**Historical Lesson and Realistic Significance of the Alienation of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union from Masses in its Last Days**

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**[Abstract]** Alienation from the masses was an important reason for the destruction of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU). As a proletarian party that had traditionally adhered to the mass line, the CPSU later became alienated from the masses, mainly because of its mental stagnation and conservative ideology, serious formalism and bureaucracy, prevalence of privilege mentality and hedonism, and rampant extravagance. In the last days of its rule, the CPSU gradually deviated from the Marxist guidelines in guiding ideology, institutional construction, development of work practices, and building of a clean government, and improper party conduct became a serious problem. In order to avoid repeating the mistakes of the CPSU, we should learn lessons from its collapse, adhere to the people-centered development philosophy, constantly strengthen our party building, and always maintain the party’s close bond with the people.

**[Key Words]** The Communist Party of the Soviet Union; Mass line; Party building

In 1991, the Soviet Union underwent sudden political changes. The Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) was dissolved, which led to transfer of governments and a change in the path of social development. By rethinking the history of the rise and fall of the CPSU, we can summarize a rule that the survival of the Party depends on the backing of the people. When one uses a person as a mirror, he sees his success and missteps; when one uses the past events as a mirror, his comprehends the rise and fall of a nation. The mass line is the lifeline and the basic line of work for the Communist Party of China (CPC). General Secretary Xi Jinping said, “History has fully proved that the nation is composed of people, and people are all that matter to the nation. The survival of the Party depends on the backing of the people. By earning the people’s trust and gaining their support, the Party can overcome any challenge and prevail in all endeavors.”[[3]](#footnote-3) “As the Communist Party of China has led the people in fighting to establish and develop the People’s Republic, it has really been fighting for their support.”[[4]](#footnote-4) The CPC was able to lead the Chinese people to achieve great victories in the historical process from revolution, to reconstruction and to reform because it always adhered to the people-centered approach and maintained a close bond with the people. An important reason why the CPSU “built the country with 200,000 members, defended it with 2 million members, and destroyed it with 20 million members”[[5]](#footnote-5) was that it turned away from the people, let formalism, bureaucracy, hedonism and extravagance run wild, and eroded the party conduct, the work style of the government, and social morality. It was eventually abandoned by the people. Today, reviewing the process of its alienation from the masses is of important educational and cautionary significance.

1. Manifestations of the CPSU’s Alienation from Masses in Its Last Days

The CPSU attached great importance to the relationship between the party and the masses in its early years. Lenin said, “The idea of building communist society exclusively with the hands of the Communists is childish, absolutely childish. We Communists are but a drop in the ocean, a drop in the ocean of the people.”[[6]](#footnote-6) He earnestly practiced what he advocated: he was always in close contact with the masses, met petitioners personally and listened to their voices, and he also created the manual labor campaign of “Communist Saturday”. While leading the Soviet people to victory in the Great Patriotic War against Nazi Germany and to great achievements in socialist construction, Stalin himself lived a modest life and was extremely strict with himself and his family. After Nikita Khrushchev became the top leader of the CPSU, bad practices such as divorcing theory from practice and alienation of cadres from the masses were epidemic. During the rule of Leonid Brezhnev, improper party conduct had been a dangerously serious problem in the CPSU and continued into the period when Mikhail Gorbachev took over. Gorbachev further alienated from the party and the masses and even betrayed them, which sealed the fate of the CPSU.

“Those who win the people’s hearts win the country, and those who lose the people’s hearts lose the country.” Throughout the history of the CPSU’s downfall, Gorbachev’s “reform” was no doubt the direct cause, but the CPSU’s complete deviation from its fundamental mission and the mass line in its last days was undoubtedly the deeper reason. The gradual separation of the CPSU top brass from the masses was mainly reflected in their ideological, organizational, conduct and lifestyle corruption.

