

The Symptoms, Damages, and Lessons of Historical Nihilism in the Communist Party of the Soviet Union

苏共党内历史虚无主义的表现、危害及启示

SOURCE

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The collapse of the Soviet Union was the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the twentieth century. As the Soviet Union's only ruling party, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) made brilliant achievements during its eventful history of over 90 years, but in the end—in a regrettable turn of events—it left the stage of history. Although scholars and Marxist theorists alike have yet to reach a consensus on the causes of the collapse of the Soviet Union and the CPSU, it is clear that historical nihilism within the CPSU dealt a fatal blow to its rule. China is currently the largest socialist country in the world; studying the errors in and lessons of the CPSU's handling of historical issues, which can serve as a cautionary example, is important for the strengthening of socialist ideology and adherence to the path of socialism with Chinese characteristics.

I. The development of the countercurrent of historical nihilism

within the CPSU

The second half of the twentieth century saw two upsurges of historical nihilism in the CPSU. Under the pretext of “re-evaluating history,” these movements—championed by Nikita Khrushchev and Mikhail Gorbachev respectively—misrepresented, attacked, and slandered CPSU leaders and even repudiated the October Revolution and the achievements of Soviet socialism.

(1) The first upsurge of historical nihilism within the CPSU

The first upsurge of historical nihilism in the CPSU began at the end of the 20th Congress of the CPSU, when Khrushchev gave a four-hour-long “secret speech” entitled “On the Cult of Personality and Its Consequences,” which subjected Joseph Stalin to a great “trial,” ruthlessly criticizing his character and cooking up charges against him to obliterate his achievements. Khrushchev’s “secret speech” set a precedent of repudiating the CPSU’s history and rang up the curtain on the first wave of historical nihilism within the CPSU. “In the late 1950s, after Khrushchev consolidated his position as the chief leader of the Party and the government, this fighter against the cult of personality turned around and started his own personality cult.” After taking power, Khrushchev became increasingly self-aggrandizing while criticizing Stalin, and a nihilistic campaign against Stalin was launched in the CPSU, with the sacred image of Stalin in people’s hearts completely torn apart. As Chairman Mao commented, “Khrushchev’s secret speech against Stalin not only lifted the lid, which was good, but also stirred the pot, which shocked the whole world.” The 20th Congress of the CPSU shook the entire communist movement to its foundations. Anti-communist and anti-socialist political activities emerged at some universities and research institutes, and there were even slogans of “Down with the Communist Party” and “Down with the Soviets” shouted at marches. Historical nihilism did not analyze the Stalin model in a dialectical manner and simply equated him with the cult of personality, repression, and concentration camps, even seeing him as a tyrant. In fact, “Soviet people who had firsthand experience of the Stalin era emphatically affirmed Stalin’s great contributions, but they also personally suffered the bitter consequences of his errors in the Great Purge and his insufficiently democratic, even overbearing leadership style.”

When Leonid Brezhnev came to power, however, he selectively ignored Stalin’s errors and stressed only his achievements, going from one extreme to another. Brezhnev mounted a full defense of Stalin and of the CPSU’s history and did not treat them dialectically. This kind of one-sided assessment of history had exactly the opposite effect, which exacerbated the spread of “de-Stalinization” in theoretical circles. In the later years of the Brezhnev era, the caliber of CPSU members declined, and they became increasingly divorced from the masses. Grippled by unfounded optimism, they announced only good news to the people and withheld negative information. The CPSU grew complacent and became stuck in a rut, its way of thinking gradually hardening. Bureaucracy and dogmatism were the order of the day, and problems such as cadre corruption and the degeneration of the privileged class threatened to spiral out of control.

(2) The second upsurge of historical nihilism within the CPSU

The second upsurge of historical nihilism within the CPSU occurred during the Gorbachev era. Gorbachev launched a campaign to “re-evaluate history” and directed its attack at CPSU leaders and Soviet socialism. From discrediting individuals like Stalin and Lenin to repudiating the whole Soviet socialist system and even Marxism, the movement was unprecedented in its scale and scope, affecting culture, politics, and the economy. In the 1980s, the Soviet economy all but stagnated, with material well-being reaching a nadir. The political system faced severe challenges, and reform was imperative. Gorbachev thought that the socialist system of the Soviet Union was politically “totalitarian,” economically “high-handed,” and culturally “bureaucratic.” Reform, then, entailed breaking the monopoly and demolishing everything—that is, a fundamental remodeling of the long-established edifice of Soviet socialism on the pattern of Western democratic socialism. As Zbigniew Brzezinski notes in *The Grand Failure*, in a May 1987 conversation with János Kádár, leader of the Hungarian Socialist Workers’ Party, Gorbachev said, “The totality of Soviet experience since 1929 had been wrong. ... No less than three quarters of the Soviet practice was discredited and should somehow be repudiated or corrected.” Finding it difficult to alter the economic system, Gorbachev started with the political system. The “openness, democratization, and social pluralism” that he emphasized at the 19th All-Union Conference of the CPSU in 1988 became a powerful weapon for revealing the “dark side” of Soviet socialism, and a trend of “overturning original verdicts” swept through Soviet society. For example, the last czar, Nicholas II, was described as a wise monarch, while the press condemned the Bolshevik “atrocities.” Gorbachev rashly advocated absolute freedom of the press, which enabled supporters of liberalization to use historical nihilism to denigrate the CPSU’s history, leading to rampant liberalization in Soviet society.

In May 1989, the Soviet Union held its first Congress of People’s Deputies, whose scale, influence, and extent of democratization and openness far exceeded those of any precedent in Soviet history. “This congress was characterized by plain speaking: deputies bluntly pointed out the difficulties facing the country and the mistakes that the leadership had made, while leaders admitted to many shortcomings and faults in their reports.” “Although a large number of deputies made pertinent remarks, quite a few vehemently attacked the CPSU, the KGB, and the Soviet systems, and their opinions were not duly refuted. In particular, even though most of the members and candidate members of the Politburo and members of the Secretariat of the CPSU Central Committee were people’s deputies, they did not say a word during the congress, which dissatisfied the masses outside the congress.” Historical nihilism maliciously slandered CPSU leaders, with the revilement and demonization of Stalin reaching a peak, and ruthlessly vilified and denigrated the CPSU’s history, sensationalizing its dark chapters. The Soviet elite lost faith in socialism. Renowned sociologist Tatyana Zaslavskaya abandoned her belief in socialism and thought that mature capitalism had “socialist features.” After leaving the CPSU, former government official Ivan Silayev said, “I myself am completely different from the person I was in the ’70s. ... We favor the privatization of property ... We favor private property of both land and industrial enterprises.” “In 1989, institutions of higher learning in the Soviet Union cut many traditional social science courses. ‘History of the CPSU’ was replaced with ‘Twentieth-Century Social and Political History,’ ‘Scientific Communism’ was replaced

with 'Issues in Modern Socialism,' 'Marxist-Leninist Philosophy' was replaced with 'Philosophy,' and 'Marxist Ethics and Aesthetics' was replaced with 'Ethics and Aesthetics.'" In the late 1980s, the State Committee for People's Education of the Soviet Union completely abolished courses on Marxism-Leninism at institutions of higher learning, radically repudiating the socialist system. The historical nihilism movement reached its apogee and raged like a prairie fire. The program statement of the 28th Congress of the CPSU in 1990—"Towards a Humane, Democratic Socialism"—marked Gorbachev's departure from Marxism-Leninism and the CPSU theorists' rejection of historical materialism; instead, they tried to understand and explain history through abstract humanitarianism. A humane, democratic socialism thus replaced Marxism as the leading ideology of the Soviet Union, which brought the country to the brink of total collapse and which led it on a wrong, irreversible path.

II. The harm of historical nihilism to the CPSU

"To destroy a nation, it is essential to first erase its history." The CPSU repudiated its own history "with its own hands," which allowed historical nihilism to run rampant both inside and outside the Party and evolve into a raging current of political thought with ideological demands. The CPSU was powerless to ward off the countercurrent of historical nihilism within or nihilistic attacks from outside the Party, and the failure triggered a domino effect that swept across various Eastern European countries and profoundly damaged the international communist movement, as would be evidenced by the drastic changes in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union's disintegration.

(1) It defamed leaders, ridiculed heroes, and distorted the image of the CPSU

The 20th Congress of the CPSU set off a "de-Stalinization" movement in Soviet society. Under the pretext of combating the cult of personality and re-evaluating Stalin, theorists and historians of the CPSU eagerly portrayed Stalin in a nihilistic way. "They did their utmost to demonize Stalin, putting him on a par with Hitler, and willfully exaggerated the errors and the number of victims of the 'Great Purge.'" Liberal intellectuals arbitrarily disparaged Stalin on the basis of subjective assumptions and made vicious, insulting remarks about him in an effort to obliterate his great achievements. His "errors" and faults were staggeringly blown out of proportion, and he was portrayed as a tyrant, a demon, a treacherous, devious person, and a heinous "murderer." Statues of Stalin were smashed, and the remains were defiled. "At the time, anyone who could write was smearing Stalin's name. ... Whoever was the first to denounce Stalin would be a hero." After Stalin, historical nihilism directed its attack at Lenin, who was labeled a Nietzschean manipulating the will to power. Rumors spread that Lenin was "an agent of the German kaiser." His "crimes" were enumerated, such as ordering the execution of the czar and his family, betraying Russian interests to Germany, and having an indulgent private life. The flaws and "errors" of CPSU leaders were thus infinitely magnified, and their authority was waning by the day. Historical nihilism's efforts to tarnish the image of CPSU leaders essentially represented a denial of the achievements of the Soviet socialist revolution in the name of "reflecting on history."

Similarly, revolutionary heroes were wantonly vilified and vulgarized for popular entertainment.

“Under the pretense of ‘declassifying history,’ some liberal writers and political commentators ... smeared and distorted the image of CPSU leaders and Soviet Red Army heroes.” For example, heroes of the Great Patriotic War such as Zoya Kosmodemyanskaya and Alexander Matrosov were slandered, vilified, and ridiculed. The CPSU had wanted to stimulate enthusiasm for reform by correcting historical mistakes, but it ultimately lost control and caused irreparable damage to its own image.

(2) It misrepresented history, distorted facts, and sowed confusion in the minds of the Soviet people

Historical nihilism within the CPSU eroded the Party’s legitimacy to hold power. Khrushchev’s total repudiation of Stalin shattered the unified value system of the Soviet people and sowed confusion in people’s minds, eroding their faith in socialism and confidence in the socialist system. Such repudiation of the Party’s supreme leaders ultimately evolved into the complete repudiation of the CPSU-led revolution and the Party’s political legitimacy. “The CPSU’s degeneration was a long and complicated process, at the forefront of which was the Party’s ideological confusion.”

“After Gorbachev’s ‘reform’ turned into ‘redirection,’ the CPSU fell into ideological confusion and became disorganized, with factionalism running rife both inside and outside the Party.” Gorbachev’s “humane, democratic socialism” was in the same vein as Khrushchev’s modern revisionism: he believed that repudiating the Soviet Union’s socialist history was a prerequisite for reforming Soviet socialism. His *glasnost* campaign set off a wave of “historical reflection” in Soviet society, which “focused on ‘exposing the dark chapters of Soviet history’ with the aim of casting doubt on history and repudiating the past. All of a sudden, a large number of films, TV programs, and writings that defamed Lenin and reviled Stalin appeared in the Soviet media. They repudiated agricultural collectivization, repudiated industrialization, equated the October Revolution with ‘violence and crime,’ and called the Soviet socialist system ‘totalitarianism,’ ‘alienated, deformed socialism,’ and ‘barracks socialism.’ The result was that the CPSU became a villain of historic proportions, and the Soviet system became the root of all evil.” The Soviet propaganda department, too, had fallen. “With the connivance of Gorbachev, Alexander Yakovlev, a member of the Secretariat of the CPSU and head of the Central Committee’s propaganda department, loosened control over public opinion and encouraged the public to critically examine the ‘dark side’ of the CPSU and of Soviet socialism, so as to uncover ‘gaps’ in Soviet history.” Historical nihilism focused solely on secondary trends and ignored principal trends, cherry-picked historical materials and took them out of context to present a partial view, deliberately amplified historical fragments, made baseless interpretations and assumptions, and tailored history to fit a particular narrative, turning serious history into a caricature. Soviet historians and theorists abandoned the basic positions of Marxist historical materialism, willfully overturned established conclusions about CPSU history, and denied the inevitability of the October Revolution. Historical nihilism spread from the study of history to the arts, engulfing Soviet literature. Publishing works full of insinuations, some authors spearheaded the advance of historical nihilism and considered it fashionable to portray CPSU history and Soviet socialism in a nihilistic way. The misinterpretation, distortion, and desecration of history was thus an

ever-rising tide that ultimately turned into a shocking deluge.

(3) It eroded faith and values and led to the CPSU's loss of ideological control

Historical nihilism “eroded the foundation for socialism’s legitimacy, nullified the value of Marxism-Leninism as a guiding principle, and therefore caused a total ideological collapse.” Why was historical nihilism so destructive? It was because “ideology embodies the core values on which a system depends; destroying an ideology amounts to overturning a system.” If CPSU members had discredited their own socialist practice, then what justifications did they still have for remaining as leaders of the country?

Seeing Marxism as an imported foreign ideology not suited to Russia’s conditions, historical nihilism claimed that it was the root of the “evil” that was Soviet socialism in order to attack the CPSU and the Soviet Union. “As disillusion pervaded Soviet society and the ‘idol’ in the hearts of the Soviet people crumbled, Soviet society, politics, and public opinion became fraught with emotion. The second half of the 1980s witnessed a surge of various anti-Marxist ideas as the CPSU completely lost control of ideology, which severely undermined the ideological and political foundations of the Party and the socialist system, and Gorbachev’s reform lost its direction.” “After 1989, bourgeois academic views proliferated, and reviling Marxism, blaming socialism, and vilifying the CPSU became the most fashionable ‘theory,’ with the most vociferous critics becoming celebrities and ‘theorists.’ Various bourgeois and petit bourgeois academic thought and religious teachings swept the academic world, which spurned only Marxism-Leninism. An unprecedented catastrophe befell Marxism.” “What was serious about the problem was not only that hostile forces used ‘democratization’ and ‘openness’ to launch savage attacks on Marxism and socialism, but that even CPSU leaders, especially Gorbachev, tolerated, connived in, supported, enjoyed, and even participated in the anti-Marxist chorus themselves. They let bourgeois ideas, values, and worldviews completely occupy all fronts, including the press, social sciences, and literature and arts. Marxism, socialism, collectivism, and patriotism were ignored, rejected, and ridiculed. It was precisely this erroneous attitude of CPSU leaders toward ideological work that led to the rapid collapse of the socialist cause and the Party’s cause.”

Historical nihilism has great power to swallow and absorb the mainstream ideology, and a sense of nothingness overwhelmed the Soviet people, who were stuck in the mire of historical nihilism, lost and anxious, their faith and values having disintegrated. The “new view on history” informed by historical nihilism displaced historical materialism among the Soviet people and eroded the foundation of their value system, bringing it to the brink of collapse and bringing the spiritual crisis to its worst point. Disillusion and disorientation resulted in an ideological vacuum and spiritual emptiness, and all authority was rendered meaningless. Endless nihilism tore up the social fabric and bred rejection of Soviet socialism and skepticism about communism. The CPSU lost popular support, lost its vitality, lost its political legitimacy, and lost control of ideology. “Disenchanted with the ideal of communism and pessimistic about the CPSU’s future, large numbers of members left the Party, whose membership plummeted from 19 million to 15 million—the 1973 level.” Historical nihilism—peddling nihilism, negation, uncertainty, facetiousness, and deconstruction—erupted with great force and deprived the CPSU of ideological control. It fundamentally undermined the CPSU’s

position as the ruling Party, challenged its legitimacy to hold power, chipped away at the ideological pillar of Soviet socialism, and shattered the Soviet people's faith in communism.

