

FIVE ESSAYS ON PHILOSOPHY

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ON PRACTICE¹

On the Relation Between Knowledge and Practice, Between Knowing and Doing

July 1937

Before Marx, materialism examined the problem of knowledge apart from the social nature of man and apart from his historical development, and was therefore incapable of understanding the dependence of knowledge on social practice, that is, the dependence of knowledge on production and the class struggle.

Above all, Marxists regard man's activity in production as the most fundamental practical activity, the determinant of all his other activities. Man's knowledge depends mainly on his activity in material production, through which he comes gradually to understand the phenomena, the properties and the laws of nature, and the relations between himself and nature; and through his activity in produc-

¹ There used to be a number of comrades in our Part who were dogmatists and who for a long period rejected the experience of the Chinese revolution, denying the truth that "Marxism is not a dogma but a guide to action" and overawing people with words and phrases from Marxist works, torn out of context. There were also a number of comrades who were empiricists and who for a long period restricted themselves to their own fragmentary experience and did not understand the importance of theory for revolutionary practice or see the revolution as a whole, but worked blindly though industriously. The erroneous ideas of these two types of comrades, and particularly of the dogmatists, caused enormous losses to the Chinese revolution during 1931–34, and

tion he also gradually comes to understand, in varying degrees, certain relations that exist between man and man. None of this knowledge can be acquired apart from activity in production. In a classless society every person, as a member of society, joins in common effort with the other members, enters into definite relations of production with them and engages in production to meet man's material needs. In all class societies, the members of the different social classes also enter, in different ways, into definite relations of production and engage in production to meet their material needs. This is the primary source from which human knowledge develops.

Man's social practice is not confined to activity in production, but takes many other forms—class struggle, political life, scientific, and artistic pursuits; in short, as a social being, man participates in all spheres of the practical life of society. Thus man, in varying degrees, comes to know the different relations between man and man, not only through his material life but also through his political and cultural life (both of which are intimately bound

yet the dogmatists cloaking themselves as Marxists, confused a great many comrades. *On Practice* was written in order to expose the subjectivist errors of dogmatism and empiricism in the Party, and especially the error of dogmatism, from the standpoint of the Marxist theory of knowledge. It was entitled *On Practice* because its stress was on exposing the dogmatist kind of subjectivism, which belittles practice. The ideas contained in this essay were presented by Comrade Mao Zedong in a lecture at the Anti-Japanese Military and Political College in Yanan.

up with material life). Of these other types of social practice, class struggle in particular, in all its various forms, exerts a profound influence on the development of man's knowledge. In class society everyone lives as a member of a particular class, and every kind of thinking, without exception, is stamped with the brand of a class.

Marxists hold that in human society activity in production develops step by step from a lower to a higher level and that consequently man's knowledge, whether of nature or of society, also develops step by step from a lower to a higher level, that is, from the shallower to the deeper, from the one-sided to the many-sided. For a very long period in history, men were necessarily confined to a one-sided understanding of the history of society because, for one thing, the bias of the exploiting classes always distorted history and, for another, the small scale of production limited man's outlook. It was not until the modern proletariat emerged along with immense forces of production (large-scale industry) that man was able to acquire a comprehensive, historical understanding of the development of society and turn this knowledge into a science, the science of Marxism.

Marxists hold that man's social practice alone is the criterion of the truth of his knowledge of the external world. What actually happens is that man's knowledge is verified only when he achieves the anticipated results in the process of social practice

(material production, class struggle or scientific experiment). If a man wants to succeed in his work, that is, to achieve the anticipated results, he must bring his ideas into correspondence with the laws of the objective external world; if they do not correspond, he will fail in his practice. After he fails, he draws his lessons, corrects his ideas to make them correspond to the laws of the external world, and can thus turn failure into success; this is what is meant by “failure is the mother of success” and “a fall into the pit, a gain in your wit.” The dialectical-materialist theory of knowledge places practice in the primary position, holding that human knowledge can in no way be separated from practice and repudiating all the erroneous theories that deny the importance of practice or separate knowledge from practice. Thus Lenin said, “Practice is higher than (theoretical) knowledge, for it has not only the dignity of universality, but also of immediate actuality.”² The Marxist philosophy of dialectical materialism has two outstanding characteristics. One is its class nature; it openly avows that dialectical materialism is in the service of the proletariat. The other is its practicality; it emphasizes the dependence of theory on practice, emphasizes that theory is based on practice, and in turn serves practice. The truth of any knowledge or theory is determined not by subjective feelings, but by objective results in social practice. Only social practice can be the criterion of

² V. I. Lenin, “Conspectus of Hegel’s book *The Science of Logic*” in *Collected Works*, Vol. XXXVIII.

truth. The standpoint of practice is the primary and basic standpoint in the dialectical-materialist theory of knowledge.³

But how then does human knowledge arise from practice and in turn serve practice? This will become clear if we look at the process of development of knowledge.

In the process of practice, man at first sees only the phenomenal side, the separate aspects, the external relations of things. For instance, some people from outside come to Yanan on a tour of observation. In the first day or two, they see its topography, streets, and houses; they meet many people, attend banquets, evening parties, and mass meetings, hear talk of various kinds and read various documents, all these being the phenomena, the separate aspects and the external relations of things. This is called the perceptual stage of cognition, namely, the stage of sense perceptions and impressions. That is, these particular things in Yanan act on the sense organs of the members of the observation group, evoke sense perceptions and give rise in their brains to many impressions together with a rough sketch of the external relations among these impressions; this is the first stage of cognition. At this stage, man can-

³ See K. Marx, "Theses on Feuerbach" in F. Engels, *Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy*, Foreign Languages Press, Beijing, 1976, pp. 61–65 and V. I. Lenin, *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*, Foreign Languages Press, Paris, 2022, pp. 143–48.

not as yet form concepts, which are deeper, or draw logical conclusions.

As social practice continues, things that give rise to man's sense perceptions and impressions in the course of his practice are repeated many times; then a sudden change (leap) takes place in the brain in the process of cognition, and concepts are formed. Concepts are no longer the phenomena, the separate aspects and the external relations of things; they grasp the essence, the totality and the internal relations of things. Between concepts and sense perceptions there is not only a quantitative but also a qualitative difference. Proceeding further, by means of judgment and inference one is able to draw logical conclusions. The expression in *Sanguo Yanyi*,⁴ "knit the brows and a stratagem comes to mind," or in everyday language, "let me think it over," refers to man's use of concepts in the brain to form judgments and inferences. This is the second stage of cognition. When the members of the observation group have collected various data and, what is more, have "thought them over," they are able to arrive at the judgment that "the Communist Party's policy of the National United Front Against Japan is thorough, sincere and genuine." Having made this judgment, they can, if they too are genuine about uniting to save the nation, go a step further and draw the following conclusion, "The National

⁴ *Sanguo Yanyi* (*Romance of the Three Kingdoms*) is a famous Chinese historical novel by Luo Guanzhong (late 14th and early 15th century).

United Front Against Japan can succeed.” This stage of conception, judgment and inference is the more important stage in the entire process of knowing a thing; it is the stage of rational knowledge. The real task of knowing is, through perception, to arrive at thought, to arrive step by step at the comprehension of the internal contradictions of objective things, of their laws and of the internal relations between one process and another, that is, to arrive at logical knowledge. To repeat, logical knowledge differs from perceptual knowledge in that perceptual knowledge pertains to the separate aspects, the phenomena, and the external relations of things, whereas logical knowledge takes a big stride forward to reach the totality, the essence, and the internal relations of things and discloses the inner contradictions in the surrounding world. Therefore, logical knowledge is capable of grasping the development of the surrounding world in its totality, in the internal relations of all its aspects.

This dialectical-materialist theory of the process of development of knowledge, basing itself on practice and proceeding from the shallower to the deeper, was never worked out by anybody before the rise of Marxism. Marxist materialism solved this problem correctly for the first time, pointing out both materialistically and dialectically the deepening movement of cognition, the movement by which man in society progresses from perceptual knowledge to logical knowledge in his complex, constantly

recurring practice of production and class struggle. Lenin said, "The abstraction of matter, of a law of nature, the abstraction of value, etc., in short, all scientific (correct, serious, not absurd) abstractions reflect nature more deeply, truly and completely."⁵ Marxism-Leninism holds that each of the two stages in the process of cognition has its own characteristics, with knowledge manifesting itself as perceptual at the lower stage and logical at the higher stage, but that both are stages in an integrated process of cognition. The perceptual and the rational are qualitatively different, but are not divorced from each other; they are unified on the basis of practice. Our practice proves that what is perceived cannot at once be comprehended and that only what is comprehended can be more deeply perceived. Perception only solves the problem of phenomena; theory alone can solve the problem of essence. The solving of both these problems is not separable in the slightest degree from practice. Whoever wants to know a thing has no way of doing so except by coming into contact with it, that is, by living (practicing) in its environment. In feudal society it was impossible to know the laws of capitalist society in advance because capitalism had not yet emerged, the relevant practice was lacking. Marxism could be the product only of capitalist society. Marx, in the era of laissez-faire capitalism, could not concretely know certain laws peculiar to the era of imperialism

⁵ V. I. Lenin, "Conspectus of Hegel's *The Science of Logic*," *Collected Works*, Vol. XXXVIII.

beforehand, because imperialism, the last stage of capitalism, had not yet emerged and the relevant practice was lacking; only Lenin and Stalin could undertake this task. Leaving aside their genius, the reason why Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Stalin could work out their theories was mainly that they personally took part in the practice of the class struggle and the scientific experimentation of their time; lacking this condition, no genius could have succeeded. The saying, “without stepping outside his gate the scholar knows all the wide world’s affairs,” was mere empty talk in past times when technology was undeveloped. Even though this saying can be valid in the present age of developed technology, the people with real personal knowledge are those engaged in practice the wide world over. And it is only when these people have come to “know” through their practice and when their knowledge has reached him through writing and technical media that the “scholar” can indirectly “know all the wide world’s affairs.” If you want to know a certain thing or a certain class of things directly, you must personally participate in the practical struggle to change reality, to change that thing or class of things, for only thus can you come into contact with them as phenomena; only through personal participation in the practical struggle to change reality can you uncover the essence of that thing or class of things and comprehend them. This is the path to knowledge that every man actually travels,

though some people, deliberately distorting matters, argue to the contrary. The most ridiculous person in the world is the “know it all” who picks up a smattering of hearsay knowledge and proclaims himself “the world’s Number One authority”; this merely shows that he has not taken a proper measure of himself. Knowledge is a matter of science, and no dishonesty or conceit whatsoever is permissible. What is required is definitely the reverse—honesty and modesty. If you want knowledge, you must take part in the practice of changing reality. If you want to know the taste of a pear, you must change the pear by eating it yourself. If you want to know the structure and properties of the atom, you must make physical and chemical experiments to change the state of the atom. If you want to know the theory and methods of revolution, you must take part in revolution. All genuine knowledge originates in direct experience. But one cannot have direct experience of everything; as a matter of fact, most of our knowledge comes from indirect experience, for example, all knowledge from past times and foreign lands. To our ancestors and to foreigners, such knowledge was—or is—a matter of direct experience, and this knowledge is reliable if in the course of their direct experience the requirement of “scientific abstraction,” spoken of by Lenin, was—or is—fulfilled and objective reality scientifically reflected, otherwise it is not reliable. Hence a man’s knowledge consists only of two parts—that

which comes from direct experience and that which comes from indirect experience. Moreover, what is indirect experience for me is direct experience for other people. Consequently, considered as a whole, knowledge of any kind is inseparable from direct experience. All knowledge originates in perception of the objective external world through man's physical sense organs. Anyone who denies such perception, denies direct experience, or denies personal participation in the practice that changes reality, is not a materialist. That is why the "know it all" is ridiculous. There is an old Chinese saying, "How can you catch tiger cubs without entering the tiger's lair?" This saying holds true for man's practice and it also holds true for the theory of knowledge. There can be no knowledge apart from practice.

To make clear the dialectical-materialist movement of cognition arising on the basis of the practice that changes reality—to make clear the gradually deepening movement of cognition—a few additional concrete examples are given below.

In its knowledge of capitalist society, the proletariat was only in the perceptual stage of cognition in the first period of its practice, the period of machine smashing and spontaneous struggle; it knew only some of the aspects and the external relations of the phenomena of capitalism. The proletariat was then still a "class-in-itself." But when it reached the second period of its practice, the period of conscious and organized economic and political

struggles, the proletariat was able to comprehend the essence of capitalist society, the relations of exploitation between social classes and its own historical task. It was able to do so because of its own practice and because of its experience of prolonged struggle, which Marx and Engels scientifically summed up in all its variety to create the theory of Marxism for the education of the proletariat. It was then that the proletariat became a “class-for-itself.”

Similarly is the Chinese people’s knowledge of imperialism. The first stage was one of superficial, perceptual knowledge, as shown in the indiscriminate antforeign struggles of the Movement of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom, the Yihetuan Movement, and so on. It was only in the second stage that the Chinese people reached the stage of rational knowledge, saw the internal and external contradictions of imperialism and saw the essential truth that imperialism had allied itself with China’s comprador and feudal classes to oppress and exploit the great masses of the Chinese people. This knowledge began about the time of the May 4th Movement of 1919.

Next, let us consider war. If those who lead a war lack experience of war, then at the initial stage they will not understand the profound laws pertaining to the directing of a specific war (such as our Agrarian Revolutionary War of the past decade). At the initial stage they will merely experience a good deal of fighting and, what is more, suffer many defeats. But

this experience (the experience of battles won and especially of battles lost) enables them to comprehend the inner thread of the whole war, namely, the laws of that specific war, to understand its strategy and tactics, and consequently to direct the war with confidence. If, at such a moment, the command is turned over to an inexperienced person, then he too will have to suffer a number of defeats (gain experience) before he can comprehend the true laws of the war.

“I am not sure I can handle it.” We often hear this remark when a comrade hesitates to accept an assignment. Why is he unsure of himself? Because he has no systematic understanding of the content and circumstances of the assignment, or because he has had little or no contact with such work, and so the laws governing it are beyond him. After a detailed analysis of the nature and circumstances of the assignment, he will feel more sure of himself and do it willingly. If he spends some time at the job and gains experience, and if he is a person who is willing to look into matters with an open mind, and not one who approaches problems subjectively, one-sidedly and superficially, then he can draw conclusions for himself as to how to go about the job and do it with much more courage. Only those who are subjective, one-sided, and superficial in their approach to problems will smugly issue orders or directives the moment they arrive on the scene, without considering the circumstances, without

viewing things in their totality (their history and their present state as a whole) and without getting to the essence of things (their nature and the internal relations between one thing and another). Such people are bound to trip and fall.

Thus it can be seen that the first step in the process of cognition is contact with the objects of the external world; this belongs to the stage of perception. The second step is to synthesize the data of perception by arranging and reconstructing them; this belongs to the stage of conception, judgement, and inference. It is only when the data of perception are very rich (not fragmentary) and correspond to reality (are not illusory) that they can be the basis for forming correct concepts and theories.

