**Communism: The Origin and Development of the Concepts of Socialism and Communism by Qin Gang**

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**Abstract: The concepts of socialism and communism have a long history. While people are using the concepts of socialism and communism, they are also constantly giving them new connotations. Marx and Engels used socialism and communism as synonyms. Their interpretation of socialism or communism laid the scientific foundation for socialism or communism. Lenin's definition of socialism and communism provided a new perspective for the Communists to understand socialism and communism. The Communist Party of China has continuously deepened its understanding of socialism and communism, enriching and developing the connotations of socialism and communism.**

Socialism and communism are both ideas that came first and concepts that came later. With the formation and widespread acceptance of the concepts of socialism and communism, various ideological propositions for criticizing and transforming capitalism ultimately shared or had similar attributes. The concepts of socialism and communism are both historical and developmental which develops by time. The specific ideological content they reflect is bound to continue to develop and change with the changes in social and historical conditions.

　　1. The Origin and Spread of the Concepts of Socialism and Communism

There are various opinions about the origin of the concept of socialism, but one thing is certain: as a social thought trend that criticizes and denies capitalism, socialism originated in the early 16th century, marked by the publication of Thomas More's Utopia. And as a concept reflecting this trend, socialism was not widely used and circulated until the late 1830s. Before that, although some people had used the word socialism, as scholars have verified, Italian missionary Giacomo Giuliani used the word "socialism" very early, but his use did not reflect the socialist trend of thought and had nothing to do with what people call socialism. The three major socialist thinkers in the 19th century did not directly use the concept of socialism when explaining their own thoughts. It was only in his later years that Owen began to use the word socialism. Saint-Simon called the ideal society he pursued as "industrial system", and Fourier called the ideal society he pursued "harmonious system". Owen initially called the ideal society he pursued "rational social system". In 1840, when Owen published a collection of speeches, he used the word socialism and the book was titled "Socialism or the Rational Social System". ①

According to the British scholar H. Cole, the word "socialism" was first used by the French, and the word "socialist" was first used by the British. In his multi-volume History of Socialist Thought, Cole pointed out: "These two words first appeared in Italian publications in 1803, but the meaning at that time was completely irrelevant to the later ones. They never appeared again until 1827, when Owen's socialist magazine "Cooperation Magazine" used the word "socialist" to refer to the believers of the cooperative doctrine.

As for the word "socialism", first appeared in the French journal "The Globe" in 1832."② The journal argued that both the words "socialism" and "socialist" are derived from the adjective "social", the former refers to the doctrine, and the latter refers to the person who advocates this doctrine.

The "social" mentioned here is the opposite of "individual". Early socialists used this word mainly to deny the individualism prevalent in capitalist society, hoping to realize and maintain the overall interests of society. In 1833, the word "socialism" was also used in the British Owen faction's publication "The Poor's Guardian", which was more than a year later than France. At the same time, the term "socialist" was also used in France, several years later than in Britain. After that, the two terms became popular in Britain and France, and soon spread to Germany and other European countries.

"Communism"

The word "communism" appeared slightly later than the word "socialism", and its etymology means "public ownership" and "community". The idea of ​​communism has existed for a long time, but its concept originated from the secret revolutionary groups in Paris in the mid-1830s. H. Cole argued that the French use of the word communism has a dual meaning: one is the expectation of realizing public ownership of property, and the other is to strive to establish a grassroots autonomous organization based on the "commune"③. In the 1840s, with the spread of the communist ideas of Cabet in France and Weitling in Germany, the word communism became more popular in Europe.

With the formation of the concepts of socialism and communism, various ideological propositions for criticizing and transforming capitalism have clear definitions. The concepts of socialism and communism are both related and different. Early socialist thought contains communist elements, and early communist thought also contains socialist contents. Both ideas reflect the negation and criticism of capitalism, and both hope to achieve an ideal society beyond capitalism. In this sense, the concepts of socialism and communism are interlinked.

