**The 100-Year-Old Communist Party of China Promotes New Developments of International Communist Movement**

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**[Abstract]** In over a century since its founding, the Communist Party of China has creatively explored a new road to the proletarian revolution with Chinese characteristics, and set an example for backward countries to embark on socialism. Meanwhile it saved the international communist movement at critical moments, and wrote a new chapter of China in international communist movement. The CPC has left its own marks in the history of international communist movement as it is playing a leading role in the new era, and promoting new developments.

**[Keywords]** Communist Party of China, International Communist Movement, Socialism with Chinese Characteristics

Aiming at overthrowing the capitalism, the international communist movement is a proletarian movement led by communists under the guidance of Marxism, and it has a history of more than 170 years. Engels wrote: “Modern Socialism is, in its essence, the direct product of the recognition, on the one hand, of the class antagonisms existing in the society of today between proprietors and non-proprietors, between capitalists and wage-workers; on the other hand, of the anarchy existing in production.”[[2]](#footnote-2) Deng Xiaoping also pointed out that “since the very beginning it has been proved there can be no international communist movement without a party of the proletariat.”[[3]](#footnote-3) The historical process of socialism replacing capitalism embodies the dialectical unity of the inevitability of the historical trend and the dynamic role of the historical subjects, and it includes conscious actions of the proletariat and the masses led by the communists, and cannot be successful without the correct leadership of a proletarian party. With a history of over one century, the Communist Party of China (CPC) has written an important chapter of China in the history of international communist movement, and now promotes the new developments.

I. The Revolution Led by Communist Party of China Is A Remarkable Part of the International Communist Movement

“The proletariat can only exist world-historically, just as communism, its activity, can only have a ‘world-historical’ existence.”[[4]](#footnote-4) The Communist Party of China is a product of the development of modern Chinese society and the international communist movement. The CPC was founded in the era of imperialism and proletarian revolution, under the influence of the international communist movement, and the revolution led by the CPC is an important part of the international communist movement.

The revolution led by the CPC is also part of global proletarian revolution. As capitalism developed into imperialism, the national liberation movements in these colonial and semi-colonial countries together constituted the world proletarian revolution. Only by uniting the proletariat and the oppressed nations around the world to fight against imperialism can secure the victory over capitalism, and eradicate national oppression and inequality. In early 20th century, Lenin concluded based on the characteristics of the era of imperialism and proletarian revolution that: “Imperialism means the capitalism goes beyond nation-state, and the national oppression has been expanded and strengthened significantly in a new historical context.” “We should link the revolutionary struggle for socialism with the revolutionary program on national question.”[[5]](#footnote-5) The victory of the October Revolution in Russia in 1917 widened the scope of the national question and converted it from the particular question of combating national oppression in Europe into the general question of emancipating the oppressed peoples, colonies and semi-colonies from imperialism. It opened up wide possibilities for national emancipation and practical paths towards it, thereby greatly facilitated the cause of the emancipation of the proletarian in the West and the oppressed peoples in the East, and drew them into the common current of the victorious struggle against imperialism. It erected a bridge between the socialist West and the enslaved East, having created a new front of revolutions against world imperialism, extending from the proletarians of the West, to the oppressed peoples of the East, through the Russian revolution. It promoted the great unity of the scattered and isolated national liberation movements in the colonies and semi-colonies in the East, established a united front against imperialism among nations, races and regions globally, and broke a way with bright future for the national liberation movements in semi-colonial and colonial countries. The Communist International that was established in 1919 also supported the liberation movements of oppressed peoples all over the world. The founding of the Communist Party of China in 1921 made a change in isolated Chinese modern national liberation movement, linking it with global national liberation movement, and the resulted New Democratic Revolution led by the CPC was, not any more an old type of world bourgeois revolution, “but turned into a new type of bourgeois-democratic revolution. And, in terms of the revolutionary front, it is part of the world proletarian-socialist revolution.”[[6]](#footnote-6) “This colonial and semi-colonial country in revolution is no longer a part of the world capitalist counter-revolutionary front, but an ally of the world socialist revolutionary front.”[[7]](#footnote-7) “This is an unparalleled great change in world history and Chinese history.”[[8]](#footnote-8) Since then, the Chinese revolution, the global proletarian revolution and the national liberation movement have powerfully backed each other, changing the landscape of world forces and the global development pattern.

