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布哈林启发邓小平，邓小平改变中国

**Bukharin Inspired Deng Xiaoping to Change China**

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## DENG XIAOPING 24<sup>th</sup> DEATH ANNIVERSARY SPECIAL ISSUE

***Summary:** Nikolai Bukharin (1888 – 1938) unjustly died in prison, Deng Xiaoping too eventually passed away. Bukharin did not succeed in bringing about reforms in the Soviet Union, but he did influence Deng enough to “rescue” China.*

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**Image:** N I Bukharin  
**Source:** foreignpolicyi.org



**Image:** DENG Xiaoping 邓小平 (1904-1997)  
**Source:** dailymaverick.co.za

**Editor’s input**

*If one day, China should change colour and turn into a superpower, if it should play the tyrant in the world, subject others to its bullying, aggression and exploitation, the people of the world should identify it as social-imperialism, expose it, oppose it and work together with the Chinese people to overthrow China.*

*These are the words of Deng Xiaoping, Chairman of the People’s Republic of China’s Delegation at the Special Session of the UN General Assembly on April 10, 1974. (Emphasis added – Tr.)*



**Image:** Deng- China’s new leader  
**Source:** economist.com

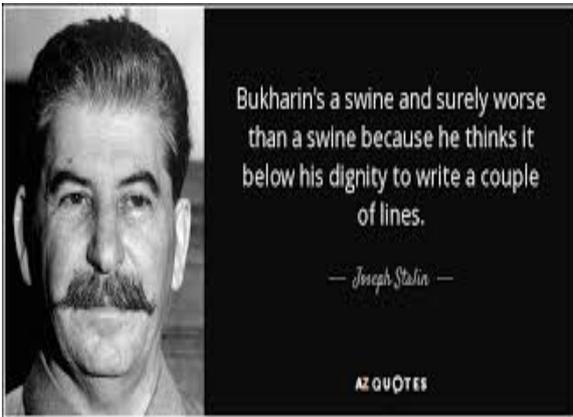
**I  
Two books that shaped Deng Xiaoping’s Thinking**

*Mao Zedong is the father of Chinese Revolution, Deng Xiaoping is the father of Chinese Reform.*

Deng Xiaoping’s reform ideas were born during his years in the Soviet Union and were profoundly influenced by Bukharin’s thoughts. During his famous *Southern Tour* 南巡 in 1992, he had said: “*The Communist Manifesto* and the *ABC of Communism* are my guides. The former, as it is known to all, is by Karl Marx; not everyone is familiar with the author of the latter – famous early Soviet thinker, Bukharin.

Deng Xiaoping read *ABC of Communism* during his days in Moscow, where he also heard Bukharin’s several speeches. During his stay in Moscow, Deng also personally experienced and witnessed Bukharin’s

involvement in the early Soviet reforms, i. e., the New Economic Policy.



**Image:** Joseph Stalin's Quote on Bukharin  
**Source:** azquotes.com

It was Bukharin's inspiration that led Deng Xiaoping to change China.

Nikolai Ivanovich Bukharin (Oct.9, 1888 – March 15, 1938) was early Soviet communist leader whom Lenin had described as the leading thinker in the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU).

Although Bukharin was executed by Joseph Stalin, he was rehabilitated by the Central Committee of the CPSU in 1988 and his reputation was restored. Before the reform and opening up, China was deeply influenced by Stalin and Bukharin was looked down upon as the right-leaning opportunist. It was not until the 1980s that following the deepening of reforms, China's scholars began to re-evaluate and acknowledge Bukharin's important

contributions to the October Revolution and in rebuilding the Soviet Union.



**Image:** Bukharin  
**Source:** famousbirthdays.com

What distinguishes a communist party from all other political parties is that the communist party attaches great importance to theory. It is only the correct theory that can rectify a mistake and correctly lead the process of rebuilding. Bukharin's outstanding theoretical contribution lay not only in launching revolution but lay in introducing reform in the aftermath of the successful revolution. Bukharin can be easily called the earliest reform theorist and it is he who profoundly inspired Deng Xiaoping.

Young Deng Xiaoping, during his student years in Moscow, not only studied Bukharin's works but also had the chance to listen to Bukharin's public speeches; he also personally witnessed implementation of the New Economic Policy advocated and pushed by Bukharin and saw for himself the changes the

NEP in the social life in the Soviet Union. All these experiences left a deep mark on Deng's thinking.

