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**Wu Ying: Marx's views on the transition of developing countries to socialism and its practical significance**

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Since the Second World War, there have been two international orders. One is the current international order established by capitalist countries headed by the United States, which is actually an extremely unequal international order where "hegemons take all"; the other is the socialist camp headed by the Soviet Union, which is actually a hegemonic international order established by the Soviet Union under the banner of socialist internationalism.

The latter has been disintegrated because of its unpopularity; the former has also become the object of calls for change by people of insight because of its unpopularity. China has become a country that people of insight have high hopes of changing the old international order. On the one hand, this is because they have a deeper understanding of Chinese history and culture, and on the other hand, it is because they have some understanding of China's true practice of socialist values.

In the early and middle stages of his theoretical construction, Marx focused on the advanced capitalist countries in Western Europe, and demonstrated the historical inevitability of the transition from capitalism to socialism from the perspective of the laws of historical development. With the question of how Russia could further develop after the reform of serfdom, Marx expanded his research perspective to the development of non-Western latecomer countries. Marx first affirmed that latecomer countries could directly transition to socialism, and specifically proposed the conditions required for such a transition. It was under the guidance of Marx's relevant discussions that Russia took the lead in establishing a socialist regime through revolution, and later latecomer countries such as China practiced a direct transition to socialism. The successful development of the socialist market economy with Chinese characteristics has made China's socialist construction epoch-making in the history of the development of scientific socialism. The various related ideas expounded and practiced by Xi Jinping have laid a solid foundation for scientific socialism to enter a new stage.

Of course, China is still a developing country, and there are still many major challenges to overcome in domestic development, such as how to promote industrial structure upgrading through scientific and technological innovation, thereby crossing the "middle-income trap"; internationally, the United States is still leading the containment of China, creating obstacles to China's internal and external development. But we firmly believe that the more China adheres to the development path of socialism with Chinese characteristics and the win-win cooperation model of global exchanges, the sooner a more equitable new international order will come.

Chapter 1

Marx's Discussion on the Possibility and Related Conditions of the Transition of Late-developing Countries to Socialism

In the early and middle stages of his theoretical construction, Marx mainly focused on the study of the advanced capitalist countries in Western Europe, and demonstrated the historical inevitability of the transition from capitalism to a higher level of society from the perspective of the laws of historical development. With the question of how Russia, as a late-developing country, should develop, Marx expanded his research vision to the development of non-Western societies, namely late-developing countries. In the mid-to-late 19th century, Russia was at a crossroads of social transformation: on the one hand, serfdom was in a general crisis and capitalism had achieved a certain degree of development; on the other hand, rural communes with shared land still existed in the vast rural areas, presenting the possibility of non-capitalist development. Under such circumstances, the Russian intellectual class had a fierce debate on the development path of Russian society. The "admirers of the capitalist system" (Marx's words) represented by Mikhailovsky strongly advocated the destruction of rural communes and the development of capitalism. The radical reformists represented by Zasulich advocated avoiding the capitalist road and taking the socialist road on the basis of preserving rural communes. In order to prove their point of view, the supporters of the capitalist road distorted Marx's discussion on the laws of human social development and insisted that even Marx himself believed that capitalist society must be developed first before transitioning to socialism. Faced with the problems raised by reality, Marx began to study Russian issues. At the age of 50, he taught himself Russian and reached a proficient reading level. After research, he wrote a series of important documents to explore the path of transition to socialism for late-developing countries like Russia that preserved rural communes. Among them, there are long notes on Kovalevsky's work on communal land ownership, as well as "Letter to the Editorial Board of the "Fatherland Chronicle" Magazine", "Reply to V.I. Zasulich" (including the first draft and reply), and Marx and Engels' preface to the Russian version of "The Communist Manifesto" in 1882.

