Research on Socialism and “Ecosocialist Manifesto”

Wen-kui WANG\textsuperscript{1,a}, Ling-ling ZOU\textsuperscript{2,b,*} and Yue WANG\textsuperscript{3,c}

\textsuperscript{1}Xijing University, Xi’an, Shaanxi, China
\textsuperscript{2}College of Marxism, Xi’an University of Technology, Xi’an, Shaanxi, China
\textsuperscript{3}Research Institute of China Unicom, Beijing, China

\textsuperscript{a}wangwenkui@xaut.edu.cn, \textsuperscript{b}616961537@qq.com, \textsuperscript{c}wangyue163@chinaunicom.com

*Corresponding author

Keywords: Socialism, Eco-socialism, Ecosocialist Manifesto.

Abstract. Socialist theory is one of the human’s idea treasuries that are continuously developing and whose contents are the most abundant. Eco-socialism provided us with another theoretical perspective that criticizes capitalist world and is beyond scientific socialism and also provided us with the unique idea to construct new socialist model from the view of ecology. “Ecosocialist Manifesto” made systematic and accurate statements to such an idea and deeply analyzed and used the reasonable thoughts for reference. It has reference value for us to construct socialism with Chinese characteristics. It has profound theoretical meaning for us to research the historical development of socialist theory and to grasp socialist idea treasury on a whole.

1. The Historical Development of Socialist Theory

Socialist theory is one of the idea treasuries whose content is the most abundant. In all ages, the theories setting forth socialist ideas emerge in endlessly. The early socialist theories had drastic criticisms to private ownership and various unjust phenomena caused by it. And it also made sorts of imagination and description to the ideas of future society with public ownership. However, the limitation of the age made them unable to find the practical methods and material forces to realize these ideas. Therefore, these socialist ideas were just some fantasies. On a whole, its theoretical features can only be regarded as an immature theory to criticize the society.

The emergence of Marxism scientific socialism made socialist ideas develop into a construction theory of a new society from a pure theory criticizing the society. Marx and Engels put forward “two necessities”, which revealed that the historical end-result of human in the future would be socialism and communism. Hereafter, socialist campaigns got continuously developed under its guidance. Socialist ideas got great enrichment and development in the aspects of practice and theory. The soviet socialism formed the concrete practice model of the first socialism by pathbreaking exploration in a country whose economy and culture were backward. At the same time, affected by it, there emerged various socialist modes in the world, among which the most successful and active is the exploration in the localization of Marxism in China, namely, the socialist theories and practice with Chinese characteristics. Socialism with Chinese characteristics, mainly combining with practical activity socialist revolution and construction, got developed by summarizing practical activities and lessons as well as seeking and solving the practical problems faced by the development of practical activities. Therefore, it possesses evident practicalness. And it’s a dynamic, fruitful and concrete construction theory of socialist society.

At the same time, sorts of socialist propositions of western Marxism enriched socialist theories and ideas along another road to development or clues. It mainly got developed in virtue of Marxist methodologies, by combining with some scientific thoughts and social ideological trend that have continuous development, criticizing a variety of drawbacks and problems that emerged in the operation of capitalist society on the basis of comprehending Marxism once again, caring for so-called “the problems concerned by the whole world”. Their common points are: stating their socialist ideas and constructing independent theory system by regarding one social real problem or some social real problems as its core. There is no doubt that these socialist theories and ideas are enlightening social criticism theories that made a difference. But it isn’t necessarily feasible.
construction theory of socialist society. Or other, it needs to be discussed in what degree they are a social construction theory. Eco-socialism is one of its schools.

