

A Simple View on Revolution in the New Era*

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How to cite this paper: Fu, W. (2021). A Simple View on Revolution in the New Era. *Advances in Applied Sociology*, 11, 251-261. <https://doi.org/10.4236/aasoci.2021.115022>

Received: April 20, 2021

Accepted: May 18, 2021

Published: May 21, 2021

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Abstract

Revolution has a profound connotation. Revolution has different meanings at different times. Starting from the interpretation of the meaning of revolution, this paper discusses the necessity of self-revolution and social revolution in the new era and the relationship between them, as well as how to promote self-revolution and social revolution from the aspects of theory and practice.

Keywords

Revolution, The New Era, Ideology

1. Introduction

On March 28, 1985, Deng Xiaoping pointed out in his meeting with Nikaidō, the vice President of the Liberal Democratic Party of Japan that the reform is China's second revolution (Deng, 1993). In other words, China's revolution did not stop because it successfully entered the socialist society. The great achievements made by the Communist Party of China in the past 100 years are the results of revolution. Marxist party is a party with revolutionary characteristics. Reform and opening up is still a great revolution.

Now, the key question is how people, especially young people, view the word "revolution". In fact, the ideological and political theory textbooks used by contemporary Chinese college students also reflect the meaning of "revolution" in different historical stages. Especially since the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, the new edition of the textbook has more obviously reflected this feature. However, in daily teaching, this feature is not particularly prominent. This should be closely related to the fact that people do not have a deep understanding of the revolutionary concept in the New Era. In order to

*This paper is the result of Research Program for "13th Five-Year Plan" of Guangdong Province Education Science (Special Project of the 19th National Congress of the CPC 2018JKSJ73), "A study of Xi Jinping's discourse on reform and opening up".

further study the revolutionary view of the new era, we use the key words of “revolutionary view” to retrieve more than 200 papers in CNKI, but less than 10 papers are highly related to this study. The articles of Zhang Jianbiao and Tian Keqin (Zhang & Tian, 2017) clearly pointed out that because of the inconsistent understanding of the concept of revolution, the academic discussion on revolution will continue, and the establishment of a scientific concept of revolution has profound value for promoting socialist modernization. Zhang Dongming (Zhang, 2018) focused on Xi Jinping’s important exposition of revolutionary spirit. The structure of the new revolutionary view is analyzed. We are now in an era of peace and development. What will be the result of the gradual weakening of the revolutionary spirit? Li Ping (Li, 2018) pointed out that the positivism of Marxism in the Second International showed that Karl Kautsky and other theorists adopt positivism and evolutionism attitude towards revolution. It was essentially a manifestation of the passivation of the revolutionary spirit. It weakened the revolutionary spirit and ideological weapon of the Marxist party, and finally affected the practical socialist revolutionary practice.

The word “revolution” in Chinese was first seen in the Book of Changes. It was said that the revolution of heaven and earth resulted in the formation of four seasons, and the Success of Tang Wu Revolution was in accordance with heaven and human (Zhao, 2016). This undoubtedly established the Chinese people’s view on “revolution” to a certain extent. To understand the meaning of “revolution” in the light of the history of Shang and Zhou dynasties, it is inevitable to combine “revolution” with armed violence and regime change. With the gradual generalization of the word “revolution”, the pursuit of the true meaning of revolution is of great significance for learning and understanding the revolutionary concept in the New Era. General Secretary Xi Jinping pointed out, “We must carry out the revolution of socialism with Chinese characteristics in the New Era. Our party must be bold in China’s self-revolution. It will make the Party stronger and more advantageous.” Therefore, in the contemporary Chinese society, the revolution we want to carry out is obviously different from the revolution we thought of in the past. How to understand the self-revolution and social revolution? How to correctly deal with the relationship between the two? How to promote the self-revolution and social revolution? We must deeply explore three issues: What is revolution? Why revolution? How to carry out revolution in the New Era?

