and out of control, shelving economic reform and further delaying it.

The balance of political forces in each case also helps to account for the divergent processes and outcomes of the reassessment in these two countries. Although Chinese veteran leaders had mostly been retired by the mid-1980s, they continued to play an active and often decisive role in national politics through informal influence. The strength of these leaders contributed to the readjustment policy and a balancing of old and new economic measures, helping to ease the pace of transition and offset the excesses of reform. Conservative leaders were also a leading force in defining the limits of reassessment, in cracking down on liberal dissent, and in upholding the Four Fundamental Principles.

In the Soviet case, Gorbachev's frequent and adept organizational maneuvers helped to weaken increasingly the political and ideological strength of conservative forces. At important junctures, reforms were always accompanied by a discharge of veteran officials. Ideological work was put into the hands of liberal-minded reformers whose control of the ideological forum helped to influence the discussion and formation of policy agenda. The weakening of the conservative input was at least partly responsible for the more radical nature of the Soviet reassessment and the one-sided (i.e., politically oriented) nature of Soviet reforms. Apart from the generational factor, a greater adherence to democratic centralism within the Soviet Party may be a major reason for the successful organizational reshuffles by Gorbachev and for the quiet departures of conservative officials. That is, Gorbachev could always get his organizational reshuffles and reform measures adopted in the party because party officials and Central Committee members faithfully observed the principles of democratic centralism even while they may personally disagree with his proposals. In the Chinese case, arbitrary disruption of normal political procedure by senior leaders and Deng's unwillingness to alienate them contributed to the persisting influence of conservative forces.

Leadership also made a difference. At the outset of reform, the two countries shared legacies of economic failures and human tragedies. The latter legacy, symbolized in China's Cultural Revolution and the USSR's Stalinist purges, was perhaps the most devastating and disturbing national experience in the post-revolutionary period for both countries. Why did similar experiences lead to such divergent directions and outcomes in the rethinking of their systems? The orientation and determination of Chinese and Soviet leadership clearly made a difference. The Chinese leadership, both of conservative and radical leanings, are reluctant to negate the past totally, especially the period before the Cultural Revolution, because a part of their own past and therefore legitimacy are at stake. They have consistently treated economic reform as the top priority, because of China's meager level of economic development, the paralysis of the economy after the Cultural Revolution, and an exhaustion with the political sphere after years of "class struggle as the key link." Thus, constantly alluding to the chaos of the

Cultural Revolution, Deng has repeatedly emphasized political stability as the precondition of economic development and even the highest political good. Gorbachev, by contrast, was willing to negate the past thoroughly, partly because he was not personally tied to it. He placed humanistic goals above economic ones and accepted the priority of political reform, because he seemed to believe genuinely that these measures could salvage socialism and give it a new life. Compared with Deng, Gorbachev seemed almost naive in believing that reformed socialism would remain the dominant national choice without a vanguard party to guarantee it.

Finally, differences in national histories and cultures also help to account for the divergent outcomes of the reassessments in China and the Soviet Union. The legacy of semi-colonialism and imperial invasions certainly made the Chinese leadership more reluctant to embrace completely those values and practices that are perceived as belonging to the "other system." The memory of the warlord period and the Cultural Revolution also made them particularly concerned with the instability of political change. The greater distance between the Chinese and Western civilizations made it harder for the Chinese leadership to accept, in Gorbachev's words, "joining the mainstream of the world civilization." The absence of these factors in the Soviet case, by contrast, made it easier for Gorbachev to talk about the reconciliation of the two social systems, and the return of the Soviet Union to the "mainstream of the human civilization."

Although the reassessment undertaken by the CCP is not the same as that undertaken by the CPSU, the similarities as well as differences between the reassessments of the two parties have illuminated some generic questions of theory and practice in socialist movements. Most importantly, the problems in socialist practice are related to certain premises of original theory, but approaches to and conceptions of socialism may vary significantly and this in turn can impact practice. Finally, the monopolistic nature and place of socialist doctrine seem essential to the maintenance of communist regimes in practice.

