

An Exploration on Deng Xiaoping's Thought of Close Ties With the People During His Administration in Southwest China

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Supported by Southwest University Research Center of Clean Government Construction Project "a Research on Clean Government Construction in the New Media Environment" (13SWUDJJD04); Southwest University 2014 Central University Basic Research Project "a Research on the Construction of Purity of the Communist Party of China in Yan'an period" (SWU1409192).

Received 16 May 2015; accepted 8 August 2015

Published online 26 September 2015

Abstract

From November 1949 to July 1952, Deng Xiaoping presided over Southwest China as the first secretary of the Southwest Bureau of CPC Central Committee. During this period, he proposed the judgment that "close ties with the people is the life of our party", stressing that close ties with the people must establish a Marxist view of people and uphold the party's fundamental purpose; adhere to realize, safeguard and develop the interests of the people; play the roles of people's congress, people's organization, party newspapers and journals to tie with the masses; reform the bad style and tendency of being isolated from the people by rectification. These ideas are Deng Xiaoping's preliminary summary of CPC's ruling law during his administration in Southwest China, and have an important reference for doing the party's mass work in the new situation.

Key words: Deng Xiaoping; preside over Southwest China; relationship between CPC and the people; thought

Wu, G. H. (2015). An Exploration on Deng Xiaoping's Thought of Close Ties With the People During His Administration in Southwest China. *Canadian Social Science*, 11(9), 95-99. Available from: <http://www.cscanada.net/index.php/css/article/view/7536> DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.3968/7536>

INTRODUCTION

From November 1949 to July 1952, Deng Xiaoping presided over Southwest China as the first secretary of the Southwest Bureau of CPC Central Committee. During this period, in order to consolidate the new people's democratic regime, rehabilitate and develop social production and improve people's lives, based on the actual situation in the southwestern region, he required to carefully implement the lines, principles and policies of CPC central committee and maintain the flesh-and-blood ties with the people. Under the new historical conditions, a systematic analysis on Deng Xiaoping's thought of close ties with the people has an important practical significance to improve the scientific level of the party's mass work.

1. ESTABLISH A MARXIST MASS VIEWPOINT AND UPHOLD THE PARTY'S FUNDAMENTAL PURPOSE

In the early foundation of New China, based on the specific conditions of Southwest China, Deng Xiaoping stressed the view that close ties with the masses must keep to the Marxist view of the masses, and uphold the Party's purpose of serving the people wholeheartedly. This lays a solid ideological foundation for promoting the smooth development of various tasks in the southwest region.

The first is to establish a Marxist view of the masses. In the early liberation of Southwest China, facing the great victory of the revolution, some comrades produced a misconception that "the first is me, and the second is the masses". In order to correct this misconception, on July 1, 1950 Deng Xiaoping pointed out at the conference to commemorate the 29th anniversary of the founding of CPC held by CPC Central Committee Southwest Bureau and Southwest Military Region that, some party members made bureaucratic and authoritarian errors, and the reason was that they went against the Marxist view of the masses

and did not know that people were the decisive force of social changes. Therefore, to maintain the Party's close ties with the masses, we must firmly uphold the idea that for the people, believe the people, unite the people and respect the people. On June 25, 1951, he reiterated on the "July 1st" memorial conference held by CPC Central Committee Southwest Bureau that: we should maintain the flesh-and-blood ties with the people.

Every party member must carefully listen to the voices of the people, understand their urgent needs, and help them organize to struggle for their needs. Every party member must resolve to learn from the people, and educate the people tirelessly with revolutionary spirit, inspire and improve the people's consciousness.

"This is a principle which every party member must observe to contact with the masses, and is an important criterion to measure the quality of party members." (*Corpus of Deng Xiaoping During His Work in Southwest China*, 2006, p. p.397) In the opinion of Deng Xiaoping, the view of the masses is the most significant symbol differentiating the proletarian party from other parties, and is the touchstone to test and measure the quality of party members. Therefore, to truly keep close ties with the masses we must firmly keep to the Marxist view of the masses.

