

Marxism-Leninism: A Scientific Method and Guide to Know and Change the World

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ABSTRACT

Centered on two new collections recently published in China, *Collected Works of Marx and Engels* and *Thematic Collection of Lenin*, this article elaborates on five key issues of theoretical concern: it emphasises the importance of being revolutionists and builders like Marx and Lenin, clarifies that the two collections are scientific tools of knowledge, and discusses important theoretical questions such as the union of workers and oppressed nations of the world, socialism as the abolition of classes and the elimination of exploitation, and the communist party as the leader and organiser of the proletariat.

KEYWORDS

Marxism-Leninism;
working-class
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In 2009, two new collections were published: *Collected Works of Marx and Engels* (10 vols) and *Thematic Collection of Lenin* (5 vols) in China. This was a commendable achievement in the intellectual and cultural sphere. During the 1980s and 1990s, the international communist movement experienced severe setbacks, and the promotion of Marxism-Leninism encountered unprecedented resistance globally. Within such an international context, the Communist Party of China (CPC) initiated and accomplished such a large-scale project of editing and publishing of Marxist-Leninist works, making a tangible effort to the dissemination and development of Marxism-Leninism and to the revival of the international communist movement that had for a time plunged into a low ebb.

At the First National People's Congress of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1954, Mao Zedong solemnly announced in his opening speech to the Chinese people and the whole world: "The theoretical basis guiding our thoughts is Marxism-Leninism."¹ This not only identified the relationship between Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought that guides the Communist Party of China (CPC), but also explained the relationship between Marxism-Leninism and the theory of socialism with Chinese characteristics that directs contemporary socialist construction in China. Clarifying this relationship is crucial for our scientific understanding of Marxism-Leninism, both during the era of the New Democratic Revolution and in the period of contemporary socialist revolution and construction. Obviously, without knowing and understanding the theoretical foundation of the Party and the government's guiding thought, we cannot scientifically apply and develop them.

Marxist-Leninist works are very rich. Which articles and works should we read first in order to learn the stand, view and method of Marxism-Leninism? The editing and publishing of the *Collected Works of Marx and Engels* and the *Thematic Collection of Lenin* have provided additional texts for Chinese people and scholars to embark on an in-depth study of Marxism-Leninism, and this can be considered another achievement that the Chinese people have achieved in the study of Marxism-Leninism. One of the topics that Chinese Marxists continue to explore in studying Marxism-Leninism is to combine the history and experience of our predecessors in learning Marxism-Leninism, constantly study and understand Marxism-Leninism, and answer and solve new problems that constantly arise in practice.

1. Being revolutionists and builders like Marx and Lenin

"For Marx was before all else a revolutionist. His real mission in life was to contribute, in one way or another, to the overthrow of capitalist society and of the state institutions which it had brought into being, to contribute to the liberation of the modern proletariat, which he was the first to make conscious of its own position and needs, conscious of the conditions of its emancipation. Fighting was his element. And he fought with a passion, a tenacity and a success such as few could rival... And, consequently, Marx was the best-hated and most calumniated man of his time. Governments, both absolutist and republican, deported him from their territories. Bourgeois, whether conservative or ultra-democratic, vied with one another in heaping slanders upon him. All this he brushed aside as though it were cobweb, ignoring it, answering only when extreme necessity compelled him. And he died beloved, revered and mourned by millions of revolutionary fellow-workers—from the mines of Siberia to California, in all parts of Europe and America—and I make bold to say that though he may have had many opponents he had hardly one personal enemy."² This speech of Engels at Marx's grave is, so to speak, a commentary not only on Marx, but also on the cause pursued by proletarian revolutionary fighters such as Lenin and others throughout their lives, and on their whole activity and thought. To learn and master Marxism-Leninism, one must be like them; and only those who are like Marx and Lenin can truly learn Marxism-Leninism.

1 Mao Zedong. 1999. *Collected Works of Mao Zedong*, Vol. 6. Beijing: People's Press, pp. 350.

2 Marx, K., and F. Engels. 2010. *Marx/Engels Collected Works*, Vol. 24. London: Lawrence & Wishart, pp. 468-469.

Over the more than a century since the birth of Marxism-Leninism, Marxism-Leninism has been repeatedly pondered and debated by numerous countries and people from different social camps and declared outdated or dead by a multitude of fashionable thinkers from both inside and outside the Marxist camp. However, whenever Marxism-Leninism is declared outdated and dead, it is as much a signal of its vigorous existence and resilient struggle. Aren't these repeated attacks and denials of Marxism-Leninism from the anti-Marxist and non-Marxist camps just a strong manifestation of its unstoppable and vigorous vitality? Is it not a striking embodiment of its great influence and extremely profound relevance across time and space? The recurrent debates over Marxism-Leninism clearly show that there are those who need it and those who fear it. The two major classes and camps that coexist and oppose each other in this world – the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, socialism and capitalism – can be identified and distinguished by their attitude toward Marxism-Leninism.

Following the drastic changes in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, Marxism-Leninism was widely condemned as “outdated” and “bankrupt” in the Western intellectual world. Yet, not long afterwards the 2008 financial crisis erupted in the United States, leading to a global economic crisis, which forced the Western intellectual world to pay attention to the classics of Marxism, especially Marx's work, *Capital*, and to acknowledge the theoretical and scientific foresight of Marx in providing practical enlightenment and guidance for analyzing the current crisis. Now, it is ironic to witness a dramatic shift in the Western world from repeatedly declaring that Marxism is outdated, to discussions about the “revival” of Marxism. Why is Marxism being revived in the West? The reason for this lies in the fact that Marxism is a scientific worldview and methodology with a tremendous cognitive and practical (transformative) function, a doctrine of revolution and construction. The oft-discussed timeless theme of Marxism-Leninism – “the liberation of mankind” – also makes its revival historically inevitable. In studying these two collections, we must neither overlook a series of historical events with far-reaching influence that have taken place since the birth of Marxism-Leninism, nor can we ignore the new changes and progress that have taken place in the world-historical process. Currently, we feel there is an urgent need to study these two collections that reflect the essence of Marxism-Leninism, to enhance our level and ability to apply Marxism-Leninism, and to observe deeply and analyze scientifically the ongoing Western financial and economic crisis and predict the new directions of the world.

Where to begin with the study of Marxism-Leninism? Marx remarks: “The theoretical conclusions of the Communists are in no way based on ideas or principles that have been invented, or discovered by this or that would-be universal reformer.”³ Engels publicly declared that Marxism “has no fixed ready-made proposals to submit”; “our views as to the points of difference between a future, non-capitalistic society and that of today, are strict conclusions from existing historical facts and developments, and of no value—theoretical or practical—unless presented in connection with these facts and developments.”⁴ Marxism, the theoretical quintessence of proletarian revolution and socialist construc-

3 Marx, K., and F. Engels. 2010. *Marx/Engels Collected Works*, Vol. 6. London: Lawrence & Wishart, pp. 498.

4 Marx, K., and F. Engels. 2010. *Marx/Engels Collected Works*, Vol. 24. London: Lawrence & Wishart, pp. 325.

tion, is by no means the result of Marx and Engels sitting in a room and thinking hard, but the record and summary of their active revolutionary activities, the “theoretical expression of the proletarian movement” which they were engaged in. Its theoretical task is to examine in-depth the historical mission of the modern proletariat – the cause of the liberation of mankind and the world – its historical conditions as well as the nature of this cause itself, “to impart to the now oppressed proletarian class a full knowledge of the conditions and of the meaning of the momentous act it is called upon to accomplish.”⁵ The same goes for Leninism.

“The Marxian doctrine, which directly serves to enlighten and organise the advanced class in modern society, indicates the tasks facing this class and demonstrates the inevitable replacement (by virtue of economic development) of the present system by a new order—no wonder that this doctrine has had to fight for every step forward in the course of its life.”⁶ What is obtained through battle can only truly be understood and applied in battle. We should understand and grasp how Marx and Lenin used to think and solve problems from the social activities they were engaged in. Any interpretations of the texts – whether purely on the basis of these texts or academically – will only move further and further away from Marxism-Leninism.

