

# Lenin in the Early 1980s China

---

## Introduction

After Mao Zedong, Chairman of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), died in 1976, the People's Republic of China (PRC) was at the brink of the precipice: the country needed to tackle with the debris of dire economy, the people had to nurse the trauma of the decay of social moral. Most importantly, the Party was facing two mammoth tasks of how to rebuild state institution and recover the communist faith among the citizens, both had been heavily ravaged by Mao and his radical socio-political movement of the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976).<sup>1</sup>

The paper will examine how Chinese officials and scholars used the first Soviet leader Vladimir Lenin and his works to rebuild the faith of socialism and disperse scepticism on the CCP regime in the early 1980s. While some pieces of Chinese writings resorted to socialist humanism defined by Lenin for attacking Maoist terror and the Chinese communist rule, most of the time the writings exploited the spirit and letter of Lenin to strengthen the weakening legitimacy of Chinese socialism without tarnishing the image of Mao, and to command support for Chinese new leader Deng Xiaoping's open policy and future reforms after the disastrous Mao era.

Regarding the primary sources, the study will be based on the reading of the humanities and social science journal articles published in the PRC. Moreover, the investigator intends to study this historical issue against the backdrop of political changes in the early 1980s China, therefore, the research will also consult with China's party newspapers and journals, as well as writings and speeches of PRC officials, such as those of Deng Xiaoping and other contemporary Chinese leaders.

## The symbolic effects of Lenin

In the Third Plenary Session of the 11th Central Committee taking place in late 1978, which signalled CCP's complete departure from past Maoist politics and opened the door for future reforms, Deng Xiaoping, Chairman of the Party Central Committee and the de facto Chinese new leader, felt that the most imminent problems of China were its self-isolation and economic and technological backwardness.<sup>2</sup> After the passage of time, he

---

<sup>1</sup> Mao's goal was to use the movement for purging remnants of capitalist and traditional elements from Chinese society, and re-imposing his dominance within the state and the CCP. The movement paralysed China politically and negatively affected the country's economy and society to a significant degree.

<sup>2</sup> Deng Xiaoping, 'We Can Develop a Market Economy under Socialism, November 26, 1979', in *Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping*, trans. by the Bureau for the Compilation and Translation of Works

increasingly realised that the biggest legacy of Mao left for China was nothing but the spiritual and moral disruption.<sup>3</sup> In Deng's mind, it was not only the leftist ideology inimical to China's coming post-Mao reforms. Since the emergence of Democracy Wall movement in 1978/1979,<sup>4</sup> Deng increasingly felt uncomfortable on China's widespread scepticism of socialism bred by decades of Maoist terror. After the suppression of Democracy Wall movement, in a speech Deng seriously criticised "a small number of persons" who had attacked the CCP by "raiding Party and government organizations," and "slandering Comrade Mao Zedong". He argued that "it is not enough for us to keep on resolutely eliminating the pernicious influence of the Cultural Revolution," and warned, "Both the ultra-Left and Right currents of thought run counter to Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought and obstruct our advance towards modernization."<sup>5</sup> In order to shore up the post-Mao regime, in the early 1980s, Chinese officials and scholars acted in concert to find the right formula from the creeds of the first Soviet leader Vladimir Lenin, for cleaning up the dregs of Maoism, restoring what they saw as true socialism, and rebutting deviation from Marxist orthodoxy.

There were two articles published in the party mouthpiece *People's Daily* in 1980, both of which reiterated Lenin's teaching that it is compulsory to persevere in the priority of economic construction, once proletarian revolution has taken hold in a culturally and socially backward country like China. They concluded that economy, not politics, is the linchpin in consolidating the proletarian dictatorship.<sup>6</sup> In academic writings, by referring to Lenin's work, Qi Shirong, a professor of history at Beijing Capital Normal University, emphasised that "violence is by no means of the essence of proletarian dictatorship."<sup>7</sup> Chun Yuyu, a professor in the Institute of Contemporary Socialism at Shandong University, strongly criticised China's past abuse and mechanical understanding of

---

of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin under the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, 3 vols (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1995), ii, p. 235.

<sup>3</sup> Deng, 'Remarks on Successive Drafts of the "Resolution on Certain Questions in the History of Our Party since the Founding of the People's Republic of China", March 1980-June 1981', *Selected Works*, ii, p. 308.

<sup>4</sup> Democracy Wall was the first political dissent movement in Post-Mao China, which demanded the institution of democracy and rule of law, to replace the party dictatorship. For the panorama of the movement, see Richard Baum, *Burying Mao: Chinese Politics in the Age of Deng Xiaoping* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), pp. 66-93.