2. The Literal Meaning of “Revolution”

2.1. The Origin of the Word “Revolution”

Revolution comes from Latin. Revolution as a noun is related to “revolve” as a Latin verb. At first, revolve means “around”, “return”, “cycle”, etc. And revolution also got the meaning of a kind of rotating action, or a special circular motion, which extended to a complete change under certain conditions. Later, the astronomer Copernicus also used the relevant meaning when naming his book

De Revolutionibus. Since Copernicus' theory overturned the old astronomical theory and gradually became popular, the process of replacing the old tradition with this new idea and new theory was called revolution. Therefore, the word revolution began to refer to the major changes under certain conditions, especially the changes in people's practice and beliefs under certain conditions, which affected a large group of people and even the society. The word revolution penetrated into the field of social politics in the 17th century. The Glorious Revolution of England forced the king to accept the Bill of Rights (an Act Declaring the Rights and Liberties of the Subject and Settling the Succession of the Crown) in 1689, to admit the restriction of the royal power, to end the monarchy of "divine power", to open the era of constitutional monarchy, and to transform the social politics. And the Glorious Revolution also makes the meaning of the word revolution have a new development, that is, it represents the input of new things, and the fundamental and extraordinary changes. After that, the American Revolution War intensified the changes of social and political structure, while the French Revolution further linked the word revolution with the use of violence to seize power by a class (Nie, 2010).

2.2. Maintaining the Integrity of the Specifications

The word "revolution" thus has a strong connection with armed struggle, violent bloodshed and regime change, but it does not mean that the meaning of the word "revolution" is confined to it. Even Marx and Engels, the founders of Marxism, emphasized more than once that the significance of revolution is extensive and the forms of revolution are diverse.

Engels wrote his last work *The Introduction to Class Struggle in France* from 1848 to 1850, from February to March 1895 shortly before his death, which was called Engels' Political Will by the Soviet Union's Marxism theorists (Marx & Engels, 1965). In the 1870s, Marx proposed a new method for workers to seize power. In his Commemorative speech on the seventh anniversary of the founding of the Communist International in September 1871, Marx said that Britain is the only country with the development and organization of its working class, which can make use of the right of universal suffrage to really seek its own interests (Marx & Engels, 2009).

In the above conclusion, Marx and Engels' attitude and views on revolution have been very clear. At that time, the "workers taking power" was revolution, which was the purpose of revolution. As for whether to use violence or peaceful means, that is the means used to achieve the purpose of revolution. It is not only a mistake to regard the revolutionary means used for the purpose of the revolution as the revolution itself, but also to make the appearance of the revolution cover up the essence of the revolution, which is easy to lead people into the misunderstanding.

What is the essence of revolution? According to Marxism, revolution was caused by basic social contradictions. For the first time in human history, Marx

and Engels revealed the objective law of the development of human society and founded historical materialism. They pointed out that the basic contradiction of human society is the contradiction between productive forces and relations of production, economic base and superstructure. When the superstructure of a certain historical period has formed the shackles of the economic foundation, and the relations of production no longer adapt to the development of productive forces, social revolution will occur. In order to establish new relations of production, the social revolution changed the relations of production and superstructure which hindered the development of productive forces through violence or non-violence, liberated and developed productive forces, and promoted the development of human society. This law occurs in the social field. What about the revolution in the field of science and technology? The revolution in science and technology still starts from contradiction!

The Introduction to *The Situation of Working Class in England* refers to a fact. The capitalists installed Jenny spinning machine in large buildings and started by hydraulic power, and then obtained a large number of products while reducing the number of workers, which greatly surpassed those who used hand shaking machines in the market. Then, the article describes how the wing spinning machine, walking spinning machine, carding machine, roving machine and mechanical loom were updated and replaced after Jenny spinning machine. These machines became more efficient because of the steam engine invented by James Watt, which eventually led to the defeat of manual labor in all major sectors of British industry (Marx & Engels, 2012). It also reflects the essence of the industrial revolution from one side, which is the contradiction between the limitation of technical conditions and human's pursuit of labor products.

