

Experience and Reflection on the Popularization of Marxism Seventeen Years After the Founding of China

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Abstract

Seventeen years after the founding of China, the Communist Party of China has gained rich experience of combining Marxism popularization with the central work of the party and the country, comprehensively covering various groups while highlighting the important objects, struggling with a variety of anti-Marxist ideology, and encouraging party cadres extensively launch theory publicity during the spread of Marxism. These experiences provide an important warning for promoting contemporary Chinese Marxism popularization: thought of the ruling class is possible to achieve and must achieve popularity, promoting the popularization of Marxism is the party's long-term historical mission, which consolidate the position of the mainstream ideology of Marxism in the struggle, and fully play its role of advocacy and demonstration to pure the party cadres.

Key words: Seventeen years after the founding of People's Republic of China; Popularization of Marxism; Experience; Reflection

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INTRODUCTION

The eighteenth National Congress report stresses “promote the era of Marxism in China popular, consistently arm the whole party and educate the people with the theoretical system of socialism with Chinese characteristics” (p.31), and Marxism popularization becomes a long-term mission for Communist Party of China (Hu, 2012). The so-called Marxism popularization is a process providing propaganda education of Marxism to the mass with plain, concrete and vivid way, and making them understand and transform the world with the view of the method of Marxism. Seventeen years after the founding of China (year 1949-1965), Chinese Communist Party insists on the propaganda education of Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought to the masses, promotes the popularization of Marxism, provides spiritual power and protective thought for socialism transformation and building a socialism society, and provides important warning to deepen contemporary Marxism popularization in China.

1. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE POPULARIZATION OF MARXISM SEVENTEEN YEARS AFTER THE FOUNDING OF CHINA

The popularization of Marxism seventeen years after the founding of China is a Marxism educational outreach activity which is far-reaching and covering all Chinese people at the first time in a specific historical context.

1.1 China Has Experienced the Most Profound Social Transformation in Modern Times

Social transformation is the transformation of the economic system in general, changes in the social structure or social patterns. No matter what form of

social transformation, will cause impacts on the original ideas, values, and ways of thinking in varying degrees. Seventeen years after the founding of China, China experiences a transition from a semi-feudal society to a new democratic society, from the new democratic society to a socialism society, which brings huge impact on people's thinking in such a short period of time experiencing dramatic social changes.

In 1957, Mao Zedong pointed out in "Speech at the Chinese Communist Party's National Conference on Propaganda Work": "We are now in a period of great social change. Chinese society has been in big changes for a long time. The Sino-Japanese War is a big change, and the liberation war is also. But for the nature, the current change is much more profound than in the past.... Commercial bourgeoisie and the petty bourgeoisie of agricultural, industrial and handicraft have changed. The socio-economic system has changed, individual economy is changing into the collective economy, and capitalism private ownership is becoming socialism public ownership. Such large changes of course reflect in people's minds" (Mao, 1999, p.267). Mao Zedong pointed out here that the establishment of the socialism system is the most profound change in modern China, is the "qualitative change" of social nature. On the one hand, this is a fundamental change in the economic base.

The year, 1956 marks the completion of the three socialism transformation in 1956, which marks the elimination of private ownership and the establishment of public ownership. That is the landmark of transformation in China's economic basis since a class society. On the other hand, this is a fundamental change in the superstructure. With the establishment of the socialism economic base, "the country's superstructures like politic and legal, are further adapted to establish and serve socialism economic base", the political and ideological superstructure were profoundly changed (Party History Research Office, 2011, p.246).

Second National propaganda Conference of Chinese Communist Party said: "Implementation of transitional line is an unprecedented profound revolution in Chinese history, it is to eliminate all forms of exploitation system, essentially eliminate private ownership of productive resources, which can cause changes in everyone's life and thought nationwide and is more extensive and stronger than the impact of the democratic revolution" (Party History Research Office, 2011, p.277). dramatic changes caused by social transformation reflects in people's minds, and the popularization of Marxism becomes a unified ideology and necessary activity leading the healthy development of social thought and maintaining social stability.