First, Marx affirmed that Russia, as a late-developing country, could transition directly to socialism without going through the capitalist system. In his letter to the editors of the magazine Fatherland Chronicle, he clearly pointed out that he agreed with Chernyshevsky's view that Russia "could develop its own unique historical conditions (referring to the widespread existence of rural communes) while achieving all the achievements of the capitalist system without going through the hardships of the capitalist system." Moreover, he firmly opposed Mikhailovsky's misunderstanding of his views. "He must completely transform my historical overview of the origin of capitalism in Western Europe into a historical philosophical theory of a general development path. All nations, regardless of their historical circumstances, are destined to follow this path, so that they can finally reach an economic form that guarantees the extremely high development of social labor productivity while ensuring the most comprehensive development of each individual producer. But I ask for his forgiveness. (He would give me too much honor and too much insult if he did so.)" This view was similarly expressed in Marx's later draft of "Reply to V.I. Zasulich": The agricultural commune "coexists with Western production that controls the world market, allowing Russia to avoid the Caucasus Gorge of the capitalist system and use all the positive results created by the capitalist system in the commune." Moreover, Marx emphasized the importance of Russia choosing its own development path. He pointed out: "If Russia continues to follow the path it started on in 1861, it will lose the best opportunity that history can offer to a nation at that time, and suffer all the disastrous twists and turns brought about by the capitalist system."

Secondly, Marx's theoretical assumption that late-developing countries may cross the "Caucasus Gorge of the capitalist system" and directly transition to socialism did not stop at merely pointing out the existence of such a possibility, but analyzed the conditions for achieving a successful transition one by one. Therefore, Marx's view on the direct transition of late-developing countries to socialism is by no means a utopian fantasy, but is operational and feasible. According to Marx's theoretical assumptions, Russia, as a late-developing country, needs to meet the following conditions to transition to socialism.

First, it is necessary to learn from all the positive results achieved by developed capitalist countries in developing productivity. Late-developing countries lag far behind developed countries in the level of development of productivity. Therefore, the primary task of late-developing countries after seizing power through revolution and establishing a socialist system is to develop productivity. At the same time, because they coexist with developed countries with higher levels of productivity development, late-developing countries can easily learn from and absorb all the positive results achieved by developed countries when developing productivity. As Marx pointed out: "Russia does not exist in isolation from the modern world. ... Precisely because it exists at the same time as capitalist production, it can possess all its positive results without experiencing the terrible twists and turns of capitalist production." This condition is the most important of the conditions for the success of the road to cross the "Caudine Gorge of the capitalist system" envisioned by Marx. The reason for this is that, first, this is a highly condensed summary, and its specific connotation needs to be determined in the practice of socialist construction; second, it is precisely because the cognitive errors on this issue have brought painful lessons to the practice of socialism.

Second, the rural communes need to be democratically reformed. As the rural communes and peasants have long been committed to the Tsarist autocracy, they are not very conscious of developing themselves and mastering their own political and economic destiny. They need to be democratically reformed to raise their consciousness. As Marx pointed out: "The Russian 'agricultural commune' has a characteristic that causes its weakness and is disadvantageous to it in all aspects. That is its isolation. There is a lack of connection between the lives of the communes... This isolated little world allows a more or less centralized autocratic system to override the communes." The specific measures for democratic reform are: "Perhaps it is enough to replace the township government agency with a peasant representative conference elected by each commune. This conference will become an economic and administrative agency to safeguard their interests." The strengthening of exchanges between communes and the ability of peasants to truly elect agencies that represent their interests are undoubtedly based on the great improvement of peasants' material production capacity and moral cultivation level.

Third, a Russian revolution was needed to prevent the rural communes from being destroyed by the development of capitalism. As Marx pointed out: "This rural commune is the fulcrum of the rebirth of Russian society; but in order for it to play this role, it is first necessary to eliminate the destructive influences that attack it from all sides, and then to ensure that it has the normal conditions for natural development." "If the revolution occurs at the right moment, if it can concentrate all its forces to ensure the free development of the rural commune, then the rural commune will quickly become a factor in the rebirth of Russian society and a factor superior to other countries still under the enslavement of the capitalist system."

From the above discussion, we can see that Marx not only affirmed that Russia, as a late-developing country, could cross the Caucasus Gorge of the capitalist system, but also presupposed the conditions required for such a leap. However, we need to clearly realize that these conditions are all principled assumptions made by Marx. As for how to apply them specifically, late-developing countries need to explore them in their own transition practices. Moreover, because this is a great practice without precedent, it often goes through a process of paying a price in practice, learning from experience, and gradually finding the right path.