In the history of the Chinese people’s study of Marxism-Leninism, and even today, it is not uncommon to hear a view that blames so-and-so for not being sufficiently prepared for the theory and doing something wrong. This view is unscientific as it fails to withstand questions such as what “theoretical preparation” entails, how to prepare, and to what extent preparation is considered adequate. Are there any cases in the history of revolutionary struggle where the theory is “well prepared”? Since the problem of insufficient theoretical preparation is raised, can we then ask the person who put forward this view to prepare theories needed in the future? Obviously, this will not work and runs against the common sense of life and history. Mao Zedong has criticized such a situation: “The correct and unwavering strategy of the Communist Party cannot be produced by a few individuals sitting in a room; it must arise from the process of mass struggle, meaning it can only be derived from practical experience.”⁷ This understanding scientifically answers where the revolutionary theory of Marxism comes from and how Marxist theory is “prepared.” Theory arises from practice, and its significance lies in addressing the questions posed by practice. The close integration of theory and practice is the spring source and the driving force of development of the life of Marxism. Therefore, the founders of Marxism repeatedly observed that the theoretical principles of Communists are “actual relations springing from an existing class struggle, from a historical movement going on under our very eyes,”⁸ and that “the practical application of the principles will depend, as the manifesto itself states, everywhere and at all times, on the historical conditions for the time being existing.”⁹ We should not “treat it in a doctrinaire

5 Marx, K., and F. Engels. 2010. *Marx/Engels Collected Works*, Vol. 24. London: Lawrence & Wishart, pp. 325.

6 Lenin. 2009. *Thematic Collection of Lenin*, Vol. 1: *On Marxism*. Beijing: People’s Press, pp. 148.

7 Mao Zedong. 1991. *Selected Works of Mao Zedong*, Vol. 1. Beijing: People’s Press, pp. 115.

8 Marx, K., and F. Engels. 2010. *Marx/Engels Collected Works*, Vol. 6. London: Lawrence & Wishart, pp. 498.

9 Marx, K., and F. Engels. 2010. *Marx/Engels Collected Works*, Vol. 26. London: Lawrence & Wishart, pp. 518.

and dogmatic way, as something which has got to be learnt off by heart but which will then supply all needs without more ado.”¹⁰ Marxism is not a dogma but a guide to action.

The tasks of revolution and construction related to socialism and communism in China and the world have not all been accomplished; on the contrary, there is still a long way to go. There is no doubt that if we do not spend our lives like Marx and Lenin, “contribute, in one way or another, to the end of the state institutions which it had brought into being, contribute to the liberation of the modern proletariat”, but detach ourselves from the revolutionary struggle of the proletariat as an alternative to capitalism, from the concrete practice of socialist revolution and construction in which the broad masses of the people are the mainstay, and study Marxism-Leninism only behind closed doors, then Marxism-Leninism will become a lifeless antique. Moreover, it could even lead to its opposite.

2. On scientific tools of knowledge

In order to rid themselves of countless forms of exploitation and oppression and escape all kinds of suffering, mankind has experienced millennia of hardships, and yet have never ceased the pursuit of an “ideal state” and an “ideal world”. Even the modern bourgeois economists and the great utopian socialist critics, though deserving of recognition for all the study they have done while groping in the dark, have not been able to discover, have not found, an effective way to the ideal society. Prior to the emergence of Marxism, the best deal the proletariat could get was to be treated by bourgeois scholars and utopian socialist critics as a stratum in deepest sorrow and worthy of sympathy, as a crowd of paupers to whom some social philanthropists gave alms or who needed charity. Even the tenacious co-operativist reformers, like the English Owenites, who, in order to change the poor conditions of the workers caused by what they considered to be an irrational system of production, built new social pilot areas such as the Rational Society, the Harmony Hall, and the Rochdale Pioneers Cooperative etc., failed to find, at the end of the day, a quick way out of their misery for the proletariat. The reason for this was that they had neither fully expounded the essence of wage-slavery under the capitalist system, nor had they fully discovered the laws of capitalist development, and thus they were not able to discover the social forces that are capable to become creators of a new society.

Marxism has brought about a complete revolution in the realm of human thought. Marx and Engels inherited and developed materialism, extending its application from the knowledge of nature to the knowledge of human society, and pursued materialism to the end. The historical materialism they discovered and established is one of the greatest achievements in scientific thought, replacing chaos and arbitrariness that had previously reigned in views on history and politics with a strikingly integral and harmonious scientific theory.¹¹ Historical materialism reveals and clarifies the simple fact long obscured by a tangle of ideologies, that mankind must first of all eat, drink, have shelter and clothing, before it can pursue politics, science, art, religion, etc.; that therefore the production of the immediate material means, and consequently the degree of economic development attained by a given people or during a given epoch, form the foundation upon which the state institutions, the legal conceptions, art, and even the ideas on religion, of the people

10 Marx, K., and F. Engels. 2010. *Marx/Engels Collected Works, Vol 47*. London: Lawrence & Wishart, pp. 531-532.

11 Lenin. 2009. *Thematic Collection of Lenin, Vol. 1: On Marxism*. Beijing: People's Press, pp. 68.

concerned have been evolved.¹² Using the method of historical materialism, Marx and Engels studied the entire history of mankind and its social life, discovered surplus-value hidden in commodity production, unveiled the secret of the exploitation of labour by capital, and thus discovered the laws of motion of modern capitalist production and the bourgeois society it produces, clarifying that “all history has been a history of class struggles, struggles between exploited and exploiting, between dominated and dominating classes at various stages of social development; that this struggle, however, has now reached a stage where the exploited and oppressed class (the proletariat) can no longer emancipate itself from the class which exploits and oppresses it (the bourgeoisie), without at the same time forever freeing the whole of society from exploitation, oppression and class struggles.”¹³

In 1872, the first year after the failure of the Paris Commune and in the face of a powerful capitalist world in which capital had defeated labour, Marx reprinted the first volume of *Capital*, publicly stating that *Capital* was a merciless criticism of capital, “represents a class whose vocation in history is the overthrow of the capitalist mode of production and the final abolition of all classes—the proletariat.”¹⁴ Starting out from the standpoint of the proletariat, from a hidden fact of capitalist social life, Marx and Engels saw a trend of development that no force could stop, that is, “the proletariat is not only a suffering class; that it is, in fact, the disgraceful economic condition of the proletariat that drives it irresistibly forward and compels it to fight for its ultimate emancipation. And the fighting proletariat will help itself. The political movement of the working class will inevitably lead the workers to realise that their only salvation lies in socialism. On the other hand, socialism will become a force only when it becomes the aim of the political struggle of the working class.”¹⁵ Therefore, when a group of social dreamers, even some geniuses who, standing outside the mass movement of workers, thought that it was only necessary to convince the rulers and the governing classes of the injustice of the contemporary social order, and it would then be easy to establish a truly human system of peace, harmony, freedom, democracy, fairness, justice and welfare on earth, and dreamt of a socialism without struggle, it was Marx and Engels who pointed out to the working class that the working class and its demands are a necessary outcome of the present economic system, which together with the bourgeoisie inevitably creates and organises the proletariat, that it is not the well-meaning efforts of noble-minded individuals, but the class struggle of the organised proletariat that will deliver humanity from the evils which now oppress it, that socialism is not the invention of dreamers, but the final aim and necessary result of the development of the productive forces in modern society, that all recorded history hitherto has been a history of class struggle, of the succession of the rule and victory of certain social classes over others, that this will continue until the foundations of class struggle and of class domination – private property and anarchic social production – disappear, that the interests of the proletariat demand the destruction

12 Marx, K., and F. Engels. 2010. *Marx/Engels Collected Works, Vol. 24*. London: Lawrence & Wishart, pp. 467-468.

13 Marx, K., and F. Engels. 2010. *Marx/Engels Collected Works, Vol. 26*. London: Lawrence & Wishart, pp. 118.

14 Marx, K., and F. Engels. 2010. *Marx/Engels Collected Works, Vol. 35*. London: Lawrence & Wishart, pp. 16.

15 Lenin. 2009. *Thematic Collection of Lenin, Vol. 1: On Marxism*. Beijing: People's Press, pp. 55.

of these foundations, and therefore the conscious class struggle of the organised workers must be directed against them.¹⁶ The abolition of private ownership and its associated concepts is what *The Manifesto of the Communist Party* emphasizes as the essential difference between the communist movement and other social movements.

Historical materialism and the theory of surplus-value are two epoch-making historical contributions made by Marx and Engels to humankind. The philosophical materialist worldview of Marxism has freed the proletariat from the spiritual slavery of the deceived bourgeoisie, while the economic theory of Marxism has explained the true position of the proletariat in the general system of capitalism¹⁷, thus “taught the working class to know itself and be conscious of itself, and substituted science for dreams.”¹⁸

Marxism-Leninism is the theoretical foundation of all guiding thoughts of the Chinese people and the CPC. The complete materialist philosophical worldview constituted by dialectical materialism and historical materialism is the theoretical foundation of Marxism-Leninism. Mastering this theoretical foundation is crucial and indispensable for professing Marxism-Leninism.

In the 1960s, Mao Zedong made a comment on an academic material compiled by the Publicity Department of the CPC: “Our work cannot be successful if we do not care about philosophy.”¹⁹ This is the first time in the history of Marxist thought that concern for philosophy, the improvement of philosophical thinking and analytical abilities, are associated with the success or failure of the Communist cause. When Mao Zedong made this assertion and announced it to the entire Party, he was not making an overstatement, but drew a lesson from the history of the international communist movement and the Chinese Revolution.

