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The Education of Historical View of People in the Teaching of the *Outline of Chinese Modern History*

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Abstract

Marxist historical materialism scientifically reveals the law of the development of history, while historical view of people is the key content of historical materialism. To solve the problems existing in college students' conceptions of history and all kinds of erroneous ideas derived therefrom, it is necessary to implement and emphasize the historical view of people throughout the teaching of the Outline of Chinese Modern History. Based on the discussion of the formation and development of the historical view of people, this paper emphatically analyzes the value of the historical view of people in the teaching of the Outline of Chinese Modern History, and finally discusses the specific strategies for the historical view of people education in this course.

Keywords

Historical View of People, Teaching of the Outline of Chinese Modern History, Ideological and Political Education For College Students

1. Introduction

General Secretary Xi Jinping pointed out that “history is created by the people, and heroic people create heroic history”. We should remember the martyrs and honor the heroes. Since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, General Secretary Xi Jinping has expressed his reverence for heroes at different times and on different occasions, and called on the whole society to advocate, defend, learn from and care for heroes. Marxist historical materialism scientifically reveals the law of the development of history, while historical view of people is the key content of historical materialism. College students are the most important youth group in our society. The ideological quality of college students can directly reflect the overall quality of young people in China. To carry out ideological education for college students, it is necessary to pay attention to the ideological and political curriculum. The conception of history is an important part of college students' ideological conceptions.

It is conducive to college students to form correct values by cultivating students' correct historical views. Using the course *Outline of Chinese Modern History* to help college students establish the standpoint of historical view of people is helpful to deepen their understanding of modern Chinese history and enable college students to face up to the role of the people in the historical development, the historical significance of the CPC for the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation, and the great significance of the socialist system and Marxist theory for the development of China's modernization.

2. Formation and Development of Historical View of People

Although the concept of "historical view of people" is not directly found in the works of Marx and Engels, its formation is directly related to Marx and Engels. In Marx's theoretical system, historical materialism and humanism are two inseparable parts. In *The German Ideology*, Marx expounded the basic principles of historical materialism from the standpoint of humanism. Marx regards "realistic individual" as the basic element of historical activities, which produces social relations from the satisfaction of life needs of "realistic individual", the production of material goods and the reproduction of human beings, and then further generates consciousness. In *The Holy Family*, he pointed out: "The masses have given history its 'task' and 'business'" (Complete works of Marx and Engels, Vol. 2, p. 101, 2016). "Historical activities are the cause of the masses and with the deepening of historical activities, the masses will expand" (Complete works of Marx and Engels, Vol. 2, p. 101, 2016). These arguments, for the first time, have theoretically evaluated the historical status of the people and laid a solid foundation for the formation of the historical view of people. It can be said that Marx's historical materialism and humanism theory laid the foundation for the formation of the historical view of people. Marx's practice of analyzing the history of human society from the "realistic individual" was inherited by later Marxists and permeated in the historical view of later Marxism. For example, Lenin pointed out in *The Proletariat Struggles while the Bourgeois Steals Political Power*: "Workers and peasants have created all the wealth for the bourgeoisie with their own labor" (The Complete Works of Lenin, Vol. 11, p. 149, 2014). Lenin regarded workers and peasants as the creators of all the wealth of the bourgeoisie, and the creation of all wealth is the creation of history. Even if Lenin did not explicitly use the concept of "historical view of people", the essence of this assertion is the essence of the "historical view of people". After that, Mao Zedong further developed the connotations of the historical view of people in the article *Talking about the coalition government*. "The people, only the people, are the driving forces for the creation of world history" (Selected Works of Mao Zedong, Vol. 3, p. 1031, 1991). To regard the people as the motive force to create world history is the core idea of historical view of people.

Since the 1960s, in the process of exploring the social and historical motive force, the academic circles of our country have gradually formed the category of "historical view of people", which is still in use today. Historical view of people regards the people as the motive force of historical development and is diametrically opposed to the "historical view of heroes" which emphasizes that heroes and elites push

forward the development of history.

In the new era, General Secretary Xi Jinping further proposed the development ideology centered on the people on the basis of inheriting Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought. At the Third Plenary Session of the 18th CPC Central Committee, General Secretary Xi Jinping stressed that “We should take the promotion of the well-being of the people and the all-round development of human beings as the starting point and the foothold of development” (Xi, 2014). General Secretary Xi Jinping’s emphasis on people-centered development lies in his profound and unique understanding of the historical view of people. At the conference marking the 200th anniversary of Marx’s birth, he emphasized: “To learn from Marx, we must learn and practice Marxist thoughts on adhering to the people’s position” (Xi, 2018).

