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Article

The Process of Criticizing Historical Nihilism: From the Practice of the Communist Party of China

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Abstract

Opposing historical nihilism is an important proposition that runs through the century-long ideological struggle of the Communist Party of China. As an erroneous trend that denies the achievements of China's revolution, construction, and reform, historical nihilism has long been highly vigilant and continuously criticized by the Communist Party of China. Based on methods such as literature analysis and historical evidence verification, this paper analyzes the origins and evolution of historical nihilism, traces the Party's practical journey in opposing historical nihilism during the New Democratic Revolution period, the Socialist Revolution and Construction period, and the Reform and Opening-up new era, and reveals the theoretical responses and practical innovations of Chinese Communists in the new era against historical nihilism.

Keywords: Chinese Communist Party; historical nihilism; historical materialism; theoretical response; practical innovation

1. Introduction

The sum of different reflections on history forms different historical perspectives, and under the guidance of different historical perspectives, different worldviews are formed. Different worldviews in turn influence the formation of diverse life views and values, determining the development of vastly different methodologies. Liang Zhu: "History, reality, and the future are interconnected. History is the reality of the past, and reality is the history of the future. Only by correctly understanding history can we correctly understand reality, learn from history, understand the past to foresee the future, and create a better tomorrow." Historical perspective is the core of ideology, and ideology is the ritualized, organized, and power-driven shell of historical perspective. Historical perspective has never been merely a perspective on observing history; it inherently contains ideological elements. "Narrating history is never just about recounting what has happened, but is closely related to current political judgments and ideological cognition." With the development of domestic and international history, and with the evolution of paradigms such as revolutionary historical perspective, modernization historical perspective, comprehensive historical perspective, and "present and openness," various ideologies, including historical nihilism, have emerged, developed, and long influenced the ideological sphere of China. Xi Jinping: "Errorful ideologies such as materialism, hedonism, extreme individualism, and historical nihilism occasionally arise, and online public opinion is chaotic, severely affecting people's thoughts and the social public opinion environment." In the domestic academic circles, Shen Zhong was the first to use the term "Historical Nihilism." He distinguished between historical nihilism and the reflection and criticism of history, and also elaborated on the intricate relationship between erroneous historical views and historical nihilism: "In modern China, historical nihilism and the 'complete Westernization' theory are almost twin concepts. Because the 'complete Westernization' theory must be premised on the negation of one's own national history and traditional culture; while the promotion of historical nihilism inevitably leads to the 'complete Westernization' theory." "Historical nihilism differs from the reflection of history." Historical nihilism is a radical political trend that reinterprets history through

extreme conservative or radical methods, attempting to form an alternative historical view and challenge or even subvert the mainstream historical view. "Historical nihilism adheres to the postmodernist historical view, and its reverse thinking of letting the objective appear in the subjective negates the dialectical unity of subjectivity and objectivity." It replaces objective historical facts with subjective conjectures, substitutes partial exploration for overall understanding, and ignores the objective laws of historical development. In essence, it is based on the theory of historical idealism, using the pretext of "reflecting on history" and "restoring the truth," employing the technique of letting the objective appear in the subjective, substituting details for the whole, and replacing historical facts with conjectures, thereby distorting history, confusing the public, poisoning the masses, and inciting rebellion, ultimately achieving its goal of subverting the regime and causing chaos in the world.

Historical nihilism often manifests politically in the form of negating the value of the May Fourth Movement, denying the leadership of the Communist Party of China, dismissing the significance of China's revolution and construction, fully endorsing the "Cultural Revolution," advocating that reform and opening-up have changed colors, and promoting the notion that the new era is a time of dictatorship and chaos. In historiography, it frequently appears as erroneous views such as rejecting the Marxist materialist conception of history, overturning the evaluation of historical figures' merits and faults, completely denigrating revolutionary predecessors, excessively praising Western aggressors, and claiming that the new era marks a turning point in the historical cycle of rise and fall. It "takes a contemptuous and negative attitude toward the history of one's own country and the culture of one's own nation, even dismissing the history of China's revolution and socialist construction as utterly worthless." In literature, it often "parody" and "mock" history in historical works, ridiculing and negating revolutionary writers, and distorting the original appearance of excellent literary works. In communication, it primarily uses new media as the main means of dissemination, selectively presenting historical information as the main content, interpreting history in an emotional and fragmented manner, and masquerading as "revealing historical truths" or "historical popular science" to incite the escalation of internal contradictions among the people into class conflicts and encourage the masses to participate in rebellion and subversion. Historical nihilism disrupts historical cognition, confuses people's correct understanding of history, and undermines historical consensus. It weakens the mainstream ideology, i.e., the recognition of Marxist guiding principles and the recognition of the path, theory, and system of socialism with Chinese characteristics. Historical nihilism also shakes national identity, erodes the cohesion and centripetal force of the national spirit, and weakens cultural awareness and confidence in socialism with Chinese characteristics. Historical nihilism can also affect social stability, that is, the wrong ideological problems are easy to be transformed into the real actions with social harm, increasing the unstable factors and social risks.

Xi Jinping: "In today's world, invisible wars in the ideological field are everywhere." "Ideological work is the work of establishing the mind for the country and the soul for the nation." Criticizing erroneous trends and consolidating Marxism's guiding position in the ideological field are the priorities of the Party's ideological, political, and cultural work. Studying the critical origins, evolution, and leaps of historical nihilism can provide some theoretical contributions to "breaking the deadlock" in accelerating the construction of the "three systems" of philosophy and social sciences with Chinese characteristics.

2. Transformation of Historical Nihilism in China

From the late 19th century to the early 20th century, Nietzsche inherited and developed nihilistic philosophy. Nietzsche believed that nihilistic philosophy, represented by Schopenhauer, Christianity, and Platonism, was characterized by a negative nihilism that plunged into despair and retreat after the devaluation of the highest values, viewing everything as meaningless. He called himself "the most thorough nihilist in Europe," arguing that nihilism was not the end of the problem but the beginning of re-imbuing depth into it, namely "positive nihilism." To counter nihilism, "Nietzsche proposed two

ideological solutions in his 'Lunzheim Notes.' " The first solution was to overcome nihilism through the idea of eternal recurrence, but he later shifted to the second solution, which involved overcoming nihilism through the concept of the will to power, due to the impact of Spinoza's philosophical ideas. Nietzsche's "positive nihilism" philosophy, which "revalued all values," was introduced to China via Japan, but its dissemination during the late Qing and early Republican periods was extremely limited and one-sided, primarily through selective introductions by individual intellectuals such as Wang Guowei, Lu Xun, and Li Shizeng, rather than systematic propagation. The declaration of "God is dead" and the "revaluation of all values" proposed by Nietzsche, along with the negation of traditional cultural values, provided advanced intellectuals of the time with ideological weapons to criticize feudal rites and establish a new culture. Schopenhauer's pessimistic philosophy constituted the classic form of negative nihilism. The pessimistic negative nihilism viewed the world as "will and representation," emphasizing that the essence of life is suffering, and that history is merely the meaningless recurrence of the blind impulse of will. This philosophy provides an ontological foundation for historical nihilism: since the will to live itself is purposeless, human history lacks progress and meaning, justifying a "re-examination" or dissolution of history into nothingness. Nietzsche's active nihilism represents a constructive deconstruction of reality. However, historical nihilism abstracts this creative dimension, distorting the "re-evaluation of all values" into a "denial of all values," and misinterpreting the historical diagnosis of "God is dead" as a cognitive paralysis of "history is dead." Historical nihilism can be seen as a vulgarized and alienated form of Nietzsche's philosophy during its dissemination, as it inherits the blade of negation while abandoning the mission of "creation." Passive nihilism is more of an ontological philosophical stance, like Camus' concept of "absurdity," whereas historical nihilism applies it concretely at the epistemological level—focusing this sense of meaninglessness on the historical domain, deconstructing collective memory and national identity by negating history's objectivity, regularity, and continuity. In essence, historical nihilism is the politicized and historicized expression of passive nihilism, possessing stronger practical intervention and ideological functions.

