

Three Major Assertions in the Communist Manifesto and Their Contemporary Value

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Abstract

The Communist Manifesto reveals that the core idea of the communists is the elimination of private ownership, specifies that the driving force of class society development is class struggle and its important role in socio-historical development, and elaborates that the ultimate value of the proletariat is the free and comprehensive development of man and constructs the ideal social goal for which mankind strives. The Communist Party of China has always adhered to these three major assertions and applied them flexibly, further strengthening the people-centred development ideology by analysing the main contradictions of socialist society with Chinese characteristics in the new era and arguing for the necessity and inevitability of building a community of human destiny, enriching the theoretical system of socialism with Chinese characteristics.

Keywords

Communist Manifesto; Three major assertions; Contemporary value.

1. Introduction

The Communist Manifesto (hereinafter referred to as the Manifesto), which was formulated jointly by Marx and Engels, was the first comprehensive and systematic exposition of the theory of scientific socialism and profoundly pointed out that the communist movement would become an unstoppable historical trend. The Manifesto marked the birth of Marxism, and since then, socialism no longer remained in a state of fantasy, and the proletariat possessed a scientific world view and methodology. Academics have been paying great attention to the study of the text of the Manifesto, and have made in-depth interpretations of the ideas of interests [1], world history [2] and social revolution [3] in the Manifesto, and have achieved many highly enlightening research results. Based on the synthesis of existing research results, this paper, based on the new development period of the new era, further explores the three major assertions in the Manifesto, namely, that the core idea of the Communists is the elimination of private ownership, that the driving force of class society is class struggle, and that the ultimate value of the proletariat is the free and comprehensive development of man, which play an important guiding significance for the development of today's society, with a view to enriching the existing academic research on the Manifesto. Research.

2. Three Major Assertions Interpreted in the Communist Manifesto

2.1. The Central Idea of the Communists Is the Elimination of Private Ownership

To begin with, Marx and Engels stated in the Manifesto that "Communism is not characterized by the abolition of ownership in general, but by the abolition of bourgeois ownership. In this sense, the communists can sum up their theory in one sentence: the elimination of private ownership. [4] "This assertion is made clear again in the Critique of the Gotha Programme, where Marx and Engels argue that the most direct and fundamental cause of the severe poverty faced by workers in modern times is the ownership of the means of production, which in Marx

and Engels' view is the modern "resurrection" of slavery, and they They believed that in order to save workers from poverty, it was necessary to "eliminate ownership" and put workers back in control of the means of production. Moreover, Marx and Engels were particularly clear that communism was not about the elimination of ownership in general, i.e. the power of the productive worker to appropriate the products of society through his own labour, but about the elimination of private ownership, the power to subjugate the labour of others and to exploit them brutally.

Secondly, Marx and Engels also wrote in the Manifesto: "To turn capital into public property, property belonging to all members of society, is not to turn individual property into social property. All that is changed here is the social nature of property. It would lose its class character. 1" The main purpose of the elimination of private property is to bring about a change in the social nature of property, and the main reason for such a change is the growing contradiction between the socialization of production and the possession of the private means of production, the fact that the productive forces of capitalist society are no longer able to promote the development of bourgeois civilization and bourgeois ownership, and that on the contrary the development of the productive forces is already constrained by bourgeois The relations of production are so constrained that they need to be broken down to re-establish relations of production that are compatible with the productive forces, i.e., the communal ownership of the means of production. Moreover, in conjunction with their analysis of historical development, Marx and Engels hit the nail on the head when they pointed out that the resolution of ownership relations that do not correspond to the development of the productive forces, i.e., the contradiction between the productive forces and the relations of production, is not just a communist mission, but is also a necessary process for historical development.

In fact, the reason why Marx and Engels spent a lot of ink in the Manifesto to explain the assertion of the elimination of private ownership is that after capitalism entered the period of great industry, due to the gradual maturity of machines and division of labour, the labour of the proletariat had lost any independent nature and the workers were gradually reduced to the subordination of machines, and the private ownership of the bourgeoisie was becoming the dominant force in society. In order to extract more surplus value and maximize profits, the capitalists increased their exploitation of the proletariat while expanding reproduction, which in turn led to high prices and declining purchasing power, resulting in an economic crisis that forced workers out of work. In order to delay this crisis, capitalism improved private ownership by eliminating large productive forces or opening up colonies to form new markets. But Marx and Engels were conscious that a complete escape from the crisis could only be achieved if the proletariat of the world united to destroy this cruel and cold-blooded capitalist private ownership.

