

A Comparative Study on the United Front Work Thought of Mao Zedong and Dong Biwu in the New Democratic Revolution Period

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Abstract: The United Front is an important magic weapon for the Party to lead the people to win the victory in revolution, construction and reform, and is an important part of the Party's general line, guidelines and policies, as well as a strategic policy and political advantage for the Party to unite people's hearts and forces, and the Party has always attached great importance to the work of the United Front. Mao Zedong's and Dong Biwu's united front thought is an important theoretical achievement of the Chineseization of Marxism's united front, and their united front thoughts have commonalities as well as their own characteristics. A comparative study of the two ideas is of great significance for further understanding the United Front ideology, implementing the United Front work under the new situation, uniting all the forces that can be united, mobilizing all the positive factors that can be mobilized, creating favorable conditions for the continuous development of the cause of the Party and the people, and achieving the goal of the two centuries, and realizing the Chinese dream of the rejuvenation of the great nation.

1. Introduction

Practice has proved that the basic viewpoints and methods of the two have undergone the test of long-term history, and that the essence and basic spirit of their thoughts are in the same vein and have common points.

1.1 Adherence to party leadership as a basic principle

The first thing to be clarified in united front work is the question of its leadership. Through his practical experience, Marx concluded that in order to win the revolution, the proletariat must "stand at the head of the revolutionary alliance". Adherence to the leadership of the CPC over the United Front is the most basic feature of Mao Zedong's and Dong Biwu's thinking on the United Front, the essence of which runs through the entire system of their thinking on the United Front.[1]

In Mao's view, the CPC's leadership of the united front was the choice of history and the people and was determined by the Party's historical mission. Against the background of a semi-colonial and semi-feudal society, China's social strata and various political interest groups had various limitations, and only the proletariat and the CPC, which wholeheartedly fought for the liberation of the nation and the toiling masses, were advanced political parties with Marxism-Leninism as their ideological and theoretical guide.[2] Mao Zedong pointed out in his article "The Communist" that "the united front and armed struggle are the two basic weapons for defeating the enemy. The united front is a united front for the implementation of armed struggle. The Party organization is the heroic warrior who masters these two weapons, the united front and armed struggle, in order to carry out the charge against the enemy".[3] By explaining the interrelationship between party building, the united front and the armed struggle, he emphasized the position and role of party leadership among the "three legal treasures". In "The Present Situation and Our Tasks," Mao also emphasized that "the victory of China's new democratic revolution is impossible without the broadest possible revolutionary united front, which includes the vast majority of the people.

On the question of the Party's leadership in the united front, Dong Biwu did a great deal and careful work; he was the de facto head of the Hubei Provincial Government, and under the leadership of Dong Biwu the united front work of the revolution in Hubei made remarkable achievements. First of all, in terms of organization, the Party organization in Hubei Province under

the leadership of Dong Biwu held the actual leadership in the revolutionary work. There were two main points: first, the KMT organizations at all levels in Hubei Province were set up at the place where the Xinhai Revolution broke out, and this was a series of work carried out under the instruction of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC). Secondly, in order to ensure that the revolutionary forces played a major role in the KMT organizations at all levels, he actively contacted the leftists of the KMT to form the national government at all levels, which was manifested in the fact that among the fourteen executive members elected by the First Congress of the KMT in Hubei Province, eleven were Communists as well as three leftists of the KMT.[4-5]

1.2 Emphasizing the important role of the Workers' and Peasants' Alliance

Marx, summing up the lessons of the failed workers' uprising in Paris, France, first pointed out the importance of the workers' and peasants' alliance: "Unless the revolutionary process mobilizes the whole nation, the peasants and the petty bourgeoisie, who stand between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, against the bourgeois system, against the rule of capital, unless it forces them to approach the proletariat and recognize it as their vanguard, the French workers cannot take a single step forward and touch the bourgeois system in the slightest." [6] Both Mao Zedong and Dong Biwu emphasized the role of the labor-peasant alliance in the united front. The alliance of workers and peasants is the basis for the development and growth of the united front. Mao Zedong highly valued the position of the alliance of workers and peasants in the united front. He pointed out in his *Analysis of the Various Classes in Chinese Society* that "Who are our enemies? Who are our friends? This is the primary question of the revolution." [7] He believed that the most basic reason why China's previous revolutionary struggles had yielded little success was that it had failed to unite real friends to attack real enemies.

