

Analysis of the Characteristics and Impacts of ‘Red Songs’ on Social Mobilization During the CCP Yan'an Period

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ABSTRACT

Social mobilization is essentially a combination work involved with polity, military, culture, and economics. Its success largely lies on the the subjects of the implementation (subjects), objects of implementation (objects) as well as the proper methods. Steeped in the modern Chinese history, a series of social mobilizations have been conducted, however, most of them had encountered failure due to the limitation of the subject class and the one-sidedness of method. At the meantime, the social mobilization carried out by the CCP during the Yan'an period through the red songs, on the one hand, had achieved enormous success. It results from both the guidance of Marxist literary theory which was applied in its own context and the meritorious experience of the past. As a result, the solid foundation of the Chinese revolution was built and laid the groundwork for the ultimate victory of the revolution.

Keywords: *Yan'an period, Red songs, Social mobilization.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Social mobilization is a process that mobilizes the masses to the highest extent through agitation and calls for participation. An effective social mobilization reflects on not only the accomplishment of its purpose, but also the raise of people's national self-esteem and pride, which further stimulates their spirit of patriotism. The red songs created during the Yan'an period successfully played a wide role of mobilization not in the Yan'an area only, but also spread over China.

2. CHARACTERISTICS OF ‘RED SONGS’ ON THE SOCIAL MOBILIZATION DURING THE YAN'AN PERIOD

2.1. The Nature of Broadly Uniting People Belonging to Various Social Classes

Clear demands of literary artists have been raised in Mao Zedong's speech “The Yan'an Forum on Literature and Art “that” Therefore, our literature and art are first for the workers, the class that leads the revolution. Secondly, they are for the peasants, the most numerous and most steadfast of our allies in the revolution. Thirdly, they are for the armed workers and peasants,

namely, the Eighth Route and New Fourth Armies and the other armed units of the people, which are the main forces of the revolutionary war. Fourthly, they are for the labouring masses of the urban petty bourgeoisie and for the petty-bourgeois intellectuals, both of whom are also our allies in the revolution and capable of long-term co-operation with us. These four kinds of people constitute the overwhelming majority of the Chinese nation, the broadest masses of the people.”[1] As an important section of the red culture, red song not only inspires people's enthusiasm, but also mobilizes the broadest class of people. Red song cannot be isolated from the masses. Tthe literary artists of the Yan'an period truly experienced and understood the people's joys through merging deeply into their lives. As a result, they were able to create works that met the requirements of the time and the psychological needs of the people.

During the period of the Anti - Japanese war in 1930s-40s, as the Great Production Movement was in full swing, the female slob second-rate women were rehabilitated by the government in Shaan-Gan-Ning Border Region in order to fulfil the requirement on labour in the “Yan'an big production campaign”. A series of red songs shaped the political movement of the Communist Party into a social movement with mass participation. The songs "Joke on the female slob ",

"Reforming the female slobs", "Women hold up half the sky", etc. were widely spread in the countryside and results in positive impacts on the women. The transformation of the female slobs was closely in line with the Marxist's concept of women's participation in labor for liberation. The Communist Party shaped the role of women as new laborers in practice, affirming the value of women's work and creating the Yan'an model of women's liberation. The transformation of the female slobs led to the formation of new women, new families and new societies. Meanwhile, a number of songs for children and youth were created by the CCP, which conveyed the concept of communism in a way that the youth could understand and actively guided them to be courageous and active in the struggle and to participate in the war against the Japanese. The mobilization work conducted through the red songs during the Yan'an period gave consideration to the broad in scope and able to be appropriately individualized and implemented given the different circumstances of the mobilized objects at the same time. It reflected the nature of broadly uniting people belonging to various social classes

2.2. Localization for the Broadly Spreading

The literary and artistic dissemination work of CPC during the Yan'an period was strongly featured by the politics and the adoption to local ized conditions. The disseminator did extensive "feed-forward" work, screened the information, and processed it in the targeted manners in order to achieve better results. For example, during the "New Yangko Campaign" in 1940s, the literary and artistic workers of Lu Xun Institute of Arts went to folk art collection. They visited the countryside, learned the local language, learned the thoughts of the masses, and created works that favoured by the masses. At the same time, they made full use of newspapers, magazines and other communication tools to publicize the red performances and expand their influence. The real reactions of those who watched the performances were directly or indirectly provided feed back to the communicators, showing the creators of literature and art a clearer direction to move forward.