The Second International socialist movement, which developed from the 1880s, reached its climax in the 1890s and met bankruptcy by the early 20th century. This historical outcome began with the leaders of the Second International, led by the German Social Democratic Party, altering and betraying the philosophical materialist worldview of Marxism. After Engels’ death, bourgeois thinkers launched a broad attack on Marxist philosophy. At that time, bourgeois professors represented by Barthes and Simmel openly opposed the materialist conception of history. They belittled and distorted the Marxist view of historical materialism on a series of questions concerning the interrelation of social consciousness determined by social being, the laws (regularity) of society, the role of the masses and of the individual in history, the nature and interaction of various forms of social consciousness (art, religion), the relative independence of the development of thought, etc.. The arguments with which opponents confronted Marxist views received support from the revisionists of the Second International. They completely accepted these enemies’ idealistic worldview, vulgar theory of evolution and the way of “criticising” historical materialism. Revisionists had tied themselves to the chariot of idealism in an attempt to “reconcile” any kind of idealist doctrine with Marxism. A group of Second International theorists, represented by Bernstein, called for returning to Kant, proclaim-

16 *Ibid.*, pp. 52.

17 *Ibid.*, pp. 71.

18 *Ibid.*, pp. 53.

19 Mao Zedong. 1996. *Manuscripts of Mao Zedong Since the Founding of the People's Republic*. Beijing: Central Literature Publishing House, pp.148.

ing that Marxism should be reconciled with Kantianism and “social Darwinism,” and merged with Neo-Kantianism and Machism.

Lenin had a fierce debate with the second international theorists, exposing and criticizing them mercilessly: “In the sphere of philosophy revisionism followed in the wake of bourgeois professorial ‘science.’”²⁰ The philosophical front is one of the battlefields where the Bolsheviks led by Lenin fought fiercely against the Second International opportunists. It is in this struggle to criticize bourgeois idealist philosophy and defend Marxist materialist philosophy that Lenin wrote several philosophical works, such as “Marxism and Revisionism” and *Materialism and Empirio-criticism*, which excised bourgeois idealist philosophy from and defended the theoretical foundation of the Marxist movement in Russia. By contrast, “the revisionists’ attacks against the theory of Marxism often met with no serious resistance within the Second International. Revolutionary Marxists such as Paul Lafargue, Wilhelm Liebknecht and Franz Mehring underestimated the danger from the revisionist trend, and especially Bernstein’s struggle against Marxist materialism. Paul Lafargue was inclined to regard Bernstein’s ‘criticism’ of Marxism as a result of his ‘intellectual overstrain’. Wilhelm Liebknecht spoke of Bernsteinianism as an intellectual trend, which should not be taken into account. In Franz Mehring’s opinion, revisionism was not engendered by the social and historical conditions of the development of the working-class movement. ‘Revisionism has never been more than a mood in Germany,’ he wrote.”²¹ With such a philosophical vision and ideological level, how could the revolutionary Marxists within the Second International not lose the battle with revisionist thinking? The bankruptcy of the Second International is a typical case of Mao Zedong’s saying that “without concern for philosophy, our work cannot succeed.” The past practices and historical experiences of the sharp philosophical struggle between Lenin and Second International revisionism are what we Chinese Marxists should think over and draw lessons from when studying Marxism-Leninism.

The Chinese Communists represented by Mao Zedong have learned and inherited the fighting style and ideological legacy of Leninism to defend the Marxist theoretical basis and have always regarded instilling and popularizing the Marxist worldview within the CPC as an important aspect of Party building that should not be overlooked. As early as the pioneering period of the revolutionary war in the early 1930s, Mao Zedong wrote the article called “Oppose Book Worship” to prevent dogmatism from encroaching on the construction of revolutionary base areas. He pointed out that “we must wipe out idealism and guard against all opportunist and putschist errors before we can succeed in winning over the masses and defeating the enemy. The only way to wipe out idealism is to make the effort and investigate the actual situation”, and uttered the slogan “No investigation, no right to speak.”²² On the occasion of the full-scale outbreak of the War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression, Mao Zedong carefully wrote the famous treatises *On Practice* and *On Contradiction*, which laid the foundation of philosophical theory for the ideological transformation of the whole party and the formulation of new strategies and tactics.

20 Lenin. 2009. *Thematic Collection of Lenin, Vol. 1: On Marxism*. Beijing: People’s Press, pp. 150.

21 Chagin, B. A.. 1976. *Selected Philosophical Works of Georgi Plekhanov, Vol. 2*. Moscow: Progress Publishers, pp. 10.

22 Mao Zedong. 1991. *Selected Works of Mao Zedong, Vol. 1*. Beijing: People’s Press, pp. 112 and 109.

Attaching importance to the inquiry of Marxist methods is a common feature of Lenin and Mao Zedong. Lenin emphasized: “Marxists unreservedly borrow from Marx’s theory only its in valuable methods, without which an elucidation of social relations is impossible.”²³ In the years of Mao Zedong’s hard struggle to lead the revolution and construction of the CPC, he paid special attention to the innovation and construction of the CPC’s methods of thought and work. He personally formulated and discussed the adoption of the first “Decision of the Central Committee of the CPC on Working Methods.” He wrote a series of methodological works on politics, economy, military affairs and society, such as “On Correcting Mistaken Ideas in the Party,” “How to Differentiate Classes in the Rural Areas,” “Be Concerned with the Well-being of the Masses, Pay Attention to Methods of Work,” “Problems of Strategy in China’s Revolutionary War,” “Some Questions Concerning Methods of Leadership,” “Methods of Work of Party Committees” and “Sixty Points on Working Methods,” etc.. Mao Zedong knew that method was not a small matter, especially in philosophy, because method is the soul of any philosophical system and has decisive significance in every serious system.²⁴

After the founding of the People’s Republic of China, Mao Zedong promoted the study of Marxist philosophy to a more important position in the context of socialist construction and development. In 1955, when socialist revolution and construction was promoted in an all-round way, Mao Zedong clearly raised the issue of establishing a common language among the whole Party and the whole nation at the National Congress of the Communist Party of China, and clearly pointed out: “I recommend that you comrades read philosophy. Quite a few people are not interested in philosophy and have not cultivated the habit of reading it. They can begin by reading pamphlets or short articles, and after their interest is thus awakened, tackle books running to a length of 70’000 and 80’000, and then even several hundred thousand words. Marxism consists of several branches of learning: Marxist philosophy, Marxist political economy, and Marxist Socialism, that is, the theory of class struggle, but the foundation is Marxist philosophy. If this is not grasped, we will not have a common language or any common method, and we may keep on arguing back and forth without making things any clearer. Once dialectical materialism is grasped, a lot of trouble will be saved and many mistakes avoided.” Mao Zedong called on the whole Party “to draw up a plan for the formation of such a corps with several million people taking up the study of dialectical materialism and historical materialism, the theoretical basis of Marxism, and combating all shades of idealism and mechanical materialism. At present there are many cadres doing theoretical work, but there is still no corps of theoretical workers, much less a powerful one. Without such a corps, the cause of the entire Party, the socialist industrialization and socialist transformation of our country, the modernization of our national defence and our research in atomic energy cannot move along or succeed.”²⁵

Philosophy is the cornerstone of the formation and development of national thought and the direct embodiment of a nation’s ability to think theoretically. The history of human thought shows that philosophy is the nourishment and impetus that transforms people from bystanders to actors; a nation without advanced philosophy is a nation

23 Lenin. 2009. *Thematic Collection of Lenin, Vol. 1: On Marxism*. Beijing: People’s Press, pp. 300.

24 Mao Zedong. 1991. *Selected Works of Mao Zedong, Vol. 5*. Beijing: People’s Press, pp.160.

25 Mao Zedong. 1999. *Collected Works of Mao Zedong, Vol. 6*. Beijing: People’s Press, pp. 396.

without a future. On the basis of his mastery and application of the method of thought of Marxist dialectical and historical materialism, Lenin went on to open up the sphere of their scientific application and thus created Leninism, which led to the victory of the Great October Revolution and the opening of a new era in the development of human history. The history of China being reduced to a semi-colony is also the history of the decline of Chinese philosophy and ability. China was a nation rich in philosophy, boasting a proud and splendid heritage. But by the late 19th century and early 20th century, China was already deteriorating to a situation where, as the saying goes, “it is difficult to help the Tang state with one hand” and “tears abound in front of the before the lamp of battle drums and horns.”²⁶ The poverty of the country and the peril of the nation forced China’s intellectual community to shout out “Down with Kongjiadian (Speculative Confucianism)” and angrily dug their own “ancestral graves”! At that time, Chinese philosophy, represented by the veneration of Confucius and the advocacy of old rites, was no longer a rival to Western capitalism. It not only failed to lead the nation forward but also formed a “cultural reactionary alliance” with imperialism, rejecting new thoughts and new cultures. World history has repeatedly shown that in the era of imperialist expansion and domination, the rise and fall of philosophy and the rise and fall of the nation can be said to be intertwined. The experience of Leninism in Soviet Russia is also the history of the rise and fall of the Soviet Union. The tragic realities of Yugoslavia and other countries are invariably footnotes to the history of glory and shame of philosophy.

The history of the development and theory of Marxism reveals such a phenomenon in the construction and innovation of theoretical thought: “Without dialectics, without the mind of a philosopher, it is impossible for a writer to produce a good work of economics. Marx was able to write *Capital* and Lenin was able to write *Imperialism* because they were both philosophers, equipped with the mind of a philosopher and the weapon of dialectics.”²⁷ Innovation in methodology is the hallmark of the emergence and development of a philosophical idea or system. The complete philosophical materialist worldview of Marxism is a great tool of knowledge. Marx gave this great tool to mankind, especially to the working class, showing them how to escape the intellectual bondage from which all oppressed classes have suffered to date. Marxism-Leninism is a great tool of knowledge, a telescope and microscope for the proletariat to observe and change the world.

