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Marx Is Alive and Well Interview with Fuwa Tetsuzo

Akahata Sunday Edition,
June 7, 14 and 21, 2009

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The book “Marukusuwa ikite iru” (*Marx Is Alive and Well*) by Fuwa Tetsuzo, Director of the Social Science Institute of the Japanese Communist Party, published in mid-May 2009 by Heibonsha Limited, Publishers is attracting attention due to increasing public interest in Karl Marx. Chief Editor of Akahata Sunday Edition Matsumiya Toshiki interviews Fuwa, a long-time Marx researcher, in regard to the essential points the author wants the readers to understand.

Contemporary world viewed in developing theory

Matsumiya: Your book *Marx Is Alive and Well* is selling well. In some major bookstores it is among the best-selling items, with the mass media beginning to pay attention. What is the point that you wanted to make in particular when writing this book?

Fuwa: I had three points in mind when I began to write.

First, I wanted my readers to get the entire image of Karl Marx as an economist, philosopher, and revolutionary. In Marx, all three aspects created an integrated whole. He first thought of how society should be reformed and became a materialist thinker, and then became a pathologist in capitalism and a pioneer of future society. I felt that not a single aspect but his theory as a whole should be introduced to the readers.

Second is that I wanted readers to see how Marx’s theory continued to develop. From the beginning of his theoretical work to his death, he devoted a lifetime to developing his thought and theory. Comparing the *Manifesto of the Communist Party* of 1848 and *Capital* of 1867 shows a striking development of his theory, but his theoretical progress continued even further, and that is what I wanted the readers to understand.

The third point is that I wanted the readers using Marx’s holistic perspective to see contemporary Japan and the rest of the world.

Matsumiya: My first impression of your book is that Marx’s theory is explained plainly. In the postface you say that you intended to give a clear outline of Marx’s theory and to explain how the theory is relevant in the contemporary

world. It would have been a hard task to start from the outline to how it really is alive and well in the present day, but the book fosters a good understanding.

Fuwa: The credit goes directly to the strength of Marx's theory.

Marx's view of nature and society is now common knowledge

Fuwa: I explained Marx's theory from three angles. My explanation of how the theory is really working today is different from chapter to chapter.

In the first chapter "Marx, the materialist thinker," I explained how Marx viewed nature and human society. Most of his view is now accepted as common knowledge.

Materialist thinking starts from the basis that everything originates from the motion of matter. In Marx's time, the thinking that human life and mind are independent from the motion of matter was prevalent even in the natural sciences.

But now it is common sense to treat life as a matter of deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA). Everyone knows that the generic material DNA determines every phenomenon of life. It is commonly accepted that consciousness and other mental activities are the products of brain cells. With the development of natural science and the development of a clearer perception of nature, Marx's materialism has become common sense.

Matsumiya: You also refer to the theory of elementary particles which you talked about with a Nobel laureate, Masukawa Toshihide in the New Year issue of the Akahata Sunday edition.

Fuwa: The development of the elementary particles theory in the last several decades provides a scientific proof of materialism and dialectics in the field of natural science.

As for the social sciences, when Marx advocated that society should be viewed with the economy as the base, this materialist view of history, or historical materialism was a surprisingly new form of analysis of society. Today, however, not a politician, a researcher, or a journalist dares to view society without thinking of its economy first and foremost.

When anyone thinks about the situation of society, always at issue is the interests and movements of forces with different economic standings, such as large corporations, workers, small-and medium-sized enterprises, working citizens,

and farmers. Whether one likes or dislikes the word “class”, it is commonplace to look at society from this angle.

Human society has developed in the way that Marx argued it would, thus proving the validity of his theory. Truly, “Marx is alive”, and this is the point that I wanted to make in the first chapter.

It happens in history that an original view of a thinker can turn into social common knowledge after a certain passage of time.

