

Analysis on the “The Origin of Family Private Property and the State”

-- On writing background, main content and practical significance

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Abstract: The Origin of Family Private Property and the State” is an important work written by Engels in his later years on the basis of historical materialism. It is a model of the application of Marxist historical materialism and a classic of the ideological treasure house of scientific socialist theoretical system. Using the research methods of anthropology and history and based on the theory of Marxist historical materialism, Engels clarified the social structure and development course of primitive society, and revealed the nature of private ownership, class and state as well as the historical law of development. Reviewing this classic is of great significance for us to have a thorough understanding of the general situation of primitive society, deepen our understanding of private ownership, class and the state, master the methods of historical materialism, grasp the essential defects of capitalist countries and grasp the superiority of people's democracy in the whole process of socialism.

Keywords: Family; Private property; Background; Practical significance.

1. Introduction

"The origin of Family Private Property and the State" has long attracted the attention of Chinese intellectuals, and has entered their vision through partial or full translation. On April 25, 1908, the foreign students who believed in anarchism living in France published part of the book "Origin" in the 44th issue of the publication "New Century". This is the first time that Origin appeared in Chinese books and periodicals. At the same time, in Tokyo, Liu Shiwei and others also published the Chinese translation of part of the content of "Origin" in the Chinese journal "Tianyi Daily" founded by him. After that, Yun Daiying published some translations of "Origin" in Volume 17, No. 19 and 20 of the Oriental Journal, with a total of about 6000 words, and translated the preface of the fourth edition of "Origin", the whole of Chapter 1 and several paragraphs of Chapter 2. On August 26, 1923, Xiong Deshan published the Chinese translation of the first, fifth, sixth and ninth chapters of "Origin" in the journal Today. It should be pointed out that Yun and Xiong refer to the English version of "Origin" in their translation, which means that the English version of "Origin" has entered China since the 1920s. Therefore, it has also received the attention of early Marxist researchers in China. At that time, the Marxist Theory Research Association of Peking University recommended this book to students in school.

During the May 4th Movement, Origins received more attention from revolutionaries, who absorbed the essence of theory, tried to use Engels' statements on women and marriage to solve related family problems, and used Engels' statements on the demise of the state to refute anarchism. The first person to make a comprehensive introduction to the content of "Origin" is Cai Hesen. In 1923, when he taught sociology at Shanghai University, the main part of his teaching content came from "Origin", and thus formed the academic focus of "History of Social Evolution". In this monograph, he praised the origin for establishing a true and scientific basis for history. During the Great Revolution, "History of Social Evolution"

became the learning material of many farmers' workshops and the theoretical departments of the Party, and the ideas and views of "Origin" were more widely disseminated. Li Da, a representative of the CPC, is also an active communicator of the book Origin. In his "Modern Sociology" written with historical materialism and socialist principles, he quoted a large number of main points in "Origin". From June 1926 to 1933, the book was published in 14 editions, which spread widely among the revolutionaries and had a far-reaching impact.

Guo Moruo is the first person to use the basic theory of "Origin" to study China's problems. In his article entitled "The Development Stage of the History of Chinese Society" written on October 28, 1928, he believed that an important value of "Origin" was to reveal the secrets of ancient society. On this basis, he studied the marriage system and clan organization of China's primitive society according to the scientific viewpoints discussed in "Origin", reached the view that there was indeed a mode of slavery production in ancient China, and accordingly formed the academic monograph of "Research on Ancient Chinese Society", which became an academic model for studying China's problems from the perspective of Marxism. In 1928, Yang Xianjiang translated "Origin" into Chinese for the first time in Japan and named it "Origin of Family, Private Property and State". This book was published in June 1929 and reprinted many times. At that time, the Great Revolution was in a period of failure, and all circles had a heated discussion about the future and destiny of China. "Origin" provided a sharp ideological weapon for these discussions. At that time, the Kuomintang boasted of the super-class state view, and Zhu Jing criticized it with Engels' state theory in The Origin. In the 1930s, "Origin" received more attention and research from progressive historians. When Zhou Gucheng taught the history of China's social development at Sun Yat-sen University, he asked students to read the last chapter of "Origin". Under the guidance of "Origin", Lv Zhenyu wrote "Outline of Chinese Social History". In 1939, in Xinjiang, where the political environment was bad, Zhang Zhongshi translated the Origin

into Chinese according to the Russian version. The translation included the annotated and appendixes The Newly Discovered Group Marriage Occasion, which was later republished several times. During the Anti-Japanese War, historical workers in Yan'an paid attention to the use of the basic theory of "Origin" for relevant research. During the War of Liberation, Reading and Publishing magazine introduced the basic ideas of Origin many times, which played an important role in promoting the spread of Origin.

