



CHAPTER 1

Stories of Incorrupt Government: “The Corruption and Unjustness of Officials Give Birth to the Decline of Governance”

REFUSING GOLD WITH THE FOUR KNOWS

There is a famous story in Chinese history. Yang Zhen, an official of the Eastern Han Dynasty, was transferred from the Prefectural Governor of Jingzhou to the Prefecture Chief of Donglai. On his way to Donglai to assume office, when he traveled to Changyi, Wang Mi, the County Governor of Changyi, who had been recommended by him when he was the Prefectural Governor of Jingzhou, heard of his arrival and visited him empty-handed during the day. However, that night, to repay him for his recommendation and help, Wang intended to make Yang a present of ten catties of gold, saying, “It’s late at night now, so no one will know.” Yang responded, “The heaven knows, the earth knows, you know, and I know. How could you say nobody knows?” Wang felt ashamed to hear that. As an official, Yang was honest and upright. In reply to the advice of his friends and elders to purchase properties for his scions, he always said, “I’ll bequeath the title ‘descendant of an incorruptible official’ to them. It’s a rich legacy, isn’t it?” This is truly the consciousness of incorruption.

- Speech at the Seventh Plenary Session of the 18th CPC Central Commission for Discipline Inspection (January 6, 2017).

Commentary

China has had many stories of incorruptible officials since ancient times. For example, Yang Xu hung the fish that his subordinates presented to him outside as a refusal of bribes, Zihan treasured the morality of incorruption, Kong Fen said no to embezzling money when he was an official in an economically developed area, and Bao Zheng did not take even an inkstone as he left office. Similarly, Yang Zhen's stories of "refusing gold with the four knows" and "bequeathing the reputation for incorruptibility to descendants" have endured.

Yang Zhen, whose courtesy name was Boqi, was born in Huayin, Shaanxi Province. He was a famous scholar in the Eastern Han Dynasty. Entering the political stratum at the age of 50 and eventually reaching a position among the Three Counselors of State, he kept himself free from corruption and bribery throughout his official career. The deed of "refusing gold with the four knows" was originally recorded in the *Book of the Later Han-Biography of Yang Zhen*. It was also written in the *Biography of Yang Zhen* that, "Yang Zhen was so impartial and incorrupt that he always refused private visits. His children and grandchildren often ate vegetables and went out on foot. An elder among his old friends proposed that he should start some businesses for his descendants. However, he retorted, 'I'll bequeath the title 'descendant of an incorruptible official' to them. It's a rich legacy, isn't it?'"

Because of the story "Refusing Gold with the Four Knows", the later generations often called him "Four Knows Yang", "Prefecture Chief Four Knows" or "Mr. Four Knows", and the Yang Ancestral Hall and Four Knows Hall were preserved in the government compound of Laizhou until the Ming Dynasty. Hu Ceng, a poet of the Tang Dynasty, praised Yang in the *Poem on History-The Land West of Hanguguan*, "Yang Zhen was dead and buried in the land west of Hanguguan, where it is bleak and desolate. However, he left the good reputation of 'the four knows' in the world, which will last forever."

Yang not only exercised self-control to protect himself from immorality but he also had the courage to criticize abuses in officialdom, even daring to speak out against the imperial family. Geng Bao, an uncle on the maternal side of Emperor An of Han, Yan Xian, the brother of the empress and some other kinsmen of the emperor had recommended their relatives or friends

to him for official positions. Knowing the candidates’ lack of conscience and ability, he always gave them a flat refusal.

Such superior moral quality and family tradition are the noble heritage of his descendants. According to historical records, Yang’s family remained incorruptible and maintained the family tradition of rectitude for four generations. His son, Yang Bing, lived secluded in a village and made a career of teaching until the age of 40, when he went out of the village and started his official career. Adopting his father’s style, “Yang Bing was celebrated for incorruptibility, shutting the door in the face of a former subordinate who proposed to offer him a large bribe.” Yang Bing’s son, Yang Ci, a grand commandant, as well as Yang Qi and Yang Biao, the great grandsons of Yang Zhen, all followed the family tradition of rectitude. Yang Zhen’s incorruptible deed of “bequeathing the reputation of incorruptibility to one’s descendants” has been retold throughout the ages.

At the Seventh Plenary Session of the 18th CPC Central Commission for Discipline Inspection, Xi Jinping emphasized that, “The leaders and officials of the Party must value consciousness and must be conscious. Consciousness and consciousness-raising will guide us to the right side of conduct.” He recounted Yang Zhen’s stories of “refusing gold with the four knows” and “bequeathing the reputation for incorruptibility to descendants” to illustrate the importance of consciousness for a person to gain a foothold in society, start his career, expound his ideas in writing, and cultivate morality. Only a conscious person can distinguish right from wrong and encourage healthy trends while dispelling perverse ones. Consciousness is the “touchstone” of one’s ideological attainment. In the face of contradictions between publicness and privateness, righteousness and self-interest, right and wrong, good and evil, as well as pain and pleasure, that which directs one’s choices is consciousness.

PERTINENT DICTUMS AND DEEP TRUTHS

Mei Cheng, a scholar of the Western Han Dynasty, told a thought-provoking story in the *Seven Elicitations*. The prince of Chu fell ill. Wu Ke diagnosed his illness as malaise and gave him a prescription of learning and exploring “pertinent dictums and deep truths”, aimed at healing him with morality. Gradually, the prince’s face lit up, and, all of a sudden, the illness disappeared. Comprehensively strengthening Party discipline requires both a temporary solution and a permanent cure. A temporary solution refers to applying drastic remedies to repel an unhealthy atmosphere and

punishing crimes with stringent laws, and a permanent cure calls for us to cultivate our culture and to maintain the foundation of government.

- Speech at the Seventh Plenary Session of the 18th CPC Central Commission for Discipline Inspection (January 6, 2017).

Commentary

The *Seven Elicitations* is an allegorical literary work produced by Mei Cheng, a master in Fu (a literary form in ancient China). The work presents a fictitious story: the prince of Chu was sick, and Wu Ke went to visit him. They engaged in a discussion from shallow to deep on the basis of the state and cause of the prince's illness. The discussion consisted of seven elicitation and answers, with each question and answer conveying a connotation.

Wu believed that the reason why the prince fell ill was that he provided for himself and lived comfortably to an excessive extent. He took a horse-drawn carriage wherever he went, ate greasy food, and lived in a dwelling where a constant temperature was maintained. In the palace, there were plenty of maids to wait on him. Consequently, he was dispirited and became riddled with ailments. This was not a physical problem but one of spiritual degeneration, for which medicine and acupuncture were of no avail. The illness could only “be expelled by pertinent dictums and deep truths.”

Accordingly, Wu introduced the pleasures of music, fine food, a riding carriage, travel, hunting, and contemplating the great ocean waves, enlightening the prince as to changes in lifestyle, and the prince's face gradually lit up. Finally, Wu proposed to introduce “the most senior and resourceful scholars with prestige and wisdom” to the prince and invite them to explore the principles of state government and self-cultivation with the prince by “discussing subtle truths and distinguishing right from wrong.” Hearing that, the prince suddenly stood up by leaning on the table, and the illness disappeared completely.

Through a conversation between fictitious characters, the *Seven Elicitations* exhorts nobles not to abandon themselves to a life of debauchery, creature comforts and enjoyments. The seven pleasures, in fact, imply the dialectical relationship between material and spirit. If a person indulges in pleasures and debauchery and lacks spiritual pursuit and moral self-discipline, a variety of pathogenic bacterium will multiply in his body, as in the story of the prince of Chu, “whose spirits were low, and he seemed to

suffer from various diseases.” Therefore, only if we make up for a deficiency in mental nutrition can we gain substantive health. Chairman Mao also appreciated the *Seven Elicitations*. At the Lushan Conference, he instructed subordinates to print and distribute the article to all participants, and he even wrote a long commentary on it.

In a figurative style, and with imposing writing techniques as well as a profound meaning, the *Seven Elicitations* can be regarded as the forerunner of the long Fu of the Han Dynasty, having a great influence on the literature of later ages. In *Dragon-Carving and the Literary Mind*, Liu Xie wrote “As the first poem in the genre of ‘Seven’, the *Seven Elicitations* by Mei Cheng is rich and variegated as rolling clouds and forceful as gusty winds.” Followed and studied by later generations, this literary form developed into the genre of “Seven”, such as the *Seven Stimulations* by Fu Yi, the *Seven Debaters* by Zhang Heng, the *Seven Expositions* by Wang Can, the *Seven Edifications* by Cao Zhi, the *Seven Attestations* by Lu Ji, and the *Seven Orders* by Zhang Xie.

Xi Jinping seeks to stress, through the story of the *Seven Elicitations*, that only by improving cultivation and strengthening faith can we maintain the foundation of government. As the saying goes, “A firm foundation will stabilize the country, while an unstable one may endanger it.” Xi often emphasizes “reinforcing the root and cultivating the vitality.” “Root” refers to the foundation or heart. Only a firm root can absorb nutrients and grow into a plant with luxuriant foliage. “Vitality” refers to vigor or spirit. Only with abundant vigor can we resist evil influences and maintain exuberant vitality. Securing the foundation requires us as a nation to fortify our ideals and faith and improve our accomplishments in the spirit of the Party.