1. Mental stagnation and conservative ideology

Brezhnev’s tenure as the top leader of the CPSU is often considered to be the heyday of social development of the Soviet Union. In the early years of his tenure, in particular, the whole society of the Soviet Union enjoyed unprecedented stability and prosperity. During the first five-year plan period (1966-1970) under Brezhnev’s presidency, the total product of society of the Soviet Union grew at an average annual rate of 7.4%.[[7]](#footnote-7) In the 1970s, the Middle East wars broke out, and international oil prices skyrocketed. The Soviet Union gained large foreign exchange balances in energy by exporting large amounts of oil and gas. From 1970 to 1980, the amount of oil extracted by the Soviet Union increased from 31 million tons to 312 million tons. Oil exports alone generated foreign exchange earnings of USD 16 billion per year.[[8]](#footnote-8) Benefiting from favorable factors such as economic growth and increased foreign exchange from oil, the overall standard of living of the people in the Soviet Union also hit an all-time high during this period. On the diplomatic front, relying on its abundant nuclear weapons and strong military power, the Soviet Union pursued a tit-for-tat hegemony strategy against the United States. It had become a true superpower on equal footing with the United States, which was mired in the oil crisis and the Vietnam War. However, in the middle and late years of Brezhnev’s tenure, the CPSU top brass gradually lost the determination and will to reform, and they became mentally stagnant and old-fashioned in their work. Complacency and conservatism were pervasive in the party. In the thick atmosphere of a blind inclination to “stability” in the party, Brezhnev, who was known as a “nice guy”, began to downplay the lofty beliefs of the Bolshevik Party that had been passed down from Lenin’s time and lost the fighting spirit in a member of a revolutionary party that pressed forward with indomitable will.

In 1967, Brezhnev asserted that the Soviet Union had reached “developed socialism”.[[9]](#footnote-9) This assertion, which lost touch with reality and lacked sufficient theoretical support, was propagated as a “theoretical leap” in the history of the CPSU, and the pace of reform within the CPSU slowed down. As the theory of “developed socialism” swept the CPSU, the economic reform, led by Alexei Kosygin, Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Soviet Union, was forced to discontinue after the 24th Congress of the CPSU in 1971. Under the guidance of Brezhnev’s theory of “developed socialism”, the whole society of the Soviet Union was devoted to proving the justification of this theory. In contrast, the really pragmatic “reform” and “innovation” were shelved and unheeded. By the end of Brezhnev’s tenure, dogmatism, hedonism, and blind optimism had spread to almost the entire society of the Soviet Union, which stopped moving forward and fell into a state of “stagnation”.

1. Serious formalism and bureaucracy

Lenin had a brilliant opinion on formalism and bureaucracy, “The blame for any formalism and bureaucracy falls on those who, by refusing to work under the leadership of the central bodies, made it difficult to conduct matters in a non-formalistic way.”[[10]](#footnote-10) In other words, formalism and bureaucracy are essentially work practices that oppose and reject the centralized and unified leadership of the party in order to serve the interests of individuals and small groups. If left unrestricted, they would be bound to erode the authority of the party. In the last days of the CPSU, the deeper pervasiveness of formalism and bureaucracy among the cadres further deteriorated the relationship between the party and the masses.

Formalism was a particularly serious problem on the propaganda front of the CPSU. Since Khrushchev came to power, the CPSU top brass had generally been ignorant of the Marxist theories and had failed to make any significant contribution to the application and development of Marxism in practice and to innovation and breakthrough in theoretical propaganda. Due to the theoretical deficiency, the ideological principle of the party had chronically not been updated and had been outdated, which resulted in empty and boring propaganda. In most cases, the propaganda of the CPSU simply involved some extracted remarks and arguments of Marxism-Leninism as the only criteria for judging right and wrong, without considering the realistic needs and the voice of the masses. Long and tedious clichés and bureaucratese flooded the propaganda field. With this dogmatic preaching approach, the ideological work gradually became rigid, and the powerful function of Marxism in understanding and transforming society was undermined. As a result, the role of Marxism in ideological leadership and social mobilization was not played to the maximum, the increasing social contradictions and problems were concealed, and the close bond between the party and the masses was cut.

