

Marx's Idea of "Leapfrogging" and the Reality of Socialist Practice

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Abstract: *In his later years, the focus of Marx's research shifted to the more backward countries of the East. Did the backward countries have to follow in the footsteps of the Western capitalist countries in order to embark on the road of modernisation and development? Through the study of the current situation of the Russian society, Marx put forward the idea of "crossing the Caudine forks" that the backward Eastern countries could skip the capitalist stage and enter the socialist stage of development directly, which is a theory that can be applied to all economically backward countries to shorten the process of development to socialism. Correct theories can guide the progress of practice, and Marx's idea of "crossing the Krafting Gorge" has left a practical challenge for the socialist countries in the East. For a special socialist country like China, how to make a smooth transition from an agrarian country to a socialist country, the Chinese leadership gave an answer - the primary stage of socialism. With the continuous development of the level of productive forces, China crossed the long "primitive accumulation" stage of capitalism in a peaceful and correct way' in just a few decades. As socialism with Chinese characteristics continues to grow and develop, China has demonstrated to the world in practice the superiority of the socialist system, and has shown its confidence in the system that modernisation is not the same as westernisation.*

Keywords: Kaftin canyon, new democracy, socialist construction, ten relations.

1. INTRODUCTION

According to the Marxist concept of material history, the relationship between theory and practice is inextricably linked, and there exists a dialectical relationship between them. Theory must be derived from practice, guided by practice and verified by practice, which is the only criterion for testing the truth. The idea of "Leaping over the caudine forks" is a theoretical conception of how the backward Eastern countries could realise socialism without the capitalist system, which was put forward by Marx in the special historical period when the proletarian revolution in the West fell into a lull, and was put forward after a full study of the Eastern countries represented by Russia. Mao Zedong once quoted Stalin's view that the world pattern had undergone a fundamental transformation with the October Revolution of 1917 as the boundary. What used to be a capitalist world system was later a world system of socialist revolution. The October Revolution and the nascent socialism broke through the dominant world pattern of capitalist globalisation" [1]. The birth of the new socialism in Russia and the bang of the October Revolution sent Marxism to China, and the Chinese Marxists carried out a difficult exploration on the choice of China's road and the construction of a democratic society. With Mao Zedong as the core of the Central Leadership Group, they started the journey of exploration of the "Chinese Leap Forward", using the Theory of New Democracy as the theoretical foundation and the On the Ten Relationships as the practical manual.

2. THE PRESENTATION OF THE THEORY OF CHINESE AND WESTERN CROSSING

2.1 Marx: Crossing Capitalism's "Caudine forks"

The question of the "Caudine forks" arose when Marx and Engels were examining the historical course of the Russian rural commune in their polemic with the Russian populist Tkachev, and first referred to the "Caudine forks of Capitalism" in his "Reply to V. I. Chasulich"(first draft). "In 1872, when the Russian edition of Das Kapital was republished in St Petersburg, the question of the Russian commune and the path of development of Russian society was hotly debated in Russian theoretical circles, with the main argument being whether Russia could make a direct transition to a socialist state without going through the development of capitalism. Marx always believed that there existed a Caudine forks in Russian society that could be crossed, and by analysing the path of historical change of the Russian nation through the application of the materialist concept of history, he came to the view that Russia could make a direct transition across the capitalist system to the path of building socialism. (Figure 1)

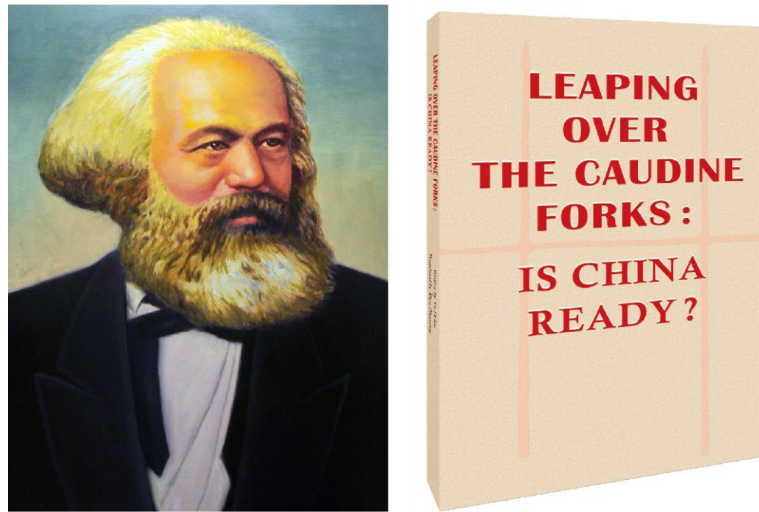


Figure 1: Karl Marx and "Leaping over the caudine forks"