NO “HOUSE OF CARDS” IN ANTI-CORRUPTION

As the struggle against corruption continues to deepen, a number of notable tendencies in public opinion are emerging in our society. Some emerging opinions have even received considerable support. For example, some of these views include the ideas that anti-corruption has nothing to do with the interests of the masses; anti-corruption leads to acts of nonfeasance by officials; anti-corruption hinders economic development; anti-corruption is all about power struggles; and anti-corruption should be slowed down. Under these circumstances, we must differentiate and analyze such vague views and incorrect remarks and guide the tendencies

of public opinion to refute erroneous statements, defuse negative emotions, and eliminate prejudices and misunderstandings. To create a good atmosphere of public opinion to improve Party conduct, build a clean government, and fight corruption in a meaningful way, we should make clear that the anti-corruption actions of the CPC are not the work of elites who look up to certain people and look down on others, nor are they the product of a “House of Cards” that is rife with scrambles for power and profit, nor an “unfinished building” with a beginning but no end.

- Speech at the Sixth Plenary Session of the 18th CPC Central Commission for Discipline Inspection (January 12, 2016).

Commentary

House of Cards is an American political TV series, which tells the story of a cold-blooded American congressman and his wife who is as power-hungry as he is, ruthlessly fighting for power and money in the American political arena.

Francis Underwood, the hero of the TV series, is a wily politico with almost no bottom line. To defeat the incoming Secretary of State, he sends his subordinate to drink and take drugs with the witness to blackmail the witness into giving false testimony. To trap the Minister of Education, he betrays the venerable former minister and pretends to be a sympathetic colleague. He even coerces his subordinates into loyalty to him with the skeletons in their closets, and he goes to all lengths to retaliate against them once they become disloyal. The show's style of critical realism has won it much acclaim and many fans.

Premiering on February 1, 2013, the first season of *House of Cards* received much attention from politicians and people in many countries as soon as it was released as it unfolds dangerous games of power-for-money, power-for-power, and power-for-sex deals among American politicians in an extremely realistic manner. Both former US President Obama and former British Prime Minister Cameron have openly said they have watched it. The American presidential election in 2016 was full of ups and downs, which can be regarded as a realistic version of *House of Cards*. With the confirmation of the production of the fifth season, this TV series will continue to showcase the black-ops and contemptible intrigue of Western politics.

Michael Dobbs, the author of the novel, *House of Cards*, is a British politician. He entered politics in 1975, successively serving as the Government Special Adviser and Chief of Staff of Mrs. Thatcher’s government, and he eventually retired as the Vice Chairman of the Conservative Party. What makes his novels of officialdom realistic and marvelous is his real-life experience in Western political circles. The foreign media has said of the novel, “This blood-and-thunder tale, lifelike and thoroughly cynical, certainly carries the ring of authenticity.”

At the Sixth Plenary Session of the 18th CPC Central Commission for Discipline Inspection, Xi Jinping emphasized that the anti-corruption actions of the CPC are not the product of elites who look up to certain people and look down on others, nor of a “House of Cards” that is rife with scrambles for power and profit, nor are they the product of an “unfinished building” with a beginning but no end. This is a convincing retort against the vague views and incorrect remarks such as “anti-corruption has nothing to do with the interests of the masses” and “anti-corruption is all about a power struggle,” embodying the firm determination of the Central Committee of the CPC headed by Comrade Xi Jinping to fight against corruption with an iron hand.

This was not the first time that Xi used “House of Cards” as metaphor. When he made a state visit to the US in September 2015, a reporter asked, “Does anti-corruption in China involve a power struggle?” Xi replied, “We vigorously investigate corruption cases and insist on cracking down on both tigers and flies to comply with the people’s requests. There is no ‘house of cards’, and this has nothing to do with a power struggle.” President Xi, who is good at telling stories, astutely answered the sensitive question using a cultural symbol of the US, winning widespread praise from both audiences and the American media. The claim of “no ‘house of cards’” suggests that the CPC is firm in rectifying its working style and fighting against corruption.

THE HARD-EARNED WEALTH OF THE PEOPLE

There was a famous, honest, and upright official in Lankao named Zhang Boxing, who served successively as the Governor of Fujian, Governor of Jiangsu, and Minister of Rites. To decline presents from all parties, he pointedly wrote the *Official Denunciation of Giving Presents*, saying, “Though a thread of silk or a grain of rice is tiny, it concerns my reputation. Though a cent or a dime is negligible, it is derived from the hard-earned wealth of

the people. If I treat the people with more lenience, then they will receive more grace. Even if I take a bribe of only one penny, then my moral quality is not worth a red cent. How can we regard this as a conventional practice of social intercourse? An ill-gotten gain, if any, would break the principle of incorruption. If you say it is not misgotten, then where does it come from?" In my opinion, this can also serve as a mirror for us.

- Speech at the Enlarged Meeting of the Standing Committee of the Lankao County Party Committee of Henan Province (March 18, 2014).

Commentary

With regard to the incorruptible officials in the Qing Dynasty, in addition to Yu Chenglong, who is known to all, another who we must mention is Zhang Boxing. Zhang Boxing was born in Lankao, Henan Province, in 1652 and died in 1725, having served successively as the Governor of Fujian and the Governor of Jiangsu, eventually reaching the position of Minister of Rites. Emperor Kangxi once commented on him as follows: "Boxing is an official of rectitude and integrity. This is known to all." Emperor Kangxi further stated that "there is no one in the world more honest or upright than Boxing."

When Zhang was the Governor of Fujian, he specifically wrote the Official Denunciation of Giving Presents and posted it over the gates of his residence and yamen (the local government office in ancient China) to decline the presents arriving in quick succession. Concise and comprehensive, this official denunciation set out that, "Though a thread of silk or a grain of rice is tiny, it concerns my reputation. Though a cent or a dime is negligible, it is derived from the hard-earned wealth of the people. If I treat the people with more lenience, then they will receive more grace. Even if I take a bribe of only one penny, then my moral quality is not worth a red cent. How can we regard this as a conventional practice of social intercourse? An ill-gotten gain, if any, would break the principle of incorruption. If you say it is not misgotten, then where does it come from?" Reading the official denunciation, the gift-givers felt snubbed and left quietly. This denunciation was subsequently read widely, and it became "an iron law" of political integrity.

In the year of famine, Zhang "allocated and transported money and food from his hometown and arranged for the sewing of cotton-padded clothes

to save the people from hunger and cold.” He even gave a command to open the province-owned grain depot for disaster relief, for which he was accused of arbitrariness, to which he asked in reply, in stern and just words, “The grain depot or human life, which is more important?” How could the people refrain from respecting and supporting such an upright and kind official? When he left the office of the Governor of Jiangsu, Yangzhou, people intended to give him fruits and vegetables as farewell presents; however, he graciously declined. “When you were in office, you got nothing from us except a cup of water. Now, you are outgoing, don’t decline our good will!” sobbed the people. Having no alternative, Zhang took a green vegetable and two pieces of bean curd, which conveyed the meaning of “clean hands.”

Lankao is designated by Xi Jinping as a contact point of the second round of the Program of Mass Line Education and Practice. At the Enlarged Meeting of the Standing Committee of the Lankao County Party Committee, Xi related the deeds of Zhang, illustrating that scrupulous abidance to the principle of integrity in small matters is the first line of defense against corruption and the foundation for a positive work ethic. Xi quoted the *Official Denunciation of Giving Presents* in full to remind all Party members of the profound philosophy that quantitative change will lead to qualitative change because “most corrupt officials take the road of corruption and degeneration starting with self-indulgence in small matters.”

“This can also serve as a mirror for us,” Xi asserted in this article. This embodiment of the self-disciplined consciousness of strictness in the prevention of abuse of power, and honesty in the performance of official duties, reflects that the culture of clean government in ancient times and historical experiences and lessons in combating corruption and upholding integrity provide a rich basis for today’s anti-corruption education. On many occasions, Xi has told stories of ancient incorruptible officials and quoted mottoes about clean government. Under his auspices, the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of CPC has even conducted a collective study in the practices of anti-corruption and the building of clean government in Chinese history.

FAREWELL MY CONCUBINE

Our Party gained the support of the overwhelming majority of the Chinese people as the dominant political force in China. Despite the firm ruling foundation, if we fail to eliminate misconduct from the Party, the tragedy

of “Farewell My Concubine” will come true. So we must have a sense of crisis.

- Speech during the Investigation and Instruction of the Program of Mass Line Education and Practice in Hebei Province, (July 11–12, 2013).

Commentary

At the end of the Qin Dynasty, Xiang Yu and his uncle, Xiang Liang, raised an invincible army to fight the Qin government and eventually routed-out the Qin army in the Battle of Julu. After the fall of Qin, Xiang Yu took advantage of his power and divided the territory of the state and conferred 18 seigneurs. In the eyes of the world, Xiang was a brave and strong man who was versed in military affairs and of matchless boldness. With the Battle of Julu, he awed all his compatriots and was claimed to be the “Overlord of Western Chu.”