1.2 Gradually Have the Winning Conditions for the Propaganda of Marxism

Seventeen years after the founding of China, the popularization of Marxism gradually have winning

conditions in full swing. Mao Zedong pointed out in *On the Correct Handling of Contradictions among the People* that now the ideological struggle of socialism have the winning conditions. The basic power regime is in the hands of the working people under the leadership of the proletariat. The Communist Party has a strong strength and high prestige.... Every fair-minded person can see that we are loyal to the people, we have the determination and ability to build the motherland together with the people, we've got great achievements, and will continue for more tremendous achievement (Mao, 1999, p.231).

Mao Zedong analyzes winning conditions of Marxism popularization: first, the Communist Party of China become the party in charge of the national government, so that extend the range of Marxism spread from revolutionary base and liberate region before the founding to the whole country, with a political premise for Marxism popularization. Second, the successful completion of the socialism transformation of the system lays the foundation for the popularization of Marxism. "The party's central collective leadership of first generation with Mao Zedong as the core lead the whole Party and people complete the new-democratic revolution, carrying out socialism transformation, establishing the basic socialism system, successfully implement of the most profound and greatest social change in Chinese history, and provide the fundamental political prerequisite and institutional foundation for all development and progress of contemporary China.

Marxism is based on the foundation of and socialism public ownership and people's democratic system, having institutional guarantee for coverage of all the public and becoming the mainstream ideology. Third, although it is affected by the errors of "left-leaning", socialism construction has experienced ups and downs, but the results are the main things. In that period, China's industrial production, transportation, culture, education and health services, science and technology have made outstanding achievements. In short, "the material and technical basis we have for modernization construction are mainly gained in this period; backbones of the country's economic and cultural development and their work experience, most of which are trained and accumulated during this period" (Party Literature Research Centre, CCCPC, 1987, p.310). Achievements in socialism construction prove scientification and practicality of Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong's thought and provide a practical basis for the popularization of Marxism.

1.3 The Further Development of Mao Zedong Thought in the New Historical Condition

Engels pointed out: "theoretical thinking in every age, including the theoretical thinking of our times, is a product of history; it has completely different forms at different times, and have completely different content"

(Marx & Von Engels, 2009, p.436). Any scientific theory is the product of the times, the theory will progress with the times and continue to develop and innovate. The same is as Mao Zedong Thought. Seventeen years after the founding of China, because the international situation and China's national conditions changed dramatically, the basic principles of Marxism combining with China's latest real socialism revolution and socialism construction has produced new theoretical results, and promote the further development of Mao Zedong Thought.

Seven years after the founding of China, Mao Zedong as the core of the first generation of leadership of the Communist Party of China leads people to restore the national economy, consolidate the national power of the people's democratic dictatorship, and establish the socialism system and a series of practical activities further deepen the Mao Zedong Thought. This includes further development of the new democratic revolution theory; creatively develop socialism transformation ideology of Marxism-Leninism; and propose building theory of ruling party.

From October 1951 to April 1953, the first, second and third volumes of "Selected Works of Mao Zedong" have been published. In the decade of building an all-around socialism, Mao Zedong summarized socialism construction rules in exploring the process of socialism development path, and enriched Mao Zedong Thought. This includes Mao used opposite and unitized perspective analyzing socialism society, presenting the basic contradiction of socialism society and the two different types of conflict theory; built a socialism democratic centralism, enriching people's democratic dictatorship thinking; developing socialism culture, and proposing "Hundred Flowers" literary approach; promoting the socialism economic construction, making overall arrangements, taking into account the principle of national, collective and individual interests, dealing with the relationship between economic and defense construction, large and small businesses, coastal and inland, central and places, consumption and accumulation. In September 1960, the official fourth volume of "Selected Works of Mao Zedong" was published. In this way, the correct theory of socialism construction principles and experience summary become an important part of Mao Zedong Thought, the main content of the basic formation of Mao Zedong Thought basically form provides a strong support for the popularization of Marxism.

2. THE MAIN EXPERIENCE OF POPULARIZATION OF MARXISM SEVENTEEN YEARS AFTER THE FOUNDING OF CHINA

Seventeen years after the founding of China, the Communist Party of China has effectively carried out

Marxism popularization activities to ensure the recovery of the national economy, the successful completion of three socialism transformations and started building socialism, forming a rich experience.