3. On uniting the workers and oppressed nations of the world

Those who have carefully read the *Communist Manifesto* will never forget its last sentence – “Working men of all countries, unite!”. This call was issued in 1848 by Marx, Engels, and their comrades of the Communist League proclaimed these words to the world, on the eve of the first Paris revolution in which the proletariat came out with demands of its own.²⁸ Sixteen years later, Marx led the International Working Men’s Association, and so the First International was founded in London. Marx personally drafted the “Inaugural Address of the International Working Men’s Association.” The last sentence of this

26 Yan Suicheng (Qing Dynasty): *Sanchuigang*. 1996. in *Manuscripts of Mao Zedong Since the Founding of the People’s Republic*, Vol. 10. Beijing: Central Literature Publishing House, pp. 225.

27 Mao Zedong. 1999. *Collected Works of Mao Zedong*, Vol. 8. Beijing: People’s Press, pp. 140.

28 Marx, K., and F. Engels. 2010. *Marx/Engels Collected Works*, Vol. 27. London: Lawrence & Wishart, pp. 60.

declaration was still the call he first issued in *The Communist Manifesto*: “Working men of all countries, unite!”. Since then, from Marx and Engels, to Lenin, Stalin, Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping, all proletarian revolutionists who firmly believe in Marxism would in their published works have the call “Working men of all countries, unite!” solemnly printed on the first page of their published works. This long-standing practice has become a tradition of Marxist revolutionists and a public declaration of their identity and beliefs. This slogan, one of the quintessences of Marxism, clearly displays the nature of Marxism and its uncompromising revolutionary character.

To thoroughly change their social status of being exploited, oppressed, and enslaved by capital, the proletariat has no choice but to unite and fight against capitalism together. The proletariat owes this realization to Marx and Engels and Marxism.

Entering the 20th century, European liberal capitalism developed into monopoly capitalism, further resorting to armed force to compete for world domination. Lenin, using the telescope and microscope of Marxism, re-examined and deeply analyzed the world and various nations greatly divided by the struggle for domination by monopoly capitalism, thereby discovering that the uneven economic and political development among countries had become a general status quo of capitalism and the absolute law of development, and confirming the world had entered the era of imperialism and proletarian revolution. He put forward the assertion that “the victory of socialism is possible first in several or even in one capitalist country alone,” which broke through many revisionist barriers of the Second International.²⁹

We will not discuss here the many significant aspects of the October Revolution, which divided an entire era of the history of human development. As far as the study of Marxism-Leninism is concerned, one of the most important and successful experiences is that Lenin, while adhering to Marx’s slogan and program – “Working men of all countries, unite!”, further enriched and developed them into “Workers and oppressed nations of the world unite!”. This great programmatic slogan is one of the most important and distinctive features of Leninism, and it is also one of the most important and distinctive features of the era of proletarian socialist revolution initiated by the October Revolution.

Chinese people and Chinese Communists have always felt intimate with and committed to the slogan, “Workers and oppressed nations of the world unite!”. It was Lenin’s call and the mobilization of the East that shone the light of the October Revolution on China, which had been long humiliated by imperialist powers, enlightened the thinkers among the Chinese people, empowered them with dignity and courage, and enabled them to re-plan the future of the country. The CPC was a direct outcome of Lenin’s great slogan that shocked the contemporary world.

From “Working men of all countries, unite!” to “Workers and oppressed nations of the world unite!” the two slogans respectively represent different revolutionary eras and show that as the scope and power of revolution expanded, so also did the content and theme of revolution.

In 1848, the year when Marx and Engels called for “Working men of all countries, unite!” was the era when the European bourgeois revolution was moving towards its later stages. Through the Communist League, Marx and Engels issued this call with the

29 Lenin. 2009. *Thematic Collection of Lenin, Vol. 4: On Socialism*. Beijing: People’s Press, pp. 4.

dual purpose of uniting and organising the scattered proletariat across Europe, and more importantly, liberating the organised proletariat from the long-term leadership and ideological influence of the bourgeois revolutionary movement. This was to make the proletariat stand as a political force independent of the bourgeoisie movement, as well as to unite with those of the bourgeoisie capable of revolution to jointly carry out the anti-feudal bourgeois revolution to its end. Only in this way could the proletariat enjoy the fruits of the bourgeois revolution for which they had fought and bled, and on the day of this revolution's success, immediately develop the bourgeois revolution into a proletarian socialist revolution, and thereby achieve their own complete emancipation. Obviously, this was a very arduous task in an era when the proletarian revolution had just begun and was still mingled with the bourgeois revolutionary movement. The slogan "Working men of all countries, unite!" directly reflects the scope of the 19th-century proletarian revolutionary movement in Europe and the successful strategies and tactics formulated by Marx and Engels for this purpose. On one hand, Marx and Engels actively participated in the revolutionary movement on the European continent, and on the other, they had to devote more energy to researching, formulating, and establishing the ideological system and theoretical program of the proletarian revolution, so as to enlighten, educate, and organise the young proletariat. This latter aspect was urgently needed by the immaturity of the proletariat and its revolutionary movement in that era. The inquiry and writing of *Capital* profoundly demonstrate that history determined the task they could accomplish with their limited lives was to lay down the foundation of thoughts, theories and organisation for the later proletarian revolutionary movement.

Compared to the 19th century, the era in which Lenin lived saw earth-shattering changes for both the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. By the early 20th century, European liberal capitalism had developed into monopoly capitalism, completely losing its early anti-feudal revolutionary nature and becoming vicious imperialism. The European proletarian movement, having been forged through decades of the First and Second Internationals, had formed organised revolutionary parties in various countries. The maturity and flexibility of its ideological program and the rigor and strength of their organisational structures were first demonstrated in the Bolshevik section of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party, led by Lenin. Shortly after the success of the February bourgeois revolution in Russia in 1917, Lenin immediately led the Bolsheviks to be the first "to cast off the 'dear old' soiled shirt"³⁰ in ideology, determined to change the party's name from Social-Democratic Party to Communist Party, thereby starting afresh and completely breaking with the social democracy of the Second International. At the same time, seizing the opportunity of the mutual slaughter and mutual harm of the imperialist powers in World War I, the Communist Party turned the international war into a domestic revolution, successfully transitioning the February Bourgeois Revolution into the October Socialist Revolution of the proletariat. Lenin, adhering to and applying Marx's theory of continuous revolution, established the Communist International and formed the broadest revolutionary united front, tirelessly opening up the battlefield for proletarian revolution worldwide, expanding the achievements of the October Revolution, and organising the revolution's spread to colonial and semi-colonial countries, and thus de-

30 Lenin. 1995. *Selected Works of Lenin, Vol. 3*. Beijing: People's Press, pp. 68.

fending and expanding the direct outcome of the October Revolution – the dictatorship of the Soviet proletariat. Lenin lived up to the title of revolutionary master, who was able to maximize the development of the revolution and expand its achievements.

Through the October Revolution, Lenin led Soviet Russia and the Communist International, based on the slogan “Working men of all countries, unite!”, to issue and mobilize the call for “Workers and oppressed nations of the world unite!”, which immensely inspired and mobilized the courage and strength of the oppressed nations and peoples of the world to fight for their own liberation. This slogan, deeply marked by its era, eloquently and brilliantly embodied the strategies and tactics of the proletarian revolution culminating in Leninism. The brilliance of this programmatic slogan lies in its firm grasp of the most important and basic economic facts and characteristics of the era of monopoly capitalism and imperialism: “the prosperity of the exploiters belonging to a few chosen nations [built] on the enslavement of hundreds of millions of working people in Asia, in the colonies in general, and in the small countries”³¹, “the whole world is now divided into a large number of oppressed nations and a very small number of oppressor nations that are enormously rich and strong in the military sense.”³² It is this fundamental fact and the contrast it reveals between class forces, distinct from previous eras, that has determined the strategies and tactics the proletarian revolution in each country should adopt, and from this specific fact formulate concrete and viable revolutionary policies. Under Lenin’s leadership and inspiration, the Communist International and communist parties of various countries adjusted their policies on supporting the bourgeois democratic movements of backward countries, first conceptually and nominally changing the “bourgeois-democratic” movement to a national-revolutionary movement.³³ This redefinition of the bourgeois national revolutionary movement, especially in colonial and semi-colonial countries, holds immense practical and theoretical significance.