Chapter 2

**The practical experience and lessons of the Soviet Union and China in exploring the direct transition to socialism**

In the process of applying Marx's theoretical viewpoint on the direct transition of developing countries to socialism to Russian social practice, the first problem that needed to be solved was the theoretical understanding of whether it was possible for Russia to cross the Caucasus Gorge of the capitalist system and directly transition to socialism. Lenin's understanding of this theoretical issue had an evolutionary process, which can be analyzed from the situation in which he and the famous Russian Marxist theorist Plekhanov went from consensus to disagreement and debate.

Initially influenced by Marx's idea that developed countries would transition to socialism after fully developing capitalism, Lenin and Plekhanov both opposed the radical populists' idea of ​​a non-capitalist development path for Russia, and both used the universal inevitability and insurmountability of capitalism as their main theoretical basis. Lenin's theoretical basis for criticizing the radical populists' view of a direct transition from rural communes to socialism was that "in Russia, as in any capitalist country, the only way to achieve socialism is through class struggle between hired workers and the bourgeoisie." Moreover, "only the advanced stage of capitalist development, namely large-scale machine industry, can create the material conditions and social forces necessary for this struggle. In all other places, under the lower forms of capitalist development, such material conditions are not available." However, on the eve of the October Revolution, fundamental differences arose between them. Plekhanov still adhered to his original theoretical viewpoint, believing that since Russia could only enter socialism after fully developing capitalism, it should not launch a socialist revolution before capitalism was fully developed. He once wrote vividly: "Russian history has not yet ground the flour that will be used to bake socialist pies in the future." At this time, Lenin no longer emphasized the theoretical views that he and Plekhanov insisted on when they opposed the radical populists. Instead, he emphasized that since the workers and peasants could no longer tolerate the tsarist rule, they should decisively lead the workers and peasants to overthrow the tsarist rule and establish a socialist system.

Lenin argued for this from the perspective of the relationship between universality and particularity: "The general laws of world historical development not only do not in the least exclude the possibility that individual stages of development may exhibit particularities in form or sequence, but on the contrary presuppose this. ... Russia can and will inevitably exhibit certain particularities. These particularities are of course in line with the general line of world development, but they make the Russian Revolution different from previous revolutions in Western European countries, and these particularities will produce certain local new things in Eastern countries. ... Since the establishment of socialism requires a certain level of culture (although no one can say what this certain "cultural level" is, because it is different in various Western European countries), why can't we first use revolutionary means to obtain the prerequisite for reaching this certain level, and then catch up with the people of other countries on the basis of workers' and peasants' power and the Soviet system?" In this way, Lenin theoretically demonstrated the rationality of launching a revolution and establishing a socialist regime in developing countries.

After establishing the world's first socialist country through the October Revolution, the most important task facing the socialist regime led by Lenin was how to build socialism. Lenin defined both communism and socialism as the Soviet regime plus advanced production technology and management system. He defined communism as "communism = Soviet regime + electrification" and socialism as "willing to absorb good things from foreign countries: Soviet regime + Prussian railway order + American technology and trust organization + American national education, etc., etc. + = sum = socialism." From Lenin's definition of socialism, it can be seen that he understood "absorbing all the positive achievements of capitalism" mainly from the material and technical level. Although Russia was forced to implement the New Economic Policy under compelling circumstances, allowing market exchange to develop to a certain extent, such as allowing farmers in rural areas to sell surplus grain freely on the market and allowing private enterprises in cities to start small and medium-sized enterprises, so that the economy recovered and developed to a certain extent, but because the development of the market economy was regarded as a characteristic of capitalism, Lenin regarded the implementation of the New Economic Policy as using capitalism to develop the economy. "Compared with socialism, capitalism is a scourge. But compared with the medieval system, small-scale production, and bureaucracy caused by the dispersion of small producers, capitalism is a blessing. Since we cannot yet achieve a direct transition from small-scale production to socialism, capitalism, as a spontaneous product of small-scale production and exchange, is inevitable to a certain extent. Therefore, we should use capitalism (especially to put it on the track of state capitalism) as an intermediate link between small-scale production and socialism, as a means, way, way and method to improve productivity." This led to Lenin looking at the New Economic Policy with a contradictory mentality. On the one hand, it was seen as a stopgap measure, a temporary retreat. "We have retreated for a year. ... We should now declare on behalf of the party: Enough! The purpose of the retreat has been achieved. This period is about to end or has ended. Now another goal is proposed, which is to redeploy forces." On the other hand, it was seen as the only way to build socialism. As pointed out in the same report that announced the end of the retreat, "We have not yet found the real way to build a socialist economy and establish a socialist economic foundation, but we have the only way to find this way, which is to implement the New Economic Policy." Undoubtedly, Lenin needed time to test the effect of the New Economic Policy and to conduct new theoretical thinking and practice on how to build socialism in developing countries. However, from the implementation of the New Economic Policy in May 1921 to Lenin's death in January 1924, it was only three years. Although Lenin left some important documents and thought about how to build socialism in developing countries, he failed to form a set of mature theoretical ideas and policies.