2.1 Start Publicity Combining the Central Work of the Party and the Country

Marxism Popularization tightly bounds to the central work of the party and the country, fully play the function of unifying thoughts and strength is an important experience. "The party's task on the propaganda front" said: "The actual central work and central work of publicity should be consistent; advocacy department should mobilize all propaganda tools working for the central work to ensure the completion of the actual work" (Party Literature Research Centre, CCCPC, 2011, p.267).

Advocacy work can be divided into the current central work, current policy advocacy and promotion of basic theories of Marxism-Leninism, "propaganda of actual work needs to contact with the basic theory, but also the advocacy of basic theory needs to contact with practical work, they need to contact with each other, and contact well" (Party Literature Research Centre, CCCPC, 2011, p.266). Central work of the Party and the country is different at different stages, the central work of Marxism popularization also changes accordingly. In the socialism transformation period, in order to successfully achieve the transformation of agriculture, handicrafts, capitalism commerce industry, the CPC Central Committee held the second National Propaganda Conference of Chinese Communist Party in May 1954, "determining the current main task of party's propaganda work, is to further educate the whole Party and the people with the socialism ideology of Marxism-Leninism, mobilize the whole Party and the people fight for the realization of the Party's transitional line and completing the first five-year national development plan" (Party History Research Office, 2011, p.276).

The conference decided, "The future of the party's propaganda work must combine with the construction of socialism and socialism transformation proceeds, combine with domestic and international major events, instill socialism ideology of working class systematically, regularly, vividly and with practical needs to the whole party and people, and propaganda the socialism construction" (Party History Research Office, 2011, p.277). Marxism popularization started combining with the central work of different stages of the party and the country, embodied the principle of combining theory and practice, gave full play of the guiding role of scientific theories and methods of practice, and promoted the process of Chinese Marxism in practice.

2.2 Comprehensively Cover the Various Groups While Highlighting the Important Target

Marxism popularization of the period has the feature of full coverage and highlighting important points, that is

highlighting party members and cadres, intellectuals, young students, military personnel and other important objects. “Task of party’s propaganda fronts” stressed: “educating all the people in the country with the ideological principle of Marxism-Leninism is our party’s most basic political task.” “National Committee of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference’s decision on starting the learning movement of people’s political thought reform” promulgated in 1952, demanded that on the base of voluntary principle, people from all walks of life participate in ideological transformation, study Marxism-Leninism, Mao Zedong Thought and the joint creed, and the important policy documents of central and major administrative districts. Meanwhile, the party and the country also carry out targeted education for the following groups. First, strengthen the Marxism education to cadres and improve their ability to solve practical problems and resist the wrong ideas’ erosion. “CPC Central Committee’s decision on strengthening the theory education (draft)” stressed: “education of Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought for the whole party must be greatly strengthened” (Party Literature Research Centre, CCCPC, 2011, p.111).

It also requires that “each party member learned theoretical knowledge and educated in university should make efforts lifelong to study these original works and other works necessary for carrying out such research, should constantly strive to understand Marxism-Leninism – and the spiritual essence of Mao Zedong Thought in this study, in order to properly resolve Chinese people’s practical problems” (Party Literature Research Centre, CCCPC, 2011, p.113). Mao and the Party Central Committee listed the “Soviet socialism economic issues”, “Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin discuss on communism”, “The theory of practice”, “The contradiction Theory”, “On the Correct Handling of Contradictions Among the People,” “Where does people’s right thinking come from?” and other books. Party members and cadres improved the theoretical level, improved the working methods and ensure the completion of the central tasks of the Party and the country of each stage.

Second, strengthen Marxism education for young students, and enhance the ability of identification and resisting erosion of wrong ideas. The central committee has promulgated the “CPC Central Committee and State Council’s instructions on Education” and “CPC Central Committee Propaganda Department, the Ministry of Higher Education secretary, temporary party of Ministry of Education’s suggestion on improving political theory course in colleges and secondary schools”, required “must carry on political education and ideological education of Marxism-Leninism in all schools”, “arm youth with Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought, carry on proletarian class education for them and train strong revolutionary successors who are young generation work

in with schools in the ideological and political work, oppose revisionism, and compete with the bourgeoisie.”