The CPC creatively developed a new road of the proletarian revolution with Chinese characteristics, since there was no clear answers but methods to think out a solution in the classic Marxist works, for the question that how an oriental backward agricultural country like China can carry out the proletariat revolution. In the 1880s, Engels clearly pointed out that “the history theory of Marx is the fundamental condition of all reasoned and consistent revolutionary tactics; to discover these tactics one has only to apply the theory to the economic and political conditions of the country in question.”[[9]](#footnote-9) Lenin also said that Marxism was not something unalterable and sacrosanct, “for it offers only general guiding principles, and the application of these principles differs specifically in England from France, in France from Germany, and in Germany from Russia”.[[10]](#footnote-10) Lenin set an example and provided theoretical guidance for the CPC in the application of Marxism. Lenin made theoretical breakthroughs in the hypothesis of Marx and Engels that the socialist revolutions would firstly take place and win in these developed capitalist countries like Great Britain, the United States, France and Germany and that these revolutions would occur “simultaneously”. Furthermore, he put forward the theory of “triumph of one country” in the light of the actual situation in the imperialist Russia, and he successfully led the October Revolution, which turned socialism from an ideal into a reality for the first time, opening up a new era in human history, and inspiring other countries including China to take the socialist road. Li Dazhao, a forward-looking pioneer of the CPC, pointed out in “Re-discussion on Problems and Doctrines (《再论问题与主义》)” that “a socialist, to make his doctrine a bit influential in the world, has to study how he can apply his ideals as far as possible to his real surroundings.” [[11]](#footnote-11) The ideals of socialism, “due to the different situations varied from places and times, must be sought out for the most suitable, so as to develop a new system combining universalities and characteristics (universalities are general characters, and characteristics vary according to times and places). Therefore, when it happens in China in the future, it will be different from those in England, Germany, Russia and so on.” [[12]](#footnote-12)

After fully considering the national conditions of a semi-colonial and semi-feudal society in China, the CPC decided to achieve the goal step by step: first the New Democratic Revolution and then the socialist revolution. Mao Zedong made it clear that the CPC was the leading force of the New Democratic Revolution, which determined that “the ultimate future of the Chinese revolution is not capitalist, but socialist and communist”.[[13]](#footnote-13) As for the specific ways of revolution, there was no experience for China to draw on since the history of the international communist movement was one of armed urban riots, and there was no precedents of surrounding the cities from the countryside in China or abroad. The CPC, represented by Mao Zedong, insisted on one hand that “the central task and highest form of revolution is the seizure of power by force, and it is a problem to be solved by wars. This Marxist-Leninist principle of revolution is universally correct, in both China and other countries, in all cases.”[[14]](#footnote-14) On the other hand, Mao Zedong analyzed the unique condition of China: “China is characterized by that it is not an independent democratic country, but a semi-colonial and semi-feudal state. Internally it has no democratic system, but an oppressive feudal system; externally it has no national independence, but suffers from imperialist oppression. Therefore, there is no parliament can be used, and no legal right to organize workers for strikes in China. Here the task for communists basically is not to go into insurrection and war after a long legal struggle, nor to take the cities first and then the countryside, but to follow an opposite road.”[[15]](#footnote-15) It was up to the national conditions that China could not copy the experiences of armed urban riots in the October Revolution in Russia, meaning China could only explore its own way. The revolutionary road with Chinese characteristics was a creative application of Marxism in China, which enriched the theory of the proletarian revolutionary roads, and was a major and outstanding contribution to the international communist movement. Deng Xiaoping said: “Marx and Lenin never thought of surrounding the cities from the countryside, and this principle was not available around the world at that time. But Comrade Mao Zedong specified the revolutionary road based on the actual conditions in China.”[[16]](#footnote-16) “Without the basic idea of seeking the truth from facts, could such a question have been raised and solved? Could the Chinese revolution have been brought to a successful conclusion?” [[17]](#footnote-17) United and led by the Communist Party of China, all people of all ethnic groups of China went through arduous struggles, won victories one after another, and established a state power of the people’s democratic dictatorship through the New Democratic Revolution, creating the political prerequisites for embarking on socialism, and developing a diversified model of the proletarian revolution in the history of the international communist movement. Since the founding of the People’s Republic of China, the Chinese nation has stood up and is no longer a nation that can be insulted, which is a great contribution to world peace and freedom cause. The victory of the Chinese revolution brought about a fundamental change in the landscape of political forces worldwide in favor of the international communist movement, and greatly boosted its development. Italian senator Velio Spano said at the founding conference of Sino-Soviet Friendship Association: “The founding of the People’s Republic of China means about one quarter of the population on earth have won their independence, giving a hope for all peoples being oppressed, and showcasing a scene of the death of imperialism.”[[18]](#footnote-18)