Historical view is an important part of values. Only by establishing a correct historical view can we truly understand the truth of historical events, objectively evaluate the merits and demerits of historical figures, face up to the history of a country and a nation, and face up to the significance of a party to the development of a country. On March 23, 2013, General Secretary Xi Jinping mentioned in his speech at Moscow Institute of International Relations that: “History always develops according to its own laws, and there is no force to block the wheels of history” (Xi, 2013).

3. The Important Value of the Historical View of People Education in the Teaching of the *Outline of Chinese Modern History*

With the rapid development of science and technology and the widespread popularity of network information, obtaining information and learning knowledge through the Internet has become an important lifestyle for college students. However, due to the lack of social experience and lack of knowledge reserves, college students are not mature enough in mentality and their values are not stable enough. Therefore, some college students are easily affected by various wrong historical concepts, and thus cannot objectively view the historical position of the people in modern Chinese history. In particular, they cannot correctly view the CPC, Marxism, the socialist system and the path of socialism with Chinese characteristics.

The education of the historical view of people in the *Outline of Chinese Modern History* (hereinafter referred to as *Outline of History*) can cultivate the correct historical views of college students, and resist idealistic heroic conception of history, historical nihilism and other erroneous conceptions of history. Historical view of heroes unilaterally exaggerates the role of historical figures in the development of history and completely obliterates the great role of the masses in creating material and spiritual wealth. However, it is the objective law of historical development that people create history. Excessive worship of historical figures will lead to the elimination of the people’s dominant position in historical creation. The education of historical view of people for college students can help them understand the objective law of historical development and make them respect the historical position of the people. Historic nihilism is a view of history which has exerted extensive influence on the network

and academia in recent years. In essence, historical nihilism and historical materialism are opposed to each other and it is a non-historical attitude. Judging from the performance of historical nihilism, some scholars use the methods of “restoring history” and “re-evaluating history” to doubt historical facts, distort historical figures, reverse right and wrong, desecrate history by entertainment, blur national memory, and dissect history with frivolous attitude. For example, they smear the development history of the CPC, beautify the achievements of the Kuomintang and distort the history of the People’s Republic of China. Once historical nihilism is popular among college students, college students will not be able to face up to history and cannot treat the changes of modern China with an objective attitude. In the teaching process of the *Outline of History*, if the analysis of the historical view of people is not thorough enough and the criticism of the wrong heroism and idealistic view of history is not thorough enough, it will be difficult for students to form a correct view of history.

The modern history of China is a historical process in which the people choose the CPC and the CPC led the people to carry out democratic revolution and build a new China. Whether they can treat the modern history with a scientific attitude is related to how college students understand the political status of contemporary China and the political status of the CPC. It is not the decision of the CPC or the decision of foreign forces that the CPC can become the ruling party. It is the choice made by the overwhelming majority of the Chinese people under special historical conditions. The choice of the people is the choice of history; the people’s choice is the right choice. If we do not start from the historical view of people, we will not be able to understand the political changes of modern China in depth and accurately. During the teaching process of the *Outline of History*, if the historical view of people is not combined with the historical reasons why the CPC became the ruling party and China chose the socialist system, there will be some deviation in students’ political view.

4. Strategies of Historical View of People Education in the Teaching of the *Outline of History*

The development of the education of the historical view of people in the teaching of the *Outline of History* needs to be considered from three dimensions. The first dimension is historical events, the second dimension is political party changes, and the third dimension is institutional changes. Historical events are the basic knowledge of this course. Only through the success or failure of historical events can we learn the basic role of the people. Political parties are important factors that affect historical events. Only through changes in political parties can we understand the trend of popular sentiment. Institutional changes are the result of the people’s choice. Only through institutional changes can we understand the real needs of the people.

4.1 Interpretation of the Success or Failure of Historical Events from the Perspective of Historical View of People—Taking the Failure of the Old Democratic Revolution as an Example

The teaching of the *Outline of History* requires the combination of history and theory, so how to discuss the “history” that has taken place has become an important symbol to test teachers’ teaching level. The interpretation of historical events based on the historical view of people reflects the respect for the

people. Only when the people can truly participate in historical events can the leadership of historical figures be revealed, otherwise any historical events will be difficult to develop.

In modern China, in the face of the massive invasion of Western powers and the brutal oppression of feudalism, the social revolution is an inevitable historical trend. However, the success of the revolution and the success of overthrowing the oppression of imperialism and feudalism depend on whether the leaders of the revolution can mobilize the masses. The failure of the Taiping Rebellion, the failure of the Westernization Movement, the failure of the Reform Movement of 1898 and the failure of the Revolution of 1911 are not only because the leaders of these movements and revolutions did not adopt the correct revolutionary program, but more importantly because the people did not really participate in these historical events. For example, during the Reform Movement of 1898, the bourgeoisie only mobilized intellectuals and some bureaucrat-literati. Once confronted with the repression of the opposition, the reform had to declare bankruptcy without the support the masses. Another example is that because of the lack of mass base, the foundation of the Revolution of 1911 was extremely weak, so Yuan Shikai stole the fruits of the revolution, leading China into a dark period of warlord infighting. It can be seen that the old democratic revolution led by the bourgeoisie failed either because it feared the people and did not dare to mobilize them, or failed because it could not fully mobilize the people. Using the historical view of people to interpret these historical events for college students enables them to understand the great influence of the people on the success or failure of historical events more clearly.

