

Qiu Shi

WE MUST GRASP IDEOLOGICAL WORK WITH A FIRM HAND

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[This document appeared in the journal Seeking Truth [求是], the main theoretical organ of the Central Committee, one which generally represents a “conservative” or hardline viewpoint. The author is also “Qiu Shi” [秋石] : pronounced just like the name of the journal, but meaning “Autumn Stone.” The pseudonym is an obvious sign that the essay represents the opinion of the editorial board. It is a not completely whole-hearted attempt to recall the Party to ideological orthodoxy, not whole-hearted because there remains a lack of precision on just what orthodoxy is—beyond supporting and defending the decisions of the Central leadership. The subtext is that the educated public has been overly influenced by corrupting influences from the west, with notions of universal value and constitutionalism. But all of these foreign ideas are designed to support the unjust capitalist system. “Only the Chinese people have the right to say whether China’s path of development is correct or not.” And, it seems, the only choice the people have is to obey the Party and its current leadership.]

Ideological work is one of the most important tasks of our Party. It affects the Fate of the Party, the long-term stability of the state, the cohesion and sense of direction of the nation. We need to pay a high degree of attention to strengthen thoroughly our ideological work. This means especially that we need to grasp in our hands leadership power, management power, and the power to control the language used in ideological work. We cannot at any time grow slack; otherwise, we will fall into a historical error that we will never be able to recover from.

The Key Is in Implementing Leadership Responsibility

To do good ideological work it is necessary first to resolve the question of leadership power (领导权). Party leadership, mainly in terms of thought, political, and organizational leadership, including ideological leadership, has extreme significance in assuring Party leadership over the state and society. Getting a firm grip over leadership power in ideological work is the basic requirement for consolidating the guiding position of Marxist ideology in the new situation and consolidating the fighting solidarity of the whole Party and the people of the whole country. It is a requirement for perfecting the system of socialism with a Chinese character and promoting the governing system of the state and the strengthening of governing capacity. It is also a requirement for responding to the attempts at ideological infiltration by western forces.

Leadership means to lead and to guide people. The broadest number of the masses in our country believe in and support our Party. They want to walk with the Party. The crux is that the Party must stand at the forefront of the times. It is fighting toward the front, bringing the masses with it. Today the struggle in ideology is fierce and complex; the key here is for the Party to shed its own light on its banner, its voice standing out from the cacophony and directing the tides running within society. For the past several years various mistaken thought tides have become popular, throwing into confusion the thought of a certain portion of the masses. At this time leading Party cadres at all levels must stand up and speak out, firmly propagating the Party's theory and its direction, line, and policy. They must firmly propagandize the major arrangements made by the Center and the Center's major analyses and decisions concerning the current situation. They must firmly remain aware of the need to be in accord with the Party Center, upholding the

prestige of the Center. We must holler at those in thrall to erroneous thought—give them a good slap, wake them up.

In the past few years a strange phenomenon has cropped up in the Party and in society. That is, anyone who says what is correct and supports the Party and government, who refutes insults to the Party and government, is attacked from all sides, while those in our own camp often remain silent as lambs^{*} or speak in very soft terms. Correct speech does not get enough support. This phenomenon is worth some deep thought. If we tolerate the development of that sort of thing we are abandoning our leadership responsibility and putting to the side our leadership power. In the ideological sphere we do not engage in meaningless bickering; but on things having to do with great matters of true and false or involving large-scale decisions and value systems, we absolutely cannot stand aside or, even worse, fall back. Leading cadres must dare to stand up in the storm of struggle, not skirt around matters involving great questions of right and wrong. We can't avoid the issue by saying "don't argue," or "don't get overheated," or "let them have their say." There are no "enlightened gentlemen" on the battlefield, and neither are there enlightened gentlemen on issues of right and wrong. In ideological and political struggles involving the fate of the Party and state no leading cadre can be a bystander; all need to be loyal guardians of the Party and people.

In judging whether a leading cadre is politically mature or not and able or not to bear heavy responsibility, one important aspect is to judge whether or not he pays attention to and is skilled or not in grasping ideological work. The main responsible comrades and those responsible for dealing with ideological issues in Party committees at all levels

* 雅雀无声: literally, "not a sound from a crow or a sparrow"—a proverbial saying.

must stand with banners streaming on the front lines of ideological work, taking up the burden of political responsibility without attempting to shirk it. The main responsible comrades in the Party committees must take the lead in ideological work. They must take the lead in reading the publications put out by the more important departments in their locality; they must take the lead over the media in their locality, in criticizing mistaken concepts and mistaken inclinations; they must take the lead in the strategic duty of guidance in the strengthening of ideological analysis and criticism. There will be serious consequences without energy in ideological work. This must be taken very seriously.