In 1954, Zhang Zhongshi formed a new version based on the Russian version, the reference English, Japanese version and the German original version, which was published by the People's Publishing House. In 1955, there was another version of collective translation and authentic revision, which added the preface of the 1947 Russian version. In 1965, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, the Bureau of Compilation and Compilation of the Works of Marx and Engels, revised Zhang Zhongshi's translation, and compiled the full text of The Origin and the preface of the first and fourth editions into volumes 21 and 22 of The Complete Works of Marx and Engels. In June 1972, in the published Selected Works of Marx and Engels (four-volume collection), "Origin" was compiled into the fourth volume. In 1995, in the second edition of Selected Works of Marx and Engels published in Chinese, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, the Bureau of Works Compilation and Compilation of Marx and Engels, carefully revised the translation, supplemented and revised the notes and indexes.

2. Writing background

2.1. To improve the theory of historical materialism and Marxist state theory

An important content of historical materialism is to study and explain the law of the development from primitive society to civilized society. From the 1840s, Marx and Engels began to study the primitive society. Because at that time, people's understanding of the early history of human development was still in a hazy state. In response, Engels once said: "In 1847, the prehistoric history of society and the social organization before the written history were almost unknown. "So when Marx and Engels co-founded the historical materialism, due to the lack of research materials, they could not understand the primitive society in depth. In the middle of the 19th century, a large number of documents about primitive society emerged, forming many real and effective academic achievements, which created favorable conditions for Marx and Engels to analyze the characteristics of primitive society and use historical materialism to induce the universal development law of human development. In 1877, American ethnologist and anthropologist Louis Henry Morgan published the book "Ancient Society". In this book, Morgan fully studied the primitive tribes, family structures and management systems of North American Indians and Australia, and restored the basic features of primitive society. Marx attached great importance to Morgan's research achievements. He carefully studied Ancient Society, made many comments and abstracts, and planned to deepen Morgan's research results with his own thinking and understanding. Contrary to our wishes, Marx died before the plan began. [1]

Engels also attached importance to Ancient Society and believed that the conclusions drawn in the book would have a significant impact on the Department of Primitive Society

Research. After Marx's death, Engels carefully sorted out a large number of manuscripts left by Marx, including the written records made by Marx for Ancient Society. After careful study, Engels believed that Morgan unconsciously proved the scientific nature of historical materialism, and it was necessary to deepen the study of primitive society on the basis of Morgan's study. He pointed out that "in the United States, Morgan rediscovered in his own way the materialist historical view discovered by Marx 40 years ago, and under the guidance of this, when taking the barbaric era and the civilized era into account, he reached the same results as Marx in the main points of view". In order to further develop and improve materialism and fulfill the wishes of revolutionary comrades, Engels believed that the research achievements of Morgan and Marx should be fully absorbed to deepen the study of primitive society and write an academic monograph on the historical view and state theory of materialism. For this reason, Engels wrote the book "Origin".

2.2. For criticizing the wrong idealistic historical view and state theory of capitalism

In the middle of the 17th century, Western Europe and North America successively established the capitalist system. In order to maintain the new capitalist system, the bourgeoisie concocted various idealistic theories about society and defended the eternal existence of capitalism. At the beginning of the 19th century, socialism and the workers' movement sprang up, the inherent contradictions and drawbacks of capitalist society were increasingly exposed, the number of positive conflicts between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie increased, and the bourgeoisie increasingly degenerated into a reactionary force for social development. For this period, Lenin pointed out that this was "the era when the bourgeoisie achieved complete domination and went into decline, and the era when the progressive bourgeoisie was transformed into the reactionary and even the most reactionary financial capital".