Here two important points must be emphasized. The first, which has been stated before but should be repeated here, is the dependence of rational knowledge upon perceptual knowledge. Anyone who thinks that rational knowledge need not be derived from perceptual knowledge is an idealist. In the history of philosophy there is the “rationalist” school that admits the reality only of reason and not of experience, believing that reason alone is reliable while perceptual experience is not; this school errs by turning things upside down. The rational is reliable precisely because it has its source in sense perceptions, otherwise it would be like water without a source, a tree without roots, subjective, self-engendered, and unreliable. As to the sequence in the

process of cognition, perceptual experience comes first; we stress the significance of social practice in the process of cognition precisely because social practice alone can give rise to human knowledge, and it alone can start man on the acquisition of perceptual experience from the objective world. For a person who shuts his eyes, stops his ears, and totally cuts himself off from the objective world there can be no such thing as knowledge. Knowledge begins with experience—this is the materialism of the theory of knowledge.

The second point is that knowledge needs to be deepened, that the perceptual stage of knowledge needs to be developed to the rational stage—this is the dialectics of the theory of knowledge.⁶ To think that knowledge can stop at the lower, perceptual stage and that perceptual knowledge alone is reliable while rational knowledge is not, would be to repeat the historical error of “empiricism.” This theory errs in failing to understand that, although the data of perception reflect certain realities in the objective world (I am not speaking here of idealist empiricism which confines experience to so-called introspection), they are merely one-sided and superficial, reflecting things incompletely and not reflecting their essence. Fully to reflect a thing in its totality, to reflect its essence, to reflect its inherent laws, it is necessary through the exercise of thought

⁶ “In order to understand, it is necessary empirically to begin understanding, study, to rise from empiricism to the universal. (Ibid.)”

to reconstruct the rich data of sense perception, discarding the dross and selecting the essential, eliminating the false and retaining the true, proceeding from the one to the other and from the outside to the inside, in order to form a system of concepts and theories—it is necessary to make a leap from perceptual to rational knowledge. Such reconstructed knowledge is not more empty or more unreliable; on the contrary, whatever has been scientifically reconstructed in the process of cognition, on the basis of practice, reflects objective reality, as Lenin said, more deeply, more truly, more fully. As against this, vulgar “practical men” respect experience but despise theory, and therefore cannot have a comprehensive view of an entire objective process, lack clear direction and long-range perspective, and are complacent over occasional successes and glimpses of the truth. If such persons direct a revolution, they will lead it up a blind alley.

Rational knowledge depends upon perceptual knowledge, and perceptual knowledge remains to be developed into rational knowledge—this is the dialectical-materialist theory of knowledge. In philosophy, neither “rationalism” nor “empiricism” understands the historical or the dialectical nature of knowledge, and although each of these schools contains one aspect of the truth (here I am referring to materialist, not to idealist, rationalism and empiricism), both are wrong on the theory of knowledge as a whole. The dialectical-materialist

movement of knowledge from the perceptual to the rational holds true for a minor process of cognition (for instance, knowing a single thing or task) as well as for a major process of cognition (for instance, knowing a whole society or a revolution).

But the movement of knowledge does not end here. If the dialectical-materialist movement of knowledge were to stop at rational knowledge, only half the problem would be dealt with. And as far as Marxist philosophy is concerned, only the less important half at that. Marxist philosophy holds that the most important problem does not lie in understanding the laws of the objective world and thus being able to explain it, but in applying the knowledge of these laws actively to change the world. From the Marxist viewpoint, theory is important, and its importance is fully expressed in Lenin's statement, "Without revolutionary theory there can be no revolutionary movement."⁷ But Marxism emphasizes the importance of theory precisely and only because it can guide action. If we have a correct theory but merely prate about it, pigeonhole it and do not put it into practice, then that theory, however good, is of no significance. Knowledge begins with practice, and theoretical knowledge is acquired through practice, and must then return to practice. The active function of knowledge manifests itself not only in the active leap from perceptual to rational knowledge, but—

⁷ V. I. Lenin, *What Is to Be Done?*, Foreign Languages Press, Paris, 2021, p. 24.

and this is more important—it must manifest itself in the leap from rational knowledge to revolutionary practice. The knowledge that grasps the laws of the world, must be redirected to the practice of changing the world, must be applied anew in the practice of production, in the practice of revolutionary class struggle and revolutionary national struggle and in the practice of scientific experiment. This is the process of testing and developing theory, the continuation of the whole process of cognition. The problem of whether theory corresponds to objective reality is not, and cannot be, completely solved in the movement of knowledge from the perceptual to the rational mentioned above. The only way to solve this problem completely is to redirect rational knowledge to social practice, apply theory to practice and see whether it can achieve the objectives one has in mind. Many theories of natural science are held to be true not only because they were so considered when natural scientists originated them, but because they have been verified in subsequent scientific practice. Similarly, Marxism-Leninism is held to be true not only because it was so considered when it was scientifically formulated by Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Stalin but because it has been verified in the subsequent practice of revolutionary class struggle and revolutionary national struggle. Dialectical materialism is universally true because it is impossible for anyone to escape from its domain in his practice. The history of human

knowledge tells us that the truth of many theories is incomplete and that this incompleteness is remedied through the test of practice. Many theories are erroneous and it is through the test of practice that their errors are corrected. That is why practice is the criterion of truth and why “the standpoint of life, of practice, should be first and fundamental in the theory of knowledge.”⁸ Stalin has well said, “Theory becomes purposeless if it is not connected with revolutionary practice, just as practice gropes in the dark if its path is not illumined by revolutionary theory.”⁹

When we get to this point, is the movement of knowledge completed? Our answer is: it is and yet it is not. When men in society throw themselves into the practice of changing a certain objective process (whether natural or social) at a certain stage of its development, they can, as a result of the reflection of the objective process in their brains and the exercise of their subjective activity, advance their knowledge from the perceptual to the rational, and create ideas, theories, plans or programs that correspond in general to the laws of that objective process. They then apply these ideas, theories, plans or programs in practice in the same objective process. And if they can realize the aims they have in mind, that is, if in that same process of practice they can

⁸ V. I. Lenin, *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*, Foreign Languages Press, Paris, 2022, p. 148.

⁹ Joseph Stalin, *The Foundations of Leninism*, Foreign Languages Press, Paris, 2020, p. 19.

translate, or on the whole translate, those previously formulated ideas, theories, plans or programs into fact, then the movement of knowledge may be considered completed with regard to this particular process. In the process of changing nature, take for example the fulfillment of an engineering plan, the verification of a scientific hypothesis, the manufacture of an implement or the reaping of a crop; or in the process of changing society, take for example the victory of a strike, victory in a war or the fulfillment of an educational plan. All these may be considered the realization of aims one has in mind. But generally speaking, whether in the practice of changing nature or of changing society, men's original ideas, theories, plans or programs are seldom realized without any alteration.

This is because people engaged in changing reality are usually subject to numerous limitations; they are limited not only by existing scientific and technological conditions but also by the development of the objective process itself and the degree to which this process has become manifest (the aspects and the essence of the objective process have not yet been fully revealed). In such a situation, ideas, theories, plans or programs are usually altered partially and sometimes even wholly, because of the discovery of unforeseen circumstances in the course of practice. That is to say, it does happen that the original ideas, theories, plans or programs fail to correspond with reality either in whole or in part and are wholly or

partially incorrect. In many instances, failures have to be repeated many times before errors in knowledge can be corrected and correspondence with the laws of the objective process achieved, and consequently before the subjective can be transformed into the objective, or in other words, before the anticipated results can be achieved in practice. But when that point is reached, no matter how, the movement of human knowledge regarding a certain objective process at a certain stage of its development may be considered completed.

However, so far as the progression of the process is concerned, the movement of human knowledge is not completed. Every process, whether in the realm of nature or of society, progresses and develops by reason of its internal contradiction and struggle, and the movement of human knowledge should also progress and develop along with it. As far as social movements are concerned, true revolutionary leaders must not only be good at correcting their ideas, theories, plans or programs when errors are discovered, as has been indicated above, but when a certain objective process has already progressed and changed from one stage of development to another, they must also be good at making themselves and all their fellow revolutionaries progress and change in their subjective knowledge along with it. That is to say, they must ensure that the proposed new revolutionary tasks and new working programs correspond to the new changes in the situation. In a

revolutionary period the situation changes very rapidly; if the knowledge of revolutionaries does not change rapidly in accordance with the changed situation, they will be unable to lead the revolution to victory.

It often happens, however, that thinking lags behind reality; this is because man's cognition is limited by numerous social conditions. We are opposed to diehards in the revolutionary ranks whose thinking fails to advance with changing objective circumstances and has manifested itself historically as Right opportunism. These people fail to see that the struggle of opposites has already pushed the objective process forward while their knowledge has stopped at the old stage. This is characteristic of the thinking of all diehards. Their thinking is divorced from social practice, and they cannot march ahead to guide the chariot of society; they simply trail behind, grumbling that it goes too fast and trying to drag it back or turn it in the opposite direction.

We are also opposed to "Left" phrase mongering. The thinking of "Leftists" outstrips a given stage of development of the objective process; some regard their fantasies as truth, while others strain to realize in the present an ideal that can only be realized in the future. They alienate themselves from the current practice of the majority of the people and from the realities of the day and show themselves adventurist in their actions.

Idealism and mechanical materialism, opportunism and adventurism, are all characterized by the breach between the subjective and the objective, by the separation of knowledge from practice. The Marxist-Leninist theory of knowledge, characterized as it is by scientific social practice, cannot but resolutely oppose these wrong ideologies. Marxists recognize that in the absolute and general process of development of the universe, the development of each particular process is relative, and that hence, in the endless flow of absolute truth, man's knowledge of a particular process at any given stage of development is only relative truth. The sum total of innumerable relative truths constitutes absolute truth.¹⁰ The development of an objective process is full of contradictions and struggles, and so is the development of the movement of human knowledge. All the dialectical movements of the objective world can sooner or later be reflected in human knowledge. In social practice, the process of coming into being, developing and passing away is infinite, and so is the process of coming into being, developing and passing away in human knowledge. As man's practice, which changes objective reality in accordance with given ideas, theories, plans or programs, advances further and further, his knowledge of objective reality likewise becomes deeper and deeper. The movement of change in the world of objective reality is never-ending, and so is man's cognition of truth

¹⁰ See V. I. Lenin, *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*, Foreign Languages Press, Paris, 2022, p. 141.

through practice. Marxism-Leninism has in no way exhausted truth but ceaselessly opens up roads to the knowledge of truth in the course of practice. Our conclusion is the concrete, historical unity of the subjective and the objective, of theory and practice, of knowing and doing, and we are opposed to all erroneous ideologies, whether “Left” or Right, which depart from concrete history.

In the present epoch of the development of society, the responsibility of correctly knowing and changing the world has been placed by history upon the shoulders of the proletariat and its party. This process, the practice of changing the world, which is determined in accordance with scientific knowledge, has already reached a historic moment in the world and in China, a great moment unprecedented in human history, that is, the moment for completely banishing darkness from the world and from China and for changing the world into a world of light such as never previously existed. The struggle of the proletariat and the revolutionary people to change the world comprises the fulfillment of the following tasks: to change the objective world and, at the same time, their own subjective world—to change their cognitive ability and change the relations between the subjective and the objective world. Such a change has already come about in one part of the globe, in the Soviet Union. There the people are pushing forward this process of change. The people of China and the rest of the

world either are going through, or will go through, such a process. And the objective world that is to be changed also includes all the opponents of change, who, in order to be changed, must go through a stage of compulsion before they can enter the stage of voluntary, conscious change. The epoch of world communism will be reached when all mankind voluntarily and consciously changes itself and the world.

Discover the truth through practice, and again through practice, verify and develop the truth. Start from perceptual knowledge and actively develop it into rational knowledge; then start from rational knowledge and actively guide revolutionary practice to change both the subjective and the objective world. Practice, knowledge, again practice, and again knowledge. This form repeats itself in endless cycles, and with each cycle the content of practice and knowledge rises to a higher level. Such is the whole of the dialectical-materialist theory of knowledge, and such is the dialectical-materialist theory of the unity of knowing and doing.

ON CONTRADICTION¹¹*August 1937*

The law of contradiction in things, that is, the law of the unity of opposites, is the basic law of materialist dialectics. Lenin said, "Dialectics in the proper sense is the study of contradiction *in the very essence of objects*."¹² Lenin often called this law the essence of dialectics; he also called it the kernel of dialectics.¹³ In studying this law, therefore, we cannot but touch upon a variety of questions, upon a number of philosophical problems. If we can become clear on all these problems, we shall arrive at a fundamental understanding of materialist dialectics. The problems are: the two world outlooks,

¹¹ This essay on philosophy was written by Comrade Mao Zedong after his essay "On Practice" and with the same object of overcoming the serious error of dogmatist thinking to be found in the Party at the time. Originally delivered as lectures at the Anti-Japanese Military and Political College in Yanan, it was revised by the author on its inclusion in his *Selected Works*.

¹² V. I. Lenin, "Conspectus of Hegel's *The Science of Logic*," *Collected Works*, Vol. XXXVIII.

¹³ In his essay "On the Question of Dialectics," Lenin said, "The splitting in two of a single whole and the cognition of its contradictory parts (see the quotation from Philo on Heraclitus at the beginning of Section 3 'On Cognition' in Lassalle's book on Heraclitus) is the essence (one of the 'essentials,' one of the principal, if not the principal, characteristics or features) of dialectics." (*Collected Works*, Vol. XXXVIII). In his "Conspectus of Hegel's *The Science of Logic*," he said, "In brief, dialectics can be defined as the doctrine of the unity of opposites. This grasps the kernel of dialectics, but it requires explanations and development" *Collected Works*, Vol. XXXVIII.

the universality of contradiction, the particularity of contradiction, the principal contradiction and the principal aspect of a contradiction, the identity and struggle of the aspects of a contradiction, and the place of antagonism in contradiction.

The criticism to which the idealism of the Deborin School has been subjected in Soviet philosophical circles in recent years has aroused great interest among us. Deborin's idealism has exerted a very bad influence in the Chinese Communist Party, and it cannot be said that the dogmatist thinking in our Party is unrelated to the approach of that school. Our present study of philosophy should therefore have the eradication of dogmatist thinking as its main objective.

I. The Two World Outlooks

Throughout the history of human knowledge, there have been two conceptions concerning the law of development of the universe, the metaphysical conception and the dialectical conception, which form two opposing world outlooks. Lenin said:

The two basic (or two possible? or two historically observable?) conceptions of development (evolution) are: development as decrease and increase, as repetition, and development as a unity of opposites (the division of a unity into

mutually exclusive opposites and their reciprocal relation).¹⁴

Here Lenin was referring to these two different world outlooks.

In China another name for metaphysics is *xuan xue*. For a long period in history whether in China or in Europe, this way of thinking, which is part and parcel of the idealist world outlook, occupied a dominant position in human thought. In Europe, the materialism of the bourgeoisie in its early days was also metaphysical. As the social economy of many European countries advanced to the stage of highly developed capitalism, as the forces of production, the class struggle and the sciences developed to a level unprecedented in history, and as the industrial proletariat became the greatest motive force in historical development, there arose the Marxist world outlook of materialist dialectics. Then, in addition to open and barefaced reactionary idealism, vulgar evolutionism emerged among the bourgeoisie to oppose materialist dialectics.