4.2 Analyzing the Rise and Fall of Ruling Parties by Historical View of People—Taking the Historical Development of KMT and CPC as an Example

The political nature of the teaching of the *Outline of History* is mainly reflected in the explanation and analysis of historical facts, so that college students can truly realize that it is the people's choice and historical necessity for the CPC to become the ruling party. Behind the rise and fall of political parties, there is a most important clue—the “people”.

The first historical task of modern China is to strive for national independence and the liberation of the people. The realization of this task requires both the participation of the people and the strong leadership of the political party as the core of leadership. Only political parties that respect and rely on the masses can win the support of the masses and lead the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation onto the road of great rejuvenation. The reason why the CPC has been able to gradually grow from the initial team of more than 50 people to a stronger one is that the CPC has received the support from the overwhelming majority of the Chinese people. The reason why the Kuomintang, with its superior forces and weapons, has turned from prosperity to decline is that it has lost the support of the people. For example, the CPC established the mass line as the party's working line at the Second National Congress just one year after its establishment. It launched the masses of workers and peasants freely, established a revolutionary united front, and quickly created a new situation in the Chinese revolution. After that, in the period of the Agrarian Revolution and the Anti-Japanese War, they were able to rely

on the people, mobilize the people, and finally won the victory of the Liberation War and established the People's Republic of China. After the establishment of the Nanjing Kuomintang Government in 1927, the Kuomintang implemented a military dictatorship that represented the big bourgeoisie. In order to control the people, the Bao-Jia system was carried out, and the freedom of speech and publication was restricted in order to control public opinions, which seriously harmed the interests of the people. After the victory of the Anti-Japanese War, the Kuomintang, with the support of the United States, launched a war against the people and intensified its oppression of the people. In the Liberation War, the Kuomintang troops took an absolute advantage, but the CPC got the full support of the masses. The Huaihai Campaign was called "victory by the people's trolley" by the Marshal Chen Yi. Finally, the victory of the three campaigns destroyed the elite power of the Kuomintang and laid the foundation for the victory of the Liberation War in the whole country. In the end, the Kuomintang lost the support of the people and retreated to Taiwan. It can be said that only when college students can understand that the people are the selectors of the ruling party, they can have a deeper understanding of the ruling status of the CPC.

4.3 Grasping the Process of Social Change by Historical View of People—Taking the Change of Social System as an Example

Among the many factors that promote social change, the people are the most central factor. In the teaching of the *Outline of History*, teachers should not only explain to students the specific nodes of the social system in modern China, but also explain to the students the living conditions of the masses under different social systems, and analyze why modern China did not choose the capitalist road, but chose the socialist road.

From 1840 to 1956, in the short span of one hundred years, the system of Chinese society had undergone several changes, and finally the socialist system has been chosen. The reason for this situation lies in the fact that the feudal autocratic monarchy, warlord despotism, Kuomintang autocratic rule and bourgeois reform are not in line with the fundamental interests of the Chinese people. In Chinese society, farmers occupy the overwhelming majority, and the interests of farmers represent the interests of the masses. Autocratic system and dictatorship cannot meet the needs of the peasants for land, so peasants will not support it. The socialist system can protect the people's basic needs and fundamental interests, thus becoming a system supported by the people. The people are the most impartial judges of the social system. The unreasonable social system does not meet the interests and needs of the people, and cannot escape the fate of being abandoned by the people. During the teaching process, teachers should lead college students to explore the changes of social system from the perspective of historical view of people, that is, to take the interests of the people as the starting point to measure whether different social systems can meet the needs of the people.

5. Conclusion

“The true color of a hero is revealed by the wind sea crosscurrent”. Only by helping college students resist all kinds of wrong historical concepts and establish a scientific historical view of people based on materialist historical view philosophy can they increase their support for the CPC and the socialist system. To support the CPC and the socialist system is to respect the people’s dominant position in history. As pointed out by General Secretary Xi Jinping, “the Chinese nation has formed extensive and profound traditional culture for thousands of years, the revolutionary culture and advanced socialist culture forged by our party in the process of revolution, construction and reform have provided profound strength for the construction of ideological and political courses” (Xi, 2019). The education of historical view of people in the teaching of the *Outline of Chinese Modern History* enables college students to truly feel the impetus of the masses to the development of history, and it is of positive significance to the cultivation of contemporary college students’ historical views and the shaping of political views.

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