However, the earliest advocates of socialism emphasized more on the peaceful transformation of capitalism, while the earliest advocates of communism emphasized more on the complete transformation of capitalism. Another point is that socialism emerged from the upper class of society, mainly among intellectuals; communism emerged from the lower class of society, mainly among the working class. In this regard, Engels said: "Socialism, at least on the continent, is for the upper class, while communism is just the opposite." ④ In this sense, the two concepts of socialism and communism were initially quite different. Due to different positions and different interests, socialism itself has also formed different propositions and schools.

Whether it is early socialism or early communism, capitalism was more of a moral condemnation, and the ideal society of the future is more of a value judgment. Especially in the early socialism, its attention was focused on designing a social system that is as perfect as possible, and it wanted to achieve this salvation plan through ideological propaganda, typical practical demonstration, and relying on external forces. As Engels wrote. "This new social system is destined to be utopian from the beginning. The more detailed and thorough it is, the more it will fall into pure fantasy." “Because at that time, social development had not yet produced the material force that could promote this social change. This "immature theory is adapted to the immature capitalist production conditions and immature class conditions." ⑤.

In 1839, French economist Jerome Adolphe Blanqui first combined the two words "utopia" and "socialism" in his book "Political Economy" to refer to the early socialist schools. Since then, the socialist thoughts from More to Saint-Simon, Fourier, Owen and others have been called "utopian socialism", and early communism has also been called "utopian communism". The term "utopian socialism" China uses is translated from Japanese. Generally speaking, utopian socialism in a broad sense also includes utopian communism.

**II. Socialism and Communism in the Context of Marx and Engels**

In Marx and Engels's view, socialism and communism are used as synonyms. Marx and Engels only distinguish them when commenting on early socialist and communist ideas.

When Marx and Engels first expressed and explained their socialist ideas, they did not use the concept of socialism, but chose the concept of communism. For example, in works such as "The German Ideology" and "The Communist Manifesto", they all used the concept of communism to express and explain socialist ideas. As to why the concept of socialism was not chosen, Engels explained in the preface to the German edition of The Communist Manifesto in 1890: **"When the Manifesto was published, we could not call it the Socialist Manifesto. In 1847, the so-called socialists referred to two kinds of people. On the one hand, they referred to the believers of various utopian socialist systems... On the other hand, they referred to various social quacks... On the contrary, the part of the workers who were convinced that mere political change was not enough and demanded a fundamental transformation of society called themselves communists... Socialism means the movement of the bourgeoisie, and communism means the movement of the workers." "Since we had already firmly determined at that time that 'the liberation of the workers should be the business of the working class itself', we did not doubt for a moment which of the two names should be chosen. Moreover, we never thought of abandoning this name later."** ⑥

Therefore, Marx and Engels called their socialist propositions "communist doctrine", the proletarian revolution "communist revolution", the proletarian party "communist party", and the future society that would replace capitalism as "communist society".

Marx rarely used the concept of socialism, and when Marx did use it, he often added qualifications. For example, in the article "The Class Struggles in France from 1848 to 1850", after analyzing and criticizing various socialist schools, Marx emphasized that the proletariat has "increasingly united around revolutionary socialism, around communism, which the bourgeoisie named Blanquism"⑦.

The "revolutionary socialism" mentioned here is relative to utopian socialism, and is also equivalent to communism. In works such as "Capital" and "Critique of the Gotha Program", Marx used the concept of communism and called the future society "communist society". Engels used the concept of communism in his works in collaboration with Marx, and he also used the concept of communism in his early works. For example, in the article "The Progress of the Social Reform Movement on the Continent", Engels pointed out: **"Communism is not the result of the special conditions of Britain or any other country, but the inevitable conclusion drawn from the premises of the general actual situation of modern civilized society**."⑧ Marx and Engels called their own socialist ideas communism, mainly to distinguish them from other socialist schools at the time, and to emphasize that the proletarian revolution was a thorough social revolution different from previous ones.

After the 1870s, Marx and Engels also began to call their own socialist ideas "scientific socialism" or simply "socialism". Engels first used the concept of "scientific socialism" in his 1872 article "On the Housing Question".

Engels said: **"The view of German scientific socialism, that the proletariat must take political action and must implement the dictatorship of the proletariat as a transition to the abolition of classes and the abolition of the state together with the classes. This view has been stated in the Communist Manifesto and has been repeated countless times since then."**

In the book "Anti-Dühring", Engels pointed out that **"the theoretical expression of the proletarian movement is the task of scientific socialism", which is to deeply examine the historical conditions for the proletariat to complete the liberation of the world and the nature of this cause itsel**f" (10).