III. Lessons

"Why did the Soviet Union collapse? Why did the CPSU fall? One important reason lay in the intense ideological struggle. With the complete repudiation of the Soviet Union's history and the CPSU's history and the denouncement of Lenin and Stalin, historical nihilism plunged Soviet ideology into chaos, paralyzed Party organizations at various levels, and deprived the Party of its leadership of the armed forces. In the end, such a great Party as the CPSU just came crashing down, and such a great country as the Soviet Union just fell to pieces. This is a cautionary tale!" "The prelude to the rapid disintegration of the Soviet state was the unraveling of the CPSU's ideological underpinnings and of the CPSU itself, after which the Soviet Union as a new model of society and ideological state could no longer exist. The communist ideology and Marxist-Leninist theories did not take roots in people's minds simply as a conceptual system, moral obligations, or a standard mode of behavior. This ideology was not only proved by reality, but also formed the political and socioeconomic structures of the state." Marxist ideology was the beating heart of a socialist state like the Soviet Union, and the edifice of Soviet socialism collapsed as soon as this heart failed.

It is crucial to prepare for danger in times of peace. The collapse of the CPSU and the Soviet Union serves as a cautionary example for China, underlining the importance of ideological security. We must draw profound lessons from that example, firmly resist and guard against the erroneous ideological trend of historical nihilism, uphold a Marxist stance, perspective, and approach in treating our own history and culture, and consolidate Marxism's position as our guiding ideology.

(1) Cultivate and practice the core socialist values and consolidate Marxism's position as our guiding ideology

The core socialist values are the common values pursued by Chinese people today and act as a cohesive force in Chinese society. Composed of national, social, and individual values, they guide ideological trends in society and help prevent and check the spread of historical nihilism. We must maximize the core socialist values' role as ideological and moral guidance, integrate the core socialist values into people's daily lives, promote the spirit of the nation and of the times, and extensively launch themed programs that promote patriotism and citizens' moral education, so as to induce in the people conscious vigilance against and opposition to historical nihilism. China's excellent traditional culture is the root and soul of the Chinese people, and it possesses intrinsic immunity to historical nihilism: it has, for example, the moral values of "integrity and righteousness," the patriotism of "repaying the country with the utmost loyalty," the political philosophy of "taking the people as the basis," the ideal of "great harmony and unity," and the sense of public duty reflected in the saying that "the rise and fall of the nation concerns everyone." When it comes to the traditional culture of the Chinese nation, we can neither blindly boast about it nor forget our own roots; we should embrace what is good and reject what is bad, discarding elements that have fallen behind the progress of the times. In other words, we should adhere to the principles of making the past serve the

present, sifting the old and bringing forth the new, and putting into practice what has been learned. We must carry on and promote the excellent traditional culture of the Chinese nation, stimulate cultural vitality, and strengthen cultural self-confidence.

“The ideology of a socialist society has Marxism as its guiding principle. Any wavering from or relaxation of the guiding principle could cause the ideology to lose cohesiveness and thus lose its direction.” “The victories of the working-class parties in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe began in the realm of ideology first of all, and their failures also began with their loss of the ideological edge. They had for a long time deviated from Marxist doctrines before finally abandoning them, which was an important cause of their loss of political power.” Marxism is the theoretical foundation for a communist party’s legitimacy as the ruling party. We must resolutely uphold and further develop Marxism and prevent it from becoming dogmatic or rigid. A period of social transition usually sees various ideological trends burgeon. In the new era, historical nihilism has manifested itself in new forms in China, such as oblique criticism of China’s path of socialism through reference to the Soviet Union’s collapse, wholesale repudiation of Mao Zedong and the Mao era through wholesale repudiation of Stalin and the Stalin model, and denigration of the achievements of socialism with Chinese characteristics since the reform and opening up. We must actively guard against and firmly counter the encroachment of historical nihilism; maintain confidence in our path, in our guiding theories, in our political system, and in our culture; ensure that China’s reform and opening up is always smoothly advancing towards socialism; and consolidate Marxism’s position as our guiding ideology.

(2) Adhere to the methodology of historical materialism and form a scientific view of history through rational analysis

In today’s Chinese society, there is a nihilistic undercurrent in the form of vilification of Party leaders, which is a manifestation of historical nihilism’s struggle to undermine Marxism’s position as the guiding ideology. Under the pretext of “reflecting on the past,” historical nihilism seizes on setbacks in our Party’s history and launches one-sided attacks focusing solely on them without considering the overall context, completely rejecting Mao Zedong thought and even Marxism solely because of Mao’s mistakes in his later years, and disparaging the achievements of socialism and even the path of socialism with Chinese characteristics since the reform and opening up solely because of the “leftist” errors in the Cultural Revolution.

Whether or not we hold a correct view of history affects the fate of our nation. We must adhere to the methodology of historical materialism, seek truth from facts, and objectively and rationally examine history, basing conclusions on abundant and reliable historical sources. We must always uphold the guidance of Marxism and consider, analyze, and resolve historical questions from a Marxist stance, perspective, and approach. We must strengthen education in a historical materialistic view of Party history and Chinese history, evaluating the contributions and mistakes of revolutionary leaders against their historical contexts. Heroes are the backbone of a nation’s spirit; a hopeful people cannot do without heroes to look up to. We must actively confront and tackle head-on the vilification of revolutionary heroes such as Qiu Shaoyun, Dong Cunrui, and Huang Jiguang. Historical materialism

is key to overcoming historical nihilism. It is important to let historical materialism guide historical research, to distinguish between essence and phenomena and between principal and secondary trends, and to respect the objectivity of history; only then can we eliminate the breeding ground for historical nihilism, dispel the falsehoods of historical nihilism, and form a scientific view of history through rational analysis.

(3) Promote the integrated development of traditional media and new media and firmly maintain predominance and influence in cyberspace

The rapid development of the internet, especially the rapid development of new media tools such as Weibo and WeChat—characterized by instantaneity, interactiveness, openness, dynamism, and shareability—has subverted the traditional unidirectional flow of information and transformed the mode of production and way of life in modern society. Breaking the hold of the traditional unidirectional mode of transmission, the rise of new media has caused “gatekeepers” to concede some of their influence. Historical nihilism has been wantonly peddled on Weibo and WeChat, and it easily goes viral and triggers a chain reaction by virtue of new media’s advantage in spreading information. The damage thus done is not to be underestimated.

In the age of new media, neutralizing the rampant spread of historical nihilism on the internet rests on governance but even more on wisdom. First of all, it is necessary to promote cooperation between traditional media and new media. We should fully utilize the professionalism and authority of traditional media and the instantaneity and openness of new media to voice the right views, voice the dominant melody, and spread positive energy, influencing how people think about and relate to the mainstream ideology in subtle and invisible ways. Second, it is important to enhance our capacity for cyberspace governance and strengthen the construction of the rule of law in cybersecurity. We should step up the supervision and regulation of film and television and introduce harsher penalties for spreading rumors and political misinformation, so as to counter the corrosive influence of historical nihilism and leave it nowhere to hide. Finally, we should come up with innovative ways to propagate the mainstream ideology. This means improving the capacity for and standard of ideological work in cyberspace to keep up with the times and take advantage of the characteristics of new media. We should create new content and forms to spread the mainstream ideology and incorporate the core socialist values through agenda setting, using microtexts, microimages, and microvideos to show the charms of the mainstream ideology in well-illustrated and expressive ways, which will help set a new trend of promoting the mainstream ideology and guide public opinion in a positive and healthy direction. In this way, we can firmly maintain ideological predominance and influence in cyberspace and win this war of ideology.

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2. Important lessons from the collapse of the Soviet Union and the collapse of the state

As mentioned earlier, the most profound warning and lesson of the collapse of the Soviet Union's party and state was the internal construction of the Communist Party, especially the problems within the party's leading group.

(1) The self-construction of a party not only relates to the survival of the party; it relates to the future and destiny of the state, the people, and even mankind

The Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) once achieved unprecedented brilliance. It not only established the world's first socialist state, but also vigorously developed the cause of socialism, profoundly changing the global order and the development direction of human society, such that Marxism-Leninism gained extensive global influence.

In the era of Lenin and Stalin, the construction of the CPSU, in terms of politics, ideology, organization, work style, discipline, and systems, allowed it to adapt to the needs of revolution and

war, construction, and development and promoted great strides in the socialist construction of the Soviet Union and the cause of international communism. Under the strong leadership of the CPSU, the Soviet people paid a huge sacrifice and price to defeat the invasion of foreign enemies and build a powerful country. In World War II, the invincible German fascist and Japanese fascist forces were defeated. After that, the socialist revolution developed from one country to many countries, and the socialist camp headed by the Soviet Union was formed.

The Soviet regime achieved people ruling their own country through the leadership of the CPSU. This means that the party's self-construction task would be arduous, that it must always act as a public servant of the people, keeping in mind its purpose of serving the people. Toward what stage the cause of the party and the people develops determines to what stage the party's construction will advance. However, from the time of Khrushchev's tenure as supreme leader onward, serious problems arose in the construction of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in all aspects, especially in the construction of ideology, politics, and style of work. This was especially so in the later period of Brezhnev's tenure as the supreme leader, during which the phenomenon of bureaucracy in the Soviet Union spread, and the problem of corruption became ever more serious, forming a privileged bureaucratic class that opposed the fundamental interests of the people. The image of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union among the people was seriously damaged, and the foundation for the legitimacy of its rule began to be shaken.

The privileged bureaucratic class was conservative and opposed to any changes involving their own interests. Of greater severity is that the privileged bureaucratic class was completely divorced from the masses, reducing the prestige of the party and the reputation of socialism while cultivating the soil for the growth of anti-communist and anti-socialist forces during the Gorbachev period. In order to legalize the illegally seized state resources, the privileged class tried their best to promote the evolution of the Soviet social system, and the anti-communist and anti-socialist forces led the Soviet Union to its disintegration.

Marxism is the theory of the people, and the standpoint of the people is the fundamental political standpoint of a Marxist party. The CPSU was tested by the revolution and war, led the people to carry out socialist modernization, and the Party and the people established a flesh-and-blood relationship. However, in the era of peaceful development, the CPSU gradually neglected party building. Party leaders were chasing fame and gain, were aloof and self-righteous, and forgot their original mission. It is no wonder that they were abandoned by history.

The history of the collapse of the CPSU shows that it is relatively easy to establish a political party and seize power, but it is extremely difficult to rise up after the collapse of a party and a state. After the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the Communist Party of the Russian Federation participated in the state's political life in a peaceful manner and strived for the restoration of socialism, which once played an important role. However, since entering the 21st century, the development of the Russian Communist Party has not been stable. In March 2018, Russia held its seventh presidential election. The leader of the Russian Communist Party Zyuganov, who had been defeated four times, did not run in the election. The Communist Party of the Russian Federation elected Grudinin (Павел Грудинин)

as its candidate. In September 2021, Russia officially announced the results of the eighth Duma election. The “United Russia” party won 49.82% of the votes, and the Russian Communist Party got 18.93%. However, the actual vote rate of the Russian Communist Party was 30%, and that of the United Russia Party was 35%. Putin talked to Zyuganov before and after the election to put pressure on the Russian Communist Party.

After the regime changed hands, the situation of ordinary people and Communists became very difficult. Ruslan Grinberg (Руслан Гринберг), a corresponding academician of the Russian Academy of Sciences and a well-known economist, once interpreted the development of the Russian economy 25 years after the disintegration of the Soviet Union: “If there are many poor people, the economy will not succeed.” He believes that contemporary Russia is experiencing unprecedented large-scale poverty after the disintegration of the Soviet Union, which is a symbol of the failure of Russia’s 25-year economic transformation; economic inequality is not only shameful, but also extremely detrimental to the country’s economic development. Ruslan Grinberg pointed out again in 2019 that the 3% of the richest Russian citizens owned 89% of the country’s financial assets in 2018. This is the result of a reckless rejection of Soviet justice, clearly showing that Russia has chosen a wrong path.

On December 8, 2021, Volodin (Вячеслав Володин), Chairman of the Russian State Duma, published an article recalling the disintegration of the Soviet Union, saying that the senior leaders of the CPSU chose to betray their ideals, the state, and the people during the country’s most difficult period. In turn, the political elites profited from the collapse of the state. The United States and Europe were thus able to eliminate a powerful ideological opponent, splitting the USSR into different countries. And yet, in the process, none of the 15 republics of the Soviet Union benefited from the collapse of the state. Volodin emphasized that the economic and industrial ties of these member countries were severed, and the industrial capacity was lost. All these factors combined led to a major crisis, and even today, they still suffer the consequences of this tragedy.

On the contrary, the United States, which destroyed the Soviet Union and Eastern European socialist states by means of “unconventional warfare,” that is, ideological, economic, and financial warfare, harvested great wealth from the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the upheavals in Eastern Europe. High-tech industries such as those in computing and the internet that were originally used for military confrontation, were converted to civilian use, further forming financial capital and technical capital. Together, they have fueled the fast growth of the U.S. economy. As a result, economic globalization based on the hegemony of the U.S. dollar and led by the U.S. has reached a new peak. This is also equivalent to the Soviet Union and Eastern European countries handing over their wealth and supporting their competitors.

(2) The leader’s beliefs, theoretical accomplishments, outlook on life, and values are directly related to the success or failure of the great cause of socialism

Judging from the experience and lessons of the rise and fall of the CPSU, the leaders of Marxist political parties must be as Lenin said: “only the most authoritative, most influential, and most experienced people who have been elected to the most important positions can be called leaders.” It

is necessary for them to have the political foresight to take the lead and steer the ship. With unwavering, extraordinary, and fearless revolutionary courage, pioneering spirit, and innovative and excellent leadership for managing complex situations, they must be capable of always standing on the right side of history and the development of the times to lead the party and the people to always move in the right direction.

After Lenin and Stalin, the ideological and political quality of the major leaders of the CPSU declined, their morale was low, and some even became stubborn defenders of the interests of the privileged class. "Meat eaters are contemptuous. They are not far-sighted." They are more concerned about the interests of individuals, families, and small groups. During the Gorbachev period, the leadership of the CPSU could not stand the test of the complicated situation and the temptation of material interests. Fundamental changes took place in ideals, beliefs, will, character, outlook on life, and values, and the fate of the collapse of the socialist cause of the Soviet Union could not be changed.

History is the best teacher. During the leadership period of Lenin and Stalin, the reason why the CPSU was able to grow from weak to strong and lead the cause of socialism to flourish was because of the existence of strong leadership cores and leadership collectives in Lenin and Stalin. After the death of Stalin, the reason why the CPSU turned from prosperity to decline and the cause of socialism led by him was finally destroyed, was also because the CPSU lacked a strong leadership core and collective leadership. The Chinese Communist Party has grown from small to large, from weak to strong, and has made brilliant achievements after a century of ups and downs precisely because of the strong leadership core and collective leadership of Mao Zedong, Deng Xiaoping, Jiang Zemin, Hu Jintao, and Xi Jinping. The cause of Chinese revolution, construction and reform is therefore invincible.

(3) Ideologically, theoretically, and politically unclear, incorrect, and unstable leadership is bound to lead the party and the state astray or even to doom

If the party's leaders and leading collectives lack the scientific armament of Marxist ideology and theory, they will easily lose their way and lose motivation in the face of complex and ever-changing domestic and foreign situations. The CPSU was ideologically, theoretically, and politically unclear, incorrect, and unstable, greatly jeopardizing the cause of the party and the people.