<sup>5</sup> Deng, 'Uphold the Four Cardinal Principles, March 30, 1979', *Selected Works*, ii, p. 175.

<sup>6</sup> The CCP Central Compilation and Translation Bureau, 'Xuexi Liening guanyu shehui zhuyi jianshede lilunhe shijian', [Learning from Lenin's Theories and Practices on Socialist Construction] *People's Daily*, 22 April 1980, p. 8; Song Hongxun, 'Duoqu zhengquanhe fazhan shengchanlide bianzheng guanxi', [The Dialectical Relations between Seizing Power and Developing the Productive Force] *People's Daily*, 3 November 1980, p. 12; On Lenin's original, see Vladimir Lenin, 'Lunwoguo geming', [Our Revolution] in *Liening quanji* [Complete Works of Lenin], trans. by the Bureau for the Compilation and Translation of Works of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin under the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, 45 vols (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1985), xliii, p. 371.

<sup>7</sup> Qi Shirong, 'Lieninglun wuchan jieji zhuanzhengde shizhi', [Lenin on the Essence of Proletarian Dictatorship] *Shijie lishi*, 4 (1980), 15; On Lenin's original, see Lenin, 'Egong dibaci daibiao dahui', [Eighth Congress of the R.C.P. (B.)] xixx, p. 136-137.

“continued revolution”. Chun brought in Lenin’s speech to spell out that exaggerating the importance of revolution had descended China into disorder under Mao.<sup>8</sup>

Another group of writings played a role in safeguarding the altar of Chinese socialism, through the quotation of Lenin’s phrases. While in complete agreement with reinstating socialist humanism in Lenin’s terms, however, Ma Jihua, a researcher at the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences, considered that humanism is not an abstract concept, and remarked that many slogans derive from bourgeois humanism, such as “freedom, equality, fraternity, democracy, and human right,” are “oppositional to Marxism-Leninism.”<sup>9</sup> After encapsulating all the essentials of Lenin in constructing socialism in an economically backwards country, both Wu Renzhang (a scholar at Beijing University) and Xu Pohan (Director of the Institute of Scientific Socialism at the Shanxi Academy of Social Sciences) averred that, while focusing on the productive force is indispensable, the most fundamental pivot of Leninism is upholding the proletarian dictatorship and communist one-party rule.<sup>10</sup>

The two categories of writings above are not contradictory but complementary with each other. Both party mouthpiece papers and scholarly works adroitly manipulated the tenet of Lenin, in an attempt to renew the CCP legitimacy after the discredited Maoist era, through undercutting the position of residual radical and conservative force, and arresting the cynicism and crisis of communist faith—these were the two biggest political and ideological tasks haunting the early Deng’s rule.

To confront the post-Mao crisis, the early Deng regime also attempted to find a way for overhauling the outdated Maoist institution. Deng once boiled down all his thoughts on party reform in a talk to an enlarged meeting of the Politburo in 1980. His standards consisted of several elements, such as institutionalisation of the party system, facilitating the economy, parrying the errors done by the Cultural Revolution, and most importantly, strengthening but not enervating the party dictatorship.<sup>11</sup> Deng’s concept of party democracy was no different to that of Mao, who viewed “the extension of democracy in the party” as a way to “strengthen discipline” and “an essential step in its consolidation and development.”<sup>12</sup> In Deng’s mind, he did not regard Mao as having created the wrong

---

<sup>8</sup> Chun Yuyu, ‘Makeside buduan geming lilun jiqizai zhongguode shijian’, [Theories and Practices of Marx’s Continued Revolution in China] *Shehui kexue yanjiu*, 2 (1983), p. 54-55; On Lenin’s original, see Lenin, ‘Shiyue geming sizhounian’, [Fourth Anniversary of the October Revolution] xlii, p. 172.

<sup>9</sup> Ma Jihua, ‘Lieninglun zichan jieji rendao zhuyihe rendao zhuyi lunli yuanze’, [Lenin on Bourgeois Humanism and the Ethical Principle of Humanism] *Shehui kexue yanjiu*, 2 (1984), p. 13.

<sup>10</sup> Wu Renzhang, ‘Lieningdui kexue shehui zhuyi lilunde zhongda gongxian’, [Lenin’s Great Contributions to the Theory of Scientific Socialism] *Sulian dongou wenti*, 2 (1981), p. 4; Xu Bohan, ‘Liening jianshe shehui zhuyi lilunde zairenshi’, [Lenin’s Theories on Socialist Construction Revisited] *Shehui kexue pinglun*, 5 (1984), p. 82.

