Transformation of Socialism from Utopian to Science Since the Birth of Marxism and Its Meanings

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Abstract: *Before the birth of Marxism, there were progressive philosophers in different social classes and periods who had discussed socialism and communism. Though they had certain historical value, these ideas were essentially utopian. In the mid-nineteenth century, together with socio-economic conditions and ideological-cultural premises increasingly developing in the core of capitalism, Marx and Engels transformed socialism from a hypothetical to a scientific practice thanks to three great discoveries. Today this theory is still valid and has a profound meaning for the further development and perfection of scientific socialism – an important part of the ideological-theoretical foundation of the world revolution.*

Keywords: *birth of Marxism; utopian socialism; scientific socialism; meanings.*

1. Conditions and premise for the birth of Marxism

In the mid-nineteenth century, with the advent of the great mechanical industry, the capitalist mode of production developed dramatically. In the "Communist Manifesto," Marx and Engels observed: "The bourgeoisie, during its rule of scarcely one hundred years, has created more massive and colossal productive forces than have all preceding generations together"[(1)]. This development led to the birth of the industrial working class, a social force that played a key role in the development of society but created conflicts with the very class that had produced it – the bourgeoisie. Therefore, many working class movements broke out widely across Europe at that time. These movements varied in size, scope, and properties, but they were all spontaneous and failed. However, the rapid development of the openly political nature of the workers' movement confirmed and proved that the emergence of the working class and the struggle against the bourgeoisie was an objective and inevitable law of the history of struggle among classes. At the same time it affirmed that the working class could become an independent political force and step onto the political stage and make a revolution against the bourgeoisie as long as it was guided by scientific reasoning. It was the socio-economic condition that not only set requirements for the philosophers of the working class but also laid real ground for the birth of a new and progressive theory – Marxism and later, Marxism–Leninism.

In addition to that objective socio-economic condition, during this period humanity had made great achievements in the field of natural science with three epoch-making discoveries: The Law of Conservation and Transformation of Energy; The Evolutionary Theory; and Cell Theory. This is considered the scientific premise

for the birth of dialectical and historical materialism, the methodological basis for Marx and Engels to study political theories prevalent in society at that time.

Along with the development of the natural sciences, social sciences also made great progress. These included Classical German Philosophy with the names of F. Hegel and L. Feuerbach and Classical British political economy with A. Smith and D. Ricardo. Three critical utopians at the beginning of the 19th century were H. Saint-Simon, Charles Fourier and R. Owen. The ideas of these utopians had values such as condemning and criticizing the current regime, proposing a model of a future communist society in which the role of industry, science and technology was emphasized, eliminating the contrast between mental and manual labor and the historical role of the State and the liberation of women. However, there were still limitations, especially with the pioneering social forces that could carry out the revolutionary transformation from capitalism to communism. Marxism was born to meet these requirements.

2. The role of K. Marx and F. Engels in shifting Socialism from utopia to science

Besides the above-mentioned objective conditions and premises, Marx and Engels played a significant role in bringing socialism out of utopia and into science.

First: The transformation of Marx and Engels from the idealistic to the materialist view, the revolutionary democratic to the revolutionary communist stance.

K. Marx was born into an intellectual family. From the beginning, in his doctoral thesis on the topic, "The Difference Between the Democritean and Epicurean Philosophy of Nature," he exhibited a critical spirit with the stance of idealism but expressed as a two-way relationship between people and the objective environment and the ability of people to improve that objective environment. Marx disagreed with Democritus' philosophical conception of nature because, according to him, this concept had a deterministic tendency. For Epicurus, Marx defended him on one side but still criticized him for the concept of absolute freedom. Marx's early liberal ideas in the field of philosophy gradually formed his liberal ideas in the political field. From the end of 1843 to April 1844, through his work "A Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right," K. Marx clearly showed changes in his ideological position.

For F. Engels, though he came from a bourgeois family and was influenced by religion more than society, gradually in his mind, doubts and conflicts between what was true and false and the contrast between rich and poor arose, eroding his religious faith. Witnessing the poor life of the workers, and the direct conflict between them and the bourgeois in Renani, a Kingdom of Prussia, the reality of that society made a deep impression on Engels and helped him break from religion. He gradually formed a new concept about the world, focusing on socio-political issues instead of religious faith. In 1843, the works "Condition of England" and "Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts" expressed changes in his ideological position.

Marx soon realized the need for philosophy to understand the real life of society, while Engels saw the need for philosophy as a tool for real life. Since then, they had associated scientific research with practical activities, changing from the idealistic to the materialist view, from revolutionary democrats to the communist position which included scientifically solving problems posed by the times. From this they gradually formed and developed their theories.