Dong considered the peasants to be the most important force in the united front, except for the working class as the leading class. In 1925, Dong issued the *Resolution on the Peasant Movement*, in which he asked the party departments to intensify the propaganda of anti-imperialist and anti-warlord ideology among the masses, and vigorously encouraged the peasants to join in the resistance movement and to set up the "Peasant Self-Defense Army." he also presided over the founding of the magazine "Hubei Peasant" to guide the peasants movement. Subsequently, he founded the magazine "Hubei Peasants" to guide the peasants' movement. In addition, in order to better cooperate with and mobilize the peasants' movement, he assigned a large number of Party members and outstanding young people to the rural areas and formed secret farmers' associations, which brought the peasants' movement in Hubei to a climax.

1.3 Emphasize the characteristics of the combination of firmness of principle and flexibility of strategy

The harmonization of principle and flexibility is a very important pair of relationships in the united front, and is a concrete application of material dialectics in united front work. Combining firmness of principle with flexibility of strategy is a basic method and feature of dealing with united front issues.

The greatest difficulty in united front work is to harmonize the interests of all parties so as to strive for greater unity. While emphasizing the firmness of the Party's leadership of the united front, Mao also attaches great importance to the flexible use of tactics. On the question of the relationship between the leader and the led in the revolutionary united front, Mao Zedong clearly realized that the Communist Party, while occupying the leading position, would not jeopardize the legitimate interests of the other classes and would give them all kinds of assistance. In addition, he put forward the principle of "unity and criticism" as a means of reconciling the conflicting interests of different classes within the United Front.[8-9]

While resolutely implementing the United Front policy, Dong Biwu also paid attention to maintaining the Party's independence and autonomy, both in terms of unity and independence. This was mainly reflected in the following points: Firstly, in the Yangtze River Bureau in Wuhan, in the face of Wang Ming's right-leaning capitulationist line in the united front, Dong Biwu resolutely opposed it, thus minimizing the damage done by the Kuomintang to the united front and greatly

reducing its influence on the Party. Secondly, he led the rectification campaign of the Southern Bureau. After the rectification campaign, the "left-leaning" mistakes made by the Southern Bureau were corrected and liquidated, and the lessons of the two successes and two failures were correctly summed up, thus ensuring the stability of the United Front.

2. The difference between the two

2.1 Ideas have different origins

Mao Zedong's idea of a united front can be traced back to 1919, when the Xiangjiang Review was founded by Mao Zedong in Changsha under the auspices of "What is the strongest force? The power of popular unity is the strongest", as mentioned in its Founding Manifesto. Mao Zedong realized the great power of union. He then pointed out in "The Great Union of the People" that "when we look at history vertically, all movements in history, no matter what kind, are born out of the union of a number of people", and that "a larger movement must have a larger union". Mao Zedong deeply realized that the revolutionary task could not be achieved by relying only on the strength of the working class. Therefore, he advocated that "the fundamental way to transform China is to realize the great unity of the people".[10]

In July 1925, Dong Biwu asked, "Who are our friends? Who is our enemy?" This statement, made five months before Mao Zedong made the same statement, shows that the CPC in its infancy had the problem of not being able to correctly distinguish between friends and foes, and that the party leaders gradually realized the importance of this question, which had a bearing on the future of the revolution.[11] Early Dong Biwu's idea of united front was mainly influenced by several events. The first occurred when he was sitting for the Academy Examination, and one of his classmates who took the examination with him was unfortunately beaten to death in a conflict over a forced body search. The second incident was when he was taking the township examination, out of curiosity, he stretched his head at the entrance of the provincial government office to look into the government office and was found out, and was then beaten up. 1909, when the provincial commissioner of the school wanted to transfer them to a higher school after they had completed their studies in the ordinary school without issuing them with graduation certificates, he took the lead in the petition, which was supported by the students and teachers and won the final victory. The unity of the people inspired Dong Biwu's idea of a united front.