Zang Fengyu: "Modern China encountered the 'great transformation unseen in three thousand years,' and the 'dispute between ancient and modern, Chinese and Western' became an important issue in the realm of thought and culture." At the same time, various Western doctrines such as positivist historiography, social Darwinism's view of evolutionary history, Enlightenment rationalism, and cultural stage theory spread with the translation of works like *On the Evolution of Nature*. Against this backdrop, historical nihilism emerged and developed in China. Historical nihilism and social Darwinism formed a complex conspiratorial relationship in modern China, while the common assertion of various conspiring ideologies—namely, the "total Westernization" theory—converged with historical nihilism. On one hand, the logic of social Darwinism's "survival of the fittest" negated the contemporary value of China's traditional culture (historical nihilism); on the other hand, it regarded Western colonial modernity as the sole direction of evolution (social Darwinism). When Yan Fu translated *On the Evolution of Nature*, he "misread" Huxley, distorting ethical evolutionism into natural evolutionism, which may be the origin of the convergence of historical nihilism and social Darwinism's "total Westernization" theory in modern China. Not only social Darwinism, but other ideologies such as Enlightenment rationalism, the "traditional-modern" binary opposition, cultural evolutionism, and stage theory also advocated "total Westernization." Therefore, the aforementioned discussion acknowledges the multi-source nature of "total Westernization." In the 1920s, the "Ancient History Debates" school represented by Gu Jiegang pushed the spirit of skepticism to its peak. Gu Jiegang proposed the theory of "layered accumulation of ancient Chinese history," arguing that the pre-Qin period's ancient history was the result of continuous fabrication and superposition by later generations. He advocated for a thorough skepticism toward ancient history, but the extreme tendency of "excessive skepticism" in this ideological trend essentially slid into historical nihilism. Moreover, the then prevalent extreme counter-argument of complete Westernization (cultural revival) also essentially slid into historical nihilism. Historical nihilism during this period exhibited three distinct characteristics: First,

influenced by Western positivist philosophy, it exhibited positivist obscurity in methodology; Second, in terms of value stance, it advocated for complete Westernization or cultural revival, equating the critique of feudal autocracy with the negation of all traditional culture or the refusal to critique traditional culture; Third, in historical cognition, it showed a fragmented tendency, using partial historical materials to negate the overall historical context and substituting specific research for macro-level understanding. These three characteristics were occasionally manifested in the long-term evolution of historical nihilism.

During the May Fourth New Culture Movement period, historical nihilism was represented by the arguments of Hu Shi, Gu Jiegang, and others, primarily focusing on issues such as skepticism toward ancient history, Westernization, and revivalism. In the preface to his earlier work "Outline of the History of Chinese Philosophy," Hu Shi proposed that "there is no history before the Eastern Zhou Dynasty" and "It is better to be suspicious than to be too confident." Gu Jiegang believed that ancient history was "layered and constructed" and that "the system of the Three Sovereigns and Five Emperors is mostly a forgery." However, he "placed too much emphasis on the method of interpreting the meaning of characters based on textual materials," analyzing history from a one-sided perspective of documentary research, which was criticized by many scholars, including Zhang Yinlin, as "violating the limits of silent evidence application," with many of his arguments falling into the category of historical nihilism. At the same time, many positivist historians "collectively placed their hopes for reconstructing ancient history on archaeology" at this time, yet they overlooked the role of documentary sources. Additionally, some positivist historians, due to the scarcity of physical historical materials and the vast gaps in known ancient history, ultimately turned to accepting the nihilistic argument of negating ancient history. Although these statements had a certain degree of progressiveness, their one-sided historical research methods, insufficient integration of historical theory and practice, and absolute historical perspectives led many of their arguments to fall into the category of historical nihilism. Moreover, historical nihilism manifested as cultural revivalism was also prevalent at the time. The "Eastern Cultural School" group, represented by Du Yiquan and Qian Zhixiu, advocated conservative cultural theories and the salvation of Eastern culture, criticized the radicalism of the May Fourth Movement, and advocated the harmonization of Chinese and Western cultures, using Eastern culture to remedy the West. The "Xueheng School" represented by Wu Mi, Mei Guangdi, Hu Xiansu and others advocated "promoting national essence and assimilating new knowledge" and opposed the "Westernization School". Although they had some progressiveness, some of their remarks were still one-sidedly opposed to foreign western history and culture, blindly anti-foreign, and fell into the category of historical nihilism.

Historical nihilism underwent a temporal evolution during the periods of the Great Revolution and the Agrarian Revolutionary War. Regarding the Great Revolution, the core of historical nihilism lies in denying the legitimacy and historical progressiveness of this anti-imperialist and anti-feudal revolution. Advocates of such views often distort the Great Revolution as a "radical revolution," claiming it "had only destructive effects and no constructive significance," and argue that the intense revolutionary actions severely hindered China's modernization process, completely ignoring the historic contributions of this revolution in overthrowing the Beiyang warlord regime, combating imperialist privileges in China, and advancing national independence. More dangerously, in recent years, there has been a noticeable tendency to "rehabilitate" the right-wing of the Kuomintang, particularly Chiang Kai-shek. This tendency, packaged with the discourse of "peaceful development across the strait," demands "acknowledging" the relationship between the Kuomintang and the Communist Party, downplaying the April 12th counter-revolutionary coup launched by Chiang Kai-shek in 1927 as a "minor incident" while exaggerating his so-called "leadership in the War of Resistance" as a great historical achievement. Consequently, it asserts that Chiang Kai-shek represented the "interests of the Chinese nation" rather than the interests of the comprador bourgeoisie, thereby completely erasing the counter-revolutionary nature and the essence of betrayal of the revolution of this coup. At the same time, this narrative strategy vigorously undermines the positive role of the Communist Party of China in the Great Revolution, obscuring its core role in

mobilizing the working and peasant masses, establishing revolutionary armed forces, and promoting the victory of the Northern Expedition by exaggerating the military contributions of the Kuomintang. It even completely blames the failure of the Great Revolution on the Communist Party of China, claiming that the CPC "should not have continued the revolution or carried out armed uprisings," and promotes the idea that the Communist Party of China should accept the ruling order of imperialism and feudal warlords, assisting them in suppressing the workers 'and peasants' movements. This view not only contradicts basic historical facts but also fundamentally denies the historical inevitability of the China revolution. Furthermore, historical nihilism attempts to negate the revolutionary united front strategy of the cooperation between the Kuomintang and the Communist Party, distorting the correct intra-party propositions on the leadership of the united front as extreme manifestations of "radicalism" or "conservatism," and attempting to prove that the early CPC was always in confusion and error in its strategic choices.