In the early days of the CCP in Yan'an, most of the literary and art workers were highly educated and their petty-bourgeois ideas had not yet been completely converted, the literary works they created were only recognized by a small number of high-ranking intellectuals and had a merely limited effects of dissemination, in a situation of 'too cultured to be appreciated by the masses', and not close enough to the daily life of the masses,. After "The Yan'an Forum on Literature and Art", many literary and art workers changed their minds fundamentally and responded to Chairman Mao's call to reach out to the masses and change their thinking. They created plenty of popular

literary and art works which were closely related to the daily lives of the people, and were more oriented to the masses,. As a result, these new creates gained wider audience and fit in better with the Communist Party's policy on the literature and art.

2.3. Diversity of Forms for the Enjoyment of both Refined and Popular Tastes

The Chinese Communist Party was based in Shaan-Gan-Ning Border Region during the Yan'an period; therefore the red songs were born with more regional characteristics than in the previous periods. In addition, Lu Xun Institute of Arts, as one of the centres of literature and art during the war period, produced a large number of works that are admired by both the refined and the popular, satisfying the people's demand. Through the converting of folk songs in Northern Shaanxi, a series of literary works with distinct political characteristics emerged, such as "Struggle Yangge" and "Turnover Yangge". Meanwhile, these works successfully kept the original simple and spirited tunes of the folk songs in, taking the experience of the public into account. At that time, the Yangge team of Lu Xun Institute of Arts was the shining star widely admired by the people. The staffs and students of actively went to the countryside and the front line, devoting themselves into the war, combining elegant art with exoteric texts, and creating a series of classic works such as "Brother and Sister Clear Land", "Production Cantata ", and "Husband and Wife learn to read". Moreover, as one of the most classic work of Yan'an literature and art, "The White Haired Girl" originated from the superstitious story of the "White Hair immortal "and evolved into a deep theme that "the old society tortured the mankind into ghosts, and the new society purifies the ghosts back to mankind". Such refinement process fully demonstrates the demand of the Chinese Communist Party to spread its political identity.

Apart from the professionals at Lu Xun Institute of Arts, many red songs were directly created by the literary enthusiasts such as the soldiers, workers, and peasants in their daily lives. Because the adaptation of folk songs was one of the most popular activities of the local masses during their leisure time. Under the background of deep implementation of the CCP's politics and ideology, these literary enthusiasts closely adopted folk art following the political demands, giving new vitality to the traditional forms of art such as Qinqiang, shadow play, Yangge, and puppetry. It was the diversity in the traditional folk literature and art enhanced the development of the red song at that time.

3. PROMISING EFFECTS OF RED SONGS ON SOCIAL MOBILIZATION DURING THE CCP YAN'AN PERIOD

3.1. *Integrating the Forces from all Classes of Peasant*

Due to the ignorance of integrating all classes of the peasant classes during a specific period of time, CCP only took the poor and hired peasants as its target for unity and the rich peasants as the target for struggle session, which makes the rich peasants the victims of struggle and intensifying the conflicts among all the peasant classes. On recognizing this problem, the CCP adjusted its policy and actively united the all classes of peasant in order to eliminate divisions and achieve coexistence, the rich peasants were allowed to join the peasant associations and therefore form a broader peasant organization together with the poor peasants, which recognized the identity of the rich peasants and affirmed their role in the resistance against invaders politically.

By implementing a series of policies, the CCP sought to eliminate the contradictions that existed between the various classes, such as advocating rent and interest reductions for landlords, honoring model workers, actively helping slob people, women reformation, and launching a large-scale production movement. According to the policy requirements of the Chinese Communist Party, the Shaan-Gan-Ning Border Region implemented rent and interest reductions during the Yan'an period, which greatly weakened the contradictions between different classes of peasants. Meanwhile, the red songs played an active role in propaganda and education at that time, giving birth to works such as the Yangge opera "Rent Reduction Meeting" and the red song "Turning Over to the Way of Love". During the Yan'an period, the Shaan-Gan-Ning Border Region was severely blockaded by the Kuo Min Tang (KMT), which resulted in a serious shortage of life supplies. The CCP was constrained by limited economic conditions to carry out better anti-war work. Although red songs alone could not fundamentally eliminate the class difference, the easy dissemination and wide applicability were very effective in mobilizing peasants of different classes to reduce their conflicts and to integrate the forces of all classes to fight against Japan.