2.2 Different ways of combining theory and practice

Mao Zedong, who had long held a leading position in the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, attached great importance to the integration of the theory and practice of the United Front. During the period of revolutionary failure, the Party led the people to continue the revolutionary struggle within the United Front. Mao Zedong led the Autumn Harvest Uprising and organized the peasants in armed struggle. He established the Jinggangshan Revolutionary Base. Enriched his practice of united front. In the years 1931 to 1934, leftist opportunism within the Party had a great impact on the united front and other aspects. The Party did not reach a unified understanding of Mao's correct thinking. It was not until the Zunyi Conference in 1935 that Mao Zedong's leadership within the Party was established, and in December 1935, Mao Zedong delivered an important speech entitled "On Strategies Against Japanese Imperialism" at the end of the Wayaobao Conference, and then led various forms of united front work. From 1937 to 1940, Mao published a number of articles on united front work, for example, "The Position of the Chinese Communist Party in the National War", "The Problem of Independence in the Unified Front" and a series of other writings further enriched his theory of united front work.[12]

Dong Biwu fought for a long time in the nationalist areas for the smooth implementation of the united front work. According to the agreement on the second cooperation between the Kuomintang and the Communist Party, Dong Biwu secretly set up the Hubei Provincial Working Committee in Wuhan under the entrustment of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, restored the Party organizations in the area and carried out the united front work. 1937, he gave two lectures on

"Problems of Mass Movements" and "How to Carry Out Mass Movements" in Wuhan University, and actively called on the public to take part in the war of resistance. He emphasized that only by mobilizing the masses could he achieve victory in the war of resistance. 1937 to 1938, Dong Biwu made use of the united front relationship to set up a training class in the name of "Rural Cooperative" to train military and political cadres, who were then assigned to local villages to launch the guerrilla war in the rear of the enemy, and set up the guerrilla zone of central Hubei. In Chongqing, the goal was to break through the enemy's tight blockade. After the end of the War of Resistance Against Japan, Dong Biwu remained active in the Nationalist Region, organizing people of all strata to fight against the reactionary forces and continuing to carry out the practice of united front extensively.

2.3 Differences in the focus of united front work

Mao Zedong's theory of the united front, from the point of view of its scope, mainly includes: first, the alliance between the working class and other working people, mainly the alliance between the proletariat and the peasants, the urban petty bourgeoisie, and other working people; and second, the alliance between the working class and the non-working people with whom it can co-operate, which mainly refers to the alliance between the proletariat and the national bourgeoisie, and also includes the alliance between the proletariat and a portion of the landowning class, the big bourgeoisie with its purchasing power. It also includes, under certain historical conditions, the alliance between the proletariat and a part of the landlord class and the big bourgeoisie with the character of the buyers. Based on his knowledge and understanding of China's national conditions, Mao Zedong proposed to shift the center of gravity of the revolutionary work from the cities to the countryside, to lead and unite the masses of peasants to carry out the agrarian revolution, and to establish revolutionary bases in the countryside, thus opening up a revolutionary path that was different from the previous city-centered one, that is, the path of encircling the cities from the countryside and seizing power by arms.[13] This was another innovative point in Mao's theory of the united front. The opening up of the new revolutionary road enabled the Party to survive the crisis of the failure of the Revolution and further consolidated the alliance between the working class and the peasant class, which was the most basic and important pair of alliances. Mao Zedong attached great importance to the role of the peasant class in the revolution, and the focus of his United Front Work was for some time on uniting and mobilizing the peasant masses. He made a thirty-two day visit to Hunan and completed the Report on the Investigation of the Peasant Movement in Hunan, in which he pointed out the seriousness of the peasant problem, described in detail the power of the peasant class, and proposed to mobilize the power of the peasant class in the countryside.