In order to respond to the problems raised by the working class and cover up the problems of the capitalist society, some bourgeois scholars advocate that private ownership is the inherent system of human society, and try to make a theoretical defense for the evil phenomenon of capitalist exploitation of workers. As for the state, they propagandize that it always exists and is inviolable, so as to demonstrate the legitimacy of the capitalist system. For example, Hegel's theory of state regards the state as an ethical entity with a sense of moral loftiness. The state is an objective existence superior to the family and civil society in logic and value. The family and civil society should obey and subordinate to the state. Durin's theory of state regards violence as the origin of the state. Especially in Germany, workers regard the country as their idol. In response, Engels pointed out that "this is in Germany, the superstition of the state from philosophy has entered the general consciousness of the bourgeoisie and even many workers." These erroneous ideas are not conducive to the formation of a correct view of the state by the working class, and hinder the development of the labor movement. In order to refute these wrong views of the state and break the superstition and misunderstanding of the working class towards the state; In order to establish a correct understanding of the problems of private ownership, class and state, arm the minds of the working class with theories, and clarify the correct views on the state and society, Engels believed that it

was necessary to write a monograph.

2.3. To point out the correct direction for the proletarian revolutionary struggle

In the process of guiding the workers' movement, Marx and Engels have always paid attention to refuting various wrong theories of the bourgeoisie from the perspective of historical materialism and scientific socialism. In the middle and late 19th century, under the guidance of Marx's theory, the proletariat in Europe and the United States successively established political parties representing the interests of workers, and the labor movement gradually became active and the struggle force became stronger. By the second half of the 19th century, the proletarian revolution was surging. In the face of the continuous emergence of the revolutionary tide, the bourgeoisie of all countries adopted various means to contain it. In 1878, Germany enacted the Act to Suppress the Social Democrats' Attempts to Harm the Public Security, which comprehensively suppressed the Social Democrats in the form of laws. At the same time, we will implement a number of social improvement measures to confuse workers with small practical interests and create a fraud of "national socialism". At this time, bourgeois scholars also racked their brains to invent various theories to beautify the country, vigorously advocating "pulpit socialism", and propagating that the country is a just organization with super-class interests, and that capitalist society can peacefully transition to socialist society. In response, Engels criticized: "There has been a kind of fake socialism, which sometimes degenerates into some kind of slavery, and unconditionally calls any kind of nationalization, or even the nationalization of Psalm, socialism."

At the same time, the bourgeoisie also tried to buy the opportunists appearing in the proletarian revolution and use their "treachery" to fight against the workers' movement in an attempt to cover up the essence of the state-class rule and advocate the correctness of the reform path. For example, Germany's Bernstein publicly said: "It is now, under the oppression of the anti-socialist human rights law, that the Party has indicated that it does not intend to take the path of violent and bloody revolution, but decides to take the path of legal reform." In the United Kingdom, "Fabian" elements regard themselves as "socialists", Propagandize to the working class that socialism can only be realized through nationalization and class cooperation. At the same time, they also regard the capitalist state machine as a tool beyond history and class, and regard the capitalist state as a special "holy object" to worship. Faced with the attack of these erroneous thoughts, Marxism must profoundly reveal the law of human history development, scientifically elaborate the basic views on family, private ownership and the state, so as to clear the ideological fog for the proletariat and point out the correct direction for the workers' movement. Obviously, this became an important reason for Engels to write *The Origin*. [2]

3. Main content

"Origin" consists of the preface of the first edition in 1884, the preface of the fourth edition in 1891 and the text of nine chapters. In the text, the first and second chapters, referring to the relevant contents of *Ancient Society*, discuss the development process of human early society and the corresponding three forms of family marriage; Chapters 4, 5,

6, 7 and 8 respectively study the growth history of Iroquois, Greeks, Romans and Germany, clarify the historical development of the transition from the clan society to the state era, and then summarize the characteristics of the clan organization, the characteristics of the state and its main types and ways of production. The ninth chapter is a summary, which comprehensively discusses the Marxist view of the country, focusing on the scientific proposition of historical materialism.