During the period of the Agrarian Revolutionary War, the focus of historical nihilism shifted to the negation of the unique path of the China revolution. The core nihilistic argument of this period was the denial of the historical inevitability of the Agrarian Revolution. Advocates often packaged their arguments with a "modernization" narrative, claiming that the Agrarian Revolution "swept away alienating factors in the pre-modern structure in an uninstitutionalized form, but also destroyed the emerging market elements of modernity," asserting that the revolution left peasants "still within the pre-modern structure" and failed to transform them into modern industrial forces. Some even claimed that the Agrarian Revolution reconstructed a "feudal structure in the form of an isosceles triangle with natural economy as the base and land dependency and personal dependency as the sides." This simplistic reduction of complex historical processes to "the destruction of modernity" completely ignores the basic national conditions of a semi-colonial and semi-feudal society, as well as the historical contributions of the Agrarian Revolution in dismantling feudal production relations, liberating rural productivity, and laying the mass foundation for the War of Resistance against Japan. Instead, it flattens the history of this period into a mere narrative of violence, turmoil, and suffering. Accompanying this is a systematic negation of the revolutionary path of "surrounding the cities from the countryside and seizing power through armed struggle." Historical nihilism either claims that the success of this path was due to "strategic errors by the enemy," which is highly accidental rather than an inevitable choice based on China's national conditions; or asserts that the Long March of the Red Army was "useless," denying its decisive significance in preserving the revolutionary spark and achieving strategic relocation; or clings to the "urban-centric theory," arguing that the China revolution should follow the Soviet model of "armed urban uprisings," thereby negating the historical logic that, under the unique conditions of a semi-colonial and semi-feudal society, it was necessary to delve into rural areas to accumulate revolutionary strength. Furthermore, historical nihilism attempts to deny the theoretical innovation value of the armed separatism of workers and peasants, distorts the Party's practice of establishing Soviet regimes, and vilifies it as a simple "copying of the Soviet model." It also stigmatizes armed struggle as "violent terror" and tries to undermine the Party's historical legitimacy through a reinterpretation of intra-Party line struggles, distorting the correct struggle against right opportunist and "leftist" dogmatism as "factional struggles" or "power struggles." It excessively magnifies the Party's mistakes during this period, using minor issues to negate the mainstream, and even denies the historical inevitability of the Zunyi Conference establishing Mao Zedong's leadership.

From the perspective of historical methodology, these nihilistic discourses targeting the periods of the Great Revolution and the Agrarian Revolutionary War share a common feature: they adhere to the "farewell to revolution" theory, advocate for reformist paths, and believe that the late Qing government had the capacity to change the nature of China through gradual reforms. They view revolution merely as a destructive historical force, while ignoring the inevitable failure of reform attempts such as the Self-Strengthening Movement and the Hundred Days Reform under the conditions of a semi-colonial and semi-feudal society. At the same time, such views often employ abstract theories of human nature, using the so-called "complexity of human nature" as a pretext to

blur the lines between revolution and counter-revolution, progress and decay, and to rehabilitate reactionary figures. In terms of historical evidence, they tend to fragment historical accounts, exaggerating minor details such as the mistakes of individual leaders or tactical setbacks in specific campaigns, generalizing from partial evidence, and substituting minor streams for the mainstream. General Secretary Xi Jinping profoundly pointed out that the crux of historical nihilism lies in "fundamentally negating the guiding role of Marxism and the historical inevitability of China's path to socialism, as well as denying the leadership of the Communist Party of China." The political essence of historical nihilism during these two revolutionary periods is to attempt to prove that China could achieve modernization without revolution or reform, to demonstrate that the Communist Party of China "stole" the fruits of revolution rather than being a historical choice, and to "de-legitimize" the people's democratic dictatorship and the socialist system, implying that without revolution, China would have developed better. However, these arguments prove utterly untenable when confronted with fundamental historical facts: The semi-colonial and semi-feudal nature of China's society rendered reformist paths unfeasible; the overwhelming majority of peasants in the population necessitated mobilizing rural forces to resolve land issues; and the revolutionary situation of being outnumbered by the enemy required establishing rural bases to accumulate strength through prolonged armed struggle. These "ironclad historical inevitabilities" constitute the most compelling refutation of historical nihilism.

Historical nihilism also pervaded discussions about the War of Resistance against Japan. This analysis examines representative perspectives from Japanese politicians, intellectuals, and scholars of the era. First, the widespread glorification of war was evident. In November 1938, Japanese official Mori Eito published an article analyzing the Sino-Japanese War, characterizing the "Japan-China Incident" as a "glorious revolution" initiated by East Asian nations under capitalist and communist rule. Second, the belief in socialism's inevitable defeat persisted. Kitani Ichiro criticized socialism in his "Outline of the Japanese Reconstruction Act," arguing that "countless reasons demonstrate the theoretical flaws in socialist construction theories that have yet to gain global acceptance. Marx and Kropotkin can only be regarded as pre-modern philosophers from an unenlightened era." He identified fundamental defects in socialist (including Marxist and anarchist) "construction theories." Third, the prevailing notion of territorial expansionism was prominent. Kitani advocated that "small countries have legitimate justification for overseas expansion," proposing the establishment of a "world empire" through military force. Ishihara Kanji advanced theories like the "ultimate war doctrine" and "East Asian alliance," framing the "Fengtian Incident" and the invasion of China as manifestations of "civilizational confrontation." Kato Yoko simplistically attributed the subjective causes of the Marco Polo Bridge Incident to the "China revenge theory," advocating that "the hatred and anti-Japanese sentiment accumulated in the hearts of Chinese soldiers had reached a point where even a spark could instantly ignite a raging fire," thereby weakening the recognition that the objective fact of the Marco Polo Bridge Incident being triggered by Japanese aggression. Fourth, apart from the characterization of the War of Resistance against Japan, historical nihilism has emerged in responses to questions regarding the course of the war, the roles of the two parties, and its significance. Many only acknowledge the "full-scale resistance" from 1937 to 1945, denying the existence or importance of the localized resistance from 1931 to 1937, thereby erasing the numerous sacrifices of the Northeast Anti-Japanese United Army, the Great Wall Resistance, and the Chahar Resistance. Chiang Kai-shek's broadcast to the military and civilians on August 24, 1945, stating, "Our country's eight-year resistance has now achieved final victory," is a typical example of the "eight-year resistance" theory.

During the Liberation War period, historical nihilism mainly focused on the issues of the Kuomintang and the Communist Party versus the state system, denying the historical inevitability of the Communist Party of China's victory, denying the transformation of Chinese society, denying the legitimacy of the regime led by the Communist Party of China, and denying democratic centralism, while advocating the system of multiple parties taking turns to hold power. In August 1949, the U.S. State Department issued the "White Paper on Relations with China," portraying over a century of aggression against China as "friendship," attributing the Chinese people's revolution to "population

pressure," glorifying Western invasion as "bringing progress," and attacking the Communist Party of China for establishing a "totalitarian government."

After the establishment of New China in 1949, erroneous assertions such as the "Continuation of the Republic of China," "Incomplete Overthrow," "Uncertain Status of Taiwan," "Defeat in Kuomintang-Communist Cooperation," and "Failure of Socialism" persisted for a long time. First, regarding the issue of Taiwan and the Kuomintang-Communist alliance, the reactionary Kuomintang, which retreated to Taiwan, insisted that the "Republic of China government" was merely "temporarily stationed in Taiwan," that the legal succession of China had not been interrupted, and that the mainland regime was a "rebel group." Ideologically, they opposed Mao Zedong Thought and the theoretical achievements of the Sinicization of Marxism by citing "Chiang Kai-shek's democracy" and "Taiwan's Three Principles of the People." Politically, some public opinions in Taiwan compared the confrontation between Taiwan and the mainland to the relationship between East and West Germany, advocating "splitting the country and unifying it in the future." Some cited the 1951 San Francisco Peace Treaty, claiming that after Japan "abandoned" Taiwan, no designated recipient was appointed, thus Taiwan's status "had not yet been determined." Second, they denied the legitimacy of socialist transformation. Economically, many attributed the "Three Major Transformations" from 1953 to 1956 to "reckless decisions by leaders," emphasizing that China lacked the conditions for socialism and advocating a return to the New Democratic Society, thereby negating the historical inevitability of China's path to socialism. Third, they concentrated on attacking Mao Zedong and the first generation of leadership. They attributed all setbacks during the construction period to "personal qualities" and "subjective will," magnifying Mao's mistakes in his later years to negate his historical contributions and the guiding role of Mao Zedong Thought, and further denied the basic socialist system of New China, thereby arguing that China could not follow the socialist path.