During the years Deng lived in France, he mainly survived by doing part-time work. In



**Image:** 'Bourgeois' Deng in Paris  
**Source:** factsanddetails.com

France, it was Zhou Enlai who became Deng's revolutionary mentor but he (Deng) could not systematically study revolutionary theory. In September 1920, Deng boarded a steamer in Shanghai and left for France. Of the five years and four months he lived in France, four years were spent working to earn his living.

From the age of sixteen to twenty-one, Deng Xiaoping grew from a teenager into a youth and spent this period in the heart of European civilization. This experience left a profound impact on Deng's thinking in his later life. He was deeply influenced by capitalist system. Such experience – whether to be called his strength or weakness – was something which Mao had none at all.



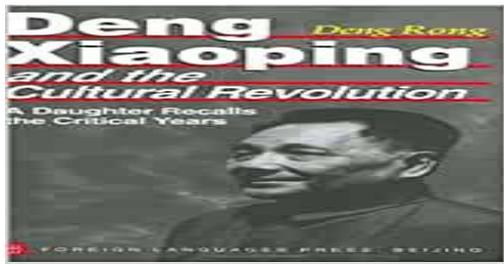
**Image:** My father...Deng Rong  
**Source:** china.org.cn



**Image:** Young Deng in France  
**Source:** scmp.com

Deng Xiaoping did not go to a university in France. Instead, he matured and graduated from the "social university." Besides revolutionary activities, although was impossible for him to enjoy a bourgeois life in beautiful Paris, still the French culture left traces on the mind of a young Deng Xiaoping.

Deng Rong describes in her book her father's life-style in France – Deng's favourite things such as French bread, cheese, potatoes, drinking wine, coffee and even watching football matches.



He once became unwell in France, had typhoid fever and was hospitalized and spent one month recuperating in a nursing home. He was deeply impressed with the social welfare system in France at the time.

In 1976, Deng Xiaoping was presiding over the work of the State Council. On one occasion, while reacting to the state media going out of the way in lavishly praising an indigenously produced 10,000 ton wind wheel, Deng said: "So much excitement and extolling over a mere 10,000 ton ship. Let me tell you, 10,000 ton is just nothing, when I travelled to France in 1920, I boarded a steamer which was several thousand tons in weight!" This was something which was beyond comprehension not only for Mme Jiang Qing and other members of the Gang of Four, but even Mao Zedong had no knowledge about. To say such a thing about Mao might sound funny but the fact of the matter is experiences such as these do play role in determining the vision and worldview of the leaders.

Deng Xiaoping arrived in Moscow from Paris in 1925 and enrolled at the Moscow Institute of Oriental Studies. Later he was transferred to Dr. Sun Yat-sen University and was given the

Russian name, Ivan Sergeyevich Dozorov. He spent two years in Russia, i. e., when he was 21 and 22 year old – today, equivalent to the age of a college student, or a university student towards the end of her/his graduation degree. But with a striking difference – Deng Xiaoping at the time was not an ordinary university student. He already had accumulated a huge degree of "social experience." He was actively involved in Marxist theoretical discussions, was studying in the capital (Moscow) of the world's first socialist country, and was living the experience of socialism in practice.



**Image:** Deng Xiaoping in Moscow  
**Source:** twitter.com

When he was studying at the Dr. Sun Yat-sen University in Moscow, as it used to be then, being a communist party member, Deng was automatically given the membership of the Soviet communist party (Bolshevik faction). But the membership did not allow him to vote. In spite of being a CPSU (B) member, Deng's position and ranking was far below Jiang Jinguo (Chiang Ching-kuo, 1910-1988, the eldest son of the KMT leader Jiang Jieshi or Chiang Kai-shek - *Translator*).

Chiang Ching-kuo was called Nikolai Vladimirovich Ilizalov in Russia. He was sent to Moscow at age 12 and he returned to Beijing in 1937. He spoke fluent Russian and could not speak Chinese when he returned to China at age 27. While in Soviet Union, he married Faina Vakhreva. After having spent 12 years of his formative youth, when he finally returned to China, the young Chiang was more “red” than even all those CPC members who stayed back in the Soviet Union.

(Chiang Ching-kuo was sent as a teenager to study in the Soviet Union during the First United Front formed by the CPC and KMT in China in 1925. He was Republic of China [Taiwan] premier from 1972 to 1978; and was the President of ROC from 1978 until he passed away in 1988 – *Translator*).



