

Doctrinal Interpretation and Value Implications of Scientific Socialism

-- Based on the Textual Inquiry "The Development of Socialism from Idea to Science"

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Abstract: The Development of Socialism from Idea to Science (hereinafter referred to as Development), taken from Engels' book *Anti-Dühring*, is an introductory work of scientific socialism, which was called "the most important part of the theoretical part" by Engels. The text profoundly elucidates the ideological origins of scientific socialism and reveals the importance of the materialist concept of history and the doctrine of surplus value. Revisiting this classic in the new era will be of great benefit to us in firmly establishing the correct political direction, opposing all kinds of historical nihilism and non-socialist thinking, and advancing the construction of socialism.

Keywords: Socialism, Scientific socialism, Value implications.

1. Introduction

The report of the 20th Party Congress points out that "having the scientific theoretical guidance of Marxism is fundamental to our Party's firm beliefs and convictions and its ability to grasp the initiative of history." [1] To adhere to the fundamental guiding position of Marxism in the field of ideology, the first thing to do is to sort out the main line of logic of scientific socialism, and to explore the truth from the original works of Marxism. With its main line of socialism from emptiness to science and its critique of Dühring's reactionary petty-bourgeois socialism, thus defending the Marxist worldview, *Development* is of great significance for our further understanding and mastery of scientific socialism, and is a sharp ideological weapon for the struggle and socialist construction of the international proletarian revolutionary people.

2. Challenges to Scientific Socialism

After the 1870s, the European workers' movement showed a vigorous development, the major countries of Western Europe established their own proletarian political parties, and Marxism gradually became the guiding ideology in the revolutionary struggle, while at the same time facing the challenge of some erroneous trends of thought. Dühring, as a representative of reactionary petty-bourgeois socialism, attacked and opposed scientific socialism, put forward a systematic set of pseudo-socialist theories and plans for reforming society in the fields of philosophy, political economy and socialism, and preached idealistic a priori theories and impostor socialist doctrines, etc., causing serious ideological confusion in the German Social Democratic Party. Its reactionary theoretical doctrines in the garb of science and under the banner of revolution caused serious ideological and organizational harm to the party. In order to criticize Dühring's absurd doctrines and counter its attack on Marxism, Engels wrote the book *Anti-Dühring*, and with the development of the workers' movement, the working class urgently needed to arm itself with scientific theories, and Engels, at the behest of his friends, distilled from *Anti-*

Dühring the popular reading of *Development*.

3. Engels's Doctrinal Reinterpretation and Re-argumentation of Scientific Socialism

In response to the challenge of the erroneous trend of thinking faced by scientific socialism, Engels clarified the imaginary, scientific and future vein of scientific socialism by re-interpreting and re-arguing its theories, thus pointing out the bright prospect of scientific socialism, safeguarding the worldview and methodology of Marxism, and laying the theoretical foundation for the blossoming of the light of truth in Marxism.

(i) Ideality: the theoretical origins of scientific socialism

Empirical socialism is the ideological and theoretical source of scientific socialism, Engels pointed out that modern socialism, "although it has its roots deep in the facts of the material economy," but its development must start from the "existing material of thought," [2], French Enlightenment scholars The French Enlightenment scholars, the theoretical source of modern socialism, emphasized "rationality," "equality," "justice," etc., and "thinking knowledge has become the only measure of everything. They emphasized "reason," "equality," "justice," etc., and that "thinking knowledge has become the only measure of all things," [3], i.e., the world is "the age of the head and the ground. Despite the calling, explanatory power, identity and factuality of Enlightenment thought, after the establishment of the bourgeois state, the kingdom of reason was in the final analysis an idealized kingdom of the bourgeoisie. At the beginning of the 19th century, with the development of large-scale machine industry and the contradiction of capitalism becoming more and more obvious, the ideology of idealistic socialism represented by St. Simon, Fourier and Owen was born, which provided the direct ideological material for the development of socialism from idealism to science. They sharply criticized the capitalist system, made some correct speculations about the objective law of historical development, and put forward positive ideas about the future society. For example, St. Simon's "industrial system",

Fourier's "collaborative system", Owen's "communist commune" and so on. However, none of them represented the interests of the proletariat and tried to transform society through rational principles. Firstly, they did not understand the nature of capitalist society, and their doctrines ignored the reality and started from principles; secondly, they thought that socialism was the truth to change the status quo, and that it could be realized mainly by men of genius, and their idealistic nature was manifested in the fact that they thought that idealistic socialism was the eternal truth, and that they did not find the class basis and opposed the revolutionary movement of the proletariat; idealistic socialism was created under the historical conditions when the contradictions within the capitalist mode of production were initially exposed, and it was the result of the initial exposure of the capitalist mode of production. Ideal socialism arose under the historical conditions of the initial exposure of the internal contradictions of the capitalist mode of production, and "immature theories are adapted to the immature state of capitalist production, the immature state of the class" [4], and therefore their doctrines are immature.