2. The Ideological Trend of Eco-socialism and “Ecosocialist Manifesto”

The ideological trend of eco-socialism is a socialist school that emerged in western society in 1960s and 1970s. Its emergence and development experienced three main stages. The first stage was its formation (in 1960s and 1970s). On the basis of the emergence of green movement in developed capitalist countries, “roman club” in 1970s was the sign of naissance. During this period, Eco-socialism theoretically advocated ecological humanism and democratic socialism, seeking the confluence of political forces of “red” (communist movement) and “green” (ecology movement). It was advocated to organize an extensive mass alliance that was composed of green party, women movements, ecological movements and all progressive, non-violent social organizations. The second stage was its high-speed stage (in 1080s). The main task was to criticize technically and rationally. This kind of criticism blamed the root of ecological crisis on capitalism itself and analyzed capitalist ecological crisis by using Marxist methodology. It redeems the emergence of ecological pressure is due to capitalist inherent production mode, immoderate high production and high consumption. It proposes to seek a revolutionary road with ecological activism that can combine the dissimulation theory of Marxism with the ecological crisis theory and can attract people to take part in if capitalism could be changed radically. The third stage was to more deeply criticize political, cultural and economic systems (from 1980s to today). The end of cold war provided a wider political space to green ecological movement and formed a more extensive social foundation. The basic theory orientation during this period is to discuss the destiny and future of socialism. Western Marxists and socialists began to pay attention to green ecological movement and sought the combination of Marxism and green thoughts [1].

On the whole, the eco-socialists firmly grasp the hot issues of ecological environment, world violence, gender discrimination and democratic politics that people are paying close attention to in the world today. They claim to use Marxism and socialism as the theoretical basis, and ecology and system as the guiding ideology, advocating to re-examine the relationship between mankind and nature by means of Marxism, and seeking the realistic plan and way of realization of eco-socialism so as to construct a new-type socialist society in which human society and nature develop harmoniously.

The Ecosocialist Manifesto [2] (hereinafter referred to as “the Manifesto”) was jointly put forward by Joel Kovel and Michael Lowy at an ecology and socialism symposium, which was held in Paris in September, 2001. “The Manifesto” text is divided into “Introduction”, “Ecosocialist Manifesto” and “why is the eco-socialism”. The Manifesto sets out the historical background, purpose, and meaning of its emergence: the shroud that envelops us is neither environmental destruction nor global economic recession, but a convincing fatalistic assertion: That world order of capitalism is irreplaceable. Therefore, I would like to use this Manifesto as an example to boost the current eager to compromise and helpless to accept the mentality of the atmosphere enveloped. The Manifesto is not a program of any particular party or movement. It announces a new order that is imminent is just a reason for the process. The purpose of that is only to hope it can bring dialogue, debate, recommendations, of which the most important thing is to know how to make this idea be better put into practice. The “Manifesto” made it clear that: eco-socialism adheres that the meaning of production should be dominated by the producer instead of others; planning production in accordance with the ecological requirements rather than mere economic growth-quality rather than quantity, reusing value instead of exchange value. The crisis of our time is a revolutionary opportunity for the internationalization of eco-socialism.

3. The Basic Ideas of “Ecosocialist Manifesto”

3.1 The manifesto’s criticism of the real world

The Manifesto’s critique to the real world focuses on three aspects. The first is the revelation of
the “catastrophic” which causes of the world we live in. The Manifesto stated that the 21st century began in a disastrous atmosphere. Due to the unprecedented destruction of the ecological environment, chaos of the world order, warfare of terror and division, many countries are in the war, uneasy. The “Manifesto” believes that the ecological crisis is mainly due to crazy industrialization process beyond the limits of the earth’s bearing capacity. The collapse of society is rooted in imperialism, namely, the influence of globalization, which crushes all human societies on its way. The Manifesto also argues that ecological crises are closely linked to social breakdowns and should be regarded as manifestations of the same structural forces, or that these forces are in fact different aspects of the same impetus. This impetus is the expansion of the world capitalist system.

Secondly, it is a systematic critique and exposition of the capitalist form, system and its essence. The Manifesto explicitly declares against the cruelty of the capitalist system: whitewashing the ecological costs it brings, blurring the cost of life in the name of democracy and human rights. The Manifesto insists that it should be viewed only in the light of the actual manifestations of capitalism.