The metaphysical or vulgar evolutionist world outlook sees things as isolated, static and one-sided. It regards all things in the universe, their forms and their species, as eternally isolated from one another and immutable. Such change as there is can only be an increase or decrease in quantity or a change of place. Moreover, the cause of such an increase or

¹⁴ V. I. Lenin, "On the Question of Dialectics," *Collected Works*, Vol. XXXVIII.

decrease or change of place is not inside things but outside them, that is, the motive force is external. Metaphysicians hold that all the different kinds of things in the universe and all their characteristics have been the same ever since they first came into being. All subsequent changes have simply been increases or decreases in quantity. They contend that a thing can only keep on repeating itself as the same kind of thing and cannot change into anything different. In their opinion, capitalist exploitation, capitalist competition, the individualist ideology of capitalist society, and so on, can all be found in ancient slave society, or even in primitive society, and will exist forever unchanged. They ascribe the causes of social development to factors external to society, such as geography and climate. They search in an oversimplified way outside a thing for the causes of its development, and they deny the theory of materialist dialectics, which holds that development arises from the contradictions inside a thing. Consequently they can explain neither the qualitative diversity of things, nor the phenomenon of one quality changing into another. In Europe, this mode of thinking existed as mechanical materialism in the 17th and 18th centuries and as vulgar evolutionism at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries. In China, there was the metaphysical thinking exemplified in the saying "Heaven changeth not, likewise the Tao changeth

not,”¹⁵ and it was supported by the decadent feudal ruling classes for a long time. Mechanical materialism and vulgar evolutionism, which were imported from Europe in the last hundred years, are supported by the bourgeoisie.

As opposed to the metaphysical world outlook, the world outlook of materialist dialectics holds that in order to understand the development of a thing we should study it internally and in its relations with other things; in other words, the development of things should be seen as their internal and necessary self-movement, while each thing in its movement is interrelated and interacts with the things around it. The fundamental cause of the development of a thing is not external but internal; it lies in the contradictoriness within the thing. There is internal contradiction in every single thing, hence its motion and development. Contradictoriness within a thing is the fundamental cause of its development, while its interrelations and interactions with other things are secondary causes. Thus materialist dialectics effectively combats the theory of external causes, or of an external motive force, advanced by metaphysical mechanical materialism and vulgar evolutionism. It is evident that purely external causes can only give rise to mechanical motion, that is, to changes in scale or quantity, but cannot explain why things differ qualitatively in thousands of ways and why one thing changes into another. As a mat-

¹⁵ A saying of Dong Zhongshu (179–104 BC), a well-known exponent of Confucianism in the Han Dynasty.

ter of fact, even mechanical motion under external force occurs through the internal contradictoriness of things. Simple growth in plants and animals, their quantitative development, is likewise chiefly the result of their internal contradictions. Similarly, social development is due chiefly not to external but to internal causes. Countries with almost the same geographical and climatic conditions display great diversity and unevenness in their development. Moreover, great social changes may take place in one and the same country although its geography and climate remain unchanged. Imperialist Russia changed into the socialist Soviet Union, and feudal Japan, which had locked its doors against the world, changed into imperialist Japan, although no change occurred in the geography and climate of either country. Long dominated by feudalism, China has undergone great changes in the last hundred years and is now changing in the direction of a new China, liberated and free, and yet no change has occurred in her geography and climate. Changes do take place in the geography and climate of the earth as a whole and in every part of it, but they are insignificant when compared with changes in society; geographical and climatic changes manifest themselves in terms of tens of thousands of years, while social changes manifest themselves in thousands, hundreds or tens of years, and even in a few years or months in times of revolution. According to materialist dialectics, changes in nature are due chiefly

to the development of the internal contradictions in nature. Changes in society are due chiefly to the development of the internal contradictions in society, that is, the contradiction between the productive forces and the relations of production, the contradiction between classes and the contradiction between the old and the new; it is the development of these contradictions that pushes society forward and gives the impetus for the supersession of the old society by the new. Does materialist dialectics exclude external causes? Not at all. It holds that external causes are the condition of change and internal causes are the basis of change, and that external causes become operative through internal causes. In a suitable temperature an egg changes into a chicken, but no temperature can change a stone into a chicken, because each has a different basis. There is constant interaction between the peoples of different countries. In the era of capitalism, and especially in the era of imperialism and proletarian revolution, the interaction and mutual impact of different countries in the political, economic, and cultural spheres are extremely great. The October Socialist Revolution ushered in a new epoch in world history as well as in Russian history. It exerted influence on internal changes in the other countries in the world and, similarly and in a particularly profound way, on internal changes in China. These changes, however, were effected through the inner laws of development of these countries,

China included. In battle, one army is victorious and the other is defeated, both the victory and the defeat are determined by internal causes. The one is victorious either because it is strong or because of its competent generalship, the other is vanquished either because it is weak or because of its incompetent generalship; it is through internal causes that external causes become operative. In China in 1927, the defeat of the proletariat by the big bourgeoisie came about through the opportunism then to be found within the Chinese proletariat itself (inside the Chinese Communist Party). When we liquidated this opportunism, the Chinese revolution resumed its advance. Later, the Chinese revolution again suffered severe setbacks at the hands of the enemy, because adventurism had risen within our Party. When we liquidated this adventurism, our cause advanced once again. Thus it can be seen that to lead the revolution to victory, a political party must depend on the correctness of its own political line and the solidity of its own organization.

The dialectical world outlook emerged in ancient times both in China and in Europe. Ancient dialectics, however, had a somewhat spontaneous and naïve character; in the social and historical conditions then prevailing, it was not yet able to form a theoretical system, hence it could not fully explain the world and was supplanted by metaphysics. The famous German philosopher Hegel, who lived in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, made most

important contributions to dialectics, but his dialectics was idealist. It was not until Marx and Engels, the great protagonists of the proletarian movement, had synthesized the positive achievements in the history of human knowledge and, in particular, critically absorbed the rational elements of Hegelian dialectics and created the great theory of dialectical and historical materialism that an unprecedented revolution occurred in the history of human knowledge. This theory was further developed by Lenin and Stalin. As soon as it spread to China, it wrought tremendous changes in the world of Chinese thought.

This dialectical world outlook teaches us primarily how to observe and analyze the movement of opposites in different things and, on the basis of such analysis, to indicate the methods for resolving contradictions. It is therefore most important for us to understand the law of contradiction in things in a concrete way.

II. The Universality of Contradiction

For convenience of exposition, I shall deal first with the universality of contradiction and then proceed to the particularity of contradiction. The reason is that the universality of contradiction can be explained more briefly, for it has been widely recognized ever since the materialist-dialectical world outlook was discovered and materialist dialectics applied with outstanding success to analyzing many aspects of human history and natural history and to

changing many aspects of society and nature (as in the Soviet Union) by the great creators and continuers of Marxism—Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Stalin; whereas the particularity of contradiction is still not dearly understood by many comrades, and especially by the dogmatists. They do not understand that it is precisely in the particularity of contradiction that the universality of contradiction resides. Nor do they understand how important the study of the particularity of contradiction is in the concrete things confronting us for guiding the course of revolutionary practice. Therefore, it is necessary to stress the study of the particularity of contradiction and to explain it at adequate length. For this reason, in our analysis of the law of contradiction in things, we shall first analyze the universality of contradiction, then place special stress on analyzing the particularity of contradiction, and finally return to the universality of contradiction.

The universality or absoluteness of contradiction has a twofold meaning. One is that contradiction exists in the process of development of all things, and the other is that in the process of development of each thing a movement of opposites exists from beginning to end.

Engels said, “Motion itself is a contradiction.”¹⁶ Lenin defined the law of the unity of opposites as “the recognition (discovery) of the contradictory, mutually exclusive, opposite tendencies in all phe-

¹⁶ F. Engels, “Dialectics. Quantity and Quality,” in *Anti-Dühring*, Foreign Languages Press, Paris, 2021, p. 130.

nomena and processes of nature (including mind and society)."¹⁷ Are these ideas correct? Yes, they are. The interdependence of the contradictory aspects present in all things and the struggle between these aspects determine the life of all things and push their development forward. There is nothing that does not contain contradiction; without contradiction nothing would exist.

Contradiction is the basis of the simple forms of motion (for instance, mechanical motion) and still more so of the complex forms of motion.

Engels explained the universality of contradiction as follows:

If simple mechanical change of place contains a contradiction, this is even more true of the higher forms of motion of matter, and especially of organic life and its development. . . . [L]ife consists precisely and primarily in this—that a being is at each moment itself and yet something else. Life is therefore also a contradiction which is present in things and processes themselves, and which constantly originates and resolves itself; and as soon as the contradiction ceases, life, too, comes to an end, and death steps in. We likewise saw that also in the sphere of thought we could not escape contradictions, and that

¹⁷ V. I. Lenin, "On the Question of Dialectics," *Collected Works*, Vol. XXXVIII.

for example the contradiction between man's inherently unlimited capacity for knowledge and its actual presence only in men who are externally limited and possess limited cognition finds its solution in what is—at least practically, for us—an endless succession of generations, in infinite progress.

. . . [O]ne of the basic principles of higher mathematics is the contradiction that in certain circumstances straight lines and curves may be the same. . . . But even lower mathematics teems with contradictions.¹⁸

Lenin illustrated the universality of contradiction as follows:

In mathematics: + and –. Differential and integral.

In mechanics: action and reaction.

In physics: positive and negative electricity.

In chemistry: the combination and dissociation of atoms.

In social science: the class struggle.¹⁹

¹⁸ F. Engels, *Anti-Dühring*, *Anti-Dühring*, Foreign Languages Press, Paris, 2021, p. 131.

¹⁹ V. I. Lenin, "On the Question of Dialectics," *Collected Works*, Vol. XXXVIII.

In war, offense and defense, advance and retreat, victory and defeat are all mutually contradictory phenomena. One cannot exist without the other. The two aspects are at once in conflict and in interdependence, and this constitutes the totality of a war, pushes its development forward and solves its problems.

Every difference in man's concepts should be regarded as reflecting an objective contradiction. Objective contradictions are reflected in subjective thinking, and this process constitutes the contradictory movement of concepts, pushes forward the development of thought, and ceaselessly solves problems in man's thinking.

Opposition and struggle between ideas of different kinds constantly occur within the Party; this is a reflection within the Party of contradictions between classes and between the new and the old in society. If there were no contradictions in the Party and no ideological struggles to resolve them, the Party's life would come to an end.

Thus it is already clear that contradiction exists universally and in all processes, whether in the simple or in the complex forms of motion, whether in objective phenomena or ideological phenomena. But does contradiction also exist at the initial stage of each process?

Is there a movement of opposites from beginning to end in the process of development of every single thing?

As can be seen from the articles written by Soviet philosophers criticizing it, the Deborin School maintains that contradiction appears not at the inception of a process but only when it has developed to a certain stage. If this were the case, then the cause of the development of the process before that stage would be external and not internal. Deborin thus reverts to the metaphysical theories of external causality and of mechanism. Applying this view in the analysis of concrete problems, the Deborin School sees only differences but not contradictions between the kulaks and the peasants in general under existing conditions in the Soviet Union, thus entirely agreeing with Bukharin. In analyzing the French Revolution, it holds that before the Revolution there were likewise only differences but not contradictions within the Third Estate, which was composed of the workers, the peasants and the bourgeoisie. These views of the Deborin School are anti-Marxist. This school does not understand that each and every difference already contains contradiction and that difference itself is contradiction. Labor and capital have been in contradiction ever since the two classes came into being, only at first the contradiction had not yet become intense. Even under the social conditions existing in the Soviet Union, there is a difference between workers and peasants and this very difference is a contradiction, although, unlike the contradiction between labor and capital, it will not become intensified into

antagonism or assume the form of class struggle; the workers and the peasants have established a firm alliance in the course of socialist construction and are gradually resolving this contradiction in the course of the advance from socialism to communism. The question is one of different kinds of contradiction, not of the presence or absence of contradiction. Contradiction is universal and absolute; it is present in the process of development of all things and permeates every process from beginning to end.

What is meant by the emergence of a new process? The old unity with its constituent opposites yields to a new unity with its constituent opposites, whereupon a new process emerges to replace the old. The old process ends and the new one begins. The new process contains new contradictions and begins its own history of the development of contradictions.

As Lenin pointed out, Marx's *Capital* gave a model analysis of this movement of opposites, which runs through the process of development of things from beginning to end. This is the method that must be employed in studying the development of all things. Lenin, too, employed this method correctly and adhered to it in all his writings.

In *Capital*, Marx first analyzes the simplest, most ordinary and fundamental, most common and everyday relation of bourgeois (commodity) society, a relation encountered billions of times, viz. the

exchange of commodities. In this very simple phenomenon (in this “cell” of bourgeois society) analysis reveals all the contradictions (or the germs of all the contradictions) of modern society. The subsequent exposition shows us the development (both growth and movement) of these contradictions and of this society in the [summation] of its individual parts, from its beginning to its end.

Lenin added, “Such must also be the method of exposition (or study) of dialectics in general.”²⁰

Chinese communists must learn this method; only then will they be able correctly to analyze the history and the present state of the Chinese revolution and infer its future.

III. The Particularity of Contradiction

Contradiction is present in the process of development of all things; it permeates the process of development of each thing from beginning to end. This is the universality and absoluteness of contradiction that we have discussed above. Now let us discuss the particularity and relativity of contradiction.

This problem should be studied on several levels.

First, the contradiction in each form of motion of matter has its particularity. Man’s knowledge of matter is knowledge of its forms of motion, because there is nothing in this world except matter in motion, and this motion must assume cer-

²⁰ Ibid.

tain forms. In considering each form of motion of matter, we must observe the points that it has in common with other forms of motion. But what is especially important and necessary, constituting as it does the foundation of our knowledge of a thing, is to observe what is particular to this form of motion of matter, namely, to observe the qualitative difference between this form of motion and other forms. Only when we have done so can we distinguish between things. Every form of motion contains within itself its own particular contradiction. This particular contradiction constitutes the particular essence that distinguishes one thing from another. It is the internal cause or, as it may be called, the basis for the immense variety of things in the world. There are many forms of motion in nature, mechanical motion, sound, light, heat, electricity, dissociation, combination, and so on. All these forms are interdependent, but in its essence each is different from the others. The particular essence of each form of motion is determined by its own particular contradiction. This holds true not only for nature but also for social and ideological phenomena. Every form of society, every form of ideology, has its own particular contradiction and particular essence.

The sciences are differentiated precisely on the basis of the particular contradictions inherent in their respective objects of study. Thus the contradiction peculiar to a certain field of phenomena consti-

tutes the object of study for a specific branch of science. For example, positive and negative numbers in mathematics; action and reaction in mechanics; positive and negative electricity in physics; dissociation and combination in chemistry; forces of production and relations of production, classes and class struggle, in social science; offense and defense in military science; idealism and materialism, the metaphysical outlook and the dialectical outlook, in philosophy; and so on—all these are the objects of study of different branches of science precisely because each branch has its own particular contradiction and particular essence. Of course, unless we understand the universality of contradiction, we have no way of discovering the universal cause or universal basis for the movement or development of things; however, unless we study the particularity of contradiction, we have no way of determining the particular essence of a thing that differentiates it from other things, no way of discovering the particular cause or particular basis for the movement or development of a thing, and no way of distinguishing one thing from another or of demarcating the fields of science.

As regards the sequence in the movement of man's knowledge, there is always a gradual growth from the knowledge of individual and particular things to the knowledge of things in general. Only after man knows the particular essence of many dif-

ferent things can he proceed to generalization and know the common essence of things.