After the reform and opening-up, especially after entering the 21st century, against the international backdrop of the global socialist movement being in a low ebb, the "peaceful evolution" of Western countries, and the convergence of postmodernist historiography with historical nihilism, as well as the domestic context of the rise of bourgeois liberalization trends after the reform and opening-up, the strong impact of the "modernization historiography" on the "revolutionary historiography," and the promotion of erroneous historical nihilism by some individual Party members and corrupt elements, the sediment of historical nihilism resurfaced, and its distortion and smearing of China's ideology using erroneous historical views became even more brazen. First, regarding post-reform and opening-up China, historical nihilism, starting from one-sided historical facts, argued that China had "changed color" and "is no longer socialism." Xi Jinping: "In recent years, some domestic and international public opinions have raised questions about whether what China is doing now is still socialism. Some say it is 'capitalist socialism,' while others outright call it 'state capitalism' or 'new bureaucratic capitalism.'" Second, with the infiltration of Western forces, exemplified by the late 1980s film "River Elegy," historical nihilists attempted to disintegrate the Chinese nation by distorting historical events, "re-commenting" historical figures, and "young people's literary works." Third, they exaggerated the mistakes of the "Great Leap Forward" and the "Cultural Revolution," and collectively smeared the three decades of construction. Fourth, they failed to objectively evaluate Mao Zedong's historical achievements.

First, historical nihilism criticizes the reform and opening-up as "changing color" due to the increase of capitalist elements after the reform and opening-up, and through a series of imprecise reasoning, it concludes that the "Cultural Revolution" was entirely correct. Second, historical nihilists inherit the methods of the "Gang of Four" in distorting and altering Mao Zedong Thought, starting from some of Mao's works and speeches, as well as critical trends such as Western deconstructionism, modernism, and postmodernism, to completely negate Mao's historical achievements, Mao Zedong Thought, and all the achievements made by China's revolution and construction. Finally, in the early stages of the reform and opening-up, historical nihilists, by adhering to the "Two Whatever's," criticizing the rise of "capitalist-roaders," and denying the leadership of the Party Central Committee with Deng Xiaoping at its core, colluded with external reactionary forces or incited a series of internal

events such as the "Xidan Wall Incident" and the "political turmoil in the spring and summer of 1989," attempting to negate the new era of reform and opening-up and socialist modernization, causing chaos and overthrowing the regime.

The new developments of historical nihilism in contemporary China are mainly reflected in new changes in form and content. First, in terms of form, it exhibits characteristics of networking and fragmentation. With the new developments in science and technology and artificial intelligence, a soft historical nihilism distinct from ordinary historical nihilism has emerged, featuring greater strategic concealment, fragmented viewpoints, mass-oriented targets, and insidious attacks. This is closely related to the current situation where capital manipulates media conglomerates and online public opinion platforms. Guo Yanlin noted: "In recent years, as capital groups have infiltrated almost all online media resources and some influential traditional mainstream media resources, they have used their controlled media platforms to manipulate political issues and social topics," providing historical nihilism with new and favorable channels for dissemination. This has produced new products of historical nihilism, such as the "Zhao Wei and Dai Liren" incident in July 2016, the literary work "Lust, Caution" legitimizing traitors, the "reconstruction of reality" for Lei Feng, and the "historical verification" of the Five Heroes of Langya Mountain. Second, it assumes the guise of academic and professional forms. Many "scholars" one-sidedly emphasize the "modernization historical perspective," viewing Chinese-style modernization as a "copy of Japan" or "using capitalist modernization means to overcome the primary stage of socialism." Some "scholars" also one-sidedly emphasize the "revolutionary historical perspective," believing that class struggle should be the focus or even the center of work in the new era. Others directly abandon the paradigm of historical perspective research, engaging in subjective "historical reasoning," thereby generating a significant amount of textual material for the development of historical nihilism. These academic research "achievements" will ultimately be transformed into political demands of historical nihilism, essentially providing a historical nihilistic theoretical basis for "shaking the ruling position of the Communist Party of China and the inevitability of China's socialist path." Third, while focusing on the core issues of major problems in Party and national history, their expressions in the new context of events are not limited to this. Xi Jinping: "In recent years, some domestic and international public opinions have raised questions about whether what China is doing now is still socialism. Some call it 'capitalist socialism, 'while others outright label it as' state capitalism 'or' new bureaucratic capitalism.'" After socialism with Chinese characteristics entered a new era, historical nihilism often starts from social reality issues and contradictions, then through a series of generalized inferences, shifts the problem to "Is socialism with Chinese characteristics socialism?" and "Does socialism have superiority?" in an attempt to stir up debates. It then attempts to argue that China is no longer a socialist country since the reform and opening-up, based on historical socialist movements and the characteristics of socialist countries, current social development contradictions, and subjective fabricated one-sided materials, ultimately concluding that socialism with Chinese characteristics is not socialism, and finally returning to the century-old cliché of "socialist failure." Fourth, the target group is becoming younger.

3. Practice of the CPC in Opposing Historical Nihilism Before the New Age of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics

3.1. The Period of New Democratic Revolution: Criticizing the "Extreme Tendency" and "Historical Distortion"

As early as 1926, in response to historical nihilistic assertions that denied the National Revolutionary Movement, denied the peasant movement, and promoted institutional reforms with a "farewell to revolution" nature, Mao Zedong, starting from the basic principles of Marxism, made Marxist critiques of the "revolutionary destruction" theory of historical nihilism, as well as erroneous assertions with historical nihilistic characteristics such as "the Great Revolution was a rebellion," "the peasant movement was very bad," and "excessive problems." He stated: "At present, there are

quite a few people in China who doubt or oppose class struggle, which is due to their lack of understanding of the history of human evolution," and quoted Marx: "The history of mankind is a history of class struggle." Mao Zedong systematically and innovatively analyzed the peasant issue in China, being the first to propose: "The peasant issue is the central issue of the National Revolution" and "Therefore, the greatest target of the economically backward semi-colonial revolution is the rural patriarchal feudal class." He repeatedly refuted assertions denying the peasant movement: "All revolutionary comrades must know: the National Revolution requires a major rural transformation" and "This theory hinders the rise of the peasant movement, and its result is the destruction of the revolution, which we must resolutely oppose." Regarding the rightist tendencies within the Party that failed to recognize the nature of the Kuomintang's right wing, viewed the Great Revolution through a historical nihilistic lens, and denied class struggle within the united front, Mao Zedong sensed the crisis early and expressed concern: "Where has the yellow crane gone? Only the place where tourists remain." Mao Zedong criticized the rightist assertions within the Party that abandoned the leadership of the united front and the armed struggle, as well as the historical nihilistic claims that denied the Great Revolution and the peasant movement, based on China's national conditions: "The vast masses within and outside the Party want revolution, but the Party's guidance does not, which is indeed somewhat counter-revolutionary." After the failure of the Great Revolution in 1927, in response to the historical nihilistic claims outside the Party such as "the red flag has fallen" and "Marxism does not work in China," the Chinese Communists delivered a strong rebuttal through theoretical and practical exploration. In the face of various "leftist" and "rightist" errors within the Party, including those of historical nihilism, the Chinese Communists continuously deepened their understanding of combining the basic principles of Marxism with China's specific realities through the practice of the Chinese revolution. Mao Zedong analyzed the reasons for the failure of the Great Revolution based on its practical experience; clarified the nature of the China revolution as "China is indeed still in the stage of bourgeois civil rights revolution"; demonstrated that the red regime of China would inevitably survive, develop, and ultimately triumph: "As long as we know that the division and war of the white regime of China will continue, the emergence, existence, and growing development of the red regime will be beyond doubt"; pointed out the causes of erroneous ideas within the Party: "Because they have not scientifically analyzed the essence of the general situation"; warned of the dangers: "The danger of extreme democracy lies in damaging or even destroying the Party's organization, weakening or even completely destroying the Party's fighting power"; "Since you have not investigated the actual and historical circumstances of that issue, you do not know the bottom, and any statement on that issue must be nonsense"; proposed solutions: "Go among the masses to conduct practical investigations!" These correct judgments on various aspects of the revolution essentially constituted a critique of the erroneous views of historical nihilism, such as "the revolution is useless," "denying the red regime," and "denying democratic centralism," and had the significance of rectifying the confusion in the judgment of the China revolution both within and outside the Party.