II. Adhere to the Party's purpose of serving the people wholeheartedly. In the early liberation of Southwest China, with the end of large-scale wars, some party members held that the revolution has triumphed and it's time to enjoy life, pleasure-seeking began to emerge among them. In view of this situation, as early as on September 20, 1949, Deng Xiaoping pointed out at the meeting of second field army and battalion level cadres who were going to work in the southwest region that, the outstanding problem in the Southwest region was the heavy tasks but less cadres. How to overcome this difficulty? The specific method is to closely contact with the masses. However, in order to achieve this, "we should pay close attention, especially the military cadres, to work with the attitude of serving the people." (Ibid., p.8) On September 7, 1950 he also said at the southwest military region first combat hero and model worker representative conference that, tens of thousands of combat heroes and model workers played a positive role in consolidating the people's new democratic regime in not only speech but also action.

Their noble qualities are reflected in being consistently faithful to the cause of people, even at the cost of their lives. They're prepared to contribute their lives, so they are bound to place the interests of the revolution above all else, and consider no personal interests. (Ibid., pp.234-235)

Therefore, party members must adhere to learning from all combat heroes and model workers, learning their noble spirit of serving the people wholeheartedly. According to Deng Xiaoping, upholding the Party's purpose of serving the people wholeheartedly is the fundamental symbol differentiating the communists from all other exploiting classes. To keep close ties with the masses, party members

and cadres must conscientiously study Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought, and set up the idea of serving the people wholeheartedly.

2. ADHERE TO REALIZING, SAFEGUARDING AND DEVELOPING THE INTERESTS OF THE MASSES

In the early liberation of the southwest region, in order to maintain a close relationship between the Party and the people, Deng Xiaoping required party members and cadres to realize, safeguard and develop the interests of the people, so as to lay a solid base for promoting a healthy development of various works in Southwest China.

First of all, realize the most direct and practical interests of the people. In the early liberation of the southwest region, due to the war and reactionary ruling of Kuomintang, production declined, market fell into turmoil, prices soared, unemployment increased and people lived in hardship. In view of this situation, on July 31, 1950 Deng Xiaoping said at the first plenary committee of southwest military and political commission that, after the liberation of the southwest region, in order to obtain the support of the peasants who accounted for more than 80% of the total population, "People's government should firmly support the reasonable demands of the peasants in rent reduction, hegemony opposition, surrender of tenancy and land reform." (Ibid., p.218) On December 21, he attended the CPC central committee southwest bureau urban work conference and stressed that, doing a good job of urban work must wholeheartedly rely on the working class. How to rely on it? We should "care for all aspects of the working class with a high degree of enthusiasm, care for them in the political, cultural, life and material aspects, do not ignore any 'little thing' of workers." (*Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping [Vol. I]*, 1994, p.175) Deng Xiaoping emphasized to maintain close ties to the people to safeguard their real interests, which undoubtedly identifies the key to expand the Party's people foundation, and plays an important role in uniting the broad masses to build a new southwest region.

Second, correctly handle the current interests and long-term interests of the people. In the early liberation of the southwest region, some comrades thought that the Communist Party of China was the vanguard of the working class, whose foundation was the working class. Therefore, only increasing the wage of workers could be consistent with the interests of the working class, and could be considered as upholding the Party's view of the masses. On January 29, 1950, for some people's opinion that CPC was the political party of the working class, and the policy of "benefiting both employers and employees" would serve only the interests of employees and disregard the interests of employers, Deng Xiaoping said at Chongqing City first session of people's congress, "Yes,

we are the political party of the working class, this is absolutely true. Just because we are the political party of the working class, we should combine the current interests and long-term interests of the working class, and manifest them into the policy of benefitting both employees and employers.” (*Corpus of Deng Xiaoping During His Work in Southwest China*, 2006, p.80) On March 29, 1951, he reiterated at Chongqing City first union member representative conference, “To achieve the leadership, the union needs to educate workers, and make them recognize the long-term interests of the working class. If the union ignores the workers’ current interests, or ignores the problem which could be resolved, it is not correct.” (Ibid., p.362) In Deng Xiaoping’s view, current interests and long-term interests of the people are a dialectical unity and can complement each other. To correctly handle the relationship between the two, we should achieve the current interests of the people and safeguard the long-term interests of the people, and try to find the best balance.