The Manifesto enumerates the manifestations of the ferocity of the capitalist system: destruction of eco-system, contempt for natural vitality, damage to human rights and destruction of life values, disruption of community integrity, and the creation of extreme injustices. The “Manifesto” points out that the urgent pursuit of the continued growth of profits will continue to affect the balance of nature and ecology, and the eco-system is seriously damaged. As a result, the region evolved from ancient times suitable for a variety of biological growth fragmented, squandered resources, and the natural vitality was measured by the cold exchange value to meet the need of accumulating capital; human beings need to have the right of self-determination, group emotions and the meaning of life, the capital regards most people in the world just as a labor reserve, the rest are abandoned like dirt. Through consumerism and depoliticized mass culture, capital has been invaded and undermined the integrity of the community; it has extended inequalities in wealth and power to unprecedented levels in human history.

At the same time, the “Manifesto” also exposes the power logic and its essence of expansion, the oppression of the capitalist system—capitalism has collided with corrupt dependent countries, forming a network to rely on local elite groups to suppress the people of the country, while the central state is immune from reputational damage; capital also spills over a transnational network that is entirely under the watchful eye of Western powers, especially the United States to undermine the autonomy of neighboring countries, binding them with debt, and maintain a strong military force to force them to obey the capitalist center.

The “Manifesto” further exposes that the nature of the capitalist system and the inherent logical basis of imperialism making it impossible to reconcile the crises it brought, let alone overcome them. It can not solve the ecological crisis which needs to limit the accumulation of capital, which is the system can not accept. Because its creed is: “Growth or perish!” It can not solve the crisis caused by terror and other forms of violent resistance, because it means giving up the logic of the empire’s foundation and making unacceptable restrictions to capital growth as well as the survival mode of the whole empire. Its only option is to resort to violence, which makes people more alienated and buries the seeds of future terrorism.

The Manifesto solemnly proclaimed: In short, the capitalist world system has gone bankrupt in history and became an empire unable to adapt to present situation. From an ecological point of view, since its unprecedented huge precisely exposed its fundamental weakness, the capitalist world system is not sustainable, so if we want a future for us to live on, we must change it and replace it fundamentally.

Third, it is a criticism of the socialist countries. According to “the Manifesto”, in the face of hostile oppression by the existing capitalist countries, some underdeveloped socialist countries failed to realize the original intention of the reintegration between producers and means of production. The dilemma has a great negative impact on the real socialism. In brief, these socialist countries refuse internal democratization and imitate capitalism’s economic growth model, which eventually leads to the collapse of these countries and the destruction of the natural environment.
3.2 Manifesto on the replacement of capitalism with socialism

With regard to the inevitability of socialism as a substitute for capitalism, the Manifesto states that the capitalist world system has bankrupt in history. Thus, it goes back to Rosa Luxemburg’s straightforward remark: “Either socialism, or barbarism!” The barbarism now reflects the imprint of the last century and manifested a great ecological disaster and fall to fascism. Although all socialism schools seem to have failed in the twentieth century, their essence still stands for the replacement of capitalism. If you want to defeat the capital to continue own civilization, socialism is an inevitable way.

With regard to the rationality of the replacement of capitalism by socialism, the Manifesto states that only socialism represents a breakthrough in backward capitalist society. If we say that capitalism is fundamentally unsustainable and will collapse into barbarism as mentioned above, it means that we need to build a “socialism” that can defeat the current crisis of capitalism. And if socialism fails to accomplish this task in the past, it will be our duty, because we must fight for a sustainable world. If we do not want to go to a brutal end, socialism, not only in name, but in practice will be the choice.

With regard to the way in which socialism replaces capitalism, the Manifesto states that, unlike other socialism in the past, eco-socialism only seeks to promote a developmental logic that is different from the status nowadays and is sufficient and necessary to change the status. In addition, eco-socialism is the beginning of an intermediate step that leads to a final goal transition. We do this in order to think more deeply about the possibilities of change and to attract people who have same goals. If these propositions have any merit, then similar ideas and the practice of realizing these ideas will be spring up with the budding of numerous corners in the world. Eco-socialism must be international or universal, or it will be nothing. We see the crisis of our time as a revolutionary opportunity. Our duty is to prove it, and to achieve it. As for the specific content and operational aspects of this “intermediate step”, you will see the economic, political, and other descriptions of eco-socialism in the following Manifesto.