<sup>11</sup> Deng, ‘On the Reform of the System of Party and State Leadership, August 18, 1980’, *Selected Works*, ii, p. 319-341.

<sup>12</sup> Mao Zedong, ‘The Role of the Chinese Communist Party in the National War’, in *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung*, trans and edited. by Foreign Languages Press, 5 vols (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1965), ii, p. 205.

system; rather, it was the bad elements of the system that distorted Mao's behaviours.<sup>13</sup> Most importantly, Deng perceived that Mao had actually undermined the CCP during his rule, so it was essential for the post-Mao political reform not to de-centralise the party power, but to reinforce it for ruling the PRC more effectively.<sup>14</sup>

To keep up the tempo, Chinese scholars took great effort in invoking Lenin's text and the early Soviet rule for promoting China's socialist political reform (or, more accurately speaking, administrative reform). First, China under Mao had suffered from rampant bureaucratism, and curbing the infestation of bureaucratic practice was a major agenda of Deng's political reform.<sup>15</sup> Some writers remarked that, according to Lenin, the root of bureaucratism is due to the legacy of the old society, feudalism and colonisation.<sup>16</sup> Others argued, seen from Lenin's works, the disease of Soviet bureaucratism had originated from Tsarist tradition, the pathetic economy, and low level of education of the masses before 1917.<sup>17</sup> The conclusion of these arguments could be summed up as stating that bureaucratism and other negative vestiges in the socialist states are by no means the intrinsic problem of socialism; instead, they are the dross from old tradition and old society.

Second, by quoting from Lenin's work encouraging mass participation in governmental administration, Xiao Lifeng, a professor at the Zhongnan University of Economics and Law, demonstrated that proletarian democracy is far superior to bourgeois democracy, since in the former it is the people who have the oversight of the state, while the exploitative class dominates in the latter system.<sup>18</sup> In addition, aside from having agreed with Lenin's thesis that proletarian democracy is advanced than bourgeois democracy and

---

<sup>13</sup> Ezra Vogel also holds the similar view. He remarks that during the Cultural Revolution, Deng "was convinced that China's problems resulted not only from Mao's errors but also from deep flaws in the system that had produced Mao and had led to the disastrous Great Leap Forward and Cultural Revolution." Ezra Vogel, *Deng Xiaoping and the Transformation of China* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2011), pp. 44-45.

<sup>14</sup> Deng, 'Remarks on Successive Drafts of the "Resolution on Certain Questions in the History of Our Party since the Founding of the People's Republic of China", March 1980-June 1981', *Selected Works*, ii, p. 297-300.

<sup>15</sup> Deng, 'On the Reform of the System of Party and State Leadership, August 18, 1980', *Selected Works*, ii, p. 320.

<sup>16</sup> Huang Zongliang, 'Liening guanyu fadong renmin qunzhong guanli jiandu guojia fandui guanliao zhuyide sixiang', [Lenin's Thoughts on Mobilizing the Masses to Administer the State and Oppose Bureaucratism] *Beijing daxue xuebao*, 6 (1980), 65; Mao Jiashu, 'Shilun woguo shehui zhuyi tiaojian xiede guanliao zhuyi', [On Bureaucratism in Our Socialist State] *Shehui zhuyi yanjiu*, 5 (1981), p. 26.

<sup>17</sup> Zheng Zuquan, 'Lieninglun wuchan jieji daodede jichuhe yuanze', [Lenin on the Basis and Principle of Proletarian Moral] *Zhongguo shehui kexueyuan yanjiushengyuan xuebao*, 5 (1982), p. 8; Xu Yunpu, 'Liening shiqide suweiai guojia zhidu', [Soviet State Institutions under Lenin] *Shijie lishi*, 6 (1982), p. 12; Wan Chunsheng, 'Liening fandui guanliao zhuyide lilunyu shijian', [Lenin's Theories and Practices on Anti-bureaucratism] *Sulian dongou wenti*, 3 (1985), p. 33.