2.2. The Class Struggle Is the Driving Force of Class Social Development

Marx and Engels open the Manifesto with the following statement: "The whole history of mankind (since the dissolution of the primitive clan society of the land commons) is the history of the class struggle, that is, the history of the struggle between the exploiting and the exploited classes, between the ruling and the oppressed classes; this history of the class struggle consists of a series of stages of development, and has now reached such a stage in which the exploited and oppressed class (the proletariat) cannot free itself from the slavery of the class that exploits and dominates (the bourgeoisie) without at the same time freeing the whole of society once and for all from all exploitation, oppression, and class differences and class struggle. [5]" It is easy to see from history that what drives the development and progress of society is the struggle and change between classes, only with new changes in the names, in the conditions of oppression, in the forms of struggle, in each period. In a nutshell, the oppressor and the oppressed have always been in a state of mutual antagonism, constantly struggling, sometimes

covertly, sometimes openly, with each struggle culminating in the revolutionary transformation of society as a whole and the liberation of the oppressed classes from exploitation and oppression.

Secondly, Marx and Engels also observed that in 1848 on the European continent, capital accumulation in many capitalist countries was carried out by very primitive and barbaric means, capitalists also exploited workers by harsh means, very violent conflicts between the proletarians and the bourgeoisie broke out frequently, the class struggle became extremely acute, and the workers' movement began to take off all over Europe. It was in this context that Marx and Engels argued that in the era of capitalism "the proletariat went through various stages of development. Its struggle against the bourgeoisie began at the same time as its existence. 2" The class antagonism gradually emerged more directly and clearly, as well as prominently, as the antagonism between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie.

Moreover, Marx and Engels analyzed the class struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie in the Manifesto, stating that the proletarian struggle is a relationship between quantitative and qualitative change, and that "all movements in the past were movements of the minority or for the benefit of the minority. The movement of the proletariat is an independent movement of the vast majority of the people and for the benefit of the vast majority of the people. 1" It is a process of quantitative change which shows twists and turns, and the fact that the proletarian struggle takes the lead from one place and gradually spreads until after its accumulation to a qualitative change does not mean that the complete victory of the struggle has been fully achieved. For the class struggle will not disappear until exploitation and oppression are completely eliminated in human society as a whole, and no country or nation will be the first to eliminate the class struggle, which will always exist in class society. However, Marx and Engels also made a scientific prediction that, although the class struggle is complex and varied, since the struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie is the highest form of class struggle, "the extinction of the bourgeoisie and the victory of the proletariat are equally inevitable 2" will become the inevitable process of the elimination of class society by mankind.

2.3. The Ultimate Value of the Proletariat Is the Free and Comprehensive Development of Man

Although the emergence of the bourgeoisie led to a very dramatic change in society, creating more productive forces than the total productive forces of all previous societies and greatly advancing human history, Marx and Engels sharply saw what was wrong with it. Although the bourgeoisie severed some of the relations of feudal society, it established a relationship without human feelings, everything was based on profit, and this profit was all selfish and cruel, and could even do whatever it took, completely depriving everyone of their freedom, and even removing the halo from the professions of doctors and teachers, and linking the treatment of the sick and teaching to profit, which has since become a The relationship of commodity exchange. Not only that, "in bourgeois society, capital has independence and individuality, while the active individual has none. 1" By the enslavement of the workers, the industrial capitalists turn them into instruments of the bourgeoisie and its state, labor becomes a simple and boring operation, the worker is spent only on the means of subsistence necessary to sustain him and to perpetuate him for future generations, but "what the hired worker appropriates by his own labor is only barely enough to maintain the reproduction of its life. Under this appropriation, the worker lives only for the appreciation of capital, and lives only as long as the interests of the ruling class require him to live. " 1

Faced with such a cold and cruel social reality, Marx and Engels, full of sympathy for the oppressed and exploited working class, resolutely and boldly took the stand of the proletariat and devoted themselves to the great cause of seeking their own emancipation. For this reason,

Marx and Engels drew up in the Manifesto the ideal blueprint of a communist society - "In place of the old bourgeois society with its classes and class antagonisms, there will be such a union, where the free development of every man is the condition for the free development of all men. 2" Marx and Engels pointed out that in a communist society the happiness of the vast majority of people can be guaranteed, and not, as in capitalist society, the interests of the few at the expense of the happiness of the vast majority. Because private ownership has been eliminated in a communist society, the alienation of labour disappears, the workers produce the products of their labour to serve themselves, and the workers become masters of the products of their labour in the true sense of the word, instead of the workers becoming subordinate to the products as in capitalism.