Galileo Galilei in the 17th century argued for the Copernican theory that the earth is not the center of the universe but only a planet moving around the sun. In those days, his thinking was regarded as heresy.

In the Inquisition, he was ordered to retract his argument. However, this theory was proven to be true several decades later, and it became common knowledge. Today no one doubts the earth is moving. A similar thing has happened with Marx’s theory.

Marx’s crisis theory sees through present crisis

Matsumiya: In regard to Marx, the public focus is on the ongoing economic crisis. How is it seen through “Marx’s eyes”?

Fuwa: One of major subjects in Marx’s study of economics was the problem of crises. In fact, Marx did not experience many crises. When the first crisis in the world took place in Britain in 1825, Marx was only 8 years old. At the time of the second crisis of 1837-38 in Britain, Marx was not yet showing interest in economics. The third crisis occurred in 1847, and it was around this time when he wrote the *Manifesto of the Communist Party*.

The first world crisis took place in 1857. About this time Marx started the so called “Economic Manuscripts of 1857-58”, the first manuscript of *Capital*. The second crisis came in 1866, and the first volume of *Capital* was published in 1867.

Thus, Marx did not undergo many crises, but he thoroughly analyzed the ones he experienced and worked out the scientific theory that explains why the capitalist system inherently causes crises.

‘Profit-first’ principle and ‘fictitious demand’ cause bubble and crisis

Matsumiya: How do you explain the present world economic crisis by applying Marx’s crisis theory?

Fuwa: The key to understanding the present crisis is the “dynamics” of crises. Without this key, you will not find it interesting to see the present world in Marx’s view.

In Marx’s time, pro-capitalist economists argued that a crisis will not take place if capitalism operates orderly. Among them, the dominant argument was that a crisis is an accidental mismanagement of the economy.

Arguing against this negation and denial of crisis, Marx in *Capital* made it clear that the possibility of crisis constantly lurks within the market economy, and that the contradiction between production and consumption resulting from the profit-first capitalism lies behind crisis. The difficult problem was exposing the mechanism by which the crisis arises.

Matsumiya: “Dynamics” is not what we usually hear in ordinary explanations of economics.

Fuwa: In a market economy, there is the term ‘invisible hand’. The balance between supply and demand is always fragile, but a coordinating force constantly works through price changes. When a certain product becomes short in supply in the market, a mechanism called the ‘invisible hand’ works, by making its price rise, signaling the product to be produced in larger quantity.

However, this ‘invisible hand’ does not work in case of the “contradiction between production and consumption”. The imbalance accumulates to the point of explosion in a crisis. Why does this happen?

Marx thought that this is the inmost core of crises. Marx found out that capitalism has a mechanism of producing fictitious demand. By this he meant that commodities appear to sell well, but that it is only an appearance.

In Marx’s days, commercial capital was the major operator of this mechanism. When commercial capital buys a large quantity of a product on the market, this is an end of a sale for the producer. The producer enters in the next cycle of his production. The product, however, has not yet reached the final consumer, and Marx called this process ‘fictitious demand’. Commercial capital buys commodities on the assumption that commensurate consumers of the goods exist, but the assumption can be at variance from the real demand of consumers.

Marx expressed this by saying that the reproduction process begins a run on the trajectory of fictitious demand. When this mechanism inflates, a bubble arises and a crisis erupts.

Thus Marx has found out why capitalism enters periodically into a bubble, and explained the mechanism of a crisis to that extent.

Today's crisis is combination of financial crisis and crisis from overproduction

Matsumiya: How should the present crisis be seen by applying the dynamics theory?

Fuwa: The latest economic crisis has been triggered by a new type of fictitious demand. Finance capital has caused fictitious market demand to emerge on a large scale. The sub-prime mortgage scheme which collapsed in the United States should be identified as a scheme in which people with low incomes and little purchasing power are lured into borrowing money to buy houses. The American public had been taken in by the “borrow and buy” mantra, and this caused the “consumption-led prosperity”. The present crisis can be characterized by the fact that finance capital created all together and quite purposely the fictitious demand which Marx identified. A survey made after the bubble burst shows that overborrowing by households (excessive debts) amounts to 8 trillion dollars (about 800 trillion yen). This amounts far greater than Japan's gross domestic product (GDP), which should give you an idea of how huge a fictitious market demand had been brought about.