<sup>18</sup> Xiao Lifeng, 'Lunjianshe gaodu minzhude shehui zhuyi zhengzhi zhidude jichuhe zhangai', [On the Basis and Obstacles of Constructing a Highly Democratic Socialist Political Institution] *Shehui zhuyi yanjiu*, 3 (1982), p. 3; On Lenin's original, see Vladimir Lenin, 'The Immediate Tasks of the Soviet Government', in *Collected Works*, trans and edited. by the Institute of Marxism-Leninism, Central Committee of the CPSU, 45 vols (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1960), xxvii, p. 235-277.

it is the highest form of democracy in the world, both of the writers Hong Yunshan (a researcher at the Sichuan Academy of Social Sciences) and Wang Lixing (a researcher at the Shandong Academy of Social Sciences) argued, by quoting *The State and Revolution*, that in order to facilitate the implementation of proletarian democracy, proletarian dictatorship (the synonym of communist party dictatorship) is essential. In their final judgment, proletarian dictatorship should exist until the state eclipses.<sup>19</sup>

Seen from the comparison between Deng and the Chinese writings presented above, scholars' arguments on the characteristics of Lenin's rule in the early Soviet state largely resonated with the thrust of Deng's various speeches. Under the full cover of the most authoritative communist leader Lenin, Chinese scholars ascribed all the past defects and wrongdoings under Mao to the imperial and feudal tradition before 1949—the founding year of communist China. They obviously suggested that all impoverishments and sufferings enveloped in the pre-1976 PRC had little to do with the true nature of socialism or even Mao himself. Their assurance on the absolute superiority of proletarian democracy and the fundamental necessity of upholding a proletarian dictatorship were undoubtedly tuneful to the Deng regime, which then desperately sought the theoretical basis for keeping the corpus of Mao unimpaired and ensuring the long-term survival of communist rule in China. China specialist Willy Wo-Lap Lam once commented that Deng's blind faith in the absolute necessity of CCP leadership and his intolerance of people who oppose socialism, had demonstrated that the Chinese leader “never tried, or dared, to exorcise totally the Chairman's ghost,” and he “was nothing more than Mao's disciple.”<sup>20</sup>

### Lenin and post-Mao Chinese socialism

Gleaned from the writings above, the connotation of Lenin in the political context of early Deng's China is multi-dimensional. First, some scholarly writings on Lenin, while ostensibly paying lip service to the official line of opposing bourgeois liberalisation, boldly attacked many dark sides of the CCP regime, such as continuous revolution, class struggle, and the trampling of human rights. By resorting to Lenin, scholars wanted the Chinese people to have a real say in managing state affairs and ultimately rebuilding what they saw as true socialism. They claimed to target the derailment of the Cultural Revolution, in essence, their writings seemed to be an unspoken disguise to criticise Mao and his tyrannical rule in circles.<sup>21</sup> Moreover, the central point of these writings was

<sup>19</sup> Hong Yunshan, ‘Makeside guojia xueshuohe wuchan jieji guojiade benzhi’, [Marx's Thesis on State and the Essence of Proletarian State] *Shehui kexue yanjiu*, 2 (1983), p. 44; Wang Lixing, ‘Lieningde wuchan jieji minzhu sixiang’, [Lenin's Thoughts on Proletarian Democracy] *Shehui zhuyi yanjiu*, 5 (1984), p. 18; On Lenin's original, see Lenin, ‘The State and Revolution’, *Collected Works*, xxv, p. 381-492.

<sup>20</sup> Willy Wo-Lap Lam, *China after Deng Xiaoping: The Power Struggle in Beijing since Tiananmen* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1995), p. 150.

<sup>21</sup> Li Dingwen, ‘Xuexi lieninglun renmin qunzhongde minzhu quanli’, [A Study of Lenin's Remarks about the Democratic Right of the People] *Shehui kexue*, 4 (1980), p. 67-70; Chun Yuyu, ‘Makeside buduan geming lilun jiqizai zhongguode shijian’, [Theories and Practices of Marx's Continued Revolution in China], p. 54-55; Ma Jihua, ‘Lieninglun zichan jieji rendao zhuyihe rendao zhuyi lunli yuanze’, [Lenin on Bourgeois Humanism and the Ethical Principle of Humanism], p. 13.

demanding the restoration of “people’s democratic rights”, and those writers considered such rights are inseparable from true socialism defined by Lenin.<sup>22</sup> People’s democratic rights in the context of these works, did not seem to conform to the thinking of Deng, who linked “democracy for the people with dictatorship over the enemy with centralism, legality, discipline and the leadership by the Communist Party,” and stressed “the importance of subordinating personal interests to collective ones, interests of the part to those of the whole, and immediate to long-term interests.”<sup>23</sup> Because the writings of the scholars signalled discrepancy, albeit not objection, to the orthodox CCP ruling philosophy, it would be convenient to apply Lenin, a sacrosanct symbol and figure that might implicate less political danger, to Chinese writings in order to ask for the return of humanistic socialism, if not wholesale democracy in the Western sense, in the early 1980s when the vestiges of Maoism were still rampant in the PRC.