When Khrushchev and Brezhnev were the senior leaders, the CPSU failed to clearly see the nature of imperialism and downplayed class struggle on an international scale. With wishful thinking, they proposed "peaceful coexistence," "peaceful competition," and "peaceful transition" and even proposed the political need for "Soviet-U.S. cooperation to dominate the world," leading to Party chauvinism and world power chauvinism in the socialist camp while promoting hegemony around the world. In order to strengthen the control over Eastern European countries, Brezhnev threw out the so-called "socialist family theory," "limited sovereignty theory," and "international dictatorship theory" to control other fraternal countries and even openly carried out an armed invasion of Czechoslovakia. He also carried out aggression and expansion against the third world under the banner of "supporting the national liberation movement." These erroneous practices of the CPSU

have tarnished the reputation of the Marxist party and led to serious consequences such as the split of the international communist movement.

Gorbachev promoted “new thinking” in diplomacy, advocating that “the interests of all mankind are above all else” and agreeing with Western values as the “values of all mankind,” abandoning the Marxist theory of class struggle and the method of class analysis. Guiding domestic reforms in accordance with Western values, completely relying on Western countries headed by the United States in terms of ideology and actions, he even sold the core interests of the Soviet Union in exchange for the trust of the West. What Russia got in return, however, was a tragedy for the party and the state and a celebration for the Western world. The lesson of the Soviet Union profoundly shows that if a socialist state takes the road of surrendering to Western countries by abandoning socialism, it will inevitably perish.

To avoid taking an erroneous path by abandoning socialism, we must adhere to Marxist standpoints, viewpoints, and methods. We must be fully aware that in the era when the socialist system and the capitalist system coexist and compete and the international monopolist bourgeoisie still dominates the world, we must not yield to the pressure of imperialism with compromise and concessions that are not based on principles and are given regardless of consequences. We should be soberly aware that since the emergence of socialist states, international reactionary forces have never given up their strategic plots of hostility and subversion of the socialist system. On the international stage, there is always a struggle between infiltration and reverse osmosis and subversion and anti-subversion, sometimes reaching a very acute level. Facing the complex and acute situation of international struggle, the ruling party of a socialist state must excel at grasping the opportunity. To adjust policies to guide international relations as far as possible in a direction that is conducive to peace, development, and the cause of human progress, we must also always maintain a clear and correct political mind, adhere to principles, and dare to fight to ensure domestic peace, stability, and development.

(4) The fundamental system that embodies the will of the people must be embodied in the text of the Constitution and in its implementation. These fundamental principles must not be shaken or even canceled in a disguised form.

The historical mission of the proletariat can only be gradually realized under the leadership of its vanguard organization. Therefore, once the proletariat seizes power, it must enact fundamental laws to reflect the will of the working class and working people. The socialist nature of the people’s democratic dictatorship and the core leadership of the Communist Party in socialist states must be clearly confirmed and safeguarded through the text of constitutions and laws. These fundamental systems must be resolutely implemented through various basic systems and important systems in all aspects of the people’s economy, politics, culture, and diplomacy. These fundamental systems must not be suspended in legal provisions through various basic and important systems. Furthermore, these unshakable principles must never be directly removed from the legal provisions. Only in this way can we ensure the socialist nature of the party and the state and safeguard the fundamental

interests of the broad masses of the people. Otherwise, such a party and state will be abandoned by the people.

After 1989, under the banner of political “diversification” and social “democratization,” Gorbachev adopted so-called “free” and “fair” methods to directly elect people’s deputies and representatives of the Supreme Soviet (members). As a result, a large number of radicals, anti-Soviet and anti-Communist leaders, and dissidents were elected. The “cross-regional parliamentarian group” proposed that “all powers belong to the Soviets” and demanded the abolition of Article 6 of the Soviet Constitution on the leadership of the CPSU. In 1990, the February Plenary Session of the CPSU Central Committee decided to abandon the ruling status of the CPSU and implement a multi-party system in the Soviet Union. The Soviet People’s Congress held in March of the same year officially abolished Article 6 of the Soviet Constitution, stipulating that the Soviet Union should implement a multi-party system, a presidential system, and establish a national political system with separation of powers. This fundamentally destroyed the jurisprudence of the CPSU’s governance foundation and dealt a fatal blow to the Soviet regime and the Soviet socialist system.

In the Constitution, it is extremely important to establish and maintain the ruling status of the Communist Party and to establish and maintain the fundamental systems, basic systems, and important systems of socialism. The lessons of the Soviet Union sounded the alarm for us. For a period of time, there has been a trend of so-called “constitutional democracy” in our country. Under the banner of “democracy” and “rule of law,” they demanded an amendment to the expression of the leadership of the Communist Party in our country’s constitution, learning from the experience of the United States and other Western countries to implement “constitutional democracy.” The content included the so-called liberalization of a “party ban” and “media ban” as well as the implementation of a multi-party system, parliamentary democracy, and separation of powers. They also hoped to promote “judicial independence,” “political neutrality,” and “non-partyization” of the military and even to “establish the Federal Republic of China under the framework of democratic constitutionalism.” These propositions are exactly the same as Gorbachev’s speech of “transforming the CPSU,” the crux of which is to put party leadership in opposition to the constitution and laws, negating the leadership of the party and abolishing the people’s democratic dictatorship. The essence is to negate the Chinese constitution and its established systems and principles and ultimately abandon socialism, introducing the Western political system to China. The Chinese constitution has always clarified and safeguarded the leadership and ruling status of the Communist Party of China. The 2018 Constitutional Amendment added the content “The leadership of the Communist Party of China is the most essential feature of socialism with Chinese characteristics” to the first article of the text, which is absolutely correct. Facts have shown that it was not “constitutional democracy” that could save the Soviet Union, but it was precisely “constitutional democracy” that brought down the Soviet Union.

(5) Only by adhering to the lofty ideal of communism and a firm belief in the victory

of socialism can the party have cohesion and fighting strength

The fundamental reason for the weakness and disintegration of the CPSU and its loss of fighting strength is that it abandoned the nature, purpose, and goal of a Marxist political party, as well as the lofty pursuit of seeking happiness for the people and liberation for mankind. In particular, the leaders of the CPSU played down, abandoned, and deviated from the ideals and beliefs of socialism and communism, which provided a bad example for all Party members, and the lessons were extremely painful.

In terms of ideology and politics, Khrushchev advocated the “Party of the Whole People” and “State of the Whole People” of class reconciliation, advocated an abstract, supra-class humanist view, and demanded that the so-called “great humanism” be “our ideology,” downplaying the guiding position of Marxism-Leninism. In the late period of Brezhnev’s tenure as the supreme leader, the CPSU generally had inconsistencies between words and deeds, characterized by formalism, rhetoric, and talking but not doing, which seriously weakened the Party’s influence and caused the CPSU’s prestige to continue to decline. During Gorbachev’s period, the CPSU completely abandoned the guiding position of Marxism-Leninism. The party was ideologically chaotic, there were many factions, chaos abounded, people’s hearts grew lax, and it was eventually disbanded.

The painful lessons of the Soviet Union show that firm ideals and beliefs are of great significance to a Marxist party and to a socialist state. In a certain sense, whether the ideals and beliefs are firm or not is directly related to the life and death of the party and the state, and we must consistently uphold and strengthen the party’s ideals and beliefs education. Ideals and beliefs are the political soul and spiritual pillar of Communists, and the ideological guarantee for overcoming all difficulties and securing all achievements. The Chinese Communist Party has persevered in strengthening the Party’s ideological and theoretical construction, insisting on building the Party ideologically, promoting the theoretical strengthening of the Party, attaching great importance to socialist ideology, strengthening the construction of ideological positions, and firmly grasping the leadership of ideology. This series of major moves is absolutely correct.

(6) Abandoning the guiding position of Marxism and violating the principles of scientific socialism will inevitably lead to the fateful consequences of abandoning socialism and a destruction of the party and the state

There have always been two different views on the issue of reform: One is to regard reform as the self-improvement and development of the socialist system, organically unifying the adherence to the fundamental and basic systems of socialism, and the improvement of specific systems that do not meet the requirements of the development of productive forces. This not only regards reform as a revolutionary change to eradicate the shortcomings of systems and mechanisms, breaks through the barriers of thinking, and solidifies interests. Furthermore, it also adheres to the basic principles of scientific socialism to ensure that reforms always advance along the direction and path of socialism. This is a Marxist view of reform that has been proven correct in practice. Another view advocates reforms that are not socialist in nature. It uses the name of reform and the banner of “reform” to

fundamentally deny the fundamental and basic systems of socialism and transplant the capitalist social system. This ultimately realizes the capitalization of the country, and Gorbachev's reforms can be categorized as such.

Throughout the history of the Soviet Union, if it is said that reforms began with Khrushchev, then from Khrushchev to before Gorbachev came to power, on the one hand, the leading group of the CPSU began to deviate ideologically and politically from the basic principles of Marxism-Leninism and the fundamental and basic systems of socialism. On the other hand, only some repair measures had been taken under the original institutional mechanisms. However, from Gorbachev's tenure as the supreme leader to the disintegration of the Soviet Union, so-called "reforms" that completely negated the socialist system and deviated from the principles of scientific socialism were implemented, pointing the finger at the socialist system itself and fundamentally denying the fundamental and basic systems of socialism.

Judging from the lessons of the CPSU, on the issue of reform, we must neither follow the old path of a rigid closed-door policy, nor an erroneous path by abandoning socialism. Specifically, it is particularly crucial not to take an erroneous path of abandoning socialism and avoid making subversive mistakes. Since the 18th Party Congress, the Party Central Committee with Comrade Xi Jinping as the core has emphasized that our country's reform has a firm and correct political direction, stance and principles. The core is to uphold and improve the party's leadership, and uphold and improve the socialist system with Chinese characteristics, emphasizing that we must strengthen political determination, stick to political principles and bottom lines, and must not turn reform into a "reversal" or a change of the socialist system. These important conclusions are completely correct.

(7) Attaching great importance to ideological work, counteracting various non-Marxist and anti-Marxist thought trends in a timely manner, and always maintaining the revolutionary, advanced and pure nature of the party in terms of ideological and political theory

Throughout the over 70 years of history of Soviet Russia and the Soviet Union, the ideological work of the CPSU underwent a process of evolution and transformation. During Lenin's period, he insisted on taking Marxism as the guide, established the principles, guidelines, and theoretical guidance of ideological work for the Bolshevik Party in the long-term revolutionary practice, and created a precedent for Marxist ideological work. The ideological work during the Stalin period had both major achievements and deviations, but the direction generally was correct, and Marxism-Leninism was upheld and developed. During the period of Lenin and Stalin, the CPSU's criticism and political reckoning of various anti-Marxist ideological trends were resolute and thorough, enabling the Party to consciously resist the erosion of various bourgeois ideological trends for a long historical period. In particular, its understanding of the nature of democratic socialism and its predecessor, social democracy, was profound and sober. This is obviously directly related to Lenin and Stalin's long-term insistence on resolute struggle with the right wing of the Second International.

Starting from Khrushchev, the ideological work of the CPSU had strayed farther and farther away

from Marxism, and various non-Marxist and anti-Marxist ideological trends in the Soviet Union had begun to revive. In addition, we must also see that after World War II, the confrontation and struggle between the two fundamentally different social systems of capitalism and socialism and the two major classes of the bourgeoisie and the proletariat have eased worldwide. At that time, the popular democratic socialism and Western bourgeois thought took advantage of Khrushchev's revolt against Stalin and the anti-communist wave caused by the Hungarian and Poznan incidents to expand their influence.

During the Khrushchev period, "humanism" appeared in CPSU, and the Marxist beliefs of Party members were greatly impacted. At that time, some Eastern European countries such as Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, and other "new Marxist" factions emerged. These factions denied Leninism and the principles of scientific socialism in the name of getting rid of the shackles of "traditional Marxism." Socialists in Western European countries held high the banner of democratic socialism to serve the needs of imperialism in promoting the strategy of peaceful evolution to socialist states. It was in this international environment that Khrushchev's ideas of "humanism" and "three harmonies" and "two completeness" were formed. This erroneous thought trend had not been corrected in the CPSU for a long time, so that it evolved into the so-called "humane and democratic socialist" reform. After Brezhnev's formalist governance, various erroneous thought trends continued unabatedly, greatly affecting the ideological purity of the CPSU and forming a hotbed for breeding anti-Marxist thoughts within the Party. During the Gorbachev period, the leading group of the CPSU embarked on the erroneous path of completely and utterly negating Marxism-Leninism, and various erroneous thought trends permeated far and wide.

Gorbachev abandoned the law of human social development revealed by historical materialism, copied the bourgeois abstract theory of human nature to analyze the problems existing in Soviet society, believed that Soviet socialism did not conform to so-called humanity, and even destroyed the so-called humanity, "castrating the humanity of the socialist structure." He also misinterpreted the assertion in the *Communist Manifesto* that "the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all," believing that it is a "humanist program" that embodies "great humanist principles." He also regarded humanism as the essential requirement of a socialist society, as the goal and task of socialist reform, and as the goal of the Communists, completely falling into the historical quagmire of idealism.

"Humanism," as a banner of the bourgeoisie against feudal autocracy and theological rule, has progressive significance in history, but what the bourgeoisie calls humans and humanity are abstract humans and abstract humanity. They are so-called "natural and eternal" things without class attributes and are so-called "standards and measures for measuring everything including human history." Attributing the driving force of historical development and social progress to human kindness or human rationality is a typical manifestation of the idealist view of history. The abstract theory of human nature could neither clearly see the essence of Soviet social problems nor the law of human social development, which made the CPSU lose its way and also caused the disappearance of the revolutionary, advanced, and pure nature of the Marxist party.

History has proved that the Chinese Communists, mainly represented by Comrade Deng Xiaoping, launched a clear-cut struggle to eliminate spiritual pollution in the early 1980s, and it was completely correct to criticize the abstract theory of human nature and abstract humanism. This has played a huge role in getting China out of the negative impact of the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the drastic changes in Eastern Europe, promoting China's reforms in the right direction.

The lessons of the collapse of the Soviet Union's Party and state show that the most important thing in ideological work is to prevent erroneous things from happening and prevent problems before they can happen. If Marxism does not occupy the ideological position, non-Marxist and anti-Marxist trends of thought will inevitably occupy it. Socialist states must attach great importance to ideological work and firmly grasp the leadership of ideological work. We must unswervingly adhere to the guiding position of Marxism, strengthen the ideological and theoretical construction of the party, and persevere in tempering the cultivation of party spirit. We must fight resolutely against all anti-Marxist trends of thought so that ideological and public opinion positions are firmly in the hands of Marxists.

Social existence determines social consciousness. As long as capitalist private ownership still exists, the social foundations of various non-Marxist and anti-Marxist ideological trends based on private ownership will always exist. History shows that the struggle between Marxism and non-Marxism and anti-Marxism is long-term, and communists must remain vigilant.

The Chinese Communist Party has always attached great importance to and worked hard to carry out ideological construction, especially since the 18th Party Congress. The Party Central Committee with Comrade Xi Jinping at its core emphasizes the extreme importance of ideological work and calls on the entire Party to fully understand the long-term nature, arduousness, and complexity of ideological work, firmly grasp the leadership of ideological work, carry forward the spirit of struggle, and improve the ability to fight. The Party must build a socialist ideology with strong cohesion and leadership in order to constantly win new victories in the great struggle of the new era. These major judgments and decisions are wise and correct.