The Feast at Hong Gate was supposed to be the perfect opportunity for Xiang Yu to kill Liu Bang. However, at the feast, the conceited and opinionated Xiang broke his agreement with Fan Zeng after having been deceived by Liu, who swallowed his humiliation to submit to Xiang’s will and convinced by Fan Kuai, who spoke sternly out of a sense of justice. Fan Zeng “winked at Xiang repeatedly” to hint that it was time to kill Liu; however, Xiang not only turned a blind eye but also accepted Liu’s present gladly and allowed him to escape. He even turned a deaf ear when Fan Zeng angrily rebuked him: “This man is undeserving of jointly planning for a great action.” Finally, at the young age of 31, Xiang cut his own throat, ashamed of the defeat he suffered in the contest with Liu for dominion over the state.

According to the *Records of the Historian-Biographic Sketches of Xiang Yu*, Xiang chanted in a heroic but mournful tone as his army was defeated, “I can root mountains up, with matchless might! But my good fortune wanes that my steed can no longer fight. My steed cannot fight, and what should I do? My lady fair, tell me what can I do!” The tragic sight caused tears to trickle down the cheeks of all those who were present.

Sima Qian commented on Xiang Yu, “He simply showed off his exploits and made a parade of his ability without learning from his predecessors,” further stating that he was “even unaware of his fault, nor did he blame

himself.” Coming to the hopeless situation, he even exculpated himself from blame by saying, “It is the heaven that will kill me, not my military strategy.” With such a mentality, it was inevitable that he would be defeated.

To warn the whole army against complacency or stagnation in making progress, Chairman Mao wrote in *The People’s Liberation Army Captures Nanjing* that “We should exploit our victories in hot pursuit of the tottering foe, and we cannot ape Xiang Yu, the overlord of Chu, who let the foe go just to achieve fame.” At the Seven-thousand People Congress held in 1962, he quoted Xiang Yu’s tale of “Farewell My Concubine,” which was used as a metaphor for losing power, to urge the leading officials to be generous, and remain open-minded to advice from inferiors, saying that if we always refuse the views of others, just like Xiang Yu, it will be difficult for us to avoid the dead end faced by Xiang.

Xi Jinping viewed the issue of work style from the perspective of the ruling foundation and the survival of the Party, and he emphasized that the people’s support is crucial to our success. By using the tragedy of “Farewell My Concubine” as a metaphor, he also cautioned Party officials and members that a poor work style will cause us to lose the support of the masses and push our Party and country to end in tragedy. He also said, “If we let a poor work style be, without correcting it in a resolute way, it will develop into an invisible wall that separates our Party from the masses and deprives us of our roots, blood vessels and strength.” These sonorous words not only contain a profound summary of historical experiences and lessons but it also expresses the earnest expectation that all comrades will improve their work style and maintain close ties with the people.

WAIST BENT WHEN PROMOTED THE THIRD TIME

Of course, daring to take on responsibilities for the cause of the Party and the people is not about personal fame. We cannot confound it with conceit and overbearing. In the Spring and Autumn period, Zheng Kaofu, a senior official of the state of Song, who served several dukes of the States of Song and was highly self-disciplined, engraved a motto on a ding an ancient cooking vessel in his family ancestral temple that read, “Head down when I was promoted the first time, back hunched when promoted the second time, and waist bent when promoted the third time. No one insults me if I keep close to the wall when walking along the street. What I need is only this vessel in which to cook porridge to feed my family.” I was deeply touched by this story when I read it. Our officials are all officials of the

Party, and our power is granted by the Party and the people. Thus, we should make ever-bolder efforts and show ever-greater determination in work and conduct ourselves in a modest and prudent manner that is free from arrogance and rashness.

- Speech at the National Conference on Organizational Work (June 28, 2013).

Commentary

The key to administering a country is incorruption, and incorruption is all about self-discipline. As early as 2,000 years ago, Confucius stated “If one is guided by profit in his action, he will be much murmured against.” This means that the person who cares only for his own interests will incur much resentment. Confucius also said “The gentleman seeks neither gratification of his appetite nor a comfortable home. He is quick in action but cautious in speech. He goes to men possessed of the Way to set himself right. Such a man can indeed be said to be eager to learn.” Coming to self-discipline, Zheng Kaofu, a seventh-generation ancestor of Confucius, interpreted this proposition long ago.

As a senior official of Song in the Spring and Autumn period, Zheng Kaofu successively assisted Duke Dai, Wu, and Xuan of Song, in ruling the state. Although he was heavily relied upon by the three monarchs and was offered the post of senior minister, second only to the monarch, he remained humble and acted in a respectful and low-key manner. To guard against self-reflection and to direct his descendants, he engraved a motto on a ding in his family ancestral temple, and his story has often been repeated: “Head down when I was promoted the first time, back hunched when promoted the second time, and waist bent when promoted the third time.” Among the three postures mentioned in the motto, “back hunched” appears more reverent than “head down”, while “waist bent” seems the most reverent. The postures provide a vivid display of how Zheng became more and more respectful as he was promoted. The progressive use of the three positions indeed leads the reader to a sense of humility and respect. After that, there is a sudden turn: “No one insults me if I keep close to the wall when walking along the street.” This was because he was protected by the power of personal character and morality.

We can also find the glorious deeds of Zheng in ancient books and records such as the *Records of the Historian—The Aristocratic Family of Confucius* and *Zuo’s Commentaries*. In the *Records of the Historian—The Aristocratic Family of Confucius*, Sima Qian wrote, “Zheng Kaofu successively assisted Duke Dai, Wu and Xuan of Song, in ruling the state, during which time he became more respectful every time he was promoted.” This is a manifestation of his morality of maintaining strictness in his self-cultivation and an upright manner in the performance of his official duty. Another much-told story is that he taught his descendants and other family members to abide by moral principles and to remain humble and respectful. In *Parental Instructions about Advocating Thrift to Sima Kang*, Sima Guang wrote, “In the olden days, Zheng Kaofu fed his family with porridge. Meng Xizi accordingly inferred that there would certainly be an illustrious and influential personage descended from his family.” Meng Xizi was a senior official of the state of Lu in the Spring and Autumn period. He foresaw that a certain celebrity would emerge from Zheng’s family. Now, a new historical Peking opera, *Zheng Kaofu*, jointly produced by the Peking Opera Theatre of Beijing and the National Centre for the Performing Arts, has dramatized the stories of Zheng. Zheng’s principles of being an incorrupt official, modestly exercising authority, and maintaining his family tradition of loyalty will further influence more people.

Zheng’s humility, uprightness, and modesty can restrain others from transgressing the bounds of decency and stop authorities from overstepping the bounds of discipline like a defense line of mentality against the pull of power. At the National Organization Work Conference, Xi Jinping told the story of “Waist Bent When Promoted the Third Time” to remind the leading officials and members of the Party to be strict in their self-development and in the exercise of power and self-discipline and to counsel them to remain humble, as Zheng Kaofu was.

Putting power into perspective and regulating the use of power can be regarded as the first threshold for testing our leading officials. Xi Jinping has put forward many important expositions with regard to the power of leading officials. In a speech at the Central Party School, he condensed the Marxist view of power in the following statement: “The power is from the people and for the people.” At the National Conference on Organizational Work, he also emphasized that “Avoiding responsibilities is the greatest disgrace for an official,” and he required Party officials to make ever-bolder efforts, to show ever-greater determination in their work, and to conduct

themselves in a modest and prudent manner free from arrogance and rashness. Furthermore, at the meeting with a class of County Party Secretaries at the Central Party School, he proposed the requirements of the “Four ‘With-in-Minds’”—with the Party in mind, with the people in mind, with responsibility in mind, and with self-discipline in mind. These important expositions give the leading officials precise directions for how to correct their views of power.

THE UNTIMELY END OF THE QIN DYNASTY

The First Emperor of Qin was the first feudal emperor to unify China. The founding of the Qin Dynasty was demanded by historical developments. However, after ascending to the throne, the emperor reveled in grandiose things and extorted excessive taxes and levies from the people, making the people furious with resentment. This finally drove Qin to its doom during the reign of the Second Emperor of Qin. Du Mu wrote in *On the Ah Fang Palace* that “The Qin Dynasty, having no opportunity of lamenting itself, was left to be lamented by later generations; and the later generations who lament Qin but refuse to learn a lesson from it make even later generations lament them.” After the establishment of the Tang Dynasty, Emperor Taizong of Tang accomplished the “Prosperity of Zhenguan” by summoning all his efforts to make the country prosperous, taking advice with an open mind and appointing those with talents of both ability and political integrity. However, the later rulers of Tang were carried away with time and indulged in carnal pleasures. For example, Emperor Xuanzong “... slept till the sun rose high, for the blessed night was short. From then on His Majesty no longer held morning court.” As a result, an atmosphere of bribery and corruption surrounded the officialdom at all levels, eventually causing the “Rebellion of An and Shi”, during which “rebels beat their war drums, making the earth quake, and the ‘song of Rainbow Skirt and Coat of Feathers’ broke.” The “Rebellion of An and Shi” dragged the dynasty from prosperity into decline. Soon after, Wang Xianzhi and Huang Chao led an uprising and captured Chang’an, and the Tang Dynasty came to ruin.