The CPC creatively developed a road for backward countries to embark on socialism. Lenin said: “It is inevitable that all nations will turn socialist, but they will not follow exactly the same way, since they may have this or that form of democracy, or of the dictatorship of the proletariat, and differ in the speed of socialist transformation in all aspects of social life. Every nation is unique.”[[19]](#footnote-19) “Because of the different conditions under which nations start their march towards socialism, the concrete conditions and forms of the transitions must and should be diverse... The richer the diversity is (of course, except on-purpose diversity), the more reliably and rapidly we will be able to establish democratic centralism and socialist economy.” [[20]](#footnote-20) After the founding of the People’s Republic of China, the CPC lost no opportunity to carry out socialist transformation while restoring the national economy, and in particular, it creatively put into practice the classic Marxist hypothesis of the peaceful redemption of the bourgeoisie, which helped establish the basic socialist system, and achieve the most thorough and profound social change in Chinese history. Deng Xiaoping said: “Successfully completing the socialist transformation of capitalist industry and commerce in China was one of the most glorious victories in the socialist history of China and the world. The success was achieved thanks to that the entire working class under the lead of CPC carried out the Marxist policies formulated by Comrade Mao Zedong in the light of the situation in our country, while the progressive and the majority of the capitalist class were also helpful as they were cooperative with the transformation.”[[21]](#footnote-21) A number of socialist countries emerging after World War II, especially the People’s Republic of China and its embarkation on the road to socialism on the basis of the successful New Democratic Revolution, marked the practice of scientific socialism had been expanded from one to multiple countries, bringing the international communist movement into a new stage of development.

II. The Communist Party of China Played a Critical Role in International Communist Movement at Key Moments

In the latter half of the 20th century, the international communist movement suffered two major crises: one was the total repudiation of Stalin by Khrushchev at the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, leading to the theoretical confusion in international communist camp, and the other was the collapse of the Soviet Union and the dramatic changes in Eastern Europe, which put a brake on the international communist movement. The CPC played a key role in saving the international communist movement in both crises.

1956 was extraordinary time in the history of the international communist movement. In that year, under the lead of the CPC China basically completed the socialist transformation, moved to socialism, and began the comprehensive socialist construction. In the same year, the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union was held, at which Khrushchev made a secret report totally repudiating Stalin. Meanwhile, a wave of worldwide anti-communist activities surged in the West, and the Polish and Hungarian Incidents occurred in Eastern Europe, both causing chaos in the international communist movement. At this critical moment, the CPC responded effectively and played a key role in saving the international communist movement.

On one hand, taking the Soviet Union as a lesson, the Chinese communists represented by Mao Zedong began to conduct independent exploration of socialist construction in a large, poor and backward agricultural country of China. Mao Zedong said: “What is particularly noteworthy is that recently the Soviet Union exposed some shortcomings and made mistakes during the socialist construction, and do you want to repeat the detours they have taken? It was their lessons that helped us prevent some detours, and now it is surely all the more important for us to take the failures as a warning.”[[22]](#footnote-22) “[I] think that the most important lesson we learned is to be independent, and conduct investigations and studies of the national conditions of our country, to combine the basic principles of Marxism-Leninism with the specific reality of our revolution and construction, and formulate our lines, guidelines and policies. During the democratic revolution, we took a detour and suffered great losses before we succeeded in such combination. Now we need to achieve new combination, namely to find out the right road for the socialist revolution and construction in China.” [[23]](#footnote-23)

