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Revolutionary Movements
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Required Reading: Chang, Labors of Sisyphus, chaps. 3 and 4; Gregor, Marxism, China and Development, chaps. 4 through 6.

The Eclipse of Maoism: After Mao's death, Chinese communist economists were unstinting in the criticism. In their judgment, the economy of the People's Republic of China (PRC) had been irrational and dysfunctional (with the high extraction of capital from the general population, the relatively low levels of productive growth, and the enormous waste of resources [not to speak of the lives lost in developmental adventures like the "great leap forward"]). Many of the discussions turned on a rational substitute for the market (rejected by Marxists since the middle of the 19th century). For Chinese communists there was only "Marxism" or "Maoism" that might be legitimate. Deng Xiaoping, responsible for China's "second revolution"--the "rational" substitute for the irrationalities of Maoism--argued that China should restore at least some of the domestic commodity market, seek to attract foreign investment and foreign expertise (technology and human administrative skills). There was a return to some sort of "theory of value" as well as emphasis on the "forces of production" both of which distinguished the "thought of Deng" from the vagaries of Mao. The renewed emphasis on the theory of value was a search for rational pricing and the return to the forces of production diminished emphasis on "class struggle." Classical Marxism had always insisted on the primacy of the forces of production. Mao (and before him, Stalin) had emphasized the role of the "superstructure" in shaping society (voluntarism). In that sense, there had been a "rejection of materialism" in both Stalinism and Maoism. Dengism, in that relatively restricted sense, was a return to classical Marxism--but with many twists.

The Rise of the Alternative: Deng, like Mao, was a nationalist. He is pragmatic in the sense that he recognized that China is in the "primary stage of socialism" in which its responsibilities are not Marxist utopia, but development, the creation of a suitable industrial and economic base for a modern nation that must compete with the advanced industrial countries for status and place. China, under Deng, took on the clear features of a "developmental dictatorship under single-party auspices." The PRC would then belong to a class of regimes familiar to the 20th century that have their ideological sources in classical Marxism, but better reflect the developmental, nationalist views of Friedrich List. Given the self-evident fact that classical Marxism had absolutely nothing to say about the economic and specifically industrial development of less-developed countries, the developmental dictatorships of the 20th century have had very little Marxism about them (Fascist Italy, the Soviet Union and the PRC--as well as elsewhere). Dengism had taken on the traits of Sunism (which Deng taught during the period before Mao's ascension to power in 1949). In that sense, Deng is further removed from classical Marxism than Mao was. Development of the "material productive forces" typified Sun's "people's livelihood." The "primary stage of socialism" is very like Sun's phase of military and tutelary rule for less-developed China in which "capitalism" would be employed to "bring socialism."