When man attains the knowledge of this common essence, he uses it as a guide and proceeds to study various concrete things that have not yet been studied, or studied thoroughly, and to discover the particular essence of each; only thus is he able to supplement, enrich and develop his knowledge of their common essence and prevent such knowledge from withering or petrifying. These are the two processes of cognition: one, from the particular to the general, and the other, from the general to the particular. Thus cognition always moves in cycles and (so long as scientific method is strictly adhered to) each cycle advances human knowledge a step higher and so makes it more and more profound. Where our dogmatists err on this question is that, on the one hand, they do not understand that we have to study the particularity of contradiction and know the particular essence of individual things before we can adequately know the universality of contradiction and the common essence of things, and that, on the other hand, they do not understand that after knowing the common essence of things, we must go further and study the concrete things that have not yet been thoroughly studied or have only just emerged. Our dogmatists are lazybones. They refuse to undertake any painstaking study of concrete things; they regard general truths as emerging out of the void; they turn them into purely abstract

unfathomable formulas and thereby completely deny and reverse the normal sequence by which man comes to know truth. Nor do they understand the interconnection of the two processes in cognition—from the particular to the general and then from the general to the particular. They understand nothing of the Marxist theory of knowledge.

It is necessary not only to study the particular contradiction and the essence determined thereby of every great system of the forms of motion of matter, but also to study the particular contradiction and the essence of each process in the long course of development of each form of motion of matter. In every form of motion, each process of development that is real (and not imaginary) is qualitatively different. Our study must emphasize and start from this point.

Qualitatively different contradictions can only be resolved by qualitatively different methods. For instance, the contradiction between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie is resolved by the method of socialist revolution; the contradiction between the great masses of the people and the feudal system is resolved by the method of democratic revolution; the contradiction between the colonies and imperialism is resolved by the method of national revolutionary war; the contradiction between the working class and the peasant class in socialist society is resolved by the method of collectivization and mechanization in agriculture; contradiction

within the Communist Party is resolved by the method of criticism and self-criticism; the contradiction between society and nature is resolved by the method of developing the productive forces. Processes change, old processes and old contradictions disappear, new processes and new contradictions emerge, and the methods of resolving contradictions differ accordingly. In Russia, there was a fundamental difference between the contradiction resolved by the February Revolution and the contradiction resolved by the October Revolution, as well as between the methods used to resolve them. The principle of using different methods to resolve different contradictions is one that Marxist-Leninists must strictly observe. The dogmatists do not observe this principle; they do not understand that conditions differ in different kinds of revolution and so do not understand that different methods should be used to resolve different contradictions; on the contrary, they invariably adopt what they imagine to be an unalterable formula and arbitrarily apply it everywhere, which only causes setbacks to the revolution or makes a sorry mess of what was originally well done.

In order to reveal the particularity of the contradictions in any process in the development of a thing, in their totality or interconnections, that is, in order to reveal the essence of the process, it is necessary to reveal the particularity of the two aspects of each of the contradictions in that pro-

cess; otherwise it will be impossible to discover the essence of the process. This likewise requires the utmost attention in our study.

There are many contradictions in the course of development of any major thing. For instance, in the course of China's bourgeois-democratic revolution, where the conditions are exceedingly complex, there exist the contradiction between all the oppressed classes in Chinese society and imperialism, the contradiction between the great masses of the people and feudalism, the contradiction between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, the contradiction between the peasantry and the urban petty bourgeoisie on the one hand and the bourgeoisie on the other, the contradiction between the various reactionary ruling groups and so on. These contradictions cannot be treated in the same way since each has its own particularity; moreover, the two aspects of each contradiction cannot be treated in the same way since each aspect has its own characteristics. We who are engaged in the Chinese revolution should not only understand the particularity of these contradictions in their totality, that is, in their interconnections, but should also study the two aspects of each contradiction as the only means of understanding the totality. When we speak of understanding each aspect of a contradiction, we mean understanding what specific position each aspect occupies, what concrete forms it assumes in its interdependence and in its contradiction with its

opposite, and what concrete methods are employed in the struggle with its opposite, when the two are both interdependent and in contradiction, and also after the interdependence breaks down. It is of great importance to study these problems. Lenin meant just this when he said that the most essential thing in Marxism, the living soul of Marxism, is the concrete analysis of concrete conditions.²¹ Our dogmatists have violated Lenin's teachings; they never use their brains to analyze anything concretely, and in their writings and speeches they always use stereotypes devoid of content, thereby creating a very bad style of work in our Party.

In studying a problem, we must shun subjectivity, one-sidedness and superficiality. To be subjective means not to look at problems objectively, that is, not to use the materialist viewpoint in looking at problems. I have discussed this in my essay "On Practice." To be one-sided means not to look at problems all-sidedly, for example, to understand only China but not Japan, only the Communist Party but not the Kuomintang, only the proletariat but not the bourgeoisie, only the peasants but not the landlords, only the favorable conditions but not the difficult ones, only the past but not the future, only individual parts but not the whole, only the defects but not the achievements, only the plaintiff's case but not the defendant's, only under-

²¹ See "Problems of Strategy in China's Revolutionary War," *Selected Works of Mao Zedong*, Volume I, Foreign Languages Press, Paris, 2021, pp. 159–230.

ground revolutionary work but not open revolutionary work, and so on. In a word, it means not to understand the characteristics of both aspects of a contradiction. This is what we mean by looking at a problem one-sidedly. Or it may be called seeing the part but not the whole, seeing the trees but not the forest. That way it is impossible to find the method for resolving a contradiction, it is impossible to accomplish the tasks of the revolution, to carry out assignments well or to develop inner-Party ideological struggle correctly. When Sun Wuzi said in discussing military science, "Know the enemy and know yourself, and you can fight a hundred battles with no danger of defeat,"²² he was referring to the two sides in a battle. Wei Zheng²³ of the Tang Dynasty also understood the error of one-sidedness when he said, "Listen to both sides and you will be enlightened, heed only one side and you will be benighted." But our comrades often look at problems one-sidedly, and so they often run into snags. In the novel *Shuihu Zhuan*, Song Jiang thrice attacked Zhu Village.²⁴ Twice he was defeated because he was ignorant of the local condi-

²² Ibid.

²³ Wei Zheng (580–643) was a statesman and historian of the Tang Dynasty.

²⁴ *Shuihu Zhuan* (*Water Margin*), a famous 14th century Chinese novel, describes a peasant war towards the end of the Northern Song Dynasty. Zhu Village was in the vicinity of Liangshanpo, where Song Jiang, leader of the peasant uprising and hero of the novel, established his base. Zhu Chaofeng, the head of this village, was a despotic landlord.

tions and used the wrong method. Later he changed his method; first he investigated the situation, and he familiarized himself with the maze of roads, then he broke up the alliance between the Li, Hu, and Zhu Villages and sent his men in disguise into the enemy camp to lie in wait, using a stratagem similar to that of the Trojan Horse in the foreign story. And on the third occasion he won. There are many examples of materialist dialectics in *Shuihu Zhuan*, of which the episode of the three attacks on Zhu Village is one of the best.

Lenin said:

[I]n order really to know an object we must embrace, study, all its sides, all connections and “mediations.” We shall never achieve this completely, but the demand for all-sidedness is a safeguard against mistakes and rigidity.²⁵

We should remember his words. To be superficial means to consider neither the characteristics of a contradiction in its totality nor the characteristics of each of its aspects; it means to deny the necessity for probing deeply into a thing and minutely studying the characteristics of its contradiction, but instead merely to look from afar and, after glimpsing the rough outline, immediately to try to resolve the contradiction (to answer a question, settle a dis-

²⁵ V. I. Lenin, “Once Again on the Trade Unions, the Current Situation and the Mistakes of Trotsky and Bukharin” in *Collected Works*, Vol. XXXII.

pute, handle work, or direct a military operation). This way of doing things is bound to lead to trouble. The reason the dogmatist and empiricist comrades in China have made mistakes lies precisely in their subjectivist, one-sided and superficial way of looking at things. To be one-sided and superficial is at the same time to be subjective. For all objective things are actually interconnected and are governed by inner laws, but instead of undertaking the task of reflecting things as they really are some people only look at things one-sidedly or superficially and who know neither their interconnections nor their inner laws, and so their method is subjectivist.

Not only does the whole process of the movement of opposites in the development of a thing, both in their interconnections and in each of the aspects, have particular features to which we must give attention, but each stage in the process has its particular features to which we must give attention too.

The fundamental contradiction in the process of development of a thing and the essence of the process determined by this fundamental contradiction will not disappear until the process is completed; but in a lengthy process the conditions usually differ at each stage. The reason is that, although the nature of the fundamental contradiction in the process of development of a thing and the essence of the process remain unchanged, the fundamental contradiction becomes more and more intensified

as it passes from one stage to another in the lengthy process. In addition, among the numerous major and minor contradictions that are determined or influenced by the fundamental contradiction, some become intensified, some are temporarily or partially resolved or mitigated, and some new ones emerge; hence the process is marked by stages. If people do not pay attention to the stages in the process of development of a thing, they cannot deal with its contradictions properly.

For instance, when the capitalism of the era of free competition developed into imperialism, there was no change in the class nature of the two classes in fundamental contradiction, namely, the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, or in the capitalist essence of society; however, the contradiction between these two classes became intensified, the contradiction between monopoly and non-monopoly capital emerged, the contradiction between the colonial powers and the colonies became intensified, the contradiction among the capitalist countries resulting from their uneven development manifested itself with particular sharpness, and thus there arose the special stage of capitalism, the stage of imperialism. Leninism is the Marxism of the era of imperialism and proletarian revolution precisely because Lenin and Stalin have correctly explained these contradictions and correctly formulated the theory and tactics of the proletarian revolution for their resolution.

Take the process of China's bourgeois-democratic revolution, which began with the Revolution of 1911; it, too, has several distinct stages. In particular, the revolution in its period of bourgeois leadership and the revolution in its period of proletarian leadership represent two vastly different historical stages. In other words, proletarian leadership has fundamentally changed the whole face of the revolution, has brought about a new alignment of classes, given rise to a tremendous upsurge in the peasant revolution, imparted thoroughness to the revolution against imperialism and feudalism, created the possibility of the transition from the democratic revolution to the socialist revolution, and so on. None of these was possible in the period when the revolution was under bourgeois leadership. Although no change has taken place in the nature of the fundamental contradiction in the process as a whole, i.e., in the anti-imperialist, antifeudal, democratic-revolutionary nature of the process (the opposite of which is its semicolonial and semifeudal nature), nonetheless this process has passed through several stages of development in the course of more than twenty years; during this time many great events have taken place—the failure of the Revolution of 1911 and the establishment of the regime of the Northern warlords, the formation of the first national united front and the revolution of 1924-27, the breakup of the united front and the desertion of the bourgeoisie to the side of the coun-

terrevolution, the wars among the new warlords, the Agrarian Revolutionary War, the establishment of the second national united front and the War of Resistance Against Japan. These stages are marked by particular features such as the intensification of certain contradictions (e.g., the Agrarian Revolutionary War and the Japanese invasion of the four northeastern provinces), the partial or temporary resolution of other contradictions (e.g., the destruction of the Northern warlords and our confiscation of the land of the landlords), and the emergence of yet other contradictions (e.g., the conflicts among the new warlords, and the landlords' recapture of the land after the loss of our revolutionary base areas in the south).

In studying the particularities of the contradictions at each stage in the process of development of a thing, we must not only observe them in their interconnections or their totality, we must also examine the two aspects of each contradiction.

For instance, consider the Kuomintang and the Communist Party. Take one aspect, the Kuomintang. In the period of the first united front, the Kuomintang carried out Sun Yat-sen's Three Great Policies of alliance with Russia, cooperation with the Communist Party, and assistance to the peasants and workers; hence it was revolutionary and vigorous, it was an alliance of various classes for the democratic revolution. After 1927, however, the Kuomintang changed into its opposite

and became a reactionary bloc of the landlords and big bourgeoisie. After the Xian Incident in December 1936, it began another change in the direction of ending the civil war and cooperating with the Communist Party for joint opposition to Japanese imperialism. Such have been the particular features of the Kuomintang in the three stages. Of course, these features have arisen from a variety of causes. Now take the other aspect, the Chinese Communist Party. In the period of the first united front, the Chinese Communist Party was in its infancy; it courageously led the revolution of 1924-27 but revealed its immaturity in its understanding of the character, the tasks and the methods of the revolution, and consequently it became possible for Chen Duxiuism, which appeared during the latter part of this revolution, to assert itself and bring about the defeat of the revolution. After 1927, the Communist Party courageously led the Agrarian Revolutionary War and created the revolutionary army and revolutionary base areas; however, it committed adventurist errors, which brought about very great losses both to the army and to the base areas. Since 1935 the Party has corrected these errors and has been leading the new united front for resistance to Japan; this great struggle is now developing. At the present stage, the Communist Party is a Party that has gone through the test of two revolutions and acquired a wealth of experience. Such have been the particular features of the Chinese Communist

Party in the three stages. These features, too, have arisen from a variety of causes. Without studying both these sets of features we cannot understand the particular relations between the two parties during the various stages of their development, namely, the establishment of a united front, the breakup of the united front, and the establishment of another united front. What is even more fundamental for the study of the particular features of the two parties is the examination of the class basis of the two parties and the resultant contradictions that have arisen between each party and other forces at different periods. For instance, in the period of its first cooperation with the Communist Party, the Kuomintang stood in contradiction to foreign imperialism and was therefore anti-imperialist; on the other hand, it stood in contradiction to the great masses of the people within the country—although in words it promised many benefits to the working people, in fact it gave them little or nothing. In the period when it carried on the anticommunist war, the Kuomintang collaborated with imperialism and feudalism against the great masses of the people and wiped out all the gains they had won in the revolution, and thereby intensified its contradictions with them. In the present period of the anti-Japanese war, the Kuomintang stands in contradiction to Japanese imperialism and wants cooperation with the Communist Party, without however relaxing its struggle against the Communist Party and the

people or its oppression of them. As for the Communist Party, it has always, in every period, stood with the great masses of the people against imperialism and feudalism, but in the present period of the anti-Japanese war, it has adopted a moderate policy towards the Kuomintang and the domestic feudal forces because the Kuomintang has pressed itself in favor of resisting Japan. The above circumstances have resulted now in alliance between the two parties and now in struggle between them, and even during the periods of alliance there has been a complicated state of simultaneous alliance and struggle. If we do not study the particular features of both aspects of the contradiction, we shall fail to understand not only the relations of each party with the other forces, but also the relations between the two parties.

It can thus be seen that in studying the particularity of any kind of contradiction—the contradiction in each form of motion of matter, the contradiction in each of its processes of development, the two aspects of the contradiction in each process, the contradiction at each stage of a process, and the two aspects of the contradiction at each stage—in studying the particularity of all these contradictions, we must not be subjective and arbitrary but must analyze it concretely. Without concrete analysis there can be no knowledge of the particularity of any contradiction. We must always remember Lenin's words, the concrete analysis of concrete conditions.

Marx and Engels were the first to provide us with excellent models of such concrete analysis.

When Marx and Engels applied the law of contradiction in things to the study of the socio-historical process, they discovered the contradiction between the productive forces and the relations of production, they discovered the contradiction between the exploiting and exploited classes and also the resultant contradiction between the economic base and its superstructure (politics, ideology, etc.), and they discovered how these contradictions inevitably lead to different kinds of social revolution in different kinds of class society.