The slogan “Workers and oppressed nations of the world unite!” is one of the quintessential features of Leninism, containing Leninism’s significant development of Marx’s theory of proletarian revolution, especially in relation to the peasantry. First, in practice it is manifested as directly influencing, mobilizing, and launching the world-wide national liberation movement, which itself is a particularly significant contribution to the proletarian revolutionary movement and the liberation of human society. Lenin clearly saw that “the overwhelming mass of the population in the backward countries consist of peasants,”³⁴ and that the essence and the mainstay of the national liberation movement should be the peasantry led by the working class. Therefore, Lenin greatly valued the exploited and oppressed dimension of the peasants, unearthed and elevated the long-neglected and suppressed revolutionary potential and infinite strength of peasants, considering them as a solid ally of the proletarian revolution. In this way, the peasant movement, which had long been attached to the bourgeoisie, was embraced by the proletarian revolutionary movement, thus the question of the proletariat leading the bourgeois revolutionary movement with peasants as its mainstay was settled. From then on, such a bourgeois national democratic revolutionary movement “no longer comes

31 *Ibid.*, pp. 387.

32 Lenin. 2009. *Thematic Collection of Lenin, Vol. 3: On Capitalism*. Beijing: People’s Press, pp. 278.

33 *Ibid.*, pp. 278.

34 *Ibid.*, pp. 278.

within the old category of the bourgeois-democratic world revolution, but within the new category. It is no longer part of the old bourgeois, or capitalist, world revolution, but is part of the new world revolution, the proletarian-socialist world revolution. Such revolutionary colonies and semi-colonies can no longer be regarded as allies of the counter revolutionary front of world capitalism; they have become allies of the revolutionary front of world socialism.”³⁵ The great slogan of “Workers and oppressed nations of the world unite!” directly reflects the fact that the exploited and oppressed peasants had become an equal revolutionary mainstay and an extremely important revolutionary force in the proletarian revolutionary movement, thus forming a solid alliance of workers and peasants in socialist revolution and construction. It was Lenin’s sincere reliance on the peasants as an extremely important and tremendous revolutionary force of the proletariat that the question of “the right leverage [sic] to cope with the peasant” – as it “seemed to” Engels himself at that time – “[sic] not set at the right point”, by Marx, Engels, as well as the entire First and Second Internationals, was not only theoretically but also practically settled at last.³⁶

History shows that under the leadership and influence of Leninism, the close integration and mutual support of the proletarian revolutionary movement and the national liberation movement opened up an infinitely vast battlefield for attacking and weakening imperialism. On the one hand, such national liberation movements were a major force that supported the socialist Soviet Union to withstand encirclement and suppression by imperialism in the first half of the 20th century; on the other hand, they provided the socialist Soviet Union with an incomparably strategic depth for survival and development, with extensive room for maneuvering. Lenin proposed a new doctrine on the question of the peasantry: “If the victorious revolutionary proletariat conducts systematic propaganda among them, and the Soviet governments come to their aid with all the means at their disposal—in that event it will be mistaken to assume that the backward peoples must inevitably go through the capitalist stage of development. Not only should we create independent contingents of fighters and party organisations in the colonies and the backward countries, not only at once launch propaganda for the organisation of peasants’ Soviets and strive to adapt them to the pre-capitalist conditions, but the Communist International should advance the proposition, with the appropriate theoretical grounding, that with the aid of the proletariat of the advanced countries, backward countries can go over to the Soviet system and, through certain stages of development, to communism, without having to pass through the capitalist stage.”³⁷ This new doctrine has greatly advanced the Marxist theory of socialism.

Undoubtedly, Leninism in both theory and practice resolved the relationship between the proletarian revolution and the bourgeois revolution, achieving the connection and transition from the bourgeois revolution to the proletarian socialist revolution, as well as giving the colonial and semi-colonial peoples a powerful ideological weapon for their liberation. Particularly in Russia and China, they realized Engels’ conception that “the greater the number of peasants whom we can save from being actually hurled down into

35 Mao Zedong. 1991. *Selected Works of Mao Zedong, Vol. 2*. Beijing: People’s Press, pp. 668.

36 Marx, K., and F. Engels. 2010. *Marx/Engels Collected Works, Vol. 27*. London: Lawrence & Wishart, pp. 495.

37 Lenin. 2009. *Thematic Collection of Lenin, Vol. 3: On Capitalism*. Beijing: People’s Press, pp. 281.

the proletariat, whom we can win over to our side while they are still peasants, the more quickly and easily the social transformation will be accomplished.”³⁸ It was through the phase of Leninism that the Marxist-Leninist theory on the question of the peasantry was carried forward and magnified in China, a country with a vast peasant population, and developed by Mao Zedong in the practice of the Chinese revolution and construction into a mature system, and was then being spread and applied in the broader Third World.

Leninism’s slogan and thought, “Workers and oppressed nations of the world unite!” still holds very important practical significance in the world today of the 21st century, since the global economic situation and political pattern that are reflected in and based upon this great slogan have not fundamentally changed – “the whole world is now divided into a large number of oppressed nations and a very small number of oppressor nations that are enormously rich and strong in the military sense.” There is no doubt then, that adhering to implementing this programmatic slogan and its strategies and tactics becomes the inescapable duty of all true Marxist parties and Marxists today.

In the 21st century, many developing countries and countries of the Global South are oppressed by neo-imperialism and its allies. In our revolutionary strategy, we can advocate the call and thought of “Workers and oppressed nations of the world unite!”

4. On socialism as the abolition of classes and the elimination of exploitation

What’s “Working men of all countries, unite!” and “Workers and oppressed nations of the world unite!” up to? It is to eliminate capitalism and establish socialism. In the 1840s, when scientific socialism arose, communism was Marx’s socialism. So, what is socialism? This was at one time a very clear-cut question, but has been muddled in recent times due to the subversion and destruction of the Soviet Union and the socialist countries in Eastern Europe by domestic and foreign hostile forces. What we are engaged in is the cause of scientific socialism guided by Marxism-Leninism, not any other socialism under the influence of another ideology. Remembering a few of the most straightforward and understandable points about what socialism is, as stated by the authors of the classics of Marxism, will enable us to identify all kinds of spurious socialism.

— In 1846, Engels wrote to the Communist Correspondence Committee in Brussels: “what communism was... I therefore defined the aims of communists as follows: 1. to ensure that the interests of the proletariat prevail, as opposed to those of the bourgeoisie; 2. to do so by abolishing private property and replacing same with community of goods; 3. to recognise no means of attaining these aims other than democratic revolution by force.”³⁹

— In 1848, Marx and Engels stated in *The Communist Manifesto*: “The distinguishing feature of Communism is not the abolition of property generally, but the abolition of bourgeois property.” “The theory of the Communists may be summed up in the single sentence: Abolition of private property.”⁴⁰

38 Marx, K., and F. Engels. 2010. *Marx/Engels Collected Works, Vol 27*. London: Lawrence & Wishart, pp. 498.

39 Marx, K., and F. Engels. 2010. *Marx/Engels Collected Works, Vol. 38*. London: Lawrence & Wishart, pp. 82.

40 Marx, K., and F. Engels. 2010. *Marx/Engels Collected Works, Vol. 6*. London: Lawrence & Wishart, pp. 489.

— In 1850, Marx, summarizing the class struggles in France from 1848 to 1850, pointed out: “The proletariat increasingly organises itself around revolutionary Socialism, around Communism, for which the bourgeoisie itself has invented the name of Blanqui. This Socialism is the declaration of the permanence of the revolution, the class dictatorship of the proletariat as the necessary transit point to the abolition of class distinctions generally, to the abolition of all the relations of production on which they rest, to the abolition of all the social relations that correspond to these relations of production, to the revolutionising of all the ideas that result from these social relations.”⁴¹

— In 1875, when Engels criticized the Russian Populists, he pointed out: “The revolution that modern socialism strives to achieve is, briefly, the victory of the proletariat over the bourgeoisie and the establishment of a new organisation of society by the destruction of all class distinctions.”⁴²

— In 1880, Engels wrote in his book *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*: “From that time forward Socialism was no longer an accidental discovery of this or that ingenious brain, but the necessary outcome of the struggle between two historically developed classes—the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. Its task was no longer to manufacture a system of society as perfect as possible, but to examine the historico-economic succession of events from which these classes and their antagonism had of necessity sprung, and to discover in the economic conditions thus created the means of ending the conflict.”⁴³

— In 1894, Engels pinpointed in the article “The Peasant Question in France and Germany”: “socialism is particularly opposed to the exploitation of wage-labour.”⁴⁴

— In 1894, Lenin, in his critique of liberal populists, said “It must be understood that protests and struggles against the exploitation of workers are aimed at the complete elimination of this kind of exploitation, and this is called socialism.”⁴⁵

— In 1905, Lenin wrote in his article “Petty-bourgeois and Proletarian Socialism”: “The socialist struggle is waged by the workers against the whole of the bourgeoisie.”⁴⁶

— In 1916, Lenin emphasised in his article “The ‘Disarmament’ Slogan”: “Whoever expects that socialism will be achieved without a social revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat is not a socialist.”⁴⁷

— In 1919, Lenin said in the work “Economy and Politics in the Era of the Proletarian Dictatorship”: “Socialism means the abolition of classes.”⁴⁸

We do not need to elaborate much on the above statements, since even less-educated workers and peasants can understand them. They learn and understand socialism from their own lives, as Mao Zedong revealed, “whole batches of Chinese Communists who confined themselves to books in their study of the social sciences have turned into coun-

41 Marx, K., and F. Engels. 2010. *Marx/Engels Collected Works, Vol. 10*. London: Lawrence & Wishart, pp. 127.

42 Marx, K., and F. Engels. 2010. *Marx/Engels Collected Works, Vol. 24*. London: Lawrence & Wishart, pp. 39.

43 *Ibid.*, pp. 304.