Therefore, revolution is to get rid of the old and bring forth the new by thoroughly overcoming and solving the basic contradictions in specific fields.

3. Why Revolution?

It was said that history and reality have proved time and time again that it is not easy for a ruling party to carry out social revolution, and it is even more difficult to carry out self-revolution. If we cannot carry out self-revolution, we will be eliminated by history. Thus, revolutionary character is the distinctive feature and clear theme of Xi Jinping's socialism thought with China's characteristics in the New Era. The great era calls for great theory, and the great era breeds great theory (Propaganda Department of the CPC Central Committee, 2018). Marxist political party is a political party born for and prospered by revolution. The Communist Party of China has never stopped her revolution since birth. Therefore, revolution is no stranger to the Communist Party of China and the Chinese people. However, unlike in the past, General Secretary Xi Jinping emphasized not only the importance of social revolution, but also the self-revolution and the social revolution promoted by self-revolution.

Self-revolution, generally speaking, is to change one's own life. In the Analects

of Confucius, Zeng Zi said, “I examine myself three times a day”, which means that ancient sages also saw the importance of being diligent and were good at finding their own problems. Therefore, they consciously examined themselves many times every day. However, it is not enough just to find the problems that exist in oneself. We should also have the determination, courage, perseverance and sensitivity to fundamentally solve the problems and meet the revolution. Xi Jinping quotes that “Safety without forgetting danger, survival without forgetting death, and governance without forgetting chaos”, the famous quotations in the *Book of Changes* many times. That is to tell us maintain a vigilant mind on the contradictions and problems in social life, take time for the sense of hardship, see those problems that are yet to arise, and take precautionary measures. It is easy for others to change their own lives. However, the Party has always been full of representatives and typical examples of reforming its own life. For example, Peng Pai, a revolutionary born in Guangdong and hailed as the king of the peasant movement by Mao Zedong, resolutely broke with his family of big industrial and commercial landlords, burning down the land lease he inherited and handing over the land to the poor peasants. It should be pointed out that the self-revolution of the Communist Party of China is not limited to one person, but the common requirements to the collective.

From the perspective of the history of the Communist Party of China, it is in the constant self-revolution that the Communist Party of China has achieved self-purification and self-growth. For example, the Zunyi Meeting on the way of the Long March in 1935 changed the party’s long-standing practice of sanctifying the instructions of the Communist International and the experience of the Soviet Union, corrected the mistakes of left adventurism, and saved the party and the Chinese revolution at a very critical moment. Zunyi Conference can be called the first famous model of self-revolution in the history of the Communist Party of China. In 1941, the Yan’an rectification movement was more active in opposing subjectivism, sectarianism and stereotyped Party Writing. The Party never thought of avoiding these problems and contradictions, which had been sown in the early days of establishment. Instead, the Party took a Marxist Attitude and made great efforts and determination to solve the problems fundamentally, thus enhancing the purity and unity of the party organization. The Third Plenary Session of the Eleventh Central Committee held at the end of 1978 made a decision to shift the focus of the party and the state’s work to economic construction. In June 1981, the Sixth Plenary Session of the 11th CPC Central Committee passed the resolution on some historical issues of the party since the founding of the People’s Republic of China, affirming Mao Zedong’s historical status and Mao Zedong thought, and evaluating the merits and demerits of the 30 years since the founding of the People’s Republic of China realistically. This conference completely negated the wrong theories of “Cultural Revolution” and “continuing revolution under the dictatorship of the proletariat”, and completed the historical task of bringing order out of chaos in the guiding ideology of the Party (Party History Research Center of the CPC Central Committee, 2001). In

the 1980s and 1990s, when the international communist movement fell into a low ebb, the CPC, taking into account the conditions of home and abroad, objectively examined and fully considered the problems and, with great revolutionary enthusiasm, determination and perseverance, pushed the cause of reform and opening up to a higher and newer stage of development.

