

THE FIGHTING TASK CONFRONTING WORKERS IN PHILOSOPHY AND THE SOCIAL SCIENCES

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by

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This speech on philosophy was an important event in the Sino-Soviet dispute of the 1960s. It was personally edited by Mao Zedong, and published very widely, including the book from which these excerpts are taken. The speech is notable for its attack on the dialectical theories of Soviet philosophers Mitin and Fedoseev, and for its use of Mao's "one divides into two" formulation of the law of the unity of opposites. Numbers in brackets are page numbers. Footnotes to the Chinese edition refer to 周扬: 哲学社会科学工作者的战斗任务, 北京:人民出版社, 1963.

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[7] Already in Marx's and Engels' lifetime, attempts to tamper with or discard their dialectical materialism, historical materialism and theory of class struggle occurred among German Social-Democrats. Marx's Critique of the Gotha Programme was shelved for sixteen years, and when Engels demanded its immediate publication and solemnly declared that any further delay would be a crime, the leaders of the German Social-Democratic Party still placed many obstructions in the way. The criticism of Dühring also met with much opposition within the leading clique of the German Social-Democratic Party. In publishing "The Introduction to The Class Struggles in France, 1848 to 1850" which Engels wrote late in life, *Vorwärts*, the organ of the German Social-Democratic Party, deliberately deleted some of the most important passages about the revolutionary struggles of the proletariat, so that Engels was presented as an unqualified supporter of the "tactics of peace" and an opponent of the use of "force". He strongly [8] protested against this. When Kautsky and others compiled a history of the socialist movement, they did so behind Engels' back; thus Engels learned of the ulterior motives of the revisionists before his death. A revisionist, anti-Marxist faction had already cropped up within the Marxist ranks.

This phenomenon may seem strange. How can certain people who had previously been supporters of revolutionary scientific socialism degenerate into counter-revolutionary, anti-scientific revisionists? Yet it is not at all

strange. Everything tends to divide itself in two.¹ Theories are no exception, and they also tend to divide. Wherever there is a revolutionary, scientific doctrine, its antithesis, a counter-revolutionary, anti-scientific doctrine, is bound to arise in the course of the development of that doctrine. As modern society is divided into classes and as the difference between progressive and backward groups will continue far into the future, the emergence of antitheses is inevitable. This has long been borne out by the history of Marxist philosophy and the social sciences and also by the history of natural science. Science and the history of science themselves reflect the unity and struggle of opposites, and science develops through such unity and struggle.²

What the opportunists and revisionists dread and hate most and have therefore tried in every way to revise is the Marxist theory of class struggle, and particularly that of proletarian revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat. As Engels said, "Hence, their fanatical hatred of Marx and all of us—because of the class struggle." ("Engels to F. A. Sorge, January 18, 1893", *Selected Correspondence of Marx and Engels*, Moscow, p. 537.) This is the heart of the matter. On this central issue Marx [9] and Engels took the most determined and clear-cut stand.

In their circular letter to A. Bebel and others, they solemnly declared:

¹ [总是一分为二]

² [This paragraph was written by Mao Zedong.]

For almost forty years we have stressed the class struggle as the immediate driving power of history, and in particular the class struggle between bourgeoisie and proletariat as the great lever of the modern social revolution; it is, therefore, impossible for us to cooperate with people who wish to expunge this class struggle from the movement. ("Marx and Engels, to A. Bebel, W. Liebnecht, W. Bracke and others ('Circular Letter'), September 17-18, 1879", *Selected Correspondence of Marx and Engels*, Moscow, p. 395.)

Later Engels emphatically pointed out:

The development of the proletariat proceeds everywhere amidst internal struggles. . . . Unity is quite a good thing so long as it is possible, but there are things which stand above unity. And when, like Marx and myself, one has fought harder all one's life against self-styled Socialists than against anyone else (for we regarded the bourgeoisie only as a class and hardly ever involved ourselves in conflicts with individual bourgeois), one cannot be greatly grieved that the inevitable struggle has broken out. ("Engels to A. Bebel, October 28, 1882", *Selected Correspondence of Marx and Engels*, Moscow, p. 427.)