**Image:** ROC President Chiang Ching-kuo (1910-1988)  
**Source:** shutterstock.com



**Image:** Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek and son



**Image:** With Faina Vakhreva  
**Source:** thediplomat.com

It is worth mentioning that as classmates at Dr. Sun Yat-sen University, Deng Xiaoping and Ulanhu introduced Chiang Ching-kuo to join the CPC. This information came to light only after Ulanhu’s personal documents were made public recently. (Ulanhu or Ulanfu, Chinese name 云泽 Yun Ze, 1906-1988, was the founding Chairman of China’s Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, serving from 1947 to 1966. According to baidu.com, Ulanhu had the nickname of ‘Mongolian Viscount’ during his political career. General Ulanhu was the PRC Vice-Premier from 1955 for over ten years until he was purged in the Cultural Revolution in 1966. He was rehabilitated in the early 1980s and was the PRC Vice-President from 1983 until his death in 1988. His son Buhe served as Chairman of Inner Mongolia for a decade. His granddaughter Bu Xiaolin was

appointed to the same position in 2016 – *Translator*).



**Image:** Ulanhu (1906-1988) - Ulanhu and Xi Zhongxun were very close friends. Ulanhu family has dominated Inner Mongolia for 70 years  
**Source:** sohu.com



**Image:** Ulanhu with Mao and Xi Jinping's father Xi Zhongxun (in middle)  
**Image:** news.sina.com.cn

## II

### ***ABC of Communism* and the Soviet Union's NEP**

The *ABC of Communism* was written by Nikolai Bukharin and young theorist Yevgeni Preobrazhansky in March 1919. The book was called an introduction to Marxism by the

Bolsheviks and is celebrated as simple introduction to the fundamentals of Marxist theory. It is translated into various foreign languages and is one of the most basic introductions to Marxism in the international communist movement. The book left lasting impressions on Deng Xiaoping when he was studying at Dr. Sun Yat-sen University in Moscow. Deng kept referring to the *ABC of Communism* all his life.



**Image:** The ABC of Communism  
**Source:** goodreads.com



**Image:** The ABC of Communism – Japanese Edition  
**Source:** amazon.com

*The ABC of Communism* is divided into two parts – fundamentals of Marxist theory and the dictatorship of proletariat and building communism. The book is a part of the CPSU Programme and is textbook exposition on theoretical issues in Marxism. The book is spread into 138 chapters. As basic introductory

volume, the book inevitable carries the idealism and radical flavour of the early revolution, including discussions on themes such as socialist-led economy, delinking from the capitalist economic system, organizing a collective economy to mobilize peasants into socialism, uniform commodity distribution by the state and predicting withering away of currency etc.



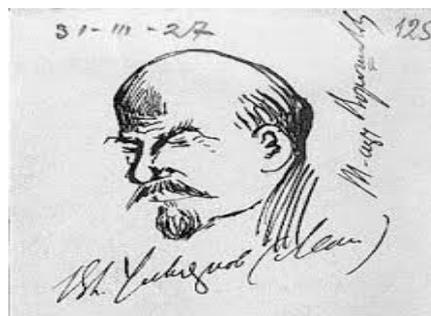
**Image:** Preobrazhansky  
**Source:** en.wikipedia.org



**Image:** The Communist Manifesto: Chinese edition  
**Source:** shuxing.cc

However, Bukharin also advocated that administrative decrees cannot be ordered to eliminate commerce and transform small producers. He emphasised that the productive forces must be developed and that the Soviet regime cannot rely on socialist distribution to

replace private enterprises. He also foresaw bureaucracy in the Soviet system.



**Image:** Bukharin: Rise and fall  
**Source:** russianfile.com



**Image:** Bukharin: Self-portrait  
**Source:** thecharnelhouse.org

Whether it is for the younger generation in the early Soviet era or it is for the revolutionary youth in other countries in the world, Bukharin's *The ABC of Communism* is as profound as *The Communist Manifesto*. When Deng Xiaoping was only in his early twenties, he was already well-versed with the book. This formed an important theoretical base in his [Deng's] thought process and led him in the CPC ideological work, even long after 1949.

This is only one side of the story.