Marx once emphasized: "'Scientific socialism' is only used to oppose utopian socialism." (11) That is to say, Marx and Engels called their own socialist ideas "scientific socialism" mainly to distinguish them from utopian socialism. After that, Engels also directly called their socialist ideas as socialism.

For example, Engels said in his book The Development of Socialism from Utopia to Utopia: "Socialism is no longer regarded as the accidental discovery of a genius, but as the inevitable product of the struggle between two historically generated classes, the proletariat and the bourgeoisie." (12)

Another passage that is often quoted is what Engels said in a letter to Otto Von Boenigk: **"I believe that the so-called 'socialist society' is not a static thing, but should be regarded as a society of constant change and reform, just like any other social system."** (13)

The reason for this is mainly because with the development and changes of the situation, the European proletariat has generally recognized and accepted the concept of socialism. People generally believe that the revolution carried out by the proletariat is a socialist revolution, and the realization of socialism is the realization of communism. In this regard, Engels said: "In 1887, continental socialism was almost completely the theory announced in the Manifesto." (14)

It is precisely because of this that the proletarian parties established in various countries in the world in the 1870s were all called socialist parties, not communist parties. The members of the Second International, founded in 1889, were all socialist parties in various countries. If we only consider the usage of concepts in this period, what Marx called the first and higher stages of communism can also be said to be the first and higher stages of socialism.

When expressing and explaining their socialist propositions, Marx and Engels successively used concepts such as communism, scientific socialism, and socialism. These three concepts all contain the connotations of the proletarian ideological system, the proletarian revolutionary movement, and the proletarian goal pursuit, but they have different emphases in different periods and different occasions.

The alternating use of these concepts is not a change in the connotation of thought, but is due to specific social conditions and clear ideological orientation. Whether Marx and Engels called their socialist propositions communism, scientific socialism, or directly called socialism, they were all aimed at clarifying the nature and goals of the proletarian revolution and providing scientific guidance for the proletarian revolution. Their ideological propositions are based on the materialist conception of history, which is the ideological starting point for their interpretation of socialist propositions. It is on the basis of the materialist conception of history that Marx and Engels realized the historic transformation of the doctrines of socialism and communism, giving socialism and communism new content and a new vision, and becoming a scientific theory to guide the proletarian revolution.

**III. Socialism and Communism in Lenin’s Context**

In Lenin's theory, socialism and communism are a system of thought, a revolutionary movement, and also a social ideal. In this respect, Lenin is consistent with Marx and Engels. When explaining the system of thought, Lenin used the concept of scientific socialism more often; when explaining the revolutionary movement, he used the concept of socialism more often; when explaining the goal pursuit, he used the concept of communism more often.

In the process of using the concepts of socialism and communism, Lenin made a unique theoretical contribution, which was to clearly define socialism and communism. He regarded socialism as the first step in the liberation of the proletariat, and communism as the ultimate goal pursued by the proletariat.

In socialist thought, the first person to propose this understanding was the German female revolutionary Luxemburg. She argued that the future society after capitalism can be divided into two stages: socialism and communism, and communism comes on the basis of socialist development. However, due to the limited influence of Luxemburg's thoughts, her view was not widely recognized. Lenin's interpretation of socialism and communism is related to the proletarian revolution and the reorganization of the communist party. It not only had a wide impact, but was also recognized by the Communist parties of various countries in the world later.

Lenin made a clear definition of socialism and communism on the basis of Marx's division of communism into the first stage and the higher stage. Lenin argued that socialism is the first stage or primary stage of communism, and communism is developed on the basis of socialism. In other words, the first step of the proletarian revolution is to realize socialism, and then develop towards communism.

