

Value Cultivation of Red Flag Canal Spirit to Youth in the New Era

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Abstract. Red Flag Canal is a historical monument spanning time and space, with universality and eternity. The in-depth excavation and understanding of the spiritual essence and era connotation of Red Flag Canal play an important role in cultivating the value orientation of youth in the new era. By vigorously promoting Red Flag Canal Spirit, the mission, patriotism, institutional confidence, pioneering spirit, and innovation of young people in the new era can be stimulated and enhanced.

Keywords: Red Flag Canal Spirit; New era; Youth; Value.

1. Introduction

After the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, General Secretary Xi Jinping pointed out when inspecting the Red Flag Canal in Anyang, Henan that “The spirit of the Red Flag Canal and the spirit of Yan’an are of the same origin, which is an indelible and shocking historical memory of the Chinese nation.” [1] The Red Flag Canal was built through ten years of hard work by the people of Lin County (now Linzhou City) under the leadership of the Communist Party of China. Among them, the spirit bred by Red Flag Canal (i.e. Red Flag Canal Spirit) is popular throughout China and even the world. In the new era, the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation promoted by Chinese-style modernization has entered an irreversible historical process. The contemporary value of Red Flag Canal Spirit has clear contemporary significance for cultivating the values of young people in the new era and enhancing the spirit of historical initiative.

2. The historical generation of the spirit of the Red Flag Canal

Through the 10-year construction process of the people of Lin County, the Red Flag Canal Spirit of “self-reliance, hard work, unity and cooperation, and selfless dedication” was nurtured and formed, which is an important part of the spiritual genealogy of the Communist Party of China[2]. A review of the historical formation process of the spirit of the Red Flag Canal can not only better understand its profound connotation, but also get a glimpse into the arduous process of the Communist Party of China leading the people leading the people and relying on the people to carry out socialist construction.

2.1 The practical generation of the Red Flag Canal

The Red Flag Canal was originally named the project to divert water from the Zhang River into Lin County. In the 1960s, in order to completely solve the water problem that had plagued the county for thousands of years, the people of Lin County diverted water from the Zhuozhang River from Pingshun County, Shanxi Province, by building a large-scale water conservancy project on the steep Taihang Mountain[3]. In the history of Lin County, it can be clearly seen that drought and water shortage are the key contradictions that have always hindered the development of Lin County. Throughout history, the people of Lin County have always shown a strong desire for water, such as Ximen Bao’s flood control during the Spring and Autumn Period, and the local party organization mobilizing the masses to build canals and divert water during the Anti-Japanese War. According to historical data, on the eve of the founding of the People’s Republic of China, there were more than

10,000 mu of irrigated land among the approximately 1 million arable land in Lin County, while other arable land relied solely on nature.

As a large agricultural country, water is the lifeblood. After the founding of the People's Republic of China, the Party Central Committee called on the people across the country to vigorously develop agriculture and build water conservancy projects in response to the overwhelming waste. In the hot wave of socialist construction, the Lin County Party Committee responded to the call of the Party Central Committee and led the people to control the mountains and rivers, with the ambition of "rearranging the mountains and rivers of Lin County". The campaign to control mountains and rivers in Lin County indeed achieved remarkable results. Literature shows that by the end of 1959, Lin County had built 46 canals, drilled 5,652 water wells and 27,120 dry wells, and built 36 small and medium-sized reservoirs. In addition, the number of irrigated land increased from 12,000 mu to 201,1200 mu. The water-eating problem of 280,000 people was solved[4].

While people were happy about the results achieved in Lin County, the severe drought of 1959 completely shattered the illusion of ending the history of "depending on the nature". In the face of the cruel reality, the Lin County Party Committee clearly realized that the solution to the county's water shortage problem cannot only rely on nature, but also on people. In other words, it is necessary to go beyond the boundaries of Lin County and look for more reliable water sources outside. With the support of the higher Party Committee and Shanxi Province, the people of Lin County spent 10 years using simple labor to carve out a 1,500-kilometer-long Red Flag Canal on the Taihang Mountain, which is considered a monument of the times.

2.2 Theoretical generation of the spirit of the Red Flag Canal

Great spirit comes from great practice. The understanding of the Red Flag Canal Spirit is feeble without considering the historical background, realistic conditions and construction process of the Red Flag Canal. Only by having an in-depth understanding of the soil of the era and the operation process of society that nurtured the spirit can people understand the profound connotation of the spirit of the Red Flag Canal.

