


Core Socialist Values • Keywords

Chief Editor: Han Zhen

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Ni Xia

Translated by Wu Tingli and Jiang Hang

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Prosperity
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Chapter One

Prosperity

1 Prosperity

Prosperity constitutes the material basis and institutional foundation for social progress and free development of individuals; prosperity, as the Millennium dream of the Chinese nation, Provides the material conditions for the country and the people; prosperity that the Communist Party of China spares no effort to strive for is the ideal status of a modern socialist country. As the primary element among the socialist core values, prosperity reflects the fundamental requirement of historical materialism of Marxism as well as the goal of the Communist Party of China.

Section one Elaboration of Prosperity from the Origin

The two Chinese characters making the word “prosperity” (“富强”) are respectively “wealth” (“富”) and “power” (“强”). In Chinese traditional classics, “wealth” refers to abundance of assets and properties, and “power”, originally meaning the “strong bow”, is interpreted as “strong”. Though the word “prosperity”, or “wealth”, “power” is not frequently seen in Confucian classics, people’s desire for prosperous and wealthy life emerged very long time ago. For an instance, the “rich people” etc. in the *Book of History*, the first history book of China and one of the world famous ancient historical classics, revealed ancient people’s desire for rich and wealthy life and a powerful and prosperous country. To realize the dream of prosperity, generations of the Chinese People exert themselves to create one brilliant period after another, from the enlightened administration of the Cheng-Kang period in Western Zhou, to political and military achievements in the Western and Eastern Han Dynasty, until the

peak time in Tang and Song Dynasty. The *Memory of the Past*, by Du Fu in Tang Dynasty, “a small city accommodating ten thousand of families and public and private warehouses full of rice”, exactly recreated this grand view of that age.

The idea of “prosperity” of ancient China was firstly formed in pre-Qin period. It had become the theme of era in the conquests of the states in the Spring and Autumn and Warring States Periods. Guan Zhong, a Legalist pioneer, who was praised as the greatest prime minister of China, once said that “Prosperity contributes to the success of the king. Based on a wealthy nation and strong army, local officials will obey its governance and neighbors will fear its majesty. Other states dare not to attack it, though it does not send treasures and money to them.”^① To pursue the powerful and dominant “wealthy nation and strong army”, all states enforced different reforms. Guan Zhong’s policy of “different taxes for different lands”, Ji Ran’s financial administration for Gou Jian and Li Kui’s economic reform of “making full use of agricultural land” and “government regulating the grain price” had all promoted the rapid social development and significantly increased the national strength. Particularly, the Reform of Shang Yang had issued a whole set of new development strategies including abandoning the state-owned agricultural land system, attaching importance to farming and silkworm industry and adopting the uniform weights and measures units, and was the most thorough reform of all states in the Warring States Period. Through the Reform of Shang Yang, Qin had seen extreme rapid economic development and become the most prosperous country in the later period of the Warring States Period, which laid a solid founda-

① Guanzi, “*Situation Analysis*”.

tion for unification of China. However, the “prosperity” with conquering or even swallowing up other states as the goal is “wealthy nation and strong army” in substance.

Although can achieve rapid effect, the policy of prosperity with “wealthy nation and strong army” as the primary or even the only goal cannot bring about the long lasting “prosperity”. The State Qin, which became prosperous due to the Reform of Shang Yang, came to an end only in three generations, since it “pursued only the interests” and “casted away rites and loyalty”. The extreme utility-based institutional design of Shang Yang like “casting away rites and loyalty” or “pursuing only the interests” led to the corruption of social conducts, which was despised by other states and accelerated the ruin of Qin.

The Confucian culture with justice and humanity as the core idea attaches more importance to “enriching people” and emphasizes “enriching people first”. Confucius said that “The priority of administration shall be given to the richness and longevity of people”. Tang Zhen, a thinker and political analyst at the end of Ming and beginning of Qing Dynasty, proposed that enriching people should be regarded as the foundation of a nation, “The foundation of a nation on-ly lies in wealth. No weak nation could be established as a country since ancient times.”^① People have the right to pursue wealth, and making people have enough food and wear is the basic requirement of a good policy.

Confucian understanding of prosperity constitutes the basic proposition of social economy. Confucian financial policy of “never scram-

^① Tang Zhen, *Book of Profoundness-Introduction*, Sichuan People's Publishing House, 1984, P. 332.

bling for interests against people” and “hiding wealth among people” brings the long lasting national prosperity. As estimated by American scholar Paul Kennedy in *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*, China’s industrial output value was 8.2 times of France and 17.3 times of Britain in 1750; and until 1830, China’s industrial output was still 3 times of Britain and 5.7 times of France. The economic development and strong power of China in the 18th century did not rely on the approach of “rich country and poor people” or “strong country and weak people” but depended on the Confucian road of “rich people and strong country” that “treasures people”, “raises people” and “enriches people”.

In addition to the focus on “richness of people”, Confucian sages attached more importance to justice and loyalty. In their opinions, wealth not only is the property or land etc., but also incorporates justice and loyalty; and they emphasized “loyalty is more valuable than jewels and gold; justice is as important as the land; and rich culture can be considered as wealth”. Therefore, the “richness of people” refers to not only the abundance of material life conditions, but also people’s quality, including people’s physical quality, cultural quality and moral quality. These basic qualities of people can be summarized as people’s modernization.

