

On Deng Xiaoping's Thought of Sinicization of Marxism

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Abstract: Deng Xiaoping expounded his thoughts on sinicization of Marxism comprehensively and systematically from three aspects: the orientation and development of Mao Zedong's thought, and the construction of the theoretical system of socialism with Chinese characteristics. He not only scientifically answered the question of the essence of socialism. He also made a historic contribution to Chinese Communist Party's scientific formulation of a set of the basic principles for the lines and policies that suit China's national conditions in the new era by perfecting and developing the proposition of sinicization of Marxism and adhering to the basic principle of combining the general principle of Marxism-Leninism with the concrete reality of Chinese socialism.

1. Introduction

The basic meaning of sinicization of Marxism is to combine the basic principles of Marxism with the concrete reality of China, that is, to further integrate the basic principles of Marxism with Chinese practice, history and culture, so as to make Marxism concrete in China. In its long practice of leading the Chinese revolution, construction and reform, The Communist Party of China has achieved three historic leaps in integrating Marxism with China's realities and produced three theoretical achievements. The first leap is Mao Zedong Thought, which is correct theoretical principles and experience summary about China's revolution and construction that has been proved by practice. Xi Jinping considers Mao Zedong "a great pioneer of sinicization of Marxism."^[1] The theoretical achievements of the second leap are the theoretical system of socialism with Chinese characteristics, including Deng Xiaoping theory, the important thought of three represents and the scientific outlook on development and other important strategy thoughts. The theoretical achievement of the third leap is Xi Jinping thought on socialism with Chinese characteristics for a new era, which is contemporary Chinese Marxism. Among the three leaps, Deng Xiaoping's theoretical system of socialism with Chinese characteristics is in the position of connecting the past and the future.

2. Deng Xiaoping Explained the Profound Meaning of Communism Scientifically

On November 17, 1956, Deng Xiaoping expounded his thought on sinicization of Marxism by answering two questions raised by his friends. The two questions are: "What do the Chinese communists mean? Who decides which of the principles of international classical communism are appropriate for China?"^[2]

2.1 On "the Implication of Chinese Communists"

Deng Xiaoping said, "the meaning or the task of a Chinese communist, if expressed in general terms, is only two sentences: Serving the people wholeheartedly and regard the interests of the people as the highest criterion for every party member. The aim is to realize socialism and communism."^[2]

Deng Xiaoping also had rational thinking and strict standards for the cultivation and promotion of the quality of party members. He advocates for gradual guidance. "For Chinese Communist Party, there are 11 million members, and not all or most of them have reached such a standard," he said.^[2]

Soon after the founding of Chinese Communist Party, a large number of peasants joined the party. The motive of many party members from peasant backgrounds was to pursue the ideal of opposing imperialism and feudalism, and to obtain land and realize the goal of democratic revolution that “the tiller has his land”. It can be seen that the peasants did not have the requirements of socialism from the very beginning, and the democratic revolution is an insurmountable process, otherwise it would be an immature revolution. The impatience and rashness of “lefties” within the communist party throughout history has given us a profound lesson. In other instances, the agricultural cooperative movement is one of the ways which the communist party has used to carefully educate and train the broad masses of farmers to gradually have this requirement. Deng Xiaoping objectively said: “A communist, first, he is an ordinary person. Second, he is an advanced member of the ordinary people. However, there are also communists who lag behind the ordinary people.”^[2] He earnestly hoped that the general party members lead by example, be disciplined in accordance with the standards of the party, and struggle for the people and the party.

2.2 On “Who Decides Which of the Principles of International Classical Communism Are Appropriate for China?”

Deng Xiaoping believed that the seventh National Congress of the Communist Party of China determined the principle of “combining the universal truth of Marxism-Leninism with the concrete practice of the Chinese revolution, so as to guide our revolution and our construction”^[2]. This hard-won principle was summed up by the communist party and Mao Zedong on the basis of their past experience of failure and success in the revolution and affirmed at the seventh and the eighth party congresses. Of course, the problems of a country are multifaceted. It is a question that needs constant exploration to combine Marxism-Leninism with the specific conditions of each period, no matter it is a period of revolution or construction. Deng Xiaoping once said: “The universal truth of Marxism-Leninism is combined with the concrete reality of the country. This sentence itself is the universal truth. It consists of two aspects, the universal truth and combining with national reality.”^[2] He stressed that the Communist Party of China won’t do well without either of the two aspects. For the Communist Party of China, there is only one universal truth, that is, to eliminate feudalism and capitalism, to realize socialism, and to realize communism in the future. It can be seen that he took the realization of socialism as the core issue of the founding of the party.

Deng Xiaoping believed that China could not leave its own characteristics to copy foreign things. For example, the communist party's socialist transformation of China's capitalist industry and commerce is an example of the combination of universal truth and China's reality. On the one hand, the universal truth of international communism is to eliminate capitalism and exploitation and realize socialism. On the other hand, the socialist transformation of capitalist industry and commerce in the early stage of China's liberation was a problem that Lenin had thought about but failed to realize. “We adopted a peaceful transformation of capitalist industry and commerce,” he said.^[2] Practice has proved that China's socialist transformation of capitalist industry and commerce has not only eliminated capitalism, but also educated the bourgeoisie. Of course, it is very difficult to control the degree of combining the general truth of Marxism with China's concrete reality. He further stressed: “if the universal truth is not combined with the reality of China, or not well, then great losses will be caused.”^[2] The socialist transformation of agriculture, and the socialist transformation of other aspects, are the cases of failure.