Following the October Revolution in 1917, the establishment of the Soviet regime was originally intended to represent workers, peasants and soldiers. However, when the civil war broke out in 1918 and the Soviet regime faced armed interference from several countries externally and fierce resistance from internal counterrevolutionary forces, it resorted to military communism and the farmers were forced to hand over grain under the so-called surplus grain collection system. The Russian soldiers and workers were originally from the countryside, and the rural population were not able to make a living. The famine in Ukraine led to strong dissatisfaction among workers and soldiers against the Soviet regime. The Marine Mutiny in Kronstadt in Saint Petersburg became the first large-scale rebellion by soldiers soon after the October Revolution. A large number of peasants marched into the city (Saint Petersburg) and joined the White Army. This caused the supply of goods in the city in short supply and everyday life in the city became difficult. The leaders of the CPSU (B) were confronted with a serious crisis immediately following the October Revolution. The October Revolution leaders were forced to reflect on their mistaken policies. The question they faced was, how long could the Revolution last if people in both urban areas and in the countryside had no livelihood?



**Image:** October Revolution

**Source:** [osu.edu](http://osu.edu)



**Image:** Red Army and Civil War in Russia...

**Source:** [workerspower.co.uk](http://workerspower.co.uk)

It was Lenin who first proposed to change military communism, at least partially. Most CPSU Bolshevik faction leaders supported Lenin. Bukharin not only agreed with Lenin, he went on to become a staunch supporter of Lenin. Not only that, Bukharin raised the military communism at the theoretical and advocated its immediate cessation in favour of the implementation of the NEP.

It is not historically incorrect to claim Bukharin was the first Bolshevik leader to advocate implantation of the NEP.

In May 1921, the tenth CPSU (B) party congress passed and adopted “The Resolution on NEW Economic Policy, and decided to implement reforms in industry, commerce and agriculture. The party congress also resolved following key decisions: to allow growth of

private enterprises, grain collection system was transformed into grain-tax, and farmers were allowed to not only freely decide what to plant but also hire farm labour.

Implementation of the NEP resulted in the Soviet Union quickly able to restore and grow its agriculture, commerce and industry. Besides, the international environment was becoming friendly and several western countries started establishing contacts with the Bolsheviks. Some western countries even established diplomatic contacts with the Soviet Union.

Bukharin's was a more sophisticated approach toward military communism, which he believed was more like "childhood fantasy." In 1922, in an article "Bourgeois Revolution and Proletarian Revolution," Bukharin expounded on the concept of "primary stage of socialism." This was the first time a communist thinker had proposed such a theoretical concept. Deng Xiaoping introduced the concept at the CPC thirteenth party congress in 1987, during the early phase of the implementation of reform and opening up policy.

Bukharin stresses on the need for nurturing market mechanism and market in the early stages of socialism, something he had elaborated in a report in 1925: "All farmers must be told, all farming classes must be told – make money, accumulate, develop own

economy!" Deng Xiaoping advocated "let a few people become rich first" in the early stages of promoting reform and open door policy, is it not Bukharin's influence?

During Deng Xiaoping's student years at the Dr. Sun Yat-sen University, Bukharin once delivered a lecture at the university. Although the text of Bukharin's speech is now untraceable, it is assumed by many in China that Bukharin had dwelt with the implementation of the NEP in his speech.



**Image:** V I Lenin

**Source:** [jacobinmag.com](http://jacobinmag.com)

In 1925, it was just after Lenin had passed away that Deng Xiaoping arrived in Moscow. The inner party factional struggle had not yet broken out among the Bolsheviks. Moscow had started implementing the NEP and markets were flourishing. All kinds of cafes, restaurants, shops, dance halls were doing brisk business. Art and culture world was full of dynamism. Deng Xiaoping and other Chinese youths, who arrived at the university, were all supplied with western-style suits, jackets, leather shoes and other daily necessities including even a night-suit. The university

dining hall had food supply in abundance and sometimes even Chinese dishes were served.

Deng's life in Russia was far better than in France. He didn't have to work part-time to earn living and could fully devote to his studies. Given the living conditions in Russia at the time, the Communist International provided a comfortable subsistence to the young revolutionaries from the East – sometimes even better than the life of the Soviet people in those days. In addition to the life of a student at the university, Deng and his classmates also had the opportunity to indulge in travelling (to Leningrad), to recuperate in summer camps, to visit opera houses and to watch ballet etc. – things that Deng Xiaoping could not even dream of in Paris.

All this and much more on how the NEP influenced Deng's everyday life in Moscow have been discussed in details in books by傅高义Fù Gāoyì 《邓小平时代》 *Dèng Xiǎopíng Shídài* (Deng Xiaoping Era) (2011) and潘佐夫、梁思文合著的《邓小平革命人生》 *Dèng Xiǎopíng Gémìng Rénshēng* (Deng Xiaoping: Revolutionary Life) (2016) jointly authored by Pān Zuǒfū and Liáng Sīwén, respectively.