It can be seen that the self-revolution of the Communist Party of China is not only the carrier of the revolutionary history of the Party, but also the continuation of the fine revolutionary tradition. The revolutionary cause that the Party has been carrying on is not only the continuous inheritance and expansion of revolutionary faith and revolutionary spirit, but also the constant recognition and challenge of the Party for “self”. The great social revolution carried out by the Party includes the self-revolution of each individual, as well as the self-revolution of the cause undertaken by the Party. This “self” may be either as small as every member of the Communist Party, or as big as the whole Party even the whole nation. Now that the cause of socialism with Chinese characteristics has entered a new era, the “self” may even be the “larger self” of the “community with a shared future” in which we live. Therefore, in this sense, the “self” of “self-revolution” is not only a reference to the subject of revolutionary practice, but also a symbol of courage and responsibility. Whether a person can carry out self-revolution is not his own ability, but depends on whether he is willing to consciously put himself in a collective.

So, we can see that there is a dialectical relationship between self-revolution and social revolution. The history of the CPC has told us that only by carrying out a good self-revolution can we shoulder the heavy responsibility of social revolution. As General Secretary Xi Jinping has said, “Stay true to our original aspiration and keep our mission firmly in mind.” It is our original aspiration and mission to seek happiness for the Chinese people and rejuvenation for the Chinese Nation. When China was sliding from feudal society into the abyss of semi-colonial and semi-feudal society step by step, the Chinese people were oppressed by the three huge mountains of foreign imperialism, domestic feudal forces and bureaucratic-capitalism, and it was impossible for them to live a happy life, let alone to talk about the rejuvenation of the country and the nation. In 1949, the Communist Party of China led the people to victory in the new democratic revolution. New China was founded on the basis of absolute poverty. The contradiction between the ever-growing people’s needs of material and cultural and the inability of social production has long been an obstacle to the people’s happiness and nation’s rejuvenation. By leading the people to victory in the socialist revolution, in socialist construction and in the cause of reform and opening up, the Party is constantly pushing the social revolution forward. Today, we still need to resolve the contradiction between the people’s ever-growing needs for a better life and the imbalance and inadequacy of development with revolutionary enthusiasm, revolutionary spirit, revolutionary courage and revolutionary perseverance, thus taking a step closer to our ultimate ideal of realizing communism. The great social revolution carried out by the people under the leadership of

the Communist Party of China has always been accompanied by the great self-revolution of the Party. On the whole, self-revolution and social revolution are in a common historical process. Social revolution is the general trend of historical development, which provides the premise and foundation for self-revolution. The self-revolution is a process of self-reflection of the subject, which is the full embodiment of the subjective initiative of the practice subject. In a certain historical period, self-revolution is the subject's self-revolution against itself, with the purpose of promoting social revolution. Therefore, the transformation from self-revolution to social revolution is a process from part to whole, from quantitative change to qualitative change.

It has been more than 70 years since the victory of the New Democratic Revolution, and it has been more than 40 years since the Reform and Opening up. After 100 years of hard work, the party and the people have made a historic leap to stand up, to become rich and to become strong together, but it does not mean that we can be proud and stop making efforts. On the one hand, today's China has been ranked as the second largest economy in the world for years in a row, and its production capacity in many fields has been at the forefront of the world. On the other hand, we should also realize that the "risk society" is coming, and various deep-seated contradictions are increasingly emerging. These unstable and uncertain problems, as well as their possible negative social impacts and systemic risks, should be realized and solved thoroughly. It also means that in the prosperous New Era of socialism with Chinese characteristics, we still need to maintain revolutionary thinking and revolutionary action.

4. How to Carry out Revolution in the New Era

Socialism with Chinese characteristics has entered the New Era, which not only gives the revolution more profound internal meaning, but also urges us to think about how to win a great victory in this new revolution. The new revolution in the New Era is the dialectical unity of great self-revolution and great social revolution, both of which are indispensable. Therefore, to embrace and carry out such a revolution means to promote the self-revolution and social revolution in a scientific and realistic manner.

