

The Causes and Enlightenment of Chinese Cultural Revolution

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Abstract

China's cultural revolution, which took place in the 20th century, is bound to be one of the major historical events in Chinese history due to its long duration, great destruction and far-reaching influence. The debate on the right and wrong of the Chinese cultural revolution has been going on till today. There is a consensus on the depth of its lessons, but it is difficult to get a consensus on its formation and reflection.

This paper analyzes the causes of the Chinese cultural revolution from the perspective of history, culture and system, and analyzes the ways to avoid the recurrence of tragedy, so as to think and study the feasibility of the future construction of the rule of law and the harmonious development of human beings in China.

Keywords: China, Cultural revolution, Lessons, Enlightenment

1. Overview of China's Cultural Revolution

“If we lose the memory of history, our hearts will be lost in the darkness,” President Xi Jinping quoted a Russian writer as saying in his essay “Remembering history, creating the future”, written to commemorate the 70th anniversary of world war two. The sentence applies to China's domestic history. If we lose the memory of the cultural revolution in the last century, our hearts will also be lost in the dark. Only by recovering the memory and arousing the awakening of the soul can we avoid the recurrence of the tragedy.

1.1 Causes of the Cultural Revolution

The cultural revolution in the last century in China was like the tidal wave of the Qiantang River. Each wave was the result of the interaction of various forces, and at the same time, a group of people were swallowed up in each wave. The cultural revolution, which ended in

failure and was characterized as “Ten years of turmoil”, was called on by the highest authority and crowned as “Bottom-up spontaneous mass democracy movement”. In essence, it was a populist movement characterized by the rule of man.

For politicians, power is not a pleasing plaything, but a tool to achieve political goals, which at that time were the direction of China’s political development. At that time, the top leadership was asking “where is China going?” A serious disagreement has emerged on the issue of it among the leaderships.

First, under what conditions will the transition from new democracy to socialism be? The central leadership had a different view. Chairman Liu Shaoqi proposed to “consolidate the order of new democracy”, that is, after a period of time to develop the Chinese economy and improve the social and economic level, then build socialism. Chairman Mao Zedong believed that if you don’t advance, you will fall back. Only by continuing the revolution without stopping can we achieve the set goals of the communist party.

Secondly, there are differences in the understanding of class struggle among the leaderships. Chairman Liu Shaoqi emphasized class struggle, but the aim of the struggle was the Landlords, rich peasants, reactionary figures, bad figures, rightists, the corrupt and depraved cadres and disobedient intellectuals. But chairman Mao Zedong believed that the focus of the struggle was in the party, at the top of the central committee, and that only the top of the party could play a decisive role in the direction of China’s development. Three famines at the time sharpened their divisions. Mao Zedong wanted to build a whole new society, in which there were no differences between urban and rural areas, no differences between workers and peasants, no differences between manual and mental labor, and equal political, economic and cultural rights for all. He believed that Liu Shaoqi and others’ proposition was an establishment that followed the capitalist road, a stumbling block to the law of historical development, and thus became the object of class struggle. Mao Zedong’s cultural revolution, which focused on class struggle, cleared the way for him to build such a utopian society. Opposing and preventing revisionism became the main task of the cultural revolution, and the mass mobilization of the cultural revolution was for the purpose of realizing his revolutionary line and building the beautiful society he envisaged (Yang, 2013).

1.2 The Consequences of the Cultural Revolution

The cultural revolution not only caused the stagnation of China’s productive forces and economic regression, the national economy was on the verge of collapse, but also destroyed the traditional culture of the Chinese nation, human ethics and morality to some extent, and destroyed and distorted people’s mind. For example, the behaviors of students beating teachers, children fighting parents and so on broke the bottom line of human nature, not only destroyed people’s self-esteem, also destroyed the dignity of the law, destroyed the basic human ethics standards, a large number of families broke down in an instant.

In addition to a large number of precious cultural relics, cultural treasures have been destroyed and a large number of traditional architecture, stone inscription were broken in the cultural revolution. In May 1984, after two years and seven months of comprehensive investigation and verification by the central committee of the CPC, the relevant statistics of casualties during the cultural revolution are as follows: 4.2 million people detained and

interrogated; More than 1.78 million unnatural deaths; More than 135,000 people were sentenced to death for existing counter-revolutionary crimes; More than 237,000 people died and more than 7.03 million were injured in the fighting. More than 70,000 homes were destroyed (Yang, 2013).

The ten years of Chinese cultural revolution have caused serious consequences, not only in Chinese history, but also in the whole human history, it can be called one of the bloody history.

2. Analysis of Causes of the Chinese Cultural Revolution

The disaster of cultural revolution cannot be attributed to the mistakes of chairman Mao Zedong and the other leaders at that time, but the causes should be found in the social system and people of China at that time. Just as Zhang Ming in “what is the gene of cultural revolution?” pointed out, it is the tension relationship between man and man that is the source of the revolutionary spirit. Everything can be sacrificed for this tension. The system, which claims to have been transformed, has not reflected on itself.