When Marx applied this law to the study of the economic structure of capitalist society, he discovered that the basic contradiction of this society is the contradiction between the social character of production and the private character of ownership. This contradiction manifests itself in the contradiction between the organized character of production in individual enterprises and the anarchic character of production in society as a whole. In terms of class relations, it manifests itself in the contradiction between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat.

Because the range of things is vast and there is no limit to their development, what is universal in one context becomes particular in another. Conversely, what is particular in one context becomes universal in another. The contradiction in the capitalist system between the social character of production and

the private ownership of the means of production is common to all countries where capitalism exists and develops; as far as capitalism is concerned, this constitutes the universality of contradiction. But this contradiction of capitalism belongs only to a certain historical stage in the general development of class society; as far as the contradiction between the productive forces and the relations of production in class society as a whole is concerned, it constitutes the particularity of contradiction. However, in the course of dissecting the particularity of all these contradictions in capitalist society, Marx gave a still more profound, more adequate, and more complete elucidation of the universality of the contradiction between the productive forces and the relations of production in class society in general.

Since the particular is united with the universal and since the universality as well as the particularity of contradiction is inherent in everything, universality residing in particularity, we should, when studying an object, try to discover both the particular and the universal and their interconnection, to discover both particularity and universality and also their interconnection within the object itself, and to discover the interconnections of this object with the many objects outside it. When Stalin explained the historical roots of Leninism in his famous work, *The Foundations of Leninism*, he analyzed the international situation in which Leninism arose, analyzed those contradictions of capitalism that reached their

culmination under imperialism, and showed how these contradictions made proletarian revolution a matter for immediate action and created favorable conditions for a direct onslaught on capitalism. What is more, he analyzed the reasons why Russia became the cradle of Leninism, why tsarist Russia became the focus of all the contradictions of imperialism, and why it was possible for the Russian proletariat to become the vanguard of the international revolutionary proletariat. Thus, Stalin analyzed the universality of contradiction in imperialism, showing why Leninism is the Marxism of the era of imperialism and proletarian revolution, and at the same time analyzed the particularity of tsarist Russian imperialism within this general contradiction, showing why Russia became the birthplace of the theory and tactics of proletarian revolution and how the universality of contradiction is contained in this particularity. Stalin's analysis provides us with a model for understanding the particularity and the universality of contradiction and their interconnection.

On the question of using dialectics in the study of objective phenomena, Marx and Engels, and likewise Lenin and Stalin, always enjoin people not to be in any way subjective and arbitrary but, from the concrete conditions in the actual objective movement of these phenomena, to discover their concrete contradictions, the concrete position of each aspect of every contradiction and the concrete

interrelations of the contradictions. Our dogmatists do not have this attitude in study and therefore can never get anything right. We must take warning from their failure and learn to acquire this attitude, which is the only correct one in study.

The relationship between the universality and the particularity of contradiction is the relationship between the general character and the individual character of contradiction. By the former we mean that contradiction exists in and runs through all processes from beginning to end; motion, things, processes, thinking—all are contradictions. To deny contradiction is to deny everything. This is a universal truth for all times and all countries without exception. Hence the general character, the absoluteness of contradiction. But this general character is contained in every individual character; without individual character there can be no general character. If all individual character were removed, what general character would remain? It is because each contradiction is particular that individual character arises. All individual character exists conditionally and temporarily, and hence is relative.

This truth concerning general and individual character, concerning absoluteness and relativity, is the quintessence of the problem of contradiction in things; failure to understand it is tantamount to abandoning dialectics.

IV. The Principal Contradiction and the Principal Aspect of a Contradiction

There are still two points in the problem of the particularity of contradiction that must be singled out for analysis, namely, the principal contradiction, and the principal aspect of a contradiction.

There are many contradictions in the process of development of a complex thing, and one of them is necessarily the principal contradiction whose existence and development determines or influences the existence and development of the other contradictions.

For instance, in capitalist society the two forces in contradiction, the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, form the principal contradiction. The other contradictions, such as those between the remnant feudal class and the bourgeoisie; between the peasant petty bourgeoisie and the bourgeoisie; between the proletariat and the peasant petty bourgeoisie; between the non-monopoly capitalists and the monopoly capitalists; between bourgeois democracy and bourgeois fascism; among the capitalist countries; and between imperialism and the colonies, are all determined or influenced by this principal contradiction.

In a semicolonial country such as China, the relationship between the principal contradiction and the non-principal contradictions presents a complicated picture.

When imperialism launches a war of aggression against such a country, all its various classes, except for some traitors, can temporarily unite in a national war against imperialism. At such a time, the contradiction between imperialism and the country concerned becomes the principal contradiction, while all the contradictions among the various classes within the country (including what was the principal contradiction, between the feudal system, and the great masses of the people) are temporarily relegated to a secondary and subordinate position. So it was in China in the Opium War of 1840, the Sino-Japanese War of 1894 and the Yihetuan War [Boxer Rebellion] of 1900, and so it is now in the present Sino-Japanese War.

But in another situation, the contradictions change position. When imperialism carries on its oppression not by war, but by milder means—political, economic, and cultural—the ruling classes in semicolonial countries capitulate to imperialism, and the two form an alliance for the joint oppression of the masses of the people. At such a time, the masses often resort to civil war against the alliance of imperialism and the feudal classes, while imperialism often employs indirect methods rather than direct action in helping the reactionaries in the semicolonial countries to oppress the people, and thus the internal contradictions become particularly sharp. This is what happened in China in the Revolutionary War of 1911, the Revolutionary War

of 1924–27, and the ten years of Agrarian Revolutionary War after 1927. Wars among the various reactionary ruling groups in the semicolonial countries, e.g., the wars among the warlords in China, fall into the same category.

When a revolutionary civil war develops to the point of threatening the very existence of imperialism and its running dogs, the domestic reactionaries, imperialism often adopts other methods in order to maintain its rule; it either tries to split the revolutionary front from within or sends armed forces to help the domestic reactionaries directly. At such a time, foreign imperialism and domestic reaction stand quite openly at one pole while the masses of the people stand at the other pole, thus forming the principal contradiction which determines or influences the development of the other contradictions. The assistance given by various capitalist countries to the Russian reactionaries after the October Revolution is an example of armed intervention. Chiang Kai-shek's betrayal in 1927 is an example of splitting the revolutionary front.

But whatever happens, there is no doubt at all that at every stage in the development of a process, there is only one principal contradiction that plays the leading role.

Hence, if in any process there are a number of contradictions, one of them must be the principal contradiction playing the leading and decisive role, while the rest occupy a secondary and subordinate

position. Therefore, in studying any complex process in which there are two or more contradictions, we must devote every effort to finding its principal contradiction. Once this principal contradiction is grasped, all problems can be readily solved. This is the method Marx taught us in his study of capitalist society. Likewise Lenin and Stalin taught us this method when they studied imperialism and the general crisis of capitalism and when they studied the Soviet economy. There are thousands of scholars and men of action who do not understand it, and the result is that, lost in a fog, they are unable to get to the heart of a problem and naturally cannot find a way to resolve its contradictions.

As we have said, one must not treat all the contradictions in a process as being equal but must distinguish between the principal and the secondary contradictions, and pay special attention to grasping the principal one. But, in any given contradiction, whether principal or secondary, should the two contradictory aspects be treated as equal? Again, no. In any contradiction the development of the contradictory aspects is uneven. Sometimes they seem to be in equilibrium, which is however only temporary and relative, while unevenness is basic. Of the two contradictory aspects, one must be principal and the other secondary. The principal aspect is the one playing the leading role in the contradiction. The nature of a thing is determined

mainly by the principal aspect of a contradiction, the aspect that has gained the dominant position.

But this situation is not static; the principal and the non-principal aspects of a contradiction transform themselves into each other and the nature of the thing changes accordingly. In a given process or at a given stage in the development of a contradiction, A is the principal aspect and B is the non-principal aspect; at another stage or in another process the roles are reversed—a change determined by the extent of the increase or decrease in the force of each aspect in its struggle against the other in the course of the development of a thing.

We often speak of “the new superseding the old.” The supersession of the old by the new is a general, eternal and inviolable law of the universe. The transformation of one thing into another, through leaps of different forms in accordance with its essence and external conditions—this is the process of the new superseding the old. In each thing there is contradiction between its new and its old aspects, and this gives rise to a series of struggles with many twists and turns. As a result of these struggles, the new aspect changes from being minor to being major and rises to predominance, while the old aspect changes from being major to being minor and gradually dies out. And the moment the new aspect gains dominance over the old, the old thing changes qualitatively into a new thing. It can thus be seen that the nature of a thing is mainly determined by

the principal aspect of the contradiction, the aspect that has gained predominance. When the principal aspect that has gained predominance changes, the nature of a thing changes accordingly.

In capitalist society, capitalism has changed its position from being a subordinate force in the old feudal era to being the dominant force, and the nature of society has accordingly changed from feudal to capitalist. In the new, capitalist era, the feudal forces changed from their former dominant position to a subordinate one, gradually dying out. Such was the case, for example, in Britain and France. With the development of the productive forces, the bourgeoisie changes from being a new class playing a progressive role to being an old class playing a reactionary role, until it is finally overthrown by the proletariat and becomes a class deprived of privately owned means of production and stripped of power, when it, too, gradually dies out. The proletariat, which is much more numerous than the bourgeoisie and grows simultaneously with it but under its rule, is a new force which, initially subordinate to the bourgeoisie, gradually gains strength, becomes an independent class playing the leading role in history, and finally seizes political power and becomes the ruling class. Thereupon the nature of society changes and the old capitalist society becomes the new socialist society. This is the path already taken by the Soviet Union, a path that all other countries will inevitably take.

Look at China, for instance. Imperialism occupies the principal position in the contradiction in which China has been reduced to a semicolony, it oppresses the Chinese people, and China has been changed from an independent country into a semicolonial one. But this state of affairs will inevitably change; in the struggle between the two sides, the power of the Chinese people, which is growing under the leadership of the proletariat will inevitably change China from a semicolony into an independent country, whereas imperialism will be overthrown and old China will inevitably change into New China.

The change of old China into New China also involves a change in the relation between the old feudal forces and the new popular forces within the country. The old feudal landlord class will be overthrown, and from being the ruler it will change into being the ruled; and this class, too, will gradually die out. From being the ruled, the people, led by the proletariat, will become the rulers. Thereupon, the nature of Chinese society will change and the old, semicolonial and semifeudal society will change into a new democratic society.

Instances of such reciprocal transformation are found in our past experience. The Qing Dynasty which ruled China for nearly three hundred years was overthrown in the Revolution of 1911, and the revolutionary Tongmenghui [Revolutionary Alliance] under Sun Yat-sen's leadership was victorious

for a time. In the Revolutionary War of 1924-27, the revolutionary forces of the Communist-Kuomintang alliance in the south changed from being weak to being strong and won victory in the Northern Expedition, while the Northern warlords who once ruled the roost were overthrown. In 1927, the people's forces led by the Communist Party were greatly reduced numerically under the attacks of Kuomintang reaction, but with the elimination of opportunism within their ranks they gradually grew again. In the revolutionary base areas under Communist leadership, the peasants have been transformed from being the ruled to being the rulers, while the landlords have undergone a reverse transformation. It is always so in the world, the new displacing the old, the old being superseded by the new, the old being eliminated to make way for the new, and the new emerging out of the old.

At certain times in the revolutionary struggle, the difficulties outweigh the favorable conditions and so constitute the principal aspect of the contradiction and the favorable conditions constitute the secondary aspect. But through their efforts the revolutionaries can overcome the difficulties step by step and open up a favorable new situation; thus a difficult situation yields place to a favorable one. This is what happened after the failure of the revolution in China in 1927 and during the Long March of the Chinese Red Army. In the present Sino-Japanese War, China is again in a difficult position, but we

can change this and fundamentally transform the situation as between China and Japan. Conversely, favorable conditions can be transformed into difficulty if the revolutionaries make mistakes. Thus the victory of the revolution of 1924-27 turned into defeat. The revolutionary base areas that grew up in the southern provinces after 1927 had all suffered defeat by 1934.

When we engage in study, the same holds good for the contradiction in the passage from ignorance to knowledge. At the very beginning of our study of Marxism, our ignorance of or scanty acquaintance with Marxism stands in contradiction to knowledge of Marxism. But by assiduous study, ignorance can be transformed into knowledge, scanty knowledge into substantial knowledge, and blindness in the application of Marxism into mastery of its application.

Some people think that this is not true of certain contradictions. For instance, in the contradiction between the productive forces and the relations of production, the productive forces are the principal aspect; in the contradiction between theory and practice, practice is the principal aspect; in the contradiction between the economic base and the superstructure, the economic base is the principal aspect; and there is no change in their respective positions. This is the mechanical materialist conception, not the dialectical-materialist conception. True, the productive forces, practice and the eco-

conomic base generally play the principal and decisive role; whoever denies this is not a materialist. But it must also be admitted that in certain conditions, such aspects as the relations of production, theory and the superstructure in turn manifest themselves in the principal and decisive role. When it is impossible for the productive forces to develop without a change in the relations of production, then the change in the relations of production plays the principal and decisive role. The creation and advocacy of revolutionary theory plays the principal and decisive role in those times of which Lenin said, “Without revolutionary theory, there can be no revolutionary movement.”²⁶ When a task, no matter which, has to be performed, but there is as yet no guiding line, method, plan or policy, the principal and decisive thing is to decide on a guiding line, method, plan or policy. When the superstructure (politics, culture, etc.) obstructs the development of the economic base, political and cultural changes become principal and decisive. Are we going against materialism when we say this? No. The reason is that while we recognize that in the general development of history the material determines the mental and social being determines social consciousness, we also—and indeed must—recognize the reaction of mental on material things, of social consciousness on social being and of the superstructure on the economic base. This does not go against mate-

²⁶ V. I. Lenin, *What Is to Be Done?*, Foreign Languages Press, Paris, 2021, p. 24.

rialism; on the contrary, it avoids mechanical materialism and firmly upholds dialectical materialism.

In studying the particularity of contradiction, unless we examine these two facets—the principal and the non-principal contradictions in a process, and the principal and the non-principal aspects of a contradiction—that is, unless we examine the distinctive character of these two facets of contradiction, we shall get bogged down in abstractions, be unable to understand contradiction concretely and consequently be unable to find the correct method of resolving it. The distinctive character or particularity of these two facets of contradiction represents the unevenness of the forces that are in contradiction. Nothing in this world develops absolutely evenly; we must oppose the theory of even development or the theory of equilibrium. Moreover, it is these concrete features of a contradiction and the changes in the principal and non-principal aspects of a contradiction in the course of its development that manifest the force of the new superseding the old. The study of the various states of unevenness in contradictions, of the principal and non-principal contradictions and of the principal and the non-principal aspects of a contradiction constitutes an essential method by which a revolutionary political party correctly determines its strategic and tactical policies both in political and in military affairs. All communists must give it attention.

V. The Identity and Struggle of the Aspects of a Contradiction

When we understand the universality and the particularity of contradiction, we must proceed to study the problem of the identity and struggle of the aspects of a contradiction.

Identity, unity, coincidence, interpenetration, interpermeation, interdependence (or mutual dependence for existence), interconnection or mutual cooperation—all these different terms mean the same thing and refer to the following two points: first, the existence of each of the two aspects of a contradiction in the process of the development of a thing presupposes the existence of the other aspect, and both aspects coexist in a single entity; second, in given conditions, each of the two contradictory aspects transforms itself into its opposite. This is the meaning of identity.