References

- Andropov, Yuri (1983) "Ucheniye Karl Marx i Nekotorye Voprosy Sotsialisticheskogo stroitelstva v CCCP," *Kommunist*, 3, pp. 9–23
- CDSP (1985) "Gorbachev Keynotes Ideological Conference," *Current Digest of the Soviet Press*, XXXVI (50), p.2
- Chen Yun and Li Xiannian (1982) "Letter to the Politburo on Financial and Economic Work," *Sanzhong quanhui yilai zhongyao wenxian xuanbian* (vol. 1), Beijing: Renmin chubanshe
- Chi Fuling and Huang Hai (eds.) (1987) *Deng Xiaoping zhengzhi tizhi gaige sixian yanjiu* (Studies of Deng Xiaoping's Thinking on the Political Structural Reform), Beijing: Chunqiu chubanshe
- Deng Xiaoping (1982) *Deng Xiaoping Wenxuan* (Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping), Beijing: Renmin chubanshe
- Deng Xiaoping (1987) "The Urgent Task of the Party in Organizational and Ideological Front," *Jianshe you zhongguo teshe de shehuizhuyi* (Building Socialism with Chinese Characteristics), Beijing: Renmin chubanshe
- Dittmer, Lowell (1989) "Soviet Reform and the Prospect of Sino-Soviet Convergence," *Studies in Comparative Communism*, XXII (2/3), pp. 125–138
- Ellison, Herbert (1990) "Perestroika and the New Economic Policy (1921–1928): The Uses of History," in Mel Gurtov (ed.) *Transformation of Socialism*, Boulder, CO: Westview
- Evans, Alfred Jr. (1987) "The Decline of Developed Socialism? Some Trends in Recent Soviet Ideology," *Soviet Studies*, 38 (1), pp. 1–23
- Goldman, Merle (1991) "Hu Yaobang's Intellectual Network and the Theory Conference of 1979," *China Quarterly*, June 1991, pp. 219–242.
- Gorbachev, Mikhail S. (1985a) *Zhivoe tvorchestvo naroda*, Moscow: Izdatekstvo politicheskoi literatury.

The Chinese and Soviet Reassessment of Socialism: Yan Sun

- Gorbachev, Mikhail S. (1986a) Speech at the all union conference of the head of social science faculties, *Pravda*, October 2, 1986
- Gorbachev, Mikhail S. (1986b) Report at the plenum of the CPSU Central Committee on April 23, 1985, *Speeches and Writings*, Oxford: Pergamon Press
- Gorbachev, Mikhail S. (1986c) Report to the 27th Congress, *Speeches and Writings*, Oxford: Pergamon Press
- Gorbachev, Mikhail S. (1986d) Remarks at the meeting with world cultural figures, *TASS* (Moscow), October 20, 1986
- Gorbachev, Mikhail S. (1987a) "Restructuring and the Party's Personnel Policy," report at the CPSU Central Committee Plenum on January 27, 1987, *Pravda*, January 28, 1987
- Gorbachev, Mikhail S. (1987b) "October and Restructuring: The Revolution Continues," speech at the ceremonial meeting of the CPSU on the 70th anniversary of the October Revolution, *Pravda*, November 3, 1987
- Gorbachev, Mikhail S. (1988a) Report at the CPSU Central Committee plenum on February 17, 1988, *Pravda*, February 18, 1988
- Gorbachev, Mikhail S. (1988b) Speech at the meeting with media executives on May 7, 1988, *Pravda*, May 8, 1988
- Gorbachev, Mikhail S. (1988c) Speech at the meeting with media representatives on January 12, 1988, *Pravda*, January 13, 1988
- Gorbachev, Mikhail S. (1988d) "Restructuring the Work of the Party is a Highly Important Key Task of the Party," political report to the 19th All-Union Conference of the CPSU, *Pravda*, July 19, 1988
- Gorbachev, Mikhail S. (1988e) Speech at the CPSU Central Committee on May 7, 1988, *Pravda*, May 8, 1988
- Gorbachev, Mikhail S. (1989a) "Socialist Thought and Revolutionary Restructuring," *Pravda*, November 26, 1989
- Gorbachev, Mikhail S. (1989b) Report to the CPSU Central Committee on January 6, 1989, in *Current Digest of the Soviet Press*, XLI (1), p. 1
- Gorbachev, Mikhail S. (1989c) "Common Responsibility for the Fortunes of Peace," *Pravda*, November 30, 1989
- Gorbachev, Mikhail S. (1990a) Report at the Plenary Session of the CPSU Central Committee on February 5, 1990, *Current Digest of the Soviet Press*, XLII (6), pp. 2-5
- Gorbachev, Mikhail S. (1990b) Speech at the Plenum of the CPSU Central Committee, *Pravda*, May 14, 1990
- Gorbachev, Mikhail S. (1990c) Speech to communists of the capital's Frunze Borough, *Pravda*, May 14, 1990
- Gorbachev, Mikhail S. (1990d) "Advance Further Along the Path of Restructuring," political report to the 28th CPSU Congress, in *Current Digest of the Soviet Press*, XLII (27), p. 2
- Gorbachev, Mikhail S. (1990e) Speech on the Results of the Discussion of the CPSU Central Committee's Political Report to the 28th Congress, *Pravda*, July 11, 1990
- Gorbachev, Mikhail S. (1990f) Report at the Plenary Session of the CPSU Central Committee, *Pravda*, March 12, 1990, in *Current Digest of the Soviet Press*, XLII (11), p. 11
- Gorbachev, Mikhail S. (1991) "On the Draft of the New CPSU Program," report at the plenary session of the Central Committee on July 25, 1991, *Pravda*, July 26, 1991; in *Current Digest of the Soviet Press*, XLIII (30), pp. 2-6
- Guan Xuelin (1991) "A Continuing Series of Blunders in Economic Reforms—Summary 18 of the Situation in the Soviet Union during Gorbachev's Six Years of Reign," *Neibu xuanbian*, 24, pp. 20-21
- Hu Jiwei (1988) "In Accordance with Books, Authority, or Practice?" *Guangming Ribao*, May 7, 1988
- Hu Qiaomu (1984) "On Humanism and Alienation," *Hongqi*, 2 (January 1984), pp. 20-29
- Jiang Zhaoyang (1990) "A Crisis-ridden Soviet Union," *Sulian dong'ou xinxi cankao ziliao*, January 1990, pp. 38-52
- Kurashvil, B.P. (1990) "Models of Socialism," *Soviet Sociology*, July-August 1990, pp. 33-52
- Ligachev, Ye. K. (1990) Statement for "Debate Page," *Pravda*, May 12, 1990
- Luo Jianhua and Gao Zhenggang (1989) "On the Spirit of Democracy," *Guangming Ribao*, March 24, 1989
- Pravda* (1986) "The Living Spirit of Marxism," *Pravda*, October 21, 1986
- Pravda* (1989a) "Toward Confrontation or Unity," *Pravda*, September 17, 1989, in *Current Digest of the Soviet Press*, XLI (42), p. 1
- Pravda* (1989b) "Questions of Theory-Debate Rostrum: Toward a Contemporary Concept of Socialism," *Pravda*, July 14, 1989, in *Current Digest of the Soviet Press*, XLI (31), p.4
- Pravda* (1990a) "Toward a Humane, Democratic Socialism (Program Statement of the 28th CPSU Congress), *Pravda*, July 15, 1990; in *Current Digest of the Soviet Press*, XLII (37), pp. 15-17
- Pravda* (1990b) Draft Democratic Platform in *Pravda*, March 3, 1990

