

believe that commodity value is decided by socially necessary labor, not by individual labor, useless labor as "forming no value" in individual labor "can not be counted as working", Therefore they should not be allocated remuneration, and commodity equal value exchange means distribution according to labor and the exchange is equal socially necessary working exchange, equal value exchange is a form, exchange of equal socially necessary labor is the essence of the distribution principle of socialism commodity equal value exchange, it's also the essential distinction between Marx's distribution principle of socialism commodity equal value exchange according to socially necessary working distribution and Stalin's average distribution principle according to the labor quantity and quality input. As Marx pointed that: "If things have no use, the labor in that is also useless and could not be considered as work, and it can not form value. ... Value from its products by its products or to express their labor useful by their value, we call such labor as "useful labor", from this point, we can conclude that the inspection of labor is always linked with its useful effect." Lenin's word "the distribution of the labor remuneration is according to work" means the distribution of the labor remuneration is according to "socially necessary labor", it has the same meaning with Marx's "equal value exchange" in terms of socially necessary labor distribution, namely socialism commodity equal value exchange distribution principle of "the same labor quantity exchange", Just as Lenin noted: "Every member of society must share certain socially necessary labor, receive a voucher from society to show the working that he completed. he can take corresponding quantity of products from the social consumable reserves." As Marx said in "Das Kapital": "The value and its quantity had ever been analyzed in Political Economics (although not plenty), it reveals the content that covered up. But it has never raised the question: Why the contents take this form? Why labor presents as value, and the labor quantity calculating by labor presents as the labor products' value? "As Engels pointed that: "Marx was the first person who has ever made a thorough study on the characteristics of the creation of value that labor has, and found that not all the needed necessary labor in production whether it seems like or true, would add a value equivalent to the work used in the commodity production in any condition. Therefore, if we still say simply together with the economist like Ricardo, the value of goods is decided by the necessary labor in the goods' production, then we always take Marx's conditions as the prerequisite. It is enough to point it here. The rest can be found in Marx's "Critique of Political Economics (1895)" and "Das Kapital", Volume I."

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Marx's Theory of "Intermediate Strata" and Studies on Intermediate

Strata in China after the Reform and Opening-up

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The foreign theoretical circle has already had deep research to the theory of the intermediate strata (called “middle class” abroad) while the Chinese academic circle began its studies on this theory after the reform and opening-up. With the development of China's modernization, it is of great significance to make a thorough research on the class stratification companied by China's modernization and the theory of the intermediate strata, and to carry on an innovative discussion according to China's specific conditions. Marx's Theory of “Intermediate Strata” in the capitalist society can be regarded as the source of domestic and international research on this theory. Therefore, reorganizing and studying upon Marx's Theory of “Intermediate Strata” in the capitalist society does have theoretical and practical significance.

I. Marx's Theory of “Intermediate Strata” in the Capitalist Society

As one of the classical sociologists who expounded earliest the theory of class and social stratification, Marx devoted himself to the study of social class and first developed a systematic, comprehensive and creative theory of class and stratum. His basic view of class is that, the production system, especially the ownership of the means of production plays a central role in the search of the basis and standard of class division during the production process. From the production relations of the private ownership society, and from the relations between possession and non-possession of property, Marx explained his Theory of Class and exposed the basic antithesis of class, so as to awaken the awareness of proletariats and overthrow the old system, which is the keynote of Marxist Theory of Class. Meanwhile, Marx and Engels also hold that the society is a complicated relation system and, like material world and other fields, can be divided into different levels.

Marx embodied a concentrated reflection in *Capital* of the thought of “intermediate strata” in the capitalist society, which sporadically appears in his works and manuscripts. The concept of “intermediate class” or “intermediate strata” developed by Marx in *Capital* Volume 3 is an important economic and class category to illustrate capitalist development theoretically. Marx's category of “intermediate strata” in the capitalist society mainly includes the following contents:

1. The concept and range of the capitalist “intermediate strata”

Marx and Engels pointed out that the capitalist “intermediate strata” refers to the stratum and social group whose social status is between capitalist class and proletariat in the capitalist society. Marx and Engels frequently adopt the name of bourgeoisie,

medium-sized classes, intermediate class, transitional class, medium-sized stratum, intermediate strata etc, but it clearly refers to all the social groups between capitalist class and proletariat. As Marx and Engels pointed out in *The Communist Manifesto*: "The lower strata of the intermediate strata --- the small trades people, shopkeepers, retired tradesmen generally, the handicraftsmen and peasants -- all these sink gradually into the proletariat", intermediate strata does not mean a particular social stratum or its another name. There should be several laborer groups and strata which can be regarded as intermediate strata.