Russia has a very special geographical location, close to the continent of Western Europe, on which the full development of capitalism had a profound influence. And the vastness of Russia itself, with its long history of collective labour in peasant communes, are extremely suitable for the development of a communal socialist state. In his Letter to the Editorial Board of the Fatherland Chronicle Magazine, Marx specifically analysed the particular nature of the Russian commune, which was highly likely to move into the arms of capitalism if the private element prevailed within the commune, and likely to continue to function as a communal state if the communal system predominated. " Everything depends on the historical circumstances in which it is situated" [2] If a leap in the social system is to be realised, the communal productive forces must remain strong in their battle to overcome the private element. Secondly, Engels once said, " The prerequisite for crossing the Caudine forks is the absorption of all the favourable results of the development of capitalist society " [3]. In his reply to Chasulich, Marx said, " The simultaneous existence of Western production, which controls the world, enables Russia to use all the positive results created by the capitalist system in the commune without passing through the Kavdin's Gorge of the capitalist system " [4]. This suggests that Russia must also make full use of external conditions to compensate for its own shortcomings if it is to make the leap. deficiencies. Finally, the Russian peasants at that time were oppressed by the two mountains of the Tsarist government and the new bourgeoisie, and the peasant commune was on the verge of disintegration in this cruel environment. To get a chance to survive, Marx believed that only revolution could save the Russian commune, and not only Russia itself had to make a revolution, but also had to complement the proletarian revolutionary movement in Western Europe, and only in this way could the peasant commune of Russia make a leap forward to the direction of communism. development. Although the course of subsequent revolutions did not go in the direction envisaged by Marx, it did not dampen the strong desire to put this theory into practice in a country with backward productive forces that wanted to escape from a long cycle of development.

2.2 Mao Zedong: "New Democracy", the choice of China's road

The theory of New Democracy, Mao's preliminary picture of the future of the Chinese revolution and the future road to socialism, coincides with Marx's theory of leapfrogging. And it is by no means possible to insert a stage of bourgeois dictatorship on the road to development for a country that is striving for socialism in China. Modern China is a semi-colonial and semi-feudal society, receiving double oppression from both imperialism and feudalism. Our main task is to overthrow these two mountains, imperialism and feudalism, through the union of the working and peasant classes, so as to realise the independence of the country and the liberation of the people. Having achieved victory in the New Democratic Revolution, only the most basic condition for development - independence - has been completed. As a country practising socialism, the most important goal was to move smoothly towards a socialist society. 1949 saw the founding of New China, a post-war country that was still in a state of flux, while the West had long since embarked on the path of industrialisation and modernisation through the primitive accumulation gained through colonisation. So how could China cross over from an agricultural country in a semi-colonial and semi-feudal society to an industrialised and developed socialist country? This question became the number one problem for the Party and a generation of leading groups at that time. (Table 1)

Table 1: The economic situation of China in the early years

Item	National total production	Average per capita
National income	35.8 billion RMB	66 RMB
Grain	110 million tons	209 kg
Steel	158,000 tons	0.29 kg

How can this major problem be solved? Since our economy is relatively backward and we do not yet have the material conditions to enter socialist society directly, Mao Zedong proposed "two stages" of socialism. The first stage was the new democratic society, which could also be described as a stage of transition to socialist society, not a real socialist society; after completing the transformation of the private ownership of the means of production and the initial industrialisation of the country, China entered the second stage of building a socialist society. The "two-stage theory" was closely intertwined with the thinking on the strategy of China's socialist development and construction, and Mao Zedong's "two-stage theory" has gone through a tortuous process of change in practice, with different views defining and interpreting this stage in different ways. Different points of view have different definitions and interpretations of this stage. However, with the constant changes in the domestic economic situation, as well as the changes in the international environment (with the Soviet Union being the most influential), Mao's "two-stage theory" has provided the right theoretical guidance for the choice of China's road development at different times. The general direction of the relationship between the two phases, "The democratic revolution is the necessary preparation for the socialist revolution, and the socialist revolution is the inevitable tendency of the democratic revolution" [5] will not change. The socialist transition phase began in 1953, and in order to push forward the construction of socialism in this period, under the leadership of the Communist Party of China (CPC), Chinese society has undergone a series of political, economic and social changes. This series of changes included land reform, the movement to collectivise agriculture, and the large-scale construction of state-run industries and co-operatives, as shown in Figure 2. By the end of 1956, China had basically completed its socialist transformation of agriculture, handicrafts, and capitalist industry and commerce, and had made a "preliminary leap" in terms of the system. It had begun to enter the primary stage of socialism, as shown in Figure 3 and Table 3.