4.1. Adhere to the Marxism Theory as a Guide

As we have seen from the above analysis, revolution has different meanings in different times, and it is also related to the traditions and customs of a place. Both Chinese and foreign Marxist parties in the exploration of revolution and construction, has experienced many twists and turns. It was because they were not from the position of Marxism principle to explore the true meaning of revolution. Therefore, we should take a scientific attitude of combining dialectical materialism with historical materialism towards revolution. The Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era is the latest achievement of adapting Marxism to China. In the historical process of the Party leading the

people in advancing the construction of socialism with Chinese characteristics, it has demonstrated a powerful force for truth, a unique charm of thought and great strength in practice, and has been highly recognized by the whole Party and the people of all ethnic groups in China. This thought is not only the latest achievement of the Party's promotion of social revolution and self-revolution, but also the scientific guide for the further promotion of the Two Great Revolutions.

The Communist Party of China is a Marxist political party, based on the working class who is the most advanced class in human history. Both the Classic works of Marxism and the Party Constitution of the Communist Party of China stipulate that the Party is the vanguard of the most advanced class, the Party is also the vanguard of the people and the state and nation. When Xi Jinping was Secretary of the Zhejiang Provincial Committee, he made it clear that the local government he was running should be in the forefront of practical work. Having served as the Party's General Secretary, he proposed that the Communist Party of China is to lead the people to great historical responsibility of social revolution. He proposed that to shoulder the historical responsibility of leading the people to carry out a great social revolution, the Communist Party of China must have the courage to carry out self-revolution, adhering to the principle of building the party for the public and assuming power for the people, deeply promoting the comprehensive and strict governance of the Party, resolutely eliminating all negative and corrupt phenomena. The Party must always be close to the hearts of the people, sharing weal and woe with the people, working together with the people, and maintaining the true character of the Marxist ruling party. The Party must go far ahead of the times and always be the backbone of the Chinese people. It can be seen that the Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era constantly takes the pursuit of advancement and "being in the forefront" as the common standard of social-revolution and self-revolution, as well as the common requirements for Party members and the whole country. It requires them to constantly surpass themselves on the original basis, from the individual to the collective so as to realize "being in the forefront" and achieve self-improvement. It is a process that unite and coordinate advancement of the revolution and social revolution.

4.2. To Take the Self-Revolution and Social Revolution in the New Era as a Part of the Cause of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics

Our present cause of socialism with Chinese characteristics is a valuable outcome that the Party and the people have gone through innumerable hardships and paid various costs. Today, we are carrying out a great self-revolution and taking part in a great social revolution in the New Era in order to further advance the cause of socialism with Chinese characteristics. To adhere to and develop socialism with Chinese characteristics in the New Era, we must maintain the core of leadership for this cause and the Party's leadership over all the work.

As a political party with the character of the people as its distinctive feature and guided by scientific theories, the Party has not only led the Chinese people to victory in the New Democratic Revolution and socialist revolution, but will continue to explore socialism with Chinese characteristics in the course of great social practice. Therefore, it is a realistic task to strengthen the Party's leadership over all work.