Second: Three great discoveries of K. Marx and F. Engels.

Marxism is composed of three parts: Philosophy, Political Economy and Scientific Socialism. These three parts have both relative independence and dialectical unity with each other.

Based on inheriting the rational elements of the dialectic and filtering out the mystical idealism of F. Hegel, as well as inheriting the materialistic values and rejecting the metaphysical views of L. Feuerbach, and at the same time studying the achievements of the natural sciences, Marx and Engels founded dialectical materialism. From dialectical materialism, they founded historical materialism to philosophically affirm the inevitable destruction of capitalism and victory of socialism and communism, which was the first discovery in the field of philosophy of Marxism.

From their first great discovery, they extensively studied industrial production and capitalist economy. Those analyses and interpretations were described by K. Marx in his book "Das Kapital" and were the foundation for the Theory of Surplus Value to confirm economically the inevitable destruction of capitalism and the emergence of socialist and communist economies. This is the second great invention in the field of economics and politics of Marxism.

Based on these two great discoveries, Marx and Engels discovered the working class was the class that had an historical mission in the world to abolish capitalism and successfully build socialism and communism. This was considered the third great discovery of Marxism in the field of scientific socialism. With this third great discovery, the historical limitations of utopian socialism preceding Marx were thoroughly overcome. They scientifically argued the socio-political aspects about the defeat of the bourgeois and the inevitable destruction of capitalism, and at the same time the inevitable victory of the proletariat as well as socialism and communism.

Third: "The Communist Manifesto" marks the birth of scientific socialism.

Along with their theoretical activities, Marx and Engels attached their lives to the movements of struggle of the working class as well as other classes, leading socialist theory to combine with the revolutionary movement of the working class, bringing to maturity the establishment of the independent revolutionary party organization of the working class.

At the end of 1847, the two men reformed the "League of the Just" into the "League of Communists." In 1848, the Confederation's Preparatory Congress

commissioned K. Marx and F. Engels to write "The Communist Manifesto" to announce the first political credo of the global workers' movement. The three basic tenets of "The Communist Manifesto" were : *first,* to affirm the global position and historical mission of the working class – the only class capable of carrying out a revolution to create a new socialist and communist society; *second*, the working class needs to build a revolutionary political party that represents the interests of the working class, the nation and the entire international workers' movement to fulfill this mission; and *third*, the struggle of the working class will develop into a socialist revolution. The first step in the revolution of the working class is to use revolutionary violence to overthrow the domination of capitalists, seize their power, gain democracy, organize themselves into a state, and become a social ruling class. After that, the working class and the working people become the subjects of reform and construction of a new society based on socialism, and communism.

In order to achieve this, the working class needs to make an alliance with the democratic and progressive forces by upholding the principles of ideological, political and organizational independence during the common struggle for social progress. They achieved this by effectively applying revolutionary measures to ensure the fulfillment of their historic mission. Especially by adopting the slogan "Proletarians of all countries, unite!" at the end of "The Communist Manifesto," K. Marx and F. Engels affirmed the great significance and international solidarity of the international communist and workers' movement. Therefore, "The Communist Manifesto" marked the formation of the basic categories and principles of Marxist Doctrine in general and the birth of scientific socialism in particular with the progression of socialism from utopia to science.

3. The meaning of studying the foundation of Marxism

Today, compared to the era of Marx and Engels, human history has advanced many times over. Although it has not been concretized in every detail, the changes of today's times are not beyond the predictions of Marxism. It is these changes that enrich this theory in the current context. Therefore, the scientific character of Marxism is still valid.

As a scientific theory, it is always open, and it is that openness that confirms the scientific character of Marxism. Reality has proven that, in the 20th century, Marxism was inherited, protected, and developed by V.I. Lenin, and came to be known as Marxism-Leninism. At present, the international Communist and workers' parties continue to supplement and develop the theory under new conditions. Therefore, the birth of Marxism is not only meaningful to the past society of that time but also has profound meaning in today's period.

First: Marxism is not a speculative theory fabricated by the human brain, nor is it a random discovery of a specific genius mind. But it has come from a process of acquisition and developed from the premise that the ideological culture was increasingly maturing in the hearts of the societies that came before it, especially

in capitalist society with the three critical utopian socialists in the early 19th century. This is considered a normal problem but at the same time affirmative of the scientific characteristic of the foundation of Marxism. When discussing this role, F. Engels once asserted that German Theoretical Socialism would never forget that it stands on the shoulders of Saint-Simon, Fourier, and Owen. These three men, whose work on illusory and utopian qualities belong to the greatest minds of all times. They brilliantly foretold the multitude of truths which we today have scientifically proven to be correct. Today, Communist parties in the process of building communism, besides national specificity, need to adhere to Marxism-Leninism, a revolutionary and scientific doctrine.