Train the young students to become successors of socialism construction, and resist the erosion of adverse social thought by these initiatives. Third, transform intellectuals’ thoughts with Marxism ideology. Seventeen years after the founding of China, intellectuals in general are positioned as objects needing to be reformed in thoughts, and be able to be transformed into socialism laborers. In “CPC Central Committee’s instructions on propaganda materialism ideology and criticize bourgeois idealism” promulgated in 1955, proposed “must promote ideas of dialectical materialism and historical materialism among intellectuals the majority of the people, criticize the bourgeois idealism and win in the ideological front”.

While reform thoughts, intellectuals actively involved in the socialism transformation and socialism construction, and made important contribution. Fourth, strengthen Marxism propaganda and education for army. After the founding of China, the armed forces uphold the fine tradition of Marxism and attached great importance to publicity and education work of Marxism. “People’s Liberation Army’s Political Work General Regulations (Draft)” adopted in 1954 clearly proposed “the basic task of political work is educating the army with the revolutionary spirit of Marxism-Leninism, raising awareness of all members of the communism and consolidating internal and external unity of the army”. The enlarged CMC meeting in 1961 passed “Decision on strengthening political and ideological work of the military”, calling on all officers and soldiers actively study Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin’s works and Mao Zedong Thought, and obey the party leadership.

2.3 Fight Against a Variety of Anti-Marxism Ideology

Seventeen years after the founding of China, Marxism expands the scope of the spread in the struggle with feudal, bourgeois ideology, and other anti-Marxism ideology, and consolidates the position of the mainstream ideology. In 1951, the central authorities have promulgated the “Decision on the establishment of the people’s propaganda network in the Party” and the “CPC Central Committee’s instructions on sounding institutions at all levels and strengthening the Party’s publicity and education work”, demanded “in terms of theoretical education: leading or promoting Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought propaganda (including patriotic propaganda), leading or promoting the critique for anti-Marxist ideology”, “fight for all reactionary and wrong ideas and advocates”, “refute reactionary rumors spreading among the people and the wrong ideas”, to inspire and raise the people’s consciousness.

Mao Zedong analyzed the reasons fighting against anti-Marxist ideology: the large-scale mass class struggle in the current revolution period has ended, but the class

struggle does not, the struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, among various political forces, between ideology of the proletariat class and the bourgeoisie class are long, tortuous, and sometimes very intense, “Marxism also develops in the struggle.... In the socialism countries, the role of Marxism is different. But in socialism countries, non-Marxist ideology still exists, and also anti-Marxism ideology”, “Marxism only develops in the struggle, not only in the past, and it must also be so now and in the future. Correct things are developed in the course of fighting against the wrong things”.

Mao Zedong also raised the policy of Marxism fighting against wrong ideology: “For obvious counter-revolutionary, and men destructing the socialism, it’s easy, just depriving their freedom of speech. For inside people’s erroneous ideas....only taking the methods of discussion, criticizing and reasoning, to truly develop the right advice and overcome the wrong advice and can really solve the problem, which provide theoretical guidance for Marxism struggling with a variety of erroneous ideas, and protect the unity of the party with the theoretical struggle.

2.4 Mobilize Party Members and Cadres to carry out a Comprehensive Theory of Propaganda

Seventeen years after the founding of China, the number of party members and cadres continues to grow, and giving full play of their role is an important experience promoting the popularization of Marxism. “Struggle for the realization of the party’s political tasks and organizational tasks” in 1953 noted: “The party has party members of about 6,369,000, four-fifths of them are recruited after the third Domestic Revolutionary War and the liberation of the national. Party members grow like this is an unprecedented phenomenon in the history of our party”. The substantial increase in the number of party members provides a steady stream of the main force for the popularization of Marxism, because “one of the bounden duty of the Communists, publicizing to the masses anywhere and anytime, and educate the masses with the revolutionary spirit”.