During Brezhnev’s tenure, “bureaucracy, departmental selfishness, institutional dictatorship, and arbitrariness unprecedentedly proliferated and doubled, as we call it.”[[11]](#footnote-11) In pursuit of cadre team stability in the narrow sense, the CPSU leadership had not been renewed and rotated for a long time, and a de facto system of life tenure was established. Brezhnev criticized Khrushchev for his cadre rotation system, arguing that “the unjustified transfer and replacement of cadres have killed confidence in the staff and has prevented them from making full use of their abilities. This provided the soil for the seed of irresponsibility.”[[12]](#footnote-12) He abolished the practice of replacing 1/3 of the members of the CPSU Central Committee and Party Committee during each re-election. During Khrushchev’s tenure, 49.6% of the Central Committee members were reelected, compared with 79.4% during the 22nd Congress, 83.4% during the 25th Congress, and more than 90% during the 26th Congress.[[13]](#footnote-13) During the rule of Brezhnev, the membership changes in the Politburo and the Secretariat of the Central Committee were even smaller, and only 12 members were replaced over 18 years.[[14]](#footnote-14) As a result, young cadres had little chance to grow up, talented people had no access to assuming important leadership positions in the prime of their life, and the leadership became more mentally stagnant and conservative. In order to maintain the vested interests, the bureaucratic group opposed reform, resisted innovation, and rested content, which caused the country to miss out on development opportunities.

1. Prevalence of privilege mentality and hedonism

During the revolutionary and war years, the CPSU fought in the forefront, fearing no sacrifice, and led the masses to significant achievements in socialist construction and the great victory of the Soviet Union’s Great Patriotic War against Nazi Germany. However, with the consolidation of its ruling position and the relaxation of its internal supervision and restraint mechanism, hedonism began to spread within the CPSU.

As the cadre team of the CPSU was expanded and fixed during the rule of Brezhnev, a special privileged class of bureaucrats gradually formed in the party. The backbones of this class were party and government cadres who held the real power, and these were highly powerful and self-contained cadres who were extremely secret, selfish, greedy and conservative.[[15]](#footnote-15) The CPSU officials at different levels enjoyed different treatments according to their official positions and status. A higher position meant greater privileges and wider gap of material benefits with the ordinary masses. For example, being a close friend of Brezhnev, General Nikolai Shchelokov (Николай Щёлоков), who also served as interior minister for 17 years, took possession of the No. 1 large state dacha and the No. 8 state dacha of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, and the latter had served as the Ministry’s guest house. In one of these dachas, there were seven layers of carpets on top of each other, and even the painting of a famous Russian painter was put under the bed. The privileged class not only officially enjoyed various preferential treatments, but also used their privileges to profiteer from trading means of production and consumer goods in the circulation field. The “black caviar smuggling case”, which was cracked in 1980, implicated more than 300 cadres in the Ministry of the Fisheries Industry, the Ministry of Commerce, the Ministry of the Food Industry, and the Pacific Fleet. Because of this case, the country suffered economic losses of millions of rubles.[[16]](#footnote-16)

With scarce social and economic resources and a low standard of living in the Soviet Union, the affluence of the privileged class stirred an angry public response. In addition, the privileged class formed “political alliances” based on their interpersonal relationships to support and shield each other from the supervision and penalty by the party discipline and national laws. This further aggravated social injustice, corrupted the social morality, and damaged the relationship between the party and the masses. During the rule of Brezhnev, nepotism became a common cadre appointment practice, and “personal loyalty to the superior leadership” became a cadre selection principle. The best minds in different sectors of society had no access to the core of power, while the mediocre sons and daughters of the cadres and friends of the officials could easily assume high positions by means of nepotism.

The cadre team became increasingly rigid, self-contained, and inclined to nepotism. They tried to maintain the current system and refused to reflect on their problems and make changes. Their behavior led to reduced or even stagnant social mobility, seriously damaged the reputation of socialism, and resulted in a social divide. A corrupt and degenerate culture, as reflected in obedience to superiors, willful blindness to the voices of the masses and mountain stronghold mentality, gradually took shape in the party and government departments. A large number of party members and cadres no longer put the interests of the people above all else and tried to maintain and expand their own privileges and vested interests instead. With a large number of corrupt behaviors were made public, the socialist ideals and beliefs of the public collapsed rapidly. The CPSU, which had traditionally claimed itself a “servant of the people”, faced a serious crisis of confidence, and there was widespread skepticism over the legitimacy of its governance.