(8) Unswervingly adhering to the Party's absolute leadership over the military and never breaking our resolve so as to not become fish under the knife of reactionary forces

Since its inception, the Soviet Red Army followed Lenin's principles of army building, established the absolute leadership of the CPSU over the Red Army, and firmly held the proletarian army in the hands of the proletarian Party. The experience and lessons of the history of the international communist movement have repeatedly proved that it is extremely important to uphold the fundamental principles and systems of the party's absolute leadership over the military and to put ideological and political construction at the top of all military constructions. During the Soviet Union's "August 19" incident in 1991, the airborne troops and the KGB Alpha action group ordered to enter Moscow refused to implement the orders of their superiors, turned their guns, and supported the "pro-democracy" Yeltsin. At the critical moment of the country's life and death, the army created by the CPSU not only failed to fulfill its mission and responsibility but turned on the Party, accelerating the collapse of the

CPSU and the state. In the name of the so-called “nationalization of the military” and “non-partyization of the military,” the CPSU completely gave up its leadership over the military.

Ideologically, Gorbachev tried his best to promote the “depoliticization,” “non-partyization,” and “nationalization” of the military. In essence, he transferred the supreme command of the army from the Central Committee of the CPSU to the President of the Soviet Union. Politically, the General Political Department of the army was abolished, political organs at all levels of the army were cut down, tens of thousands of officers were removed, and the political review system for officer promotion was abolished, so that the loyalty and reliability of the army to the Party and the state rapidly declined. In addition, the *Supplementary Law on the Establishment of the President of the Soviet Union and the Amendment to the Constitution of the Soviet Union (Fundamental Law)* enacted in March 1990 legally deprived the CPSU of its supreme power to lead and command the Soviet army.

In order to wrest the power to lead the army from the hands of the CPSU, the trend of historical nihilism in the Soviet Union became more widespread and began to foment public opinion aimed at subverting the state, pointing the finger of negation at the Soviet army and Soviet heroes. Anti-Soviet and anti-communist newspapers and extremist forces exclusively exposed and criticized the so-called problems of the Soviet army and blamed the consequences of Gorbachev’s wrong reforms on the army. It was the result of the “monster” of the Soviet army sucking up the blood and sweat of the country. It became fashionable to slander Soviet soldiers and deny the history of the Soviet army. Zoya (Зоя Космодемьянская), Matrosov (Александр Матросов), Klochkov (Федор Крючков), the Young Guards, and other Soviet national heroes and hero groups were slandered. The Soviet army became an accomplice of the “fascist regime,” and the victory in the Great Patriotic War was nothing more than the defeat of the “little fascist” in Germany by the “big fascist” of the Soviet Union. On November 14, 1990, Marshal Akhromeyev (Сергей Ахромеев) of the Soviet Union published an article in *Soviet Russia*, pointing out that since the middle of that year, all anti-military activities ceased to be local issues. Separatist and anti-socialist forces combined a policy of discrediting the military with crowding out the Communist Party and sparked mass unrest calling for the resignation of the government.

It was not just Zoya, a hero, who was tainted by lies at that time. Hostile forces at home and abroad in the Soviet Union slandered and insulted almost all heroes the Soviet people were proud of, such as Private Alexander Matveyevich Matrosov (Александр Матвеевич Матросов) of the Soviet Guards. On February 23, 1943, during the battle for the village of Chernushki, near Velikiye Luki, in the Pskov Oblast, he used his unyielding chest to block the machine gun slot of a German pillbox. Matrosov dedicated his precious life at the age of 19 to the victory. On June 19, 1943, he was posthumously recognized as a “Hero of the Soviet Union.” Nine years later, a Matrosov-style hero also appeared on the Korean battlefield—Huang Jiguang, a special hero of the Chinese People’s Volunteers. However, this “Huang Jiguang of the Soviet Union” was vilified during the Gorbachev period as a “juvenile delinquent” and a “prisoner soldier” who went to the front line from exile in a gulag. The rumormongers also slanderously claimed that Matrosov was short and thin. As the German machine gun has a caliber of 40mm and as multiple machine guns were likely used in a pillbox slot that was one and a half meters wide, it would have been impossible for him to block the slot. Even the

testimony of Tajirov (Хамза Тагиров), a comrade-in-arms who witnessed Matrosov's death, was questioned, claiming his memory was unreliable. How similar are these statements to the rumors around slandered Huang Jiguang that once appeared in our country! It is simply that since the 18th Party Congress, these historical nihilist heresies have been all but run out of town. At the same time, China has also made legislation to safeguard the reputation of heroes, severely punishing any tarnishing of the people's heroes and models.

A society that denies heroes is destined to have no future. Such a torrent of lies not only disturbed public opinion and confused the masses, but it deprived the 5 million Soviet troops of all former glory and deprived the Soviet people of their strong backing to defend their regime. Moreover, as a result, the CPSU, which had nearly 20 million Party members, and the Soviet Union, which had a history of more than 70 years, were pushed towards disintegration. The ultimate fate of the powerful Soviet army is embarrassing, and the historical mirror is worth remembering forever.

(9) We must be highly vigilant against the Western strategy of peaceful evolution, and we must not allow the fifth column to run amok in our country or even within the Party, especially within the Party's leadership. Otherwise, an overthrow of the Party and the state will become inevitable.

"Peaceful evolution" is a strategic idea put forward by brothers John and Allen Dulles for the U.S. government to "contain" socialist states from 1953 to 1961. As World War II was drawing to a close in 1945, Allen Dulles, then a senior U.S. intelligence official, outlined in detail how the Soviet Union would evolve through peaceful means: "The war will be over. Everything will be settled down and put in order. We shall spend everything we have (all gold, all economic power and resources) on duping and fooling people." "Human brains and consciences can be changed. Having wreaked havoc there, we will insensibly replace people's values with false ones..." "We will find like-minded people—allies and supporters—in Russia itself." "We shall insensibly, but actively and constantly, promote abuse of power by state officials, bribe taking, and unscrupulousness." "We shall gradually exterminate the social substance in literature and art." "We shall smartly and insensibly cultivate and all of this will thrive... And only a few, a very few people will guess and understand what is happening. But we shall put those people in a helpless position, make a mockery of them, find ways to belie them and declare them to be the scum of society." January 15, 1953, U.S. Secretary of State John Dulles claimed that the way to destroy socialism's threat to the free world must be, and could be, peaceful. Those who do not believe that mental pressure and propaganda pressure can have an effect are too ignorant.

Western hostile forces pursued a strategy of peaceful evolution against the Soviet Union, first of all by cultivating a strong internal Western force among the leadership of the Soviet Party and state at all levels and all walks of life, especially within senior leadership. This is commonly known as the "fifth column." The West used cultural exchanges, economic activities, and personnel exchanges to infiltrate ideas and cultures, fostering spokesmen of the West in the USSR. Primarily through extensive recruitment of experts and scholars from various disciplines, the West used means such as propaganda, mutual visits, reconnaissance, and espionage to conduct large-scale psychological

warfare. Through solidarity and bribery, they supported Soviet dissidents. Taking advantage of ethnic conflicts, they created ethnic divisions and incited dissatisfaction in Soviet society. By spreading political rumors and vilifying the images of Soviet leaders such as Lenin and Stalin, they incited resentment and hatred of the Soviet system in the masses and kindled a yearning for Western society.

In September 1956, the U.S. government decided to take advantage of Khrushchev's advocacy of "peaceful coexistence" between socialism and capitalism to encourage "large-scale people-to-people exchanges" between the Soviet Union and the United States and proposed inviting 10,000 Soviet college students to the United States, all expenses for which were borne by the U.S. government. This was in the hopes that, one day, this group of people cultivated by the United States would take power in the Soviet Union. Later, facts proved that the Americans did not waste their efforts. By attracting a large number of Soviet young people to study in the United States, the United States carried out anti-communist propaganda on them and cultivated a group of anti-communist, anti-socialist, pro-American, pro-Western forces. Yakovlev was one such subject. According to Kryuchkov (Владимир Крючков), the former chairman of the National Security Council of the Soviet Union, Yakovlev was bought by the U.S. Secret Service during his studies at Columbia University in the United States in 1960 and received instructions from the United States during the "reform" period of the Soviet Union.

The West also used its own Nobel Prize, various foundations, and various non-governmental organizations to influence and dominate intellectual groups in Soviet society, cultivate pro-Western "intellectual elites," and let them promote Western ideology and values. The Nobel Prize for Literature, the Peace Prize, and the Prize for Economics, all have distinct Western ideological overtones. The Soviet Union has won 5 Nobel Prizes in Literature and 2 Nobel Peace Prizes. In addition to the famous Soviet writer Sholokhov (Михаил Шолохов), who won the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1965 and is the author of *And Quiet Flows the Don*, the works of the other four winners are all famous for denying and vilifying the October Revolution and the Stalin period, the most famous of which is Solzhenitsyn (Александр Солженицын), known for writing *The Gulag Archipelago*. One of the two Peace prizes was awarded to the famous Soviet "dissident" and scientist Sakharov (Андрей Сахаров), who had been engaged in anti-Soviet and anti-communist political activities since the 1970s. His award in 1975 came from Western affirmation of his political activities. Another Nobel Peace Prize was given to Gorbachev in 1990 for his "outstanding contribution" to the disintegration of the Soviet Communist Party and the promotion of "democracy" in Eastern Europe. At this point, the black hand manipulating the Nobel Prize was exposed.

Western non-governmental organizations also played an important role in disintegrating the ideology of the Soviet Communist Party and promoting the disintegration of the Soviet Union. The representative of neoliberalism known for his anti-communist and anti-Marxist beliefs — British economist and political scientist Friedrich Hayek — with the help of the British consortium, used the Monteplee Foundation to actively participate in the ideological infiltration of the Soviet Union by the West and focused on funding a group of Soviet scholars to study in the West, including Gaidar (Егор Гайдар) and Chubais (Анатолий Чубайс). Under the influence of the Hayek and Monteplee Foundations, Gaidar and Chubais tried their best to spread neoliberal ideas in the Soviet Union and

Russia and promoted “shock therapy” based on neoliberalism, which became the leading cause and major driver of the collapse of the Soviet and Russian economies.

Soros, the founder of the Open Society Foundations of the United States, established the Soviet Soros Foundation in Moscow in 1987, actively funding anti-Soviet and anti-communist liberals to engage in political activities for the disintegration of the Soviet Union, such as the famous “dissident” and historian Yuri Afanasyev (Юрий Афанасьев). In addition, the Soros Foundation also funded a working group composed of Yavlinsky (Григорий Явлинский) and others in 1990 to formulate the Soviet Union’s transition plan to a free market economy (the “500-day Plan”). The foundation also funded a large number of journalists and TV anchors, trained a group of so-called independent TV media experts, acted as anti-Soviet and anti-communist mouthpieces, and actively engaged in anti-Soviet and anti-communist activities.

The West, led by the United States, paid special attention to seeking and cultivating agents at all levels of the Soviet Union’s leadership. Freemasonry, a mysterious organization in the West, also played an important catalytic role in promoting the disintegration of the Soviet Union. According to Russian historian Platonov (Олег Платонов) in the book *Russia’s Crown of Thorns: The Secret History of Freemasonry 1731-1996*, from 1945 to 1994, more than 400 senior party and government officials in the former Soviet system joined Freemasonry or international organizations affiliated to Freemasonry (such as the Petersburg Club, Great Europe Committee, and International Russia clubs). Among them were Gorbachev, Yakovlev, Shevardnadze, Yeltsin and other senior leaders of the CPSU.

As the general secretary of a major power and Party like the Soviet Union, he should have been a firm and sober Marxist-Leninist who wholeheartedly served the vast majority of people in his country and the world, that is, “have no self and live up to the people.” The strange phenomenon of “doves occupying magpie’s nests” gradually appeared in key and important positions, and they were controlled by degenerate elements in the Party and traitors of the communist cause. The emergence of this peculiar phenomenon, of course, has extremely complicated domestic and internal reasons within the Party, but it is also directly related to extremely complicated international factors. Many conclusive materials prove that the reason why Gorbachev, who had completely lost his communist beliefs, was elected as the general secretary of the CPSU Central Committee was closely related to the induction and support of Western forces headed by the United States. A well-known Soviet dissident Alexander Zinoviev (Александр Зиновьев) stated that around 1979 he had a conversation with a British intelligence officer who told him: “Soon they (that is, the Western powers) will put their own people on the throne of the Soviet Union.” Although the staff member did not mention Gorbachev’s name, Zinoviev concluded from this that the prophecy was prescient. As early as 1983, the CIA had a lot of information about Gorbachev, which convinced the U.S. Secret Service that “it could use him to serve its own political interests.” Since then, the West, led by the United States, tried many times to establish a secret relationship with Gorbachev and regarded him as the best candidate for the leadership of the CPSU. Mrs. Thatcher also said bluntly: “We made Gorbachev the general secretary.” Some commentators believe that London approved Gorbachev’s election as General Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee before Moscow. In fact, when he was studying at Moscow State University in 1953, Gorbachev became good friends with Czech student Zdenek Mlinaz

(Зденек Млынарж). However, Zdenek was a “dissident” that the United States had worked hard to cultivate in the Czech Republic. Zdenek served as Secretary of the Central Committee of the Czech Communist Party and a member of the Presidium in 1968. He was one of the leaders of the Prague Spring and was expelled from the Party in 1970. In 1977, Zdenek and 240 other Czechoslovakian intellectuals and people from other fields and classes signed and issued the *Charter 77* declaration demanding the protection of the so-called basic human rights, launching a campaign against the so-called Stalinist autocratic rule. Gorbachev apparently had little contact with Zdenek, but Gorbachev’s biographer Grachev (Андрей Грачев) quoted Gorbachev in 1994 to *Komsomolskaya Pravda*: “Zdenek is my closest friend, closer than anyone.” Gorbachev also confirmed in 2002: “I have a friend named Zdenek Mlinaz, and we maintained friendly relations until the last moments of his life.” Immediately after being elected general secretary, Gorbachev invited Zdenek to Moscow, but the meeting with him was kept private.

Allen Dulles, a senior CIA official, acknowledged in his book *The Craft of Intelligence* published in the mid-1960s that Western intelligence agencies kept tabs on socialist states “with communist party members at every level, from the top down to the grassroots, carefully archiving and detailing their activities and speeches as well as the relevant circumstances of their personal and social lives.” Soviet KGB General Sidorenko (Андрей Сидоренко) recalled: “In the mid-1960s, the KGB got the first information from its sources about the move of the CIA and other American intelligence agencies to recruit so-called agents of interest.” “The purpose of recruiting these agents of interest was to use them in the future, that is, to expect that at an unknown moment in the future, they would be able to be promoted to Party and state organs, influential social institutions, and the Soviet army and then work there.” Russian historian Ostrovsky (Александр Островский) proposed in the book *Who Supported Gorbachev?* that, “Gorbachev’s name appeared on the CIA profile card no later than 1968, when he was the second secretary of the Stavropol Krai Party Committee.”

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, CIA Director Robert Gates took a proud walk in Moscow’s Red Square and said: “We know that neither economic pressure nor an arms race can bring it down, even by force. It can only be destroyed by an internal implosion.” Former USSR Council of Ministers Nikolai Ryzhkov said: “If it were not for the “fifth column” inside that actually fully pursued the goals set by the enemies of the Soviet Union, no one would be able to do anything to our country with external forces alone.” Former Soviet Defense Minister Dmitry Yazov said: “There is a so-called ‘fifth column,’ people who depend on the Americans for sustenance. There are not many of these people, but they were the ones who crippled the Soviet Union.”

After Gorbachev’s death, leaders of Western countries such as Biden spoke highly of him and offered him various compliments without hesitation. U.S. President Joe Biden said: “Gorbachev was a man of extraordinary vision. When he came to power, the Cold War had been raging for nearly 40 years, and communism had existed even longer, with devastating consequences. Few of the top Soviet leaders had the courage to admit that change was needed. As a member of the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee, I watched as Gorbachev did this and more.” British Prime Minister Boris Johnson said: “I am saddened by the news of Mikhail Gorbachev’s death. I have always admired his courage and honesty in bringing the Cold War to a peaceful end.”