Deng Xiaoping believes that we must oppose the wrong tendency of subjectivism when it comes to the combination of universal truth and concrete reality because the Communist Party of China has suffered many losses in the past, it has been the key theme of opposing subjectivism since then. “Dogmatism,” he said, “means knowing only Marxism-Leninism but not applying it in the light of specific conditions. It has caused our revolution to suffer failures and setbacks. Empiricism means that it sees only concrete practices and temporary experience in one country and one place, but not the principles of Marxism-Leninism.”^[2]

Deng Xiaoping also hoped that the party members and cadres to be relaxed, not to be plagued by mistakes. According to the practical experience of the communist party, it is not easy to combine the

universal truth with the concrete reality. It is much more difficult than the theoretical statement. The great Communist Party of China also often makes mistakes. However, the party adheres to the principle of seeking truth from facts, promptly seeks the causes of its mistakes, and promptly corrects them. He was well aware of comrade Mao Zedong's instructions. "Chairman Mao often said that he also made mistakes," he said, "but we all know he made fewer mistakes than we did."^[2]

3. Deng Xiaoping Initiated the Theoretical System of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics

Since the Third Plenary Session of the Eleventh Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, Chinese communists, mainly represented by Deng Xiaoping, have given a preliminary answer to the primary and fundamental theoretical question of what socialism is and how we build it, on the basis of summarizing the historical experience of socialist construction at home and abroad, especially the new experience since reform and opening-up. They have gradually developed the line, principles and policies for building socialism with Chinese characteristics, expounded on the basic problems of building, consolidating and developing socialism in China, founded Deng Xiaoping Theory, carved out a right path for building socialism with Chinese characteristics, and actively advanced sinicization of Marxism in China.

3.1 Promoting Sinicization of Marxism from the Perspective of History and the Attitude of Seeking Truth from Facts

Deng Xiaoping pointed out that "after the founding of the People's Republic of China, comrade Mao Zedong used the truth of seeking truth from facts to lead us forward. Of course, there were many things that were not available to be brought up at that time."^[3] For example, many conditions for China to realize the four modernizations which were not available in chairman Mao's lifetime are available now. If the central government does not promptly consider and make up its mind on the basis of favorable and objective conditions, many problems will not be raised and will be put on hold and left unsolved. This is extremely detrimental to the career. Here is another example. For example, when chairman Mao was alive, China also wanted to expand economic and technological exchanges with other countries, including developing economic and trade relations with some developed capitalist countries, and even envisaged introducing foreign capital and joint ventures.

3.2 Developing Marxism and Mao Zedong Thought

In the new era, Deng Xiaoping hoped that the Chinese people should correctly understand chairman Mao's theory on the division of the three worlds, deal with international relations flexibly, and create a peaceful and tranquil international environment for China's socialist modernization. Therefore, Deng Xiaoping put forward the ideological proposition to develop Marxism and Mao Zedong Thought. He said: "If we could only do what comrade Mao Zedong said, what would we do now? Marxism needs to be developed! MAO Zedong Thought needs to be developed too! Otherwise, it will become rigid!"^[3]

3.3 Reflecting the Superiority of Socialism by the Development of Productive Forces

Deng Xiaoping severely criticized the ideological stagnation existing in the party. He called for dialectical and historical materialism to be applied to the grim reality that China, even in the third world, "belongs to the less developed part". He believed that the fundamental manifestation of the superiority of the socialist system is the rapid development of the productive forces and the gradual satisfaction of people's ever-increasing material and cultural needs. He said, "If in a very long historical period, the rate of development of the productive forces of socialist countries is slower than that of capitalist countries, what are the advantages?"^[3] He called on party members and cadres to reflect on "how much we have done for the people" and devote their energy to maintaining the status of socialism.

3.4 Correctly Understanding the Essence of Socialism

Deng Xiaoping put forward the criterion to judge socialism and capitalism. In his opinion, the

criterion of judgment “should mainly be whether it is conducive to the development of the productive forces of a socialist society, whether it is conducive to the enhancement of the overall national strength of a socialist country and whether it is conducive to the improvement of people's living standards.”^[4] Secondly, he proposed the essence of socialism. He once said: “The essence of socialism is to liberate and develop the productive forces, eliminate exploitation and polarization, and ultimately achieve common prosperity.”^[4] In his view, planned economy does not equal to socialism, capitalism also has plans; Market economy also does not equal to capitalism, socialism also has markets. Both plans and markets are economic means only. Thirdly, he offered a path to gradual common prosperity. He pointed out that “if the rich get richer and the poor get poorer, polarization will occur. Socialist system should and can avoid polarization!”^[4]

4. Conclusion

Deng Xiaoping's perfection and development of sinicization of Marxism reflects the great particularity of China's social construction and the special need for theoretical development; It shows the self-conscious recognition of the Communist Party of China about the development rule that foreign cultures blend with each other; It embodies the internal requirements of the wider application and further development of Marxism in China. A review of Deng Xiaoping's judgment on sinicization of Marxism will promote us to continuously explore a road of socialist modernization that is full of confidence and suitable for China's national conditions under the new historical and social conditions, and inject powerful impetus and fresh thoughts into the improvement and development of sinicization of Marxism.

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