Thus, that which is unified breaks into two — into two conflicting parts.³

Marxist-Leninist parties always treasure the unity of the ranks of the proletariat, but Marxist-Leninists must never co-operate with those who expunge the class [10] struggle from the movement and must never surrender principle for the sake of unity. This is the most important and most precious behest the founders of Marxism have left us. Any betrayal of this behest is a betrayal of Marxism itself.

To persevere in or to abandon the class struggle of the proletariat, to persevere in or to renounce the dictatorship of the proletariat — here is the fundamental line of

³ [你们看，统一的事物，一分为二，变为相互斗争的两部分了。 This sentence was written by Mao Zedong.]

demarcation between Marxism and revisionism.

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[17] Looking back over the history of Marxism-Leninism, we can see that it gained ground and advanced step by step through "one battle after another". For more than a century, neither the enemy's attacks from without nor the enemy's "revisions" from within have been able to defeat it. On the contrary, it is precisely through repeated struggles against external and internal foes of all shades that the forces of Marxism-Leninism have grown strong.

In the beginning, Marxism was but one of many doctrines and schools in the socialist movement and this school consisted only of Marx and Engels. But because it is right and because it truly and scientifically represents the revolutionary proletariat's interests and needs, Marxism has finally vanquished all antagonistic ideological systems in struggle and won the world-wide support of the revolutionary working class and the revolutionary people.

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[28] The modern revisionists have wantonly distorted and revised the Marxist-Leninist teachings on the laws of contradiction, and spread their views about the merging and reconciliation of contradictions. On the pretext of what they call the characteristics of the transition from socialism to communism, they preach a "new way of putting the question", namely, "the overcoming of opposites through their uniting (merging),"⁴ claiming that under socialist conditions "new phenomena" or "new processes" emerge in which "dialectical opposites, contradictions, turn into differences and differences merge into unity."⁵ Some of their philosophers even claim that the law of the unity and struggle of opposites is outmoded under socialist conditions.

[29] This theory of the merging or reconciliation of contradictions and the theory that the laws of contradiction are outmoded constitute a radical revision of materialist dialectics.

⁴ P. N. Fedoseev, "The 22nd Congress of the CPSU and the Tasks of Scientific Research Work in the Field of Philosophy" in the magazine *Voprosy Filosofii* (Problems of Philosophy), 1962, No. 3.

⁵ M. B. Mitin, "The 22nd Congress of the CPSU and the Tasks of Scientific Work in the Field of Marxist-Leninist Philosophy", in the magazine *Voprosy Filosofii*, 1962, No. 4.

The Marxist-Leninist view is that the law of materialist dialectics, the law of the unity of opposites, is a universal law which governs nature, society and the development of thought, and which is applicable to the past, the present and the future. In other words, it is applicable to class society, to socialist society which is transitional between class and classless society, and also to the classless communist society of the future. Contradictions exist everywhere and at all times. They are differentiated into antagonistic and non-antagonistic contradictions, but not into reconcilable and irreconcilable contradictions. Contradictions are all irreconcilable and have to be resolved through struggle. Contradictions and the struggles to resolve them are always the motive force that pushes human society forward.

Whether or not a person persists in Marxist-Leninist revolutionary dialectics is shown by whether or not he dares to face and acknowledge the contradiction between the imperialists headed by the United States and the people of the world, whether or not he dares to face and acknowledge the fact that class contradictions and class struggles exist in all countries, and whether or not he dares to face and acknowledge the two types of contradictions (antagonistic and non-antagonistic) within socialist society. All conservatives and opportunists, all those who do not desire but fear revolution, dread change and evade or deny contradictions. On the contrary, all revolutionaries who take upon themselves the transformation of the world desire change, courageously face [30] contradictions and resolve them by revolutionary means.

As old contradictions are resolved, new ones arise and must be resolved by new methods. History thus advances with the endless resolution and emergence of contradictions. Only thoroughgoing revolutionaries can be thoroughgoing revolutionary dialecticians. Comrade Mao Zedong has shown outstanding theoretical courage and genius in developing dialectics. For the first time in the history of Marxism-Leninism he penetratingly and systematically revealed the contradictions within socialist society in his work, "On the Correct Handling of Contradictions Among the People", and set forth the necessity for differentiating the two types of contradictions and for using different methods in handling them. This is a great contribution of Comrade Mao Zedong's to the development of Marxist-Leninist theory.