During the Anti-Japanese War, Chinese Communists launched a critique of historical nihilism by addressing erroneous doctrines such as 'meritorious contributions to invasion,' 'Sino-Japanese non-war theories,' 'national extinction theories,' and 'quick victory theories.' Grounded in the realities of the war and the practice of the Anti-Japanese National Liberation War, Mao Zedong at the Sixth Plenary Session of the Sixth Central Committee of the CPC in 1938 called for a 'historical approach' to counter historical nihilism.

During the Liberation War period, Mao Zedong concentrated on exposing and criticizing these historical nihilist arguments in five commentaries, including "The Bankruptcy of Idealistic Historical View." Regarding the "meaninglessness of revolution," he pointed out that the China revolution originated from the brutal oppression of imperialism, feudalism, and bureaucrat-capitalism, rather than being simply about "food issues" or "population issues." As for the "Western catalysis theory," he exposed its essence of distorting aggression into "promoting development," emphasizing that the true driving force behind the transformation was the anti-imperialist and anti-feudal struggle of the

Chinese people, not the "advanced culture" of the West. In response to the criticism of the CCP's "totalitarian government theory," he clarified that the people's democratic dictatorship is a dialectical unity of people's democracy and dictatorship over the enemy, and that democratic centralism is a dialectical unity of centralization based on democracy and democracy under centralized guidance, which is a fine tradition of the Party. He also exposed the U.S. plot to interfere in China's internal affairs under the banner of "democracy." These criticisms laid the foundation for unifying thoughts, establishing a materialist historical view, and correcting the idealistic historical view of historical nihilism.

3.2. The Period of Socialist Revolution and Construction: Criticizing "Historical Idealism" and "Nihilism of Party History"

During this period, historical idealism often coexisted with historical nihilism. It attributed historical development to the will or genius of individual "heroes," denied that the masses were the creators of history, and emphasized that in spiritual determinism, superstructural factors such as ideology, culture, and morality determined the economic base, rather than the contradictory movement between productive forces and production relations. It also emphasized the worship of contingency, viewing the historical process as a pile of accidental events, denying the regularity and inevitability of historical development, thereby weakening, trivializing, and ultimately nullifying the great historical achievements created by the Communist Party of China leading the Chinese people to complete the Chinese revolution, overcome the three mountains, and build socialism. The 1951 film "The Story of Wu Xun" was regarded as a typical example of using an idealist view of history to glorify reformism and belittle the peasant revolutionary struggle.

3.3. The New Period of Reform and Opening Up and Socialist Modernization: Criticizing the "End of History" and "Total Negation"

First, oppose the "outdated theory of Marxism" and adhere to the path of socialism with Chinese characteristics. Historical nihilism often claims that Marxism has become outdated on the grounds that "times have changed," but Deng Xiaoping emphasized that "the ancestral legacy must not be abandoned," insisting on development through adherence and adherence through development, continuously enriching scientific theories with new practices. Second, oppose "farewell to revolution" and uphold the unity of revolutionary historiography and modernization historiography. In response to the practice of negating the entire Party history by exploiting the errors of the "Cultural Revolution," Deng Xiaoping proposed that "we must recognize both the mistakes and the mainstream," stressing that the 30 years after the founding of New China laid the foundation for industrialization and established a relatively complete national economic system, where "achievements are primary and errors secondary," and that one should not be "blinded by a single leaf." Third, oppose "vilifying leading figures" and emphasize the complete and accurate evaluation of historical figures. Addressing the trend of magnifying Mao Zedong's late-life errors to the point of completely negating his historical contributions, Deng Xiaoping clearly stated that "the Party Central Committee and the Chinese people will never do anything like Khrushchev," emphasizing that "Mao Zedong's achievements are primary, and his mistakes are secondary," and that historical figures must be evaluated appropriately and factually. Additionally, when guiding the drafting of the "Resolution on Certain Questions in the History of Our Party Since the Founding of the People's Republic of China," Deng Xiaoping proposed: "We must evaluate the 'Cultural Revolution' appropriately and assess the merits and demerits of Comrade Mao Zedong." Fourth, oppose "degrading traditional culture and idolizing foreign influences" and emphasize being self-reliant and serving our own needs. Deng Xiaoping emphasized: "We must never forget our roots," and on the basis of inheriting the excellent national culture, "absorb the progressive elements of the world," but "we must firmly follow our own path" and "build socialism with Chinese characteristics." Fifth, he opposed the "failure theory of socialism" and the "distortion theory of reform and opening up," stressing the Four Cardinal Principles. Some people used the economic difficulties in the early stages of reform and opening up

to promote the idea that "socialism is inferior to capitalism" and that "we must first go through the Kafedín Gorge of capitalism." Deng Xiaoping pointed out: "If we do not pursue socialism and instead take the capitalist road, the chaotic state of China cannot be ended, and the state of poverty and backwardness cannot be changed." He firmly believed that "our system will become increasingly perfect and become the best system in the world," emphasizing that institutional confidence is the fundamental defense against historical nihilism. Regarding the claim that "China has changed its color" due to the socialist market economy, Deng Xiaoping argued: "We have always emphasized the adherence to the Four Cardinal Principles, one of which is ultimately the adherence to the socialist system." "There is no fundamental contradiction between socialism and the market economy. The question is what methods can more effectively develop social productivity." "The superiority of socialism will ultimately be reflected in the better development of productivity."

4. Theoretical Innovation of the CPC in the New Age of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics

4.1. Innovative Inheritance: Adhere to the Basic Position of Marxist Historical Materialism

4.1.1. Adhere to the Fundamental Method of Historical Materialism to Analyze Three "Why"

The fundamental flaw of historical nihilism in philosophical ontology lies in its substitution of subjective conjecture for objective facts and its dissolution of holistic laws through fragmented perspectives, essentially constituting a contemporary variant of historical idealism. As scholars have pointed out: "Historical nihilism's counter-accusation against Marxism reveals its idealistic ontological defect of substituting subjective conjecture for objective facts." Therefore, to oppose historical nihilism in the paradigm of historical perspective, one must first return to the fundamental method of historical materialism, adhere to the basic principles that social existence determines social consciousness, productive forces determine production relations, and the economic base determines the superstructure, and grasp the historical inevitability of the China path from the objective laws of historical development.

In his important speech on July 1st, General Secretary Xi Jinping profoundly pointed out: "Why can the Communist Party of China succeed? Why is socialism with Chinese characteristics effective? Ultimately, it is because Marxism works!" This assertion essentially proposes a "three whys" methodological framework for analyzing the Party's history, the history of New China, and the history of reform and opening-up. The fundamental method of adhering to the materialist conception of history is to apply this framework, examining the Party's century-long history from the perspective of the overall historical practice, within the macro-structure of the evolution of the principal contradiction in Chinese society since modern times, the level of productive forces development, and the changes in the balance of class forces, rather than getting entangled in the minutiae of individual events; from the perspective of the process of historical development, viewing the explorations of different historical periods—revolution, construction, and reform—as a unified whole of continuous struggle, rather than isolated fragments that are mutually fragmented or even mutually negating; and from the perspective of the initiative of historical subjects, acknowledging both the constraints of objective conditions and the subjective initiative of the Communists in understanding and applying laws. Only in this way can we fundamentally refute the nihilistic rhetoric that reduces the Party's history to a "history of power struggles," a "history of conspiracies," or a "history of opportunistic trial and error," and establish historical confidence based on objective historical laws.