Liu Shaoqi stressed in “*Task of the Party’s Propaganda Fronts* that all Communists have the obligation propaganda Marxism-Leninism to the people, which is based on the provisions of the Constitution. Every party member needs to explain and publicize party’s proposals and policies to the people, promote our party’s basic views, and fight against all wrong opinions with the views of Marxism-Leninism. And every party members need to do so.” Most of the communists in that era consciously improved the personal training of Marxism theory, proactively publicized to the masses and became the main force of the popularization of Marxism. Meanwhile, the party cadres also assume responsibility for propaganda of Marxism, “senior party cadres should promote in the party spreading Marx, Engels Lenin, Stalin and Mao’s doctrine correctly in their daily propaganda, in order to popularize

Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought, to increase the masses and party members’ level of consciousness.” The majority of party members and cadres jointly promoted the spread of Marxism, inspired people’s ambition and passion to build socialism, and then made many achievements in socialism construction.

3 . REFLECTION ABOUT POPULARIZATION OF MARXISM SEVENTEEN YEARS AFTER THE FOUNDING OF CHINA

Practice and experience of popularization of Marxism seventeen years after the founding of China provides a profound reflection to promote contemporary Chinese Marxism

3.1 The Thought of the Ruling Class May and Have to Be “Popular”

In a class society, any kind of thought (even if it is scientific or advanced) wants to be the mainstream ideology of society, and achieves the goal of grasping the public, needing to have a necessary condition, that is, the class which is presented and maintained by idea rose to the ruling class. Marx and Engels pointed out: “The ideas of the ruling class are the ruling ideas in every epoch.” In a class society, an idea which hopes to go up to the dominant ideology, it must take the basic premise that letting the class it represents and maintenance to become the ruling class. Marxism is a scientific world outlook and methodology, the Communist Party of China establishes a state power of dictatorship of the proletariat, and rose from a revolutionary party to a ruling party, which is a necessary prerequisite for true popularity and being the mainstream ideology of Marxism.

Meanwhile, in socialism China, Marxism as an ideological superstructure must also effectively realize “popularization”, occupy the dominant in the field of ideology, and play a dominant role, to lead the healthy development of all kinds of social thoughts, in order to consolidate the political superstructure and economic base of socialism. At present, our country implements the basic economic system of public ownership as the mainstay and common development of multi ownership, unswervingly consolidate and develop the public economy, uphold the dominant position of public ownership, let national economy playing a leading role, and constantly enhance the vitality, control and influence of the state economy, which not only relate to the socialism economic development and growth, but also to the fundamental interests of the people, and to the consolidation of the status of a mainstream of Marxism as ideological superstructure. Therefore, while currently encourage, support and guide non-public economic development, we must always ensure and strengthen the dominant position

of public ownership, ensure ownership status of the proletariat and working people are the masters, ensure that they always master the material means of production of and psychotropic means of production, in order to ensure that Marxism occupying the position of mainstream consciousness which present their fundamental interests.

3.2 Promoting the Popularization of Marxism Is the Party's Long-Term Historical Mission

Popularization of Marxism is guiding people to grasp, identify, and practice Marxism, to achieve the combination of theoretical weapon transforming the world and the main body of the people making history. Mao Zedong summarized in the practice of new democratic revolutionary struggle, "revolutionary war is a war of the masses, only mobilizing and relying on the masses can carry on war." In peace-building era, Deng Xiaoping pointed out: "the extremely difficult and complex task of socialism modernization lying in front of us and a lot of old issues need to continue to address and new problems are endless. The party only firmly relies on the masses, closely links to the masses, get ready to listen to people's voices anytime, understand their emotions, and represent their interests, can form a powerful force and successfully complete the tasks."

Can we solve the problems if we only rely on party organizations and Party members? Deng's answer is "no", because "our party is a party having 39 million members, and leading the country's regime. But in the people of the country, the Communists always are minority. Our party proposes major task, and all them rely on people's hard work to complete."

The same is true as Marxism popularization, only by publicizing and educating to guide the masses to grasp, identify, practice and develop Marxism, can reinforce the mass foundation of Marxism, and consolidate the status of the mainstream ideology of Marxism.