Tocqueville believed that the past was never completely dead to man; Man can forget it, but he always keeps it with him; for, as it was in ages, it is the product and generalization of all previous ages, and even if it penetrated into the soul, it could recover and distinguish these different ages according to the way they remained in him (Tocqueville, 2015). In the early days of the founding of the People’s Republic of China, people unconsciously inherited most of their feelings, habits and thoughts from the traditional culture. At the same time, some institutions of the old system were moved into the new society, which lost their names in the process of transformation, while retaining the original form.

2.1 People’s Servility and Blind Obedience Under the Influence of Traditional Chinese Culture Still Exist

In China several thousand years of feudal autocratic rule, unification is instilling “wheresoever, servants”, what fostered is full of a set of royalism, from top to bottom is the personal relationship, this kind of thought and attachment to rely on from central to local administrative authorities strictly enforced at various levels, if who resist, will be punished. Its view of “the great tao originates from the heaven, and the heaven remains unchanged, and the tao remains unchanged”, and its view of “valuing the old rather than the young, valuing the ancient rather than the present”, have hindered the development of human personality (Shao, 2001). under the influence of this culture, people usually do not think ahead, lack independence, and cannot think rationally. What they can do is usually credulity and blind following.

Under thousands of years of high pressure and autocracy, people have formed a slavish mentality of blind obedience, which can only be followed and obeyed like slaves. For most people, it can be said that this kind of servility has been distorted until the eve of the cultural revolution. People are still as old and conservative as ever, blindly following the old way of life. As Mr. Lu Xun pointed out, “the eldest people are stuck in a rigid tradition and refuse to change. They are so old that they have no energy left.” Mr. Liang Qichao also pointed out in the article “scientific spirit and eastern and western culture”: the spirit of criticism completely disappeared, and there is no ability to criticize, so blindly follow the ancients, some of the

combination of plagiarism to live.

When the cultural revolution took place, people generally had no personality and no reason. They became a group and acquired a herd mentality. The people selflessly devoted themselves to a great goal. It was because of this blind obedience that Chinese people were led to the abyss of the cultural revolution.

2.2 The System in the Early Days of the Founding of the People's Republic of China Tended to Be Centralized

An important reason for the cultural revolution lies in the social system established at that time. We should look for the reasons in the social system.

New China is a soviet-style power structure built on the soil of traditional society. Under the planned economy, a high degree of economic monopoly, political monopoly and ideological monopoly has been carried out, and everyone's production and life have been included in the state plan. Depending on modern means of transportation, modern communication technology and organizational means, the power of the state affects every aspect of family life, deeply into everyone's mind. In this well-organized society, management by the bureaucratic groups are the only means to govern the country. Therefore, the bureaucrats become the masters of the society instead of the public servants of the people. In the absence of power checks and balances, it is inevitable that the public servants become the masters of the society. In this social relationship, there are tensions between the officials and the people, as well as within the bureaucratic system (Yang, 2013).

It is in this highly centralized political authority and the widespread contradictions between the government and the people that the theory of continuing revolution under the dictatorship of the proletariat quickly received the general response of the masses.

2.3 At That Time, the Public Was Lost to the Authority of Individual Leadership

The traditional culture of China is based on the rule of authority and obedience personality, It took three principles of feudal moral conduct as the main basis of ethics. Passed the imperial examinations, the clan and family education, social education, as well as on the system by patriarchal, patriarchal clan, imperial power system and the feudal hierarchical reasoning aristocracy of autocratic imperial power legitimacy, teach people "I do gentleman with sincerity", namely the monarch in the social life, has the absolute authority, these provide rigorous system of support for the Chinese traditional society rule and theory. Under this kind of idea, people's main body status, self consciousness, consciousness of individual rights and obligations are constantly being eroded. Through the political practice of traditional society, officials and the public have formed the value of loyalty to the monarch (Wu & Zhou, 2014). This supremacy of monarchy has become the basic value choice of traditional social officials and the public in their political life.

It was in the absence of such independent personality and spirit of political independence that the superstition on the authority of "the son of heaven" was formed in the traditional Chinese society, which was still prevalent until the early days of the founding of the People's Republic of China. The May 4th movement, which took place at the beginning of the last century, did not make the Chinese people generally wake up.

The founding of the People's Republic of China established the principal position of the

people, but the vast majority of the people's culture is low, knowledge is extremely poor, lack the ability to rein the real connotation of Marxism-Leninism, MaoZedong thought. For a long time, chairman MaoZedong was not only the highest political authority, the highest military authority, but also the highest ideological authority. At the same time, this kind of political system, which emphasizes the rule of man and the authority of power, also shapes the people's consciousness to obey the authority and the official standard consciousness. The people turned from the superstition of "the son of heaven" to the superstition of the supreme leader authority at that time.

3. The Way to Avoid the Repetition of Cultural Revolution Tragedy

3.1 The Eradication of National Servility and Blind Obedience

With the general improvement of Chinese people's economic and living standards, cultural and knowledge levels, it is possible to gradually dilute or even eliminate servility.