4.1.2. Adhere to the Class Analysis and the People's Position to Analyze the History and the People's Choice

The class analysis method represents the concrete application of historical materialism in studying class-based social history, while the people's standpoint constitutes the fundamental political position that distinguishes the Communist Party of China from other political parties. These

two approaches are essentially aligned: Only by adhering to class analysis can we penetrate the complex historical appearances to reveal the class interest conflicts underlying the contradictory movement between productive forces and production relations. Only by upholding the people's standpoint can we transcend the narrow historiography of the ruling class and truly elucidate the fundamental driving force and ultimate destination of historical development. To oppose historical nihilism, it is imperative to maintain this dialectically unified methodology.

First, regarding the historical inevitability of China's choice of the socialist path. General Secretary Xi Jinping profoundly pointed out: "History and reality tell us that only socialism can save China, and only socialism with Chinese characteristics can develop China. This is the conclusion of history and the choice of the people." [Xi Jinping. *Selected Readings from Xi Jinping's Works: Volume 1* [M]. Beijing: People's Publishing House, 2023:76.] This assertion contains profound class analysis and a people-oriented stance. From the perspective of class analysis, the semi-colonial and semi-feudal social nature of modern China determined that the Chinese revolution had to simultaneously accomplish the democratic revolutionary task of opposing imperialism and feudalism, as well as the socialist revolutionary task of opposing bourgeois exploitation. The revolutionary path led by the proletariat and based on the worker-peasant alliance was the only way to break the oppression of the "three mountains" of imperialism, feudalism, and bureaucrat-capitalism. From the perspective of historical subjectivity, the choice of socialism was not a subjective design by a few elites, but the fundamental demand of the vast majority of the working and peasant masses to escape exploitation and oppression and achieve liberation. Historical nihilism denies the inevitability of this choice, essentially standing on the side of the comprador bourgeoisie and the feudal landlord class, denying the historical right of the Chinese people to pursue liberation.

Secondly, regarding the evaluation of historical figures' merits and faults. President Xi Jinping's speech at the 120th anniversary commemoration of Mao Zedong's birth stands as a paradigm for applying class analysis and historical analysis methods to assess historical figures, particularly proletarian leaders. As scholars have noted: "President Xi's speech at the 120th anniversary commemoration of Mao Zedong's birth exemplifies the application of class analysis and historical analysis methods in evaluating historical figures, especially proletarian leaders." President Xi Jinping emphasized: "We cannot measure or demand from predecessors using today's conditions, development level, or cognitive standards. We should not expect them to achieve what only future generations can accomplish." This methodological principle requires us to dialectically analyze historical figures within their specific historical contexts: evaluating whether they aligned with historical trends and advanced social productivity, while also assessing whether they represented the fundamental interests of the broadest masses of people. We must acknowledge potential errors made by historical figures due to cognitive limitations, yet distinguish between exploratory mistakes and malicious sabotage. Historical nihilism often abstracts historical conditions, condemning revolutionary leaders through so-called "universal values" or "abstract human nature," or excessively magnifying historical errors while erasing their contributions. Its essence lies in undermining the Party's historical legitimacy by eroding leadership authority. Upholding the unity of class analysis and people-oriented perspectives means restoring historical figures to their true historical nature, highlighting historical progressiveness within the framework of historical limitations, and reinforcing the direction of historical advancement through recognition of historical twists and turns.

4.1.3. Adhere to the Extreme Importance of Ideological Work

To uphold the paramount importance of ideological work, we must first establish its theoretical foundation. Marx and Engels pointed out: "The thoughts of the ruling class are the dominant thoughts in every age." "Dominant thoughts are merely the conceptual manifestation of dominant material relations." These profound insights reveal the class nature and material origins of ideology, elucidate the counteraction of the ideological superstructure on the economic base, and provide philosophical justification for proletarian parties to prioritize ideological work. Secondly, we should inherit the Party's fine traditions in ideological work. Mao Zedong emphasized: "A certain culture (as

a form of ideological culture) reflects the politics and economy of a given society, while also exerting significant influence on its political and economic development." He consistently regarded ideological and political work as the "lifeline of economic work and all other endeavors," establishing the clear orientation of "arming people with scientific theories and guiding them with correct public opinion," thereby forming the important principles of the Party's management of propaganda and ideology. Thirdly, we must elevate the strategic positioning of ideological work in the new era. Confronted with the impact of diverse social ideologies brought by reform, opening-up, and the market economy, General Secretary Xi Jinping has placed ideological work at the height of state governance, explicitly stating: "Economic construction is the central task of the Party, while ideological work is an extremely important task of the Party." This assertion breaks through the one-sided perception of opposing ideology with economic construction, emphasizing that ideological work concerns the Party's future and destiny, the nation's long-term stability, and the cohesion and centripetal force of the ethnic group, holding fundamental and strategic significance in complex struggle patterns.

To do a good job in ideological work in the new era, it is essential to build a systematic defense and dissemination system for ideological work. To implement the extreme importance of ideological work, it must be transformed into institutional arrangements and operational mechanisms: First, establish systems, improve the responsibility system for ideological work and legal safeguards, set up the responsibility system for ideological work under the Party committee (Party group), and safeguard all types of ideological fronts; Second, purify the internet, identify and govern historical nihilism on the internet under new technological conditions, and use big data, algorithmic governance, and other means to break the digital transmission chain of erroneous trends; Third, educate people, promote the "Four Histories" education and the inheritance of the red gene in the new era, and recognize that historical education—especially the education on the history of the Party, the history of New China, the history of reform and opening up, and the history of socialist development—has a complex dual nature—it is both a scientific cognitive activity and an important part of the construction project of the mainstream Marxist ideology; Fourth, voice opinions, advance the practice of Chinese-style modernization and build an autonomous knowledge system of philosophy and social sciences in China. As Zang Fengyu said, "Chinese-style modernization is the practical form of the old nation and new destiny of the Chinese nation. The 'new destiny' embodies the modern reshaping of Chinese civilization with historical continuity, achieved through the combination of the basic principles of Marxism with the specific realities of China and the excellent traditional Chinese culture." By constructing an autonomous knowledge system in China, the discourse dominance of historical narratives can be fundamentally established.

4.2. Creative Development: New Judgment on the Response to Historical Nihilism

4.2.1. Two Non-negations: Maintaining the Continuity of History before and after Reform and Opening-up

Historical nihilism has never ceased to distort the socialism with Chinese characteristics, often negating each other through the historical differences before and after the reform and opening-up. In response to the differences in historical processes before and after the reform and opening-up, there is an urgent need for new arguments to oppose historical nihilism. Xi Jinping said: "We cannot use the historical period after the reform and opening-up to negate the historical period before the reform and opening-up, nor can we use the historical period before the reform and opening-up to negate the historical period after the reform and opening-up." The "two non-negations" help guide the people to correctly understand the history and achievements before and after the reform and opening-up, the historical issues and conflicts after the reform and opening-up, and "to bridge the ideological tension between the periods before and after the reform and opening-up" in order to counter the attacks of historical nihilism.

4.2.2.". China's socialism with Chinese characteristics is socialism": Clarifying the essence of China's socialism with Chinese characteristics in the new era

Historical nihilism often denies that the history after reform and opening-up, especially the new era of socialism with Chinese characteristics, is not a history of socialism, but a history of non-socialism, capitalism, and "capitalist socialism" that has changed color. Chinese Communists need to answer the question of the times in the new era: "What is socialism with Chinese characteristics, and how to build socialism with Chinese characteristics?"

First, regarding the characterization of socialism with Chinese characteristics, General Secretary Xi Jinping directly answered what socialism with Chinese characteristics is: "Our Party has always emphasized that socialism with Chinese characteristics adheres to the principles of scientific socialism while endowing it with distinct Chinese characteristics based on the conditions of the times. This means that socialism with Chinese characteristics is socialism, not some other kind of doctrine." Second, on the issue of whether reform and opening up and socialism with Chinese characteristics have changed color, General Secretary Xi Jinping countered the argument based on practical considerations.