Second: Marxism was born in relation to the reality of the socio-economic life at the heart of capitalism. This objective reality was the most vivid evidence to affirm the scientific nature from the birth of Marxism. When the large capitalist industry was founded, fundamental changes in the economic and political life of society with its inherent internal contradictions could not be reconciled. There inevitably arose a social revolution where the working class conducted that historic mission. It is the development of the capitalist mode of production that has "more and more completely transformed the great majority of the population into proletarians"(2), and it is also "the capitalist mode of production that has paved the wave for the revolution"(3). Therefore, the process of building socialism in all nations should be based on reality – the objective socio-economic conditions of the times of each nation.

Third: Marxism was born as a dialectical unity between theory and practice. Reality has illuminated and is a condition and a real ground for the birth of Marxism. Hence, when Marxism was created, it penetrated into reality and led the movements of struggle of the global working class and the working people to realize the set revolutionary goals. Practice has proven, "Without revolutionary theory there can be no revolutionary movement"(4), and at the same time practice is the criterion of truth. Therefore, it is important to not despise reasoning but avoid absolutizing reasoning.

Fourth: The birth of Marxism confirmed that socialist thought movements before Marxism were "utopian," and that utopian ideology had many causes, the fundamental reason being that capitalism had not developed yet. The movements of socialist thought before Marxism were born before capitalist production methods were fully developed. Great industry had only just begun in England. Therefore, the conflict between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie was not yet mature. In addition, methods and tricks had not yet fully appeared to resolve the conflict. Therefore, those theories were not mature and had not escaped from idealistic conceptions of history. It was unable to discover the nature and laws of the movement of capitalist society or the emergence of the future society. Today, in the process of building socialism, the Communist parties need to postpone

their hasty and subjective views when they do not have enough conditions and prerequisites for the construction of socialism.

Fifth: the major representatives of the socialist thought movements before Marxism were all progressive philosophers – K. Marx, F. Engels, V.I. Lenin, and Hồ Chí Minh. Some are even great intellectuals who came from the upper classes of society. They all realized the law of the inevitable development of human society is to move toward socialist and communist societies. The philosophers in the history of socialist thought while embracing the life, dignity, and aspiration to fight for the best life for all men have always been a strong driving force that has awakened the movements of struggle of the masses and working people in each historical and subsequent period. This shows the aspiration for a good society and communist regime as an indispensable need of human society. "According to the evolutionary laws of history, mankind will definitely move towards socialism"(5).

With that in mind, the international Communist and workers' parties today have always been devoted to Marxism and continue to apply and develop it creatively in new conditions. The 13th Party National Congress emphasized: "Firmly and constantly applying and creatively developing Marxism-Leninism and Hồ Chí Minh Thought in line with Vietnam's reality in each period. Strongly aimed at national independence and socialism. To follow the reform policy for the goal of prosperous people, strong country, and democratic, equitable, civilized society. Uphold the working-class nature of the Party and adhere to the principles of Party building. Enhance the bravery, forecasting capacity and quality of planning and policy work in line with Vietnam's reality and development trends of the times. Timely institutionalize, concretize, properly and effectively implement the guidelines of the Party, policies and laws of the State, overcome weaknesses in leadership, direction and organization of implementation. To raise the stance, political bravery, qualifications, intelligence and combativeness of the Party committees and organizations and of each cadre and party member, especially, key leaders and managers at all levels, strategic officers. Practice democracy in the Party that associated with strengthening the Party's discipline"(6).

(1). K. Marx and F. Engels: *The Complete Works*, National Political Publishing House, Hanoi, 1995, Vol 4, p.603.

(2), (3). K. Marx and F. Engels: *The Complete Works*, Vol 19, National Political Publishing House, H.1995, p.304; p.326.

(4). V.I. Lenin: *The Complete Works*, Vol. 6, Progress Publishing House, Moscow, 1975, p.30.

(5). Communist Party of Vietnam: *Documents of the 11th National Party Congress,* National Political Publishing House, H.2011, p.69.

(6). Communist Party of Vietnam (2021), *Documents of the 13th National Party Congress,* National Political Publishing House, H. 2021, Vol. 1, pp. 180-181.