What was more, finance capital, taking advantage of this consumption bubble, developed a worldwide financial bubble on a far greater scale. The failure of the sub-prime loans scheme immediately caused a global failure of finance capital. These finance capital driven economies had been based on the consumption bubble which has been inflated by fictitious market demand. The bubble contracted in one stroke, leaving behind a crisis from overproduction. This process of contraction is still under way.

From this viewpoint, I want to characterize the present crisis as a combination of a financial crisis and a crisis from overproduction.

Marx's analysis that the centerpiece of a crisis is a bubble running wild on the track of fictitious market demand is still valid in the present stage of capitalism.

JCP-CPC theoretical exchange meeting

Matsumiya: You held a theoretical exchange meeting with the Communist Party of China in April (Apr. 20-24) in Beijing. The main theme of the meeting was the global economic crisis.

Fuwa: The theoretical meeting with the CPC is the third; the previous meeting was in 2005. In the preceding two exchanges, I could not help feeling a certain theoretical gap with the CPC in our analyses of capitalism. The difference derives from the CPC's position calling for “reform and openness” in the past 30 years to overcome the retardation in their market economy and the JCP which has had to fight in a society directly confronting the excesses of capitalism. To the CPC, capitalism is what they should catch up with, and to the JCP, it is

something that should be overcome.

To our great delight, the perception gap almost disappeared in the latest exchange. The CPC in advance proposed an overall theme of global economic crisis and Marxist theory on crisis, and listed 21 questions. I responded to the questions one by one, followed by discussion. On the whole, the questions in themselves showed that they have a view of capitalism similar to ours, possibly reflecting the results of studies and discussions in the CPC since the economic crisis occurred.

In answering the 21 questions, it was a great help for me to have restudied, in the light of the present stage of capitalism, the works of Marx, a specialist in the pathology of capitalism, with a view to writing this book.

A major focus of the theoretical exchange was the present global economic crisis. I think that the CPC side has understood my characterization of the present crisis, the “combination of a financial crisis and a crisis from overproduction”.

Matsumiya: You mean that your analysis of the present economic crisis matched the Chinese awareness of how a socialist country should respond to the crisis of capitalism.

Fuwa: The 21 questions included problems requiring deep and multifaceted analysis of the capitalist economic crisis. There were also questions as to what lessons the world should learn from the crisis, what revolutionary lines should be taken in capitalist states, and what points should be taken into serious considerations by countries aspiring to achieve socialism.

Although the JCP does not pretend to have expert knowledge of the structure of the Chinese economy, I said, “in the world of *go*, there is a saying that onlookers have a better view of the game than the players,” and then related my thoughts. The theoretical exchange was indeed intellectually stimulating.

In May, I explained some points discussed in the theoretical exchange to an audience of over 300 at the JCP head office. My report took three days, for two to three hours at a time. It is too long to give a thumbnail sketch here. It will be published some day in the future.

Similarities with the days when *Capital* was written

Struggles against profit-first merciless exploitation heighten workers' class-consciousness

Matsumiya: Workers, particularly contingent workers, are the hardest hit by the economic crisis, and we see their struggles to defend their living standards and

rights increasing. In this book, you stress similarities between workers in Marx's days and today.

Fuwa: Marx in *Capital* most typically characterizes capitalism as the insatiable pursuit of surplus-value, or a profit-first principle in modern terms. From this viewpoint he realistically depicted how workers were treated at their places of work.