4.2.3. Five Inevitable Paths: Establishing a Grand Historical View and Strengthening Historical Confidence

In the report to the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, General Secretary Xi Jinping profoundly pointed out: "Adhering to the overall leadership of the Party is the only way to uphold and develop socialism with Chinese characteristics. Socialism with Chinese characteristics is the only way to achieve the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. Unity and hard work are the only way for the Chinese people to create great historical achievements. Implementing the new development philosophy is the only way for China to grow stronger in the new era. Strict governance of the Party in all respects is the only way for the Party to maintain its vitality and successfully navigate the new journey ahead." The significant assertion of the "Five Only Way" is a crucial and essential understanding of the Party's century-long struggle, especially the great transformation of the past decade in the new era. It provides the sharpest historical mirror and the most solid theoretical foundation for opposing historical nihilism.

First, the fundamental purpose of opposing historical nihilism is to defend the historical inevitability of the "Five Inevitable Paths." The concentrated manifestations of historical nihilism in contemporary China, whether attacking the Party's leadership as "destroying tradition," defaming socialism with Chinese characteristics as "deviating from universal values," or deconstructing the spirit of revolutionary struggle and belittling the achievements of the new era, all share the fundamental political intent of severing the historical logic between the Communist Party of China and the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation, thereby negating the historical legitimacy and practical legitimacy of the "Five Inevitable Paths." Therefore, criticizing historical nihilism cannot remain at the level of correcting specific historical facts; it must be elevated to the height of a defense of the path. Through scientific historical interpretation, it must be proven that without the Party's comprehensive leadership, there would be no initiation and advancement of China's modernization; without socialism with Chinese characteristics, there would be no international status of China today; without the spirit of unity and struggle, it would be impossible to create miracles in the history of human poverty reduction; without the new development philosophy, it would be impossible to achieve high-quality development; and without comprehensive and strict governance of the Party, it would be impossible to break the historical cycle of order and chaos, rise and fall. These five paths are the choices of history and the people, and they are also the truths tested by practice.

Secondly, establishing a grand historical perspective serves as the fundamental methodology to counter historical nihilism. This perspective requires examining the "Five Inevitable Paths" through the long-term and broad-spectrum lens of China's 5,000-year civilization (revealing the continuity of cultural genes), 180-year struggle history since modern times (showcasing the complexity of path exploration), 100-year Communist Party of China's struggle history (demonstrating the long-term

validity of practical verification), and over a decade of transformative reforms in the new era (highlighting the certainty of current achievements). Historical nihilism often resorts to "fragmented interpretations" and "disconnection tactics" —such as dismissing the revolutionary and construction periods through the lens of post-reform history, or negating the necessity of reform through policy errors from the revolutionary era. Only by applying this grand historical perspective and maintaining the dialectical unity of historical continuity and developmental stages can we see through these politically motivated distortions. We must deeply understand that each "Inevitable Path" emerged as a solution to specific challenges under particular historical conditions, collectively forming the complete chain of the Chinese nation's great rejuvenation.

Finally, firm historical confidence is the spiritual foundation for resisting the erosion of historical nihilism. Historical confidence is not blind optimism, but a rational conviction based on a profound understanding of the "Five Inevitable Paths." This confidence stems from the confidence in the continuity of civilization (Chinese civilization is the only uninterrupted civilization in the world, providing fertile ground for the "Inevitable Paths"), the support of practical achievements (achieving in decades what took the West centuries to accomplish in industrialization, proving the correctness of the path), and the manifestation of comparative advantages (compared to some countries that abandoned independence and lost direction during development, leading to turmoil and decline, China has maintained stable development for decades). Firm historical confidence means daring to face historical setbacks (such as the "Cultural Revolution"), but more importantly, recognizing the Party's ability to correct mistakes and move forward with its own strength; it means acknowledging the challenges in the modernization process, but more importantly, seeing the systemic changes guided by the new development philosophy. This confidence, rooted in a grand historical perspective, can effectively resist various variants of the "China collapse theory" and "end of history" theories, ensuring that the entire Party and the people maintain strategic resolve and historical initiative on the "Five Inevitable Paths."

5. Conclusion

The century-long journey of the Communist Party of China in criticizing historical nihilism is a history of continuously defending historical truth in ideological struggles, consolidating ideological leadership through theoretical innovation, and gradually improving governance systems in practical explorations. From the rectification of "subjectivist" historiography during the Yan 'an Rectification Movement to the systematic governance of fragmented online dissemination in the new era, this journey not only reflects the deepening understanding of the laws of ideological work by Marxist parties but also mirrors the era-specific challenges of different historical stages in China's revolution, construction, and reform. Standing at the new journey of comprehensively building a modern socialist country, systematically summarizing the experiences and lessons from this century-long journey holds significant theoretical value and practical significance for constructing a disciplinary system, academic system, and discourse system of historiography with Chinese characteristics.

5.1. Phased Characteristics and Evolution Laws of the CPC's Counterattack Against Historical Nihilism

Throughout the century, the CPC's criticism of historical nihilism has shown clear characteristics of stages, reflecting the main contradictions and task orientation of ideological work under different historical conditions.

First, the New Democratic Revolution period (1921–1949): Upholding historical authenticity in the struggle for national survival. Confronted with dual threats of imperialist aggression and feudal restoration, the Party established the "seek truth from facts" ideological line through the Yan 'an Rectification Movement. This initiative combated the distortion of revolutionary history by subjective and sectarian tendencies within the Party, while countering the Kuomintang's right-wing smear campaign against the land revolution. The defining feature of this era was validating history through revolutionary practice, closely aligning the defense of historical truth with the political goals of

national independence and people's liberation. This process solidified the materialist historical narrative that "the masses are the creators of history."

Second, the Socialist Revolution and Construction Period (1949–1978): During this era, the materialist conception of history was established and consolidated as the dominant framework in institutional development. With the establishment of state power, the Party shifted ideological work from wartime mobilization to the institutionalization of national education. Through mechanisms such as university restructuring, ideological reform in historical academia, and standardized history textbook compilation, Marxism was established as the guiding principle in historical research and education. The defining feature of this period was the rigid institutionalization of historical perspectives, though it also bore lessons of politicizing academic issues and substituting scholarly debate with political criticism, laying the groundwork for ideological liberation after the reform and opening-up.

Third, the New Era of Reform and Opening-up (1978–2012): During this period, the Party liberated its thinking to scientifically evaluate history and reestablish the Marxist materialist conception of history as the guiding ideological framework. Confronting post-Cultural Revolution tendencies of "de-Maoization" and bourgeois liberalization, the Party adopted dialectical negation in major documents like the Resolution on Certain Questions in the History of Our Party Since the Founding of the People's Republic of China, distinguishing Mao Zedong Thought's scientific system from Cultural Revolution errors to rectify historical misjudgments. Simultaneously, it launched academic critiques against neo-liberalism, universal value theories, and other new forms of historical nihilism, including humanist alienation theories and premature socialist theories. The defining feature of this era was building consensus through historical resolutions while maintaining a dynamic equilibrium between ideological emancipation and ideological unification.

Fourth, the New Era (2012 to present): Consolidating the Grand Historical Perspective Amid National Revival. Confronting challenges of historical fragmentation, trivialization, and anti-intellectual tendencies in digital communication, the Party elevated the fight against historical nihilism to the level of safeguarding national security and political stability. Through measures such as the Resolution on the Major Achievements and Historical Experience of the Party's Centennial Struggle, the establishment of the National Textbook Committee, and special campaigns against online historical nihilism, a multi-stakeholder collaborative governance framework was established, featuring Party leadership, government oversight, corporate accountability, social supervision, and netizen self-discipline. The defining feature of this period was systematic governance through integrated approaches, deeply integrating historical understanding with the narrative of national rejuvenation, and establishing a long-term, broad-spectrum, and holistic analytical framework for the Grand Historical Perspective.