1. Rampant extravagance

During the rule of Brezhnev, the practice of gift giving reached pinnacle among the cadres at different levels in the Soviet Union. Every time Brezhnev paid a visit, he would give numerous valuable gifts to local officials at different levels and received abundant even more valuable gifts from them, such as “valuable brooches, gemstone necklaces, rings, pistols with gold and silver holsters, various gold ornaments and other expensive gifts”.[[17]](#footnote-17) So much so that every time when Brezhnev returned from a visit, dozens of boxes filled with high-grade gifts would be unloaded from his plane and transported to the dacha of the general secretary.[[18]](#footnote-18) What the superior loves, his inferiors will be found to love exceedingly. In order to cater to Brezhnev’s hunting hobby, more than 100 luxury hunting rifles were given to him by officials at all levels. During a visit to the Republic of Azerbaijan, Brezhnev even received a pure gold bust of himself from Heydar Aliyev (Гейдар Алиев), the first secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Azerbaijan.[[19]](#footnote-19)

The practice of gift giving had the negative effects of “putting money above everything else” and “money all-mighty” on the society of the Soviet Union, and it became common that officials at all levels solicited and accepted bribes. Even official positions at different levels were sold at marked prices, and it became an open secret that official positions could be purchased. For example, in Azerbaijan, the positions of the first and second secretaries of a district committee of the Communist Party of Azerbaijan were sold at RUB 200,000 and RUB 100,000, respectively; the position of social security minister was sold at RUB 120,000; the position of the urban utilities minister was sold at RUB 150,000; the commerce minister was sold at RUB 250,000; the position of a university president was sold at RUB 200,000.[[20]](#footnote-20)

In contrast to the extravagant life of the CPSU top brass, the markets were full of empty shelves and long queues of shoppers. In late 1989, only 11% of the 989 consumer goods were provided - with difficulty. Associate Professor Dmitri Fateyev (Дмитрий Фатеев) of the Pushkin State Russian Language Institute said, “In 1990 and 1991, all kinds of tickets, in blue and pink, were issued. I was a child at that time, and I remember standing in a long line to shop. When it was my turn, the woman in front of me bought the last half a kilogram of sausages, leaving nothing for me. I cried so hard and swore that I would never go to the store again.”[[21]](#footnote-21) In the context of a shortage economy, the people had difficult access to daily consumer goods, let alone quality and inexpensive articles of daily use. The wide variety of market consumer goods in the Western countries became an unattainable dream for the masses of the Soviet Union. This contrast fueled of the dissatisfaction of the masses with the CPSU and the system of the Soviet Union.

1. Reasons for the Alienation of the CPSU from Masses in Its Last Days

In the final analysis, the reason why the CPSU seriously betrayed the mass line of the Marxist parties was its long-standing neglect of party building, weakening of its advanced nature and leadership capability as a party, and the ultimate loss of trust and support from the people.

1. In terms of guiding ideology, the CPSU constantly deviated from the Marxist guideline and turned to non-Marxist and anti-Marxist positions in its last days

The thought on the relationship between the party and the masses is an important part of the Marxist theory. It requires a party to uphold the principal position of the people in history, serve the people wholeheartedly, and to communicate with the masses in innovative ways and through innovative channels. During the rule of Brezhnev, conformity and conservatism became the mainstream of the CPSU’s ideological system, and the masses had long been excluded from political life. Because the reasonable demands of the people had long been unsatisfied, their democratic rights were not guaranteed, and their creative spirit was not respected, a large number of social problems and social contradictions kept building up. At the 19th National Congress of the CPSU, Gorbachev put forward the goal of establishing “democratic and humane socialism”, replacing the guiding Marxist theory with the idea of the democratic party in the western society. This was a total departure from the Marxist thought on the relationship between the party and the masses and complete betrayal of the basic Marxist standpoint.