3.2. *Promoting the Spontaneous Support of the Mass to the War*

The red songs created during the Yan'an period not only served as political propaganda tool, but also, and more importantly, had a good mobilizing effect, giving the masses a clearer perception of the anti-war activities, preventing them to participate into the war. People from all classes in the society participated in the anti-Japanese

national united front, and the enthusiasm for joining the army and fighting against the invader grew with the red song. It was clear that the red songs stimulated the patriotism of the masses, activated their national pride, and promoted the spontaneous support of the masses for the war.

Due to the remote location of the Shaan-Gan-Ning Border Region, the masses were not highly educated, which had little spirit of resistance and awareness of political participation. By creating red songs close to the reality of the masses' lives, the China Communist Party during the Yan'an period promoted the awakening of people's political consciousness, made them actively participate in politics, and widely spread Marxist theories and new democratic concepts. From the illiterate elderly to the children, the concept of class was deeply rooted in the hearts of the people. Women were growing in their thinking and bravely pursued for free love and new-style marriage. The women's political rights and family status were significantly changed. The widespread dissemination of red songs made the masses in the Shaan-Gan-Ning Border Region realize that victory in the war of resistance was a matter of life and death for every person and every family, and that it was a war against invader. The red songs were not only created by the literary artists of Lu Xun Institute of Arts, but also by many people, who enthusiastically sang about their own lives, showing the optimism of the general public and the military during the war years. Under such background, the Yan'an spirit of "self-reliance and hard work" was formed.

Although the red songs could not improve the real situation of the people in the border region, which was characterized by lack of life supplies and difficulties in life, the people were greatly encouraged in spirit and had a new outlook, and they actively fought against the war and went to the front. In addition, the red songs also inspired people to make efforts to save themselves, and the masses responded positively by joining in the great production movement, completing the process from passive to active.

3.3. *Maintaining Political Stability and Political Identity*

During the thirteen years of the CCP in Yan'an, many effective measures were taken in mobilizing the resistance to carry out production, all of which achieved good results. In addition, social mobilization achieved more obvious results, as the masses went from being ignorant of their rights to gradually participating in political life, and the degree of political participation gradually increased. More and more people participated in the political elections in the border region. These phenomena highly demonstrated the high degree of political identification of the masses with the CPC in the border region, and lay a good foundation for the

political stability of the Shaan-Gan-Ning Border Region.

Under the call of "literature and art serve politics", a series of policies, lines and political slogans of the time, such as "self-reliance and hard work", were used as the core of creation, giving birth to a large number of realistic works such as "Nanniwan Labor", "Flower Drum for the Army" and "Twelve Sickles". The successful performance of these works gained good political influence for the CCP and successfully shaped the red symbols of Yan'an literature and art, forming a set of symbolic languages in line with the political demands. Behind the "blossoming of a hundred flowers in literature and art", it is the power that embeds its designated discourse order in a programmatic narrative in the vehicle of literature and art. As a result, it became straightforward to harvest the expected political goals.

The degree of political identification directly determines whether social mobilization could achieve the ultimate success. If the mobilization object does not have a high degree of identification with the mobilization subject, it is difficult to maintain the social mobilization even if it has achieved certain results. The social mobilization carried out by the CCP during the Yan'an period was to make the people in the Shaan-Gan-Ning Border Region understand the concept of class equality, the purpose and meaning of the revolution carried out by the CCP, and thus psychologically identify with the political philosophy of the CCP through a series of measures, so as to maintain the stability of the political ecology of the entire border area, concentrate the strength of the whole nation in unity, actively resist the war, and achieve the ultimate victory.