The blind trust in political authority and blind respect for officials should be gradually eliminated, and the myth that authority cannot be criticized should be replaced by reasonable doubt and criticism. Reasonable doubt and rational criticism of power are the important conditions for the transition from subject society to civil society and finally form the independent consciousness of citizens in line with the requirements of the society ruled by law.

The reform of the system without civic consciousness, especially citizens' rights and democratic consciousness, is not successful. The failure of the revolution of 1911 in China lies in that the republican reform is only propagated and promoted in the new intellectual class and lacks of extensive mass basis.

By establishing institutional channels of political participation and accumulating practical experience, the dissemination of civic consciousness such as civil political rights and democratic rights is the way to eliminate blind obedience of the public. Political participation in traditional Chinese society was either through imperial examinations or peasant uprisings. Obviously, the political participation under the rule of law society is essentially different from the traditional society ruled by man. Grassroots autonomy, online political participation, and elections of party and government at all levels are all impossible in traditional societies. Under the condition of perfecting various laws and regulations, it is an possible and important way to form citizens' consciousness of rights and the consciousness of rule of law, which is related to the success or failure of the construction of socialist rule of law. What we need to do is to accumulate practical experience of political participation and form theories through continuous democratic practice, and to conduct civic consciousness education through various channels.

Through the environment edification and enlightenment education of the rule of law society, our society could gradually improve the civic consciousness, let the servility disappear in the people's mind.

3.2 Rational Decentralization of Power in a Society Ruled by Law

With the arrest of the "gang of four", the system once destroyed by the cultural revolution has been revived after it.

Chairman deng xiaoping once said, "the mistakes we have made in the past are related to the

thinking and style of some leaders, but the organizational system and work system are more important. Good institutions in these areas can prevent bad people from running amok, and bad institutions can prevent good people from doing enough good things and even going against them.” (Deng, 1994).

With the development of China’s economy and the advancement of political reform, the construction of system comes with it.

The core concept of the rule of law is to restrict the power of the state, which brings about the democratization of politics and the rule of law of power. Undoubtedly, decentralization and autonomy are important approaches.

At present, China’s rural and urban grass-roots organizations have basically achieved autonomy, but various problems are still widespread and prominent, and the implementation of local autonomy and its consequences are also quite different. After more than 40 years of practice, the public’s awareness of the rule of law and democracy has taken initial shape, but it is still weak. The task of strengthening civic awareness education among the people at the grass-roots level and continuing to vigorously promote and improve the autonomy of grass-roots organizations is heavy but urgent.

The advance of the reform of market economy has reconstructed the relationship of social and economic interests in China. The relationship between people changes from dependency to competition. With the reconstruction of social structure and the separation of public and private fields, pluralistic social power comes into being. Combined with the steady advance of economic structural reform, we should vigorously foster civil society, establish and perfect the non-governmental organizations, social organizations and other civil organizations. When conditions permit, they should transfer the rights that should belong to the society to the non-governmental organizations. As the law enforcement agencies providing public services, the government units should only fulfill the duties that belong to them under the law. The role of non-governmental organizations and government organizations in the country and society under the rule of law is established with the development goal of the future society under the rule of law as the orientation. In addition, by improving the civil society, the connotation of citizenship and civic consciousness is reconstructed to form an ideological system of basic value judgment, thinking mode and behavior mode of the political and economic community.

The existence and effective operation of grassroots autonomy and social organizations will effectively supervise and restrict the legitimate operation of public power in the public sector, and enable citizens to have a more rational understanding and independent judgment of the highest political personal authority.

3.3 The Transformation of Personal Authority of Leaders to Legal Authority

Political movement during Chinese cultural revolution period is the important means to realize the people’s sovereignty, class dictatorship, the movement of this kind of simple, efficient and consciousness infusion is the main form of citizen political participation at the time. This kind of political participation strengthens the consciousness of power and obedience, and destroys the consciousness of right, subject and democracy and the rule of law (Wu & Zhou, 2014).

To realize the transformation from the authority of individual political leadership to the

authority of the rule of law in a country, first of all, we should promote the construction of democratic politics, perfect the transformation of the party's governance philosophy and governance mode, perfect the transformation from a revolutionary party to a construction party, and perfect the transformation of the government from a dictatorship to a service function. In the process of such transformation, the socialist legal system should be constantly improved. Through the establishment of a legal system with complete system, strict logic and accurate norms, the legal authority that is higher than any individual leadership authority, not subject to the individual will of leaders, and generally accepted by members of society should be formed. Secondly, the concept of "the supremacy of the constitution" and "the rule of good law" should be widely established among the members of the society. Forming a belief, thinking mode and behavior mode of the rule of law among Chinese people, only china can realize the rule of law society with legal rights and under the law.

A shift from the authority of individual leadership in a society governed by man to the authority of law in a society governed by law would fundamentally rule out the possibility of the cultural revolution, since such a movement no longer had a legal basis for convincing the public.

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