44 Marx, K., and F. Engels. 2010. *Marx/Engels Collected Works, Vol. 27*. London: Lawrence & Wishart, pp. 491.

45 Lenin. 1984. *Collected Works of Lenin, Vol. 1*. Beijing: People's Press, pp. 237.

46 Lenin. 1995. *Selected Works of Lenin, Vol. 1*. Beijing: People's Press, pp. 657.

47 Lenin. 2009. *Thematic Collection of Lenin, Vol. 4: On Socialism*. Beijing: People's Press, pp. 385.

48 Lenin. 2009. *Thematic Collection of Lenin, Vol. 3: On Capitalism*. Beijing: People's Press, pp. 158.

ter-revolutionaries... whereas illiterate workers often grasp Marxism very well.”⁴⁹

The contemporary Chinese are familiar with a quote from Deng Xiaoping: “The essence of socialism is liberation and development of the productive forces, elimination of exploitation and polarization, and the ultimate achievement of prosperity for all.”⁵⁰ We say that Marxism-Leninism, Mao Zedong Thought, and Deng Xiaoping Theory are of the same lineage. What is this “lineage”? Where is it? We believe that it is what Deng Xiaoping said about “elimination of exploitation.” In the popular readers that explain Deng Xiaoping Theory on the market, one can easily see that ideological circles in China often only talk about the “liberation and development of the productive forces” and “prosperity for all”, considering these to be the most crucial and essential aspects of Deng Xiaoping’s conception of the essence of socialism, while avoiding to talk about the phrase “elimination of exploitation and polarization,” or even to propagate the notion that “private capital involves no exploitation.” This perception is extremely wrong and harmful. Those who hold this view are in dire need of learning the preliminary knowledge about socialism.

Deng Xiaoping repeatedly emphasized: “Socialism has two major requirements. First, its economy must be dominated by public ownership, and second, there must be no polarization.”⁵¹ “The policies of using foreign funds and allowing the private sector to expand will not weaken the predominant position of the public sector, which is a basic feature of the economy as a whole. On the contrary, those policies are intended, in the last analysis, to develop the productive forces more vigorously and to strengthen the public sector.”⁵² “Special economic zones are socialist, not capitalist. In the case of Shenzhen, the publicly owned sector is the mainstay of the economy, while the foreign-invested sector accounts for only a quarter. And even in that sector, we benefit from taxes and employment opportunities.”⁵³ Clearly, the theory of socialism with Chinese characteristics established by Deng Xiaoping underscores the dominance of public ownership and distribution according to work in the primary stage of socialism and achieving prosperity for all on this basis, ultimately aiming to eliminate exploitation. However, popular misinterpretations sever Deng Xiaoping’s conception of the essence of socialism from its distinct party principles – class and revolutionary nature, obscuring the social orientation and revolutionary edge of Deng Xiaoping’s conception of the essence of socialism. This turns Marxist scientific socialism into a vulgar sociology that can be accepted and manipulated by non-Marxist or anti-Marxist ideologies. Why? The logic behind it is not complicated. Does the bourgeoisie not liberate and develop the productive forces? Any idea about what socialism is, if it does not consider “the elimination of private ownership and its exploitation” as the most essential thing, is fundamentally flawed. As Jack Matlock, the former U.S. Ambassador to the Soviet Union, put it in an incisive analysis of the revisionist agenda of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in *Autopsy on an Empire*: “if the Soviet leaders were willing genuinely to discard that concept [i.e., the theory of class struggle; author’s note], it would matter little whether they continued to call their

49 Mao Zedong. 1991. *Selected Works of Mao Zedong, Vol. 1*. Beijing: People’s Press, pp. 111.

50 Deng Xiaoping. 1993. *Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping, Vol. 3*. Beijing: People’s Press, pp. 373.

51 *Ibid.*, pp. 138.

52 *Ibid.*, pp. 149.

53 *Ibid.*, pp. 372.

guiding philosophy ‘Marxism’ or not. It would be a different ‘Marxism’ in a different world, a world we could all recognize.”⁵⁴ Obviously, any discussion of Deng Xiaoping’s conception of the essence of socialism that intentionally or unintentionally avoids the kernel – “elimination of exploitation” – that is, the elimination of exploitation formed by private ownership, is to obliterate the essential difference between Marxist proletarian socialism and bourgeois socialism, and is a blasphemy against Deng Xiaoping’s conception of the essence of socialism.

“The liberation and development of the productive forces” is the material basis for “the elimination of exploitation and polarization, and the ultimate achievement of prosperity for all”, while “the elimination of exploitation and polarization” is the ownership basis for “the liberation and development of the productive forces” and “the ultimate achievement of prosperity for all”, and “the ultimate achievement of prosperity for all” is the common goal and result of the development of the productive forces and the development of public ownership. The deeper content of Deng Xiaoping’s conception of the essence of socialism is that since the “essence of socialism” is “the elimination of exploitation”, it naturally presupposes that, to a certain extent and within certain boundaries, exploitation caused by private ownership still exists in the process of establishing and constructing socialism. Therefore, the investigation of socialist practice will inevitably produce a series of very important questions and their ideological logic, such as what is exploitation? Who is exploiting whom? How to “eliminate exploitation”? Whom to rely on? By what means to “eliminate exploitation” etc.. Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought tell us that exploitation is a question of the mode of production and the relations of production, which occurs between classes, and therefore relations of exploitation are also a question of class relations.

The contemporary world is a world in which the capitalist mode of production and relations of production are dominant, and it is not other than private capital that exploits labour, and it is the bourgeoisie that exploits the working class and other labouring people. How is exploitation achieved? It is mainly achieved through commodity exchange, that is, through commodity economy. This means that exploitation exists within an economy based on private property because private surplus-value is contained in commodities and realized through the commodity economy, via the buying and selling of labour-power and other commodity exchanges. And “polarization” is the inevitable result of exploitation. “Polarization” is but class differentiation, the manifestation and result of which is the contradiction and game between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. The elimination of exploitation and the abolition of classes are one and the same thing. It is for this reason that Lenin said that “socialism means the abolition of classes,” but “classes cannot be abolished at one stroke.”⁵⁵ Since the existence of classes is only bound up with particular historical phases in the development of production,⁵⁶ the elimination of exploitation, i.e. abolition of classes, is a historical process, and the elimination of exploitation, i.e. elimination of capitalism by socialism, requires a set of scientific and

54 Matlock, Jack F. Jr. 1995. *Autopsy on an Empire. The American Ambassador's Account of the Collapse of the Soviet Union*. New York: Random House, pp. 148.

55 Lenin. 2009. *Thematic Collection of Lenin, Vol. 4: On Socialism*. Beijing: People's Press, pp. 161.

56 Marx, K., and F. Engels. 2010. *Marx/Engels Collected Works*, Vol. 39. London: Lawrence & Wishart, pp. 62.

lasting strategies and tactics. That's why Deng Xiaoping said, "ultimate achievement of prosperity for all". "Ultimate" is a temporal and spatial concept, and its message is to tell us that "the achievement of prosperity for all" will go through a historical process and the ultimate result of the development of socialist society.

Undoubtedly, in the historical process of achieving "prosperity for all", contradiction and contest between classes inevitably occur in order to "eliminate exploitation," that is, the struggle of the proletariat to completely eliminate the bourgeoisie, and the Four Cardinal Principles put forward by Deng Xiaoping are the most powerful weapon for the proletariat to completely eliminate the bourgeoisie in order to "eliminate exploitation". Because "socialism is the transition from a society with the dictatorship of the proletariat to a stateless society".⁵⁷ At the beginning of 1992, when the international communist movement had just suffered great setbacks, Deng Xiaoping resolutely pointed out that the essence of socialism was "the elimination of exploitation", that is, to adhere to the Marxist doctrine of class struggle and proletarian dictatorship, and to uphold the socialist revolutionary banner of Marxist class struggle and the people's democratic dictatorship (dictatorship of the proletariat). Meanwhile, he also warned us that it was because the revisionist leading group of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union abandoned this basic principles of scientific socialism that led to the demise of the party as well as the state.

Undoubtedly, the essence and purpose of Marxist scientific socialism "is that it brings out the historic role of the proletariat as the builder of socialist society,"⁵⁸ that is, the struggle of the proletariat against the bourgeoisie: "the necessity of political action by the proletariat and of its dictatorship as the transition to the abolition of classes and, with them, of the state."⁵⁹ Therefore, only by liberating all mankind can the proletariat finally emancipate itself. In other words, "outside the class struggle, socialism is either a hollow phrase or a naïve dream."⁶⁰ "As long as class struggle still exists to a certain degree, we cannot abandon the Marxist view and method of class and class analysis. This view and method is the key for use to observe the complex political phenomenon of struggle between socialism and all sorts of hostile forces."⁶¹ It can be said that Marxist scientific socialism is a socialism built in all respects, including the construction of economy, politics, culture society, ecology, national defense and other spheres; including correctly handling contradictions among the people, between the enemy and ourselves, and among other classes; including scientific development, reform, and opening up, and also including socialist revolution, construction and reform.