Ideological Leadership Cannot be Separated from Management

Management power is intimately tied in with ideological power. Should we or should we not manage the ideological sphere? Of course we must. Thought has no shape, but the media that carry and transmit thought do have shape; they are part of the social enterprise. Marx and Engels have pointed out: “Those who produce thought exercise rule; they are the ones who coordinate the production and distribution of the thought of their age” (*Collected Works of Marx and Engels*, Vol. 1, p. 551). This coordination of the production and distribution of thought is what is meant by management. Actually, in contemporary society there is no sphere that does not require management. As the saying goes, without norms and standards (规矩) you can't make a square or a circle [Mencius]. Management is a force of production.

The west sets up freedom of speech and journalistic freedom as standards, but in fact they are very fierce in managing ideology. The true rulers of western society are the monopoly capitalist cliques. In our country and internationally they summon up the wind and call for rain. The most influential western media in the realms of politics, economics,

and intellectual culture are in the hands of capitalist monopoly cliques. The western media can cross-examine politicians, pick at political parties, criticize the government. They can depose a particular politician, defeat a particular political party, bring a particular government to collapse. But they absolutely cannot raise radical doubts about, criticism of, or opposition to the capitalist bosses or the capitalist system. The capitalist monopoly cliques buy off large numbers of elite intellectual leaders of public opinion, and these package capitalist ideology as a “universal value.” Domestically their ideology has over the long term infected the general population, creating an ideological barrier, so that whatever does not conform to mainstream ideology is regarded as “politically incorrect.” Internationally they draw an ideological line, sparing no effort to export western ideology, measuring all things that happen in the world according to western standards. Whatever fits in with western standards is regarded as good, and whatever does not is demonized. America engages in military action abroad under the flag of liberal democracy, creating however many humanitarian disasters! In these wars the United States even made use of the media as instruments of information warfare, war for public opinion. The west frequently talks about the “freedom of exchange of ideas,” but when has it ever seriously tried to introduce ideologies or intellectual systems of value inconsistent with those of the west? Why do so many Americans have such a narrow perspective, with such a startling degree of ignorance toward anything beyond themselves? Could this be the result of a long-term blockade on ideas and a policy of keeping the people stupid?

Socialist ideology reflects the basic interests of the broadest mass of the people, so it has never tried to hide its political standpoint and perspective. In news publications,

television broadcasting, culture and art, and other means of cultural propagation it demands emphasis on the Party nature (党性—“*partinost*”). The principle of Party nature is the basic principle of ideological work and also the core of management in the sphere of ideology.

There are three main things about Party nature. The first is to uphold Party leadership. In thought, we must uphold the guiding position of Marxism; in politics, we must adhere to the direction of serving the people and serving society, maintaining a high degree of consistency with the Party Center; organizationally, we must insure that the leadership over all propaganda and cultural institutions at all levels remain in the hands of those who are loyal to the Party and to the people. Second, we must maintain a high degree of consistency between responsibility to the Party and responsibility to the people. The third is to uphold Party propaganda discipline. In propaganda and cultural work it is not only necessary to act in accordance with the constitution, the laws, and the administrative regulations of the various relevant departments of state, but also to observe Party discipline, including the concrete demands of work and the items on the agenda. Without discipline leadership power and management power will come to nothing.

Right now the influence of the internet is increasing all the time. At its root it is beneficial and constructive to provide an environment for a relatively free exchange of opinion on the internet, providing a complement to mainstream public opinion. But rumors proliferate on the internet; there is irresponsible defiance of authority; the internet is used to stir up trouble; its interstices are filled with confusion and filth. All of this seriously damages its constructive nature. How can it be proper not to manage it?

Regulating the chaos of the internet by means of law and by bringing light to its interstices is connected with ideological struggle in the field of ideology, with consolidating the great mainstream of public opinion, with the great task of reform and stable development of the state. It is a great thing that cannot be left undone.

The management of the ideological sphere has its complexities and peculiarities. We cannot be too sharp in managing the proper, reasonable, good-willed criticism and supervision that comes from the masses. We welcome it; we should be happy about it, certainly not repress it. Not only should we welcome it, but we should sincerely listen to it and make the proper corrections. On scholarly matters we must promote democracy and equality in debate, persuading people through reason. There are no forbidden zones in research or the kind of discipline imposed on propaganda. When we recognize problems in thinking we should seek truth from facts, adhere to reason, strengthen proper propaganda, applying leadership that actually addresses the issues. On major political principles and questions of truth and falsity, our banner must be clear in what we must support and what we must oppose; we need to have a firm attitude. The Party must manage the media, manage the direction of guidance, manage the rank and file, manage the cadres, manage the proper division of labor between superior and subordinate organizations, allowing the mainstream of thought and public opinion entrench itself in the ideology camp.