In the hundreds of years of canal construction history, the people of Lin County have realized that only through unity and cooperation can success be achieved. In the process of canal repairing again and again, it has accumulated considerable experience. After the founding of New China, the whole country entered the climax of socialist construction. The Lin County Party Committee and the people of Lin County responded to the call of the Party Central Committee and the State Council to vigorously build water conservancy facilities. The construction experience, technology, and management methods of a number of small and medium-sized water conservancy facilities laid a solid foundation for the construction of the Red Flag Canal. For example, the canal construction policy of "self-reliance as the mainstay, supplemented by state support" established during the construction of the Hero Canal was successfully applied to the construction of the Red Flag Canal[5].

On April 5, 1965, Yang Gui, secretary of the Lin County Party Committee, emphasized in his report on the water opening ceremony of the general trunk canal of the Red Flag Canal that it is necessary to continue to carry forward the revolutionary spirit of building the main trunk canal of the Red Flag Canal, muster up strength, guard against arrogance and impetuosity, and make persistent efforts. Among them, the expression of "the revolutionary spirit of building the main trunk canal of the Red Flag Canal" is the earliest text about the spirit of the Red Flag Canal[6].

In 1968, Premier Zhou Enlai said in a foreign affairs event: "For visiting friends from the third world, we should show them the spirit of self-reliance and hard work of the Red Flag Canal[7]. "Since then, the basic connotation of the spirit of the Red Flag Canal has been summarized as "self-reliance and hard work". In 1973, Chairman Mao Zedong mentioned while watching the documentary Red Flag Canal: "With the spirit of self-reliance and hard work of the people of Lin County, there is hope to build a new socialist China!"

In 1990, the 25th anniversary of the opening of the main trunk canal of the Red Flag Canal, the Lin County Party Committee of the Communist Party of China outlined the spirit of the Red Flag Canal as “self-reliance, hard work, unity and cooperation, and selfless dedication” in the Decision on Publicizing, Inheriting and Promoting the Spirit of the Red Flag Canal[8]. The proposed Red Flag Canal Spirit was highly praised by the Henan Provincial Committee of the Communist Party of China. With in-depth coverage by major media, the Red Flag Canal appeared across the country and even around the world. Gradually, the spirit of the Red Flag Canal has become synonymous with hard work and enterprising spirit. On September 29, 2021, on the occasion of the 72nd anniversary of the founding of the People’s Republic of China, the Party Central Committee approved the Central Propaganda Department to officially release the first batch of great spirits of the spirit of the Communist Party of China. Among them, the spirit of the Red Flag Canal was included in the first batch of great spirits[9].

3. Value of the spirit of the Red Flag Canal

The Red Flag Canal is not only the witness of the time of socialist construction, but also the best interpretation of the socialist fighting spirit. The spirit of the Red Flag Canal comes from the great practice of the people of Lin County and is rooted in the fine traditions of the Chinese nation. It embodies the Chinese nation’s spirit of self-reliance and self-improvement. As a Marxist party, it is the fine tradition and distinctive character of the Communist Party of China to continuously promote theoretical innovation based on practice. In the long-term practice of revolution, construction and reform, it is necessary to adhere to the combination of the basic principles of Marxism with China’s specific reality as well as the excellent traditional Chinese culture, and to constantly promote the Chineseization and modernization of Marxism[10]. The spirit of the times is the product of the development of the times, which embodies the spirit of human civilization in every era. Keeping up with the times is the living soul of Marxism. The contemporary interpretation of the spirit of the Red Flag Canal will help the spirit of the Red Flag Canal rejuvenate in the new era, and inspire young people in the new era to shoulder the responsibility of the era of national rejuvenation and make their own contributions to the motherland and the people .

3.1 The spirit of struggle has universality

The start of construction of the Red Flag Canal coincided with the country’s difficult period of three years of natural disasters. Adhering to the belief of “better to work hard than to wait”, the people of Lin County accomplished an impossible thing at an impossible time and place. This is largely due to the hard work and courageous spirit of the Chinese people since ancient times. They fired their own lime and made explosives. When food was insufficient, they relied on leaves, bark, and wild vegetables to satisfy their hunger. Without large tools, they worked with their own bodies. They conquered the steep Taihang Mountain with the crudest tools. Even today, these stories are still moving. Such self-reliance is not limited to the building of the Red Flag Canal. This spirit pervades all aspects and periods of national construction.

