CHAPTER 1

MARX’S “VIEW ON WORLD HISTORY” AND THEORETICAL THINKING ABOUT GLOBALIZATION

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During the course of economic globalization, the socialism with Chinese characteristics after China’s entry into the World Trade Organization faces new challenges. It is important to understand and cope with globalization and study the dual effect of economic globalization and the nature of anti-globalization phenomenon from Marx’s view of “world history”.

I. Marx’s View on “World History” and Basic Characteristics of Economic Globalization

1. Basic characteristics of economic globalization and the mark of starting

The basic characteristics of economic globalization generally include two meanings: a. mankind’s progress to keep overcoming geographic, national, institutional and cultural barriers; b. the process that all countries’ economies are integrated into an inseparable global organic entity.

There are many theories about the start of economic globalization. Among them one school of thought holds that the grand geographic discovery in the 15th century “had expanded the world market and ushered in globalization”; globalization and capitalism “belonged to the same process” because they were “coincidental in time and synchronous in history”.1

This theory is open to question. Though the grand geographic discovery in the 15th century had enabled people to exchange more closely,

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1 Song Shichang, Li Ronghai, "Globalization and the construction of socialism with Chinese characteristics", Social Sciences in China, 2001, issue 6, pp. 4, 5, 11.
it did not break all the geographic, national, institutional and cultural barriers to facilitate extensive communications between peoples.

If taking the formation of an inseparable global organic entity including all countries’ economies as the mark of the start of globalization, it also cannot conclude that economic globalization is synchronous with the process of capitalism because it is not possible for all countries’ economies to form an inseparable global organic entity until the capitalist world market has come into being. It was till the mid 19th century when industrial revolution was at its height that a unified global market of commodity, labor and capitalism has come into being. But industrial revolution began two and a half centuries after the grand geographic discovery in the 15th century. Since the capitalist world market did not exist until the mid 19th century when all countries’ economies formed an inseparable global organic entity, the start of economic globalization should begin in the mid 19th century.

Similarly, economic globalization is not synchronous with the process of capitalism. In the mid 19th century when the capitalism world market took form and economic globalization started, the process of capitalism had already undergone two to three hundreds of years of workshop handicraft industry. The process of capitalism began a long time ago before the start of economic globalization.

2. Relations between industrialization, economic globalization and Marx’s view on “world history”

Marx’s view on “world history” is rich in content and elaborated in many of his works. There are some special discussions about it in such typical works as “The German Ideology”, “Principles of Communism”, “The Communist Manifesto” and “Capital”. In these articles, we can find that Marx’s view on “world history” is put forward when elaborating the historical materialist principle that productivity decides production relations and the historical role of large industry. When discussing the great historical role of modern mechanical industry, Marx pointed out in “The German Ideology” that it had caused extensive social division of labor and exchange of commodities and facilitated the formation of a unified world market that includes all nations and states into a whole; it “had ushered in world history for the first time because it had made every civilized country and every people in these countries dependent on the whole world to meet their demand and because it had eliminated the isolation of all countries resulted