Second, the use of Lenin in the early 1980s was also propitious to validate that the Deng regime was the legitimate socialist government after vetoing the radical Maoism. Mao Zedong once commented that it was the October Revolution that had brought China Marxism-Leninism.<sup>24</sup> His words actually revealed an undeniable veracity that, although the PRC was created by Mao and his communist fellows, the founding principle and genesis of Chinese communism came from Lenin and the Soviet Union. Deng, in a 1979 speech, pointed out squarely that the madness of the Cultural Revolution was smashing not only Mao, but most importantly, Marxism-Leninism.<sup>25</sup> According to another speech made by the party veteran Chen Yun at the same time, the CCP is an international socialist party belonging to the global communist movements, and it is a truly Leninist party, but by no means of an indigenous product created by Mao. He argued what post-Mao China should do is recover intra-party democracy and normal party life—a return to Leninist norm.<sup>26</sup> To take a case of a speech from Ye Jianying, Marshal of the PRC People’s Liberation Army, the term “Marxism-Leninism” always precedes “Mao Zedong Thought”.<sup>27</sup> Such writing format is common after Mao’s death in China, and we can find many of these examples in speeches and works of PRC officials from 1978 onwards.<sup>28</sup> In

<sup>22</sup> Li Dingwen, ‘Xuexi lieninglun renmin qunzhongde minzhu quanli’, [A Study of Lenin’s Remarks about the Democratic Right of the People], p. 67; Chun Yuyu, ‘Makeside buduan geming lilun jiqizai zhongguode shijian’, [Theories and Practices of Marx’s Continued Revolution in China], p. 51; Ma Jihua, ‘Lieninglun zichan jieji rendao zhuyihe rendao zhuyi lunli yuanze’, [Lenin on Bourgeois Humanism and the Ethical Principle of Humanism], p. 16.

<sup>23</sup> Deng, ‘Uphold the Four Cardinal Principles, March 30, 1979’, *Selected Works*, ii, p. 177.

<sup>24</sup> Mao, ‘On the People’s Democratic Dictatorship’, *Selected Works*, iv, p. 413.

<sup>25</sup> Deng, ‘Uphold the Four Cardinal Principles, March 30, 1979’, *Selected Works*, ii, p. 177.

<sup>26</sup> Chen Yun: ‘Zaizhongyang jilu jiancha weiyuanhui diyici quanti huiyi kaimuhui shangde jianghua’, [A Speech in the Opening Meeting of the First Plenary Session of the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection] 4 January (1979), *Renminwang*, last accessed 20 September 2016, <<http://cpc.people.com.cn/GB/64184/64186/66677/4493864.html#>>.

<sup>27</sup> Ye Jianying: ‘Zaiqingzhu zhonghua renmin gongheguo chengli sanshi zhounian dahui shangde jianghua’, [A Speech in the Meeting for Celebrating the 30-Year Founding Anniversary of the PRC] 26 September (1979), *Renminwang*, last accessed 20 September 2016, <<http://cpc.people.com.cn/GB/64184/64186/66677/4493848.html#>>.

<sup>28</sup> Two examples here: Deng, ‘Opening Speech at the Twelfth National Congress of the Communist Party of China, September 1, 1982’, *Selected Works*, iii, p. 13; Zhao Ziyang, ‘Advance Along the Road of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics’, in *Documents of the Thirteenth National Congress*

sum, post-Mao China has devolved Mao's role to the Party as a whole, and the CCP has identified itself as a legatee of Lenin rather than of Mao.

Having said this, the paradigm of Lenin in the early 1980s China by no means had functioned as overruling Mao. Mao founded the Chinese party-state in 1949, and his fate and the PRC are always inter-connected, so it would be out of the question for Deng to obliterate the unsurpassable landmark of Mao's position through any measure. According to Yang Haikun, a professor of law at Suzhou University in Jiangsu Province, socialist democracy defined by Lenin is not only antagonistic to "personal dictatorship and patriarchy," but also incompatible with "anarchism and bourgeois liberalization," which are the targets of every Chinese communist leader.<sup>29</sup> Seen from the examples cited above, the use of Lenin after Mao's death was mostly for cutting away the bad side of Maoism only, and was not for totally rooting out the status of Mao. In reality, the use of Lenin in the early 1980s China could be regarded as protecting or saving Mao in history. From Deng's point of view, the best part of Mao's rule was before the Great Leap Forward in 1957,<sup>30</sup> and during those years Mao "developed Lenin's theory of Party building most comprehensively".<sup>31</sup> According to the CCP verdict, Mao only made mistakes in the evening of his life, a period that was the antipode to true Maoism.<sup>32</sup> It seemed that true Maoism appeared before the emergence of the Great Leap Forward and it was equivalent to Leninism. The aim of post-Mao China was to return to true Maoism as well as Leninism. As American scholar David Goodman comments, the essence of the reforms launched in 1978 highlighted Deng's obsession with "the golden age of the unforgettable 1950s", when the collective leadership, inner-party democracy, style of honesty, cleanliness in government, and frugality in enterprise were the norm. In Goodman's view, Deng was not "an innovator", but rather "a traditionalist", who was eager to restore the good sides of Maoism for legitimising contemporary politics.<sup>33</sup>

