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The *Communist Manifesto* and the development of the Japanese Communist Party

**Answer to the questionnaire sent from *Chinese Social Sciences Today*
commemorating the 170th anniversary of the *Communist Manifesto***

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Answer to the questionnaire sent from *Chinese Social Sciences Today* commemorating the 170th anniversary of the *Communist Manifesto*

Japanese Communist Party
Social Sciences Institute Director
Fuwa Tetsuzo

A questionnaire commemorating the 170th anniversary of the *Communist Manifesto* was sent from the Academy of Social Sciences of China to Tetsuzo Fuwa, Director of the Social Sciences Institute of the Japanese Communist Party, in July. Being entitled “the *Communist Manifesto* and the development of the JCP”, his answer to the questionnaire was appeared in the September 27 issue of the *Marxist Studies Monthly* of the *Chinese Social Sciences Today*, which is the journal of the Academy of Social Sciences of China. While the journal slightly edited Fuwa’s manuscript, below is the original full text of his answer. [Subheads are entitled by Akahata editorial desk.]

Foundation of the JCP and the *Communist Manifesto*

Firstly, please tell us about the fundamental relationship between the *Communist Manifesto* and the Japanese Communist Party. In other words, please tell us how the *Communist Manifesto* was introduced to Japan and what will be influence of the *Communist Manifesto* on future generations. When JCP members read the *Communist Manifesto* for the first time, how did they acknowledge this work? To what extent were the JCP members at that time theoretically informed?

From the beginning of the twentieth century, precursors of a socialist movement read the *Communist Manifesto* and made some remarks, though the Japanese translation of it was first published in November 1904. It was jointly translated by socialists Toshihiko Sakai and Shusui Kotoku, and appeared in the weekly *Heimin-shinbun* (“Commoners’ newspaper”) which was opposing the Japanese-Russo War. However, this issue was banned by the government on the same day.

Two years later in 1906, Toshihiko Sakai created and published the magazine *Socialism Studies* and ran the full text of the *Communist Manifesto* in the first issue. Supposedly, due to the small circulation of this scholarly journal, the magazine was not suppressed by prohibition of sale and existed as the only Japanese translation of the *Communist Manifesto* that was legally published in prewar Japan.

In particular, since the JCP was founded in 1922, suppression of the freedom of

speech and the press had become intense. While the *Marx and Engels Collected Works* (30 volumes in total) was published with the cooperation of many Marxist researchers between 1928 and 1935, and became the only collected works in the world before the WWII, here again, only the *Communist Manifesto* was not allowed to be included in the works.

Despite this suppression of freedom of speech, illegal publications of the *Communist Manifesto* were repeatedly printed and circulated in secret, and Marx's theory of revolution stated in the *Communist Manifesto* became a shared property among many leading activists. Obviously, this became a major driving force for the foundation of the JCP in July 1922.

Role of the *Communist Manifesto* in the JCP's theory construction

Secondly, what is the significance of the *Communist Manifesto* in the JCP's theory construction? In other words, how did Marx's ideas in the *Communist Manifesto* affect the JCP's theory construction?

At the beginning of the current JCP Program, the foundation of the JCP and its significance are specified as follows:

“The Japanese Communist Party was founded on July 15, 1922, in the midst of the popular liberation struggle surging in Japan and the world, as a party with scientific socialism as its theoretical basis following the Japanese history of the struggle for social progress and change.”

It is also clearly stipulated in Article 2 of the Constitution of the Japanese Communist Party.

“The party adopts scientific socialism as its theoretical basis.”

As stated in these sentences, we, the party as a whole, are making efforts to stick to the position of scientific socialism in the establishment of JCP's idea and theory as well as in the promotion of party activities in various fields.

We use the term “scientific socialism” to express our theory. It is the term that Karl Marx himself used to express his own theoretical position, and is synonymous with Marxism in content.

It could be argued that the *Communist Manifesto* is the origin of the theoretical evolution for Marx himself as a scientific socialist. Marx used this writing as a starting point and dedicated his best efforts to develop his theory. Marx introduced his theory of surplus value about twenty years after writing the *Communist Manifesto*. There were many developments in the theory of socialism/communism as well as in the theory and course of revolutionary movements. Thus, when studying Marx's theory, we use the slogan, “Read Marx through his own history.”

To focus on studying all the works of Marx and Engels

Thirdly, as a revolutionary work that influenced the world, how does the JCP promote the use of the *Communist Manifesto* for JCP members? In other words, moving from theory to praxis, how has the *Communist Manifesto* influenced JCP members?

How do JCP members learn and understand an ideological weapon of Marxist theory from a theoretical viewpoint? How do the JCP members analyze Japanese society by using this ideological weapon and then go on to promote party building activities?