Win the Power of Initiative in the Use of Words

To do a good job in ideological work the power over deciding wording is highly important. We ourselves are constantly drawing conclusions concerning China's path to development; but there are also those who have other types of explanation and critiques

and who spare no effort in struggling with our Party for the power to decide on wording and for the ability to exert influence. In these past few years the thought and theory field has been very noisy and lively and several topics have been the subject of great debates. It is not a bad thing to have debates: in the course of the argument the truth becomes ever more clear. The main thing is to keep a firm grip on the power over wording.

Right now, there is much international affirmation of China's success in economic development. When the leaders of other countries meet with our leaders they all express admiration for our achievements. At the same time, more and more people have begun to affirm our country's governing system and governing capacity: and this the topic the west holds to be most taboo. When New China was first set up, some in the west made a prediction: The CPC was pretty good at revolution but not so good at construction; and they waited to see how ridiculous we could make ourselves. Since reform and opening China's rate of economic development speeded up and some people in the world became very sarcastic. When things went well they talked about a "China threat." When there was trouble they talked about "China's collapse" : on and on and on and on. Over the past 30 years we have gone through many storms. Not only have we survived, but after each tempest we have come out better, in bright contrast to the chaos that has overtaken so many other countries. Practice proves that we have been successful in walking a road to development different from that of the west and that we have set up a successful institutional system different from that of the west. We are a factual refutation of the thesis of an "end to history" and have shown the bankruptcy of the thesis that the western way is the only way to national development.

Indeed, is there anything in the whole wide world that could be considered a “universal value” or an “ultimate model”? Some people underestimate the excellence, flexibility, vitality, and potential of the socialist system with Chinese characteristics. Alternatively, they do see it and acknowledge it in their minds, but for ideological reasons will not openly admit it for anything in the world. The most typical premises in the west are liberty, democracy, and human rights. They have been talking about these for one or two centuries and are still talking about them. But these concepts or terms do not actually mean anything, but rather have been means of defining and monopolizing the terms of the international discourse over the past one or two hundred years.

It is worthy of alarm that under the influence of western domination of discourse and mistaken tides of thought, there have developed biases and deficiencies in the understanding of certain people inside the country. Blindly following the wind, they consciously or unconsciously evaluate what goes on inside the country according to western ideological standards. The huge success of reform and opening and our victories over natural disasters should clearly show the people of our country, under the leadership of the CPC, the excellence of the socialist system. But they are treated as “universal values,” with “universal” taking precedence over “special.” Similarly, social problems and social phenomena such as mass resistance incidents^{**} in China are treated as “defects of the system.” Similar events in the west are regarded as normal or even as expressions of freedom, democracy, and human rights. That is the reason for the manifestation of “social crisis.” Some people even trace filth and corruption to the system. There are even those who can’t see how things in China today are better than they ever have been before

^{**} That is, riots, popular protest.

and worry about China's future, believing that China's only hope is to adopt western "constitutional democracy." Could anything be more confused and stupid!

You alone are able to tell whether your shoes fit you or not. It is only the Chinese people themselves who have the right to say whether China's path of development is correct or not. What kind of model should govern China's 1.3 billion people, its 56 ethnicities, its 9.6 million square kilometers? The problem is that even though our practice since reform and opening has been brilliant and successful, in drawing conclusions we have not put enough effort into making our propaganda convincing; talk is not as good as action. The theme of the patriotic China dream is to bring about the revival of the country through the true patriotism and cohesiveness of the great mass of the people. But this is not enough. We must adhere to and develop socialism with Chinese characteristics. We must build a system of discourse that is Chinese in character, Chinese in style, Chinese in atmosphere, that is attractive, persuasive, and cohesive. We must make an effort to combine new concepts, models, ways of expression from China and abroad, putting them to use in understanding China's basic condition, its concepts of value, its path to development, its foreign and domestic policies forming a "mass discourse" on a system of socialism with Chinese characteristics, a "China discourse" on socialist ideology. We must consolidate the struggle of the Party and the people to achieve a common ideological basis and seize the initiative in the struggle for ideological formation.

Qiushi, April 1 2014