In his article “The Tasks of the Proletariat in Our Revolution”, Lenin said: **“Mankind can only pass directly from capitalism to socialism, that is, to common ownership of the means of production and distribution of the products according to the amount of labor performed by each individual. Our party sees further: socialism will inevitably grow gradually into communism.”** (15)

In the book “The State and Revolution”, Lenin clearly pointed out: “The scientific difference between socialism and communism is very obvious. What is usually called socialism, Marx called it the ‘first’ or lower stage of communist society. Since the means of production have become public property, the term ‘communism’ can also be used here, as long as we do not forget that this is not yet complete communism.” (16)

Lenin later emphasized: “Communism is the higher stage of socialist development, when people engage in labor because they are aware that they must work for the common good.” (17) In addition, Lenin has another important view on the understanding of socialism and communism. Lenin argued that socialism can be realized in one or several countries, while communism will be a global process. Lenin's definition and distinction between socialism and communism provided a new perspective for later Communist Parties to understand socialism and communism, and also provided new theoretical guidance for the Communist Party to realize socialism and pursue communism.

Lenin's definition of socialism and communism also provided a theoretical basis for his re-establishment of the communist party. Lenin argued that the leaders of socialist parties in European countries had betrayed Marxism and distorted socialism. The Russian Social Democratic Labor Party should no longer be called a socialist party and should change its name. "It should call itself a Communist Party like Marx and Engels did." (18)

According to Lenin's proposal, the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party changed its name to "Russian Communist Party (Bolshevik)" at its seventh congress in March 1918. With the establishment of the Russian Communist Party, a large number of communist parties emerged in various countries around the world. These parties all adhere to Marxism and Leninism, and all accept Lenin's distinction between socialism and communism. The Communist Party must not only realize socialism, but also realize communism. This theoretical distinction brought about political divisions. After that, political parties advocating socialism still existed, and realizing communism became the distinctive proposition of the Communist Party, and communists were also called communists. The Third International, established in 1919, is an international organization of communist parties. Western countries later also called countries ruled by the Communist Party "communist countries", but in the eyes of the West, this "communism" was regarded as totalitarianism or authoritarianism.

While defining socialism and communism, Lenin also emphasized that Russia, with its relatively backward economy and culture, could only build **a "primary form of socialism" first, and could not immediately build "developed socialism**."

However, Lenin only proposed such a concept and did not form a corresponding theory for this idea. In the early days after the victory of the October Revolution, Lenin did not fully estimate the long-term nature of socialist construction. For example, in his speech at the Third Congress of the Russian Communist Youth League in 1920, Lenin estimated that Russia would enter a communist society in another 10 to 20 years. (19)

In his later years, Lenin had a deeper understanding of the long-term nature and complexity of socialist construction and formed some new ideas. Due to Lenin's premature death, this new understanding of Lenin and his new ideas did not form a systematic theory, nor did Lenin’s new ideas fully penetrate the hearts and minds of the people. Since the name of the Communist Party is associated with communism, the communist party must realize communism and establish a communist society. Such ideas have a direct impact on the social transformation and social practice of the communists.

After Lenin, Stalin did not continue to make theoretical exploration according to Lenin's ideas in his later years. Stalin still regarded socialism as a short period.

In 1936, Stalin announced that the Soviet Union had established a socialist system. Three years later, in 1939, Stalin put the transition to communism on the agenda. The outbreak of the war interrupted the transition process. After the end of the Great Patriotic War, shortly after the Soviet Union had just completed the restoration of the national economy, Stalin again proposed the task of transitioning to communism. The document of the 19th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in 1952 clearly stated: **"Now, the main task of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union is to gradually transition from socialism to communism and finally build a communist society." After Khrushchev took over, he put forward the idea of ​​"comprehensively launching communist construction."**

At the 22nd Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union held in 1961, **Khrushchev** proposed "basically building communism within 20 years."

Because the Communist Party of the Soviet Union founded the first socialist country, its ideological propositions inevitably had a "radiation effect" or "role model effect" on the theory and practice of the Communist Parties of other countries. This idea of ​​eagerness to transition inevitably affected the Communist Parties of other countries' understanding of socialism and communism. Later, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union adjusted this approach and proposed the concept of "developed socialism", but it did not make any new theoretical contribution.