One hundred and forty years have passed since then. Workers in today's Japan are experiencing a similar situation in principle, with some changes in the methods of exploitation. What Marx denounced as "small thefts" from workers' time for meal and recreation is what prevails today as unpaid overtime work on a large scale. What he denounced as excessive tight work schedules resulting in the waste of workers' lives and health reappears today with the many cases of *karoshi* (death from overwork). The mechanism of turning workers into an industrial reserve army is equivalent to today's institutionalized system of increasing contingent work and allowing the easy dismissal of contingent workers.

Capitalism has maintained its true colors throughout the past 140 years of labor exploitation.

Matsumiya: In addition, you stress that workers referred to in *Capital* are not just on the defensive as the target of exploitation and bullying by capital.

Fuwa: Yes. Marx in *Capital* made clear how workers are exploited by capital. At the same time, he described how workers under capitalism can be organized, increase class-consciousness and develop into the class capable of creating a better society.

He devoted one chapter to the history of the struggle of the working class in Britain opposing the long working hours and realizing a 10-hour work day act, and drew a conclusion about a law of development of the working class and society. This is an impressive highlight of *Capital*.

Previously, capitalists were engrossed in competing among themselves to force workers to work longer hours in their quest for greater profits. They were indifferent to the admonition that such competition would damage workers' health and lives even to the extent of causing long term distress to capitalism. Their motto was: *Après moi le déluge!* (After us the deluge). Today's profit is all that matters.

To place capitalism under a "compulsion from society" is the only way to get out of this vicious cycle. Having undergone major struggles for half a century, the working class in Britain won the "social compulsion" to regulate the unruly capitalist exploitation endangering workers' lives: the Ten Hours' Act in 1848, the Factory Act of 1848, and the Factory Act of 1850 which was completed in

1953.

Here I must pay particular attention to the fact that Marx called the law for social compulsion a “social barrier” for the working class to put up to defend their own and their families’ lives and livelihoods. Marx described organized workers as coming out as different selves from when they entered as individuals into the production process. They are organized into a class with power to win strong social barriers for the protection of themselves.

Undoubtedly, Marx was a revolutionary aiming to overthrow capitalism. He was by no means a passive revolutionary leaving capitalism a free hand until the revolution. Marx argued that even under capitalism, the working class can win a “social barrier” to check the abuses by capital, and this becomes a positive legacy to be carried onto the society to emerge.

This line of reasoning by Marx is linked to the “economy governed by rules” thesis, one of the JCP’s major goals in present-day Japan.

Development of ‘social barrier’

Even capitalists call for ‘social compulsion’ -- Capitalism destroys earth’s environment

Matsumiya: Considering our immediate goal, an “economy governed by rules” as the “social barrier” is a grand theoretical design of building a bridge between history and the contemporary world.

Fuwa: Social control of working hours was the starting point of the struggle in the days of Marx. Let’s review the history of the development of the “social barrier” at each juncture.

The first milestone in the 20th century was the Russian Revolution of 1917. Under its influence, state provision of social security became a major component of the “social barrier”, with the Weimar Republic’s Constitution in Germany declaring the people’s right to live, along with political rights.

The second milestone was the Popular Front movement in the 1930s. Under the popular front government in France, French workers’ struggles brought about the agreement with the capitalist association (the Matignon Agreement of 1936). The system of paid holidays is the fruit of victory in this period, and a summer vacation for many weeks running is what workers in France today will not give up for anything. Around this time, also in the United States, the National Labor Relations Act (Wagner Act) and the Social Security Act were won, which marked another major advance.

The founding of the United Nations in 1945 was the third milestone. Human rights have become a major issue in international politics, and the spheres to be covered by the “social barrier” drastically widened to include elimination of discrimination against women.

In Europe, the European Union plays an important part in internationalizing the “social barrier” to defend the rights of workers and women.

The JCP pays close attention to the European form of “capitalism with rules”. The matter does not concern Europe alone. It means that what Marx called the “social barrier” has developed and extended through the struggles of workers and women united in many countries.