A few years later, the New Economic Policy was terminated by Stalin's "Great Transformation" of "all-out offensive" launched at the end of 1929. Stalin abandoned Lenin's New Economic Policy, launched an "all-out offensive" against capitalism, and began to "transform to socialism", establishing a socialist economic model with full nationalization of industry, full collectivization of agriculture, and highly centralized management. Stalin excluded the market mechanism as an element of capitalism from the socialist economy. What's more, Stalin also proposed the theory of two parallel markets, arguing that socialist countries have been economically combined, established cooperation and mutual assistance, and no longer need to import goods from capitalist countries. In practice, Stalin closed the Soviet Union and minimized exchanges with the capitalist world, that is, even the reference to the positive achievements of capitalism at the material and technological level was prevented. Although the national leaders after Stalin continued to carry out economic reforms and tried to give vitality to the Soviet economy, they basically followed Stalin's ideas and regarded the market mechanism as an element of capitalism. Therefore, the reform focus was placed on measures such as decentralization of enterprises and material incentives, which were only temporary measures and ultimately failed to reverse the decline of the Soviet Union's economic development. Gorbachev implemented "shock therapy" and used 500 days to transition to a market economy, which eventually led to economic chaos and the disintegration of the Soviet Union. It can be said that the 70 years of Soviet socialism construction failed to fundamentally solve the problem of "absorbing all the positive results of capitalism" suggested by Marx, and failed to achieve breakthrough understanding and practice on the relationship between the market mechanism and capitalism.

Before the reform and opening up, China basically followed the Soviet model of economic construction and rejected the market mechanism, which it tried to cut off as the "tail of capitalism". The resource allocation and product distribution of the entire economy were completely controlled by the central government. Due to the lack of competition and incentive mechanisms under the market system, a situation of "enterprises are treated the same whether they do a good job or a bad job, and workers are treated the same whether they work more or less" was formed. In addition, the continuous political struggle led to the Chinese economy on the verge of collapse. Fortunately, at a critical moment, the Communist Party of China showed a stronger ability to correct itself than the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. Under the leadership of Comrade Deng Xiaoping, China implemented the policy of reform and opening up in the late 1970s and started the transition to a market economy system while retaining the socialist system. In the face of the painful lessons, Comrade Deng Xiaoping reflected on and made corrections to the understanding of "all the positive achievements of capitalism" only at the material and technical level. He once made a special speech on "Planning and market are both methods of developing productivity", pointing out: "Why do we say that when we talk about the market, it is capitalism, and only planning is socialism? Planning and market are both methods. ... As long as they are good for developing productivity, they can be used. ... If it serves socialism, it is socialist; if it serves capitalism, it is capitalist. ... It seems that when we talk about planning, it is socialism, which is also wrong. Japan has a Planning Agency, and the United States also has plans. We used to learn from the Soviet Union and engage in planned economy, and later we talked about planned economy as the main thing. Now we should not talk about this anymore." Later, he specifically emphasized: "Planned economy is not equal to socialism, capitalism also has plans; market economy is not equal to capitalism, socialism also has markets. Planning and market are both economic means."

