

A Brief Analysis of the People-centered Development Philosophy in *The Communist Manifesto*

Xiaoli Sun

Zhejiang Normal University, Jinhua 321004, China

Abstract

The Communist Manifesto is an important symbol of the birth of Marxism. It is a classic work for the interests of the people and liberation for the people. The Communist Party of China has combined Marxist theory with China's concrete reality and continuously enriched and developed the people-centered development philosophy. Therefore, how to accurately understand the people-centered development philosophy contained in *The Communist Manifesto* is of great practical significance for promoting common prosperity in high-quality development. This article will be discussed from the aspects of theoretical basis, basic contents and important value.

Keywords

The Communist Manifesto; People-centered development philosophy.

1. Introduction

The report to the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China made an in-depth elaboration of the rich connotation of the people-centered development philosophy: in responding to the sudden outbreak of Covid-19, we put the people and their lives above all else, worked to prevent both imported cases and domestic resurgences, and tenaciously pursued a dynamic zero-Covid policy. We fought against the epidemic to prevent its spread to the greatest extent possible. We have protected the people's health and safety to the greatest extent possible and made tremendously encouraging achievements in both epidemic response and economic and social development. We must maintain a global vision, stand firmly with the people, respond to their wishes, respect their creativity and pool their wisdom. All of us in the party must adhere to the fundamental purpose of serving the people wholeheartedly, maintain a people-centered mindset, and carry out the mass line. We must respect the people's pioneering spirit and ensure that we are acting for the people and relying on them in everything we do. We must follow the principle of "from the masses, to the masses", maintain a close bond with the people, and accept their criticism and oversight. We must breathe the same air as the people, share the same future, and stay truly connected to them.[4] As an important part of the Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era, applying a people-centered development philosophy reflects the Communist Party of China's inheritance and development of the basic ideas of *The Communist Manifesto* (hereinafter referred to as *The Manifesto*).

2. The Theoretical Basis of The People-centered Development Philosophy in *The Manifesto*

Since its publication, *The Manifesto* has been regarded by the working class as the supreme guide to action. The publication of *The Manifesto* gave the proletarian revolution, headed by the workers' movement, a scientific basis and a concrete goal to strive for. The people-centered development philosophy contained in *The Manifesto* pointed out the way for the Communist Party and determined the ultimate goal of the proletarian movement, while providing the basic guidelines for the proletarian movement in all countries. The Communists always put the

interests of the people first, and thus won the support of the vast majority of the working people, so that the scale of the proletarian movement continued to grow. *The Manifesto* provides a theoretical basis for the people-centered development philosophy.

The basic ideas of *The Communist Manifesto* mainly include three aspects. The first is the idea of historical materialism: "the principal mode of economic production and exchange and the social structure that necessarily follows from it in every historical epoch are the foundations on which the political and spiritual history of that epoch is based and from which it can only be explained." [2] That is to say, the mode of production of material life restricts the whole process of social, political and spiritual life. The appearance, structure and nature of society vary with different modes of production. With the development of social production, all aspects of social life will change. The more rapidly social production develops, the greater will be the changes in all aspects of social life.

Class struggle is the direct driving force for the development of class society, that is, "the whole history of mankind is the history of class struggle, that is, the history of the struggle between the exploiting classes and the exploited classes, between the ruling classes and the oppressed classes." [2] In other words, class struggle is the direct power and lever to promote the replacement of social forms, and to promote the qualitative change of social forms. When the basic social contradictions become acute, that is, when the old relations of production don't adapt to the development of the productive forces and become a shackle on the development of productive forces, the reactionary ruling class, which upholds the old relations of production, will inevitably come into sharp confrontation with the advanced class, which represents the demands of the development of the productive forces. At this time, only through the revolutionary struggle of the advanced class against the reactionary ruling class and the overthrow of the rule of the reactionary ruling class can a new social formation be established in order to liberate and develop the productive forces and promote social progress.

The third is the thought of the historical role of the proletariat. That is: "the history of this class struggle consists of a series of stages of development, which have now reached the stage at which the exploited and oppressed class (the proletariat) cannot free itself from the bondage of the class that exploits and rules (the bourgeoisie) without simultaneously freeing society as a whole from all exploitation, oppression, class distinctions and class struggle once and for all." [2] That is, the class emancipation of the proletariat and the emancipation of mankind cannot be separated, and if the proletariat wants to be liberated, it must liberate all mankind. It defines the aims and strength of the proletarian movement. The proletariat is at the lowest level of society and cannot achieve true freedom and true equality without destroying the entire superstructure of the bourgeoisie. The Communist Party of China's people-centered development philosophy is a fundamental and creative development of the basic ideas of *The Manifesto*. It embodies the fundamental principle of historical materialism and reflects the law of social and historical development. The Communist Party of China adheres to the people-centered philosophy of development, promotes common prosperity for all the people, and has achieved innovation and development of *The Manifesto* in practice.