The existence of the “fifth column” has enabled the U.S.-Western strategy peaceful evolution to achieve a comprehensive “victory.” This is a “victory” that the West has never had since the establishment of the socialist states. The harm of the Soviet Union’s “fifth column” tells us that battles on military battlefields are often thrilling because they can be seen, but battles on invisible battlefields such as economics, ideology, and culture are calm on the surface, but because of their level of concealment and subterfuge often become more deadly.

The “fifth column” of the West, headed by the United States, instigated rebellion in the Soviet Union, including by the likes of Gorbachev, Yakovlev, Shevardnadze, and Yeltsin, and Western anti-Soviet forces worked together internally and externally to bring down the Party and state of the Soviet Union. That is an indisputable fact, and the process is shocking, making it worthy of our study. (To be continued)

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Historical Lessons and Contemporary Implications of the Soviet Communist Party's Disengagement from the Masses in its Later Period

苏共后期脱离群众的历史镜鉴及现实启迪

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In 1991, the political climate in the Soviet Union experienced a sudden upheaval, the CPSU was disbanded, the national regime underwent transition, and the path of social development was changed. Reflecting on the history of the rise and fall of the CPSU, one can conclude a law for the rise and fall of a political party, that is, the life and death of the party depends on winning the hearts and minds of the people. One may learn by reflecting on other people's stories; one can understand why powers rise and fall by learning from history. The mass line is the lifeline of the Chinese Communist Party, and the fundamental focus of its efforts. General Secretary Xi Jinping has pointed out that "History has fully proved that the country is the people, and the people are the country, and the support of the people's hearts is related to the life and death of the Party. By winning the trust and support of the people, the Party will be able to overcome any difficulty and be invincible." "As we have fought to establish and consolidate our leadership over the country, we have in fact been fighting to earn and keep the people's support." The reason why the CCP was able to lead the Chinese people to achieve great victories in revolution, construction, and reform is because it has always been able to put the people at the center and maintain a close bond between the Party and the

people. On the other hand, the CPSU “founded the country when the Party had 200,000 people, defended it when it had 2 million people, but destroyed it when it had 20 million people,” and the important reason remains that the CPSU had disengaged from the people and indulged in formalism, bureaucracy, hedonism, and extravagance, which corrupted party conduct, the political climate, and social morality, and ultimately led the party to be abandoned by its people. Today, reviewing the history of the CPSU’s disengagement from the masses has important educational values and can serve as an important warning.

1. The Manifestations for CPSU’s Disengagement from the Masses in its Later Period

In the early days of the founding of the party, the CPSU attached great importance to the relationship between the Party and the masses. Lenin once said: “It is a naive, very naive idea to build a communist society only by the hands of the communists. The members of the Communist Party are just a drop in the ocean, a drop of water in the ocean of the people.” He practiced what he had said by setting a personal example. Lenin kept close contact with the masses, received the visits of the masses in person, listened to the voices of the masses, and created the “Communist Subbotnik.” Stalin led the Soviet people to the victory of the Great Patriotic War and great achievements during the socialist construction period, but he lived a simple life and had very strict requirements on himself and his family. After Khrushchev became the leader of the CPSU, the bad habits of divorcing theory from reality and cadres from the masses had been gradually spreading across the Party. During the time of Brezhnev, the problem of Party conduct within the CPSU had become very serious, and the problem continued to the period when Gorbachev became the leader of the CPSU. Gorbachev’s further disengagement from and his betrayal of the Party and the masses eventually led to the collapse of the CPSU.

“The one who wins the hearts of the people wins the world, and the one who loses the hearts of the people loses the world.” In the entire history of the decline of the CPSU, Gorbachev’s “reforms” were certainly the direct cause of the CPSU’s downfall, but the complete departure from the Party’s fundamental principles and the mass line in the later period of the CPSU was undoubtedly the root cause for its failure. The top leaders of the CPSU gradually disengaged from the masses, which was mainly manifested in its corruption and degeneration with regard to ideology, organization, conduct, and lifestyle.

(1) Stagnant and Unmotivated to Make Progress in Ideology

The period when Brezhnev was the leader of the CPSU is generally considered to be the heyday of Soviet social development. Especially in the early days of his tenure, the entire Soviet society showed unprecedented stability and prosperity. During the first five-year plan period (1966-1970) under Brezhnev’s rule, the average annual growth rate of the reached 7.4%. When wars broke out in the Middle East in the 1970s, international oil prices rose sharply. The Soviet Union obtained a huge amount of foreign exchange by exporting a great amount of oil and natural gas. From 1970 to 1980,

the amount of oil extracted in the Soviet Union increased from 31 million tons to 312 million tons. Solely from oil exports, the Soviet Union had already gained foreign exchange earnings of up to 16 billion dollars per year. Stimulated by favorable factors such as economic growth and the increase in foreign exchange earned through oil exports, the overall living standards of the Soviet people also reached an all-time high during this period. In terms of diplomacy, with a large number of nuclear weapons and strong military, the Soviet Union pursued a tit-for-tat bid for hegemony against the United States. For the United States, which was deeply mired in the oil crisis and the Vietnam War at this time, the Soviet Union appeared to have become a real superpower whose competitiveness was tantamount to itself. However, during the middle and later period of Brezhnev's tenure, the top leaders of the CPSU gradually lost their determination and will to reform. They were complacent in their thinking and conservative in their work, and such complacency and narrow-mindedness were pervasive within the Party. In a blind pursuit of "stability," Brezhnev, known as the "good old man," played down the lofty beliefs of the Bolshevik Party during the Lenin period and lost the indomitable fighting spirit of the revolutionaries.

In 1967, Brezhnev asserted that the Soviet Union had successfully built a "developed socialism." This assertion, though divorced from reality and lacking sufficient theoretical support, was publicized as a "theoretical leap" in the history of the CPSU. And the pace of reform within the CPSU gradually slowed down. With CPSU's increasing idolization of the theory of "developed socialism," after the 24th Congress of the CPSU in 1971, the economic reform led by Kosygin, chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Soviet Union, was forced to a halt. Under Brezhnev's so-called "developed socialism" theory, the entire Soviet society was preoccupied with finding ways to rationalize the theory. In contrast, pragmatic and realistic "reform" and "innovation" had been shelved and ignored. In the later period of Brezhnev's power, dogmatism, hedonism, and blind optimism had almost spread across the entire Soviet society, and the Soviet Union had stopped advancing, falling into a state of "stagnation."

(2) Organizational Formalism and Strict Bureaucracy

Regarding formalism and bureaucracy, Lenin made a brilliant point: "The occurrence of formalism and bureaucracy should be attributed to those who refuse to work under the leadership of the central authority, which makes it difficult to avoid formalism in dealing with problems." In other words, formalism and bureaucracy are essentially a working style that opposes and rejects the centralized and unified leadership of the party and only serves the interests of individuals and small groups. If its development and influence is unchecked, it will definitely damage the authority of the party. In the later period of the CPSU, formalism and bureaucratic style pervading the ranks of cadres had become more and more serious, which further deteriorated the relationship between the party and the masses.

Formalism was particularly serious in the field of CPSU propaganda. Since Khrushchev's administration, the top leadership of the CPSU had generally lacked the theoretical literacy of Marxism and made no outstanding contributions to the application and development of Marxism in practice or to innovations or breakthroughs in publicizing Marxist theories. The absence of

theoretical guidance left CPSU's ideological guidelines with little update for a long period of time, making it unable to keep pace with the times, which in turn led to empty and boring propaganda rhetoric. In most cases, the propaganda of the CPSU picked individual words and judgments of Marxism-Leninism as the only criterion for judging right from wrong, without considering the actual needs and the voice of the masses at all. This dogmatic way of preaching and indoctrination gradually bound ideological work with rigid mentalities, weakened the powerful function of Marxism in understanding and transforming society, damaged Marxist thought's ability to lead and mobilize people, concealed ever-intensifying social conflicts and problems, and further severed the close ties between the party and the masses.

During Brezhnev's tenure, "bureaucracy, parochialism, bureaucratic authoritarianism and arbitrariness underwent a so-called doubled exacerbation." In order to pursue the stability of the cadre team in its literal sense, there had been no transition of leadership of the CPSU for a long time, forming a de facto tenure system for leading cadres. Brezhnev criticized Khrushchev's rotation mechanism for cadres, believing that "the unreasonable transfer and replacement of cadres will make them unconfident, which restrains them from fully living up to their abilities, and provides grounds for irresponsible behavior." He also abolished the practice whereby one-third of the members of the Central Committee of the CPSU and the Party Committee must be replaced in every re-election. During Khrushchev's tenure, 49.6% of the members of the Central Committee had been re-elected. By the 22nd Congress of the CPSU, 79.4% of the members of the Central Committee had been re-elected. By the 25th Congress of the CPSU, it was 83.4%. By the time of the 26th Congress of the CPSU, the percentage had risen to over 90%. When Brezhnev was in power, the Politburo and the Secretariat of the CPSU underwent even smaller changes, with only 12 people being replaced in the course of 18 years. This made it difficult for young cadres to develop themselves, meant stand-out talents were unable to obtain leadership positions in their prime of life, and made the mentality of the CPSU leadership even more rigid and conservative. In order to defend their vested interests, the ruling bureaucratic clique opposed reform and innovation, and was content to maintain the status quo, causing the country to miss good opportunities for its development.

(3) Pervasive Privilege-Seeking Attitudes and Widespread Hedonism in Conduct

In the years of Soviet revolution and war, the CPSU was out in front and not afraid of making sacrifices, and eventually led its people to achieve major achievements in socialist construction and victory in the Great Patriotic War. However, as it consolidated its ruling position and the inner-party supervision and restraint mechanism lost its binding power, a hedonistic climate began to spread widely across the CPSU.

With the expansion and solidification of the Party and government cadres of the CPSU during the Brezhnev period, a special bureaucratic privileged class gradually formed within the Party. This class was mainly composed of Party and government cadres who held power. They held high positions of authority and had great power, forming a self-consistent group, and were highly apt to hide behind the scenes, characterized by great selfishness, greed, and conservatism. Officials at all levels of the CPSU enjoyed different treatment according to their respective official positions and status. The

higher the position, the greater the privilege, and the greater the gap between their material privileges and the material condition of ordinary people. For example, General Nikolai Sholokov (Николай Щёлоков), a personal friend of Brezhnev, who served as Minister of Internal Affairs for 17 years, appropriated the largest national villa of the Ministry of the Internal Affairs and the No. 8 National Villa, the guest house of the Ministry of the Internal Affairs, solely for himself. In one of the villas, there were seven layers of carpets stacked one on top of the other, and oil paintings by famous Russian painters were even placed under the bed. The privileged class not only enjoyed all kinds of preferential treatment openly and shamelessly, but also used their privileges to buy and sell means of production and consumer goods on the market, making a fortune. The “black caviar smuggling case” uncovered in 1980 involved more than 300 cadres from the Ministry of Fisheries, the Ministry of Commerce, the Ministry of Food Industry, and the Pacific Fleet, causing the country to suffer economic losses of several million rubles.

Given the scarcity of social and economic resources and the low living standards of the Soviet Union, the affluent life of the privileged class aroused discontent among the masses. In addition, the privileged class had taken advantage of various connections to form “political alliances,” promoting each other and shielding each other from supervision and punishment of the Party discipline and state laws, which further aggravated social injustice, corrupted the social atmosphere, and damaged the relationship between the Party and the masses. During the Brezhnev period, nepotism became a common phenomenon among Party cadres, and “loyalty to the individual superior leader” became the principle for selecting and promoting cadres. Outstanding talents from all walks of life could not enter the center of power, while the children of cadres and relatives and friends of leaders with mediocre abilities could easily gain high positions by relying on nepotism.

The ossification, self-confinement, and nepotism among the leading cadres intensified as they tried their best to maintain the status quo while refusing to reflect and change. This led to reduced or even stagnant social mobility, which severely damaged the reputation of socialism, and created a social divide. The decadent and degenerate climate of blindly obeying the orders of the superiors, turning a blind eye to the voice of the masses, and prioritizing the interests of one’s own political faction gradually grew within the party and government departments. A large number of Party members and cadres no longer regarded the interests of the people above all else, but rather did their best to maintain and expand their own privileges and vested interests. As a large number of corruption cases were uncovered and exposed to the public, the socialist ideals and beliefs in the hearts of the people quickly evaporated, causing a serious crisis of confidence about the CPSU, which had long been advertising itself as a “servant of the people.” And there were also widespread doubts about the legitimacy of CPSU’s governance.

(4) Extravagance in Lifestyle

During the Brezhnev period, the gift-giving fashion among cadres at all levels in the Soviet Union came to its extreme. Every time Brezhnev traveled the country, he would bring a large number of priceless gifts and give them to local officials. Local officials would also give Brezhnev numerous more expensive gifts in return, such as “precious boutonnieres, gemstone necklaces, rings, pistols

with gold and silver holsters, various gold ornaments, and other valuable gifts.” Every time Brezhnev returned from a visit, he would unload dozens of boxes containing luxurious gifts from the plane and send them back to the General Secretary’s villa. What the superior loves, the inferior will further strive for. In order to cater to Brezhnev’s hobby of hunting, officials at all levels presented him with more than 100 luxury shotguns. During a visit to the Republic of Azerbaijan, the First Secretary of the Azerbaijan Communist Party Heydar Aliyev (Гейдар Алиев) even gave Brezhnev a solid gold bust as a present.

The gift-giving fashion had a negative impact on Soviet society, forming a social climate in which people believed that “money is everything” and “money is omnipotent.” Solicitation and acceptance of bribes by officials at all levels had become the norm. Governmental positions at all levels even had clear prices for purchase, and it had become an open secret that one could buy an official position with money. For example, the First Secretary of the Communist Party of Azerbaijan cost 200,000 rubles, the Second Secretary cost 100,000 rubles, the Minister of Social Security cost 120,000 rubles, the Minister of Urban Public Works cost 150,000 rubles, the Minister of Commerce cost 250,000 rubles, and a university president cost 200,000 rubles.

In stark contrast to the extravagant life of the top officials of the CPSU, in the markets, there were only empty shelves and people standing in long queues. At the end of 1989, only 11% of the 989 kinds of mass consumer goods could be supplied. Dmitry Fadeyev (Дмитрий Фатеев), associate professor of Russian State Pushkin Institute of Languages said: “In 1990 and 1991, various tickets were issued. There were blue ones and pink ones. When I was young, I remember standing in a long line for most of the day. When it was my turn, the woman in front of me bought the last half kilogram of sausage, and I got nothing. I kept crying, and after that, I vowed never to go to the store again.” Under an economy of scarcity, it was difficult for people to buy daily consumer goods, let alone daily necessities that were of both high quality and cheap prices. The abundant choices of market consumer goods in Western countries had become an elusive dream for the masses of the Soviet Union. Through such a comparison, the discontent of the masses evolved into the discontent towards the CPSU and the Soviet system.

2. Reasons for the Soviet Communist Party’s Disengagement from the Masses in the Later Period

The reason for CPSU’s drastic deviation from the mass line of the Marxist party in its later stage was that it had neglected party building for a long time, which gradually weakened the Party’s advanced nature and leadership, and finally depleted the trust and support of the people.

(1) The Continuous Deviation of Guiding Ideology from the Guiding Principles of Marxism, which Eventually Evolved into a Non-Marxist and Anti-Marxist Position in the Later Period

The idea of party-people relationship is an important component of Marxist theory. The Marxist

philosophy of party-mass relations requires that the historical status of the masses be maintained and that the party persist in serving the people wholeheartedly, utilizing new communication methods and channels between the party and the masses. During the Brezhnev period, conformity and conservatism became the mainstream of the ideology of the CPSU, and the broad masses of the people were excluded from political life. For a long time, reasonable demands of the people could not be met, democratic rights could not be guaranteed, people's creativity could not be respected, and a large number of social problems and conflicts had accumulated. Gorbachev proposed the goal of establishing a "democratic and humane socialism" at the 19th National Congress of the CPSU, replacing the guiding Marxist theory with the thinking of Western social democrats. This marked a complete break from the Marxist thought of the party-people relationship and a complete departure from the basic position of Marxism.