It is precisely because the problem of socialist countries using market mechanisms has been solved from a theoretical level that China's reform and opening up has lifted the ideological shackles, boldly carried out trials, introduced market mechanisms into economic operations, introduced competition mechanisms into corporate operations, introduced competition mechanisms into personal work performance assessments, introduced multiple ownerships into the economic system, and implemented opening up to the outside world and participated in the world economic division of labor system, thus contributing to the take-off of China's economy. Since the reform and opening up, after more than 40 years of construction, China has leapt into the world's second largest economy, its international status has been greatly improved, it has moved closer to the center of the world stage, and the construction of socialism with Chinese characteristics has entered a new era. Tracing back to the source, the fundamental reason why the misunderstanding of "absorbing all the positive achievements of capitalism" has appeared continuously in the practice of socialist construction in the Soviet Union and China is that they did not realize that there are two different theoretical assumptions about the construction of socialism in two different types of countries, namely developed countries and late-developing countries, in Marx's theory. As far as developed countries are concerned, the programmatic document "Critique of the Gotha Program" obviously denies the existence of market economy in socialism, but it is aimed at developed countries where market economy has achieved long-term development. In this document, although Marx emphasized that the first stage of communist development, that is, the socialist stage, would retain bourgeois legal rights and implement the principle of distribution according to work, this distribution was no longer through the exchange of money in the market, but "received a voucher from society to prove how much labor he provided (minus the labor he performed for the public fund), and based on this voucher, he received a consumer product with the same amount of labor from the social reserve. The amount of labor he gave to society in one form, he received back in another form." Although "Critique of the Gotha Program" was aimed at developed countries with mature capitalist development, later on, excluding or restricting the role of the market economy almost became the basic principle adhered to by socialist countries. However, Marx's documents on the possibility and conditions of Russia, as a latecomer, directly transitioning to socialism have been ignored. In these documents, although Marx did not explicitly state that the market mechanism is the means that latecomers should rely on to develop their economies, his hints in this regard can still be perceived. For example, he compared the difference between the introduction of material and technical content such as advanced machines and the introduction of a whole set of exchange institutions such as banks and credit. "In order to adopt machines, ships, railways, etc., does Russia have to go through a long incubation period of machine industry like the West? At the same time, we also ask them to explain to us: How can they introduce a whole set of exchange institutions (banks, credit companies, etc.) that took centuries to establish in the West all at once?" It can be seen from this that "all the positive achievements of capitalism" include not only the material and technical level, but also the level of exchange institutions and exchange mechanisms, and the latter needs to be gradually nurtured and matured in the long-term development of the market economy.

Observations from the practice of socialist construction in late-developing countries such as the Soviet Union and China show that they have failed to reach a scientific understanding of how to treat "all the positive achievements of capitalism" and have failed to recognize that the market economy, as a means of developing productivity, can be used by socialism. It was only when China implemented the policy of reform and opening up, introduced the market mechanism, and developed the market economy that the issue of "all the positive achievements of capitalism" should include the market mechanism and the market economy was truly resolved.

Chapter 3

**Socialism with Chinese characteristics has epoch-making significance in the history of the development of scientific socialism**

Since Marx founded the theory of scientific socialism, the development of scientific socialism has roughly gone through three stages. The first stage is the stage of theoretical creation. The main task of this stage is to construct a set of scientific socialist theories. It must reveal the inevitability of the emergence of socialism from the perspective of the laws of human social historical development. Marx revealed the laws of human social historical development by creating the materialist conception of history, and revealed the internal mechanism of the contradiction between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie by creating the theory of surplus value, thereby revealing that socialism, as a solution to this contradiction, has the law of historical inevitability. As for how different types of countries transition to socialism, Marx put forward different theories, which became the theoretical guidance for these countries to transition to socialism, and tested and developed Marx's relevant theoretical ideas in their practice. The author has already discussed the issue of the transition of developed capitalist countries to socialism in a special article. As for the issue of the transition of late-developing countries to socialism, Marx not only affirmed through research that late-developing countries may directly transition to socialism, but also specifically put forward the conditions required. Of course, in understanding the true connotation of Marx's "absorbing all the positive achievements of capitalism", the actual socialist countries have gone through a relatively long process of exploration, gradually finding a way to solve this problem from setbacks and lessons, thereby promoting the practice of socialist construction to achieve greater development.