On the basis of the laws of materialist dialectics, he is guiding the socialist revolution and socialist construction of our country from one victory to another. He is teaching us correctly to understand and handle the contradictions confronting us, to remain sober and alert in the face of the continued existence of classes and class struggle in socialist society and of the danger of a restoration of capitalism, and to take the correct and necessary measures to avert this danger. All this immensely fortifies the Chinese people's immunity to revisionism.

In the past, some comrades one-sidedly emphasized the "moral and political unity" of socialist society and failed to see that contradictions, classes and class struggle continue to exist in it, and that the struggle against bourgeois ideology within socialist society remains a main task of the dictatorship of the proletariat for a long period after the seizure of power. They only recognized solidarity [31] and unity and denied the existence of internal contradictions in socialist society and the fact that contradictions are the motive force of social progress. They thus denied the universality of contradiction and did away with dialectics, and as a result the "theory of the absence of conflict" spread far and wide.

The mistakes in their understanding of contradictions in socialist society paved the way for the modern revisionists of today. The modern revisionists have formulated a theory about the merging or reconciliation of contradictions, in order to provide a philosophical basis for their fallacies concerning "a state of the whole people" and "a party of the entire people." Moreover, they have extended this theory of the merging or reconciliation of contradictions to the sphere of international struggle, so as to present a philosophical justification for their line of "peaceful coexistence," "peaceful competition," and "peaceful transition."

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[64] While engaged in the practice of class struggle and production, the masses of workers, peasants and cadres raise all kinds of theoretical questions for solution, and they advance many original views. But they lack the requisite book knowledge and theoretical equipment while many of the professional workers in philosophy and social science lack the steeling and experience acquired in practical struggles. In 1942 in his speech "Rectify the Party's Style of Work", Comrade Mao Zedong asked the people with book-learning to combine with those expe-

rienced in work:

Those with book-learning must develop in the direction of practice; only so will they not rest content with books, only so will they not commit dogmatist errors. Those experienced in work must take up the study of theory and must read seriously; only then will they be able to systematize and synthesize their experience and raise it to the level of theory, only then will they not mistake their partial experience for universal truth and not commit empiricist errors.

The combination of these two kinds of people, so that they can make up for each other's deficiencies and raise each other's level, will prove very helpful not only to theoretical work but to the revolutionary cause as a whole. [65] Man's correct ideas come only from social practice. Man's social being determines his consciousness. Once grasped by the masses, the correct ideas which a progressive class represents become a material force capable of changing society and the world. The movement from the material to the mental and then back from the mental to the material, i.e., the movement from practice to knowledge and from knowledge back to practice, has to be repeated many times before correct knowledge takes shape. The dialectical process of the transformation of the material into the mental and the mental into the material in the course of social struggle will be more consciously grasped and will give rise to still greater achievements in the revolutionary cause as a result of the combination of professional theoretical workers with those engaged in practical work. Promising theorists will emerge from among the practical workers. A powerful contingent of theorists, with the professional theorists as its centre but comprising large numbers of practical workers too, will grow relatively rapidly.

In stressing the need for workers in philosophy and social science to link themselves with the workers and peasants and to keep in contact with and understand reality, we do not in the least minimize the importance of book knowledge. Workers in philosophy and science must be proficient in their own fields as well as being well versed in the Marxist-Leninist classics; they must acquire knowledge of a wide range of subjects and become truly learned.

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From "Socialism: Utopian and Scientific", in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels: Selected Works, International Publishers, New York, 1969, p. 432. Google Scholar. [4]. "Chairman Mao Tse-Tung's Latest Directions", Peking Review 48 (November 29, 1968), p. 2. Google Scholar. 5. Chou Yang, The Fighting Task Confronting Workers in Philosophy and the Social Sciences, Foreign Language Press, Peking, 1958. Google Scholar. [15]. Ch'en, Jerome (e.d.), Mao, Prentice-Hall, New Jersey, 1969, p. 103. Google Scholar. [16]. First published in Peking's Jen-Ming Jih-Pao [People's Daily, January 16, 1966] and reprinted in Che-Hsueh Yen-Chiu, (1966, No. 1), pp. 46-47. Google Scholar. [17]. Ch'en, op. cit., p. 105. Google Scholar.