1. In terms of institutional construction, the CPSU weakened the centralized leadership and abandoned democratic centralism

During the rule of Brezhnev, not only was the chronic “dictatorial rule” not corrected, but also individual dictatorship was strengthened. The CPSU top brass gave up internal supervision and unified leadership, and allowed individual will or minority will to replace the wisdom of the majority. Decisions were made simply by subjective feelings, with serious detachment from reality. Even major decisions such as sending troops to Afghanistan were made by Brezhnev and other four leaders alone, regardless of the Central Politburo of the CPSU. Under a false appearance of peace and prosperity, the CPSU top brass often failed to be accurately and effectively informed of the actual situation at the grassroots level, which prevented them from making decisions in a scientific and democratic way. As a consequence, they made a series of major policy mistakes, which increased the people’s distrust of the ruling party.

1. In the development of work practices, the CPSU turned a blind eye to the chronic internal improper conduct and let formalism, bureaucracy, hedonism and extravagance spread like wildfires

The CPSU top brass set bad examples in the development of work practices in its last days. Brezhnev was obsessed with social and political praises and flattery and showed a special preference to honors and orders. He was awarded the rank of Marshal of the Soviet Union and received more than 200 orders of various types, including the Order of Lenin and the Hero of the Soviet Union, many of which were awarded at his suggestion, although he did not make outstanding achievements during the Soviet Union’s Great Patriotic War against Nazi Germany and his political performance was relatively mediocre. Formalism and bureaucracy were prevalent in the CPSU, and officials at all levels were simply armchair strategists who were impractical, unambitious, and conservative. They were good at singing praises of their superiors and fishing for compliments, but they were indifferent to the voices and realistic demands of the masses. Their privileges and corruption caused far-reaching harm.

1. In the building of a clean government, the CPSU shielded, tolerated and even encouraged corruption and failed to effectively supervise the members and cadres.

The CPSU failed to have a systematic and comprehensive understanding of the persistence, difficulty, and complexity of the fight against internal corruption. It assumed that corruption would only be a product of capitalist countries and would not exist in socialist countries. It downplayed the corruption of officials by describing it as “bribery” and “abuse of power”. Brezhnev was indifferent to the contagious corrupt behavior. He not only refused to fight against corruption, but also declared that “no one can live on wages in our country”[[22]](#footnote-22) and “it is normal for cadres to commit bribery”[[23]](#footnote-23). By citing political stability as a reason, the CPSU was not devoted to a thorough or deep fight against corruption. Corruption cases were often handled with inconsistent standards, and corrupt top leaders and their corrupt cronies were often shielded and tolerated. Brezhnev’s daughter Galina Brezhneva (Галина Брежнева) went unpunished for her smuggling of huge amounts of jewelry and diamonds; his son-in-law Yuri Churbanov (Юрий Чурбанов) took bribes for 6 years that were equivalent to the wages of an average worker in the Soviet Union for 270 years and was not arrested until five years after the death of Brezhnev. With Brezhnev’s acquiescence and connivance, corruption became an increasingly serious problem in the CPSU, especially among the top brass. The people resented it and argued that “communism has been realized for the top class.”[[24]](#footnote-24)

1. Realistic Significance of the Alienation of the CPSU from Masses

Shortly before the fall of the CPSU, the Academy of Sciences of the Soviet Union conducted a social survey called “Who does the CPSU represent”. According to the results, 7% of the respondents reported that the CPSU represented the laboring people; 4% of the respondents reported that it represented the workers; 11% of the respondents reported that it represented all the party members; 85% of the respondents reported that it represented the bureaucrats, cadres, and institution staff.[[25]](#footnote-25) When the CPSU was about to dissolve, it still had nearly 20 million members and 433,000 primary organizations. However, when the Communist Parties were banned by hostile forces, they met no resistance from any party organization at any level. The CPSU members did not organize any large-scale protest, and the masses did not take any organized action in support of and in solidarity with the CPSU.