Lenin said:

Dialectics is the teaching that shows how opposites can be and how they happen to be (how they become) identical—under what conditions they are identical, transforming themselves into one another—why the human mind should take these opposites not as dead, rigid, but as living, conditional, mobile, transforming themselves into one another.²⁷

²⁷ V. I. Lenin, "Conspectus of Hegel's *The Science of Logic*," *Collected Works*, Vol. XXXVIII.

What does this passage mean?

The contradictory aspects in every process exclude each other, struggle with each other and are in opposition to each other. Without exception, they are contained in the process of development of all things and in all human thought. A simple process contains only a single pair of opposites, while a complex process contains more. And in turn, the pairs of opposites are in contradiction to one another.

That is how all things in the objective world and all human thought are constituted and how they are set in motion.

This being so, there is an utter lack of identity or unity. How then can one speak of identity or unity?

The fact is that no contradictory aspect can exist in isolation. Without its opposite aspect, each loses the condition for its existence. Just think, can any one contradictory aspect of a thing or of a concept in the human mind exist independently? Without life, there would be no death; without death, there would be no life. Without "above," there would be no "below"; without "below," there would be no "above." Without misfortune, there would be no good fortune; without good fortune, there would be no misfortune. Without facility, there would be no difficulty; without difficulty, there would be no facility. Without landlords, there would be no tenant-peasants; without tenant-peasants, there would be no landlords. Without the bourgeoisie,

there would be no proletariat; without the proletariat, there would be no bourgeoisie. Without imperialist oppression of nations, there would be no colonies or semicolonies; without colonies or semicolonies, there would be no imperialist oppression of nations. It is so with all opposites; in given conditions, on the one hand they are opposed to each other, and on the other they are interconnected, interpenetrating, interpermeating, and interdependent, and this character is described as identity. In given conditions, all contradictory aspects possess the character of non-identity and hence are described as being in contradiction. But they also possess the character of identity and hence are interconnected. This is what Lenin means when he says that dialectics studies “how opposites can be and how they become identical.” How then can they be identical? Because each is the condition for the other’s existence. This is the first meaning of identity.

But is it enough to say merely that each of the contradictory aspects is the condition for the other’s existence—that there is identity between them and that consequently they can coexist in a single entity? No, it is not. The matter does not end with their dependence on each other for their existence; what is more important is their transformation into each other. That is to say, in given conditions, each of the contradictory aspects within a thing transforms itself into its opposite, changes its position to

that of its opposite. This is the second meaning of the identity of contradiction.

Why is there identity here, too? You see, by means of revolution the proletariat, at one time the ruled, is transformed into the ruler, while the bourgeoisie, the erstwhile ruler, is transformed into the ruled and changes its position to that originally occupied by its opposite. This has already taken place in the Soviet Union, as it will take place throughout the world. If there were no interconnection and identity of opposites in given conditions, how could such a change take place?

The Kuomintang, which played a certain positive role at a certain stage in modern Chinese history, became a counterrevolutionary party after 1927 because of its inherent class nature and because of imperialist blandishments (these being the conditions); but it has been compelled to agree to resist Japan because of the sharpening of the contradiction between China and Japan and because of the Communist Party's policy of the united front (these being the conditions). Things in contradiction change into one another, and herein lies a definite identity.

Our agrarian revolution has been a process in which the landlord class owning the land is transformed into a class that has lost its land, while the peasants who once lost their land are transformed into small holders who have acquired land, and it will be such a process once again. In given condi-

tions having and not having, acquiring and losing, are interconnected; there is identity of the two sides. Under socialism, private peasant ownership is transformed into the public ownership of socialist agriculture; this has already taken place in the Soviet Union, as it will take place everywhere else. There is a bridge leading from private property to public property, which in philosophy is called identity, or transformation into each other, or interpenetration.

To consolidate the dictatorship of the proletariat or the dictatorship of the people is in fact to prepare the conditions for abolishing this dictatorship and advancing to the higher stage when all state systems are eliminated. To establish and build the Communist Party is in fact to prepare the conditions for the elimination of the Communist Party and all political parties. To build a revolutionary army under the leadership of the Communist Party and to carry on revolutionary war is in fact to prepare the conditions for the permanent elimination of war. These opposites are at the same time complementary.

War and peace, as everybody knows, transform themselves into each other. War is transformed into peace; for instance, the First World War was transformed into the postwar peace, and the civil war in China has now stopped, giving place to internal peace. Peace is transformed into war; for instance, the Kuomintang-Communist cooperation was transformed into war in 1927, and today's situation of world peace may be transformed into a second

world war. Why is this so? Because in class society such contradictory things as war and peace have an identity in given conditions.

All contradictory things are interconnected; not only do they coexist in a single entity in given conditions, but in other given conditions, they also transform themselves into each other. This is the full meaning of the identity of opposites. This is what Lenin meant when he discussed “how they happen to be (how they become) identical—under what conditions they are identical, transforming themselves into one another.”

Why is it that “the human mind should take these opposites not as dead, rigid, but as living, conditional, mobile, transforming themselves into one another?” Because that is just how things are in objective reality. The fact is that the unity or identity of opposites in objective things is not dead or rigid, but is living, conditional, mobile, temporary, and relative; in given conditions, every contradictory aspect transforms itself into its opposite. Reflected in man’s thinking, this becomes the Marxist world outlook of materialist dialectics. It is only the reactionary ruling classes of the past and present and the metaphysicians in their service who regard opposites not as living, conditional, mobile and transforming themselves into one another, but as dead and rigid, and they propagate this fallacy everywhere to delude the masses of the people, thus seeking to perpetuate their rule. The task of com-

munists is to expose the fallacies of the reactionaries and metaphysicians, to propagate the dialectics inherent in things, and so accelerate the transformation of things and achieve the goal of revolution.

In speaking of the identity of opposites in given conditions, what we are referring to is real and concrete opposites and the real and concrete transformations of opposites into one another. There are innumerable transformations in mythology, for instance, Kuafu's race with the sun in *Shan Hai Jing*,²⁸ Yi's shooting down of nine suns in *Huainanzi*,²⁹ the Monkey King's seventy-two metamorphoses in *Xiyouji*,³⁰ the numerous episodes of ghosts and foxes metamorphosed into human beings in the *Strange Tales from Liaozhai*,³¹ etc. But these leg-

²⁸ *Shan Hai Jing* (*The Classic of Mountains and Seas*) was written in the era of the Warring States (403–221 BC). In one of its fables Kuafu pursued and overtook the sun. But he died of thirst, whereupon his staff was transformed into the forest of Deng.

²⁹ Yi is one of the legendary heroes of ancient China, famous for his archery. According to a legend in *Huainanzi* (*Book of the Master of Huainan*), compiled in the 2nd century BC, there were ten suns in the sky in the days of Emperor Yao. To put an end to the damage to vegetation caused by these scorching suns, Emperor Yao ordered Yi to shoot them down. In another legend recorded by Wang Yi (2nd century AD), the archer is said to have shot down nine of the ten suns.

³⁰ *Xiyouji* (*Journey to the West*) is a 16th century novel, the hero of which is the monkey god Sun Wukong. He could miraculously change at will into seventy-two different shapes, such as a bird, a tree, and a stone.

³¹ The *Strange Tales from Liaozhai*, written by Pu Songling in the 17th century, is a well-known collection of 431 tales,

endary transformations of opposites are not concrete changes reflecting concrete contradictions. They are naïve, imaginary, subjectively conceived transformations conjured up in men's minds by innumerable real and complex transformations of opposites into one another. Marx said, "All mythology masters and dominates and shapes the forces of nature in and through the imagination; hence it disappears as soon as man gains mastery over the forces of nature."³² The myriads of changes in mythology (and also in nursery tales) delight people because they imaginatively picture man's conquest of the forces of nature, and the best myths possess "eternal charm," as Marx put it; but myths are not built out of the concrete contradictions existing in given conditions and therefore are not a scientific reflection of reality. That is to say, in myths or nursery tales the aspects constituting a contradiction have only an imaginary identity, not a concrete identity. The scientific reflection of the identity in real transformations is Marxist dialectics.

Why can an egg but not a stone be transformed into a chicken? Why is there identity between war and peace and none between war and a stone? Why can human beings give birth only to human beings and not to anything else? The sole reason is that the identity of opposites exists only in necessary given

mostly about ghosts and fox spirits.

³² K. Marx, "Preface" and "Introduction" to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, Foreign Languages Press, Beijing, 1976, p. 44.

conditions. Without these necessary given conditions there can be no identity whatsoever.

Why is it that in Russia in 1917 the bourgeois-democratic February Revolution was directly linked with the proletarian socialist October Revolution, while in France the bourgeois revolution was not directly linked with a socialist revolution and the Paris Commune of 1871 ended in failure? Why is it, on the other hand, that the nomadic system of Mongolia and Central Asia has been directly linked with socialism? Why is it that the Chinese revolution can avoid a capitalist future and be directly linked with socialism without taking the old historical road of the Western countries, without passing through a period of bourgeois dictatorship? The sole reason is the concrete conditions of the time. When certain necessary conditions are present, certain contradictions arise in the process of development of things and, moreover, the opposites contained in them are interdependent and become transformed into one another; otherwise none of this would be possible.

Such is the problem of identity. What then is struggle? And what is the relation between identity and struggle?

Lenin said:

The unity (coincidence, identity, equal action) of opposites is conditional, temporary, transitory, relative. The struggle of mutually exclusive opposites is absolute,

just as development and motion are absolute.³³

What does this passage mean?

All processes have a beginning and an end, all processes transform themselves into their opposites. The constancy of all processes is relative, but the mutability manifested in the transformation of one process into another is absolute.

There are two states of motion in all things, that of relative rest and that of conspicuous change. Both are caused by the struggle between the two contradictory elements contained in a thing. When the thing is in the first state of motion, it is undergoing only quantitative and not qualitative change and consequently presents the outward appearance of being at rest. When the thing is in the second state of motion, the quantitative change of the first state has already reached a culminating point and gives rise to the dissolution of the thing as an entity and thereupon a qualitative change ensues, hence the appearance of a conspicuous change. Such unity, solidarity, combination, harmony, balance, stalemate, deadlock, rest, constancy, equilibrium, solidity, attraction, etc., as we see in daily life, are all the appearances of things in the state of quantitative change. On the other hand, the dissolution of unity, that is, the destruction of this solidarity, combination, harmony, balance, stalemate, dead-

³³ V. I. Lenin, "On the Question of Dialectics," *Collected Works*, Vol. XXXVIII.

lock, rest, constancy, equilibrium, solidity, and attraction, and the change of each into its opposite are all the appearances of things in the state of qualitative change, the transformation of one process into another. Things are constantly transforming themselves from the first into the second state of motion; the struggle of opposites goes on in both states but the contradiction is resolved through the second state. That is why we say that the unity of opposites is conditional, temporary and relative, while the struggle of mutually exclusive opposites is absolute.

When we said above that two opposite things can coexist in a single entity and can transform themselves into each other because there is identity between them, we were speaking of conditionality, that is to say, in given conditions two contradictory things can be united and can transform themselves into each other, but in the absence of these conditions, they cannot constitute a contradiction, cannot coexist in the same entity and cannot transform themselves into one another. It is because the identity of opposites obtains only in given conditions that we have said identity is conditional and relative. We may add that the struggle between opposites permeates a process from beginning to end and makes one process transform itself into another, that it is ubiquitous, and that struggle is therefore unconditional and absolute.

The combination of conditional, relative identity and unconditional, absolute struggle constitutes the movement of opposites in all things.

We Chinese often say, “Things that oppose each other also complement each other.”³⁴ That is, things opposed to each other have identity. This saying is dialectical and contrary to metaphysics. “Oppose each other” refers to the mutual exclusion or the struggle of two contradictory aspects. “Complement each other” means that in given conditions the two contradictory aspects unite and achieve identity. Yet struggle is inherent in identity, and without struggle there can be no identity.

In identity there is struggle, in particularity there is universality, and in individuality there is generality. To quote Lenin, “there is an absolute in the relative.”³⁵

VI. The Place of Antagonism in Contradiction

The question of the struggle of opposites includes the question of what is antagonism. Our answer is that antagonism is one form, but not the only form, of the struggle of opposites.

In human history, antagonism between classes exists as a particular manifestation of the struggle of opposites. Consider the contradiction between

³⁴ The saying, “Things that oppose each other also complement each other,” first appeared in *The History of the Earlier Han Dynasty* by Ban Gu, a celebrated historian in the 1st century AD. It has long been a popular saying.

³⁵ V. I. Lenin, “On the Question of Dialectics,” *Collected Works*, Vol. XXXVIII.

the exploiting and the exploited classes. Such contradictory classes coexist for a long time in the same society, be it slave society, feudal society or capitalist society, and they struggle with each other; but it is not until the contradiction between the two classes develops to a certain stage that it assumes the form of open antagonism and develops into revolution. The same holds for the transformation of peace into war in class society.

Before it explodes, a bomb is a single entity in which opposites coexist in given conditions. The explosion takes place only when a new condition, ignition, is present. An analogous situation arises in all those natural phenomena that finally assume the form of open conflict to resolve old contradictions and produce new things.

It is highly important to grasp this fact. It enables us to understand that revolutions and revolutionary wars are inevitable in class society and that without them, it is impossible to accomplish any leap in social development and to overthrow the reactionary ruling classes and therefore impossible for the people to win political power. Communists must expose the deceitful propaganda of the reactionaries, such as the assertion that social revolution is unnecessary and impossible. They must firmly uphold the Marxist-Leninist theory of social revolution and enable the people to understand that social revolution is not only entirely necessary but also entirely practicable, and that the whole history

of mankind and the triumph of the Soviet Union have confirmed this scientific truth.

However, we must make a concrete study of the circumstances of each specific struggle of opposites and should not arbitrarily apply the formula discussed above to everything. Contradiction and struggle are universal and absolute, but the methods of resolving contradictions, that is, the forms of struggle, differ according to the differences in the nature of the contradictions. Some contradictions are characterized by open antagonism, others are not. In accordance with the concrete development of things, some contradictions that were originally non-antagonistic develop into antagonistic ones, while others that were originally antagonistic develop into non-antagonistic ones.

As already mentioned, so long as classes exist, contradictions between correct and incorrect ideas in the Communist Party are reflections within the Party of class contradictions. At first, with regard to certain issues, such contradictions may not manifest themselves as antagonistic. But with the development of the class struggle, they may grow and become antagonistic. The history of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union shows us that the contradictions between the correct thinking of Lenin and Stalin and the fallacious thinking of Trotsky, Bukharin, and others did not at first manifest themselves in an antagonistic form, but that later they did develop into antagonism. There are similar cases

in the history of the Chinese Communist Party. At first the contradictions between the correct thinking of many of our Party comrades and the fallacious thinking of Chen Duxiu, Zhang Guotao, and others also did not manifest themselves in an antagonistic form, but later they did develop into antagonism. At present the contradiction between correct and incorrect thinking in our Party does not manifest itself in an antagonistic form, and if comrades who have committed mistakes can correct them, it will not develop into antagonism. Therefore, the Party must on the one hand wage a serious struggle against erroneous thinking, and on the other give the comrades who have committed errors ample opportunity to wake up. This being the case, excessive struggle is obviously inappropriate. But if the people who have committed errors persist in them and aggravate them, there is the possibility that this contradiction will develop into antagonism.