3. The Basic Contents of The People-centered Development Philosophy in *The Manifesto*

3.1. The connotation of people is constantly changing with the development of history

The concept of people has a long history in the history of political thought, and often has different connotations in different times. In the Marxist view of history, in the primitive society, people lived in groups, without exploitation and without class antagonism. At this stage, humanity was primitive and there was no concept of private property or possession. But with

the passage of time, the primitive society began to disintegrate, which provided an opportunity for the change of social form. In the slave society, there was an antagonism between slave owners and slaves. The people at that time were mostly slaves without social status or personal freedom. In feudal society, the people were all oppressed people, including the working class. However, in capitalist society, the meaning of people has changed again. "But our age, the age of the bourgeoisie, has one characteristic: it simplifies class antagonisms. The whole of society is increasingly divided into two hostile camps, into two classes directly opposed to each other, that is, the bourgeoisie and the proletariat." [1] Capitalism is a social system based on private ownership of the means of production. The contradiction between the socialization of production and the capitalist private possession of the means of production constitutes the basic contradiction of capitalist society, and this basic contradiction runs through the entire development of capitalism. It is politically manifested as the contradiction between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. At this time, the people were the vast working people and the people at the bottom of society who were ruthlessly exploited and oppressed by the bourgeoisie. According to Marxist historical materialism, the people are the sum total of classes, strata and social groups that account for the majority of the social population, conform to historical development and promote historical progress. To further adhere to the people-centered development philosophy on the new journey, we need to use historical materialism to accurately understand and grasp the concept of the people.

3.2. The proletarian revolution is the inevitable way for the proletariat to gain power

The Manifesto states that "the immediate aim of the Communists" is "the formation of the proletariat into a class, the overthrow of the rule of the bourgeoisie and the seizure of power by the proletariat." [2] "The first step of the workers' revolution is to raise the proletariat to the ruling class and to win democracy. By means of its political rule, the proletariat will seize step by step all the capital of the bourgeoisie, concentrate all the means of production in the hands of the proletariat and increase as quickly as possible the total volume of the productive forces." [2] To achieve the liberation of the proletariat and all mankind, it is necessary to reform the capitalist system and establish a new system of socialism and communism. This is the mission of the proletariat. The role, economic status and class characteristics of the proletariat in the development of the productive forces of capitalist society determine that it must be able to undertake such a historical mission.

That is to say, the first step in the emancipation of the proletariat is a revolution, the overthrow of the rule of the bourgeoisie and the establishment of a state under the dictatorship of the proletariat and the establishment of the socialist political system. This is the fundamental political prerequisite for putting the people as the center and upholding the people's principal position. The second step is to make use of the power of the state system of the dictatorship of the proletariat for socialist transformation, to concentrate the means of production in the hands of the state or the working masses and to establish socialist economic relations. This is the fundamental economic foundation for putting the people as the center and ensuring the people's principal position. The third step is vigorously developing productive forces to create a strong material and technological foundation for the all-round progress of society. At the same time, we must adapt to the requirements of the development of productive forces and constantly promote economic, political, ideological, cultural and social improvement and development.

3.3. The free and all-round development of everyone is the goal of Communists

"In place of the old bourgeois society, in which classes and class antagonisms exist, will be an association in which the free development of each is a condition for the free development of

all." [2] To achieve the free development of all people, everyone must be free to develop. To achieve the free development of everyone, all people must be free to develop. In other words, the free development of each individual and the free development of all people are mutually conditional and mutually reinforcing.

To realize the free and all-round development of human beings is the fundamental value goal pursued by Marxism, and also the fundamental characteristic of communist society. Marx and Engels clearly expressed the lifelong pursuit of the Communists in concise words. Only by means of violent revolution can the proletariat lead the workers to overthrow the rule of the bourgeoisie and then seize power. Then it can completely rid itself of capitalist oppression and establish a communist society free from exploitation, oppression, polarization and class struggle. In such a society, social productive forces are highly developed, material products are extremely abundant and labor is no longer a means of making a living. People live and work in peace and contentment. Everyone will be free and well-rounded.

4. The Important Value of The People-centered Development Philosophy in *The Manifesto*

4.1. It is an innovative development of the Marxist view of mass history

Marxism is the doctrine of the complete liberation of the world proletariat and all mankind. From the exploration of the law of human social development to the investigation of the contradictions of capitalist society, from the *Theses on Feuerbach*, which contains the "germination of a new world view", to *Das Kapital*, which is known as the "Bible of the working class", Marxism has always been centered on "man is the subject of all values" and "seeking liberation for mankind". It also reveals the "social history" of human beings from the ontology, that is, "the essence of human beings is the sum of social relations". The Communist Party of China has never had any special interests of its own, and has always adhered to its original aspiration and served the broad masses of the people regardless of its own interests. Through the deep interpretation and grasp of Marx's view of the people, from the perspective of human development, president Xi Jinping explains that the real people are dynamic and comprehensive and forms a series of important discussions on the nature of people. He stressed on many occasions that we must apply a people-centered development philosophy, implement the purpose of serving the people, adhere to the mass view in Marxism, implement the mass line of the Communist Party of China and constantly meet the needs of the broad masses of the people for a better life.