We focus not only on studying the *Communist Manifesto* but also on studying all the works of Marx and Engels. Within the JCP Central Committee, we have held year long seminars on *Capital* (21 times in all). We also have two serial lectures on classic works and on the JCP Program in parallel for one year. The two serial lectures are webcast at many locations throughout the country, and the contents of these lectures are put together in brochure form and distributed nationwide to promote learning activities. The serial lecture on classic works expounds on the theory on revolution and the theory of socialism/communism developed by Marx and Engels in the *Communist Manifesto* as well as in their subsequent theoretical works. Also, the youth organization, the Democratic Youth League of Japan (DYLJ, Min-sei), promotes learning activities that make good use of the textbook of a lecture “Let’s make friends with Karl Marx” which was given by the JCP leadership at the DYLJ’s study meeting.

When we analyze the real situation and challenges facing our movement, we place emphasis on analyzing Japan and the world in the 21st century through learning from the core concept of scientific socialism and its scientific and revolutionary spirit, not through taking an attitude of applying the reality to the classic theory as a doctrine.

Theory of a future society written in the *Communist Manifesto*

Fourth, after 170 years of publishing the *Communist Manifesto*, in relation to the reality of the development of the JCP, please tell us what significance the *Communist Manifesto* has for the present JCP and a future Japan.

As I previously stated, the *Communist Manifesto* has significance as the starting point for the theory of scientific socialism.

You use the phrase, “a future Japan”, in the fourth question, and in this respect, there is a proposition which bears significant meaning for the contemporary world in the *Communist Manifesto*. That is the below-mentioned proposition about a future society, which should be a joint goal for our movement and similar movements throughout the world.

“In place of the old bourgeois society, with its classes and class antagonisms, we shall have an association, in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all.”

After Marx’s death, Engels received a letter from a socialist in Italy, and the socialist asked Engels to come up with a slogan that expresses the spirit of the coming socialist era. In response to this request, Engels offered the above-mentioned quotation from the *Communist Manifesto*.

When Marx talks about a future society in *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, he often mentions “free” or “free development”, such as “a community of free individuals” (Chapter 1: Commodities, Part 1, *Capital* Volume 1) and “a higher form of society, a society in which the full and free development of every individual forms the ruling principle” (Chapter 22: Conversion of Surplus-Value into Capital, Part 7, *Capital* Volume 1 (in German version)). The word “free” has been regarded as a defining feature of a future society.

Then, what is meant by “free”?

It is natural that freedom from political oppression and economic exploitation will constitute important elements of “freedom” in a future society.

In addition, Marx revealed a special meaning of the word “free” for a future society in his subsequent works, especially in *Capital*.

What is meant by the term is that in a future society, all members of the society will be guaranteed “free time”, i.e. each individual will be guaranteed discretionary time without being bound by any exogenous obligation.

As an exploiting class disappears and all members of the society will engage in productive activity, the working time of each individual will be significantly shortened accordingly and the society will enable all people to have “free time” as a result. Not only selected people, but all members of such a society will be guaranteed the basic conditions needed for a rich human development. While in capitalist society, the profit-first principle which thoroughly pursues expansion of the surplus value has become a driving force of economic development, in a future society, human development that gains free time will become a driving force of social development. This will signify the beginning of a new era in human history.

Marx wrote that the “prehistory” of human society accordingly closes with capitalist society (“Preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*”), and that the glorious prospect of creating a “true history” of human society will begin with a socialist/communist society.

We have fully discussed a new shape for a future society in the new JCP Program revised in 2004.

Today’s significance of researching on classic works of Marxism

Fifthly, as a theorist of the JCP, how do you learn, understand, and appreciate the *Communist Manifesto*? What significance does this classic work of Marxism have for you?

Along with the significance of the *Communist Manifesto* as a starting point of communist theory and praxis, we have pursued the historical development of Marx's theory in every field mentioned by the *Manifesto*.

From an international viewpoint, numerous points of Marx's theory had been distorted and falsified by Joseph Stalin and his successors. In *The Foundations of Leninism*, one of Stalin's early works, he compared Marx's theory with "Leninism" and regarded Marx's theory as an outdated one before the era of imperialism. Under the label of "Marxism-Leninism", Stalin introduced an ideology that has nothing to do with Marxism. Since the 1960s, we have made efforts to overcome Stalin's false ideology, revive the original idea of scientific socialism, and further develop it according to the new circumstances facing Japan and the world. To achieve this, it is essential to carry out in-depth research on the classic works of scientific socialism. We still continue in these efforts.

The *Communist Manifesto* and the JCP Program

Sixthly, does the JCP have a work like the *Communist Manifesto*, or a theoretical work titled "the JCP manifesto"? If it does, tell us how it is distinct from and relevant to the *Communist Manifesto*? If it does not, is it possible to publish a work describing how the JCP will build itself along the path of Marxism and socialism?