Based on the aforementioned phased characteristics, the century-long journey has revealed four distinct evolutionary patterns: First, from passive response to active leadership. Early criticism was mostly a "passive defense" against erroneous ideologies, while the new era has shifted to proactively setting agendas through initiatives such as building an independent knowledge system of China and advancing the Chinese Civilization Origins Project, thereby gaining control over historical narratives. Second, from single-criticism to systematic governance. It has evolved from mere theoretical refutation and political criticism to a multidimensional governance system encompassing legal safeguards (the "Heroes and Martyrs Protection Law"), technological governance (algorithmic recommendation management), educational immersion ("Four Histories" education), and academic reconstruction (rewriting the general history of China). Third, from domestic perspective to global narrative. It has shifted from focusing on domestic ideological security to telling China's story through civilizational exchanges, deconstructing the historical philosophical foundations of "Western centrism" via the narrative of "Chinese-style modernization," and reshaping the global significance of China's modern and contemporary history within a global historical perspective. Fourth, from stage-specific historiography to macro-historiography. It has transitioned from separately discussing revolutionary history, construction history, and reform history to a "grand history" narrative with

"the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation" as the overarching thread, integrating the four historical periods into a continuous spectrum of "exploration—foundation—innovation—rejuvenation," fundamentally dissolving the academic space that fragments or nihilizes history.

5.2. Contemporary Enlightenment Against Historical Nihilism

The century-long history has accumulated rich experience, which provides methodological guidance for the continuous deepening of the struggle against historical nihilism in the new era. The author summarizes it as "five unifications".

Ideological Positioning: Upholding the Unity of the Party's Leadership and the People's Standpoint. Opposing historical nihilism is not an abstract academic debate, but a political struggle concerning "what banner to hold and what path to take." The Party's leadership ensures the correct direction of critical work, while the people's standpoint forms the fundamental criterion for judging historical right and wrong. We must always regard "the people's aspiration for a better life" as the ultimate measure of historical progress. This requires opposing the "heroic historical view" that devalues the masses, while guarding against reducing Party history to a personal chronicle of a leader. We must maintain a dialectical unity between "the people as the creators of history" and "safeguarding the Party's historical status."

Academic Dialectics: Upholding the unity of Marxist historical materialism and the historical process of China. Opposing historical nihilism cannot remain at the level of slogan criticism; it must be grounded in the specific realities of China and employ historical materialism to explain the particularity and universality of the Chinese path. It is essential to thoroughly elucidate major historical questions such as "Why did China establish socialism without experiencing a typical capitalist stage?" and "Why did the transition from a planned economy to a market economy not lead to a Soviet-style collapse?" Using Sinicized and contemporary Marxism to answer the questions of China, the world, the people, and the times, thereby enhancing the explanatory power of historical narratives through academic depth.

Political Orientation: Balancing Historical Objectivity with Political Guidance The paramount principle of historical research is truth-seeking, yet a completely "value-neutral" historical narrative is impossible. The key distinction lies between historical facts (e.g., time, place, and figures of specific events) and historical evaluations (e.g., the nature of events or the merits and faults of individuals). Regarding fundamental historical facts, objectivity must be upheld, and fabrication or concealment for political purposes must be strictly avoided. For historical evaluations, the Marxist methods of class analysis and historical analysis must be adhered to, grasping historical limitations through "sympathetic understanding" to avoid the nihilistic tendency of judging the past by today's standards.

Methodological Strategy: Upholding the Unity of Criticizing Errors and Constructing New Narratives. Merely "breaking" cannot eradicate historical nihilism; the focus must be on "building." On one hand, it is essential to accurately identify new variants of historical nihilism—shifting from overt discursive attacks to covert emotional manipulation (such as glorifying the "Republican Era" style, deconstructing revolutionary "violence," and exposing the "human weaknesses" of heroes)—and conduct targeted refutations. On the other hand, efforts should be accelerated to construct the "Three Major Systems" of China's distinctive historiography, utilizing high-quality academic achievements, popular communication products (such as "The Awakening Age" and "The Battle at Lake Changjin"), and digital historical scenarios (such as the red metaverse) to occupy the ideological front with authentic, multi-dimensional, and comprehensive historical narratives.

Evolution of the Era: Balancing Traditional Methods with Technological Empowerment. To address emerging challenges posed by generative AI (AIGC)—such as fabricated historical imagery, algorithmic echo chambers, and the proliferation of "historical dramatization" on short-video platforms—innovative governance technologies are imperative. This requires establishing AI-powered review mechanisms for historical content, developing knowledge graph-based rumor-refutation systems, and leveraging blockchain technology to secure digital archives of revolutionary

artifacts. By using technological safeguards to counteract technological threats, we can modernize our capacity for ideological governance.

5.3. Global Significance of Opposing Historical Nihilism – Contributions from China

The Communist Party of China's practice of anti-historical nihilism in the past hundred years not only protects the historical memory and spiritual home of the Chinese nation, but also provides important enlightenment for the development of human civilization.

To provide China with solutions for developing countries to address historical nihilism, many developing nations face the erosion of Western-centric historical narratives during their modernization process. Their histories of national independence are stigmatized as "colonial alternatives," and their paths of independent development are denigrated as "anti-modernity." The Communist Party of China has established a unified historical textbook system, improved the responsibility system for ideological work, and coordinated development with security, forming a systematic experience of "institutional safeguards—educational infiltration—technological governance." This provides a replicable institutional paradigm for late-developing countries to construct autonomous historical narratives and safeguard cultural sovereignty.

To contribute China's wisdom to the construction of the mainstream Marxist ideology, after the dramatic changes in the Soviet East, the international communist movement fell into a low ebb, and Marxism was widely questioned as a "failed historical legacy." The Communist Party of China created a new form of Marxism's Sinicization and modernization through the "second combination" — integrating the basic principles of Marxism with China's excellent traditional culture, merging the materialist conception of history with cultural genes such as the political wisdom of "great unity," the people-oriented ideology, and the ideal of a "moderately prosperous" society, thereby proving that Marxism still possesses strong historical explanatory power and civilizational shaping power in the 21st century.

To provide a new paradigm of historical materialism for the inheritance and development of human civilization, under the impact of individualism and core Western postmodernist trends, the global historiographical community is generally anxious about the "collapse of grand narratives," with relativism and nihilism rampant. The "macro-historical perspective" advocated by the Communist Party of China examines the evolution of human civilization from a long-term perspective, adheres to the fundamental law of the contradictory movement between productive forces and production relations, while respecting the diversity of civilizations and opposing linear evolutionism and Western centrism. This historical paradigm, which upholds historical inevitability while acknowledging historical diversity, emphasizes material foundations while valuing spiritual inheritance, provides a philosophical foundation for building a community with a shared future for mankind and contributes a China perspective to global historical research.

History is the root of a nation and the genetic code of civilization. The Communist Party of China's century-long struggle against historical nihilism is fundamentally a protracted battle concerning the survival of civilization, confidence in our path, and spiritual independence. From the Rectification Movement reports in Yan' an caves to the Clear Net Campaign in cyberspace in the new era, what changes are the battlegrounds and technological tools, while what remains constant is the reverence for historical truth, the commitment to the people's position, and the steadfast adherence to Marxist truth. Currently, the once-in-a-century global transformation is accelerating, and the field of historical cognition has become the frontline of international ideological competition. Only by upholding the grand historical perspective of historical materialism—innovating through inheritance, maintaining autonomy through openness, and uniting through struggle—can we continuously consolidate the common ideological foundation for the unity and endeavor of the entire Party and people, providing strong historical resolve and spiritual momentum for achieving the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. History has proven—and will continue to prove—that those who respect history will win the future, while those who deny history will ultimately be nullified by history itself.

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