Matsumiya: Japan’s capitalism without rules is excessively exploitative, isn’t it?

Fuwa: Yes. Japan is left far behind in creating effective “social barriers.”

I have referred to the three milestones marking the development in the world of establishing social rules to govern capitalism. In the period of the first two milestones, beginning with the Russian Revolution, Japan was under despotic rule with the people deprived of all freedoms.

Particularly in the 1930s, during the days of the popular front movement, Japan was on the way to strengthening the war-time state structure by starting the war of aggression against China. This has taken a heavy toll on postwar Japanese society. For example, the labor law to stipulate an 8-hour work day was enacted after the war. However, capitalists, by reducing the 8-hour system to a mere formality and making use of unpaid “overtime work”, have been forcing longer working hours on workers. The postwar retarded starting point still casts a big shadow on Japan.

Matsumiya: The unpaid “overtime work” and *karoshi* are aberrations unique to Japan.

Fuwa: Japan is a highly developed capitalist country, but its “social barrier” necessary for sound social development remains backward, while the mechanism of exploiting workers has been extraordinarily developed. You can have a fresh look at the issue if you see from a “Marx’s perspective”.

Matsumiya: Would you please give us a little more explanation of what Marx meant by “compulsion from society” in connection with “social barrier”?

Fuwa: If an individual capitalist tries to set up such rules at his company alone, he will lose in competition with other capitalists and go bankrupt. So, it is necessary for the state to legally compel all capitalists to collectively abide by such rules.

In the book I recalled that Morita Akio, then Sony Corporation president, in the early 1990s commented that the profit-first urge of Japanese corporations is shocking to the world and proposed fundamental reforms over a series of matters concerning corporations' relations with workers and subcontractors. As to how such reforms be carried out, Morita concluded, "If a company does it by itself, its business will decline and will finally fail. It is necessary to change the entire economic and social system in Japan."

Morita's argument is quite similar to that of Marx, only he was speaking as a capitalist. This means that an economy governed by rules, which the JCP is aiming for, is what even a corporate capitalist head cannot but acknowledge as the basic requirement of Japanese society.

Matsumiya: A journalist said: I agree with the concept of an economy governed by rules, but if such a society works, there would then be no need for the society to go further toward socialism. What is your response to this argument?

Fuwa: In an economy governed by rules, regulations would be imposed in some way or other on outrageous actions based on profit-first motives, but the profit-first principle will persist. This is why even in European countries where capitalism is governed by rules to a certain extent they have experienced a crisis when the U.S.-originated economic crisis occurred.

In addition, since those rules are won through struggles and based on power relations, rollbacks by the capitalist side may take place if the strength of workers and the general public weakens. Such experiences may lead the people to further raise public awareness and strive for further progress.

Creating a desire for further progress can be motivated by various factors. Global warming, for example, can be a motive. In Europe, where pioneering efforts against global warming are under way, we hear some skeptical voices questioning if targets for reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions can be achieved within a capitalist framework.

It is capitalistic nature for "social reason" to operate only after contradictions explode, Marx said.

Matsumiya: The issue of global warming cannot be resolved under the system of giving top priority to making profit. Did Marx in his arguments on capitalism give any warning about these issues?

Fuwa: Marx stressed many times that it is in capitalism's nature to expand material production to gain surplus value; the sky's the limit. From this viewpoint, he consistently warned against regional pollution. However, the insatiable hunger of profit-first capitalism has damaged the earth to the extent of destroying the environment for the existence of life. We can say that it is the

ultimate disaster, worse than what Marx foresaw.

As I wrote in the book, the volume of energy consumed by the humankind is 110 times that in Marx's days, with carbon dioxide emissions 61 times greater. The global population increased fivefold. In per capita terms, a person today consumes 21 times more energy than a person in Marx's days, emitting 12 times greater volume of carbon dioxide.