Deng once said: “To learn Marxism-Leninism requires one to be precise and efficient. Long narrative texts are meant for professionals to study, how do masses read them? Reading a

big, thick book is formalism, not easily done. My introductory guides to Marxism were *The ABC of Communism* and *Communist Manifesto*.”



Image: The Communist Manifesto in Chinese  
Source: sohu.com

It is important to mention here Felix Edmundovich Dzerzhensky (1873-1926), Polish Marxist who strongly supported the implementation of the NEP. Dzerzhensky is regarded as the father of “Red Terror” – the founder of Cheka, the All Russian Anti-Countermeasures Committee, and the predecessor of the KGB. In fact, political character of comrades such as Dzerzhensky is very complicated and it is unfair to simply demonize them.

Stalin all along upheld and maintained that military communism was correct. Stalin eventually emerged victorious in the power struggle for succession caused by the death of Lenin. Although Stalin did not completely abolish the NEP, he violently launched collective farms movement in the 1930s. Making good use of the capital and technology of the Great Depression in the West, he

successfully implemented the Soviet industrialization. Stalin also cleaned out and purged several top and senior leaders, including Bukharin. Bukharin was eventually convicted and secretly executed in 1938. Bukharin's name since became taboo in Soviet Union. Bukharin's last words recited from memory by his wife and passed down to the world. These were Bukharin's last words: "I request a new, young and honest generation of party leaders to read this letter of mine at the CPSU Plenary Committee Meeting and declare my innocence and restore my party membership." Bukharin's this request was finally fulfilled in 1988. His very last words were: "Comrades, you must not forget, there is also a drop of my blood on the banner you hold high on the victorious march of communism."

In China too, just like several other top CPC leaders, Deng Xiaoping did not for long mention Bukharin's name. Although Mao remained at odds with Stalin, but he (Mao) consistently upheld the ideological position of Stalin, including Stalin's rejection of Bukharin. Mao once himself criticized Bukharin, whom he considered as pioneer of Soviet revisionism. It became possible only during the reform era that not only Bukharin's name and theory reappeared in China but scholars started writing about and publishing on Bukharin.

After New China was established in 1949, Deng Xiaoping became the State Council vice

premier in 1952 and was inducted into the party's political bureau three years later. In February 1956, Deng represented the CPC at the CPSU twentieth party congress in Moscow.



**Image:** Mao and Deng

**Source:** japan-forward.com

This was Deng returning to Moscow after a gap of three decades. Since he was visiting Moscow as the CPC senior leader, he did not engage in any private or individual activity. However, the CPSU twentieth party congress was an event of historical significance – to negate Stalin. This angered Mao Zedong. Though Deng's own reaction to the denouncement of Stalin at the twentieth party congress is not known, at least not known publicly, it can be assumed that he must not have differed from Mao. Afterwards Deng visited Soviet Union on three different occasions in 1957, 1960 and 1963 respectively, to negotiate with the CPSU Central Committee. But relations between CPC and CPSU and between the PRC and the USSR broke down completely.

There are no records of what Deng Xiaoping thought of the achievements of the Soviet communism as well as the malpractices in the

Soviet system at the time. He was given the CPC party mandate to supervise “Nine Commentaries” on the debate between CPC and CPSU and to comprehensively criticize the Soviet revisionism. Despite the fact that the CPSU at the time regarded Bukharin as a dissident, the Soviet revisionism did include some theoretical elements of Bukharin. In the CPC’s critical evaluation, the CPSU now seemed inseparable from the “fantasy of childhood.” It is hard to determine if it was Deng’s own assessment. However, it is highly untenable that he was not influenced by Mao’s thinking.

However, in his later years, Deng did talk about the dispute between the CPC and CPSU. He also indicated the problem was on both the sides.

### III

#### **Deng’s Reform Policy “White Cat, Black Cat” Paradigm**

After the great famine China experienced in the early 1960s, the party convened a 7000 – people conference in Beijing. At the “mass conference,” Mao Zedong briefly reflected on his policy of the Great Leap Forward (GLP). Deng Xiaoping advocated “White-Black Cat” theory was manifestation of the NEP.



**Image:** Architect of modern China

**Source:** linkedin.com

During the Cultural Revolution (CR), Deng was detained under house arrest at a school in Nanchang (Jiangxi province) for three and a half years from October 1969 to February 1973. During this period, Deng is said to have done a great deal of introspection – rethinking on the system, on introducing a set of reforms, rethinking on what should be the nature of reforms etc. and so on. But he did not write down anything or make notes.