The 100-year development history of the Communist Party of China is the history of the Party’s continuous and successful struggle under the leadership of the people, such as from the development of “missiles, nuclear bombs, and the artificial satellite” to the development of Daqing oilfield, from the barren Gobi Desert to the forefront of reform and opening up, and from the construction of the Red Flag Canal to the completion of poverty alleviation. As General Secretary Xi Jinping said, “Socialism is earned by hard work and sacrifice of life, not only in the past, but also in the new era.”[11] From socialism with Chinese characteristics to socialism with Chinese characteristics in the new era, it needs to overcome difficulties to realize the second centenary goal and the Chinese dream of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. In this sense, the spirit of struggle contained in the spirit of the Red Flag Canal is timeless, with universality and eternity.

3.2 The people's position is the magic weapon to win.

The moving thing about the spirit of the Red Flag Canal is that it embodies the original intention and mission of the Communists. The Lin County Party Committee has always kept in mind the theme of what the Communists are, why and what they want to do. Solving the people's most pressing "water" problem has always been at the top of the list. The goal of the Communists of Lin County is to provide water for the people of Lin County. The Party's mass line is the magic weapon for the Chinese Communist Party to lead the people to victory in revolution, construction and reform. The stand of the people and the mass line are fully reflected in the process of building the Red Flag Canal. Yang Gui, Secretary of the Lin County Party Committee, often said to cadres, "As long as the leaders serve the people wholeheartedly, they can win the unity of all people." [12] The leading cadres who repair the canal always stand from the perspective of the masses, and always play an exemplary and exemplary role. Party members and cadres serve as role models and can provide encouragement and motivation to the people who follow them.

No one can be left behind in the fight against poverty, and the treatment of patients at all costs in the COVID-19 is a true portrayal of the Chinese Communist Party's people-centered approach. No matter what historical position our development is in, we must not forget the fundamental question of who we develop for, who we rely on, and who we are. Today, the world is in a period of historical opportunity for major changes unseen in a hundred years. We must clearly see the major risks and challenges we face. As long as we always adhere to the supremacy of the people, rely on the people closely, and continue to benefit the people, there will be no difficulties that cannot be overcome[13].

3.3 Ideals and beliefs refer to street lights.

Ideals and beliefs are not taken as a point of view, which need to be put into action to be convincing. Why can a poor and backward mountainous county build a 1,500-kilometer-long Red Flag Canal on Taihang Mountain? To answer this question, it is impossible to avoid Yang Gui, the secretary of the Lin County Party Committee, and the Lin County leadership team. On the one hand, history is created by the people. On the other hand, key figures are often important. Yang Gui is a grass-roots leading cadre who came out of the war, with rich experience in grassroots work and a pragmatic and efficient work style. The highlight of his body is not his individual characteristics, but the commonality of that generation of outstanding Communist Party members who are loyal to the Party and love the people. Faced with the pressure of the "Great Leap Forward" and "exaggeration", Yang Gui and other leaders of the Lin County Party Committee took political risks and did not follow suit or make false reports, thereby preserving the foundation for the development of Lin County. In addition, they insist on seeking truth from facts in their work, maintain a strong sense of responsibility, and always safeguard the interests of the Party and the people. It is this attitude of loyalty to the Party and responsibility to the people that ensures the smooth progress and ultimate success of the construction of the Red Flag Canal.

The political soul of Communists lies in their belief in Marxism, socialism and communism[14]. Firm ideals and beliefs have always been the foundation for Communists to live and work. Apart from the interests of the country, nation, and people, the Communist Party of China does not have any special personal interests. The construction of the Red Flag Canal demonstrates the power of strong ideals and beliefs.

Over the past 100 years, countless Communists have written touching chapters one after another for their communist beliefs and the noble cause of the Party. There are many difficulties on the journey to realize the Chinese dream. As long as the Communists strengthen their ideals and beliefs, maintain strategic determination, and carry forward the spirit of struggle, they will surely be able to carry out the great struggle to the end.

4. The cultivation of youth values by the spirit of the Red Flag Canal

The Red Flag Canal is no longer just a stone-built canal in the material sense, but also a spiritual canal that carries the value pursuit, contains the Chinese spirit, and flows with the spirit of struggle[15]. By exploring it, people can understand the capabilities and advantages of the Communist Party of China, Marxism, and socialism with Chinese characteristics. Understanding, mastering and applying the spirit of the Red Flag Canal is of great significance to further cultivate the values of young people in the new era.