On the other, the CPC summed up the historical experience of the dictatorship of the proletariat, put forward the basic principles of handling the relations between leaders of the international communist movement and brotherly parties, made correct proposals to the Communist Party of the Soviet Union for dealing with the Polish and Hungarian Incidents, and coped with the crisis facing the international communist movement. In order to defend the basic principles of the international communist movement, the CPC engaged in a decade-long polemic with the Soviet Communist Party, which was of great significance to the independent development of the international communist movement, but there were deficiencies, too. Summing up the lessons of the Sino-Soviet polemic in early 1960s, the CPC concluded: “The real mistake we made was assert and evaluate the rights and wrongs of the international communist movement based on our own experiences and practices, and there was something not in line with the principles of materialism and dialectics.” “It is dangerous not to make indiscreet remarks at brotherly parties.” “If China tries to make significant contributions to the international communist movement and to human race, it may be the key to develop the productive forces, since such development would be helpful not only to change global power balance between socialism and capitalism in favor of socialism, but also to demonstrate the superiority of socialism over capitalism.” [[24]](#footnote-24)

After the collapse of the Soviet Union and the dramatic changes in Eastern Europe, China that has implemented the reform and opening-up policies set a new model for the socialist construction and development, and saved the international communist movement by providing a fortified position for its development. The collapse of the Soviet Union and the dramatic changes in Eastern Europe were only twists and turns and recurrence of socialism in practice. Socialism, as a completely new social system, can only develop and mature in the midst of great storms. Lenin noted: “In the process of pursuing such a new, difficult and great cause, we inevitably encounter mistakes and errors. Whoever fears the difficulties in the construction of socialism, and becomes pessimistic and disappointed or panic-stricken therefore, is not a socialist.” [[25]](#footnote-25) As these major changes in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe placed the down-turning international communist movement at a major historic juncture, Deng Xiaoping stated categorically: “China will not move away from socialism, and we will definitely follow the chosen socialist road to the end. No one will be able to crush us. As long as China does not collapse, one-fifth of the world’s population will adhere to socialism. We have full confidence in the future of socialism.”[[26]](#footnote-26)

“There have been serious setbacks in some countries, which have apparently weaken socialism. However, these difficulties will only train our people while teach and push us for a better and healthier socialist development.”[[27]](#footnote-27) “So long as socialism does not collapse in China, it will always hold its ground in the world.”[[28]](#footnote-28) In 1990, when meeting with Kim Il-sung, general secretary of the Central Committee of the Workers’ Party of Korea, Jiang Zemin said: “Socialism is a new social system that eliminates exploiting systems, and with a history of only 73 years, it is hardly to completely avoid difficulties and detours, even setbacks. Many fundamental contradictions in contemporary world, which have been analyzed in the works of Marx, Engels, Lenin and their successors, can only be solved by socialism, not capitalism. As long as socialist countries concentrate on speeding up the economic development, strengthening the strength, and fully demonstrating the superiority of the socialist system, we will eventually win.” “Certain people in the West even want to wipe off socialism from the earth, but it can never be done. Western countries cannot ignore China as a socialist power in international arena, especially its role in the Third World. We communists must hold up our beliefs firmly while continue to accumulate experience. We have to acknowledge that world socialism is at a low ebb, but we have to hold onto, though it’s hard, and develop our socialist cause well.”[[29]](#footnote-29) In 1995, during a meeting with the head of the (Marxist) Communist Party of India, Hu Jintao said: “After the collapse of the Soviet Union and the dramatic changes in Eastern Europe, world socialism has indeed suffered certain setbacks. However, it does not change the general historical development trend that socialism will eventually replace capitalism. Based on the dramatic changes in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, some Western prophets predicted the complete failure of socialism and the collapse of the socialist cause. However, their predictions have been proved wrong. Some countries insisting on the socialist system have made new development achievements through continuous reform and innovation, while genuine communists did not get depressed nor flinch in the face of difficulties and setbacks, but gained experience, summed up the lessons from the history, and continued on the exploration of roads to socialism taking into account their own situations. Therefore, in view of the present case, although there are still difficulties of one kind or another for the socialist cause, we believe there is a bright future. The world socialist cause in difficulty further highlighted the historic responsibility we, the CPC, shoulder. We, first of all, have to put things right in China, and make the socialist system successful in a country with a population of 1.2 billion, which in itself is a great encouragement and support to communists and people engaged in the socialist cause around the world.”[[30]](#footnote-30)