Finally, some Chinese scholars in the early 1980s highly appreciated Lenin's notion that socialism could be founded in a backwards nation without previous experience in the capitalist stage.<sup>34</sup> In their opinions, an economically backwards country like China could reach the final victory of communism by learning from Lenin's teachings, such as persisting in a proletarian dictatorship and observing advanced elements from all over the

---

of the Communist Party of China (October 25-November 1, 1987), ed. by Foreign Language Press (Beijing: Foreign Language Press, 1987), p. 17.

<sup>29</sup> Yang Haikun, 'Jianshe gaodude shehui zhuyi minzhu', [To Attain a High Level of Socialist Democracy] *Yunnan shehui kexue*, 4 (1983), p. 45.

<sup>30</sup> The Great Leap Forward was a utopian economic and social campaign launched by Mao from 1957 to 1961. It was widely considered to have caused the greatest famine in human history. For details, see Jasper Becker, *Hungry Ghosts: Mao's Secret Famine* (New York: The Free Press, 1996).

<sup>31</sup> Deng, 'Mao Zedong Thought Must Be Correctly Understood as an Integral Whole, July 21, 1977', *Selected Works*, ii, p. 56-57.

<sup>32</sup> The Central Committee of the CCP, *Guanyu jianguo yilai dangde ruogan lishi wentide jueyi* [Resolution on Certain Questions in the History of Our Party since the Founding of the PRC] (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1981), p. 272.

<sup>33</sup> David Goodman, *Deng Xiaoping and the Chinese Revolution: A Political Biography* (London: Routledge, 1994), pp. 123-124.

<sup>34</sup> On Lenin's original, see Lenin, 'On the So-Called Market Question', *Collected Works*, i, p. 79.

world.<sup>35</sup> Chinese scholars' defence of Lenin in this point was trying to excuse the economic and social backwardness that still existed in China after more than three decades of the CCP rule. Lenin's statement was being used to explain that the extensive poverty in the early 1980s China was not due to Mao or the intrinsic party rule, but rather the historical situation or something else. Through the enduring lustre of Lenin, scholars attempted to bring vigour to the weakening legitimacy of Chinese socialism since the Cultural Revolution, and provide a mandate for Deng's policies and future reforms. Their introduction of Lenin's argument laid the groundwork for the theory of "primary stage of socialism" built on by the later CCP Secretary General Zhao Ziyang in his key-note speech delivered during the 13th Party Congress in 1987. In Zhao's words, because China has attained socialism without proper capitalist experience before, the PRC may use whatever means is available to catch up with the advanced countries, including commodity economy and other capitalist elements.<sup>36</sup> The use of Lenin's argument also opened the path to Deng Xiaoping's word-juggling of "socialist market economy" propounded in the early 1990s, which determined the future development framework of China, namely economic capitalism plus the guaranteed communist party monopoly.<sup>37</sup> China in the early 1980s wanted to wriggle out of Maoist model in economic terms, but still needed to retain socialism in political terms. Hoisting the flag of Lenin could give the PRC such needed convenience, as Lenin's thinking of manipulating the unorthodox methods to achieve orthodox socialism in a backwards state bears the stamp of the *Zeitgeist* of post-Mao China, which could be defined as: there is no universal truth, the only truth according to the tide is truth.

### Conclusion

To conclude, first, Lenin's name could be used to help rally Chinese communists against the radical policies that had long prevailed. On many issues, his views were introduced in an effort to justify new policies or rally support behind new proposals in the early 1980s. His stand was invoked to weaken the hold of Maoist remnants in favour of utilising all possible resources for economic construction, and to support reformers in their pursuit of more sweeping changes. Having said this, the use of Lenin was by no means for leading the attack on Mao, but rather for defending the legitimacy of Chinese socialism founded by the Chairman. His theory was for saving the CCP regime that had been paralysed by the Cultural Revolution. The first Soviet leader was seen by Chinese officials and scholars as an epitome of the new kind of image the Party forged for itself after the disastrous