With no heed to the serious consequence to come, capitalism, motivated by an urge to pursue profits, has changed lifestyles to become extremely wasteful. This wastefulness has accumulated to the extent of destroying the earth's environmental conditions for humans to go on living.

I said earlier that this is the "ultimate disaster" even beyond Marx's prediction. However, it is obvious that the present situation cannot be understood without Marx's analysis of capitalism exposing the evils of profit-first motives.

Matsumiya: You referred to this topic at the Akahata festival eight years ago.

Fuwa: Yes. I made a speech entitled "the 21st century and scientific perspective". In that speech I said: The earth's atmosphere is a life-support device for human beings; it took more than 3 billion years for primitive life-forms to create conditions for this system; capitalism invited disasters destructive to the system; if capitalism is incapable of coping with this situation, it means that capitalism has no longer the capacity to manage the earth; there is no way for the capitalistic system than to disappear.

The deterioration of the global environment in the last eight years has progressed faster than expected. As regards how the earth can be sustained, we must say that the time has come for us to seek a system in which "social reason" can operate beforehand.

Theory of future society has been misinterpreted

Marx's goal was a parliamentary republic

Matsumiya: Now we are at the book's chapter III, "Marx as a pioneer of future society". Not a few people harbor an impression of Marx's theory of revolution as being "outdated" or "scary".

Fuwa: His theories of revolution and future society are the most misinterpreted among his theories. Actually, Marx was surprisingly modern in his theories of revolution and future society, having developed arguments applicable to the current situation. However, these two aspects are where the least studies have

been made.

My challenge in this book was to reproduce the entire concept of Marx's argument on future society in his own words, not piecemeal aspects or parts of his argument. It was a hard task, but I have found the work rewarding.

Matsumiya: How do you characterize the theory of future society in a word?

Fuwa: Unlike his forerunners, Marx did not force on society a blueprint of an imaginary ideal society. His thoroughgoing scientific criticism of capitalist society leads straight to the conclusion of what society should be after it has overcome the contradictions of capitalism. I think this is typical of his theory.

So, I wanted the first part of Chapter III to be a kind of introduction to the flow of Marx's thought.

Matsumiya: Then, the next is about the characteristics of future society.

Fuwa: The description in the book isn't necessarily in systematic order, but I took the opportunity to introduce in detail important points of Marx's arguments on future society and revolution. These two aspects are the points from which misunderstandings and questions often arise.

Matsumiya: Not a few readers may find the sections dealing with the theory of revolution rather unexpected.

Fuwa: Very likely because there still exist arguments that Marx was as an advocate of violent revolution. But Marx was actually a pioneering advocate of revolution through winning a parliamentary majority.

In the historical context, Marx entered a revolutionary movement in a period when there was no other way for revolution but through an uprising of people. We can read about the struggles in the French revolution in 1832 in Victor Hugo's voluminous work *Les Misérables* and details of the revolutionary situation in the February Revolution in 1848 in Gustave Flaubert's *L'Education Sentimentale*. Each of the revolutions took shape with the people's street uprisings and their putting up barricades.

These were not unusual scenes in Europe at that time. Almost no parliament had real authority, and the voting right to elect members to parliament, if any, was monopolized by the rich. Thus, street uprisings were the only way to achieve revolution. In those days, however, Marx called for a political system based on universal suffrage and people's sovereignty, reasoning that this is a new way of revolution through winning a majority in parliament.

Matsumiya: Apparently Marx paid attention to the British parliamentary system, as well as the republican model of the government system in the United States,

didn't he?

Fuwa: Yes, Marx studied a lot about the Civil War in America in 1861-65, and highly appreciated the emancipation of slaves. In revolutionary context, he paid attention to the fact that this great change began with the victory in the presidential election, and the winning of a majority in the election.

After that, Marx began to refer to the U.S., in addition to Britain, as a country with the potential for a revolution through a parliamentary majority.