China has always held up socialism, and successfully pioneered and developed socialism with Chinese characteristics, demonstrating the superiority of scientific socialism, and saving socialism when the international communist movement was at the bottom. Not only did China stand up to the domino effect set off by the collapse of the Soviet Union and the dramatic changes in Eastern Europe, but it achieved great successes. In particular, China became the second largest economy globally in 2010, reversing the “surging” trend of capitalism since late 1980s. And, the world capitalist crisis in 2008 resulted in a change in the power balance and landscape between world socialism and capitalism represented by China and the United States respectively. General secretary of the CPC Central Committee, Xi Jinping pointed out profoundly: “If the socialist system in China was not so successful as today, and if the CPC and Chinese socialist system had also collapsed like a domino following the Soviet Union and the Soviet Communist Party, as well as these in Eastern Europe, or had failed for other reasons, the practice of socialism might have to wander in the darkness for a long time again, like a ghost according to Marx.” [[31]](#footnote-31) The Communist Party of Vietnam commented: “Internationally speaking, the success of reform and opening-up policies has saved and developed socialism, and China made a historic contribution to the development of the world socialist revolutionary movement. If the socialist system also failed in China after the collapse of the socialist system in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, socialism would have been wiped off, and the world socialist movement would certainly have been plunged into a dark period for centuries. The successful socialist construction in China is a vivid example to prove to the world the superiority of socialism, and an eloquent evidence to refute all the distorted and slanderous arguments of various hostile forces and to restore the confidence of the progressive in the future of socialism.” [[32]](#footnote-32)

III. Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era Leads the Development of the International Communist Movement

Since the 18th CPC National Congress, socialism with Chinese characteristics has entered a new era, which is a new historic junction in China’s development and “means that scientific socialism is full of vitality in 21st century China, and that the banner of socialism with Chinese characteristics is now flying high and proud for all to see.”[[33]](#footnote-33) “Everything we do is for the happiness of the people, for the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation, and for human progress and world harmony.”[[34]](#footnote-34) Socialism with Chinese characteristics for a new era has successfully solved a historic issue in the history of socialist development, and become a banner of scientific socialism in the 21st century and China now is the mainstay leading the development of the international communist movement.

As socialism with Chinese characteristics enters a new era, the CPC is holding high the banner of Marxism and has adopted Marxism to the 21st century. The banner is a crucial issue, since the banner indicates the direction, and the direction determines the road. As Mao Zedong said, “Ism is like a flag. Only when a flag is raised up will people have something to look forward to and know where to go”.[[35]](#footnote-35) And Marxism is the powerful ideological weapon guiding the international communist movement, and they share the same fate. Jacques Derrida, who was influential in the Western intellectual world, argued in his work of *Specters of Marx,* which he wrote after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the dramatic changes in Eastern Europe, that “whether they wish it or know it or not, all men and women, all over the earth, are today to a certain extent the heirs of Marx and Marxism.” “There can be no Marx. If there is no Marx, no memory of Marx, and no heritage of Marx, there will be no future; there has to be a Marx anyway, his brilliance, or at least some spirit of him.”[[36]](#footnote-36) Robert L. Heilbroner, an American economist, argued in *Marxism: For and Against* that “as long as it exists, I don’t think we can claim that his (Marx’s) assertion of the intrinsic nature of the capitalist system is wrong.”[[37]](#footnote-37) A Western scholar said pertinently in early 21st century: “Marx’s most incisive analysis of capitalism, while helping people understand the 19th century, would likewise lead us to a better understanding of the world we now live in.”[[38]](#footnote-38) In May 2018, at the thematic workshop held by the CPC to commemorate the 200th birthday of Karl Marx, representatives from communist and workers’ parties in various countries generally spoke highly of Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era, regarding it as “the Marxism of the 21st century” and also “for the 21st century”.[[39]](#footnote-39) Some foreign political parties remarked Xi Jinping Thought as the “most outstanding” representative of socialism in the 21st century, which has enabled China to enter a new realm of “mankind self-liberation” and brought the cause of world socialism to life.[[40]](#footnote-40)