---

<sup>35</sup> Cui Peihua, 'Zaizongjiehe jiejiande jichushang bawo weilai', [Be Masters of the Future by Summing Up Our Work and Drawing on the Experience of Others] *Shehui kexue*, 5 (1981), p. 10; Xu Jiankang, 'Shehui zhuyizai bufada guojiade shenglishi diguo zhuyi shidai lishide biran', [Victory of Socialism in Backward Countries is Historically Inevitable in the Age of Imperialism] *Zhongguo shehui kexueyuan yanjiu shengyuan xuebao*, 6 (1981), p. 27; Han Wei, 'Xuexi liening guanyu jianshe shehui zhuyi wenmingde lilunyu shijian', [Learning from Lenin's Theories and Practices on Constructing Socialist Civilization] *Sulian dongou wenti*, 1 (1983), p. 42; Xu Bohan, 'Liening jianshe shehui zhuyi lilunde zairenshi', [Lenin's Theories on Socialist Construction Revisited], p. 85.

<sup>36</sup> Zhao Ziyang, *Documents of the Thirteenth National Congress of the Communist Party of China* (October 25-November 1, 1987), p. 11.

<sup>37</sup> Deng, 'Excerpts from Talks Given in Wuchang, Shenzhen, Zhuhai and Shanghai, January 18-February 21, 1992', *Selected Works*, iii, p. 361.



Jie Li

Maoist decades. The Chinese writings played on these positive associations of the Grail of Lenin, making him the moral centre of its representation of post-Mao China.

University of Edinburgh

Jie Li  
*s1300558@sms.ed.ac.uk*

## Bibliography

### Primary Sources

Chen, Yun, 'Zaizhongyang jilu jiancha weiyuanhui diyici quanti huiyi kaimuhui shangde jianghua', [A Speech in the Opening Meeting of the First Plenary Session of the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection] (4 January 1979), *Renminwang*, last accessed 20 September 2016,

<<http://cpc.people.com.cn/GB/64184/64186/66677/4493864.html#>>.

Chun, Yuyu, 'Makeside buduan geming lilun jiqizai zhongguode shijian', [Theories and Practices of Marx's Continued Revolution in China] *Shehui kexue yanjiu* [Social Science Research], 2 (1983), pp. 48-56.

Cui, Peihua, 'Zaizongjiehe jiejiande jichushang bawo weilai', [Be Masters of the Future by Summing Up Our Work and Drawing on the Experience of Others] *Shehui kexue* [Social Sciences], 5 (1981), pp. 9-15.

Deng, Xiaoping, *Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping*, trans. by the Bureau for the Compilation and Translation of Works of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin under the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, 3 vols (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1995).

Han, Wei, 'Xuexi liening guanyu jianshe shehui zhuyi wenmingde lilunyu shijian', [Learning from Lenin's Theories and Practices on Constructing Socialist Civilization] *Sulian dongou wenti* [Matters of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe], 1 (1983), pp. 40-49.

Hong, Yunshan, 'Makeside guojia xueshuohe wuchan jieji guojiade benzhi', [Marx's Thesis on State and the Essence of Proletarian State] *Shehui kexue yanjiu* [Social Science Research], 2 (1983), pp. 40-47.

Huang, Zongliang, 'Liening guanyu fadong renmin qunzhong guanli jiandu guojia fandui guanliao zhuyide sixiang', [Lenin's Thoughts on Mobilizing the Masses to Administer the State and Oppose Bureaucratism] *Beijing daxue xuebao* [Journal of Beijing University], 6 (1980), pp. 60-68.

Foreign Language Press, ed., *Documents of the Thirteenth National Congress of the Communist Party of China (October 25-November 1, 1987)* (Beijing: Foreign Language Press, 1987).

Lenin, Vladimir, *Collected Works*, trans and edited. by the Institute of Marxism-Leninism, Central Committee of the CPSU, 45 vols (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1960).

----- *Liening quanji* [Complete Works of Lenin], trans. by the Bureau for the Compilation and Translation of Works of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin under the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, 45 vols (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1985).

Li, Dingwen, 'Xuexi lieninglun renmin qunzhongde minzhu quanli', [A Study of Lenin's Remarks about the Democratic Right of the People] *Shehui kexue* [Social Sciences], 4 (1980), pp. 67-70.

Ma, Jihua, 'Lieninglun zichan jieji rendao zhuyihe rendao zhuyi lunli yuanze', [Lenin on Bourgeois Humanism and the Ethical Principle of Humanism] *Shehui kexue yanjiu* [Social Science Research], 2 (1984), pp. 13-17.

Mao, Jiashu, 'Shilun woguo shehui zhuyi tiaojian xiede guanliao zhuyi', [On Bureacratism in Our Socialist State] *Shehui zhuyi yanjiu* [Socialism Studies], 5 (1981), pp. 25-28.