In addition, implement the policy of safeguarding people’s legitimate rights and interests. The party’s principles and policies are the concentrated expression of the people’s interests and will. Conscientiously implementing the Party’s policies is an important way to closely contact with the masses. On May 2, 1950, regarding the phenomenon that some Party members set task completion against policy implementation, he sharply criticized at the southwest military region senior official meeting that, if a policy was not properly performed, the Party’s cause and people’s interests would be damaged. Therefore, in order to promote the Party and people’s cause to move forward, we must “propaganda policy to comrades to make everyone a model of implementing policy.” (Ibid., p.79). On November 28, he attended the meeting with the southwest ethnic delegation who returned from the celebration for the anniversary of founding of People’s Republic of China in Beijing and said that, land reform in minority nationality regions must be strictly implemented according to the Party’s policy, “must be resolved based on the discussions with ethnic minorities”, “to distinguish whether it’s a requirement of a few people or most people.” (Ibid., p.135) Otherwise, we would be isolated from the mass and damage the interests of the masses. Under this guidance, Party members and cadres implemented the Party’s principles and policies by integrating the interests of the masses, which greatly promoted the development of various works in the southwest region.

3. PLAY THE ROLE OF PEOPLE’S CONGRESS, PEOPLE ORGANIZATIONS, PARTY’S NEWSPAPERS AND JOURNALS TO CONTACT WITH THE PEOPLE

Deng Xiaoping pointed out during his administration in Southwest China that, people’s congress, people’s

organizations and Party’s newspapers and journals were the important ways to contact with the people. To unite, educate the people and solve their practical problems, we must be able to play the role of people’s congress, people’s organizations and Party’s newspapers and journals to contact with the people.

Firstly, people’s congress is the main channel of contact with the masses. On July 31, 1949, CPC Central Committee issued *Instruction to Promptly Hold Conference of Representatives from Various Sectors of Society and People’s Congress* to central bureaus and branches, requiring that “within two or at most three months after the liberation, cities with more than thirty thousand population should promptly hold a conference of representatives from various sectors. This is an important method for the Party and government to maintain close ties with the people.” (*Selected Important Documents Since the Foundation of CPC [Vol. XXVI]*, 2009, p.610) In order to implement the spirit of the instruction, on September 20 Deng Xiaoping made a mobilization report to southwest service corps for marching into the southwest, requiring that people’s congress was the best way to contact with the people, and all regions which implemented this system have received good results. Thus, large and medium cities with more than twenty thousand populations must hold people’s congress in a timely manner, and play its role of maintaining ties with the people. On March 6, 1950, regarding the case that among 196 representatives in a county conference, there were 133 peasant representatives, 19 worker representatives, and government representatives for the half of the remaining 44 quotas, he criticized at the enlarged meeting of CPC East Sichuan committee that, this conference could not be called as representatives of the people from all walks of life, but peasants’ conference only, which certainly could not unite the masses and differentiate the enemy. Therefore, he required the southwest region not only to pay attention to the form of democracy, but also attaches importance to the essence of democracy, fully reflect the representativeness, advanced-nature, and extensiveness of people representatives. On March 29, 1951, he held Chongqing City first labor union representative assembly and said, this meeting was of great significance to help keep close ties with the masses, and should be held regularly. But at the conference, “leadership does not necessarily have to make a report. As long as we can solve one problem each time, we will not be divorced from the masses.” (*Corpus of Deng Xiaoping During His Work in Southwest China*, 2006, p.363) When constructed Southwest China people’s congress system, Deng Xiaoping creatively combined implementing the Party’s policy with resolving specific issues, paid attention to identify, study and solve problems, and gave full play to the role of people’s congress to contact with the masses.