3.1. Comprehensively summarized two production theories

In the book "German Ideology", Marx and Engels put forward two production theories. In "Origin", Engels further enriched the expression of this theory, pointed out that the production of means of life and human's own production have a prominent role in the development of human society, thus revealing the historical code of the transition from the primitive society based on kinship to the exploitative society based on class relations. He pointed out: "According to the materialist view, the decisive factor in history is, in the final analysis, the production and reproduction of direct life. However, there are two kinds of production itself. On the one hand, the production of means of life, namely food, clothing, housing and the tools necessary for this purpose, and on the other hand, the production of human beings, namely the reproduction of species." In the early stage of human society, due to the insufficient development of productivity, blood relationship is the basic factor determining social relations. The continuous development of productive forces, especially the complexity of social division of labor, has made the form of social system more restricted by the degree of labor development and the type of ownership structure.

3.2. Proved the origin and historical evolution of the family

Engels drew on the existing research results in *Ancient Society*, and summarized the three stages of human history in terms of ignorance, barbarism and civilization. For the period of ignorance and barbarism, it is subdivided into three stages, namely, low, intermediate and high levels, according to the level of productivity development. Engels studied the evolution of family forms at different stages of development in different times, and believed that the family, as the basic unit of society, did not exist since ancient times, but was the product of the development of productive forces to a certain stage. At the same time, social and economic relations restrict the evolution of the family. According to the chronological order, the family form of human society can be divided into consanguineous family, Puneluya family, dual family, and exclusive family.

3.3. Clarified the origin of private ownership and class

Engels, starting with the analysis of the Iroquois clan of the North American Indian tribe, and through careful study of the early history of the Greeks, Romans, Celts, and Germans, creatively revealed the secret of private ownership and class with the theory of social division of labor. He believed that the division of labor was the fundamental prerequisite for the emergence of private ownership. Only with the division of labor can there be an increase in surplus products and private ownership. On this basis, the division of labor has gradually shown the trend of refinement and individualization, and the

continuous development of product exchange has gradually led to the popularization of private ownership. At this point, private ownership emerged and society was divided into classes. It can be seen that private ownership and class are not always social phenomena, but the products of the development of human history to a certain stage. Therefore, they are bound to perish with the progress of human society.

3.4. Explained the origin and essence of the country

Engels pointed out that the state was created on the basis of the development of social division of labor, the disintegration of the clan system, and the emergence of private ownership and class. On this basis, Engels clarified the essence of the state. The state is the result of the class struggle between the two opposing classes after the emergence of private ownership. It is neither a force imposed on the society from the outside, nor a representation of some abstract ethical concepts in reality. The role of the state is to serve the economically dominant class in suppressing and exploiting the oppressive class, and to serve as a tool for the rulers to enslave the ruled. In the process of historical development, the form of the state has different manifestations, but the nature of the class rule and the tools of slavery has remained unchanged. Therefore, with the elimination of private ownership and class, the country will also perish.

The logic throughout the book is that the development of productive forces has led to the birth of private ownership, which has led to the development of the family from the dual system to the exclusive system, which has led to the division of the rich and the poor within the clan and the military war between the tribes, which has led to the disintegration of the clan society and the emergence of the state. During most of the whole period of ignorance and barbarism, mankind practiced primitive public ownership, and people lived an equal and free life. The development of productive forces and the emergence of private ownership have brought human society into a civilized state, but have formed the oppression of one class against another and the domination of a few over the majority.

4. Practical significance

"Origin" is a classic Marxist work that uses historical materialism to study the development of human history and the origin of the country. It enriches and improves the content and methods of historical materialism, fully explains the Marxist theory of the country, scientifically analyzes the evolution process and historical role of the country, and provides an important theoretical basis for human society to enter the communist society. As for the importance of this book, Lenin once pointed out: "I hope you can read Engels' book Family, Private Ownership and the Origin of the State when you study national issues. This is one of the basic works of modern socialism." Review this classic, It is of great significance to deeply grasp the basic principles of historical materialism and the Marxist concept of state, and to understand the theory of socialist democratic politics with Chinese characteristics. In "Origin", Engels pointed out that the country is the product of the development of productive forces and production relations movement to a certain historical period, and the phenomenon of the development of human society to a certain stage. Engels analyzed that the essence of the state is class rule, and the state always

maintains the interests and order of the ruling class. This tells us that no matter how the state form and state policies of capitalist countries change, as long as private ownership and class antagonism always exist, its true face as the spokesman of the interests of the bourgeoisie and the oppressor of the interests of the proletariat will not change. Correspondingly, China is a socialist country under the people's democratic dictatorship led by the working class and based on the alliance of workers and peasants. The state represents and protects the fundamental interests of the overwhelming majority of the Chinese people. From the perspective of the universality of the representative interest groups, China's socialist countries have natural advantages.