Reform is China's second revolution, and it is inevitable that the revolution will touch on the issue of interests. The great revolution carried out by the Chinese people under the leadership of the Communist Party of China is to face up to the deep-seated problems in social life and to solve them thoroughly. As a revolutionary leader, whether he can straighten his back on issues involving interests in the revolution, whether he has the confidence, and whether he has the determination and courage to solve problems will have a bearing on the success or failure of the revolution as well as the rise and fall of the socialist cause. We can see from the Marxism that the proletariat is the most capable of revolution because the proletariat have nothing and are not afraid of being deprived. As a party of the proletariat, the Communist Party has no selfish interests, so the Party can be a worthy leader. Admittedly, under the conditions of the market economy, some principles of exchange try to erode and infiltrate Party life. And, in society, some decayed ideas are constantly looking for opportunities to reappear. All of these have directly or indirectly damaged the purity and revolutionary nature of some individual Party members, and further affected the advanced nature of the Party. Therefore, to strengthen the great project of party building, we must start with strengthening ideals and beliefs, and constantly wake up every Party member with the original intention and mission of the Party, so as to straighten out the outlook on life, values and world outlook. We will improve intra-Party laws and regulations under the guidance of the Constitution. Party discipline and rules should be clarified to ensure that Party members and cadres dare not and cannot be corrupt. Inheriting the fine revolutionary tradition, Party members should actively carry out criticism and self-criticism within the Party, and care for Party members through the friendship between comrades. We should enhance the effectiveness of intra-Party supervision and the strength of supervision by the masses, grasp opportunities for self-revolution, and create a clean and upright political environment.

4.3. The Education of Revolutionary Concept in the New Era

The need of revolution is social existence, and the idea and consciousness of revolution are social consciousness. Social being determines social consciousness, but social consciousness and social being are not always synchronized. In particular, with the remarkable achievements of socialism with Chinese characteristics, the general improvement of people's material, spiritual and cultural living standards, and the relative stability and tranquility of the society, it is even harder for people to realize the necessity and possibility of revolution in the New

Era. Marx and Engels mentioned an example in the Introduction to *The Situation of the British Working Class*. In Britain, the oldest capitalist country, the workers were happy and could get along happily with the exploiters before they realized that they would be ostracized by machines and become destitute. Their lives were happy, “but certainly not for human beings” (Marx & Engels, 2012). The need of revolution has always existed, and the concept education for revolution must adapt to the development of The Times. In Chinese society, the discourse of “revolution” has quietly faded in people’s vision for a period of time, but it does not mean that all the contradictions have been solved and the need for revolution does not exist. Judging from the achievements made since the 18th CPC National Congress, the revolution in the New Era is not only necessary, but also quite urgent. First, the fight against corruption in the political field. Since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC), the CPC Central Committee with General Secretary Xi Jinping has been committed to combating both “tigers” and “flies” with a strong fist and drastic medicine, which has effectively curbed the frequent and high incidence of corruption that had been unchecked for many years. Second, supply-side structural reform in the economic field. In just one year, steel, coal and other industries exceeded their targets ahead of schedule. Third, since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, China has implemented the strategy of innovation-driven development, and the strategic high-tech achievements have been widely reported. Fourth, the construction of ecological civilization. Since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC), the Party has incorporated ecological progress into its overall plan of promoting ecological progress, and since the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC), the “Two Mountains Theory” proposed by the General Secretary has become more and more popular. Contradictions exist all the time and everywhere. When the old ones are resolved, new ones will spring up. In the New Era, it is necessary to maintain a heart of preparedness, to find problems and then to solve them.

5. Conclusion

1) As a word, revolution has multiple meanings. From the study of its etymology, we can find that the word revolution represents the direction of the development of human society and nature. It is a philosophical concept with progressive significance.

2) The reason why some people today misunderstand the word revolution ideologically is that the history of the past hundreds of years has limited people’s concept of revolution to the political and military fields. And people’s misunderstanding and fear of revolution just reflect people’s desire for peace and development.

3) At present, this article is to make some preliminary analysis of the word “revolution” from the perspective of theory. When conditions are ripe in the fu-

ture, it will also do some field research among young people, especially among a group of people born in the new century, to further explore the image of the word “revolution” in people’s minds.

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my gratitude to all those who helped me during the writing of this paper. The research related to this paper is supported by the Research Program for “13th Five-Year Plan” of Guangdong Province Education Science (Special Project of the 19th National Congress of the CPC, 2018JKSJD73), “A study of Xi Jinping’s discourse on reform and opening up”. Finally, in particular, I would like to express my gratitude to Anonymous Reviewers.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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