- Speech at the Second Plenary Session of the 18th CPC Central Commission for Discipline Inspection (January 22, 2013).

Commentary

“Although it can be referred to as God’s will, does the law of rise-and-fall not have anthropogenic factors?” Ouyang Xiu wrote in the *New History of the Five Dynasties—Preface to the Biography of a Performer*. Upon the analysis of the later Tang Dynasty’s course of decadence, from sudden prosperity to sudden death, he reached the conclusions that “diligence improves a nation while indulgence destroys it” and “small mistakes accumulate to form disasters, and indulgence traps the intelligence.” Both Qin’s ruin during the reign of the Second Emperor and the Rebellion of An and Shi breaking out during Tang provide the historical lesson that indulgence will destroy a nation.

Qin was the first great dynasty in history that unified China. This was an outstanding accomplishment of the First Emperor of Qin, Ying Zheng, who even created the praiseworthy achievement that “carriages have all wheels of the same size; all writing is with the same characters; the unified measurement and monetary units are adopted; and for conduct there are the same rules.” Nevertheless, just like what was written in the *Records of the Historian*, “the people suffered from torments for a long time because of the oppression by the Qin government.” Ying Zheng began the construction of his mausoleum soon after his enthronement, which was not completed until 208 BC, lasting 39 years and requiring the labor of 720,000 people. It has been determined that the number of people participating in this project was almost eight times that of the Pyramid of Khufu in Egypt. “The reason why the Qin Dynasty came to an end early in the sixteenth year of the reign of the Second Emperor of Qin was that the members of the imperial family were extravagant in preserving their health and had numerous people and objects to be buried with them when they died,” according to the *Book of Han*. Jia Yi wrote in *On the Faults of Qin* that “A single rustic nevertheless challenged this empire, and the government was toppled and the emperor was killed by the rebels, becoming a laughingstock in the eyes of all. Why? Because the ruler lacked humanity and righteousness, which reversed the situation with regard to attack and defense.” In addition, Du Mu once lamented, “It was Qin and not the world that exterminated the clan of Qin.” Simply put, what destroyed Qin was the monarch’s extravagance and dissipation as well as his lack of humanity and righteousness.

With respect to the Tang Dynasty’s history from prosperity to decay, the principal cause was also that the ruling class indulged in a life of pleasure and

comfort, and it became corrupt and degenerate. “Viewed from afar, the hills seemed like brocades in piles. The doors of the palace on hilltops opened one after another. A steed raising red dust won the fair mistress’ smiles. But few people knew how many steeds bringing her litchis died on the run.” This passage is from *The Summer Palace* by Du Mu, a narration of the story that a steed galloped to bring litchis to the Imperial Concubine Yang. This poem presented an intuitive image illustrating that the ruler of Tang wasted a lot of manpower and money to gratify his appetite. According to the *Old Book of Tang*, “In the imperial palace of Emperor Xuanzong of Tang, about seven hundred workers were employed to do brocading and embroider for the Imperial Concubine Yang, and hundreds of people were employed to carve and forge jewelry for her.” From this, we can obtain a hint of the imperial family’s extravagance and wastefulness in their daily lives. Indulging himself in worldly enjoyments, Emperor Xuanzong allowed the treacherous officials headed by Yang Guozhong to disturb the affairs of state, thus causing the dynasty, which was then at its peak, to decay when An Lushan raised an army to start the Rebellion of An and Shi.

An iron law proven by history is that integrity allows the regime to prosper, while corruption causes it to decay. Xi Jinping referred to the untimely end of Qin in the reign of its second emperor as well as the fall of the flourishing Tang to emphasize that corruption is a cancer of society and to remind the whole Party to take history as a mirror, to learn the historical lessons, and to fight unswervingly against corruption. As he stated, “Through a thorough review of history in China and elsewhere, our Party has realized that improving Party conduct, upholding integrity and combating corruption are vital for the survival of the Party and the state. Chinese history is littered with examples of serious corruption that led to government failure. Even in today’s world, the examples of losing political power because the ruling party became corrupt and degenerate as well as completely out of touch with the people are too numerous to enumerate!”

Having a deep sense of concern about corruption, Xi has said many times that “as the ruling party, the biggest threat we are faced with is corruption,” and “if we let the corruption problem intensify, we will inevitably meet the doom of our Party and country.” He also emphasized many times that the masses detest various types of corruption and privilege most, and these acts are most destructive to the close ties between our Party and the masses. As early as when he headed the administration of Ningde, Fujian Province, he said, “There is an issue of offence. If you violate the laws and party discipline to occupy a piece of land and build a house on it purely out of

self-interest, undermining our Party’s authority and image, then it is not the official who investigates and punishes you on behalf of the Party and the people’s interests that offends you, but rather, it is that you offend the Party, the people, the party discipline and the laws of the state.”

THE TUNE PRESAGING THE FALLEN STATE

In the Northern and Southern Dynasties, Chen Shubao, the Emperor of the state of Chen of the Southern Dynasties, reigned but did not govern and lived off the fat of the land. Later, when the troops of the Sui Dynasty marched south to attack the state of Chen, Chen’s army could not withstand a single blow, so that Chen Shubao was captured by the Sui army and finally died of illness. His poem *The Jude Tree-like Backyard Flower* is referred to as “the tune presaging the fallen state” by later generations. In the *Five Poems Written in Jinling—The Capital*, Liu Yuxi, the poet of the Tang Dynasty, wrote, “The monarchs of the six dynasties did their utmost to foster the extravagant climate in Jinling, especially the last king of Chen, who indulged himself in an extremely extravagant and luxurious life in the buildings Jieqi and Linchun. Now the rows of houses have vanished, and the city has become wild and covered with weeds. All of this was caused by the song of the ‘Backyard Flower’.” After the Anti-Japanese War, the Kuomintang took over many regions. However, they simply took the opportunity to wrest the “five sons”, causing the social unrest to die down. Totally losing popular support, they were soon driven away by the revolution led by our Party.

- Speech at the Second Plenary Session of the 18th CPC Central Commission for Discipline Inspection (January 22, 2013).

Commentary

Among the emperors of all the dynasties, Chen Shubao, the last king of the state of Chen of the Southern Dynasties, Li Yu, the last monarch of the Southern Tang Dynasty, and Zhao Ji, Emperor Huizong of the Northern Song Dynasty, were definitively ranked at the top in literary grace and talent.

Chen Shubao had a special fondness for poetry. At banquets, he recited poems and composed verse with the ministers. This played an important role in developing the metrical norms of poetry and laying a foundation for

the high point of poetry of the Sui and Tang dynasties. *The Jude Tree-like Backyard Flower* and other poems by him demonstrated his great literary attainments. Li Yu was not only proficient in calligraphy, painting, and music but also had certain attainments in various poetic styles, especially in Ci (a type of lyric poetry in ancient China). “Carved balustrades and marble steps must still be there, but rosy faces cannot be as fair. If you ask me how much my sorrow has increased, just see the overbrimming river flowing east!” This is the poem *The Beautiful Lady Yu*, which has been read through the ages, winning the honorary title of “King of Ci” for Li. Zhao Ji, a rare interdisciplinary artist in ancient times, created the calligraphy font “slender gold” and created a style in bird-and-flower painting.

In the *Comments on the Ancient and Modern Ci Poetry*, a book written by Shen Xiong in the Qing Dynasty, he stated, “The misery of a country is the luck of poets. Good lines will be born when poets witness the vicissitudes of the world.” No matter what heights Chen Shubao, Li Yu, and Zhao Ji attained in literature and art, they totally failed in managing affairs of state and bringing prosperity to their states. They eventually ruined their states through fatuity and dissoluteness, which allowed them to be eclipsed. Chen Shubao was addicted to a lewd and debaucherous life, causing his army to be defeated and his government overthrown. For this reason, his poem *The Jude Tree-like Backyard Flower* is referred to as “the tune presaging the fallen state” by later generations, just as Liu Yuxi lamented, “Now the rows of houses have vanished, and the city has become wild and covered with weeds.” All of this was caused by the song of the “Backyard Flower”. When Du Mu heard a singsong girl sing *The Jude Tree-like Backyard Flower* as he berthed the ship by the Qinhuai River at night, he could not help but lament, “Knowing not the grief of the captive king, by riverside the songstress still sings his song presaging the fallen state.”

As the saying goes, “Peril approaches as an extravagant atmosphere emerges.” In all the past dynasties, the prevailing extravagance was an omen of the decline of the dynasty. In the later Zhou Dynasty during the Five Dynasties, Dou Yujun, a resident in Yanshanfu, had five sons who were all excellent in character and learning. The five boys passed the highest imperial civil service examination in succession, which led to the common blessing, “Five sons pass the civil examination,” meaning “wishing your children a promising future.” After the success of the Anti-Japanese War, the key officials of the Kuomintang took advantage of regaining the lost territory to extort gold, houses, paper money, cars, and traitors’ wives by trick or by force from the people. The “gold, houses, paper money, cars, and

traitors’ wives” were then satirically referred to by the people as “the new five sons”. As a result, the social unrest died down, and the Kuomintang lost its popular support and finally fled to Taiwan in defeat.

