

MARXIST

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EDITORIAL BOARD

SITARAM YECHURY (EDITOR)

PRAKASH KARAT

B.V. RAGHAVULU

ASHOK DHAWALE

CONTRIBUTORS

ASHOK DHAWALE is President, All India Kisan Sabha (AIKS), Member, Central Secretariat, CPI(M).

MADHU PRASAD taught for many years in a college in Delhi University, New Delhi.

ANIL BHATTI retired as Professor of German from the Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.

LI JIE is President of Qiushi Journal Press, China.

For subscription and other queries, contact

The Manager, Marxist, A.K.Gopalan Bhavan, 27-29 Bhai Veer Singh Marg, New Delhi 110001

Phone: (91-11) 2373 8725. Email: pdpbln@gmail.com

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LI JIE

Marxism: A New Era, New Environment, and New Requirements

I. THE MARKET

Commodities and markets have long histories, both in China and abroad.¹ However, it was the age of capitalism that expanded commodity production and the commodity economy nationwide and worldwide, bringing about unified domestic markets, regional markets, and economic globalization.

Today, market economies, which boast the advantages of being integrated, accessible, and efficient, have become a platform for economic globalization and regional economic integration, for international finance and trade, and for the global flow of capital, technology, talent, and information. This has led some people to regard market economies as exclusive products of capitalism. In their opinion, China must carry out capitalist privatization and make up for the absence of capitalism if it is to develop a market economy. Should this really be the case?

In the 21st century, three major events have ended the reign of the capitalist market economy. First, since the overall initiation of China's second round of reform, the aim of which was to establish

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and develop a socialist market economy, China's unique approach to socialism has scored a massive success, turning China into the world's second largest economy. Second, emerging markets have experienced highly rapid economic growth, reshaping the world economic landscape and becoming new engines for world economic growth. Third, since the international financial crisis of 2008, Western capitalist countries, as represented by the US and the European Union, have descended into prolonged stagnation. The combination of these three events paved the way for the G20 Hangzhou Summit in September 2016 and the formation of the "Hangzhou Consensus."

This bears testimony to the saying "all roads lead to Rome," and serves as proof that "only the wearer knows if the shoes fit or not." It shows that capitalism is not the only model a country can choose when establishing and developing a market economy. After having achieved national independence, all developing countries, including China, are perfectly capable of combining the general rules of the market economy with their own local realities, conditions, and features to independently establish and develop a market economy that is unified internally and open to the outside world. As a result, we can see that market economies can be both diverse and inclusive.

This represents a new landscape derived from the intrinsic logic of the market, and a landscape that is conducive to the revival and development of Marxism in the 21st century. More importantly, it has set a grand stage for the great renewal of the Chinese nation.

II. CAPITAL

Much like commodities and the market, the history of money, transactions, loans, and employment also stretches back extremely far. However, once interwoven with the capitalist

mode of production, these factors become a foundation for the multiplication of capital. Historically, capitalism has not only secured control over domestic markets by utilizing the power of capital, but also taken and constantly strengthened control over the world economy and the rules of its operation by drawing on the close integration of capital with scientific, technological, and industrial revolutions. So far, shifts in control over the world economy have only been realized through competition within the ranks of developed capitalist countries. Whoever has the most capital and financial resources has the final say – this is merely an economic manifestation of the logic that strong countries are bound to seek dominance.

Once the proletariat, who had nothing under capitalist rule, seizes state power through social revolution, a major step they must take is to expropriate the expropriators. This is only right and proper, because capital, as a form of social wealth, is ultimately created by the working people. However, what happens next? The responsibility of answering this long-standing question eventually fell on the shoulders of Chinese Communists, who launched the reform and opening up drive after a tortuous process of exploration.

The success of socialism with Chinese characteristics has proved that Chinese Communists cannot overlook the power of capital if they are to achieve modernization and national rejuvenation. Although capital is bound to class and social systems, the most important thing is who wields it, under which system it functions, and whom it serves. Socialism needs to, and has the capacity to, seize, create, and utilize the power of capital, just as capitalism has done so in the past.