The second stage is the stage of establishing a socialist country. The main task of this stage is to put Marx's scientific socialist theory into practice and establish a socialist country. It requires the revolutionary leaders of specific countries to determine the strategy of transition to socialism based on their specific national conditions. Lenin flexibly applied Marx's scientific socialist theory based on Russia's national conditions at that time, advocating that Russia should seize the major historical opportunity when the bourgeois provisional government was weak and workers and peasants strongly demanded to change the status quo. He first theoretically demonstrated the rationality of launching a revolution to establish a socialist regime in a late-developing country and using the socialist regime to develop productivity faster; then, through the Bolsheviks, the vanguard of the proletariat, the October Revolution was launched to establish the world's first socialist country, turning scientific socialism from theory into reality. It was under the demonstration and guidance of the Soviet Union that China, a late-developing country with a more backward level of productivity development, established a socialist regime through arduous revolutionary struggles under the leadership of the first generation of leadership collective with Comrade Mao Zedong as the core. Other late-developing countries have also established socialist regimes. Of course, after the establishment of the socialist regime, socialist construction will follow. Although the Soviet Union and China before the reform and opening up have made great achievements in socialist construction, they have never solved the problem of whether to use the market mechanism and whether to develop the market economy. Faced with the urgent situation of internal and external difficulties, Lenin decisively implemented the New Economic Policy, and to a certain extent used market means to stimulate economic development, thereby restoring and developing the economy to a certain extent. However, Lenin was in a contradictory state on how to view the relationship between the market mechanism and socialism. On the one hand, he affirmed that the New Economic Policy was the only way to establish the real foundation of socialism, but on the other hand, he believed that the New Economic Policy was a temporary retreat to capitalism. This reflects Lenin's view that the market economy is equivalent to capitalism. Unfortunately, Lenin did not have more time to think about and solve this major theoretical issue concerning the future development of socialist construction. After Lenin's death, Stalin soon announced the end of the New Economic Policy, implemented a planned economy that excluded the market mechanism, and created the Stalin model of developing socialism. The Stalin model has become the standard model for latecomer countries to carry out socialist construction. After the establishment of China's socialist regime, the 29 years of socialist construction before reform and opening up followed the Stalin model and excluded the role of the market mechanism. Although the economy also achieved tremendous development, it was insufficient in promoting the vitality of sustained economic development and mobilizing the enthusiasm of the working people.

The third stage is the stage of building socialism with Chinese characteristics by using market mechanisms. The main task of this stage is to put into practice Marx's idea of ​​"absorbing all the positive achievements of capitalism". While absorbing and learning from the positive achievements of Western developed capitalist countries in terms of material technology, boldly introduce market mechanisms and develop market economy, inject vitality into socialist economic construction, and make socialist market economy a new standard model for developing countries to build socialism. Therefore, the construction of socialism with Chinese characteristics has epoch-making significance in the history of the development of scientific socialism.

Faced with the urgent situation of low-level productivity and lack of vitality in the planned economy, the second generation of the party's leadership collective with Comrade Deng Xiaoping as the core flexibly applied Marx's scientific socialist theory, launched reform and opening up, introduced market mechanisms, and explored the construction of a socialist market economy with Chinese characteristics. The socialist market economy is developed on the basis of introducing technology, foreign investment, and learning from the advanced management experience of developed countries. After more than 40 years of development, China's socialist construction has made great achievements. Its total economic output has jumped to the second place in the world and has jumped to the first place in the world in terms of purchasing power parity. Its comprehensive national strength has been greatly improved, and it has stepped closer to the center of the world stage, ushering in a bright prospect for realizing the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. The socialist market economy with Chinese characteristics has become the standard model for the new development stage of scientific socialism, and has become a standard model for countries that still adhere to the socialist system and other developing countries to learn from.