Dong Biwu was always at the forefront of united front work. In establishing the united front of the anti-Japanese nation, he emphasized the union with international forces and sought their assistance. During the period of expanding the united front in the Nationalist Region, he united overseas Chinese and international friends around the Party organization. During the Wuhan period, Dong Biwu often met with representatives of overseas Chinese, foreign groups visiting China and international aid teams, supporting and encouraging them to come to China to participate in the war of resistance and to make donations. During the Chongqing period, he also organized foreign journalists to visit Yan'an, using the influence of the international media to gain support from abroad. In addition, he also actively organized American military inspection teams to visit Yan'an, so that they could understand the situation of the war of resistance within China. In April 1945, Dong Biwu was also invited to attend the founding of the United Nations General Assembly to present the Party's policies and guidelines as well as its achievements to the world, and signed the United Nations Charter on behalf of the whole nation. During his overseas united front work in the U.S., he got rid of the Kuomintang's press blockade and published "The Facts of China's Liberated Areas," which introduced the liberated areas under the leadership of the Communist Party to the world and gained wide attention and support from international public opinion. The CPC was also recognized and understood by many overseas people through Dong Biwu.

3. Conclusion

To summarize. Both Mao Zedong and Dong Biwu were highly skilled in the art of united front work, from which the following points can be drawn: firstly, we must adhere to the leadership of the Party, maintain a high degree of consistency with the Central Committee of the Party at all times, and resolutely carry out the policies and guidelines of the Central Committee of the Party. The second is to combine China's national conditions and realities, and to analyze specific problems in concrete terms. The third is to emphasize the combination of theory and practice, and to actively participate in the flood of revolution. To consolidate and develop the patriotic united front, it is fundamental to adhere to the Party's leadership, which is also the core of Mao Zedong's and Dong Biwu's ideas on the united front. In their united front work, they always put the Party's leadership in the first place, and the measures and policies adopted in the united front work must be centered on the Party's main position, and take into consideration the interests and demands of the other allies while emphasizing principles and methods. Secondly, the united front should respect the characteristics of consistency and diversity. The united front is a combination of diversity under the leadership of the Party, and inclusiveness is an important manifestation of the united front thinking of Mao Zedong and Dong Biwu, who, in order to realize their revolutionary goals, fully carried forward the spirit of democracy, sought common ground while reserving differences, and reached a consensus. Then, we must be good at making friends. Today's united front is no longer limited to domestic but also international targets, so we must continue to carry forward the big-picture view of Mao Zedong and Dong Biwu's united front ideology. Lastly, we must fit in with the theme of great solidarity and unity, and carry forward the spirit of patriotism that was so high in the forefathers of the revolution. The multi-party cooperation and political consultation system under the leadership of the Communist Party of China (CPC) is an important organization of the patriotic united front. It is a great innovation of the united front of the New Democracy period, and it provides an important platform for gathering the wisdom of the people and combining public opinion with the heart of the people. Both Mao Zedong's and Dong Biwu's united front ideas are an important part of the CPC's united front ideology, both are the crystallization of the Party's collective wisdom, and both have played an important guiding role in the revolutionary cause under the Party's leadership. The united front ideology of the two has played an important role as a link and bridge in uniting all classes and strata of society and in gathering the powerful forces of the whole nation. With the continuous development and progress of economy and society, China's social structure has undergone major adjustments and changes, the united front work under the new situation is still severe and complex, Mao Zedong and Dong Biwu's united front ideas still have great theoretical significance in guiding the united front work in the new period. We must do a good job in the United Front work in the new period, and provide strong support for realizing the goal of two hundred years and the Chinese dream of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation.

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