(2) The Weakening of Collective Leadership in Institutional Building and the Abandonment of Democratic Centralism

During the Brezhnev period, not only was the long-standing phenomenon of "rule by the voice of one man" in the party not corrected, but the phenomenon of individual arbitrariness was strengthened instead. The senior leaders of the CPSU gave up inner-party supervision and collective leadership, replaced the wisdom of the majority with the will of the individual or the will of the few, and made decisions solely based on subjective feelings. The Party became seriously divorced from reality, even such a major decision as sending troops to Afghanistan was only decided by Brezhnev and five other people, bypassing the Politburo of the CPSU Central Committee. Under the climate where people tended to create feigned tranquility by whitewashing the status quo, the top leadership of the CPSU was often unable to accurately and effectively understand the actual situation at the grassroots level, which affected the democratization and scientificization of decision-making, led to a series of major decision-making mistakes, and exacerbated the people's distrust of the ruling party.

(3) Disregard for Long-Standing Unhealthy Party Conduct and Widespread Formalism, Bureaucracy, Hedonism, and Extravagance

In the later period of the CPSU, senior party leaders set a negative example in terms of party conduct. Brezhnev was keen on flattery from all walks of life and had a special penchant for various honors and medals. Although he did not have outstanding military achievements during the Great Patriotic War and his political achievements were relatively mediocre, he was still made Marshal of the Soviet Union and was awarded more than 200 medals, including the Order of Lenin and the Hero of the Soviet Union - many of which were granted upon his suggestion. Formalism and bureaucracy prevailed in the CPSU. Officials at all levels were boastful, unpragmatic, content with the status quo, and lacking in initiative to make progress. They were good at praising the good deeds of their superiors and angling for undeserved fame, but were unconcerned by real-world circumstances and people's voices from the grassroots. The ensuing privilege-seeking culture and corruption had far-reaching and terrible consequences.

(4) The Covering-up, Tolerance, and even Encouragement of Corruption, and the Absence of Effective Supervision of Party Members and Leading Cadres in Building a Clean Government

Regarding the long-term, arduous, and complex nature of the fight against corruption, in the later period of the CPSU, there was no systematic or comprehensive understanding of corruption within the Party, and the CPSU believed that corruption was only a product of capitalist countries, and there was no corruption in socialist countries. The Party even used expressions such as “bribery” and “abuse of power” to downplay the importance of corruption among their officials. Regarding the spread of corruption, Brezhnev stood on the sidelines. Not only did he not start the fight against corruption, he even publicly stated that “in our country, no one can live on wages” and “the bribery among cadres is normal.” For the so-called reason of maintaining political stability, the anti-corruption struggle carried out by the CPSU was neither thorough nor profound. Corruption cases were often treated with different standards, and the corruption of high-level leaders and their cronies was usually covered up and tolerated. Brezhnev’s daughter, Galina (Галина Брежнева), smuggled huge amounts of jewelry and diamonds, but always escaped with impunity; her son-in-law, Churbanov (Юрий Чурбанов), received bribes, and the bribes he received for just six years were equivalent to 270 years’ wages of an ordinary Soviet worker. He was only arrested five years after Brezhnev’s death. With Brezhnev’s acquiescence and tolerance, the issues of corruption within the CPSU, especially among the top leaders, became increasingly rampant. The people hated this, and believed that “for the upper class, communism has already been achieved.”

3. Practical Lessons of the CPSU’s Disengagement from the Masses in the Later Period

Not long before the collapse of the CPSU, the Academy of Sciences of the USSR conducted a social survey on “Who exactly does the CPSU represent?” The results of the survey showed that 7% of the interviewees believed that the CPSU represented the working people, 4% the laborers, 11% Party members, and 85% the bureaucrats, cadres, and government officials. When the CPSU was forced to disband, it still had nearly 20 million Party members and 433,000 grassroots organizations. However, when hostile forces disbanded the CPSU, Party organizations at all levels did not resist, members of the CPSU did not hold any large-scale protests, and the Soviet people did not take any organized actions to support or display solidarity with the CPSU.

“The past cannot be mended, but the future can still be pursued.” The profound historical lessons of the CPSU’s failure are still thought-provoking today. In order to avoid repeating the mistakes of the CPSU, we must adhere to the Party’s mass line at all times and strengthen the close ties between the Party and the people.

(1) Strengthen the Party Politically and Always Adhere to the Correct Political

Direction

The mass line was created and developed by the Chinese Communist Party during the long-term practice of revolution, construction, and reform. It has withstood the test of history and is a correct and effective political line. The gradual deviation from the mass line in the later period of the CPSU is an important demonstration of the CPSU's departure from the basic direction of Marxism and its reorientation towards an evil path. General Secretary Xi Jinping has repeatedly warned the entire party, "The Chinese Communist Party has always represented the fundamental interests of the overwhelming majority of the people; it stands with them through thick and thin and shares a common fate with them." "The people are the deepest foundation and the greatest source of confidence for our Party to govern." To adhere to the correct political direction and resolutely uphold the authority and centralized, unified leadership of the Party Central Committee with Comrade Xi Jinping at the core, we must fully implement the Party's mass line and always take the stand of the people as the Party's fundamental position, and work for the wellbeing of the people as our fundamental mission. We must adhere to the fundamental purpose of serving the people wholeheartedly, respect the principal position of the people and their pioneering spirit, as well as always maintain close ties with the people.

(2) Strengthen the Party Ideologically and Firmly Establish a People-Centered Development Philosophy

General Secretary Xi Jinping has emphasized, that "The Party has in the people its roots and its lifeblood. The fundamental purpose of the party uniting and leading the people in revolution, construction, and reform is to enable the people to live a better life. No matter how many challenges and pressures they face, no matter how much they sacrifice and what price they pay, this point remains unswervingly true." Party organizations at all levels should attach great importance to ideological building, and practice it especially in combination with the recent study and education campaign of the Party's history, revisit our feelings towards the people, and stand firmly on the people's side. Since its establishment, the CCP has unified its people-centeredness and the Party's spirit, and has always stood with the people and fought for the interests of the people. The leaders of all generations of the Party have regarded "putting the people first above all else" as the quintessence of the Party and the country. Comrade Mao Zedong established the principle of serving the people wholeheartedly and uttered the strongest voice of the era: "Long live the people." Comrade Deng Xiaoping adhered to the idea that people are the main body of the country and pointed out that in everything we do, we must "take the people's support, approval, happiness, and consent as the fundamental criterion for judging all our work." Comrade Jiang Zemin pointed out that the CCP should always represent the fundamental interests of the overwhelming majority of the Chinese people. Comrade Hu Jintao insisted on putting the people first above all else and insisted that the Party "shall exercise power for the people, demonstrate concern for them, and work in their interests." Comrade Xi Jinping proposed to take the people's yearning for a better life as the goal of the whole Party's unremitting struggle. In different historical stages and historical conditions, the CCP has always adhered to the principle of serving the people, has always adhered to the idea of

placing the people first above all else, and has continuously improved the Marxist philosophy of party-mass relations, which has greatly enriched and developed Marxism.

(3) Strengthen the Party Organizationally and Build a Team of Cadres who Work Diligently for the People

Improving governance capabilities is a major task in the training of cadres in the new era. For a long period of time, the CPSU appointed cadres not based on their professional capabilities, but on nepotism. They put “loyalty” to their superiors first and ignored fostering professional capabilities for the cadre team. The quality of social governance in Soviet Union was consequently low and the society was characterized by great social conflicts. Therefore, we should attach great importance to governance capacity building of the cadre team in the new era. The solid manifestation and practical requirements for serving the people in the new era are highlighted in whether the cadre team can completely, accurately, and comprehensively implement the new development philosophy, whether they have the professional spirit and ability to promote development of different industries, rural revitalization, and grassroots governance, and whether they can effectively respond to the people’s yearning for a better life. This is further manifested in whether they can effectively respond to various risks and challenges to adapt to the new requirements of the modernization of the governance system and governance capabilities. General Secretary Xi Jinping pointed out, that “Working for the wellbeing of the people and rejuvenation for the nation is the immutable aim of our Party in leading the modernization drive, and the ‘root’ and ‘essence’ of the new development philosophy. We will only have the right view of development and modernization if we follow a people-centered approach, insisting that development is for the people, reliant on the people, and that its fruits should be shared by the people. “ To improve the governance capabilities of the cadre team and build a high-caliber and professional cadre team, we should first improve the political and theoretical literacy of the cadre team. We must consolidate our Party members and cadres’ theoretical understanding of the socialist system with Chinese characteristics and the national governance system, and clarify issues such as “for whom to govern” and “by whom to govern.” Second, we should improve the professional capabilities of the cadre team. We should bear in mind the specialized, professionalized, and refined nature of governance in the new era, carry out relevant professional training and special training, focus on improving the professional skills necessary for cadres to perform their job duties, excel in organizational work, promote career development, and third, we should establish and improve the evaluation system for cadres. We should mainly base our evaluation of cadres on the practical, good, and ordinary things they have done for the people, and make people’s support an important factor to be considered during the selection of government officials.

(4) Strengthen the Party through Conduct and Maintain Close Ties between the Party and the People

General Secretary Xi Jinping emphasized, that “as a century-old Party, we should always strive to win lasting support from the people. To achieve lasting greatness for the Chinese nation, we should always remember our original aspiration and mission. We must resolutely remove whatever weakens the

Party's advanced nature and undermines the Party's purity, and rid ourselves of any tumor that erodes the Party's health. We must resolutely guard against all dangers of running counter to the original aspiration and the mission or shaking the foundation of the Party." Formalism and bureaucracy will corrode the conduct and culture of the Party, weaken the Party's ability to take on challenges, damage the Party's authority and image in the eyes of the masses, and reduce administrative efficiency as well as the vitality and health of the political system. The pervasive formalism and bureaucracy is one of the important reasons for the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the failure of the CPSU. These features have seriously hindered the development of socialist democracy, and we must resolutely fight against them. To eradicate formalism and bureaucracy, we must first trust and rely on the vast majority of cadres and the masses, and constantly consolidate and expand the Party's ruling foundation. We must give more space and time for local and grassroots cadres and masses to display their initiative and creativity. Secondly, we must highlight positive examples for imitation and negative examples for warning. We must identify and encourage positive role models who are innovative, creative, and dynamic, and at the same time reveal and punish the attention-seeking, specious negative examples. Finally, we must unleash the creativity of the people, fully mobilize the wisdom and enthusiasm of the people, and constantly explore convenient, efficient, and effective working modes. Hedonism and extravagant lifestyle not only cause a huge waste of social wealth, and dissolve the will and numb the spirit of people; they also corrupt the political climate and Party conduct, and are therefore resented by the people. At present, we must be particularly vigilant against the invisible and variable forms of hedonism and extravagance. We should give full play to the advantages and functional roles of various departments, effectively mobilize and integrate various professional supervision forces, use big data for analysis and judgment, and improve the accuracy of investigating and dealing with related issues. We should also actively utilize new media and technologies to mobilize the masses to participate in supervision.

(5) Strengthen the Party through Disciplinary Improvement and Resolutely Oppose the Privilege-Seeking Attitudes and Behavior

The cohesion and readiness to take on challenges of party members come from the strictness of discipline. It is precisely because the CPSU had loosened the Party's standard for discipline, that more and more Party members and cadres moved from pretending to comply with Party orders but quietly opposing them, to openly opposing the Party's resolutions, and eventually to openly opposing the Party's policies. The CPSU was continuously disengaging from the people, deviating from its ideals and beliefs, and had gradually become a special organization catering to the interests of small groups. And eventually, it was abandoned by the people. Party members and cadres who lack discipline will surely seek power, special treatment, and special status that can distinguish them from others, and transform them into a privileged class. Promoting disciplinary improvement and raising the awareness of Party members and cadres to abide by political discipline and rules is an important way to effectively contain privilege-seeking attitudes and behavior. General Secretary Xi Jinping affirmed, that "everyone is equal before the Party discipline, and we will not allow any special Party member to be exempt from discipline. Party organizations at all levels must actively explore ways to make disciplinary education a regular activity with an institutional basis, and must provide their

members with warnings and advice so that Party members and cadres can truly understand that Party discipline is the code of conduct that the entire Party must abide by. To strictly observe and resolutely uphold our discipline is the basic requirement for being a qualified party member and cadre.” It is necessary to continuously strengthen our disciplinary awareness, establish and improve the discipline education mechanism, strictly clarify the main responsibility of discipline building, and strengthen disciplinary supervision.

(6) Strengthen the Party Institutionally and Implement Democratic Centralism

Democratic centralism is the Party’s fundamental organizational and leadership system, and it is the Party’s greatest institutional advantage. Through an extensive collection of opinions in the decision-making process, it reflects the demands of different stakeholders to the greatest extent, effectively achieves consensus, and maximizes the overall and long-term interests of the people. Democratic centralism truly embodies the decision-making process of “from the people, to the people,” which can stimulate creativity and vitality within the Party and ensure that the Party’s lines, principles, and policies are drafted in a scientific and democratic manner. Democratic centralism can also effectively prevent and overcome problems such as anarchism, dictatorial rule, paternalism, and the problem of discussion without resolution and resolution without action. In the later stage of the CPSU, it violated democratic centralism, continuously diminished the democratic activities within the party, and restricted the democratic rights of party members, which in turn resulted in dictatorial individuals, bureaucracy, and disengagement from the masses. General Secretary Xi Jinping pointed out, that “In the implementation of democratic centralism, it is very important for the highest leader to lead by example.” Leaders and cadres at all levels, especially the major ones, should take the lead in implementing democratic centralism. We should strive to improve the highest leaders’ understanding of democracy and their capabilities for practicing democratic centralism, and for the ones who trample on democratic centralism, we should also hold them accountable. At the same time, it is necessary to improve and implement various specific mechanisms of democratic centralism and continuously promote the development and innovation of democratic centralism.

(7) Promote Anti-Corruption Campaigns and Foster Solidarity of the Party and the People

General Secretary Xi Jinping emphasized, that “‘Worms can only grow in something rotten.’ In recent years, long-pent-up problems in some countries have led to resentment among the people, unrest in society and the downfall of governments, with corruption being a major culprit. Facts prove that if corruption is allowed to spread, it will eventually lead to the destruction of a party and the fall of a government.” In the later period of the CPSU, a large number of Party and government cadres became corrupted and lost their support of the people, which directly threatened the foundation of the CPSU’s governance. Drawing lessons from the collapse of the CPSU, we must consciously strive to combat corruption and build a clean government, and enhance the ability to resist corruption and prevent moral decline. We must vigorously strengthen anti-corruption education and promote a social climate that advocates a clean government. We must guide the majority of Party members and cadres

to strengthen their ideals and convictions, and resolutely oppose corruption. We must improve our system that checks and oversees the exercise of power, and confine power to an institutional cage. We should oppose corruption with the rule of law in theory and practice, and ensure that the laws are strictly abided by.

“To achieve long-term governance for the Party, we must maintain close ties with the people, empathize and work with them, stand with them through good times and bad.” Looking back at the history of CPSU’s disengagement from the masses, it can be seen that if a Marxist ruling party deviates from the historical outlook centered on the people, its party conduct grows corrupted, its cadres engage in privilege-seeking and corruption, and the “Four Forms of Decadence” run rampant, its governance legitimacy will suffer chronic damage, and the party will be eventually abandoned by its people. We must earnestly learn from the lessons of the collapse of the CPSU, always put the people first above all else, and further advance the great new project of party building. We must constantly carry out self-improvement in politics, ideology, organization, conduct, discipline, and institutions. We must strive to combat corruption and build a clean government, and be committed to upholding the mass line, the lifeline of the party.