If the object of the popularization of Marxism confines to the backbone of the party members and cadres, it makes the mistake of closed doors, which not only cuts off the natural connection between Marxism and masses and gradually weaken the masses base, and will lose its vitality for lacking the motivation to develop and innovate. However, the reality is that Marxism has increasingly became the issue concerned and discussed by the academic insiders, and becomes a propaganda slogan of political party and state, there is a widening trend between Marxism and the people, if it is not promptly reversed, it will endanger Marxism's status and influence, therefore, promoting the popularization of Marxism is the party's long-term mission.

3.3 Consolidate the Ideological Mainstream Position of Marxism in the Struggle

The status of the mainstream ideology of Marxism constantly consolidates in the struggle, and any avoidance

and compromise are disguised support for the anti-Marxism ideas. Contemporary China has entered a critical period of reform and opening up, "China's development has stand at a new historical starting point, we are facing an unprecedented opportunities for development and unprecedented challenges. While we see a rare historical opportunity, we also need to enhance the sense of sober and see serious challenges.

In international, there are increasing unstable and uncertain factors affecting peace and development, and more violent competitiveness about comprehensive national power, we will continue to face long-term pressure from developed countries on science and technology. In domestic, there are profound changes in economic system and in social structure, profound adjustment in pattern of interests and ideas, and deep-seated contradictions gradually reveal".

Social transformation caused by agitation combining with various foreign bourgeois ideology thoughts' stepping in, resulting in a fierce battle and clash between Marxism and a variety of anti-Marxism ideas, such as democratic socialism, neo-liberalism, universal value theory, and pragmatism and so on. These anti-Marxism ideologies dressed with "democracy", "freedom" and other garb have a strong confusion to public who do not know the truth, hinder the process of popularization of Marxism. However, struggling with anti-Marxism ideologies is not enough in time effectiveness, and even avoids confrontation with them, thus contributes to the arrogance of these erroneous ideas, results in some degree of ideological confusion.

Therefore, the propaganda department of the party and the state, the party cadres and theoretical workers must struggle positively with anti-Marxism ideologies, using the method and viewpoint of Marxism to analyze nature, origin and harm of various erroneous ideas, and must not engage in eclecticism. Expanding influence of Marxism by critical struggle and removing the pernicious influence of wrong thoughts, which is an effective way to show the charm of truth and critique power of reality of Marxism, and also an important path for popularization of Marxism.

3.4 Pure Party Members to Give Full Play to the Role of Its Advocacy and Demonstration

Seventeen years after the founding of China, the popularization of Marxism achieves good results, which is closely linked with the party members and cadres' firm belief, pure thoughts, upright style, honesty and self-discipline in that period. Today's party members far exceed the size seventeen years after the founding of China. At the end of 2012, total number of members reached 85.127 million, there is an increase of 2,525,000 compared with the previous year, and the increase rate is 3.1%; total number of grass-roots party organizations is 4,201,000, increased by 175,000 compared with last year, and increase rate is 4.3%. From the view of structure of

party members, there are 20,269,000 female members, accounting for 23.8% of the total party members; minority party members are 5,802,000, representing 6.8% of the total party members; party members with college degree or above are 34,081,000, accounting for 40% of the total number of party members; party members aged 35 and below are 21.801 million, accounting for 25.6% of the total party members.

Meanwhile, party members are widely distributed in the first line of production, and they have natural links with various ethnic workers, peasants, intellectuals and other mass. Therefore, the expansion of scale of communist team and enhancement of cultural quality, help them bear the main responsibility for the popularization of Marxism. But it is worth attention that a small part of the party, including party cadres who are faith shaking, ideal missing, thought depravity, debauchery, in violation of party discipline and state laws, they not only did not play a role of the demonstration of popularization of Marxism, and they undermined the image of party and Marxism, reduced the degree of recognition of the masses.

Thus, pure party members, strict joining the party, strengthen the theory education, supervise party members' behavior, improve the system of party members' quit, and always maintain the advanced nature and purity of party members, are necessary actions to ensure that communists play a part in propaganda, education and positive demonstration in the popularization of Marxism.

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