Figure 2: The three great socialism reconstruction (1953-1956)

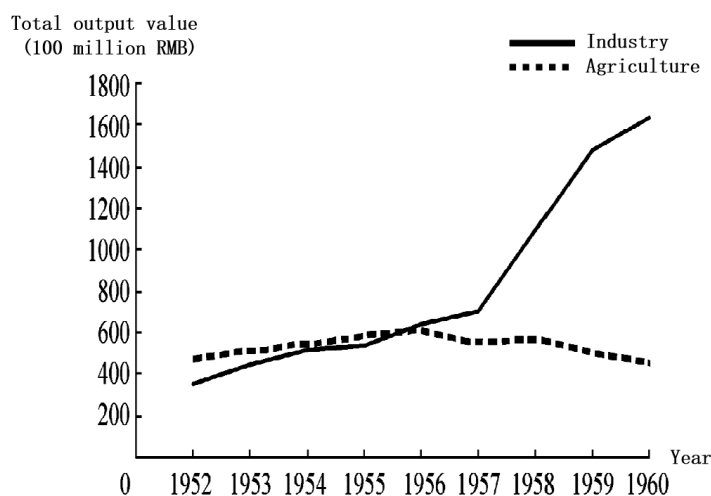


Figure 3: The Chinese economy from 1952 to 1956

Table 2: Changes in China's Economic Structure from 1952 to 1956

Economic sector	Proportion	
	1952	1956
State-owned economy	19.1%	32.2%
Cooperation economy	1.5%	53.4%
Public private partnership economy	0.7%	7.3%
Capitalist economy	6.9%	0%
Individual economy	71.8%	7.1%

3. "ON THE TEN RELATIONSHIPS" - A PRACTICAL HANDBOOK ON HOW TO OPERATE ACROSS THEORIES

From the institutional point of view, our country has entered a socialist society, but at the level of production, there is still a long way to go before the standard of socialist industrialisation I as originally planned. The economic base determines the superstructure; without solid conditions of material production, the superstructure is like floating weeds that cannot really gain a foothold. "Comrade Mao Tse-tung's On the Ten Relationships it initially reveals the contours of the road of socialist construction in China "[6]. Mao Zedong believed that China had entered a socialist society at the institutional level, but had not built a socialist society at the level of development of the productive forces. In September 1952, Mao Zedong told a meeting of the Secretariat of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CCPC) that we were now about to begin to basically complete the transition to socialism in ten to fifteen years. Mao Zedong put forward the goals and tasks of China's socialist construction, and that within ten to fifteen Within 10 to 15 years, the transition from new democracy to socialism will be basically completed. The development of socialism, in turn, needed to go through two stages: underdeveloped socialism and more developed socialism. The transition from the first stage to the second stage will take about 100 years, and only by increasing the speed of development can the transition from underdeveloped socialism to more developed socialism be completed as soon as possible. On the Ten Relationships makes both theoretical and methodological contributions to the various problems of China's social development, and provides an operational guide to the development of China's industrialisation in the special period of time when it is moving towards the standard of development of the productive forces of a socialist society.

In 1956, during this period, China had already gained initial experience in economic construction, and also recognised some of the problems of the Soviet Union on the road to economic construction. In On the Ten Relationships, Comrade Mao Zedong put forward the idea of "taking the Soviet Union as a model", and based on the method of contradiction analysis put forward ten pairs of contradictions, which analysed the main problems in the construction of China's socialism in a cocooning way, and made rational thinking on the development of China's industrialisation. In On the Ten Relationships, Comrade Mao Zedong proposed to "learn from the Soviet Union" and put forward ten pairs of contradictions based on the method of contradiction analysis, from which he analysed the main problems in the construction of Chinese socialism and gave rational thoughts on the development of China's industrialisation, as shown in Figure 4. Discussions on economic issues focused mainly on the first five relationships in On the Ten Relationships, correctly reflecting Comrade Mao Zedong's understanding of the importance of socialist economic construction. After in-depth investigation, research and reflection, in the opening chapter of On the Ten Relationships, Comrade Mao Zedong profoundly elaborated on the relationship between heavy industry, light industry and agriculture, and put forward the idea of developing heavy industry by means of developing more agriculture and light industry, and of co-ordinating the development of agriculture, light industry and heavy industry, which was a major development of Marxist political economy. The second relationship: coastal industry and inland industry; Comrade Mao Zedong believed that to balance the layout of China's industrial development, it was necessary to vigorously develop inland industry and make full use of and develop coastal industry. The third relationship: economic construction and national defence construction; national defence construction must be strengthened, but first of all economic construction must be strengthened; the two must be developed in a coordinated manner before they can be advanced together. The fourth relationship: between the state, production units and individual producers. Comrade Mao Zedong made it clear that the interests of the state, the collective and the individual must be taken into account in order to fully mobilise the people's enthusiasm to participate in socialist construction. The fifth relationship: between the centre and the localities; guided by the basic principles of Marxism, Comrade Mao Zedong put forward that under the premise of consolidating the unified leadership of the central government, the basic principle of dealing with the relationship between the centre and the localities was to give full play to the two positive aspects of the centre and the localities, and that it was necessary to deal with the relationship between centralisation and decentralisation of power, to

expand the local powers and to give full play to the localities' positive aspects. The handling of the above five economic relations can be seen as one of the important reasons for the obstruction of economic development, and by grasping the main contradictions, we can know that in the primary stage of low productivity, the focus of our practice, accelerate the improvement of the level of productive forces, and realise the coordinated development of the economic construction has naturally become the primary goal of this important stage of crossing over.