Adherent to the ambitious goal of communism, the Communist Party of China demonstrates the bright future of international communism through in-depth consideration of the history of the international communist movement and the combination with the situations in the 21st century. General secretary Xi Jinping pointed out: “Although it has undergone great and profound changes since Marx’s times, from the perspective of the 500-year history of world socialism, now we are still in a historical era indicated by Marxism. This is the scientific basis for us to maintain firm confidence in Marxism and belief in the eventual victory in socialism.”[[41]](#footnote-41) In response to the attack that communism is illusory, General secretary Xi Jinping clarified that revolutionary ideals soar beyond the skies[[42]](#footnote-42), and that noble ideals of Marxism, socialism and communism are the source of strength and political soul as the CPC members to withstand any test[[43]](#footnote-43). Realizing communism is the highest ideal and ultimate goal of the Communist Party of China. “It must be recognized that our present and the continued efforts of many generations in the future are all directed toward the grand goal of the ultimate realization of communism. At the same time, it must be recognized that the realization of communism is a very long historical process, and we must advance our cause with feet on the ground, taking base on the Party’s goals at the present stage.”[[44]](#footnote-44) “We must comprehensively grasp the worldview and methodology of dialectical materialism and historical materialism, deeply understand that the realization of communism is a historical process gradually reached by one stage goal after another, combine the lofty ideals of communism with the common ideals of socialism with Chinese characteristics and with what we are doing, firmly establish the road to socialism with Chinese characteristics with confidence in the path, theory, system and culture, hold fast to the communist ideals and beliefs, and, like Marx, strive for communism for life.”[[45]](#footnote-45) The Communist Party of China emphasizes the promotion of the international communist movement through the building of a modern socialist country, just as general secretary Xi Jinping said, “China is the largest socialist country in the world, and the great social revolution in China under the leadership of our Party will demonstrate its historical significance more fully when we successfully develop our country into a modern socialist power, and the first modern country in the world following the socialist path, not the capitalist.”[[46]](#footnote-46)

Correctly understanding and treating contemporary capitalism, is a major issue facing the international communist movement in the new era. General secretary Xi Jinping said: “ There are people who believe Marxist political economy and *Das Kapital* are obsolete, but this is an arbitrary and erroneous judgment. Setting aside more distant events and looking at just the period since the global financial crisis, we can see that many capitalist countries have remained in an economic slump, with serious unemployment problems, intensifying polarization, and deepening social divides. The facts tell us that the contradictions between the socialization of production and the private possession of the means of production still exist, but they are manifested in ways and show characteristics that are somewhat different.”[[47]](#footnote-47) “The wealth of the richest 1% exceeds that of the remaining 99% of the world’s population, and the income distribution inequality and uneven development space are worrisome.”[[48]](#footnote-48) The current pandemic of COVID-19 has once again exposed the deep-rooted crisis in the capitalist system. And to defeat capitalism, “it is paramount to concentrate on our own affairs, to continue to increase our composite strength, to keep improving the lives of our people, to boost the socialist construction for justice of the superior to capitalism, and to lay a more solid foundation to gain initiative and advantages to win the future.”[[49]](#footnote-49)

The development of the international communist movement needs impetuses of successful practices in the socialist countries represented by China. General secretary Xi Jinping pointed out: “We firmly believe that as socialism with Chinese characteristics constantly develops, our system will certainly mature, the superiority of China’s socialist system will surely become more evident, our path will inevitably become wider and the influence of China’s development path on the world will constantly increase.” [[50]](#footnote-50)

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