The idea of socialism taking hold of, creating, and utilizing the power of capital is a brand new one that we are facing in our efforts to uphold and develop Marxism. Generally speaking, there are three major issues that must be resolved here. First, domestically speaking, we need to ensure that Communists are capable of

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controlling, utilizing, and increasing capital without being taken captive by it. Second, internationally speaking, we need to ensure that socialist countries are not only able to handle foreign capital, cooperate with it, and invest globally, but also able to prevent financial risks and safeguard their own financial and capital security. Third, considering the aim of capital appreciation, we need to resolve inequalities in income distribution and misconduct in capital operation during the process of appreciation. This means avoiding the “middle-income trap,” expanding the middle-income group, gradually creating an olive-shaped pattern of distribution, and ultimately eradicating poverty and exploitation through shared development to achieve common prosperity. Only in this way can we fundamentally reverse the relationship between labor and capital, setting history straight by empowering labor to control capital rather than being enslaved by it. Such a miracle can only be created under socialism with Chinese characteristics.

This historic proposition must be resolved during the course of our efforts to develop Marxism for the 21st century and for contemporary China.

III. THE RULE OF LAW

The transition from rule of man to rule of law is one of the overarching trends of our time.

This transition was first achieved through bourgeois revolution. Through this process, capitalism not only established its position of dominance over society, but also systematized its revolutionary theories against theology, clericalism, and feudal monarchy, and institutionalized those systems established after the revolution that were conducive to its own development. After several centuries of evolution, the capitalist discourse of social sciences and system of rule of law eventually took shape.

It was also during this process that two major changes took place: the theorization of ideology and the cloaking of monopoly

rule (namely bourgeois dictatorship). Through the theorization of ideology, the bourgeoisie provided strong academic support for their national ideology, allowing it to assume the form of academic studies and academic discourse. This meant that such an ideology no longer displayed the attributes of a certain class on the exterior, but rather was able to exist, replicate, and spread worldwide in the form of “universal values.” Through the cloaking of dictatorship, the bourgeoisie transformed the will of the state into the “social contract,” namely the law. Reinterpreted as the rule of law, bourgeois dictatorship was rendered cloaked, flexible, and universal, assuming the sacred, non-partisan form of democratic elections, institutional arrangements, statutory procedures, and legal authorization.

Socialist rule of law cannot mimic capitalist rule of law. Rather, it must balance the leadership of the CPC, the rule of law, and the position of the people as masters of the country. However, we still face the practical issue of transitioning from the rule of man to the rule of law. This will be a gradual, long-term process. In accordance with the guidelines laid out in the resolution of the Fourth Plenary Session of the 18th CPC Central Committee, we must carry out a sustained and thorough effort to comprehensively implement the rule of law. This is also something that needs to be resolved through our efforts to develop Marxism for the 21st century and for contemporary China.

There are three key issues to be resolved as we advance the rule of law. First, we need to properly balance the relationship between upholding the leadership of the CPC and upholding the authority of the Constitution and our belief in the rule of law. The argument over whether greater authority rests with the CPC or the law is actually a false proposition; it is the relationship between power and the law that constitutes the true proposition to be addressed. Second, we need to balance the relationship between the rule of law and the people’s democratic dictatorship. As one of the Four Cardinal Principles, which represent the foundation

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of national governance, the people's democratic dictatorship has been written into the CPC Constitution and the Constitution of China. We must not waver from this principle. However, the people's democratic dictatorship should be realized through the application of law-based thinking and approaches rather than any other means. Third, we need to balance the relationship between the authority of the rule of law and the principal position of the people. Socialist rule of law should put the people first, and its aim should be to safeguard, develop, coordinate, and realize the interests of the people. This is the fundamental difference between socialist rule of law and capitalist rule of law.

IV. SHARING

A common wish of people around the world is that the fruits of material and non-material progress can be shared by all people and society as a whole, rather than being exclusively enjoyed by certain interest groups.

Against this backdrop, the difference between sharing under the socialist system and that under the capitalist system has become increasingly evident. Capitalist sharing aims to balance political, social, and other interests under the precondition that the vested interests of a minority of people are satisfied. Socialist sharing, in contrast, adopts a people-centered approach that aims to dismantle the barriers erected by entrenched interests through efforts to comprehensively deepen reform and implement new principles of development, such as shared development. To that end, multiple measures have been taken to provide stronger and more balanced welfare guarantees for both urban and rural residents, to step up the integrated development of urban and rural areas, to adjust unreasonable income distribution and expand the middle-income group, and to increase the household property income of rural residents and the low-income group. Socialist sharing embodies a great deal: the CPC's fundamental tenet of

serving the people wholeheartedly; the inherent requirement that socialist modernization is ultimately aimed at boosting and realizing well-rounded development of individuals; and the principle that development is for the people, reliant on the people, and that its fruits are shared by the people.