Xi Jinping often cautions Party members and officials against poor work styles and expresses aspirations using ancient poetry, endowing members and officials with a concrete and profound understanding of the work-style issue. He warns of the harm brought by extravagance and dissipation by citing Chen Shubao’s “tune presaging the fallen state”; he highlights the importance of upholding the spirit of hard work and perseverance using the verse “From the history of the sagacious states and families, we know that thrift leads to success, and luxury, failure” and he has quoted the verse “The portals of the rich reek of flesh and wine while frozen bodies lie by the roadside” to warn Party members and officials against hedonism and extravagance. In Xi’s view, maintaining close ties with the people and preventing the party from becoming corrupt during long-term rule “are major political tasks that we must perform well.”

“The tune presaging the fallen state” also implies that the improvement of work style must start with the administrator of the state. Only if the “vital few”, the leading officials, straighten up, can “the inferior follow the example set by the superior.” Shortly after the 18th National Congress of the CPC, Xi visited and inspected Guangdong Province without heavy security guards or a welcome banner. While inquiring of the poor about their sufferings in Fuping, Hebei Province, he took only light meals with his accompanying personnel. When he braved the rain to conduct an on-the-spot inspection in Yangluo Container Harbor in Wuhan, Hubei Province, he visited the site with his trouser legs rolled up and holding his own umbrella. These deeds of taking the lead and practicing what the Party Central Committee preaches show the officials and masses the steadfast determination of the Party Central Committee to govern and manage the Party and its political commitment by setting itself as an example.

PEI JU TURNED FROM OBSEQUIOUS IN SUI TO OUTSPOKEN IN TANG

There is a story in the *Abstracts of Ancient Prose*: Pei Ju, the famous official of the early Tang Dynasty, was a loyal and candid minister who dared remonstrate with the emperors. He even had the courage to argue face-to-face with Emperor Taizong of Tang. However, when he was an official of the Sui Dynasty, surprisingly, he had only curried favor with Emperor

Yang of Sui, finding every way to satisfy him. Sima Guang commented on this by saying, “Pei Ju shifted his attitude from obsequious in Sui to outspoken in Tang not because of a change in temperament but due to the likes and dislikes of the monarch. If the monarch disliked listening to criticisms of his faults, then Pei became obsequious, and if he wished, then Pei became outspoken.” We can learn from this story that people are willing and pleased to tell the truth only to those who have hope and are able to listen to the truth. Our leading officials must encourage others to tell the truth and embrace the truth in line with the following principle: “Do not blame the critic for an incorrect comment, but take heed from it.”

- Adherence to the Ideological Line of Seeking Truth from Facts—
Speech at the Opening Ceremony of the Second Batch of Trainees of
the Central Party School in 2012 Spring Semester (May 16, 2012).

Commentary

The ancients said, “True words are not fine-sounding; fine-sounding words are not true.” Sharp criticisms are unpleasant to hear. The more valuable the words are, the more likely that it will be difficult to accept. It takes breadth of mind to accept criticisms, and it takes courage to offer criticisms. Both history and reality tell us that the question of whether to tell the truth depends entirely on those who listen to it.

Pei Ju, a famous official of the Tang Dynasty, was originally an official of the Sui Dynasty. He was good at figuring out how the mind of Emperor Yang of Sui worked and catering to the emperor’s pleasure. Emperor Yang once praised him, “Pei Ju knows me very well. The proposals he submitted were all what I expected. Although I did not specify what was required, he was able to anticipate my needs. He definitely strives to serve the state with heart. If it were not so how else could he do that?” Emperor Yang had a fondness for the grandiose, thus he suggested that a grand Lantern Festival be held in the eastern capital Luoyang. Emperor Yang yearned for a golden age when “all surrounding nationalities are obedient to Sui and many states come and pay respects to it,” and he then backed a foreign war. When Sui was defeated, he led his following to surrender to Tang. However, facing Emperor Taizong of Tang, who was willing to heed counsel in court, Pei became a changed man who dared to frankly criticize the emperor’s faults and unhesitatingly offer counsel. Emperor Taizong spoke highly of him:

“As an official, Pei Ju dares to make his utmost efforts to argue with me on the basis of reality instead of blindly obeying me. If everyone could do this, we wouldn’t need to worry about the poor governance of the state, would we?”

In *A General Reflection for Political Administration*, Sima Guang wrote, “The ancients said, ‘If the monarch is sagacious, then the officials are outspoken.’ Pei Ju shifted his attitude from obsequious in the Sui court to outspoken in the Tang court not because of a change in temperament but in deference to the likes and dislikes of the monarch. If the monarch disliked listening to criticisms on his faults, then Pei became obsequious, and if wished, he became outspoken. Thus, the monarch is like a sundial, and the official is like the shadow that moves with the sundial.” This means that it was not the change in temperament that caused Pei Ju to turn from obsequious in Sui to outspoken in Tang. If the monarch dislikes hearing criticisms of his faults, then an upright official will become a crafty sycophant. In contrast, given a monarch who is willing to listen to the truth, a crafty sycophant will become upright. The monarch is like the body, and the official is like the shadow that always follows the body.

Xi Jinping used the example of Pei Ju to emphasize that the leader is the one who holds the “baton” and conducts his orchestra of inferiors to tell the truth. Only if leaders have the courage to listen to the truth and encourage their inferiors to tell the truth, if they are magnanimous and receptive to criticism and show a cordial attitude “to correct mistakes if you have made any and guard against them if you have none,” can speaking the truth and offering sound advice become a common practice for them.

In the speech, Xi stated that to be realistic and pragmatic, leading officials should not only seek truth but also address concrete matters. They should especially speak the truth, make pragmatic suggestions and recommendations, handle concrete affairs, and seek substantial results. “To speak the truth” means to focus on the nature of things, to speak frankly, and follow the truth. This is an important embodiment of a leading official’s characteristics of truth seeking, embodying justice, devotion to public interests, and uprightness. Moreover, he highlighted that the premise of telling the truth is to listen to the truth. In addition to the story of Pei Ju, Xi quoted a dictum of the English philosopher Bacon to prove that listening to true words is a type of wisdom, “It is a blessing or good fortune for one to have a chance to hear the truth from someone else so that he may avoid making detours altogether or at least make few detours, to make only a few mistakes or at least prevent serious mistakes.”

INFERIORS FOLLOW THE EXAMPLE OF SUPERIORS

The preferences and taboos of leadership are the driving force for the formation of social customs, while the preferences and taboos of the masses are the basis for the formation of folklore. Those in subordinate positions will follow the example set by their superiors. The style and appeal of leading officials not only concern their own character and image but they also affect the Party's prestige and image imprinted on the masses' minds. They play an exemplary role in the formation of the social atmosphere and the cultivation of the masses' life interest. There are many anecdotes about this, two of which still have a strong significance for today. One is a story in *The Collections of Anecdotes in Song Dynasty*. Qian Chu offered a precious belt with rhinoceros horn ornaments as a tribute to Emperor Taizu of Song. Emperor Taizu said, "I have three such belts." Qian asked to be shown the belts, and the emperor laughed and answered, "The Bian River, the Huimin River and the Wuzhang River." Then, Qian felt greatly ashamed and sincerely apologetic. Another story was recorded in *The Casual Literary Notes by Nancun—Foot Binding*. Yao Niang, a concubine of the last monarch of the Southern Tang Dynasty, was slim, beautiful, and good at dancing. The emperor instructed her to bind her feet with silk and then dance trippingly in a pair of white socks on the lotus terrace, presenting a spectacle like dancing in the clouds. Later, the common people followed her example in pursuit of bound feet and felt ashamed of non-bound ones. From positive and negative perspectives, these two stories illustrate that the attitude leaders show toward the details of life are not trifles.

- *Delight of Life Is Not a Trifle* (February 12, 2007), from *Fresh Ideas of Zhejiang*, Edition 2007, published by Zhejiang People's Publishing House.

Commentary

The setting of an example by superiors for their subordinates has been used as an important measure to correct customs and govern the country since ancient times. The ancients said, "As he puts everything aside, the folk will not have him as their guide." *The Analects* told us, "Government is being correct. If you lead the people with correctness, who will dare to be incorrect?" In the book *Mencius*, it was stated that, "If people of high rank

like something, people below will surely like it all the better. The virtue of people above is like the wind, while that of those below is like the grass. The grass is sure to bend toward where the wind blows.” There is also a folk saying, “If the upper beam is not straight, the lower ones will go askant.” The stories of the Emperor Taizu of Song and the last monarch of the Southern Tang Dynasty provide strong proof of this from a positive and a negative perspective, respectively.

Qian Chu was a grandson of Qian Liu and the last king of the state of Wuyue during the period of Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms. When Emperor Taizu was pacifying the regions south of the Yangtze River, Qian dispatched troops to assist Song in eradicating the Southern Tang Dynasty instead of accepting the request for reinforcements by Li Yu, the last monarch of Southern Tang. After that, he surrendered to Song. According to the historical records, after surrendering to Song, Qian Chu offered precious and scarce objects as a tribute to Emperor Taizu; however, Taizu said, “These are nothing but belongings in my warehouse, which never need to be presented as a tribute!” *The Collections of Anecdotes in Song Dynasty* recorded the story that Qian Chu presented a precious belt as a tribute to Taizu but received a reprimand from him. This story depicted Taizu’s uprightness—observing the principle of “country first.” In spite of driving the state to its doom, the people of Wuyue felt deeply grateful to Qian Chu because he followed Qian Liu’s last words and surrendered to Song to avoid war in consideration of the security of the people. Even today, some monuments to his memory still stand by West Lake, such as King Qian’s Temple and the Pagoda to Bless Qian Chu.