4.1. It has a guiding role in understanding the nature and morphological differences between the state and democracy

Engels believed that although the state essentially protects the interests of the ruling class, it often appears in reality as a spokesman for social public interests, as if it is above the society and maintains a neutral position outside the conflicting class. As for various types of capitalist countries, Engels clearly pointed out that they exist to maintain the private ownership of the bourgeoisie, in which the proletariat is in a dominant position. In order to cover up the nature of state exploitation, the bourgeoisie will use various methods to package democratic politics as "democracy for the whole people", such as implementing universal suffrage and cultivating their own spokesmen. Although these forms of governance are more indirect and covert, the bourgeois countries have always served the interests of the bourgeoisie. There are essential differences between democracy in China and that in capitalist countries. From the perspective of ownership structure, China implements socialist public ownership, which enables the working class to enjoy the fullest material basis, and fully reflects the national essence that China is the people in charge of the country. Therefore, China is a country where the proletariat and the working people hold power and safeguard the interests of the whole people. At the stage of development under certain historical conditions, class struggle still exists in socialist countries. At home, class struggle still exists within a certain range; In foreign countries, various reactionary forces hostile to our country still exist. In order to cope with the damage that the enemies at home and abroad may launch, China still needs to maintain the dictatorship function of a socialist country. [3]

4.2. It plays a guiding role in grasping the superiority of people's democracy in the whole process of socialism

In the Origin, Engels thoroughly exposed the fundamental defects of capitalist democracy. This also means that no matter how capitalist democracy changes, it will never represent the broadest interests of the people, and it will always be a false democracy bought by money. In the new era, we have successfully formed the theory and practice of the whole process of people's democracy, which is a complete transcendence of capitalist democracy and a new model for the development of human democracy. The capitalist political system, which boasts freedom, democracy and human rights, seems perfect in concept, but has multiple drawbacks. Political activities revolve around money, and capital becomes the dominant force. The hypocrisy of democracy is

very obvious; The political party election has become a factional struggle for power and profit, with conflicting policies and serious depletion of public resources; The institutional arrangement of separation of three powers has resulted in low efficiency of governance, accumulation of social problems, and inability to respond to the interests of voters in a timely manner. It can be seen that the legitimacy and effectiveness of Western-style democracy is weakening and can no longer meet the needs of the people to express their will. In recent years, President Biden of the United States has launched the so-called "democracy summit", which classifies countries with conflicting interests and different ideologies into the ranks of "non-democratic countries", regards the European and American democratic models as the best model of human democracy, and regards himself as the practitioner and defender of true democracy. But the existence of private ownership of the means of production fundamentally determines that capitalist democracy will only safeguard the interests of the bourgeoisie. This also determines that the "democracy summit" launched by Biden is just a fake game of playing with democracy against the trend of history. The whole process of people's democracy enables people to truly become masters of their own affairs, and is a democratic system that integrates authenticity and practicality. There is a strong contrast with the deceptive and limited nature of Western democracy. From the perspective of civilized exchanges, the whole process of people's democracy is a new form of civilization created by contemporary Chinese

political civilization. The whole process of people's democracy can be extended to other countries and play an important role in human political civilization. In reality, the western countries led by the United States, which are proud to represent "universal values", export European-style and American-style democracy to all parts of the world on a large scale, but all of them have failed without exception. It can be seen that democracy in Europe and the United States does not meet the needs of developing countries to develop democracy. They need new democratic choices, and the whole process of people's democracy can fully undertake this mission. Unlike European and American countries, China will never force others to accept its own democratic model by force, but will respect the right of each country to choose freely. It can be seen that, as a democratic form that truly reflects the fundamental interests of the people, the whole process of people's democracy will contribute more Chinese wisdom and Chinese solutions to the development of human democracy.

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