Sharing is a principle and a requirement, but it is also a practical process whereby a society develops from a lower to a higher level. Sharing cannot be achieved overnight, so we should not whet people's appetite by promising them too much. But the promise of sharing cannot be an empty one. We need to ensure sharing under the precondition of respecting differences and diversity, rather than adopting an egalitarian approach or imposing a uniform, "one-size-fits-all" standard across the board.

We need to find a way of achieving different levels of shared development at different stages of development, whilst ensuring that all social strata and groups, especially the low-income group, have a sense of happiness, gain and satisfaction during this process and that they are grateful to the CPC, the country, and the society and are willing to reciprocate. This is another topic that needs to be resolved through our efforts to develop Marxism for the 21st century and for contemporary China.

V. COEXISTENCE

The major requirement of our time is that countries with different social systems and different social, historical, and cultural backgrounds coexist harmoniously and establish a community of shared future for humankind, as driven by the trend of peaceful development and mutually beneficial cooperation, so as to dismantle the international foundations of the centuries-old logic that a strong country is bound to seek dominance, and oppose global hegemony, cultural hegemony, terrorism, and extremism in all their forms.

This coexistence hinges on peaceful coexistence between

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socialist and capitalist countries. Despite emerging at different times, capitalism and socialism have essentially developed and coexisted in the same era as different social systems and ideologies that compete against one another while learning from one another. This has never been seen before in the history of social development. It is thus evident that the world has become more diverse since the emergence of capitalism, and that the time has passed when a single mode of production or social system can dominate the world. Therefore, we must abandon the Cold War mentality and zero-sum game if we are to keep in step with the times.

The relationship between capitalism and socialism is no longer a question of who will destroy who. For years, Western countries have attempted to defeat or transform socialist countries. Though they brought about the collapse of the Soviet Union and Eastern European countries, leading to a temporary low tide in the world socialist movement, they have failed to prevent the robust development of socialism with Chinese characteristics. This is a testimony to the great vitality of socialism. Socialism and capitalism are becoming increasingly evenly matched in strength in today's complex international landscape, which comprises one major power and multiple poles. This is not attributable to a hot or cold war, but rather to the long-term peaceful development of socialism with Chinese characteristics and to the achievements of China's reform and opening up, which have shattered the "end of socialism" theory that emerged after the end of the Cold War. It represents an objective outcome that has emerged as China has moved towards the center of the world stage based on its peaceful development and remarkably enhanced overall national strength. Therefore, the eventual replacement of capitalism by socialism will take place over a long historical process which includes several stages. One of the most important stages will see socialist countries draw on their own reform and opening up initiatives to enable socialism to genuinely match capitalism globally, thus

breaking through Western countries' long-term strategic blockade and containment of socialist countries.

Generally speaking, there are four major issues that must be addressed with regard to the coexistence of socialism and capitalism. First, a socialist country needs to remain confident in its path, theories, system, and culture. If you do not believe in yourself, how can you possibly expect others to have faith in you? Second, a socialist country needs to be self-reliant. It needs to seize the initiative firmly in its own hands, and never rely on others with regard to its sovereignty, security, development, and innovation of the nation. Third, a socialist country needs to fully open up to the outside world, and engage in comprehensive interaction and mutual learning. Fourth, a socialist country needs to enhance its capacity for international communication and improve its international image. The key to the success of these efforts lies in finding a way for socialist countries which have long been at a disadvantage to remain firmly committed not only to reform and opening up but also to upholding and developing their own form of socialism with national characteristics.

Through our summary of five key terms (the market, capital, the rule of law, sharing, and coexistence), we can conclude that Marxism will definitely embrace its revival as we move ever closer to realizing the Chinese dream of national rejuvenation. In China lies the hope and foundation for the great development of Marxism, the hallmarks of which are the innovative progress of Marxism for the 21st century and for contemporary China, as well as the establishment of a framework for philosophy, social sciences, and discourse under its guidance that displays Chinese character and style.