For us, a work with similar significance is the JCP Program itself. The Program was adopted at the JCP 8th Congress in 1961 and was drastically revised at the 23rd Congress in 2004. This document represents the JCP's theoretical development, particularly the achievements of the party's half-century of research of the classics and of its efforts to get rid of the false legacy of the Stalin era.

The JCP Program is composed of five chapters: Chapter 1 summarizes prewar Japanese society and the history of JCP activities at that time; Chapter 2 analyzes postwar Japanese society and clarifies its fundamental characteristics; Chapter 3 analyzes the world situation from the 20th century to the 21st century; Chapter 4 defines the change Japanese society needs at present as a democratic revolution that puts an end to Japan's extraordinary subordination to the United States and the tyrannical rule by large corporations and business circles. It also sets out the way to achieve this and the need to form a united front; and Chapter 5 clarifies the goals of the future society – a socialist/communist society – and the path to follow toward the goals, and presents a global vision for the 21st century.

We do not call this Program “the JCP manifesto”. But I think it corresponds to what you call “manifesto” because it presents what the JCP – as a political party advocating scientific socialism – aims to build in the future.

How to understand the meaning of the passage: “Abolition of private property”

Seventhly, the *Communist Manifesto* states, “In this sense, the theory of the Communists may be summed up in the single sentence: Abolition of private property.” How do you understand this passage?

Following these sentences, the *Manifesto* stresses that “capital” should be “converted into common property, into the property of all members of society”. Also in the part explaining changes to be implemented in “the revolution by the working class”, it states: “The proletariat will use its political supremacy ... to centralize all instruments of production in the hands of the State, i.e., of the proletariat organized as the ruling class”. As shown by these citations, it is clear that the phrase “Abolition of private property” in the *Communist Manifesto* refers to the socialization of the means of production.

In *Capital*, with reference to economic relations in the future society, Marx states that while the means of production will be owned by society, the means of living will be distributed to individuals as private property. Based on this view, Engels thoroughly refuted anticommunists’ accusation that the International Workingmen’s Association (IWA) attempts to abolish private property.

Theory of revolution—Exploring Marx’s own theoretical development

Eighthly, the *Communist Manifesto* states that “the violent overthrow of the bourgeoisie lays the foundation for the sway of the proletariat.” Do you think this argument is correct? If you think so, tell us why.

When the *Manifesto* was published, key European countries did not have a democratic political system in which people elect parliamentarians or a government created through universal suffrage. To overthrow a reactionary regime under such circumstances, people had no option but to rise up. This situation was reflected in Marx’s early theory of revolution.

Afterward, when democratic systems began to be built in some countries, before anyone else Marx pointed to the feasibility of a revolution by obtaining a parliamentary majority in such countries. In this regard, the following two statements Marx made in the 1870s deserve special attention.

One is the speech he delivered in September 1872 at a mass rally in

Amsterdam, held soon after the IWA put an end to its activities in Europe at the Hague Congress.

Marx said, “Someday the workers must seize political power in order to build up the new organization of labor.” He went on to say: “But we have not asserted that the ways to achieve that goal are everywhere the same. You know that the institutions, mores, and traditions of various countries must be taken into consideration, and we do not deny that there are countries – such as America, England, and if I were more familiar with your institutions, I would perhaps also add Holland – where the workers can attain their goal by peaceful means. This being the case, we must also recognize the fact that in most countries on the Continent the lever of our revolution must be force.”

The other is the notes he made in 1878 reading the record of the Reichstag debate about the Bismarck regime’s legislation to outlaw the Socialist Workers’ Party of Germany. These notes describe in more detail Marx’s thoughts about the possibility of a peaceful revolution in some countries: “The goal in the given case is the emancipation of the working class and the upheaval (transformation) of society contained therein. A historical development can only remain ‘peaceful’ as long as it is not being violently obstructed by the respective social rulers. If the working class – for example in England or in the United States – wins the majority in parliament or congress, it could legally remove the laws and institutions that stand in the way of its development, but only insofar as the social development requires it. Yet the ‘peaceful’ movement could turn into a ‘violent’ one by a rebellion of those who are interested in maintaining the old state; if they are crushed by violence (as in the American Civil War and the French Revolution), then as rebels against ‘legal’ violence.”

Marx’s theory of revolution had developed with changes in the political system of capitalist nations, especially with the evolution of democratic political systems. This theoretical development led to forming the policy of achieving a revolution by gaining majority support from the public.

With regard to the theory of revolution, we believe it is of critical importance to look at the definitions given in the *Communist Manifesto* against the historical backdrop and correctly perceive the development of Marx’s theory thereafter and its direction.

At the beginning of the 20th century, Lenin went so far as to regard revolution by force as a universal principle, dogmatizing the revolutionary theory contained the *Communist Manifesto*. It is very regrettable that Lenin did not fully take into consideration the later developments of Marx’s theory.

-- Akahata, October 11, 2018