

The ineffectiveness of anti-corruption struggles in China

Corruption re-emerged in China in a big way after the restoration of capitalism and remains source of social dissatisfaction today. Here, the November 2023 edition of Struggle Monthly critiques the phenomenon and the Party's hypocritical and self-serving "anti-corruption" campaigns – Trans.

Anti-corruption film in a fairy tale



Above: The fist of anti-corruption smashes the wall of 腐败 (means 'rotten, corrupt') while the vertical comment in red reads: 你说这个我都觉得好笑 ('I think it's funny, a joke, when you say that')

Since the restoration of capitalism after 1976, the ideology of capitalism has also been restored.

It dares not give up Marxism-Leninism-Socialism directly, but can only distort vulgar Marxism-Leninism through various means. As a bureaucratic capitalist, it cannot go for the bourgeois form of democracy in the West, and Chairman Mao said that once revisionism came to power, it would be the worst kind of capitalism, and that if it engaged in the bourgeois liberalisation, the 89 Incident^[1] would occur, so it had to bring back the feudal elements at the same time to serve as an ideological cohesion. The two together have carried out a counter-attack on the former socialist culture, which has continued to this day, and it is most obvious and reactionary in the cultural field. Popular literary works and film and television productions are nothing but the most shameless and naked deception of bureaucratic capitalism against the working people.

The Zhongxiu^[2] authorities have a very clever way of disguising themselves. Take anti-corruption works as an example, how does Zhongxiu tell such stories? The villains and contradictions in such works are usually the corruption of a high-powered official at the local level, and the impact on the people is manifested in the emergence of triad-type bullies or unscrupulous businessmen who do harm

to one side, for example, Zhao Lichun, Gao Yuliang, and Qi Tongwei in the name of the people are the former, and the latter are unscrupulous businessmen such as Zhao Ruilong and Gao Xiaoqin. The positive characters are Sha Ruijin, a minister of the imperial police, and Hou Liangping, who has a background as a royal relative. The logic of this kind of story is to let the audience focus on how the positive side defeats the negative side step by step, and how the positive side highlights the righteousness of the spirit of anti-corruption. One of the key characters, and the one with the most sinister intentions, is Chen Yan, a veteran cadre with genuine communist consciousness, who is used to show that there is still hope within the party and that it is not completely corrupt. In the film and TV drama, Chen Yan sits up all night with the workers of the Dafeng factory in order to stop the demolition of the factory and prevent conflicts from intensifying, and the image of the communist as being deeply involved in the people's lives is built up, and the authorities are using this kind of rare example to prove that this Party, which has already deteriorated, is still good.

The vast majority of anti-corruption films and TV programmes follow this narrative logic, which is the most deceptive to the people, making them believe that the Party is really carrying out a self-revolution, but in fact it is just internal strife. In connection with the recently released film "I Am Originally a High Mountain", which is based on the story of Zhang Guimei, we can clearly see the sinister intention of Zhongxiu's cultural works under his reactionary ideology, which is to make the people be touched by those who really do something, so that they can spontaneously defend this capitalist, exploitative and cannibalistic social system. The "Zero Tolerance" and "Moving China" productions made by Zhongxiu are just window-dressing. Those who have really made a contribution to the people become idols under the propaganda of Zhongxiu, which ultimately serves to strengthen its rule.



Above: the anti-corruption politician has a sack on his back with the characters for 'keeping a mistress'

The same applies to this kind of TV drama, which will try to portray a clean official who serves the people and is sent by the Central Authorities to rectify the local situation. Sha Ruijin and Hou Liangping in the Name of the People are such characters, but in essence, the appearance of these officials is just a manifestation of the state machinery to maintain its own functioning, with the aim of removing local corrupt officials who threaten the overall interests of the general public, and the general public will often be confused by the illusion of this kind of drama: the Central Committee of the Party is wise and mighty, and sends inspection teams to solve problems at the local level. Essentially, these problems are caused by the reform and opening up of capital. For example, a masked person breaks your leg. You don't know who it is. Later, the person who broke your leg heals your leg. , you don't know who is the person who broke your leg, but instead you are grateful to him, whether it is anti-corruption or poverty alleviation. This kind of vicious method is very deceptive to the people, but the lies will eventually be seen through.

For the bureaucratic bourgeoisie who truly hold power, the Discipline Inspection Commission is nothing more than a tool for political struggle. The real Zhao family will always be at large. Small fish and shrimps like Arctic Catfish[3] are no match for thieves like Deng Pufang. As part of the state apparatus, the Discipline Inspection Commission will also play a certain role in self-purification, but its role is very limited. This is not self-revolution under the dictatorship of the proletariat. It is useless to arrest and kill a group of corrupt officials. Under the dictatorship of the bureaucratic bourgeoisie, Capitalism and private ownership will continue to produce corrupt officials. China's revision has long entered the law of historical cycles. Chairman Xi does not even have the courage to kill corruption, and talking about self-revolution is just a lie to deceive the people.

This kind of cultural work has given us a lot of food for thought today. When the class struggle and revolution stop on the road to socialist development, there will be a regression, and capitalism will gradually spread from the ideological to the political and economic spheres, as history after the Cultural Revolution has proved. The experience left to us by the Cultural Revolution is that after the establishment of a socialist regime, an ideological revolution must be carried out. After the temporary death of capitalism, the stench and filth it emits will still affect us. It will wait for an opportunity to dominate people's ideologies again, and in reality China completed its own restoration. The chaos and regression in China's ideological field today strongly prove this.



Above: both cartoons illustrate anti-corruption campaigners accepting bribes and accumulating wealth.

[1] The “89 Incident” refers to the June 4, 1989 crackdown.

[2] “Zhongxiu” is an abbreviation for “Chinese revisionism” and is used not only to indicate an ideological departure from Marxism, but the Party and the State that serve this departure.

[3] “Arctic Catfish” is the social media name of the granddaughter of Zhong Gengci, former director of the Freight Management Branch of Shenzhen Transportation Bureau. She outraged Chinese netizens by disparaging the common people and flaunting her family’s wealth, which she claimed ran to a nine-figure sum. Some netizens found that the IP of “Arctic Catfish” shows the location as Australia. After a rather desultory examination of Zhong Gengci’s situation by the Commission for Discipline Inspection, he was expelled from the Party in October 2023.

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