“As to the past, reproof is useless; but the future may still be provided against.” The profound historical lesson of the CPSU’s collapse is still thought-provoking to this day. In order to avoid repeating the CPSU’s mistakes, we should always uphold the CPC’s mass line and strengthen the CPC’s close bond with the people.

1. Strengthen political development and always adhere to the correct political direction

The mass line has been created and developed by the Communist Party of China through the long-term practice of revolution, construction and reform. It has withstood the test of history as a correct and effective political line. The gradual deviation of the CPSU from the mass line in its last days is an important manifestation of its departure from the basic direction of Marxism and its shift to an evil path. General Secretary Xi Jinping repeatedly reminded the whole Party that “The Communist Party of China always represents the fundamental interests of the greatest possible majority of the Chinese people, and it stands with them through thick and thin and shares a common fate with them.”[[26]](#footnote-26) “The people represent the deepest foundation and the greatest source of confidence for our Party in governing the country.”[[27]](#footnote-27) Adhering to the correct political direction and firmly upholding the authority and centralized leadership of the CPC Central Committee with Comrade Xi Jinping at its core surely requires the Party to uncompromisingly implement the mass line thought, to always regard standing on the people’s side as its fundamental stance and seeking happiness for the people as its fundamental mission, to uphold its abiding aim of serving the people wholeheartedly, to respect the primacy of the people and their initiative, and to always maintain its close bond with the people.

1. Strengthen ideological development and firmly establish the people-centered development philosophy

General Secretary Xi Jinping emphasized, “The Communist Party of China has in the people its roots and its lifeblood. It unites and leads the people in revolution, construction, and reform. The fundamental purpose is to enable the people to live a good life. The Communist Party of China will remain committed to this aspiration no matter how hard it is challenged and pressured, how huge sacrifices it has to make and how big the price it has to pay.”[[28]](#footnote-28) The Party organizations at all levels should attach great importance to ideological building, especially renewing their affinity to the people in the context of the recent campaign to study the Party history, and firmly stand on the people’s side. Since its establishment, the CPC has combined the affinity to the people with its party spirit, and it always stands on the people’s side and works for the benefits of the people. All of the past CPC leaders regarded “putting the people in the first place” as the essence of the thought on Party and state governance. Comrade Mao Zedong established the aim of the Party as serving the people wholeheartedly and put forward the most resounding slogan of the times - “Long live the people”. Comrade Deng Xiaoping insisted on the idea of the primacy of the people and proposed that “whether we have the people’s support, acceptance, satisfaction and approval should be the starting point and the ultimate objective of our policies and decisions” in all of our endeavors.[[29]](#footnote-29) Comrade Jiang Zemin pointed out that the CPC should always represent the fundamental interests of the greatest possible majority of the Chinese people. Comrade Hu Jintao emphasized a people-oriented approach and insisted that “The government must function by the mandate of the people, empathize with the feelings of the people, and work for the well-being of the people.”[[30]](#footnote-30) Comrade Xi Jinping stated that people’s aspiration for a better life motivates all the unremitting endeavors of the Party. At different historical stages and under different historical conditions, the CPC has been always committed to the aim of serving the people and has always adhered to the idea of putting people in the first place. It continuously improves the Marxist thought on the relationship between the party and the mass and has greatly enriched and developed Marxism.

(III) Strengthen organizational development and cultivate a diligent and people-oriented cadre team