2. The economic base of the Theory of "Intermediate Stratum" of capitalist society

Marx's Theory of "Intermediate Strata" in the capitalist society holds that the economic base of the appearance of intermediate strata exists and expands in the development of the capitalist commodity economy. In other words, it is the constant development of the capitalist commodity economy (i.e. the market economy) that motivates the formation of those sources or economic functions which gave birth to intermediate strata. In this sense, Marx's theory of "intermediate strata" implies that the forming and developing of market economy is the base and the condition of the appearance of intermediate strata.

3. The characteristics of the capitalist "intermediate strata"

Marx and Engels hold that the characteristics of intermediate strata are "approaching the proletariat according to its unstable existing while approaching the capitalist class according to its living condition". Because the development of the capitalism has the tendency to centralize towards large capital and to constantly expand the working class, the economic status of intermediate strata in the capitalist society determined that it wavers between the working class and capitalist class. It is a stratum with duality.

4. Theory concerning the distinctiveness and unity of intermediate strata

As an integral part of laboring class or working class, intermediate strata are distinctive from and unified with the other strata of working class. On the one hand, there is some difference between intermediate strata and the traditional blue-collar workers; on the other hand, intermediate strata also falls within the laborer group and working class, therefore, diverse intermediate strata are unified with one another in their common social attribute- wage laborer class.

In brief, to Marx and Engels, in a certain period there must be a sizable intermediate strata spanning across the bourgeoisie and the preliterate, although the internal structure of this class would go through constant changes.

II. Enlightenment from Marx's Theory of Intermediate Strata in the Capitalist Society

1. Marx's Theory of Intermediate strata provides us a new way to conduct studies upon the intermediate strata in current China.

When he studied on the intermediate strata in the capitalist society, Marx aimed to meet the preliterate's demand to revolutionize and to seek for the theoretical power to destroy capitalism. As times change, the purpose of studies on "intermediate class" in today's China and the social modes of production on which the theory depends have also undergone dramatic changes. However, the basic position, research approaches and analytical methods included in Marx's Theory of Intermediate strata still have great practical guiding significance, for Marx's economic theory "does not provide the doctrine but a way of method. What it provides is not the ready-made principles but a starting point for the study and the ways to do the study."

2. The group of intermediate strata will change constantly with the socio-economic development.

As early as the period of the Great Industrial Production, Marx predicted that new intermediate strata would come into being as a result of the economic development and social progress. There is no limit to socio-economic development, resultantly, the generating and updating of intermediate strata also has no limit. This fact requires that when making studies on the current intermediate strata in China, we are expected to have a full and correct understanding of this group of people according to different economic developmental stages.

3. The different social roles intermediate strata play under different social systems

Marx's Theory of Intermediate strata takes the antagonistic capitalist production relations as its economic base. Moreover, the basic social attribute of intermediate strata is their subordination to wage laborers. For these reasons, the social significance of these strata is to finally develop themselves into the social power that pulls down the capitalist system.

Yet, at the primary stage of socialism in China, what the concept of "intermediate strata" embodies is the mutual benefit and cooperation between socialist builders and the socio-economic relations in the realization of common prosperity of the entire population. The emergence of this class ensures an increase in earnings of ever more members of society and their individual income so as to enhance social equality.

4. Intermediate strata can be regarded as the complex of the social "stabilizer" and "propeller".

From the perspective of vested interests or economy, play the role of social stabilizer; and from the perspective of being and appealing or from the political point of view, intermediate strata often turn into a propeller that fosters social progress.