Mao, Zedong, *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung*, trans and edited. by Foreign Languages Press, 5 vols (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1965).

Qi, Shirong, 'Lieninglun wuchan jieji zhuanzhengde shizhi', [Lenin on the Essence of Proletarian Dictatorship] *Shijie lishi* [World History], 4 (1980), pp. 14-21.

Song, Hongxun, 'Duoqu zhengquanhe fazhan shengchanlide bianzheng guanxi', [The Dialectical Relations between Seizing Power and Developing the Productive Force] *People's Daily* (3 November 1980), pp. 12-13.

The Central Committee of the CCP, *Guanyu jianguo yilai dangde ruogan lishi wentide jueyi* [Resolution on Certain Questions in the History of Our Party since the Founding of the PRC] (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1981).

The CCP Central Compilation and Translation Bureau, 'Xuexi Liening guanyu shehui zhuyi jianshede lilunhe shijian', [Learning from Lenin's Theories and Practices on Socialist Construction] *People's Daily* (22 April 1980), pp. 8-10.

Wan, Chunsheng, 'Liening fandui guanliao zhuyide lilunyu shijian', [Lenin's Theories and Practices on Anti-bureaucratism] *Sulian dongou wenti* [Matters of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe], 3 (1985), pp. 31-38.

Wang, Lixing, 'Lieningde wuchan jieji minzhu sixiang', [Lenin's Thoughts on Proletarian Democracy] *Shehui zhuyi yanjiu* [Socialism Studies], 5 (1984), pp. 14-21.

Wu, Renzhang, 'Lieningdui kexue shehui zhuyi lilunde zhongda gongxian', [Lenin's Great Contributions to the Theory of Scientific Socialism] *Sulian dongou wenti* [Matters of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe], 2 (1981), pp. 1-5.

Xiao, Lifeng, 'Lunjianshe gaodu minzhude shehui zhuyi zhengzhi zhidude jichuhe zhangai', [On the Basis and Obstacles of Constructing a Highly Democratic Socialist Political Institution] *Shehui zhuyi yanjiu* [Socialism Studies], 3 (1982), pp. 2-6.

Xu, Bohan, 'Liening jianshe shehui zhuyi lilunde zairenshi', [Lenin's Theories on Socialist Construction Revisited] *Shehui kexue pinglun* [Social Science Review], 5 (1984), pp. 81-85.

Xu, Jiankang, 'Shehui zhuyizai bufada guojiade shenglishi diguo zhuyi shidai lishide biran', [Victory of Socialism in Backward Countries is Historically Inevitable in the Age of Imperialism] *Zhongguo shehui kexueyuan yanjiu shengyuan xuebao* [Journal of the Graduate School of Chinese Academy of Social Sciences], 6 (1981), pp. 26-29.

Xu, Yunpu, 'Liening shiqide suweiai guojia zhidu', [Soviet State Institutions under Lenin] *Shijie lishi* [World History], 6 (1982), pp. 8-15.

Yang, Haikun, 'Jianshe gaodude shehui zhuyi minzhu', [To Attain a High Level of Socialist Democracy] *Yunnan shehui kexue* [Social Sciences in Yunnan], 4 (1983), pp. 41-46.

Ye, Jianying, 'Zaiqingzhu zhonghua renmin gongheguo chengli sanshi zhounian dahui shangde jianghua', [A Speech in the Meeting for Celebrating the 30-Year Founding Anniversary of the PRC] (26 September 1979), *Renminwang*, last accessed 20 September 2016, <<http://cpc.people.com.cn/GB/64184/64186/66677/4493848.html#>>.

Zheng, Zuquan, 'Lieninglun wuchan jieji daodede jichuhe yuanze', [Lenin on the Basis and Principle of Proletarian Moral] *Zhongguo shehui kexueyuan yanjiushengyuan xuebao* [Journal of the Graduate School of Chinese Academy of Social Sciences], 5 (1982), pp. 5-12.

## Secondary Literature

Baum, Richard, *Burying Mao: Chinese Politics in the Age of Deng Xiaoping* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994).

Becker, Jasper, *Hungry Ghosts: Mao's Secret Famine* (New York: The Free Press, 1996).

Vogel, Ezra, *Deng Xiaoping and the Transformation of China* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2011).

Goodman, David, *Deng Xiaoping and the Chinese Revolution: A Political Biography* (London: Routledge, 1994).

Lam, Willy Wo-Lap, *China after Deng Xiaoping: The Power Struggle in Beijing since Tiananmen* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1995).