.**IV. Socialism and Communism in the Context of the Communist Party of China**

The ideology and theory of the Communist Party of China is derived from Marxism-Leninism. The nature and name of the party determine that communism is the ultimate goal of the Communist Party of China. The revolution and construction practices led by the Communist Party of China are ultimately aimed at realizing communism, and such practical activities are naturally called the communist movement. Therefore, whether in the revolutionary period or in the socialism construction period, members of the Communist Party of China do not call themselves socialists, but emphasize that they will fight for communism all their lives and call themselves as communists.

The Chinese Communist Party's initial knowledge and understanding of communism mainly came from Marx and Engels' interpretation in The Communist Manifesto. For example, the first program of the Chinese Communist Party clearly emphasized: **"overthrow the power of the capitalist class", "eliminate capitalist private ownership", and "eliminate social class distinctions".**

But at the same time, the Chinese Communist Party also accepted Lenin's distinction between socialism and communism, regarding the realization of socialism as a prerequisite for the realization of communism, and regarding communism as the result of the full development of socialism.

Mao Zedong once said**: "We Communists have never concealed our political propositions. Our future program or highest program is to advance China to a socialist society and a communist society. This is certain and undoubted. The name of our party and our Marxist worldview clearly point to this future, infinitely bright, infinitely wonderful highest ideal."** (20)

At the same time, based on China's national conditions, the Chinese Communist Party also proposed that the democratic revolution is the first step of the socialist revolution, emphasizing that "the democratic revolution is a necessary preparation for the socialist revolution, and the socialist revolution is the inevitable trend of the democratic revolution. The ultimate goal of all communists is to strive for the final completion of the socialist society and the communist society" (21).

From New Democracy to Socialism and then to Communism, this is the basic path established by the CPC for the development of Chinese society based on China's national conditions and the laws of human social development.

During the revolutionary period, the CPC did not elaborate on socialism and communism. Its ideology mainly followed the views of Marx, Engels and Lenin, emphasizing that the proletariat and the working people should take control of state power, eliminate private ownership, establish public ownership, achieve social equality, and eventually move from distribution according to work to distribution according to need.

While adhering to the development direction of socialism and communism, the Communist Party of China also linked socialism with "saving China" and "developing China". Mao Zedong pointed out: **"Only socialism can save China"; "Socialism is China's only way out".**

The Chinese Communists must "**reform and build our society in accordance with the direction of socialism and communism" and build a prosperous and strong modern country** (22).

The Communist Party of China not only linked socialism with communism, but also with national prosperity, giving socialism a new meaning, with both lofty pursuits and realistic goals. After entering the period of socialist construction, the Communist Party of China began to have a new understanding of socialism and communism. However, due to its own insufficient theoretical preparation, lack of in-depth research on socialism and communism, and the influence of the Soviet Communist Party's ideology, it did not form a correct understanding for a long period of time. For example, CPC once regarded socialism as a temporary period and was eager to transit to communism. For a long time, CPC argued that China's socialist society was still in a "transitional period" with fierce struggles between two classes and two paths.

On the basis of summarizing the experience and lessons, the CPC gained a clearer understanding of socialism and communism. The CPC adheres to Lenin's definition and distinction between socialism and communism. While firmly adhering to the lofty goal of communism, CPC fully realizes that socialism is a very long historical stage in China.

Deng Xiaoping pointed out: "We are engaged in the cause of socialism, and the ultimate goal is to realize communism." (23) "The first stage of communism is socialism. Socialism is to develop productive forces. This is a very long historical stage." (24) Deng Xiaoping also emphasized that consolidating and developing socialism requires a very long historical stage and requires several generations, dozens of generations, or even dozens of generations of unremitting efforts.

The CPC's successive later leadership collectives have always adhered to the basic understanding of socialism and communism and have not changed. Xi Jinping also clearly emphasized: **"Our current efforts and the continued efforts of many generations in the future are all moving towards the ultimate goal of realizing communism. At the same time, we must realize that the realization of communism is a very long historical process. We must advance our cause down to earth based on the Party's current goals."** (25)

In the process of exploring socialist theory, some people have proposed the view that **"socialism is an independent social form."** We think this view will bring logical confusion to the Communist Party's construction of socialism and the realization of communism, which is obviously inappropriate.