III. To Survey the Current Intermediate Strata in China Based on the Theory of Intermediate Strata Proposed by Marx and Engels

Since the agriculture society, the farmers have always acted as the main body of the society, accounting for over 90% of the total population. Hence where social structure was concerned, the traditional Chinese social structure had always presented itself as a structure of the paramedic shape. To be specific, a minority of royalties and eunuchs were in the position of the upper class while masses of farmers lied at the foot. Compared with these two main classes of the society, the intermediate strata occupy a lesser population. However, this does not rule out the potentiality that they could also assume a greater social function.

After the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949 and the accomplishment of socialist transformation in 1956, China resorted to relatively unitary systems of state ownership and collective ownership. The state allocated resources and organized production according to a fixed plan. Besides, the state adopted the mode of national industrialization. Consequently, the urbanization level was not enhanced correspondingly with the improvement of the level of industrialization, which conversely affected the course of China's modernization. As thus, the social hierarchical structure then was divided into "two classes and a stratum". Through the labor personnel system and the household registration system, this structure was finally specified into three severely ordered fixed identities: cadres, workers and farmers. At that time, there was scarcely any "intermediate strata" in the real sense in China.

After the reform and opening up, particularly the market economy-oriented economic reform in the 1990s, due to the change of ownership, "the free flow of resources" and "the free flow of space", China's original class-stratum structure was broken and there have appeared quite a few new strata, thus the "intermediate strata" with its own unique characteristics has taken shape.

1. Scale of China's "intermediate strata"

A research into the social structure changes of contemporary China, presided over by Professor Lu Xueyi, indicates that China's social strata pattern has evolved from the original three major strata of workers, peasants and intellectuals into today's ten major strata, namely, state and social administrators, managers, private entrepreneurs, professionals, staff, self-employed entrepreneurs, commercial attendants, industrial workers, agricultural laborers, and the urban jobless, unemployed and underemployed.

"Intermediate strata" is not a specific class but a general notion of several social strata. In the 10 strata, a large portion of the first six falls into the "intermediate strata", and all members of the fifth and sixth strata should belong to the "intermediate strata". The size of this class in China is still relatively small for the moment, accounting for 15% according to

the survey made by Professor Lu Xueyi in 1999, 20% in 2004, but with China's economic and social development, China's "intermediate strata" will expand the scale.

2. Characteristics of China's "intermediate strata"

(1) China's "intermediate strata" is an outcome of social change in the background of China's reform and opening up, sharing common interests. Their fate is closely linked with the reform and opening up, the success or failure of the reform, economic development, advances in technology, the establishment of the market mechanism, and the perfection of the social system are all their urgent concerns. They are the ardent supporters and propellers of China's reform and opening up.

(2) China's "intermediate strata" is rapidly expanding distribution in the political, economic, and scientific and other fields. They have more independence and social responsibility, exhibiting a strong sense of identity with the dominant social value.

(3) Serving as a buffer, China's "intermediate strata" alleviate the conflicts between social strata, and is conducive to the re-integration of social structure, and social and political stability

China's "intermediate strata" have their commonness and differences. On the one hand, in contemporary China, different social groups of the "intermediate strata" all share the fundamental property of "builders of socialism with Chinese characteristics"; on the other hand, China's "intermediate strata" is composed of different social strata. Since they rise and exist in different stages or segments of social reproduction, it's inevitable that different groups have their own special interests and there are obvious differences between their economic statuses, self-awareness, and social demands.

IV. Conclusion

The existence of the society and its positive operation and harmonious development attributes to the integration and cooperation of all social factors. China's "intermediate strata", concomitant with the reform and opening up, is propelling the modernization of China as a frontier force. We must be guided by Marx and Engels' thought of "intermediate strata" and promote the development of China's "intermediate strata" in a positive and healthy way.

Annotation

1. Marx and Engels, Communist Manifesto, People's Publishing House, 1963, p34.
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3. Collected Works of Marx and Engels, Volume 39, People's Publishing House, 1975, p406.

4. Lu Xueyi (ed.), Research report on contemporary China's social strata, Social Sciences Academic Press, 2002.

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