4.1 Inspiring youth to take on the mission

General Secretary Xi Jinping pointed out during his inspection in Anyang: “The young generation should inherit and carry forward the spirit of hard work and self-reliance. They should abandon arrogance and coquettishness, and engrave their youth and blood on the historical monument just like their parents.” [16] With young people who have ideals and responsibilities, the country will have hope and the nation will have a future. The pursuit of values contained in the spirit of the Red Flag Canal is a vivid embodiment of the Communists. Among them, the red gene is condensed with the blood of the people led by the Communist Party. By expounding the value of the era of the spirit of the Red Flag Canal, and the purpose of the communists to serve the people wholeheartedly, young people are influenced and inspired. The ideals and beliefs of young people are related to the future of the country. Through the spirit of the Red Flag Canal, young people in the new era can find strength, build up their belief in Marxism, and increase their belief in socialism with Chinese characteristics and confidence in the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation, which makes us strive hard in the journey of promoting the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation with Chinese-style modernization.

4.2 Cultivating the patriotic feelings of youth

According to Cai Yuanpei, “Patriotism is actually the lifeblood of a country.” The essence of contemporary patriotism lies in adhering to a high degree of unity of loving the country, loving the Party, and loving socialism[17]. In the historical practice generated by the spirit of the Red Flag Canal, patriotism, as the endogenous driving force, finally wrote the immortal poem of Lin County’s love for the party and patriotism. At the intersection of the “two centenary” goals, young people in the new era need to clearly see the risks and challenges on the way forward. No matter when and where they are, the interests of the country and the people should be given top priority. Only by deeply integrating personal development with national development can the value of life be reflected. The behavior of the people of Lin County during the construction of the Red Flag Canal is a vivid illustration. Patriotism is not empty, which has different external manifestations in every era. The love for the motherland and the love for the people are highly unified, with the difference between macro and micro. In the new era, patriotic young people must take the initiative to integrate their personal youth dreams into the great practice of the national dream and the rejuvenation dream, and make a difference in key positions and key links, thus contributing to the grass-roots front line, such as emergency and disaster relief, scientific and technological research and development, volunteer services, and rural revitalization, serve the society, and serve the motherland.

4.3 Strengthening the self-confidence of the youth system

The successful construction of the Red Flag Canal is a concentrated embodiment of the superiority of the socialist system, which vividly illustrates the success achieved by concentrated efforts. Looking back on the century-old history of the founding of the Communist Party of China, the Communist Party of China has led the people of all ethnic groups to concentrate their efforts to achieve one major event after another, to achieve one impossible thing after another, to create one miracle after another, and to win one victory after another. The results include completing the task

of alleviating poverty, realizing a moderately prosperous society in all respects, solving the problem of absolute poverty, and winning all major emergency and disaster relief tasks. In the comparison of Chinese and Western social systems, the correctness of the socialist path chosen by China cannot be doubted. The purpose of the Communist Party of China to serve the people wholeheartedly is also unquestionable. The spirit of the Red Flag Canal is the most specific and vivid embodiment of the self-confidence of the system. The young people of the new era should deeply study the spirit of Red Flag Canal and understand the importance of socialism. This can be translated into practical actions to achieve the second centenary goal and the quality of will to overcome risks and challenges. By continuously strengthening the “four self-confidences”, people can become firm successors of socialism.

4.4 Encouraging youth to explore and innovate

Innovation is the first driving force for development. Not only in the current era, the bold innovations during the construction of the Red Flag Canal also solved a series of problems that plagued the progress of the project. In the face of a minimal gap of 1/8000, surveying and mapping tools are the key. The only two surveying and mapping instruments in Lin County cannot meet the construction progress. Under the bold exploration of technicians and construction backbone, the invention of “water duck” was successfully applied to the construction of the Red Flag Canal, which made a big congratulations. According to the report of the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, educational scientific and technological talents play a fundamental, strategic and overall role. It is necessary to promote the emergence of talents through the development of education and science and technology, and use human resources to counteract the development of education and science and technology. To solve the major problems in current development, it needs to find innovative breakthroughs. Among them, young people are the most innovative and creative. Therefore, young people should be encouraged to boldly explore, develop and innovate, break down the system mechanisms and social environment that hinder the development of innovation, and realize self-worth in innovation and creation.

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