There are widely divided opinions on the origin of the undesirable customs of foot binding. According to *The Casual Literary Notes by Nancun—Foot Binding*, it was thought that foot binding dated from the period of Five Dynasties. To enjoy more graceful dancing, on the basis of the aesthetic standard of the Tang Dynasty, during which time shoes with upturned ends were immensely popular, Li Yu had an out-of-the-ordinary idea. He instructed a dancer to wrap her shoes with long strips of cloth and wear a pair of white socks. Soon afterward, everyone followed this example to pursue slim feet. This is strong evidence of the amazing potency of examples set by superior authorities.

When heading the administration of Zhejiang Province, Xi Jinping elucidated the exemplary role of the ruler with these two stories, a positive one and a negative one. Xi Jinping has repeatedly made clear that leading

officials at all levels should take the lead in the improvement of work style. At the First Plenary Session of the 18th CPC Central Commission for Discipline Inspection, he quoted the saying “To straighten your shadow, you must stand straight; to require your subordinates to be clean and incorrupt, you should take the lead first” to emphasize that the work style of leading officials, especially high-ranking ones, has an important influence on Party conduct, government conduct, and even social conduct. At the Second Plenary Session, he again noted, “Those who are good at governing society with a ban must be the ones abiding by the ban.”

A person must meet a requirement before he proposes it to others, and he must not do what he bans others from doing. Xi Jinping has carried out this idea through actual efforts since his youth. The main reason for the good situation whereby public opinion echoes the aspirations of the Party, which has taken shape since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, is that the central leadership practices what it preaches and takes the lead. From taking the initiative by observing the “Eight Rules” of the CPC to warning of the “four forms of decadence”, launching the campaign for criticism and self-criticism and setting an example of fulfilling the “Three Guidelines for Ethical Behavior and Three Basic Rules of Conduct,” the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the CPC has insisted on setting a good example. This has helped them establish credibility and produced a strong exemplary effect in the whole Party and throughout the country.

THREE NOT-CHEATS

We are all familiar with the story of “Ximen Bao Administered Ye” recorded in the *Records of the Historian*. The story unfolds as follows: “When Zichan was administering the state of Zheng, the people could not cheat him; when Zijian was administering Shanfu, the people had no heart to cheat him; and when Ximen Bao was administering Ye, the people dared not cheat him.” During the Spring and Autumn period, Zichan administered the state of Zheng. He was aware of the slightest deceit; thus, the people were unable to cheat him. Zijian was a student of Confucius. When he governed Shanfu, he attached importance to civilizing and enlightening. As a result, although he played Zheng (a Chinese zither) for pleasure everyday instead of performing hands-on leadership, the people, who were civilized and enlightened, thus could not bear to cheat him. Ximen Bao, a methodical man of great wisdom, was an official in the state of Wei during the Warring

States period. Standing with the people, he successfully abolished the evil practice of “marrying girls to the River God,” led the people to construct water conservancy facilities and punished crimes with stringent laws; thus, the people dared not cheat him. The truths of these stories help us deepen our understanding of the relationship between officials and the masses and improve our working methods. We should study them in depth.

- Speech at the Grassroots Officials Symposium in Ruian, Zhejiang Province (December 26, 2004), from the *Take the Lead, Take Pragmatic Actions—Thoughts on and Practices in Promoting the New Development of Zhejiang Province*, Edition 2006, published by The Central Party School Publishing House.

Commentary

The assertion that people did not cheat the ruler is another way of saying that they obeyed him. In ancient China, the officials aimed to obtain people’s obedience to them given the nature of the times and their limited understanding. It was written in the *Records of the Historian* that “When Zichan was administering the state of Zheng, the people could not cheat him; when Zijian was administering Shanfu, the people had no heart to cheat him; and when Ximen Bao was administering Ye, the people dared not cheat him.” There are three administrative policies contained in this sentence. One is hands-on leadership, another is the seeking of assistance from people of wisdom and virtue, and the last is the severe punishment of crimes. Although these governance styles and philosophies varied greatly, they all achieved the people’s obedience.

Zichan was a famous politician of the state of Zheng during the Spring and Autumn period. He allowed the people to discuss government affairs and was willing to draw useful suggestions from them. However, he also enforced reform, which he believed was to the benefit of the country, regardless of public opinion. He “cast the statute law on the bronze tripod” to make it public, and vigorously promoted economic reform and concerning himself with all matters, regardless of whether they were important or trivial. Through hands-on leadership, he made Zheng a state where “the people kept the door open all night and no one pocketed anything found on the road,” and the people could not cheat him.

Zijian, who was born in the state of Lu in the Spring and Autumn period, was listed among the “72 students of Confucius.” When he administrated Shanfu, he played Zheng every day for fun and seldom went out to visit the people, living a leisurely and comfortable life. However, the county was well governed. This was because he employed the administrative policy of maintaining honest, sincere, kind, respectful, and loyal administrators, attaching importance to employing people of virtue and of talent, and he ran the government with a sense of compassion. Because of this, the people felt in their hearts that they could not cheat him, although he played Zheng for pleasure everyday instead of engaging in hands-on leadership.

Ximen Bao was an official in the state of Wei during the Warring States period. When he served as the Governor of Yexian County, he found, upon investigation, that a grassroots official had colluded with a sorcerer and a sorceress to defraud the people of their property in the guise of “marrying girls to the River God.” Once, when they were holding a wedding ceremony for the “River God”, Ximen declared that there was a need to send a report to the River God and then ordered someone to throw the grassroots official, sorcerer, and sorceress into the river, thus wiping out this deceptive practice. After that, he led the people to construct water conservancy facilities and excavate 12 canals to channel water from the Zhang River for irrigation. Promulgating laws and decrees, he banned witchcraft and punished crimes with stringent laws, so that the people dared not cheat him.

In the view of the later generations, Zichan, Zijian, and Ximen Bao were, respectively, models of hands-on leadership, commission, and strict supervision.

Attitude and emotion support us in performing mass work, and ways and methods are the key to success. If one uses the wrong method, one will obtain a negative result despite a positive attitude. Xi Jinping used the “three not-cheats” to demonstrate the importance of selecting right ways and methods in mass work. “Cannot cheat” shows that an official should be willing to get his hands dirty and be mindful of the slightest detail as well as advocate openness, fairness, and justice to the greatest extent possible. The people’s having “no heart to cheat” proves that the talents of wisdom and virtue should be given important positions, the people should be extensively civilized and enlightened, and officials should stimulate the people with actual affect, impress them with their sincerity, and inspire them with lofty values. “Dare not to cheat” shows that law-based governance and stern treatment for offenders are effective remedies for the ills of society.

Only if we punish crimes with stringent laws and enforce those laws with great exertion can evil deeds be stamped out and peace reign over the land.

Xi Jinping was an expert at mass work from his early appointments. During the period in which he served as the Secretary of the CPC Ningde Prefectural Committee, he visited all of the villages of Ningde, even those in the most remote mountain areas, which required traveling a few hours by car and on foot. Not merely inquiring after the villagers’ living conditions, he also felt the thickness of their quilts by touch and learned about their dietary conditions. This was the state of “cannot cheat”. When he lived and worked in the rural area of northern Shaanxi Province, he performed all types of hard labor and bore all sorts of hardships—farming, hauling a coal cart, building dykes, and carrying manure. He always spared no effort to work for the well-being of the villagers, including reinforcing the riverbank to prevent erosion, organizing a cooperative of blacksmiths to make farming tools, and building a methane tank for gathering cooking gas. In the eyes of the villagers, he was “a tough boy” and “a good secretary for the poor and lower-middle peasants.” This is the state of “have no heart to cheat.” While working in Zhengding, he seriously rectified the financial problems in the rural area and cracked down heavily on economic crimes. At one point, he and other senior officials in Fuzhou met with more than 700 petitioners in 2 days and solved many of their problems on the spot or set a time limit to find solutions. When he was heading the administration of Zhejiang Province, he attached importance to pollution prevention and controls to ensure environmental safety. This is the so-called “dare not to cheat.”

POPULAR SUPPORT

In his book, *The Great Chinese Revolution, 1800–1985* Harvard University Professor John King Fairbank posed a question: “as of 1928 China’s future seemed to be with the Kuomintang; ...How did the situation come to be reversed twenty years later?” His answer was as follows: “the Kuomintang leadership was older and had become worn out” and it “... alienated...the Chinese people.” Meanwhile, in Fairbank’s view, the leaders of the CPC “were...fervently devoted to their cause, and they pioneered..., on the cutting edge of a great national upheaval.” He recognized the problem of the common aspiration of the people, which is rare for a bourgeois scholar. His words certainly point to the root cause of victory in the Chinese revolution—the Party’s close relationship with the people.