4.2. It shows the Communists value position of the people-centered development philosophy

Adhering to the people-centered development philosophy and the historical concept of "the country is the people, and the people are the country" highlights the inherent requirement of upholding the people's subject status in the new era and demonstrates the value orientation of putting the people first. Adhering to the people-centered development philosophy, emphasizes that "the people's aspiration for a better life is our goal"; emphasizes that "development is for the people, by the people, and its fruits are shared by the people"; emphasizes that "Chinese modernization is the modernization of common prosperity for all the people"; emphasizes that "a people-centered development philosophy is not an abstract concept that can only be talked about, but must be implemented and reflected in every link of economic and social development." It can be seen that applying a people-centered development philosophy adheres to the consistent value position of the Communist Party of China. *Resolution of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China on the Major Achievements and Historical Experience of the Party over the Past Century* clearly states: "we must adhere to the people-centered

development philosophy, develop people's democracy throughout the process, and make more tangible progress in promoting all-round human development and common prosperity for all the people", [3] which further highlights the great significance of the people-centered development philosophy.

4.3. It contains the value pursuit of human's free and comprehensive development

Communist society is a society in which everyone is free and fully developed, and it is also a society in which the productive forces are highly developed. Our highest ideal is the realization of communism. Marxism regards the proletariat and the masses of the people as the subject of history, and regards the establishment of the ideal society of "the comprehensive and free development of everyone" as the value pursuit of the proletarian party. From this standpoint, it is inevitable to conclude the communist value pursuit with the complete liberation of human beings as the goal. The free and comprehensive development of man achieved by communist society has brought the development of man's personality to a very high level. Man not only completely got rid of the slavery of nature, created highly developed social productive forces, became the master of nature, but also became the master of society and himself, and realized real free development.

The free and comprehensive development of human beings is also the highest value goal of socialism with Chinese characteristics. The people's belief in socialism with Chinese characteristics not only satisfies the needs of the people as value subjects to pursue the realization of their own values, but also integrates the demands of different value subjects to the greatest extent. Adhering to the people-centered development philosophy is highly in line with the inherent requirements of the people's ever-growing needs for a better life in the new era. The content of a better life for the people in the new era covers economic, political, cultural, social and ecological fields. The people's desire for a better life is an inevitable result of the continuous improvement of social and economic development. Therefore, the connotation of a better life for the people will continue to be enriched with the improvement of the level of social and economic development. Since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, whether it is promoting the Five-Sphere Integrated Plan and the Four-Pronged Comprehensive Strategy in a coordinated way, or emphasizing the implementation of a new development philosophy, it has fully reflected the need to ensure that the fruits of reform and development benefit all the people in a more equitable manner, and constantly promote the comprehensive and free development of the human. We will continue to promote common prosperity for all our people.

5. Summary

It has been 176 years since *The Communist Manifesto* was published, but the theoretical value it contained are still relevant to the times we live in. In particular, the idea of people-centered philosophy of development runs through the entire process of China's economic and social development. Applying a people-centered development philosophy is an important manifestation of the scientific and revolutionary nature of Marxism. From "the people's yearning for a better life is our goal," to the report of the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China once again emphasized that "the country is the people, and the people are the country." As a Marxist political party, applying a people-centered development philosophy is the inherent and unchanging value position of the Communist Party of China. With the changes of the times and the development of society, we must constantly improve our ability to apply the basic principles of Marxism to solve practical problems in contemporary China, put the people-centered development philosophy contained in *The Communist Manifesto* into practice and constantly improve the living standards of the people.

References

- [1] Karl Marx, Frederick Engels. The Communist Manifesto [M].Beijing: People's Publishing House, 2014.
- [2] Karl Marx, Frederick Engels: Selected Works(vol 1 to 4)[M].Beijing: People's Publishing House, 2012.
- [3] Resolution of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China on the Major Achievements and Historical Experience of the Party over the Past Century[N]. People's Daily, 2021-11-17(001).
- [4] Xi Jinping. Hold High the Great Banner of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics and Strive in Unity to Build a Modern Socialist Country in All Respects—Report to the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China[N]. People's Daily, 2022-10-26(001).
- [5] Zhao Meiling, Li Qian. Communist Manifesto and the Original Aspiration and the Mission of CPC[J]. *Journal of the Party School of Tianjin Committee of the CPC*, No.6(2020), p.11-17.
- [6] Zheng Yuntian. On Developmental Thought of "Taking People as the Center" in the New Era of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics from the Perspective of The Communist Manifesto[J]. *Journal of Langfang Normal University (Social Sciences Edition)*, Vol.34(2018)No.4, p.5-8.