The Chinese and Soviet Reassessment of Socialism: Yan Sun

- Scanlan, James (1988) "Ideology and Reform," in Peter Juviler and Hiroshi Kimura (eds.) *Gorbachev's Reforms*, New York: Aldine de Gruyter
- Schoenhal, Michael (1991) "The 1978 Truth Criterion Controversy," *The China Quarterly*, June 1991, pp. 251–268
- Selyunin, Vasily (1988) "Sources," *Novy Mir*, 5 (May 1988), in *Current Digest of the Soviet Press*, XL (40), pp. 14–17
- Soviet Sociology* (1990) "Alienation Under Socialism," *Soviet Sociology*, November/December 1990, pp. 58–78
- Soviet Sociology* (1991) "Prospects for Democratization," *Soviet Sociology*, March–April 1991, p. 35
- Sun Yuecai (1989) "The Question of Humanism and Alienation and the Contention of A Hundred Flowers—rereading Hu Qiaomu's 'On Humanism and Alienation'," *Dangxiao Luntai*, 1 (January 1989)
- Tsipko, A. (1988) "The Roots of Stalinism," *Nauka and zhizn*, 11 (November 1988), in *Current Digest of the Soviet Press*, XLI (10), pp. 1–5
- Wang Chongjie (1991) "Drastic Change in the Soviet Political Situation," *Neican xuanbian*, 38, pp. 18–20
- Wang Ruoshui (1983) "A Defense of Humanism," *Wen hui bao*, January 17, 1983
- Wu Jiang and Sun Changjiang (1989) "Hu Yaobang and the Discussion of the Criterion of Truth," *Guangming Ribao*, April 24, 1989
- Xue Muxiao (1979) *Dangqian wuoguo jingji ruogan wenti* (Several Problems of our Current Economy), Beijing: Renmin chubanshe
- Xue Muxiao (1982) *Woguo guomin jingji de tiaozheng he gaige* (The Readjustment and Reform of Our National Economy), Beijing: Renmin chubanshe
- Yan Jiaqi (1988) "From 'Non-Procedural Politics' to 'Procedural Politics'," *Tianjin shehuikexue*, April 1988
- Zaslavskaya, Tatyana (1990) *The Second Socialist Revolution*, Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press
- Zhao Ziyang (1987) "Advance Along the Path of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics," political report to the 13th Congress, *Renmin Ribao*, November 4, 1987
- Zhao Ziyang (1989) *Jianshe you zhongguo teshe de shehuizhuyi de kexuelilun* (The Scientific Theory of Building Socialism with Chinese Characteristics), Beijing: Zhonggong zhongyang tangxiao
- Zheng Tao (1988) "The Great Debate of 1978," *Xuexi yuekan*, 12 (December 1988)