57 Stalin. 1954. *Works of Stalin*, Vol. 7. Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, pp. 161.

58 Lenin. 2009. *Thematic Collection of Lenin*, Vol. 1: *On Marxism*. Beijing: People's Press, pp. 61.

59 Marx, K., and F. Engels. 2010. *Marx/Engels Collected Works*, Vol. 23. London: Lawrence & Wishart, pp. 370.

60 Lenin. 1995. *Selected Works of Lenin*, Vol. 1. Beijing: People's Press, pp. 658.

61 Jiang Zemin. 2006. *Selected Works of Jiang Zemin*, Vol. 3. Beijing: People's Press, pp. 83.

5. On the Party as the leader and organiser of the class

In the works of Marx, Engels, and Lenin, there is a rich account of their historical practice and theoretical thoughts of party construction, which includes both summaries of successful experiences and analyses of failures and hard lessons. When we study the glorious history and theoretical thoughts of the working-class parties they painstakingly established, we must also face the historical results of one twist and turn after another in the international communist movement. A history of the development of Marxism-Leninism is a history of proletarian parties that have experienced both successful developments and painful failures, a textbook on the experiences and lessons of constructing proletarian parties. Clearly, to learn properly the theories and basic experiences of Marx and Lenin on party construction, it is necessary to combine them with the experiences of the tortuous struggles of proletarian parties in various countries.

Beginning with the 1840s, when the international communist movement began from scratch, Marx and Engels, through arduous propaganda and mobilization, initially established working-class political party organisations in some European countries and organised and launched the proletarian revolutionary movement. At that time, Marx and Engels organised scattered workers struggling against individual capitalists, “centralise[d] the numerous local struggles, all of the same character, into one national struggle between classes, [hence organised] the proletarians into a class, and consequently into a political party.”⁶² By forming workers’ parties, they instilled in the European working class two fundamental ideological concepts: First, “they never cease, for a single instant, to instill into the working class the clearest possible recognition of the hostile antagonism between bourgeoisie and proletariat, in order that the German workers may straightway use, as so many weapons against the bourgeoisie, the social and political conditions that the bourgeoisie must necessarily introduce along with its supremacy, and in order that, after the fall of the reactionary classes in Germany, the fight against the bourgeoisie itself may immediately begin.”⁶³ Second, “making it clear to themselves what their class interests are, by taking up their position as an independent party as soon as possible and by not allowing themselves to be misled for a single moment by the hypocritical phrases of the democratic petty bourgeois into refraining from the independent organisation of the party of the proletariat. Their battle cry must be: The Revolution in Permanence.”⁶⁴ It was precisely because of the establishment of such a revolutionary or thoroughgoing reform consciousness that the European working class kept revolutionizing, and developed the struggle of the Paris Commune to seize bourgeois state power. Subsequently, they strongly supported the establishment of the German Social-Democratic Party, under the pressure of Bismarck’s “Anti-Socialist Laws” and relentlessly carried out an “illegal” semi-open secret struggle and achieved great development. After Marx’s death, Engels shouldered the burden of guiding the world proletarian revolutionary movement and lost no time in initiating and forming the Second International with the German Social-Democratic Party as the core, breaking the “Anti-Socialist Laws” in

62 Marx, K., and F. Engels. 2010. *Marx/Engels Collected Works*, Vol. 6. London: Lawrence & Wishart, pp. 493.

63 Marx, K., and F. Engels. 2010. *Marx/Engels Collected Works*, Vol. 26. London: Lawrence & Wishart, pp. 121.

64 Marx, K., and F. Engels. 2010. *Marx/Engels Collected Works*, Vol. 10. London: Lawrence & Wishart, pp. 287.

Germany, and enabling the German Social-Democratic Party to obtain the right and conditions for public activities.

Compared with later revolutionists, organisers, and theorists such as Lenin and Mao Zedong, who were able to completely control the proletarian party in their own country, Marx and Engels showed deep historical and temporal limitations in their practice of party construction. Since Marx was wanted and persecuted by reactionary governments across Europe, not only in his homeland Germany, but also in other countries, it was difficult for him to settle down and was forced to flee to England. Such an already public identity as a revolutionist made it difficult for him to guide the practical struggle and development of proletarian parties in various countries in a very concrete manner. He mainly influenced and guided the activities of workers' parties in some countries from afar and from the outside. Social being determines social consciousness. The history of political parties in the international communist movement shows that the theoretical ideas, tactics and strategies and basic experiences that have a great guiding role in party construction have been systematized and matured through the development of Lenin and Mao Zedong.

The victories of the Bolsheviks in the October Revolution under Lenin's leadership in Russia and the CPC's victory in the Chinese Revolution under Mao Zedong's leadership are successful embodiments of Marxist-Leninist principles on proletarian party construction in view of both thoughts and methods. These achievements represent an inexhaustible treasury of ideas for the proletarian party construction.

What is a political party up to? Political parties are products and tools of class development that have emerged in the modern era since the establishment of capitalist society. Engaging in political activities to seize and lead state power is the most fundamental task of all political parties. Whoever does not understand this point, or does not firmly grasp it, will not know what a political party is up to, nor how to fix and implement the aims, tasks, and methods of party construction, and will not be able to talk about the construction of the advanced nature of communist party, its capability to seize power, and its capability to govern.

Lenin's significant developments and contributions to the Marxist party construction are first and foremost reflected in organisational construction, where he established the principle of democratic centralism. This was the product of Lenin's fierce struggle with the Mensheviks of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party, who were deeply influenced by the "legal" struggle of the Second International. Marx had early on recognized that "revolutionary activity [...] can proceed with full force only from the centre... it is the task of the really revolutionary party to carry through the strictest centralisation."⁶⁵ Lenin inherited this basic idea from Marx and creatively put forward and implemented the organisational principle of democratic centralism. This allowed him to combine in a flexible manner "illegal" struggle with "legal" struggle under the complex circumstances of the suppression of the revolution by the bourgeoisie, achieving development and victory for the proletarian revolutionary party. However, the Mensheviks of the Second International and the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party were still pursuing the liberal concept and system of party construction from the bourgeois parties. They were

65 Marx, K., and F. Engels. 2010. *Marx/Engels Collected Works, Vol. 10*. London: Lawrence & Wishart, pp. 285.

transformed beyond recognition by the so-called “legal” political party struggle with the separation of powers in the structures of parliamentary democracy of bourgeois states, thereby losing the character of a working-class party and degenerating into opportunistic political parties that deceive workers. Lenin not only established and developed the Bolsheviks of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party on the basis of democratic centralism, but also extended this principle to the leadership and construction of the Russian Communist Party over the state under the dictatorship of the proletariat after the October Revolution. He stressed the necessity of maintaining the Communist Party’s leading position in state power, stating that “all the political and economic activities of which are guided by the class-conscious vanguard of the working class—the Communist Party.”⁶⁶ Other parties must accept and support the leadership of the Communist Party, and any form of bourgeois parliamentary multi-party system is strictly prohibited. Facing attacks from the national and international bourgeoisie and the Second International, which accused the Communist Party of “dictatorship” and “dictatorship of one party,” Lenin responded sharply that if maintaining the leadership of the Communist Party is considered “dictatorship of one party,” then “yes, it is a dictatorship of one party! This is what we stand for and we shall not shift from that position.”⁶⁷ The organisational principle of democratic centralism is one of the basic principles and experiences in the proletarian party construction a guided by Marxism-Leninism.

Lenin’s second important contribution to the Marxist party construction was the renaming of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party as the Russian Communist Party. Lenin’s action was a major event in the history of the international communist movement and Marxist political parties in the early 20th century, having a profound impact on the establishment and development of Communist parties in various countries thereafter. The impact and significance of this event, as Lenin explained at the time, are manifold: First, “the name ‘Social-Democratic Party’ is scientifically incorrect. When the workers set up their own state they realised that the old concept of democracy—bourgeois democracy—had been surpassed in the process of the development of our revolution. We have arrived at a type of democracy that has never existed anywhere in Western Europe,” and “if we at least state precisely, without departing from reality, Soviet power is a new type of state, a form of the dictatorship of the proletariat”. Second, for a real proletarian party, “the goal [...], that is, the creation of a communist society. That is why the name of Communist Party is the only one that is scientifically correct.” Third, in the period of the World War I, “up to now the old official socialist parties in all the leading European countries have still not got rid of their intoxication with social-chauvinism and social-patriotism that led to the complete collapse of European official socialism during the present war, so that up to now almost all official socialist parties have been a real hindrance to the working-class revolutionary socialist movement, a real encumbrance to it.”⁶⁸ The new name of the Russian Communist Party cleared the way for the establishment of the long-expected Communist International, and promoted the great development of the international communist movement in the later period.