- *The Basic Proficiency of Officials—Maintaining Close Ties with the People* (January 1989), from the *Up and Out of Poverty*, Edition 2016, published by Foreign Languages Press and Fujian People's Publishing House.

Commentary

John King Fairbank, a tenured Professor at Harvard University, was one of the most prestigious China watchers in America. He was referred to as “No. 1 Old China Hand”. In his autobiography, he revealed that he had been working on understanding China for 50 years. Coming to China in the 1930s, Fairbank taught at Tsinghua University, and he was acquainted with Liang Sicheng and his wife Lin Huiyin. His Chinese name was given by Liang. *The Great Chinese Revolution, 1800–1985* was his magnum opus, which unfolded the 185 years of political and social changes that occurred in China from 1800 to 1985.

Why did the Kuomintang cause the collapse in the Chinese mainland, and why did the CPC garner victory? This question is still under debate among historians at home and abroad, and it concerns the development of modern China, which is worth deep exploration. As early as 1946, Theodore Harold White and Annalee Jacoby, correspondents of *Time* magazine in China, published the book *Thunder Out of China*, which presented the corruption of the Kuomintang government to the American public in an objective and comprehensive manner. Fairbank wrote a book review for the book, saying, “The *Thunder Out of China* lifts the lid”. He made a bold prediction of the Kuomintang-CPC civil war and further stated that the mass line allowed the CPC to go deep into the countryside and mobilized the masses, thus the final victory went to the CPC.

Unlike the American political leaders who were accustomed to attributing the China issue to ideology, Fairbank, who was familiar with Chinese history, noted, based on deep and clear observation, that the one and only key to the survival of a regime is the people's support. These observations and judgments were recorded in *The Great Chinese Revolution, 1800–1985*. Coincidentally, the American scholar Lloyd Eastman also noted in his book *Seeds of Destruction—Nationalist China in War and Revolution, 1937–1949* that the defeat of the Kuomintang was not due to the lack of “American aid”, but because of its own malpractices and internal

divisions such as corruption and incompetence as well as the loss of discipline. All of these aspects eventually caused it to lose public support and political power.

The book *Up and Out of Poverty* includes some speeches made and articles written by Xi Jinping when he was working in Ningde during 1988 and 1990. Although there are only 120,000 words in this book, we can see Xi’s reflections on many important issues, such as the construction of a clean government, the mass line, and common prosperity, as well as his deep understanding of the people’s strength. Xi writes, “On our way forward, there will be many problems and difficulties. Exactly where should we start to solve the problems, and on what should we rely to overcome the difficulties? We can discuss different ideas and methods from various perspectives. The fundamental issue, however, is to mobilize and rely on the people.” Even to this day, this important judgment generated by Xi Jinping is still of great significance.

The people’s support versus opposition is an issue always lingering in Xi’s mind. “Never forget that we are the government of ‘the people’.” “We should always keep closely attached to the people, share joys and sorrows with them, and strive hard together with them.” “We should regard the people as though they are our.” He has expressed his deep regard for the people and a deep understanding of the relationships between the party and the people on many occasions. He has cited Fairbank’s research results as circumstantial evidence to prove that the victory of the revolution in China depends on popular support to admonish the Party members and officials not to forget the Party’s original intention of serving the people and always maintaining close ties with the people.

THE YAN’AN CONVERSATION

The patriot and democracy advocate Huang Yanpei said the following to Mao Zedong: Few people, families, groups, localities, or even nations, have the capacity to break free of this cycle. At first, they carefully focus on every issue, and everyone exerts their best effort. Conditions may be quite difficult at the time, and they must struggle for their very survival. As things gradually change for the better, they gradually lose their focus. Complacency then arises, spreads from a few to the many, and becomes the norm. Even with a great effort, the situation cannot be reversed. Huang hoped that the “members of the Communist Party” would be able to find a new way forward to escape the historical cycle in which rulers in the past had

moved from hard work and innovation to becoming isolated from the people. Mao Zedong immediately answered: We have found a new path and we can break this cycle. This new path is democracy and the mass line. When the people are allowed to monitor the government, it dare not become lax. When everyone bears responsibility, the death of the ruler will not cause the government to collapse. Mao Zedong summarized the theory and practice of the Party and made the great and solemn call to “serve the people wholeheartedly,” which was written into the Party Constitution as the sole purpose of our Party. We can see that maintaining close ties with the people is determined by the very nature and mission of our Party, and it is also an excellent tradition and style forged and upheld throughout its long revolutionary struggle.

– *The Basic Proficiency of Officials—Maintaining Close Ties with the People* (January 1989), from the *Up and Out of Poverty*.

Commentary

On the eve of the victory of the Anti-Japanese War, Mao Zedong had a conversation with Huang Yanpei, which was referred to as the “Yan’an conversation”. The conversation later became a much-told anecdote on communication between the CPC and democratic parties.

Huang Yanpei was a famous educator and social activist. Making a resolution in his early years to save the nation by way of education, he engaged in an unremitting exploration into China’s cause of professional education throughout his life. After the outbreak of the Anti-Japanese War, Huang actively participated in the war, joining the National Political Council as a member of the social elite and endeavoring to uphold democratic solidarity and support the struggle against Japan. In July 1945, to consolidate democratic unity and facilitate the Kuomintang-CPC negotiation, Huang and six other members of the National Political Council visited Yan’an. During the 5-day visit, the simplicity and prudence of the leaders of the CPC as well as the democratic and peaceful climate of the Yan’an revolutionary base area moved him deeply. His response was as follows: “Of course what I saw and heard during these five day in Yan’an was quite close to my ideal.”

When Mao Zedong asked Huang how he felt about the visit, he said, frankly, “I’ve lived for more than 60 years. Let’s not talk about what I’ve

heard. Whatever I saw with my own eyes fits the saying ‘The rise of something may be fast, but its downfall is equally swift.’ Few people, families, groups, localities, or even nations, have the capacity to break free of this cycle... Throughout history, there have been various examples: a ruler ignored state affairs and eunuchs used the opportunity to seize power; a good system of governance ceased to function after the person who initiated it died; some people lusted for fame and fortune through humiliating themselves. No one has escaped the historical cycle.” Mao answered decidedly, “We have found a new path, and we can break this cycle. This new path is democracy and the mass line. When the people are allowed to monitor the government, it dare not become lax. When everyone bears responsibility, the death of the ruler will not cause the government to collapse.” In Huang’s view, “this was reasonable” because “only if the people are empowered to participate in the administration of where they live can each task be assigned to the right person and can each person have a proper post where he or she can play a role. Perhaps it will work to break out of this cycle with democracy.”

The “Yan’an conversation” was of great significance in the history of our Party and country. This not only provided a good representation of the deepest sincerity shown by the CPC to democratic parties but it also indicates the exploration that by the CPC into the people’s democracy and its aspiration for the people’s well-being.

Shortly after the 18th National Congress of the CPC, Xi Jinping visited the central committees of the eight democratic parties as well as the All China Federation of Industry and Commerce and had informal discussions with them. During the discussions, he emphasized that the dialog on the historical cycle of rise-and-fall made by Mao Zedong and Huang Yanpei in a cave dwelling in Yan’an is a very good inspiration and warning to us in the CPC to this day. He recalled the “historical cycle of rise-and-fall,” brushed the “two musts” up and cited the tale of “Farewell My Concubine” to warn Party officials of the danger of being derailed by poor work styles simply for the purpose of reaffirming that “we must forever preserve the fighting spirit demonstrated by Chinese Communists when the CPC was first founded and forever preserve our devotion to our people.” Keeping the people in mind and striving for the people’s well-being is the precious wealth that our Party accumulated during this 90-year course of trials and hardship. Just as Xi declared at the Celebration Ceremony of the 95th Anniversary of the Founding of the CPC, no matter how far forward we go, we can

never forget the past, and we can never forget why we embarked on this journey in the first place.

DISPELLING THE SUFFERINGS OF THE PEOPLE

At present, we are placing great emphasis on social stability. What is our most important safeguard? It is the people, the tens of millions who wholeheartedly support the Four Cardinal Principles and reform and opening up. "Governance lies in reassuring the people; reassuring the people lies in observing their suffering." This ancient saying about governance is still worth drawing from today. As long as we understand and address the suffering of the people, "dispelling the suffering of the people is like treating your own severe illness." As long as we truly represent the fundamental interests of the people and "take as our own the mind of the people," the people will gather around us, and we need not worry about social instability. As the poet Gu Yanwu of the Ming Dynasty wrote, "In the mountain Goujian lived/His countrymen their lives would give." He meant that Goujian, the king of Yue, lived in the Kuaiji Mountains and patiently suffered hardships to build up strength against the invading neighbor state of Wu, winning the trust of the people, who then became willing to sacrifice themselves for him. The fundamental interests of our Party's officials conform with those of the people. As long as we stay close to the people and truly share their pains and concerns, we will certainly reaffirm our close ties with the people and win their hearts and minds.

— *The Basic Proficiency of Officials—Maintaining Close Ties with the People* (January 1989), from *Shake off Poverty*.