(ii) Scientific: typical features of scientific socialism

Scientific socialism was born on the basis of the critical inheritance and revolutionary transformation of ideal socialism. The transformation of socialism into science must be placed on the basis of reality, i.e., the economic and class relations of capitalism. In this paper, Engels points out that only by analyzing capitalism using a scientific worldview and methodology can we find the material forces and the right path to realize scientific socialism. Ancient dialectics, the first historical form of dialectics, formed a modern metaphysical method of thinking that emphasized isolation, stasis, and one-sidedness in the course of the development of production and natural science. For the first time, Hegel depicted the whole natural, historical and spiritual world as a process, in constant motion, change and development, but limited by idealism, "thinking" and "being" became "inverted". But due to idealism, "thinking" and "being" became "inverted". The creation of material dialectics laid the philosophical foundation for the transformation of socialism from fantasy to science; in the field of nature, it holds that nature has its own temporal history, with its process of emergence, development and extinction; in the field of the concept of social history, it regards social history as the process of mankind's own development.

The creation of the materialist conception of history and the doctrine of surplus value transformed socialism from a pipe dream into a science. "All previous history, with the exception of the primitive state, is the history of class struggles; these social classes struggling against each other are at all times the products of the relations of production and exchange, and, in a word, of the economic relations of their own time" [5], the materialist concept of history found the right way to recognize the historical development of society. On the basis of the critical inheritance of the labor theory of value, Marx and Engels created the doctrine of surplus value, which is the value created by the surplus labor of hired workers and appropriated by the capitalists without compensation, which exposes the secret of exploitation of capitalism, and implies the objective law that capitalism will inevitably perish and socialism will inevitably triumph. These two major discoveries overcame the historical limitations of utopian socialism and placed socialism on a realistic footing, thus transforming socialism from utopia into "science".

(iii) Futurity: the forward-looking implications of scientific socialism

Using the principles of historical materialism, Engels profoundly analyzed the basic contradictions of capitalist society, revealed the class relations of exploitation and exploitation, oppression and oppression between capitalists and wage workers, and emphasized the power and revolutionary nature of the proletariat. The contradiction between the socialization of production and the private appropriation of capitalism, as the basic contradiction of capitalism, manifests itself in class relations as the opposition between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, and in production as the organized nature of individual production and the anarchy of the production of the whole society. With the intensification of the fundamental contradictions of capitalism, there is bound to be a capitalist economic crisis, i.e., overproduction, which results in a massive waste and destruction of the productive forces and commodities of society. The violent conflict between the productive forces and the relations of production manifested by the economic crisis compels the capitalists to change the principle of private ownership and the form of organization of production without changing the principle of private ownership on the premise of preserving the capitalist relations of exploitation, so that monopolistic organizations arise, the capitalists become parasites relying exclusively on the cutting of interest coupons and the taking of dividends, and the capitalists are left with no other social functions, and the capitalist mode of production becomes exclusionary of the capitalist, especially the state monopoly. The emergence of capitalism further intensified this contradiction and brought it to its zenith. Therefore, easing this crisis and the replacement of capitalism by socialism is an inevitable historical development. Private ownership must be eliminated and social appropriation of the means of production must be introduced; socialist public ownership must be realized through proletarian revolution. The bourgeoisie, in its frantic pursuit of surplus value, also produces its own gravediggers. The consciousness of the proletariat gradually rises, thus moving towards organized unity and laying the class foundation for the launching of the proletarian revolution.

4. The Contemporary Value of Socialism from Idea to Science

More than one hundred and forty years have passed since *Development* was first published, and despite the fact that the world has changed considerably, this classic work is still rich in contemporary value in the twenty-first century, and the truths revealed by scientific socialism have not become obsolete, but rather have become ever new.

(i) Advancing the proletariat's understanding of scientific socialism

By criticizing and refuting a series of erroneous ideas, Engels clarified the fundamental differences between scientific socialism and other socialisms, further developed and improved scientific socialism, and provided scientific theoretical guidance for the proletarian revolution. First of all, it is necessary to adhere to the important worldview of materialism. While philosophers used the concept of "standing on the ground with one's head" to depict the future society, Engels used the concept of materialistic history as the theoretical foundation, and based on the reality of the capitalist society, he once again argued that socialism would

inevitably replace the development trend of capitalism, which deepened the understanding of the worldview of scientific socialism, and also facilitated the understanding of the worldview of the proletariat. This deepened the understanding of the scientific socialist worldview and also helped the proletariat to further discern false socialist theories. Secondly, capitalist society should be viewed with a dialectical perspective. "Dialectics worships nothing; by its very nature it is critical and revolutionary." [6] The replacement of capitalism by socialism is the inevitable result of the revelation of the laws of social development, and it is a basic conclusion drawn from the observation of real society.