4. DEFICIENCIES OF 'RED SONGS' ON THE SOCIAL MOBILIZATION

4.1. The Negative Effects of Social Mobilization

Social mobilization is a double-edged sword. When the objectives and tasks of social mobilization are not clearly distinguished, inappropriate approaches are utilized, or excessive mobilization are applied, social order and political stability may be endangered. Since the social mobilization has certain uncertainty, social mobilization does not always achieve the expected effect. Meanwhile, successful social mobilization generally requires the joint action of multiple factors such as subject and object, while excessive pursuit of mobilization effect or the adoption of improper mobilization methods may lead to the side effects. According to the government process theory, social mobilization can, to a certain extent, complement official political institutions and increase their political influence in both breadth and depth, but over-reliance on social mobilization, or utilize as an implementation

of governmental decisions, has obvious shortcomings and cannot replace the normal implementation of general policies.

The fundamental support for social mobilization comes from its own political system, and thus is prone to the guiding ideology of achieving goals at all costs. Those guided by this ideology are prone to extreme behaviours resulting from the value orientation of the ultimate goal. It adversely affects social development and the health of the political ecology. Under the background of the strong propaganda of social mobilization and the severe adopted political, administrative and organizational approaches, all levels of organizations face strong political pressure. According to the pyramid structure of the political hierarchy, the pressure will cascade downward, leading to a higher possibility of over-mobilization the further down the hierarchy goes, which may seriously break the solid social structure and even create a crisis of trust in the political power. Social mobilization generally emphasizes the maximum mobilization of people and materials, and is a national campaign. It is truly an effective way for achieving certain goals in the short time. Because of the stronger purposefulness of mobilization, the beginning of social mobilization may make the participants and administrators of politics resort to breaking regulations and even laws, weakening the authority of the legal system and posing a great risk to the good functioning of society and legalization.

4.2. Deficiencies of Red Songs on Social Mobilization during the CCP Yan'an Period

Mao Zedong pointed out that "Proletarian literature and art are part of the whole proletarian revolutionary cause; they are, as Lenin said, cogs and wheels in the whole revolutionary machine. Therefore, Party work in literature and art occupies a definite and assigned position in Party revolutionary work as a whole and is subordinated to the revolutionary tasks set by the Party in a given revolutionary period." [2] Although the Yan'an period witnessed the creation of works with strong political guidance such as 'The Yellow River Cantata', 'The White Maiden', and 'Wang Gui and Li Xiangxiang', which brought a great boost to the CCP's work in the base areas. However, many shortcomings still exist when looking at the whole process of the CCP's use of red literature and art for the mobilization.

First of all, a petty-bourgeois ideology in the creation of literature and art can be found, especially in the early period. When the literature and art were created, more attention was paid to artistic expression instead of political expression, and the plays created were grand in narrative and majestic in spectacle, the authors were unwilling to write small scripts which could be performed universally. Also the creators were unable to write works that truly reflected the life of the

real masses and exposed deep-seated conflicts due to their previous class and educational level. Secondly, the problem of perfunctory response in grassroots work exists. Many local theater companies did not have enough actors, and often one actor played many roles, and mostly just made up the work to cope with it. Moreover, except for Lu Xun Institute of Arts, which had a certain number of professional literary workers, most of the actors and actresses in local theatre groups were from traditional theatre groups and had no modern literary education before. The intensive performance schedule also made the actors and actresses lack artistic training. As a result, the performances were often not as effective as they should be. The communication effect is affected to a certain extent, as the audience lacked empathy for the content of the performances and identifies less with the political ideas to be conveyed.

"The best thing of any kind must be able to bring real benefits to the people." [3] In General, although there is still much room for improvement and progress in the use of red songs for social mobilization during the CCP Yan'an period, its overall success and availability are a significant part of the history of CCP mobilization.

5. CONCLUSION

The Communist Party of China is good at mobilizing work. As an indispensable part of literary and artistic work, the red songs have a bright political color and wide spreading that fit well with social mobilization

work. A series of popular red songs born in the Yan'an period and spread to these days are the best examples. These songs have lasted forever and can still play an inspiring, emotional and political expression role even today. Social mobilization, as a powerful means for the CCP to carry out ideological and political education, runs through the entire developmental context of the CCP and promotes the continuous development of the party and the country. Throughout the party's development history, social mobilization has always been part of it. Today, as we enter the new era in an all-round way, doing a good job in social mobilization can better carry out ideological and political education and convey party values.

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