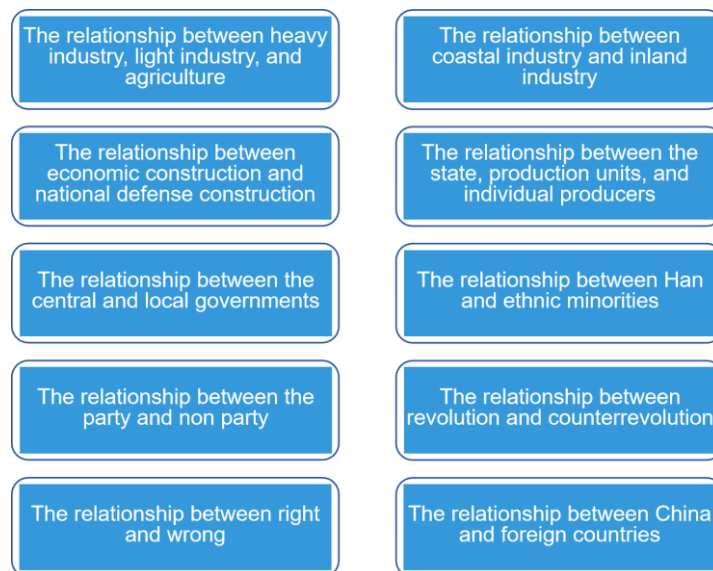


Figure 4: The Ten Relationships

Social consciousness should complement and develop in harmony with social existence. Comrade Mao Tse-tung added to the report the contradictory relationship between political and cultural life associated with economic construction, and also the course of action in political and cultural affairs in order that China at that time could make a better and faster leap to the level of development of a socialist society in terms of economic development. The contradictory movement of the productive forces and the relations of production tells us that the development of the productive forces is a long-term process, and that in order to achieve leapfrogging, we must fully absorb the existing achievements of the developed countries with productive forces. By this time, Comrade Mao Zedong had already realised this point, and in *On the Ten Relationships* he clearly put forward the scientific method of "mobilising all positive factors in the service of the socialist cause" [7]. This provided theoretical preparation and practical inspiration for China's subsequent economic development. However, some of the subsequent theoretical policies were deviated in the process of putting them into practice, resulting in the failure of the first-generation leading group to make a real leap forward in terms of productivity. The road of socialist construction is characterised by advancement and twists and turns. The growth of something new is bound not to be smooth, but twists and turns are short-lived and advancement is inevitable. After a series of twists and turns, the road of socialist construction in China gradually got on the right track after the Third Plenary Session of the Eleventh Central Committee of the Party in 1978, and explored the road of construction in line with the actual situation in China - the theory of socialism with Chinese characteristics. This was a leap forward in combining Marx's theory of "leapfrogging" with China's national conditions, and the exploration of the question of the "essence of socialism" reached a new level.

4. CONCLUSION

Marx's idea of "crossing the Kaften Valley" was initially put forward to explore a new way for the backward countries in the East to achieve social development and emancipation of their people, a new way to "leapfrog" to socialism without going through the sufferings brought about by capitalist development. On the whole, "China's road of development is the road of 'leapfrogging' from backwardness to catching up as a backward country. " [8] The great victory of the New Democratic Revolution, the establishment of the socialist system and the implementation of the policy of reform and opening up have brought about a tremendous and historic development of China's production level. The great victory of the New Democratic Revolution, the establishment of the socialist system, and the implementation of the policy of reform and opening up have led to a great historical development of China's production level, and China has made a historical leap from "standing up" to "getting rich", and has also

made a "leap" into the "Kafting Canyon". China has made a historic leap from "standing up" to "getting rich", and has also realised the "Krafting Canyon". At present, China is realising the historical leap of "getting stronger", which will be another practical proof of Marx's idea of "leap". Since the founding of the Communist Party of China (CPC), more than a hundred years of revolution, construction and development have shown that socialism with Chinese characteristics is the inheritance and development of Marx's idea of "crossing the Kaften Gorge". Based on the new era and starting a new journey, we should continue to apply Marx's idea of "Crossing the Caudine forks" to the practice of socialism with Chinese characteristics, and unswervingly follow the road of socialist development with Chinese characteristics.

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