(ii) Enhanced knowledge of the truth of Marxism

Socialism with Chinese characteristics adheres to the basic principles of scientific socialism while giving it distinctive Chinese characteristics in accordance with the changes of the times and specific realities. China has never given up socialism and Marxism in its revolution, construction and reform, and has always been guided by socialism, making great achievements since the New Nationalist Revolution, the Socialist Revolution and Construction, the Reform and Opening Up, and the New Era, and thus standing in the forest of nations. Marxism has a scientific worldview and methodology, and there is no doubt that the comprehensive national power of our country has increased and developed rapidly thanks to its adherence to socialism and the guidance of Marxism.

5. Practical Requirements for Practicing the Basic Principles of Scientific Socialism

Scientific socialism has respectively realized a course of development from ideal to science, from ideal to reality, from one country to many, and has been revitalized in China. Marx and Engels summarized the laws of development of the socialist cause in the process of founding and developing Marxism, and formed the basic principles of scientific socialism in founding the theory of scientific socialism and guiding the international workers' movement, and, looking to the future, the basic principles of scientific socialism will remain the theoretical source that guides socialist countries to overcome the difficulties and dangers in the long run. Therefore, it is particularly important to implement the basic principles of scientific socialism and to put into practice the practical requirements of the basic principles of scientific socialism.

(i) Drawing on the essence of the times and innovating the theory of scientific socialism

The theoretical system of scientific socialism is not static, but keeps changing with the changes in objective reality. Today's scientific socialism has developed many new ideas that are in keeping with the times, distinctly embodying the characteristics of innovation. Scientific socialism can only move forward and develop in innovation; if its ideas stay where they are, without innovation and change, they will become a rigid idea. As practice advances, theoretical innovation must keep pace in order to further guide practice; otherwise, it will be difficult to realize the benign interaction between theoretical innovation and practical innovation, and the theory will hardly give full play to its due value. Only through continuous innovation can scientific socialism develop in innovation and progress in development, so that the idea of scientific socialism can be passed on from

generation to generation.

(ii) Integration of the basic principles of scientific socialism with the specific realities of each country

The basic principles of scientific socialism set out the inevitable trend towards the inevitable victory of socialism and the inevitable demise of capitalism, and depict the bright prospects of a future communist society, summarizing the general laws and universal features of human social development. However, any theory has its scope of application, and the basic principles of scientific socialism are not suitable if they are applied rigidly. As emphasized in the basic principles of Marxism, contradictions are special and should be analyzed in concrete terms, and the basic principles can only be revitalized by combining them with specific national conditions. Therefore, the application of scientific socialism should take into account the basic national conditions, cultural traditions and requirements of the times of each country, and should combine the basic principles with its own revolution, construction and reform, so as to explore the path suitable for its own development and to answer and solve its own problems in a creative manner.

(iii) The socialist system must be upheld and maintained

The basic principles of scientific socialism adhere to the socialist system, which encompasses many aspects, including economic and political, and is a political and economic system relative to the capitalist system, providing a system to follow for the economic development of socialist countries. The socialist economic system refers to an economic system based on public ownership of the means of production and distribution according to work, which pursues the public ownership and fair distribution of wealth for the whole society, thus realizing the common prosperity of all people. Under the socialist system, the state exercises macro-control over the economy, safeguards the basic needs of the people, and promotes economic development and social progress. The socialist political system refers to the political system of the country dominated by the proletariat, whose main features are the people's democratic dictatorship, the leadership of the proletarian political party, and the implementation of democratic centralism under the leadership of the Party. The socialist system adheres to the idea of people-centred development and has made great contributions to safeguarding the interests of the people, realizing the prosperity and strength of the country and promoting human progress.

6. Conclusion

Firstly, as an introductory work for understanding socialism, *Development* systematically and comprehensively comprehends the development of socialism from the empty to the scientific, thus enabling the general readers to know clearly the development of socialism and its basic contents. Secondly, the work *Development* is a shining example of the popularization of Marxism and a classic work for promoting the study and understanding of Marxism among the public, with a condensed and easy-to-understand style of language, and with the form, content and method reflecting the characteristics of mass popularization, which Lenin described as "the book that must be read by every enlightened worker", and which enabled the working class to realize the importance of its overthrow of the bourgeoisie. Lenin called this work "a must-read for every conscious worker", which made the working class realize its mission to overthrow the bourgeoisie and create a new world. Once again, *Development* is of great

significance in the history of the development of Marxism and scientific socialism, and it is a time-honored document of scientific socialism that still shines with the light of truth. Revisiting this classic will not only stimulate theoretical vitality, but also have an extremely far-reaching significance in firming up the belief in communism and socialism with Chinese characteristics.

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