Economically, the contradiction between town and country is an extremely antagonistic one both in capitalist society, where under the rule of the bourgeoisie the towns ruthlessly plunder the countryside, and in the Kuomintang areas in China, where under the rule of foreign imperialism and the Chinese big comprador bourgeoisie, the towns most rapaciously plunder the countryside. But in a socialist country and in our revolutionary base areas, this antagonistic contradiction has changed

into one that is non-antagonistic; and when communist society is reached it will be abolished.

Lenin said, "Antagonism and contradiction are not at all one and the same. Under socialism, the first will disappear, the second will remain."³⁶ That is to say, antagonism is one form, but not the only form, of the struggle of opposites; the formula of antagonism cannot be arbitrarily applied everywhere.

VII. Conclusion

We may now say a few words to sum up. The law of contradiction in things, that is, the law of the unity of opposites, is the fundamental law of nature and of society and therefore also the fundamental law of thought. It stands opposed to the metaphysical world outlook. It represents a great revolution in the history of human knowledge. According to dialectical materialism, contradiction is present in all processes of objectively existing things and of subjective thought and permeates all these processes from beginning to end; this is the universality and absoluteness of contradiction. Each contradiction and each of its aspects have their respective characteristics; this is the particularity and relativity of contradiction. In given conditions, opposites possess identity, and consequently can coexist in a single entity and can transform themselves into each

³⁶ V. I. Lenin, "Remarks on N. I. Bukharin's Economics of the Transitional Period" in *Selected Works*, Russ. ed., Moscow-Leningrad, 1931, Vol. XI, p. 357.

other; this again is the particularity and relativity of contradiction. But the struggle of opposites is ceaseless, it goes on both when the opposites are coexisting and when they are transforming themselves into each other, and becomes especially conspicuous when they are transforming themselves into one another; this again is the universality and absoluteness of contradiction. In studying the particularity and relativity of contradiction, we must give attention to the distinction between the principal contradiction and the non-principal contradictions and to the distinction between the principal aspect and the non-principal aspect of a contradiction; in studying the universality of contradiction and the struggle of opposites in contradiction, we must give attention to the distinction between the different forms of struggle. Otherwise we shall make mistakes. If, through study, we achieve a real understanding of the essentials explained above, we shall be able to demolish dogmatist ideas that are contrary to the basic principles of Marxism-Leninism and detrimental to our revolutionary cause, and our comrades with practical experience will be able to organize their experience into principles and avoid repeating empiricist errors. These are a few simple conclusions from our study of the law of contradiction.

ON THE CORRECT HANDLING OF CONTRADICTIONS AMONG THE PEOPLE³⁷

February 27, 1957

Our general subject is the correct handling of contradictions among the people. For convenience, let us discuss it under twelve subheadings. Although reference will be made to contradictions between ourselves and our enemies, this discussion will center on contradictions among the people.

I. Two Different Types of Contradictions

Never has our country been as united as it is today. The victories of the bourgeois-democratic revolution and the socialist revolution, coupled with our achievements in socialist construction, have rapidly changed the face of old China. Now we see before us an even brighter future. The days of national disunity and turmoil, which the people detested, have gone forever. Led by the working class and the Communist Party, and united as one, our six hundred million people are engaged in the great work of building socialism. Unification of the country, unity of the people and unity among our various nationalities—these are the basic guarantees for the sure triumph of our cause. However, this does not mean that there are no longer any

³⁷ *Speech at the Eleventh Session (Enlarged) of the Supreme State Conference.* Comrade Mao Zedong went over the verbatim record and made certain additions before its publication in the People's Daily on June 19, 1957.

contradictions in our society. It would be naive to imagine that there are no more contradictions. To do so would be to fly in the face of objective reality. We are confronted by two types of social contradictions—contradictions between ourselves and the enemy and contradictions among the people. These two types of contradictions are totally different in nature.

The term “the people” has different meanings in different countries, and in different historical periods in each country. Take our country for example. During the War of Resistance to Japanese Aggression, all those classes, strata, and social groups that opposed Japanese aggression belonged to the category of the people, while the Japanese imperialists, Chinese traitors and the pro-Japanese elements belonged to the category of enemies of the people. During the War of Liberation, the United States imperialists and their henchmen—the bureaucrat-capitalists and landlord class—and the Kuo-mintang reactionaries, who represented these two classes, were the enemies of the people, while all other classes, strata, and social groups that opposed these enemies, belonged to the category of the people. At this stage of building socialism, all classes, strata, and social groups that approve, support, and work for the cause of socialist construction belong to the category of the people, while those social forces and groups that resist the socialist revolution,

and are hostile to and try to wreck socialist construction, are enemies of the people.

The contradictions between ourselves and our enemies are antagonistic ones. Within the ranks of the people, contradictions among the working people are non-antagonistic, while those between the exploiters and the exploited classes have, apart from their antagonistic aspect, a non-antagonistic aspect. Contradictions among the people have always existed. But their content differs in each period of the revolution and during the building of socialism. In the conditions existing in China today what we call contradictions among the people include the following: contradictions within the working class; contradictions within the peasantry; contradictions within the intelligentsia; contradictions between the working class and the peasantry; contradictions between the working class and peasantry on the one hand and the intelligentsia on the other; contradictions between the working class and other sections of the working people on the one hand and the national bourgeoisie on the other; contradictions within the national bourgeoisie, and so forth. Our people's government is a government that truly represents the interests of the people and serves the people, yet certain contradictions do exist between the government and the masses. These include contradictions between the interests of the State, collective interests, and individual interests; between democracy and centralism; between those

in positions of leadership and the led, and contradictions arising from the bureaucratic practices of certain state functionaries in their relations with the masses. All these are contradictions among the people. Generally speaking, underlying the contradictions among the people is the basic identity of the interests of the people.

In our country, the contradiction between the working class and the national bourgeoisie is a contradiction among the people. The class struggle waged between the two is, by and large, a class struggle within the ranks of the people. This is because of the dual character of the national bourgeoisie in our country. In the years of the bourgeois-democratic revolution, there was a revolutionary side to their character; there was also a tendency to compromise with the enemy—this was the other side. In the period of the socialist revolution, exploitation of the working class to make profits is one side, while support of the Constitution and willingness to accept socialist transformation is the other. The national bourgeoisie differs from the imperialists, the landlords and the bureaucrat-capitalists. The contradiction between exploiter and exploited, which exists between the national bourgeoisie and the working class, is an antagonistic one. But, in the concrete conditions existing in China, such an antagonistic contradiction, if properly handled, can be transformed into a non-antagonistic one and resolved in a peaceful way. But if it is not properly

handled, if, say, we do not follow a policy of uniting, criticizing and educating the national bourgeoisie, or if the national bourgeoisie does not accept this policy, then the contradiction between the working class and the national bourgeoisie can turn into an antagonistic contradiction as between ourselves and the enemy.

Since the contradictions between ourselves and the enemy and those among the people differ in nature, they must be solved in different ways. To put it briefly, the former is a matter of drawing a line between ourselves and our enemies, while the latter is a matter of distinguishing between right and wrong. It is, of course, true that drawing a line between ourselves and our enemies is also a question of distinguishing between right and wrong. For example, the question as to who is right, we or the reactionaries at home and abroad—that is, the imperialists, the feudalists and bureaucrat-capitalists—is also a question of distinguishing between right and wrong, but it is different in nature from questions of right and wrong among the people.

Ours is a people's democratic dictatorship, led by the working class and based on the worker-peasant alliance. What is this dictatorship for? Its first function is to suppress the reactionary classes and elements and those exploiters in the country who set themselves against the socialist revolution, to suppress all those who try to wreck our socialist construction; that is to say, to solve the contradictions

between ourselves and the enemy within the country. For instance, to arrest, try and sentence certain counterrevolutionaries, and for a specified period of time to deprive landlords and bureaucrat-capitalists of their right to vote and freedom of speech—all this comes within the scope of our dictatorship. To maintain law and order and safeguard the interests of the people, it is likewise necessary to exercise dictatorship over robbers, swindlers, murderers, arsonists, hooligans and other scoundrels who seriously disrupt social order.

The second function of this dictatorship is to protect our country from subversive activities and possible aggression by the external enemy. Should that happen, it is the task of this dictatorship to solve the external contradiction between ourselves and the enemy. The aim of this dictatorship is to protect all our people so that they can work in peace and build China into a socialist country with a modern industry, agriculture, science and culture.

Who is to exercise this dictatorship? Naturally it must be the working class and the entire people led by it. Dictatorship does not apply in the ranks of the people. The people cannot possibly exercise dictatorship over themselves, nor must one section of the people oppress another. Lawbreakers among the people will be punished according to law, but this is different in principle from the exercise of dictatorship to suppress enemies of the people. What applies among the people is democratic centralism.

Our Constitution lays it down that citizens of the People's Republic of China enjoy freedom of speech, the press, assembly, association, procession, demonstration, religious belief, and so on. Our Constitution also provides that the organs of state must practice democratic centralism, that they must rely on the masses and that their personnel must serve the people. Our socialist democracy is the broadest kind of democracy, such as is not to be found in any capitalist country. Our dictatorship is the people's democratic dictatorship, led by the working class and based on the worker-peasant alliance. That is to say, democracy operates within the ranks of the people, while the working class, uniting with all others enjoying civil rights, and in the first place with the peasantry, enforces dictatorship over the reactionary classes and elements and all those who resist socialist transformation and oppose socialist construction. By civil rights, we mean, politically, the rights of freedom and democracy.

But this freedom is freedom with leadership, and this democracy is democracy under centralized guidance, not anarchy. Anarchy does not conform to the interests or wishes of the people.

Certain people in our country were delighted when the Hungarian events took place. They hoped that something similar would happen in China, that thousands upon thousands of people would demonstrate in the streets against the People's Government. Such hopes ran counter to the interests

of the masses and therefore could not possibly get their support. In Hungary, a section of the people, deceived by domestic and foreign counterrevolutionaries, made the mistake of resorting to acts of violence against the people's government, with the result that both the State and the people suffered for it. The damage done to the country's economy in a few weeks of rioting will take a long time to repair. There were other people in our country who took a wavering attitude towards the Hungarian events because they were ignorant about the actual world situation. They felt that there was too little freedom under our people's democracy and that there was more freedom under Western parliamentary democracy. They ask for the adoption of the two-party system of the West, where one party is in office and the other out of office. But this so-called two-party system is nothing but a means of maintaining the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie; under no circumstances can it safeguard the freedom of the working people. As a matter of fact, freedom and democracy cannot exist in the abstract; they only exist in the concrete. In a society where there is class struggle, when the exploiting classes are free to exploit the working people, the working people will have no freedom from being exploited. When there is democracy for the bourgeoisie there can be no democracy for the proletariat and other working people. In some capitalist countries the Communist Parties are allowed to exist legally, but only to the

extent that they do not endanger the fundamental interests of the bourgeoisie; beyond that they are not permitted legal existence. Those who demand freedom and democracy in the abstract regard democracy as an end and not a means. Democracy sometimes seems to be an end, but it is in fact only a means. Marxism teaches us that democracy is part of the superstructure and belongs to the category of politics. That is to say, in the last analysis, it serves the economic base. The same is true of freedom. Both democracy and freedom are relative, not absolute, and they come into being and develop under specific historical circumstances. Within the ranks of our people, democracy stands in relation to centralism, and freedom to discipline. They are two conflicting aspects of a single entity, contradictory as well as united, and we should not one-sidedly emphasize one to the denial of the other. Within the ranks of the people, we cannot do without freedom, nor can we do without discipline; we cannot do without democracy, nor can we do without centralism. Our democratic centralism means the unity of democracy and centralism and the unity of freedom and discipline. Under this system, the people enjoy a wide measure of democracy and freedom, but at the same time they have to keep themselves within the bounds of socialist discipline. All this is well understood by the people.

While we stand for freedom with leadership and democracy under centralized guidance, in no sense

do we mean that coercive measures should be taken to settle ideological matters and questions involving the distinction between right and wrong among the people. Any attempt to deal with ideological matters or questions involving right and wrong by administrative orders or coercive measures will not only be ineffective but harmful. We cannot abolish religion by administrative orders; nor can we force people not to believe in it. We cannot compel people to give up idealism, any more than we can force them to believe in Marxism. In settling matters of an ideological nature or controversial issues among the people, we can only use democratic methods, methods of discussion, of criticism, of persuasion and education, not coercive, high-handed methods. In order to carry on their production and studies effectively and to order their lives properly, the people want their government, the leaders of productive work and of educational and cultural bodies to issue suitable orders of an obligatory nature. It is common sense that the maintenance of law and order would be impossible without administrative orders. Administrative orders and the method of persuasion and education complement each other in solving contradictions among the people. Administrative orders issued for the maintenance of social order must be accompanied by persuasion and education, for in many cases administrative orders alone will not work.

In 1942 we worked out the formula “unity-criticism-unity” to describe this democratic method of resolving contradictions among the people. To elaborate, this means to start off with a desire for unity and resolve contradictions through criticism or struggle so as to achieve a new unity on a new basis. Our experience shows that this is a proper method of resolving contradictions among the people. In 1942 we used this method to resolve contradictions inside the Communist Party, namely, contradictions between the doctrinaires and the rank-and-file membership, between doctrinairism and Marxism. At one time in waging inner-Party struggle, the “left” doctrinaires used the method of “ruthless struggle and merciless blows.” This method was wrong. In place of it, in criticizing “left” doctrinairism, we used a new one: to start from a desire for unity, and thrash out questions of right and wrong through criticism or argument, and so achieve a new unity on a new basis. This was the method used in the “rectification campaign” of 1942. A few years later in 1945 when the Chinese Communist Party held its Seventh National Congress, unity was thus achieved throughout the Party and the great victory of the people’s revolution was assured. The essential thing is to start with a desire for unity. Without this subjective desire for unity, once the struggle starts it is liable to get out of hand. Wouldn’t this then be the same as “ruthless struggle and merciless blows?” Would there be any Party

unity left to speak of? It was this experience that led us to the formula: “unity-criticism-unity.” Or, in other words, “take warning from the past in order to be more careful in the future,” and “treat the illness in order to save the patient.” We extended this method beyond our Party. During the war it was used very successfully in the anti-Japanese bases to deal with relations between those in positions of leadership and the masses; between the army and the civilian population; between officers and men; between different units of the army; and between various groups of cadres. The use of this method can be traced back to still earlier times in the history of our Party. We began to build our revolutionary armed forces and bases in the south in 1927 and ever since then we have used this method to deal with relations between the Party and the masses, between the army and the civilian population, between officers and men, and in general with relations among the people. The only difference is that during the Anti-Japanese War, this method was used much more purposefully. After the liberation of the country, we used this same method—“unity-criticism-unity”—in our relations with other democratic parties and industrial and commercial circles. Now our task is to continue to extend and make still better use of this method throughout the ranks of the people; we want all our factories, cooperatives, business establishments, schools, government offices, public bodies, in a word, all the six

hundred million of our people, to use it in resolving contradictions among themselves.

Under ordinary circumstances, contradictions among the people are not antagonistic. But if they are not dealt with properly, or if we relax vigilance and lower our guard, antagonism may arise. In a socialist country, such a development is usually only of a localized and temporary nature. This is because there, the exploitation of man by man has been abolished and the interests of the people are basically the same. Such antagonistic actions on a fairly wide scale as took place during the Hungarian events are accounted for by the fact that domestic and foreign counterrevolutionary elements were at work. These actions were also of a temporary, though special, nature. In a case like this, the reactionaries in a socialist country, in league with the imperialists, take advantage of contradictions among the people to foment disunity and dissension and fan the flames of disorder in an attempt to achieve their conspiratorial aims. This lesson of the Hungarian events deserves our attention.