The most important point in a communist society is that all people are free and equal, without classes or privileges, and that people pursue their own happiness as completely independent individuals, instead of losing their independence and freedom, as in a capitalist society, where people can only survive by being dependent on capital and have no power to be happy at all. In a communist society, people are proud of their work, and everyone can cultivate their own interests according to their own will, and no one can oppress themselves, and no one can override others. This is the ultimate value that a communist society strives to achieve - the liberation of the proletariat and all mankind and the realization of the full and free development of man. Marx and Engels believed that in order to realize such a communist society, the proletariat would need to become the ruling class and gain the power to liberate itself through revolutionary means, and step by step seize all the capital and all the means of production of the bourgeoisie, so as to further achieve the noble goal of liberating all mankind.

3. The Contemporary Value of the Three Major Assertions in the Communist Manifesto

3.1. Theoretical Basis for Analyzing the Main Contradictions of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics In The New Era

In the Manifesto Marx and Engels summarized three major assertions through their historical analysis of the critique of capitalist modernity, further pointing out the responsibilities and missions that communists should shoulder on the road to achieving communism. Through this method of contradiction analysis in the Manifesto, General Secretary Xi Jinping also pointed out that the current social development in China is still a complex of contradictions, and the basic contradiction of society is still the contradiction between the productive forces and the relations of production, between the economic base and the superstructure, as revealed by Marx and Engels, but the main contradiction of society has changed to "the contradiction between the people's growing and beautiful needs and the unbalanced and insufficient development []. But the main contradiction of society has changed to "the contradiction between the people's growing needs and unbalanced and inadequate development [6]". As Marx and Engels explained, the basic contradiction of society runs through the entire historical development of human society, but this does not mean that it is the same in every period, but that in different historical periods, the basic contradiction of society manifests itself with the characteristics of that historical period.

Through the three major assertions in the Manifesto, it is clear that the basic contradictions of society in a socialist society are completely different from those in a capitalist society, and that the contradiction between the productive forces and the relations of production, and the state of confrontation between the productive forces and the bourgeoisie and its ownership, can be effectively resolved entirely through the development and improvement of socialist society itself. The main contradictions of society are the concentrated expression of the basic contradictions of society in this historical period, and General Secretary Xi Jinping believes that

after socialism with Chinese characteristics has entered a new era, both the needs of the people and the development of society have undergone great changes, and the Party and the State are faced with contradictions and struggles with entirely new characteristics. The three major assertions in the Manifesto have proved to us that the contradictory movement of the productive forces and relations of production is the fundamental driving force for social progress and development, and that the CPC should lead the people to profoundly grasp this idea, grasp the main contradictions of socialist society with Chinese characteristics in the new era, seriously examine the real needs of the people for a better life in the current society, strive to solve the real problems faced by the people [7], and stimulate the new era the great development of the productive forces of the whole society, fully mobilize the superiority of the socialist system, and bear in mind the original intention and mission to seek happiness for the Chinese people and rejuvenation for the Chinese nation.

3.2. Important Theoretical Guidance for Adhering to "People-Centred" Thinking

As early as the Yan'an rectification period, Comrade Mao Zedong used the idea of "two overwhelming majorities" in the three major assertions of the Manifesto and further proposed the mass line, that is, the mass line that everything is for the masses, everything depends on the masses and comes from the masses and goes to the masses, in the light of the specific actual situation in China. The introduction of the mass line has provided an endless impetus for the development of the CPC, and has led to a series of world-renowned historical achievements [8]. The Chinese Communists have persistently breathed with the people and shared their destiny in any period, which is the fundamental reason why the CPC was able to unite all the forces that could be united and achieve revolutionary victory. After socialism with Chinese characteristics entered a new era, the mass line was once again given a new meaning, and in the report of the 19th Party Congress it was reflected that the greatest characteristic of socialism with Chinese characteristics is its people's nature, that it must always adhere to the people as the center, and that the spiritual pursuit of the Chinese Communists is to work for the happiness of the people. In the Manifesto, Marx and Engels have made clear their distinct class position through three major assertions, namely, that the interests of the working people are to be safeguarded. The history of human social development is the history of the practice of the vast number of working people, and it is the people who play a creative role and play an important role in promoting the development of history as a whole, and the real subject of historical development is the people. General Secretary Xi Jinping further pointed out on this basis that the firm builder and defender of socialism with Chinese characteristics is the Chinese people, and that a unique spirit of the times possessed by the Chinese people is not subordinate to any country or any historical period, and that this spirit of the times does not originate from the new era of socialism with Chinese characteristics, but is precisely formed by the Chinese people after a long period of great practice, symbolizing It symbolizes all the characteristics of the character of this era, and is the concentrated embodiment of the "great spirit of creation, great spirit of struggle, great spirit of unity and great spirit of dream", and the spiritual qualities it contains support and consolidate the road, theory, system and cultural confidence of socialism with Chinese characteristics.