Regarding socialism, the Communist Party of China not only deepened its understanding from the historical process, but also focused on deepening its understanding from the essence. CPC put forward the view that liberating and developing productive forces, eliminating exploitation, eliminating polarization, achieving common prosperity, promoting the all-round development of man, and achieving social harmony are the essence and essential requirements of socialism. Regarding communism, there have been many descriptions and speculations in the past.

When talking about communism, Deng Xiaoping made the following summary: **"** **Communism is a system in which there is no exploitation of man by man, a social system in which there is a great abundance of products, and in which each person does what he or she can to contribute to the society, and products are distributes according to his or her needs”.** (26)

Jiang Zemin later also made a concise summary: "Communist society will be a society with extremely abundant material wealth, people's spiritual realm will be greatly improved, and free and all-round development for everyone." (27) From past experience, deepening the understanding of socialism is of great significance to the construction of socialism. What is more important for communism is to emphasize adherence to the direction of communism and firm belief. **The more and more detailed the theoretical explanation of communism is, the easier it is to be divorced from reality and fall into utopia.**

Regarding the progress and development of socialism in China, the CPC has made an important judgment and put forward an important proposition. This important judgment is that China is in and will remain in the primary stage of socialism for a long time.

This important proposition is to build socialism with Chinese characteristics. This is an important innovation of the CPC in the concept and thought of socialism. Regarding the relationship between the primary stage of socialism and socialism and communism, Deng Xiaoping said: **"Socialism itself is the primary stage of communism, and China is in the primary stage of socialism, that is, the underdeveloped stage."** (28)

Regarding socialism with Chinese characteristics, the CPC has always emphasized that it is the practice of scientific socialism in China and scientific socialism rooted in Chinese soil. In this regard, Xi Jinping clearly pointed out: **"Socialism with Chinese characteristics is the dialectical unity of the theoretical logic of scientific socialism and the historical logic of China's social development. It is scientific socialism that is rooted in the land of China, reflects the will of the Chinese people, and adapts to the development and progress requirements of China and the times."** (29)

Regarding the relationship between the primary stage of socialism and socialism with Chinese characteristics, Jiang Zemin said in his speech on the 80th anniversary of the founding of the Party: **"The primary stage of socialism is the initial stage in the entire long historical process of building socialism with Chinese characteristics."** (30)

With the important judgment of the primary stage of socialism and the important proposition of socialism with Chinese characteristics, the Communist Party of China has a new understanding of the development of socialism in China and has also formed a Chinese discourse system of socialism, which is called as the theoretical system of socialism with Chinese characteristics.

**Notes:**

①See Gao Fang, Marxism and Socialism, Heilongjiang Education Press, 1994, p. 129.

②③See Cole, History of Socialist Thought, Volume 1, Commercial Press, 1977, pp. 7-8, 13.

④⑥⑦(14) Selected Works of Marx and Engels, Volume 1, People’s Publishing House, 2012, pp. 392, 392-393, 532, 392.

⑤⑨⑩(11)(12)Selected Works of Marx and Engels, Volume 3, People’s Publishing House, 2012, pp. 780-781, 248-249, 671, 341, 796.

⑧ "Collected Works of Marx and Engels", Volume 3, People's Publishing House, 2002 edition, page 474.

(13) Collected Works of Marx and Engels, Volume 10, People’s Publishing House, 2009, p. 588.

(15)(16)(18) Selected Works of Lenin, Volume 3, People’s Publishing House, 2012, pp. 64, 199-200, 64.

(17)(19) Selected Works of Lenin, Volume 4, People’s Publishing House, 2012, pp. 87, 296.

(20) Selected Works of Mao Zedong, Volume 3, People’s Publishing House, 1991, p. 1059.

(21) Selected Works of Mao Zedong, Volume 2, People’s Publishing House, 1991, pp. 651-652.

(22) Selected Works of Mao Zedong, Volume 7, People’s Publishing House, 1999, pp. 214, 267, 275.

(23)(24)(26)(28)Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping, Volume 3, People’s Publishing House, 1993, pp. 110, 228, 137, 252.

(25)(29) Selected Important Documents Since the 18th CPC National Congress (Volume 1), Central Literature Publishing House, 2014, pp. 115-116, 118.

(27)(30) Selected Works of Jiang Zemin, Volume 3, People’s Publishing House, 2006, pp. 293, 293