A powerful country does not mean the strong military or strong force, but refers to a strong nation, which comprises the strong economic power, the modern, advanced and superior political system and institutions, free, tolerant and diversified culture, prosperous, vital and well-functioned society and the military power capable of resisting foreign aggression and maintaining the independent and complete sovereignty. Therefore, a “powerful country” actually refers to industrial modernization, national defense modernization, technological moderniza-

tion, information modernization and ecological civilization.

The prosperity we are pursuing today is neither the “rich country and poor people” nor the “rich people and weak country”, but refers to the organic integration of national prosperity and people’s richness. In traditional Chinese culture, the country and the family is the same, while the country is a greater family and the family is a smaller country. In modern society, country is the most important form of social organization in people’s life; and, therefore, the country’s prosperity and people’s richness condition and complete each other. The prosperity of a country constitutes the necessary premise for people’s pursuit of happiness and the important foundation and effective guarantee for people’s abundant life and rich spirit. On the other hand, people’s prosperity is the foundation and representation of the national prosperity, and people’s freedom and happiness make up the ultimate goal of the country’s prosperity. The country can only attain the real prosperity by realizing people’s happiness. The prosperity of a country cannot last long when the focus is only given to the power of a country and people’s demands and happiness are ignored; while the people’s prosperity will be absolutely at stake without the powerful country as a guarantee when the attention is only paid to people’s prosperity.

Further Reading

According to ancient and modern Chinese and foreign historical experiences,⁸ an inconsistency existed between the people’s prosperity and country’s prosperity. The extreme status of weak country and rich people or strong country and poor people had once emerged in human history. Some countries in the history found it difficult to attain prosperity under external pressure despite the rich people due to the weak power of the country. For example, in Northern Song Dynasty of China, the peak

GNP was 5 times of it at the heyday of Kangxi and Qianlong Periods in Qing Dynasty, and Bianliang, the capital of Northern Song, was much more prosperous than Chang'an in Han and Tang Dynasties. People in that age were well fed and clothed and lived an abundant and easy life. However, the Zhao family governing Song Dynasty established the country based on learning and culture and was weak in power. Under pressure from other state powers, it migrated for several times and was finally extinguished. Some other countries in the history emphasized only on the power of a country but ignored people's demands and happiness, and they had been in full flourish but only for a short period. For example, in the Spring and Autumn Period and the Warring States Period, State Qin developed rapidly after the Reforms of Shang Yang, finally gave an end to the rivalry among the independent principalities in the Warring States Period and unified the empire. The Empire Qin attained the great military power and economic abundance through the orders and measures that fooled, insulted, exploited and weakened people, making people live in darkness, humbleness and poverty. As a result, the powerful Empire Qin abandoning justice and loyalty and treating people heartlessly and cruelly was replaced by Liu's Han Dynasty as rapidly as it developed. It can be seen that people's prosperity cannot be guaranteed without a prosperous country; and the country's prosperity cannot be continued without the prosperous people.

Poverty is not socialism. Prosperity of socialism, meaning the wealthy and powerful country and people, refer to the abundant and happy life of people, favorable social development and powerful comprehensive strength of country. It not only includes the abundant and rich material life of people and the prosperous development of social economics, but also incorporates the national, social and individual modernization and civilization. The socialist view of prosperity and

power requires us to place the development of social productivity, improvement of national comprehensive strength and improvement of people's material and spiritual life as the important value goal for construction of socialist culture with Chinese characteristics.

The socialist view of prosperity and power has learned from but overstepped the traditional Chinese and western capitalist view of prosperity and power. The social idea of "well-off" in the ancient *Book of Rites* reflected Chinese ancient people's desire for rich life and the diet; the idea of "people will be well bred when well fed" in the *Records of the Grand Historian* presented ancient people's understanding about the influence of economic development on moral development; and the thinking of "the trouble lies not in scarcity but in uneven distribution" revealed the emphasis on fair distribution, but also people's ignorance of wealth creation and economic development in the small peasant economy. These ideas had played the positive or negative role in social and economic development to a certain degree. Some western capitalist countries had greatly promoted the development of productivity and created high material civilization through the primitive accumulation of capitals and constant exploration of market. The western bourgeois scholars have attached importance to the research on the way to wealth, successively developed mercantilism, classical economics and modern economics etc. and proposed some historically progressive ideas that reflect the laws of market economic development. However, as restricted by the system, the view of prosperity and power of capitalism only reflects the desire and measure of the minority or capitalists to raise fortunes in essence and the capitalist production method supported by the laws of surplus value. The socialist view of prosperity and power has absorbed the traditional ideas and the positive factor about emphasis on developing econom-

ics and valuable ideas in western values, and meanwhile casted away the wrong ideas that inhibit social progress and damage people's fundamental interests, pursued fair prosperity for people, advocated the integration of prosperity with democracy, civilization and harmony, proposed the close association between prosperity and freedom, equality, justice and the rule-of-law social system and guaranteed the correct value direction of the country's prosperity that serve for social progress, people's development and world peace.

Section two Prosperity: A Thousand-year Dream and Unremitting Pursuit

Prosperity is primarily an economic concept, revealing people's basic requirements on material wealth and economic life. Firstly, "prosperity" lies in people's prosperity. People's prosperity does not refer to great welfare, but indicates the abundance of material life, i. e. "ample food and clothing" as commonly known, and the status of the abundant material resources for individuals and families. The material interest constitutes the basic demands for people's existence and development as well as the material guarantee to promote social progress and people's free development. During the development course of human history, the productive labor that creates material wealth and pursues material interests constitutes the foundation for social and historical development. Since human emerged, as the demands for survival and the basic pursuit, people have put great efforts to get rid of material scarcity and constantly created and accumulated material wealth. For human, with the abundant and rich material condi-