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A Review of Chinese Scholarship on the Collapse of the Soviet Union

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Since the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the causes and lessons of its collapse have become a key focus for Chinese scholars. In academic discussion, the collapse of the Soviet Union refers not only to its dissolution, but also to the loss of power of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) and the failure of Soviet socialism. These three aspects are interconnected. The CPSU was the pillar of the union. Its loss of power led directly to the disintegration of the union and the political conversion from Soviet socialism. This paper reviews 30 years of Chinese scholarship on the collapse of the Soviet Union, tracing out and summarizing scholars' achievements and views, with the aim of furthering the development of socialism with Chinese characteristics.

I. The history and main achievements of research on the collapse of the Soviet Union

Ever since the dissolution of the Soviet Union over 30 years ago, it has been a focus of Chinese scholars to study the causes of—and draw lessons from—the CPSU's loss of power and the failure of Soviet socialism.

(1) Scholars studying the Soviet Union in the 1990s provided insights into its collapse.

The dissolution of the Soviet Union in December 1991 posed a new issue for Chinese scholars. Studying the causes and lessons of the union's disintegration and the collapse of the CPSU became a task of national strategic importance and utmost relevance. As Chinese academia had attached great importance to the study of the history of the Soviet Union since the beginning of the reform and opening up, a number of books and articles on the causes of the Soviet Union's collapse were soon published, including *Reflections on the Historical Roots of the Soviet Union's Collapse* (China Social Sciences Press, 1994), edited by Jiang Liu and Chen Zhihua; *Studies on the Collapse of the Soviet Union* (Social Sciences Academic Press, 1994), edited by Jiang Liu, Xu Kui and Shan Tianlun; *From Lenin to Gorbachev: The Evolution of Soviet Socialist Theory* (The Eastern Publishing Co., Ltd., 1992), edited by Liu Keming and Wu Renzhang; *The Rise and Fall of the Soviet Union* (Shanghai People's Press, 1993), written by Zhou Shangwen et al.; *A Political Biography of Stalin (1879-1953)* (CCP Central Party School Press, 1997), edited by Jiang Changbin; and *A Study of the Ethnic Issues of the Soviet Union* (Social Sciences Academic Press, 1996), written by Zhao Changqing et al. These works study the causes of the Soviet Union's collapse from political, economic, cultural, diplomatic, and ethnic perspectives. The first two focus on problems caused by Mikhail Gorbachev's reforms, while the remaining four focus on deep-rooted structural problems that contributed to the collapse of the Soviet Union. In response to Chinese president Jiang Zemin's 1996 call for thorough research into the deep-seated causes of the Soviet Union's disintegration and the fundamental factors that played a leading role in its collapse, Wang Daohan organized several academic discussions in Shanghai on the topic, and the first symposium was held at East China Normal University in November 1997, with more than 40 Chinese scholars of Soviet history attending. The China Reform Forum also invited both Chinese and foreign experts to study those issues. In 2001, on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the Soviet Union's dissolution, the International Department of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party held a seminar as well, in which U.S. experts on the Soviet Union participated. Influential publications of this period included *A New Inquiry into the Soviet Union's Collapse by Leading Chinese Scholars* (World Affairs Press, 1998), edited by Gong Dafei, and *A Study of the Deeper Causes of the Collapse of the Soviet Union* (China Social Sciences Press, 1999), edited by Lu Nanquan and Jiang Changbin. Regarded as encapsulations of Chinese scholarship on the dissolution of the Soviet Union in the 1990s, these two books cover politics, economics, culture, diplomacy and ethnicity from past to present.

It is a consensus that a scientific review of the causes of the Soviet Union's collapse is of great significance to China. As Gong Dafei says, "As Chinese Marxists, we should take a serious, unbiased look at such a major historical issue with which we are inextricably linked historically, ideologically, and even emotionally. We should not blindly disregard it or refrain from discussing it." During this period, the analysis of the causes of the Soviet Union's collapse was done in a comparatively objective manner, focusing not only on the mistakes in Gorbachev's reforms but also on the influence of historical factors, with scholars acknowledging the complexity of the issue but arguing that institutional mechanisms and dogmatic theory played a crucial role in the collapse of the Soviet

Union.

Scholars focused on institutional issues within the Soviet Union first and foremost, which they explored by studying the characteristics of Lenin's New Economic Policy and the Stalinist model, the relationship between Stalin and Lenin, and the ways in which the CPSU exercised its power. Zheng Yifan's book *Swan Song: A Dialogue on Lenin's Later Thought* (Liaoning Education Press, 1996), a systematic study of Lenin's ideas on socialist construction in his later years, is an excellent piece of scholarship. Jiang Changbin's *The Loneliness of History: A New Look at Early Stalin (1879-1924)* (CCP Central Party School Press, 1994) is the first monograph on Stalin's early activities published in China. Examining Stalin's political activities and the Soviet socialism he built, *A Political Biography of Stalin (1879-1953)* reaches many different conclusions from those of previous studies. It argues that Stalin and Lenin differed significantly in many aspects, such as worldview, methodology, understanding of Marxism and the Russian Revolution, political behavior, implementation of theoretical principles, and the purpose of building socialism. It also analyzes the rationale behind and characteristics of Stalin's theoretical system, as well as issues like the industrialization of the Soviet Union, agricultural collectivization, and the Great Purge. Zheng Yifan's *Essays On Bukharin* (Central Compilation and Translation Press, 1997) is also helpful for understanding how the Stalinist system took shape. Xing Guangcheng's *70 Years of High-Level Decision-Making in the Soviet Union* (World Affairs Press, 1998) examines the process by which major decisions were made in the Soviet Union, revealing the problems that existed in its overcentralized political system.

(2) The study of the Soviet Union's collapse bore new fruits around the 10th anniversary of the Soviet Union's dissolution.

With the declassification of Soviet archival materials and more in-depth research, a number of important works were published around the 10th anniversary of the Soviet Union's dissolution in 2001. *A History of the Rise and Fall of the Soviet Union* (People's Press, 2002), edited by Lu Nanquan et al., is a representative example, which studies the successes and failures of the Soviet Union by examining the Soviet system. The Soviet system developed and became established during the Stalin era, and the CPSU failed to fundamentally reform it after that. Guided by the basic principles of Marxism and using detailed historical sources, the book objectively studies the 74-year history of the Soviet Union and traces the Soviet Union's rise and fall with relative clarity and in a comprehensive manner, thus showing that the Soviet system had a fundamental and systemic impact on the country's fortunes. Other works published during this period included Zhang Shengfa's *Stalin and the Cold War* (China Social Sciences Press, 2000), Zuo Fengrong's *Fatal Mistakes: The Evolution and Impact of Soviet Foreign Strategy* (World Affairs Press, 2001), Zhang Jianhua's *A Historical Study of the Soviet Union's Ethnic Problems* (Beijing Normal University Press, 2002), Wen Yi's *Looking Back on the Soviet Union* (Shandong People's Press, 2003) Ma Longshan's *A Cultural Perspective on the Soviet Union's Collapse* (Social Sciences Academic Press, 2005), Huang Lifu's *Soviet Social Classes and the Soviet Union's Collapse* (Social Sciences Academic Press, 2006), and Guo Chunsheng's *Sociopolitical Classes and the Soviet Union's Collapse: A Study of Soviet Sociopolitical Classes from the 1960s to 1990s* (Contemporary World Press, 2006). In 2005, Anhui University Press published the series Four

Chinese Historians on the Soviet Union, which comprises Xu Tianxin's *The Ideal of an Equal and Strong State and the Soviet Practice*, Yang Cuntang's *An Epoch-Making Experiment*, Zheng Yifan's *Exploring the Sea of History*, and Ye Shuzong's *A Study of Russian Socialism in Practice*. In his preface, Zhu Tingguang notes, "It was the lessons of the Cultural Revolution that prompted our historians to seriously reflect on the shortcomings and problems of the Stalinist model. The mistakes were made by ourselves, but their roots were inseparable from the Stalinist model." In addition, this period saw the publication of *An Outline of the Rise and Fall of the Soviet Union* (China Social Sciences Press, 2004), edited by Chen Zhihua et al., Shen Chongwu's *Reflections on the Stalinist Model* (Yunnan People's Publishing House, 2004), Huang Weiding's *Ten Years after the Fall of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union: A Reflection* (Jiangxi University Press, 2004), Lu Nanquan's *A History of the Reform of the Soviet Economic System (from Lenin to Putin)* (People's Press, 2007), and Wu Enyuan's *A Discussion on the History of the Soviet Union* (People's Press, 2007). Lastly, the three-volume *Rise and Collapse of a Great Power* (Social Sciences Academic Press, 2009), a prominent work edited by Shen Zhihua, discusses 28 topics, such as politics, economics, culture, military, diplomacy, ethnicity and religion, on the basis of archival materials. Apart from books, the eight-episode documentary *Preparing for Danger in Times of Safety: Historical Lessons from the Demise of the CPSU*, jointly produced by China Founder Press and Jilin Publishing Group in 2006, also reached a broad audience.

(3) Remarkable achievements were made in the study of the Soviet Union's collapse around the 20th anniversary of the Soviet Union's dissolution.

The study of the Soviet Union's disintegration was at its most active around 2011, the 20th anniversary of the Soviet Union's dissolution, with a number of highly influential works published, whose most notable characteristic was the use of declassified Soviet archival materials. One example is the three-volume *The Truth about the Soviet Union: Reflections on 101 Important Issues* (Xinhua Publishing House, 2010), edited by Lu Nanquan et al. The work consists of essays written by 35 experts, who reflect on the causes and lessons of the Soviet Union's collapse from various perspectives, combining academic rigor with readability. *A Study of the CPSU's Mode of Ruling* (Shanghai Century Publishing Group, 2010) by Zhou Shangwen et al. and *The Mystery of the CPSU's Demise: From Flaws in the Power Structure to Failures in the Personnel System* by Li Yongzhong et al. are attempts by Chinese scholars to study the CPSU's successes and failures and the Soviet Union's dissolution through the lens of the Party's mode of ruling. Han Kedi's *The United States and the Dissolution of the Soviet Union* (Economy and Management Publishing House, 2011) shows with detailed information that the United States had maintained consistent policies towards the Soviet Union, whose collapse thus cannot be attributed to the U.S. strategy of "Peaceful Evolution." Han concluded: "The main causes of the Soviet Union's collapse lay internally. Internal problems gave the United States an opportunity to exploit various crises and exacerbate the tensions within the Soviet Union." Such objective studies are useful for understanding the deep-seated causes of the Soviet Union's collapse.

A major event in the field during this period was the publication of a nine-volume history of the Soviet

Union edited by Zheng Yifan. In 2013, the People's Press published five of the nine volumes: *The Russian Revolution* by Yao Hai, *The New Economic Policy Era* by Zheng Yifan, *The Establishment of the Stalinist Model* by Xu Tianxin, *The Eighteen Years of Brezhnev* by Ye Shuzong, and *The Perestroika Period* by Zuo Fengrong. The authors devoted over a decade's effort to these volumes, which have greatly advanced the study of the Soviet Union's collapse in China. The same year, Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences Press published Wen Yi's *A General History of Russia (1917-1991)*, which draws on a large number of archival materials and presents the author's unique views, shedding light on the historical evolution of the Soviet Union and the lessons that can be learned from its dissolution. *Preparing for Danger in Times of Safety: Reflections Twenty Years after the CPSU's Demise* (Social Sciences Literature Press, 2011) edited by Li Shenming, was also influential during this period. In addition, *Twenty Years Since the Fall of the Soviet Union and CPSU: Accounts from the Russians* (Party Building Books Publishing House, 2013), a documentary by Li Shenming, blames the Soviet Union's disintegration mainly on Khrushchev and Gorbachev. The causes of the Soviet Union's collapse were the subject of much debate during this period. Essays in *The Debate on the Collapse of the Soviet Union* (China Social Sciences Press, 2013), a book edited by Chen Airu, present two different views on the dissolution of the Soviet Union. One view argues that it was the Gorbachev leadership's betrayal of Marxist and communist ideals and beliefs—its attempt to replace the then existing socialist system with a “humane and democratic socialism”—that led the Soviet Union down the capitalist road and eventually to its collapse. Other scholars, however, argue that the root cause of the Soviet Union's dissolution lay in the fundamental flaws of the Soviet socialist model, which failed to keep pace with the times and which stood at odds with the trend of human progress. As the CPSU was unable to reform the system, it was bound to be left behind by the people and the progress of history. Those who hold the first view are primarily scholars of Marxist theories, while those that study the Soviet Union tend to hold the second view.

This period can be seen as the turning point in the study of the Soviet Union's collapse. On the one hand, scholars of Soviet history probed deeper into the history and dissolution of the Soviet Union, producing many studies based on archival materials. On the other hand, works by scholars of Marxist theories had a greater influence on Chinese society. They emphasize Gorbachev's role in the Soviet Union's dissolution, arguing that the ideological pluralism and historical nihilism he introduced eventually resulted in the demise of the Soviet Union.

(4) Research on the Soviet Union's collapse has somewhat stagnated since 2014.

Since 2014, research on the Soviet Union's collapse has become less active, with the manuscripts of the remaining four volumes of the nine-volume Soviet history yet to be submitted. Only a small number of academic works have been published so far. Examples include *From the Soviet Union to Russia: A Study of the Issue of Regional Ethnic Autonomy* (Social Sciences Academic Press, 2015), co-authored by Zuo Fengrong and Liu Xianzhong, which is a systematic and in-depth study of the Soviet Union's disintegration from the perspective of ethnic issues; and Zhang Jianhua's *Mirror of Ideas: Intellectuals and the Political Changes of the Soviet Union*, which helps us understand why Soviet socialism and the Soviet Union failed through an examination of changes in the fate of Soviet

intellectuals from 1936 to 1991.

The year 2017 marked the centennial of the October Revolution. Shen Zihua's paper "The October Revolution and China's Path of Development" (*Exploration and Free Views*, no. 12, 2017) argues that although the Chinese revolution and China's development were inextricably linked with the October Revolution and the Soviet socialist model, the Chinese people eventually found and embarked on their own path, which has not only changed the millennia-old course of Chinese history, but has also added a unique chapter to world history. Monographs on the Soviet Union published in 2017 included Lu Nanquan's *A Study on the Transformation and Modernization of Russia* (China Social Sciences Press), the second part of which discusses—with a focus on political and economic systems—the Soviet Union's modernization, the reasons for its failure, and the consequences of the failure; and Li Yongquan's *A History of Political Parties in Russia: The Formation and Collapse of the Pyramid of Power* (Social Sciences Academic Press). The first volume of Li's work charts the birth, growth and success of the Bolshevik Party, as well as the formation of the CPSU's pyramidal power structure. The second volume studies the collapse of the CPSU's pyramid of power and comprehensively analyzes Gorbachev's reforms, revealing its inherent contradictions and problems along with the necessary and contingent factors in the Soviet Union's dissolution. 2018 saw the publication of Zheng Yifan's three-volume *Essays on the history of the Soviet Union* (Shanghai People's Press). The first volume, *Revolution and Reform*, mainly deals with the revolution before and the reforms after the Soviet Union's founding; the second volume, *The Great Transformation*, deals with the Stalin era; and the third volume, *Restructuring and Dissolution*, discusses lessons drawn from the collapse of the Soviet Union. The book is not a new work, but a collection of previously published essays.