Improving governance capacity is a major task for cadres in the new era. For a long period of time, the CPSU appointed cadres not on the basis of their service capability and professional qualities, but on the basis of cronyism, and it put personal “loyalty” to superiors in the first place while neglecting the professional development of the cadres. This led to a low level of social governance and social tensions in the Soviet Union. The low level of governance and social tensions in the Soviet Union. Therefore, we should attach great importance to the governance capacity building of the cadres in the new era. The direct manifestation and realistic requirement of serving the people in the new era is that the cadres should completely, accurately and comprehensively implement the new development philosophy, should have the professionalism and specialized ability to promote industrial development, rural revitalization and grassroots governance, and should be able to effectively respond to people’s aspiration for a better life and cope with various risks and challenges in order to meet the new requirement for modernization of the governance system and governance capacity. General Secretary Xi Jinping said, “Working for the well-being of the people and the rejuvenation of the nation is the immutable aim of our Party in leading the modernization drive, and the ‘root’ and ‘essence’ of the new development philosophy. We will only have the right view of development and modernization if we follow a people-centered approach, insisting that development is for the people, reliant on the people, and that its fruits should be shared by the people.”[[31]](#footnote-31) To improve the governance capacity of the cadres and build a high-quality and professional cadre team, we, first of all, should improve the knowledge of the cadres on political theory. We should consolidate the theoretical foundation of the Party members and cadres on the socialist system and the national governance system with Chinese characteristics and should help them understand “who will be the beneficiaries of governance” and “who will govern”. Secondly, we should improve the service capability of the cadres. Considering the professional, specialized, and refined governance context in the new era, we should provide relevant professional training and special training to improve the professional skills in the cadres needed to perform their duties, complete organizational tasks satisfactorily, promote their professional development, strengthen the Party’s engagement with the masses, and we should also continue to optimize the knowledge base and knowledge structure of the cadres that are relevant to governance work. Thirdly, we should establish a sound cadre evaluation system that regards bringing tangible, desired and relevant benefits to the people as an important assessment criterion and the degree of engagement with the people as an important factor that influences cadre selection and appointment.

(IV) Strengthen the development of work practices of the Party and maintain its close bond with the people

General Secretary Xi Jinping emphasized: “As a great party with a history of one hundred years, our Party must always win endorsement and support from the people and must dedicate itself to achieving lasting greatness for the Chinese nation. We must stay true to our founding mission, resolutely remove whatever weakens the Party’s advanced nature and undermines the Party’s purity, rid ourselves of any tumor that erodes the Party’s health, resolutely guard against all dangers of running counter to the original aspiration and the mission or shaking the foundation of the Party.”[[32]](#footnote-32) Formalism and bureaucracy erode the party conduct and the party’s style of writing, damage the party’s fighting capability and its prestige and image among the masses, and reduce administrative efficiency and the vitality and vigor of the political system.[[33]](#footnote-33) The prevalence of formalism and bureaucracy was an important cause of the collapse of the CPSU. They can seriously hinder the development of socialist democracy and have to be resolutely defeated. To destroy formalism and bureaucracy, we should, first of all, trust and rely on the vast majority of cadres and masses and continuously consolidate and strengthen the Party’s ruling base; secondly, we should know what to do and what not to do and allow more space and time for local and grassroots cadres and masses to bring their initiative and creativity into play; thirdly, we should set up both positive and negative examples, discovering and encouraging positive examples of innovation, creativity and vitality while exposing and punishing negative examples of claptrap and superficiality; finally, we should stimulate the creative spirit of the people, fully mobilize the wisdom and enthusiasm of the people, and continuously explore convenient and effective working methods. Hedonism and extravagance not only cause an immense waste of social wealth, dilute the will and depress the spirit, but also corrode the politics and corrupt the morale. They are resented by the masses. At present, we should be especially vigilant to the invisible variation of hedonism and extravagance, fully leverage the service advantages and functions of different professional departments, effectively mobilize and integrate various professional supervisory forces, apply big data for analysis and research purposes, improve the accuracy of investigation and handling of problems, and actively use new media and new technologies to mobilize the masses to participate in supervision.

(V) Strengthen discipline development and resolutely oppose privilege mentality and the existence of privileges