In order to truly serve the people, the Communist Party of China has made the mass viewpoint and the mass line the lifeline of the Party from the beginning to the end, reaching out to the masses, starting from the actual needs of the people and making all efforts and actions to solve the real problems of the people [9]. The "people-centered" ideology of the Party and the State is not high-sounding, but is actually reflected in every aspect of people's lives. General Secretary Xi Jinping, who works hard at all hours of the day and night, has always taken the people into his heart. In 2020, he made 13 visits to local inspections, going to the grassroots, into the

mountains and forests, visiting communities, always going into the homes of the people and talking to them, paying close attention to the quality of life of the farmers, leaving one touching moment of warmth after another, vividly showing the great leader's "I will be nothing but the people". He left behind one touching moment after another, vividly showing the supreme spiritual pursuit of the great national leader "I will not fail the people without me". During the fight against the epidemic, party members and cadres rushed forward and bravely took up the heavy responsibility, treating the epidemic as the enemy, treating the ward as the battlefield, and treating the patients as their own relatives, showing the spirit of communists being highly responsible for the people to the fullest. The "digital divide" problem has caused the State Council to pay great attention, and on November 24, the General Office of the State Council issued the "implementation plan on effectively solving the difficulties of using intelligent technology for the elderly" to promote the elderly to enjoy intelligent services more commonly, and traditional services need to continue to improve to effectively meet the basic needs of the elderly. This concept of serving the people and governing for the people not only responds to the people's call, but is also a concentrated manifestation of people-centred thinking, meeting the diverse needs of the people in different times and allowing the general public to reap more happiness.

3.3. Theoretical Sources for Building A "Community of Human Destiny"

The idea of world history, as elaborated by Marx and Engels through their three major theses, shows that human history will eventually evolve into world history, a basic fact constantly confirmed by the high development of productive forces and the formation of universal interactions, that the previous city-state world system will gradually disintegrate, that universal global interactions and exchanges between civilizations will become a historical necessity, and that the destiny of mankind will be more closely linked than in any other historical period. The destiny of mankind will be more closely linked than at any other time in history. Although political, economic and military strife still frequently erupts in the international community, the integration of the world's development process is accelerating, prompting countries facing common opportunities and challenges to put aside confrontational conflicts and establish cooperative relations that are "more frequent and closer than ever before". It is against such a realistic background that General Secretary Xi Jinping has proposed building a community of human destiny based on the three major assertions in the Declaration. [10] This is not only a scientific and effective Chinese solution and Chinese wisdom contributed by the Chinese government in its commitment to the peaceful development of the world and to join hands with people from all countries to jointly safeguard the global home, but also an inevitable result of following the general law of the historical development of society as a whole. The "community of human destiny" is essentially the same as the "community of free men" conceived by Marx and Engels in the Declaration, the former being a milestone, while the latter is the ultimate goal, unlike the brutal and cruel modern plundering path of capitalism. Unlike the brutal and cruel modern plundering path of capitalism, the "community of human destiny" always insists on constructing a realistic and feasible path to the "association of free people" on the premise of the path of peaceful development. The "community of human destiny" must be prepared through the construction of a "community of human destiny". [11] As the largest socialist country in the world today, China, while successfully realizing the Chinese dream of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation, will surely share the fruits of its hard-won victory with people all over the world.

4. Concluding Remarks

The Communist Manifesto, first published in 1848, was not only the first programmatic document of a communist nature drafted by Marx and Engels for the Communist League, but

also a direction for proletarian revolution all over the world, and although its words are easy to understand, they are full of profound ideas that enlighten us at all times. As time passes, on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Communist Party of China, rereading the Communist Manifesto makes us remember the heavy responsibility on our shoulders, closely combine theory and practice, and renew the new vitality of Marxist thought to guide us further and further on the prosperous path of socialism with Chinese characteristics.

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