Secondly, mass organization is an important bridge to contact with the masses. In the early days

after the liberation of Southwest China, due to the underdevelopment of mass organization, its role of contacting with the masses was not played appropriately. In view of this situation, on August 24, 1950, he reiterated in the telegraph to the southwest region and CPC central committee that, although peasants' associations had been established, there were many problems which seriously affected their ties with the masses. To play their roles, we must rectify Party organizations at all levels. At the same time, Deng Xiaoping also attached great importance to the role of labor union to contact with the masses. On December 21, regarding the phenomena that the number of workers who joined labor union accounted for only 19% to 20% of the total and less labor unions were truly in contact with workers, he required at CPC central committee southwest city work conference that,

resolutely attract worker activists in local places and local factories into the leading organs of labor union at all levels, so as to strengthen the tie between labor union and workers, and change the current situation of being separating from the masses.

“Labor union must fully listen to the opinions and suggestions of workers, and make careful and proper treatments.” (Ibid., p.94). According to Deng Xiaoping, mass organization is the social organization to contact with masses and represent the interests of masses under the leadership of the Party. This nature determines that mass organization is the bond and bridge between the Party, the government and the masses.

Thirdly, Party's newspapers and journals are a sharp weapon to contact with the masses. The Party's newspapers and journals are the “mouthpiece” of the Party and the people, which determine its sacred mission of speaking for the people. Deng Xiaoping also had an in-depth thinking about the role of Party's newspapers and journals to contact with the masses during his administration in the Southwest China. On May 10, 1950 he pointed out at Southwest China press conference held by Southwest China Military and Political Committee that, “newspaper is the best tool which has been used by government most extensively and contacts with the people most directly” (*Chronicle of Deng Xiaoping [1904-1974][Part III]*, 2009, p.911). Therefore, leading cadres must attach great importance to making good use of “the weapon”, otherwise we would be isolated from the masses and make mistakes. On May 16, he reiterated at Southwest China press conference that, newspaper was the sharp weapon for the Party and government to contact with the masses. Only when newspaper fully reflected the interests and wills of the masses, and “spread the voices of the party and government to masses from all sectors” (*Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping [Vol. I]*, 1994, p.150), we could truly achieve close ties with the masses. On May 1, 1951 he wrote an inscription for the first issue of *East Sichuan*, “Newspaper should truly become the tool to strengthen

leadership and ties with the masses.”¹ According to Deng Xiaoping, people is the essential attribute of the Party's newspapers and journals. Therefore, only when the Party's newspapers and journals truly defend the interests of people and keep in close contact with people, they can continue to develop with new vitality.

4. CORRECT THE PARTY'S BAD STYLE AND TENDENCY OF SEPARATING FROM THE MASSES BY RECTIFICATION

Based on the actual situation of the Party members' work style, Deng Xiaoping emphasized to correct the Party's bad style and tendency of separating from the masses, and promote the Party's work style to a new level.

Firstly, strengthen education. In the early days after the liberation of Southwest China, faced with the great success of the revolution, some party members became conceited, rejected learning and produced a bad style of separating from the masses. In view of this situation, on June 6, 1950, Deng Xiaoping pointed out at CPC Chongqing second representative's meeting that, the essence of bureaucracy, authoritarianism, close-door work style and hedonism was being isolated from reality and the masses. The reason of the occurrence of these erroneous tendencies in the past was “because some comrades did not pay attention to learning, fell into routinism, and stopped absorbing new nutrition.” “Learning allows us to look ahead and clarify confused thinking.” (*Corpus of Deng Xiaoping During His Work in Southwest China*, 2006, p.171). Therefore, Party members must attach great importance to learn. Party organizations at all levels should establish a study system conscientiously. On July 1, he reiterated at the conference to commemorate the 29th anniversary of the founding of CPC held by CPC central committee southwest bureau and southwest military region that, the reason that some comrades committed bureaucracy, authoritarianism and close-door work style was that they only trusted their own narrow experience and did not attach importance to study the Party's policies and government's decrees. They just trusted individual skills, and did not trust the power of the masses. In order to correct these errors, we must strive to learn Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought, and strive to learn the Party's policies and government's decrees. Deng Xiaoping said that strengthening learning and education was an effective way to correct the wrong tendency of separating from the masses, and played a crucial role in maintaining the work style purity of the Party organizations in the southwest region.