The cohesiveness and fighting capability of the party team comes is tempered through rigid discipline. Because the CPSU wavered its discipline requirements, more and more party members and cadres showed ostensible obedience to the central policies and even openly opposed the party’s resolutions and confront the party’s policies. They moved farther and farther away from the people, betrayed their ideals and beliefs, gradually degenerated into a special gang serving the interests of small groups, and were eventually abandoned by the people. When party members and cadres lack discipline awareness and are not subject to discipline, they will naturally seek special power, special treatments, and special status, and then evolve into a privileged class. Strengthening discipline development and enhancing the consciousness of Party members and cadres towards observing political discipline and rules is an important way to effectively curb the privilege mentality and privileges. General Secretary Xi Jinping emphasized, “Every member is equal before Party discipline. The Party does not allow special members who are not subject to discipline. The Party’s organizations at all levels should actively explore methods to regularize and institutionalize discipline education, and they should often sound the alarm to let the Party members and cadres truly understand that the discipline of the Party is an abiding code of conduct in the entire Party and that strict compliance with and resolute maintenance of the discipline is a basic condition for being qualified Party members and cadres.”[[34]](#footnote-34) We should constantly strengthen discipline consciousness, establish and improve discipline education mechanisms, strictly enforce the principal responsibility for discipline development, and strengthen discipline supervision.

(VI) Strengthen institutional development and implement democratic centralism

Democratic centralism is the CPC’s fundamental systems of organization and leadership. Through extensive consultation in the decision-making process, it reflects the demands of different shareholders to the maximum and effectively builds consensus to maximize the overall and long-term interests of the people. Democratic centralism truly embodies a decision-making process that “draws wisdom from the masses and serves for the masses”. It can outstandingly stimulate the creativity and vitality of the Party and ensure the formulation of lines and policies in a scientific and democratic way. Democratic centralism can also effectively prevent and overcome anarchism, “dictatorial rule”, patriarchy, and deliberation without decision and making decisions without execution. In its last days, the CPSU deviated from democratic centralism by continuously weakening the democratic life of the party and restricting the democratic rights of the party members, thereby resulting in the evil consequences of personal dictatorship, bureaucracy, and alienation from the masses. General Secretary Xi Jinping pointed out, “The role model of the top leadership is crucial to the implementation of democratic centralism.”[[35]](#footnote-35) Cadres at all levels and especially the main cadres should take the lead in implementing democratic centralism. We should strongly improve the democratic quality and centralized governance ability of the top leadership and seriously hold those who trample on democratic centralism accountable. At the same time, we should improve and implement specific systems under democratic centralism and continuously promote the development and innovation of democratic centralism.

(VII) Combat corruption and build a clean government to foster cohesion in the party and among the masses

General Secretary Xi Jinping emphasized, “‘Worms can only grow in something rotten.’ In recent years, some countries have seen chronic conflicts lead to public discontent, social unrest and regime collapse. Corruption is one of the most important reasons. A lot of facts tell us that when corruption grows, the fates of the party and the country will eventually be doomed!” [[36]](#footnote-36) In the last days of the CPSU, a large number of party and government cadres became corrupt and degenerated, losing the support and endorsement of the people, which directly shook the foundation of the party’s rule. We should draw on the lesson from the collapse of the CPSU, consciously promote the combat against corruption and the building of a clean government, and constantly enhance our ability to resist corruption and degeneration. We should vigorously strengthen anti-corruption education and the building of a clean government culture, guide the Party members and cadres to hold firmly on their ideals and beliefs, and unswervingly oppose corruption; we should improve the constraint and supervision system for the execution of power and contain power in the cage of system; we should oppose corruption with the mentality of the rule of law and in a legal way and ensure the robust operation of the legal system.

“In order to be a long-term ruling party, we must always maintain the Party’s close bond with the people, always be of one heart and one mind with the people, stand with the people through thick and thin, and share weal and woe with them.”[[37]](#footnote-37) By reviewing the process of the CPSU’s alienation from the masses, we can conclude that if a ruling Marxist party deviates from the historical thought on the mass line, falls into improper party conduct, engages in privileges and corruption, and allows “the four forms of decadence” (formalism, bureaucracy, hedonism and extravagance) to become rampant, the legitimacy of its ruling base will be continuously undermined and it will eventually be abandoned by the people. We should seriously learn the lesson from the collapse of the CPSU, always insist on putting people in the first place, propel the new great project of party building, constantly improve our political, ideological, organizational, work practice, discipline, and institutional development, further promote our anti-corruption efforts and building of a clean government, and firmly cling to the mass line vital to the lifeblood of the Party.

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