Matsumiya: What are major points which could incur misunderstandings of Marx's theory on future society?

Fuwa: There are many points to note in this connection. The following three aspects seem to be important to remove such misunderstandings.

First, Marx argued that a parliamentary democratic system is the most appropriate political form for a socialist state.

The second point is in regard to relations with farmers after the working class comes to power. Marx took a long time over this issue, and he concluded that farmers organizing themselves into cooperatives would be the most appropriate step to agricultural socialization, not by nationalization of land. Marx stressed that this should be implemented on a volunteer basis by which farmers opt for it, and strongly warned against political power coercing it.

The third point is on international relations. Marx warned against territorial expansionism and interference in other countries, in our present term, big-power chauvinism and hegemonism.

The right to choose a course for a country belongs entirely to its people. Even though a country becomes a socialist country, any attempt at interventionism in imposing its system on other countries must not be allowed. Marx's goal in international relations is that the "simple laws of morals and justice" governing relations of private individuals in an ordinary society should also prevail in the international community.

Lenin's error, Stalin's guilt

Matsumiya: Marx's argument as you explained is very modern and convincing. Then, why has his argument been misunderstood so much?

Fuwa: Regarding the theory of revolution, part of the blame goes to Lenin's misinterpretation of Marx. Lenin, in his *The State and Revolution*, summed up Marx's theory of revolution with the theses of revolution by force in principle.

This was Lenin's preconception in the circumstances which did not allow him to

read thoroughly Marx's works. Lenin in his later years raised and addressed issues of a united front, winning a majority, establishing a government based on a parliamentary system, and other matters which go beyond the framework of *The State and Revolution*. But in the midst of those activities, he was seriously taken ill in March 1923, was unable to recover, and died in January 1924.

Regarding the question of future society, Stalin is the most to blame. He held the leadership after Lenin's death and turned the Soviet Union, in the name of socialism, into an aberrant society which had nothing in common with the type of future society Marx had envisioned

The fundamental principle of socialism is, among others, "emancipation of all human beings". But Stalin changed the Soviet society into a society of oppression of humankind -- hegemonism abroad and despotism at home.

Matsumiya: In this book, you focus on the 1930s to describe how Stalin turned Soviet society away from socialism. This left a strong impression on me.

Fuwa: Earlier, I mentioned three points which Marx gave as characteristics of future society. Stalin, however, discarded all these points and took a reverse course. This is the first time that I gave a detailed description of how things developed during the 1930s.

Seeing through changing world

Matsumiya: Eighteen years have passed since the Soviet Union collapsed. The final part of the book refers to how the contemporary world should be analyzed.

Fuwa: The world today is changing rapidly from day to day. The 20th century has played a significant part in bringing about the current situation.

The milestones were the October Revolution of 1917, the end of the colonial system in the latter half of the century, and the collapse of Soviet hegemony in 1991. The third one, the collapse of the Soviet Union, of course, marked a major turning point for the world.

To make an overview of the world situation, it is helpful to categorize countries into four groups: (1) Developed capitalist countries, (2) would-be socialist countries, (3) countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, and (4) the former Soviet Union and East European countries.

The final part of the book begins by showing how the power relationship between these groups has changed in the last 18 years in the post-Soviet world based on some statistical figures.

Comparing capitalist countries and would-be socialist countries, a major change is China's rise in its gross domestic product (GDP) to the world's third position

from 8th position in 1992, overtaking Britain, France, and Germany.

Another big change is that left governments came into being one after another in Latin America where U.S. hegemony persisted even after the end of colonial system. The continent thus turned into a base for national liberation and social progress, which is playing another major role in changing the world.

The 21st century will be an era in which streams of development in many places of the world will join together into a big global trend of major change. Marx's perspective will be helpful to properly analyze these currents.

I hope this book will help readers to critically analyze and comprehend the nature of contemporary Japan and the rest of the world.

Matsumiya: Thank you.