Despite the small number of works on Soviet history published during this period, some are particularly notable. *Lessons from the Cold War* (World Affairs Press, 2019), edited by Shen Zihua, explains what can be learned from the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union. Furthermore, two case studies are noteworthy. One is Song Yongcheng's *A Study of Soviet Jews (1941–1953)* (Commercial Press, 2021). Centered on the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee from the outbreak of the Great Patriotic War in 1941 to the death of Stalin in 1953, the book discusses the contributions of Soviet Jews to the defeat of fascism and the anti-Semitic movement in the Soviet Union after the end of the Second World War. The other is *From Honeymoon to Confrontation: A Study on the Relationship between the Soviet Union and Israel in the Early Cold War (1948–1953)* (Social Sciences Academic Press, 2022) by Xiao Yu and Jiang Yipeng, which studies Soviet-Israeli relations from the Soviet Union's support for the establishment of the State of Israel to the severance of their diplomatic relations. Both works are based on rigorous research of declassified archival materials from Russia, Britain, the United States and Israel, from which they draw convincing conclusions.

Apart from books, a number of journal articles on Soviet history are worthy of attention. Shen Zihua and Yu Weimin's "How Stalin fell into the 'Thucydides Trap': The Course and Causes of the Post-war Shift from Cooperation to Confrontation Between the Soviet Union and the United States" (*Russian Studies*, no. 1, 2019) provides an in-depth analysis of the origin of the Cold War. Yu Weimin's "How to Seek Consensus in Reform: A Brief Discussion of Three Views on Gorbachev's Reform" (*Exploration*

and *Free Views*, no. 1, 2019) summarizes and analyzes Chinese scholars' perceptions of Gorbachev's reforms. "German Experts and the Soviet Union's Nuclear Program (1945-1956)" (*Journal of Historical Science*, no. 10, 2021), co-authored by Zhang Guangxiang and Wang Jinling, studies how the Soviet Union recruited from Germany and from prison camps 324 German experts—who would play a crucial role in the development of Soviet atomic and hydrogen bombs—by legal, economic and coercive means. Feng Shaolei's "The Disintegration of the Soviet Union in the *Longue Durée*" (*Russian Studies*, no. 6, 2021) explores the Soviet Union's disintegration by taking a long-term view of the history of civilization. Yu Weimin's "Systems and Persons: The Logic behind the Process of the Soviet Union's Disintegration" (*Russian Studies*, no. 1, 2022) analyzes the process of the Soviet Union's collapse by examining both the Soviet system and the actions of Soviet leaders, arguing that structural reform and social transformation were a historical necessity, but that dissolution was not the only option.

In the field of Marxist theory, historical nihilism is regarded as one of the main factors in the Soviet Union's dissolution, and many papers have been published on the relationship between the two. June 2019 saw the release of a five-part educational film aimed at members of the Chinese Communist Party, *Historical Nihilism and the Collapse of the Soviet Union* (Party Building Books Publishing House), which was produced by the World Socialism Research Center of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. The film reviews how historical nihilism and other erroneous intellectual trends undermined the CPSU and holds that the Soviet Union's collapse was a result of Gorbachev's policy of ideological pluralism and historical nihilism.

II. The main views of Chinese scholars on the causes of the Soviet Union's collapse

Chinese scholars who study the collapse of the Soviet Union are primarily composed of two groups: scholars of Soviet history, who focus on structural, institutional issues and who rely mainly on Russian-language materials; and scholars of Marxist theories, who focus on ideological issues in the CPSU and the role played by Gorbachev, evaluating Soviet reforms through the lens of Marxist theories. With differing starting points, the two groups accordingly highlight different factors in analyzing the causes of the Soviet Union's collapse.

(1) The root causes of the collapse of the Soviet Union

Most scholars of Soviet history examine the root causes of the dissolution of the Soviet Union from an institutional angle. In his preface to *A New Inquiry into the Soviet Union's Collapse by Leading Chinese Scholars*, Gong Dafei writes, "The Soviet Union's collapse and failure were certainly related to its leaders' misjudgments and mistakes, but generally speaking, the responsibility cannot be assigned to any one leader. There were no foundations on which to build a Marxist, scientific socialism in the kind of society found in old Russia." According to Xu Kui, former director of the Institute of Soviet and Eastern European Studies of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, "If the Soviet Union's collapse were attributed only to Gorbachev's personal mistakes, it would become

impossible to fully shed light on this historical event and draw profound lessons from it ... The Soviet Union's collapse resulted from a combination of subjective and objective factors under the specific conditions of the Soviet Union at the end of the twentieth century." As Gao Fang argues, "It was not so much Gorbachev that killed the CPSU as the poison brewed by Stalin—namely, a system in which power was concentrated in a single individual and in which the bureaucracy became a privileged group. Stalin's dogmatic errors, especially the totalitarian system he had built, left enormous problems that his successors found difficult to effectively root out." Lu Nanquan and Jiang Changbin also stress that the root causes of the Soviet Union's collapse lay not in individual leaders but in the system itself. We must "consider the direct, contemporary causes in relation to their historical roots and study the relationship between the collapse and such major issues as the Soviet Union's economic development, ethnicity, the theoretical origins of 'leftism,' and the CPSU's ideological line." An important conclusion to be drawn here is that reform is essential for the development of socialism, which must not be built on the old Soviet model.

Among scholars of Marxist theories, the dominant view is that, since Khrushchev—and especially during the Gorbachev era—the Soviet Union had gradually followed a set of paths, principles, and policies that deviated from the basic principles of Marxism-Leninism and the path of scientific socialism, which led to the tragic fall of the CPSU and the Soviet Union. The root causes of the Soviet Union's collapse, that is, were the CPSU's betrayal of Marxism-Leninism and scientific socialism and the degeneration of the Soviet bureaucratic class, which turned its back on the people; foreign subversive forces took advantage of these factors to undermine the Soviet Union. The CPSU under Gorbachev's leadership, in particular, initiated misguided reforms. The openness, democratization and new thinking advocated by Gorbachev, especially his "humane, democratic socialism," betrayed scientific socialism and gave rise to historical nihilism, leading ultimately to the curtailment of reforms, the CPSU's fall from power, and the Soviet Union's disintegration. The lesson here for other socialist countries is that they must strengthen ideological work and stamp out corruption.

(2) Mistakes in the Soviet Union's ethnic theories and policies and their role in its collapse

As the disintegration of the Soviet Union was the breakup of a multiethnic state, the CPSU's theories and policies on ethnicity are naturally a focus for scholars. As Zhao Changqing and others argue in *A Study of the Ethnic Issues of the Soviet Union*, "The Soviet Union's ethnic problems arose from a diversity of factors—subjective and objective, historical and contemporary, political and economic, social and cultural, ideological and practical, and domestic and external. The emergence and exacerbation of the Soviet Union's ethnic problems, which eventually led to its disintegration, were the result of a combination of factors." Wu Chuke, a professor at the Minzu University of China, also discusses the Soviet Union's ethnic problems from historical and contemporary perspectives in his book *The Ghost of Nationalism and the Breakup of the Soviet Union*. He argues, however, that the CPSU's surrender of leadership under Gorbachev and "peaceful evolution" were the root causes of the Soviet Union's collapse. Writing about the origins and consequences of the Soviet Union's ethnic problems, Pan Zhiping notes, "Stalin not only artificially 'organized,' 'formed,' and 'established'

nationalities, but also artificially 'organized,' 'formed,' and 'established' nation-states, digging a grave for the Soviet Union at the same time as founding it. As scholars have pointed out, "The Soviet Union helped the ethnic groups of its constituent republics mature into nationalities, arousing their national consciousness and causing the gradual rise of local nationalism. Once the right conditions were present, it was inevitable that the semi-civilized ethnic minorities would cast off their teacher." Zuo Fengrong and Liu Xianzhong emphasize that the Soviet Union failed to build a nation-state, that ethnic Russians did not recognize the Soviet Union as their nation-state, and that the dissolution of the Soviet Union was directly related to its failure to properly handle ethnic relations. Nominally a federation of republics, the Soviet Union was in actuality a unitary state. On paper, the CPSU made much of the right to self-determination, but in practice it did not respect the rights of ethnic minorities or even the rights of Russians, the main ethnic group, and therefore all ethnic groups were dissatisfied with the union. In his reforms, Gorbachev did not handle ethnic issues well, neglecting them at first in the belief that the CPSU had already solved them. After the issues had come to light, his mishandling accelerated the disintegration of the union.

(3) Mistakes in the Soviet Union's strategy for national development and their role in its collapse

In terms of national development, the Soviet Union long prioritized building a powerful nation in a bid to outdo capitalist countries, mismanaging the relationship between the state and the people. As has been studied in detail by scholars like Jiang Changbin, Lu Nanquan, and Shen Zhihua, the core of the Soviet Union's development strategy was to "catch up with" and surpass capitalist countries in heavy industry and armaments, which led to the excessive militarization of the country's economy and hindered the improvement of living standards. The writings of Jiang Changbin, Lu Nanquan, Shen Zhihua and other scholars have made further study of this topic. The Soviet Union's arms race with the United States after the Second World War, in particular, became a severe drag on the people's standard of living, which in turn caused general public dissatisfaction. Although the Soviet Union achieved parity with the United States in military terms, in terms of living standards it lagged not only far behind the United States, but also behind the rapidly emerging countries which would later come to be known as the Four Asian Tigers. As the Soviet economy stagnated in the 1970s, the shortage of consumer goods steadily worsened, and people had to spend more and more time waiting in line to buy the basic necessities of life. With the CPSU proving incapable of solving the problem, both the cadre and the masses naturally lost faith in socialism. Gorbachev's goal in the early stages of his reform remained to build a powerful nation rather than bring prosperity to the people, and over time the populace lost confidence in the reform effort. In the wake of Gorbachev's opening-up policy, more and more people visited Western countries and saw a rich profusion of goods in those capitalist economies, which shook their faith in socialism.

The Soviet Union also made strategic mistakes in its foreign policy, as it channeled its growing strength into expanding its international influence instead of improving the well-being of its people. After the 1970s, in particular, the Soviet Union considered itself stronger than the United States and began to engage in a struggle for hegemony, supporting revolutions in Asia, Africa and Latin America

and invading Afghanistan in December 1979. The 10-year war between the Soviet Union and Afghanistan not only resulted in terrible human and material losses, but also provoked widespread condemnation from the international community, seriously tarnishing the Soviet Union's international image. Many studies have been published on this aspect.

The mistakes of the Soviet Union's development strategy also lay in how it handled relations with capitalist countries. For a long time, the Soviet Union regarded the elimination of capitalism as its historic mission and tried to bring about a world revolution, which made it difficult to foster mutual trust with capitalist countries. Tensions with developed capitalist countries contributed to a great extent to the failure of the Soviet Union's reforms. Reform without opening up meant running around in circles within the confines of the old system. Many of the aforementioned works have discussed this issue.

(4) The CPSU's degeneration and the collapse of the Soviet Union

The party played a key role in the Soviet Union's collapse. The CPSU's leadership and cadre degenerated from "servants of the people" to "masters of the people." "The CPSU was originally a revolutionary party of the Russian working class. After it seized state power and became the only ruling party of the country, however, it refused to reform itself and gradually declined into a party of the privileged class of the Soviet state bureaucracy, which was still deeply influenced by the tradition of czarist autocracy. It became, in other words, a political party of the modern state bureaucracy with Russian characteristics, despite still calling itself the Communist Party of the Soviet Union." The transformation of the CPSU began in the Stalin era. With power concentrated in his hands, Stalin tended to act arbitrarily and without regard to the socialist legal system, which strangled democracy and eroded the people's rights as masters of the country. As Zheng Yifan and Ma Longshan have studied in detail, during the Great Purge, a large number of Soviet people of various ethnicities perished. Ye Shuzong and Guo Chunsheng show how the privileges of the CPSU cadre grew during the Brezhnev period and how the party came to represent the interests of the party apparatus rather than those of the people. The Brezhnev era, during which the CPSU's degeneration was complete, was thus key to the collapse of the Soviet Union.

III. A brief assessment

In studies of the Soviet Union's collapse over the past 30 years, Chinese scholars have adhered to the principles of dialectical materialism and historical materialism, armed themselves with historical facts—making full use of an abundance of sources, especially newly declassified archival materials—and continually pushed the boundaries of the field.

First, Chinese scholars have shown a relatively comprehensive understanding of the history of the Soviet Union. They do not deny Soviet achievements when discussing the causes and lessons of the Soviet Union's collapse. In the context of human history, Soviet socialism did not last long, and yet it had a tremendous impact on the world and fundamentally altered the course of human history in the twentieth century. Since there remain few socialist countries in the world today, it is natural to focus

on why Soviet socialism failed and what can be learned from it. Chinese scholars of the Soviet Union have never, however, dismissed the achievements it made. They acknowledge that the Soviet Union blazed a new path of modernization for developing countries to follow and that it achieved industrialization in a short time. It played a leading and indispensable role in the war against fascism; it made considerable progress in solving ethnic issues and promoting the development of ethnic minority regions; and it contributed to the liberation of oppressed peoples around the world and to the end of colonialism. The brilliant achievements notwithstanding, the Soviet Union faced long-standing problems and tensions, and the CPSU's failure to solve them eventually led to the dramatic collapse of the edifice that was Soviet socialism.

Second, in analyzing the causes and lessons of the Soviet Union's collapse, Chinese scholars have followed the scientific method of Marxism and studied the people and events of the Soviet Union in their historical contexts. Chinese scholars, especially historians of the Soviet Union, acknowledge that Gorbachev was directly responsible for the Soviet Union's collapse, but they do not attribute the collapse merely to the "betrayal" of a few leaders, as doing so does not solve any problem, nor does it answer the question why no one stepped up when the CPSU fell and the Soviet Union disintegrated. Scholars have tried to locate the causes in Soviet socioeconomic and political systems. Historians of the Soviet Union generally believe that, given the historical conditions, Soviet socialism was inherently deficient. Lenin envisioned seizing power first before developing the productive forces to a level commensurate with a socialist system, but the Soviet Union ultimately failed in the latter task its history of over 70 years. The New Economic Policy, which was appropriate to the conditions of the Soviet Union at the time, lasted only a short time before being replaced by the Stalinist model. Relying too much on administrative power, the Soviet model was incapable of stimulating the enthusiasm and creativity of the people, and the economy grew at an increasingly slower pace while its efficiency dropped: the collapse of the Soviet Union was not an accident.

Finally, Chinese scholars have adhered to a people-centered principle in the study of the Soviet Union's collapse. According to the basic principles of Marxism, the people are the makers of history and the real heroes. When studying the CPSU's loss of power, the failure of Soviet socialism, and the dissolution of the Soviet Union, scholars have adopted a people-centered approach, focusing on the Soviet people and looking at the Soviet Union's problems through the people's eyes. In theory, the CPSU and the people of the Soviet Union were supposed to be one and the same. The socialist system and union of nations established by the CPSU were supposed to represent and serve the people, but that was not the case in reality. The peace, land, bread and freedom that the Bolsheviks had promised to the people during the October Revolution did not materialize. Many measures taken by the CPSU, such as the Great Purge, agricultural collectivization, the excessive centralization of power, and the privileges of the cadre, infringed upon the interests of the people. The CPSU failed to fulfill Lenin's promise of making the people the masters of their own country and society, and it failed to deliver peace and prosperity to the people. Scholars have shown that it was precisely the CPSU's loss of popular support that led to the collapse of the Soviet Union.

To ensure the vitality of socialism, it is of great importance to scientifically review the lessons of the Soviet Union's collapse. Over the past 30 years, Chinese scholars made great strides in understanding

the Soviet Union's demise, producing some world-leading studies, although the field has somewhat stagnated more recently. It is thus necessary to renew our effort to explore the deep-seated causes of the Soviet Union's dissolution, the failure of Soviet socialism, and the CPSU's loss of power, from which we can draw valuable lessons.

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