3.3 Manifesto on economic, political and other description of the eco-socialism

With regard to the eco-socialist economy, the Manifesto states that, like socialism, eco-socialism is based on the understanding that capital is nothing more than materialized labor, whereas eco-socialism is built on the basis of free development of all producers. In other words, it wants to discontinue the separation between producers and means of production. Eco-socialism insists on redefining the means and goals of socialist production within the framework of an ecology. To maintain the sustainable development of the society, eco-socialism grows restrictedly, but it does not a hard or oppressed way.

The Manifesto further explains that our goal is actually a transformation of human needs, which is to guide the direction of quality, rather than the number. From the point of view of commodity production, it means that the value in use is more important than the value in exchange. This is a far-reaching plan based on the current economic activities. The Manifesto also points out that, under the conditions of socialism, the ecological mode of production is the basis for solving the increasingly serious crisis.

With regard to the politics of eco-socialism, the Manifesto states that a society organized freely by producers does not stop at its own democratization, but further insists on the footholds and goals of all mankind’s freedom. This requires the society overcoming subjective and objective impulses of imperialism. On the way to the freedom, the society seeks to overcome all forms of oppression, especially gender and ethnic oppression, and it eliminates conditions that lead to fundamentalist chaos and terrorism. In short, this international society and nature could maintain ecological harmony. However, such a society can not be imagined at present. One of the practical consequences of this trend will be, for example, a gradual reduction of dependence on fossil fuels - which has always been associated with industrial capitalism. In turn, this trend will liberate the land occupied by oil imperialism, while also bring the effects of global warming and other ecological crises under control.
4. The Positive Significance of “Ecosocialist Manifesto”

In this paper, the “Ecosocialist Manifesto” is interpreted and narrated under the premise and framework of eco-socialism and even the socialist ideology, with an aim to draw people’s attention to it and the conclusions and carding to socialist theory with a whole point of view, and so as to help us study and explore socialism with Chinese characteristics. As for the specific evaluation to eco-socialism, there are many relative documents in current theoretical circle, especially the analysis and criticism for its problems and shortcomings that obviously exist and the author believe that many of them have already been familiar to the people. In the following content, the author gives her brief comment on the positive enlightenment brought by the theoretical character of the “Manifesto” that the academic community has not given enough attention to.

The real persuasion of the vitality of theory and theoretical criticism lies in paying attention to the real problems and revealing the origin and essence of the problems of reality. If it is a historical necessity that the socialism replaces the capitalism, then any critique about the reality must be able to get the same conclusion. But the Ecosocialist Manifesto does it, which enables us to see a conclusion that socialism replaces the capitalism with a unique perspective and sufficient and convincing reasons except Marxism.

It is the basic character of the theory with vitality and the inherent requirement of all scientific researches to keep pace with the times, adopt the new scientific methods and ideas and study the frontier and hot issues in the real world. There is no doubt that the “Ecosocialist Manifesto” has this character and meets this requirement, so it is a positive and useful attempt and exploration of this kind theoretical study.

It is the basic principle for a theoretical system to have substantial content, specific arguments and consistent logical clues. The Ecosocialist Manifesto is very instructive in this regard. It is the inevitable cost of any self-contained theory, despite the theory itself can cause controversy, even has some limitations. Otherwise, there will be no possibility of the theoretical development.

The base point of a new theory that can keep a foothold is to possess clear point of view and full innovation. The idea embodied in the Ecosocialist Manifesto belongs to socialism and is the enrichment and development of the treasure of socialist ideological theory. The socialist model described in the Ecosocialist Manifesto is a new model of enlightenment and reference. The concept of “harmony”, “peace”, “democracy”, “justice”, “ecology”, “sustainability”, “freedom” and “autonomy” advocated by the Ecosocialist Manifesto and the basic values and beliefs implicated in the pursuit of “life meaning” are the original point of the capitalist exist. That is, a subversion and breakthrough of the “economic man hypothesis” [3,4].

Of course, what worth further introspecting and criticizing are the abandonment of the correct view of scientific socialism in the Ecosocialist Manifesto, its notable characteristics of Western Marxism, deep utopian color and the theoretical characteristics presenting a kind of social critical theory.

References