66 Lenin. 1987. *Collected Works of Lenin*, Vol. 42. Beijing: People’s Press, pp. 274.

67 Lenin. 1986. *Collected Works of Lenin*, Vol. 37. Beijing: People’s Press, pp. 126.

68 Lenin. 1995. *Selected Works of Lenin*, Vol. 3. Beijing: People’s Press, pp. 456, 467, 457.

Lenin's third major contribution to the construction of Marxist parties was his reliance on peasants as an extremely important and vast revolutionary force for the proletariat. He solved the problem that Marx, Engels, and the entire First and Second Internationals had not found "the right leverage [sic] to cope with the peasant" thereby expanding the party's organisation and the revolutionary forces it led. This greatly broadened the depth and breadth of the proletarian party construction.

Lenin's fourth significant contribution to the Marxist party construction was his opposition to and rejection of "spontaneity" in ideological construction, advocating and implementing the scientific approach of "indoctrination." Lenin deeply explored and discussed the viewpoint that Marxism, or scientific socialism, cannot spontaneously emerge within the working class. Practice has proven that "the working class, exclusively by its own effort, is able to develop only trade union consciousness" and its economism; the consciousness of scientific socialism in the working class "have to be brought to them from without." Thus, "the only choice is — either bourgeois or socialist ideology. There is no middle course"; because "in a society torn by class antagonisms there can never be a non-class or an above-class ideology). Hence, to belittle the socialist ideology in any way, to turn aside from it in the slightest degree means to strengthen bourgeois ideology"; and "the spontaneous development of the working-class movement leads to its subordination to bourgeois ideology."⁶⁹ The stand, view, method of Marxism-Leninism, as well as its excellent human thought, morality, and style all need to be consciously, intentionally, and persistently advocated and cultivated in order to be widely accepted and formed among people. This is because since the emergence of class society, the ruling exploitative classes have oppressed and enslaved the working people for thousands of years, deeply embedding the ideology and morality of the exploitative classes into every aspect of social life, creating a powerful force of habit. This situation can only be changed through long-term and unrelenting education. Therefore, it is necessary to educate systematically all party members and the masses from all walks of life on Marxist ideology and morals in an organised and regular manner.

Lenin's developments and contributions to Marxism and its party construction were achieved in the struggle against the opportunism of the Second International, arising and evolving through the fight against all forms of revisionism and opportunism.

The CPC was established on the historical platform built by the October Revolution and Leninism, adopting and absorbing the world's most advanced and successful revolutionary experiences and party-construction theories from the Russian Communist Party. To establish a powerful proletarian party guided by Marxism-Leninism with combat effectiveness in China, a country that was at one time an extremely backward semi-colonial and semi-feudal state, with hundreds of millions of poor and ignorant peasants, numerous petty bourgeois but very few modern industrial proletarians, Chinese Communists represented by Mao Zedong consciously raised and solved the question: "How can we build up 'a bolshevized Chinese Communist Party, a party which is national in scale and has a broad mass character, a party which is fully consolidated ideologically, politically and organizationally'?" "It is this kind of party that we now want to build, but

69 Lenin. 2009. *Thematic Collection of Lenin, Vol. 5: On the Proletarian Party*. Beijing: People's Press, pp. 76&85.

how shall we go about it?”⁷⁰ From this, Mao Zedong developed the Marxist-Leninist party construction and its theoretical doctrines into a systematic and complete scientific system. Why say this, and based on what? The basis is that Mao Zedong identified and elucidated a fundamental principle of the construction of the proletarian party.

The history of the emergence and development of science shows that a scientific system can be established only when its theoretical form contains a number of basic principles of nature or society, and only then does it possess independent human value in the history of science. Principles are not artificially created, but are inviolable laws of nature or society discovered by people through long-term production practice and scientific inquiry.

What is the basic principle of proletarian party construction discovered by Mao Zedong? In 1945, Mao Zedong summarised in the political report of the Seventh National Congress of the CPC the movement for rectification and the basic experience of 24 years of party construction: “Ideological education is the key link to be grasped in uniting the whole Party for great political struggles. Unless this is done, the Party cannot accomplish any of its political tasks.”⁷¹ This principle reveals that the proletarian party, the Communist Party, is primarily an organ dedicated to political and ideological work. Political and ideological work is the primary work and task of the Communist Party at all levels of organisation and leadership. The history of the party shows that the leadership and prestige of the Communist Party, and thus the power of the Communist Party, are primarily and fundamentally established through persistent and in-depth political and ideological education of the masses, influencing them, uniting, and winning them over to the banner of Marxism and the Communist Party. The leadership of the Communist Party is primarily and fundamentally a reflection of the “leadership of proletarian ideology.”⁷² “Ideological leadership” can be achieved only through the political and ideological education of the party. Mao Zedong regarded ideological education and political work as the “central link” and the “lifeline,” highlighting its importance. If the Communist Party neglects or forgets such work and matters as the “central link” and the “lifeline,” what would that mean? It would mean that the Communist Party or any level of its organisation has given up and lost its influence over the masses upon which it relies, essentially abandoning its fundamental leadership over the masses, which amounts to an act of suicide. Once the political and ideological education of the party is neglected or undermined, the outcome would be that the masses and cadres scatter like wild horses leaving the herd, and the corresponding system would collapse. While systems are important, ideology guides the formulation and implementation of systems.

“The Party is the highest form of class organisation,” Deng Xiaoping pointed out in his report on the amendment of the Party Constitution at the Eighth National Congress of the Communist Party of China. “It is particularly important to point this out today when our Party has assumed the leading role in state affairs.”⁷³ There is no doubt that the party is “the leader and organiser of the class,”⁷⁴ but if the party does not consciously think about and engage in party construction and its political and ideological work from the

70 Mao Zedong. 1991. *Selected Works of Mao Zedong*, Vol. 2. Beijing: People's Press, pp. 603, 613.

71 Mao Zedong. 1991. *Selected Works of Mao Zedong*, Vol. 3. Beijing: People's Press, pp. 1094.

72 *Ibid.*, pp. 77.

73 Deng Xiaoping. 1994. *Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping*, Vol. 3. Beijing: People's Press, pp. 236.

74 Lenin. 2009. *Thematic Collection of Lenin*, Vol. 5: *On the Proletarian Party*. Beijing: People's Press, pp.337.

proletariat against all kinds of non-proletariat, especially from the side of feudalism and the bourgeoisie, it will not even be able to enter the “door” of party construction. Only by clarifying and addressing the objectives and issues related to the party’s construction and its political-ideological work can the rest of the party construction efforts be targeted effectively, can the party organisation become a school for educating and transforming people, and can the party’s political and ideological work become a powerful tool for realizing the Party’s various tasks.

Ideological and theoretical education is the foundation of party construction, a fundamental experience summarized by the CPC from its study of Marxism-Leninism, proven by both positive and negative historical experiences and lessons from the CPC and the international communist movement as a whole. Addressing the political turmoil in 1989, Deng Xiaoping hit the nail on the head when he pointed out: “This incident has really revealed enough of our mistakes! We have indeed made mistakes. And they are not minor ones.”⁷⁵ Where did the major problem lie? It was “the failure to do a good job in education and in ideological and political work,” “we have not talked about those things consistently, and there has been no action or even any mention of the need for action,” stating, “our biggest mistake was made in the field of education, primarily in ideological and political education — not just of students but of the people in general.”⁷⁶ It was precisely “the failure to do a good job in education and in ideological and political work” that corruption spread and severe political turmoil was incited, leading Deng Xiaoping to urgently exclaim to the entire Party, “It is high time that this Party was rectified; there can be no delay.”⁷⁷ The collapse of the Communist Parties in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union can be scientifically explained by their abandonment of this fundamental principle of proletarian party construction.

In summary, the editing and publishing of *Collected Works of Marx and Engels* and *Thematic Collection of Lenin* reflect the diligent study, accurate inheritance, and scientific development of Marxism-Leninism by the Chinese people and Communists. To advance the development of Marxism-Leninism and its Sinicization, we must first study Marxism-Leninism itself and then understand the relationship between Marxism-Leninism and its Sinicization. On the important issue of how to study Marxism-Leninism and its role in the international communist movement, Deng Xiaoping’s summarizing assertion, drawn from the long-term practice of the Chinese Communists, should become a guide for all comrades who adhere to Marxism. He stated, “Marxist ideological and theoretical work cannot be divorced from current politics. By politics here I mean the overall situation in the domestic and international class struggle and the fundamental interests of the Chinese people and the people of the world in current struggles. It is inconceivable that anyone can become a Marxist thinker or theorist if he is divorced from the overall political situation, if he doesn’t study it, if he doesn’t assess the actual development of the revolutionary struggle.”⁷⁸ Guided by Marxism-Leninism and its Sinicization, we must continue to promote continuous progress and harmony in China and the world.

75 Deng Xiaoping. 1993. *Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping*, Vol. 3. Beijing: People’s Press, pp. 312.

76 *Ibid.*, pp. 305, 306.

77 *Ibid.*, pp. 314.

78 Deng Xiaoping. 1994. *Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping*, Vol. 2. Beijing: People’s Press, pp. 179.

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