Secondly, carry out criticism and self-criticism. Criticism and self-criticism are one of the three fine styles of the Party, and are significant symbols differentiating the proletarian party from other political parties. In the

¹ *East Sichuan*, May 1, 1951 (1st ed.).

early days after southwest region liberation, faced with the great victory achieved in the revolution, some Party members had a tendency of insolence, bureaucracy and commandism. In order to overcome these serious problems of work style, on May 11, 1950, Deng Xiaoping telegraphed to CPC Central Committee to report the spring production in the southwest region and rectification to cadres. He pointed out that we must actively carry out rectification as per the requirement of CPC Central Committee, and the main method was to keep in line with practice, and conduct criticism and self-criticism by inspection. On June 6, he reiterated at CPC Chongqing second representative's meeting that, the rectification should emphasize enlightenment and guidance, and carry out careful examination, criticism and self-criticism. On July 1, he wrote an inscription for the 29th anniversary of the foundation of CPC, "Communists should grasp the weapon of criticism and self-criticism, overcome bureaucracy, authoritarianism and close-door work style in the united front, and maintain close ties with the masses to complete tasks and move forward bravely."² According to Deng Xiaoping, criticism and self-criticism are a sharp weapon for the proletarian party to achieve self-purification and self-improvement. Only when we make good use of the weapon of criticism and self-criticism and endeavor to correct the problem of separating from the masses, we can maintain the Party's advanced nature, purity, and combat capacity.

Thirdly, make the Party's disciplines strict. In the early days after the liberation of southwest region, faced by the great victory of the revolution, some comrades produced the problems of bureaucracy, authoritarianism and close-door work style, leaving the Party at the danger of being isolated from the masses. In view of this situation, on January 12, 1950, Deng Xiaoping said in the telegraph to southwest military regions, Party committees and corps that, in order to correct the error of being isolated from the masses, we must promptly "establish the Party's discipline inspection commissions at different levels to enable them to fulfill their duties." (*Corpus of Deng Xiaoping During His Work in Southwest China*, 2006, p.64). On January 17, he reiterated at the second field army third corps regimental cadres' meeting that, in order to correct the bad style of being isolated from the masses, Party organizations at all levels in the southwest region

must strengthen disciplinary regulations to facilitate the completion of new tasks. On June 6, he pointed out at CPC central committee Chongqing second representative meeting that, "The Party's discipline inspection commission and the government's supervisory committee must be established and strengthened, which are an important tool to oppose bureaucracy, authoritarianism, and monitor the Party members to observe laws and disciplines." Deng Xiaoping took the Party's strict discipline as an important means to change work style, and correct the Party's erroneous tendency of being isolated from the masses.

CONCLUSION

Deng Xiaoping put forward the claim that "maintaining close ties with the masses is the life of our party", stressed that maintaining close ties with the masses must establish a Marxist view of the masses and upheld the Party's fundamental purpose; Adhered to realizing, safeguarding and developing the interests of the people; Played the role of people's congress, people's organization and Party's newspaper and journal to contact with the masses; Corrected the Party's bad style and tendency of being isolated from the masses. These thoughts are the preliminary summary of CPC's ruling in the early decades of the founding of New China, and provide valuable experience for properly implementing the Party's mass work. Under the new situation of implementing the "four comprehensive" strategy, promoting the further development of the Party's mass work will encounter many difficulties and challenges. We must be good at using these valuable experiences to guide the great practice, and continuously improve the quality of maintaining close ties with the masses.

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² *Xinhua Daily* (Chongqing edition). July 1, 1951 (1st ed.).