By no means was Deng the only Central Committee top ranking leader at the time to have contemplated about advocating reforms in the system. The party elders and Deng’s contemporaries all had agreed to introduce reform and opening up in some degree or more. However, it was Deng alone who pushed the most for the reforms. During the 1950s, 1960s, during the CR in particular, it is not at all true that China’s growth and development had become stagnant.

But it is true China completely isolated itself from the outside world and implemented the policy of “self-reliance.” In sharp contrast, the world around China, especially Japan and the “four little dragons” took off and made rapid

economic progress. Deng Xiaoping was fully aware of this.



**Image:** Deng visits France in 1974  
**Source:** everydaylifeinmaoistchina.org

*China will not take the capitalist road, but the initial socialist path too has to end. (Emphasis added – Tr.)* This is what Deng repeatedly appealed to people of China after the passing away of Mao Zedong in September 1976 and after the toppling down of “Gang of Four” in October 1976, respectively.

During the CR, Deng Xiaoping was appointed by Mao to preside over the everyday work of the State Council and the Central Military Commission (CMC). It soon became apparent his “rectification programme” was incompatible with Mao’s “class struggle as the key” programme. Not surprisingly, he (Deng) was soon removed from his positions. In 1973, Deng was sent to represent the PRC at the UN General Assembly. He left for New York en route Paris. This was Deng’s first visit to France in forty years. More significantly, this was also the first time Deng was to step on the American soil. Although not a foreign visit in the real sense of the term, but whatever little he sees and hear during visits to Paris and New

York, left a strong impact on Deng’s thinking. It made him seriously reflect on China’s development path and China’s relationship with the Western countries.



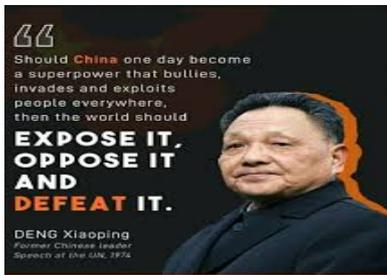
**Image:** Deng Xiaoping  
**Source:** chinese posters.net



**Image:** Deng in cowboy hat in Texas  
**Source:** researchgate.net

Once the CR ended, Deng emerged as China’s most influential leader. China must abdicate the Soviet model of socialism. The distribution system China had adopted during the early phase of the People’s Republic was modelled on the military communism in the early Soviet Union. The great famine in China in the early 1960s was the exact repetition of the famine in Ukraine during the 1920s. At the time, the Soviet Union relied on Lenin-Bukharin NEP to promote the reform and opening up of Russia. Its success and outcome, as witnessed and experienced by Deng himself, had remained cemented in Deng’s thoughts, especially Bukharin’s theory. In the late 1970s, Deng

began to promote China's reform and opening up policy which eventually turned into the main resource in his thinking.



**Image:** Famous Deng quote  
**Source:** twitter.com



**Image:** The handshake with India  
**Source:** firspost.com

In the so-called socialist camp countries – Yugoslavia, Hungary, Czechoslovakia and East Germany – all have experimented with socialist reform idea. All these must be first of all seen as a resistance to the chauvinism of Soviet power and secondly must be viewed as reform of political significance. However, under the chauvinism of Soviet power, the smaller socialist countries failed to pursue reforms. It was only a big socialist country such as China which could and dared to break away from the so-called Soviet camp during Mao era and eventually completely bid farewell to Soviet-style centralized planned

economy under Deng Xiaoping. From theory into practice, Deng's reform policies exceeded Bukharin's NEP. This was inevitable. For after all Bukharin's theory was conceived at the beginning of the last century, China's reform led by Deng happened in the 1980s and in 1990s.

Bukharin had to die unjust death in a prison, Deng Xiaoping too died eventually. Ironically, their respective fate seems to have reflected on the fate their countries too. Bukharin unfortunately failed to continue the reform he initiated in the Soviet Union and Deng Xiaoping happened to be around to rescue China.



**Image:** Deng's China under Xi  
**Source:** indiatimes.com

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*The views expressed here are those of the original author and not necessarily of the translator or of the Institute of Chinese Studies*

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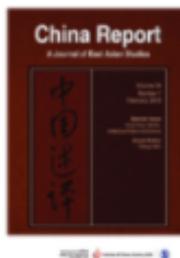


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