Commentary

"The people are the root of a country. When the root is firm, the country is peaceful." Such people-oriented thought has deeply influenced Chinese society for thousands of years. "Governance lies in reassuring the people; reassuring the people lies in observing their suffering." "Dispelling the suffering of the people is like treating your own severe illness." These two ancient adages form a microcosm of people-oriented thought.

In the tenth year of the reign of Emperor Wanli in the Ming Dynasty, to alleviate social contradictions, Zhang Juzheng submitted a proposal to the

emperor for ceasing to levy taxes on farmlands throughout the country and exempting the people from payment of overdue taxes. He also asserted, “Governance lies in reassuring the people; reassuring the people lies in observing their suffering.” This meant that the key to achieving national stability is to make the people live and work in peace and contentment. To realize this, the ruler must show understanding of and sympathy for their sufferings and hardships. This initiative of “reassuring the people” precisely embodies people-oriented thought.

Su Zhe was a son of Su Xun and the younger brother of Su Shi. Deeply affected by his father and brother in his learning, he mainly embraced Confucianism and admired the “Secondary Saint” Mencius the most. Having dissenting views on the political reformation promoted by Wang Anshi, Su Zhe submitted a memorial to Emperor Shenzong of the Song Dynasty to convey his views on the new law. The *Memorial to His Majesty Emperor Shenzong* contained many of his important viewpoints, including the advice “dispelling the suffering of the people is like treating your own severe illness.” He remonstrated with the emperor that a monarch should treat the people’s sufferings as his own “severe illness” and dispel their misery with sympathy.

“In the mountain Goujian lived/His countrymen their lives would give” is a verse stemming from the poem, *The Mountain in Autumn*, by Gu Yanwu, a thinker in the late Ming and early Qing Dynasties. In 1645, the troops of the Qing Dynasty marched south and annihilated the regime of Emperor Hongguang of the Southern Ming Dynasty. During the war, several relatives of Gu were murdered in the Jiading Massacre. Thus, he penned this poem in grief and indignation to voice his deep sorrow over the fall of Southern Ming and his resolve for the restoration of his state. Goujian, the king of the state of Yue, in hopes of taking revenge for the insult, dwelled in the Kuaiji Mountain and patiently suffered hardships to build up strength against the invading neighbor state and finally won the trust of the people; therefore, the people were willing to follow him and even to sacrifice their lives for him. The poet quoted the tale of Goujian restoring his state to embolden the monarch and subjects of Southern Ming: as long as they kept the faith of fighting against the enemy and restoring the state, the people would rekindle the fighting will for renaissance.

To highlight the importance of mass work, Xi Jinping presented to Party officials the methodology of observing the people’s suffering and hardships and dispelling their suffering. As Party officials, they must stand in the shoes of the people to realize how they feel, to experience their suffering, and

to detect the difficulties they encounter, and, in doing so, reaching the bottom of their hearts. They should continue to put the issue of people's livelihood at the top of their work, learning more about the expectations of the people, and meeting more of their pressing needs.

"To take as our own the mind of the people" is a view aired by Xi on multiple occasions. He once stated that poverty alleviation was on the top of his concerns and it took up most of his time and effort. To know the feelings of the people, to listen to their will and their desires, and to understand their living conditions, he reached the ice-and-snow-covered frontier, utterly oblivious to the bitter cold at minus dozens of degrees centigrade, and he went deep into the old revolutionary base areas where the land was infertile and the people were still ground down by deep poverty. Moreover, he once wrote that, "As a public servant, the Loess Plateau in Northern Shaanxi is where I became rooted. It nurtured my abiding faith: handling concrete affairs for the people!" "No matter where I go, I will always be the son of the Loess land."

BE INCORRUPTIBLE AND DILIGENT WITHOUT COMPLAINT OF POVERTY OR HARDSHIP

Throughout Chinese history, there have been many examples of honest and hardworking officials. The ancient statesman and strategist Zhuge Liang, who humbly strove to "do his best until death," required himself "not to allow himself or his family to have extra possessions in or out of the household." The Song Dynasty scholar-official Sima Guang "desired to sacrifice himself for his country and attend personally to public matters, working day and night." He was "indifferent to materials things, with no special interest in them" and "wore coarse clothing and ate poor food until the end of his life." If feudal officials were capable of this, who says that our proletarian officials are not? The older generation of proletarian revolutionaries, as represented by Chairman Mao Zedong, was models of honesty and diligence. Our officials at all levels must learn from the older generation of proletarian revolutionaries and strive to "be incorruptible and diligent without complaint of poverty or hardship." In this way, we can always be rooted in the people.

– *The Basic Proficiency of Officials—Maintaining Close Ties with the People* (January 1989), from the *Up and Out of Poverty*.

Commentary

There is a couplet hung on the columns of the door of the east accountant’s office in the yamen of Neixiang County, Henan Province. The first line goes “Be incorruptible and diligent without complaint of poverty or hardship,” and the second line is “Be respectful and conscientious of what you have heard and learned.” The first line means that a truly incorruptible official would not complain about poverty, and a truly diligent official would not complain about hardship. The second line advises us that we should attach importance to the voice of the people and make an effort to practice what we learn. The first line now is utilized by President Xi Jinping in improving Party conduct and upholding integrity because this governing proverb, which preaches both incorruption and diligence, is still of strong realistic significance today.

Zhuge Liang, the Prime Minister of the state of Shu during the Three Kingdoms period, set strict demands on himself and lived frugally throughout his life. He assisted Liu Bei and Liu Shan diligently and conscientiously for 26 years, from his youth, when he had just come from his thatched cottage at the age of 27, until his death at 53 in Wuzhang Plains. By striving humbly to “do his best until death,” he set an example to later generations. According to historical records, Zhuge Liang wrote *My Memorial to the King Liu Shan* before his death, in which he said, “My family has eight hundred mulberry trees and 15 acres of farmland in Chengdu. The gains from them are sufficient to afford the daily expenses of my sons and brothers as well as other family members. I myself, as an official, rely entirely on my salary to pay for my living expenses. I am not engaged in any part-time job or business for increasing income. Therefore, when I die, Your Majesty will never fall short of your expectations by finding any spare silk or extra money of mine.”

The scholar-official Sima Guang of the Song Dynasty, who once saved a childhood playmate who had fallen into an enormous vat full of water by picking up a rock and smashing a hole in the vat, was famous for resourcefulness and determination. Assiduous and diligent, he “felt the need for more time to do his work and would thus steal some hours from the night,” and he devoted nearly all his life to historical record compilation and political participation. The first annals in Chinese history—*A General Reflection for Political Administration*—were compiled under his direction. He remained honest and upright throughout his 40 years of officialdom, from his early

years when he served as a local official until he was promoted to high-ranking positions. "He dares neither to often eat meat nor wear clothes made of pure silk." This is a true portrayal of his everyday life. Toward the end of his life, Sima Guang wrote a famous article to teach his son that it is easy to drift to a sumptuous and comfortable lifestyle, but it becomes very difficult then to change back to a simple and unadorned way of living. Many wise sayings can be derived from this article, such as "It is easy when one's living conditions ascend from economical to luxurious; conversely, it is difficult" and "Frugality is the magic weapon of establishing a reputation, while extravagance is the bane of failure," and they still bear significance today.

The older generation of proletarian revolutionaries, as represented by Chairman Mao Zedong, can be seen as models of honesty and diligence. There is an anecdote of Mao Zedong about frugality. In 1936, Edgar Snow arrived at the Shaanxi–Gansu–Ningxia border area as the first Western journalist to conduct an interview there. On this soil, he encountered a phenomenon: Mao Zedong had only two suits of uniforms and one patched overcoat, without any personal property; the officers and soldiers of the Red Army were treated equally and paid a salary of a negligible amount; however, none of them resorted to corruption and favoritism to make a fortune. Thus, Snow reached a conclusion: the CPC and the people's army under its leadership "were unbeatable owing to their steadfastness and perseverance as well as their willingness to bear hardship without complaint."

With the anecdotes of Zhuge Liang and Sima Guang, Xi Jinping exemplified the political attainments that our Party officials must have. Honesty is the foundation for governance, and diligence is the key to good governance. Only the official who has both political integrity and diligence can achieve good governance.

Xi Jinping once composed a poem to a Ci tune to express his admiration for Jiao Yulu's spirit of serving the people, and he wrote an article to extol Gu Wenchang as "an immortal monument in the people's heart". At the summary conference of the Program of Mass Line Education and Practice, he put profound meaning into simple words, "Our Party officials are all the people's public servants, thus we should concentrate on our duties. We should maintain both incorruptibility and diligence, and we should deliver practical services to the people with clean hands." It is thus clear that the excellent qualities of honesty and diligence are the political attainments that weigh most heavily in Xi's heart. The construction of a clean and diligent government is not only a revolution of integrity and efficiency but also one

that stretches deep into the roots of some unhealthy notions. Only if one allows the conceptions of honesty, integrity, and diligence to take root in his or her heart can one be a good official and win the support and trust of the people.

Open Access This chapter is licensed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>), which permits any noncommercial use, sharing, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons license and indicate if you modified the licensed material. You do not have permission under this license to share adapted material derived from this chapter or parts of it.

The images or other third party material in this chapter are included in the chapter’s Creative Commons license, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the chapter’s Creative Commons license and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder.