Many people seem to think that the proposal to use democratic methods to resolve contradictions among the people raises a new question. But actually that is not so. Marxists have always held that the cause of the proletariat can only be promoted by relying on the masses of the people; that communists must use democratic methods of persuasion and education when working among the

working people and must on no account resort to commandism or coercion. The Chinese Communist Party faithfully adheres to this Marxist-Leninist principle. We have always maintained that, under the people's democratic dictatorship, two different methods—dictatorial and democratic—should be used to resolve the two different kinds of contradictions—those between ourselves and the enemy and those among the people. This idea has been explained again and again in our Party documents and in speeches by many responsible Party leaders. In my article "On the People's Democratic Dictatorship" written in 1949, I said: "These two aspects, democracy for the people and dictatorship over the reactionaries, when combined, constitute the people's democratic dictatorship." I also pointed out that, in order to settle questions within the ranks of the people, "the methods we use are democratic, that is, methods of persuasion and not of compulsion." In addressing the Second Session of the National Committee of the People's Political Consultative Conference in June 1950, I said further: "The people's democratic dictatorship uses two methods. In regard to the enemy, it uses the method of dictatorship, that is, it forbids them to take part in political activities for as long a period of time as is necessary, it compels them to obey the laws of the People's Government, and it compels them to work, and to transform themselves into new people through work. In regard to the people, on the con-

trary, it does not use compulsion, it uses democratic methods. That is, it must allow the people to take part in political activities, and, far from compelling them to do this or that, uses the democratic methods of education and persuasion. This education is self-education among the people, and criticism and self-criticism is the fundamental method of self-education.” We have spoken on this question of using democratic methods to resolve contradictions among the people on many occasions in the past, and, furthermore, we have in the main acted on this principle, a principle of which many cadres and many people have a practical understanding. Why then do some people now feel that this is a new issue? The reason is that, in the past, an acute struggle raged between ourselves and our enemies both within and without, and contradictions among the people did not attract as much attention as they do today.

Quite a few people fail to make a clear distinction between these two different types of contradictions—those between ourselves and the enemy and those among the people—and are prone to confuse the two. It must be admitted that it is sometimes quite easy to confuse them. We have had instances of such confusion in our work in the past. In the suppression of counterrevolutionaries, good people were sometimes mistaken for bad. Such things have happened before and still happen today. We are able to keep mistakes within bounds because it has been

our policy to draw a sharp line between ourselves and the enemy and to rectify mistakes whenever discovered.

Marxist philosophy holds that the law of the unity of opposites is a fundamental law of the universe. This law operates everywhere, in the natural world, in human society, and in man's thinking. Opposites in contradiction unite as well as struggle with each other and thus impel all things to move and change. Contradictions exist everywhere, but as things differ in nature, so do contradictions. In any given phenomenon or thing, the unity of opposites is conditional, temporary and transitory, and hence relative, whereas struggle between opposites is absolute. Lenin gave a very clear exposition of this law. In our country, a growing number of people have come to understand it. For many people, however, acceptance of this law is one thing, and its application in examining and dealing with problems is quite another. Many dare not acknowledge openly that there still exist contradictions among the people, which are the very forces that move our society forward. Many people refuse to admit that contradictions still exist in a socialist society, with the result that when confronted with social contradictions they become timid and helpless. They do not understand that socialist society grows more united and consolidated precisely through the ceaseless process of correctly dealing with and resolving contradictions. For this reason, we need to explain

things to our people, and to our cadres in the first place, to help them understand contradictions in a socialist society and learn how to deal with such contradictions in a correct way.

Contradictions in socialist society are fundamentally different from those in the old societies, such as capitalist society. In capitalist society contradictions find expression in acute antagonisms and conflicts, in sharp class struggle; they cannot be resolved by the capitalist system itself and can only be resolved by socialist revolution. The case is quite different with contradictions in socialist society; on the contrary, they are not antagonistic and can be resolved one after the other by the socialist system itself.

The basic contradictions in socialist society are still those between the relations of production and the productive forces, and between the superstructure and the economic base. These contradictions, however, are fundamentally different in character and have different features from contradictions between the relations of production and the productive forces and between the superstructure and the economic base in the old societies. The present social system of our country is far superior to that of the old days. If this were not so, the old system would not have been overthrown and the new system could not have been set up. When we say that socialist relations of production are better suited than the old relations of production to the

development of the productive forces, we mean that the former permits the productive forces to develop at a speed unparalleled in the old society, so that production can expand steadily and the constantly growing needs of the people can be met step by step. Under the rule of imperialism, feudalism, and bureaucrat-capitalism, production in old China developed very slowly. For more than fifty years before liberation, China produced only a few tens of thousand tons of steel a year, not counting the output of the northeastern provinces. If we include these provinces, the peak annual output of steel of our country was only something over nine hundred thousand tons. In 1949, the country's output of steel was only something over one hundred thousand tons. Now, only seven years after liberation of the country, our steel output already exceeds four million tons. In old China, there was hardly any engineering industry to speak of; automobile and aircraft industries were nonexistent. Now we have them. When the people overthrew the rule of imperialism, feudalism, and bureaucrat-capitalism, many were not clear as to which way China should head—towards capitalism or towards socialism. Facts give the answer: only socialism can save China. The socialist system has promoted the rapid development of the productive forces of our country, a fact even our enemies abroad have had to acknowledge.

But our socialist system has only just been set up; it is not yet fully established or fully consolidated. In joint state-private industrial and commercial enterprises, capitalists still get a fixed rate of interest on their capital—that is to say, exploitation still exists. So far as ownership is concerned, these enterprises are not yet completely socialist in nature. A number of our agricultural and handicraft producers' cooperatives are still semi-socialist, while even in the fully socialist cooperatives certain problems of ownership remain to be solved. Relationships in production and exchange are still being gradually established along socialist lines in various sectors of our economy, and more and more appropriate forms are being sought. It is a complicated problem to settle on a proper ratio between accumulation and consumption within that sector of socialist economy in which the means of production are owned by the whole people and that sector in which the means of production are collectively owned, as well as between these two sectors. It is not easy to work out a perfectly rational solution to this problem all at once.

To sum up, socialist relations of production have been established; they are suited to the development of the productive forces, but they are still far from perfect, and their imperfect aspects stand in contradiction to the development of the productive forces. There is conformity as well as contradiction between the relations of production and the devel-

opment of the productive forces; similarly, there is conformity as well as contradiction between the superstructure and the economic base. The superstructure—our state institutions of people's democratic dictatorship and its laws, and socialist ideology under the guidance of Marxism-Leninism—has played a positive role in facilitating the victory of socialist transformation and establishment of a socialist organization of labor; it is suited to the socialist economic base, that is, socialist relations of production. But the existence of bourgeois ideology, a certain bureaucratic style of work in our state organs and defects in some of the links in our state institutions are in contradiction with the socialist economic base. We must continue to resolve all such contradictions in the light of our specific conditions. Of course, as these contradictions are resolved, new problems and new contradictions will emerge and call for solution. For instance, a constant process of readjustment through state planning is needed to deal with the contradiction between production and the needs of society, which will long remain an objective reality. Every year our country draws up an economic plan in order to establish a proper ratio between accumulation and consumption and achieve a balance between production and needs. "Balance" is nothing but a temporary, relative, unity of opposites. By the end of each year, such a balance, taken as a whole, is upset by the struggle of opposites; the unity undergoes a change, balance

becomes imbalance, unity becomes disunity, and once again it is necessary to work out a balance and unity for the next year. Herein lies the superiority of our planned economy. As a matter of fact, this balance, this unity, is partially upset every month or every quarter, and partial readjustments are called for. Sometimes, because our arrangements do not correspond to objective reality, contradictions arise and the balance is upset; this is what we call making a mistake. Contradictions arise continually and are continually resolved; this is the dialectical law of the development of things. This is how things stand today; the turbulent class struggles waged by the masses on a large-scale characteristic of the revolutionary periods have, in the main, concluded, but class struggle is not entirely over. While the broad masses of the people welcome the new system, they are not yet quite accustomed to it. Government workers are not sufficiently experienced, and should continue to examine and explore ways of dealing with questions relating to specific policies.

In other words, time is needed for our socialist system to grow and consolidate itself, for the masses to get accustomed to the new system, and for government workers to study and acquire experience. It is imperative that at this juncture we raise the question of distinguishing contradictions among the people from contradictions between ourselves and the enemy, as well as the question of the proper handling of contradictions among the people, so as

to rally the people of all nationalities in our country to wage a new battle—the battle against nature—to develop our economy and culture, enable all our people to go through this transition period in a fairly smooth way, make our new system secure, and build up our new state.

II. The Suppression of Counterrevolution

The question of suppressing counterrevolutionaries is a question of the struggle of opposites in the contradiction between ourselves and the enemy. Among the people, there are some who hold somewhat different views on this question. Two kinds of people hold views differing from ours. Those with a rightist way of thinking make no distinction between ourselves and the enemy and mistake our enemies for our own people. They regard as friends the very people the broad masses regard as enemies. Those with a “leftist” way of thinking so magnify contradictions between ourselves and the enemy that they mistake certain contradictions among the people for contradictions between ourselves and the enemy, and regard as counterrevolutionaries persons who really aren’t. Both these views are wrong. Neither of them will enable us to handle properly the question of suppressing counterrevolution, or to correctly assess the results in this work.

If we want to correctly evaluate the results of our efforts to suppress counterrevolution here, let us see what effect the Hungarian events had in our country. These events caused some of our intellectuals to

lose their balance a bit, but there were no squalls in our country. Why? One reason, it must be said, was that we had succeeded in suppressing counterrevolution quite thoroughly.

Of course, the consolidation of our state is not due primarily to the suppression of counterrevolution. It is due primarily to the fact that we have a Communist Party and a Liberation Army both steeled in decades of revolutionary struggle, and a working people likewise so steeled. Our Party and our armed forces are rooted in the masses, have been tempered in the flames of a protracted revolution; they are strong and they can fight. Our People's Republic was not built overnight. It developed step by step out of the revolutionary base areas. A number of democratic personages have also been tempered in the struggle in varying degrees, and they went through troubled times together with us. Some intellectuals were tempered in the struggles against imperialism and reaction; since Liberation many have gone through a process of ideological remolding that was aimed at making a clear distinction between ourselves and the enemy.

In addition, the consolidation of our state is due to the fact that our economic measures are basically sound, that the people's livelihood is secure and steadily being improved, that our policies towards the national bourgeoisie and other classes are also correct and so on. Nevertheless, our success in suppressing counterrevolution is undoubtedly an

important reason for the consolidation of our state. Because of all this, although many of our college students come from families other than those of the working people, all of them, with few exceptions, are patriotic and support socialism; they didn't give way to unrest during the Hungarian events. The same was true of the national bourgeoisie, to say nothing of the basic masses—the workers and peasants.

After Liberation, we rooted out a number of counterrevolutionaries. Some were sentenced to death because they had committed serious crimes. This was absolutely necessary; it was the demand of the masses; it was done to free them from long years of oppression by counterrevolutionaries and all kinds of local tyrants—in other words, to liberate the productive forces. If we had not done so, the masses would not have been able to lift their heads.

Since 1956, however, there has been a radical change in the situation. In the country as a whole, the main force of the counterrevolution has been rooted out. Our basic task is no longer to set free the productive forces but to protect and expand them in the context of the new relations of production. Some people do not understand that our present policy fits the present situation and our past policy fit the past situation; they want to make use of the present policy to reverse decisions on past cases and to deny the great success we achieved in

suppressing counterrevolution. This is quite wrong, and the masses will not permit it.

As regards the suppression of counterrevolution, the main thing is that we have achieved successes, but mistakes have also been made. There were excesses in some cases and in other cases counterrevolutionaries were overlooked. Our policy is: "Counterrevolutionaries must be suppressed whenever they are found, mistakes must be corrected whenever they are discovered." The line we adopted in this work was the mass line, that is, the suppression of counterrevolution by the people themselves. Of course, even with the adoption of this line, mistakes will still occur in our work, but they will be fewer and easier to correct. The masses have gained experience through this struggle. From what was done correctly they learned how things should be done. From what was done wrong they learned useful lessons as to why mistakes were made.

Steps have been or are being taken to correct mistakes that have already been discovered in the work of suppressing counterrevolutionaries. Those not yet discovered will be corrected as soon as they come to light. Decisions on exoneration and rehabilitation should receive the same measure of publicity as the original mistaken decisions. I propose that a comprehensive review of the work of suppressing counterrevolution be made this year or next to sum up experience, foster a spirit of righteousness and combat unhealthy tendencies. Nationally, this task

should be handled by the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress and the Standing Committee of the People's Political Consultative Conference, and locally, by the provincial and municipal people's councils, and committees of the People's Political Consultative Conference. In this review, we must help and not pour cold water on the large numbers of functionaries and activists who took part in the work. It is not right to dampen their spirits. Nonetheless, wrongs must be righted when they are discovered. This must be the attitude of all the public security organs, the procuracies and the judicial departments, prisons or agencies charged with the reform of criminals through labor. We hope that wherever possible members of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress and of the People's Political Consultative Conference and the people's deputies will all take part in this review. This will be of help in perfecting our legal system and in dealing correctly with counterrevolutionaries and other criminals.

The present situation with regard to counterrevolutionaries can be described in these words: there still are counterrevolutionaries, but not many. In the first place, there still are counterrevolutionaries. Some people say that there aren't any more left and all is at peace—that we can pile up our pillows and just go to sleep. But this is not the way things are. The fact is, there still are counterrevolutionaries (of course, that is not to say you'll find them every-

where and in every organization), and we must continue to fight them. It must be understood that the hidden counterrevolutionaries still at large will not take things lying down, but will certainly seize every opportunity to make trouble. Also, the US imperialists and the Chiang Kai-shek clique are constantly sending in secret agents to carry on disruptive activities. Even when all the existing counterrevolutionaries have been rooted out, new ones may emerge. If we drop our guard, we shall be badly fooled and shall suffer for it severely. Wherever counterrevolutionaries are found making trouble, they should be rooted out with a firm hand. But, taking the country as a whole, there are certainly not many counterrevolutionaries. It would be wrong to say that there are still large numbers of counterrevolutionaries at large. Acceptance of that view will also breed confusion.

III. Agriculture Cooperation

We have a rural population of over five hundred million, so the situation of our peasants has a very important bearing on the development of our economy and the consolidation of our state power. In my view, the situation is basically sound. The organization of agricultural cooperatives has been successfully completed and this has solved a major contradiction in our country—that between socialist industrialization and individual farm economy. The organization of cooperatives was completed swiftly, and so some people were worried that something

untoward might occur. Some things did go wrong but, fortunately, they were not so serious. The movement on the whole is healthy. The peasants are working with a will, and last year despite the worst floods, droughts, and typhoons in years, they were still able to increase the output of food crops. Yet some people have stirred up a miniature typhoon; they are grouching that cooperative farming won't do, that it has no superior qualities. Does agricultural cooperation possess superior qualities or does it not? Among the documents distributed at today's meeting is one concerning the Wang Guofan Cooperative in Zunhua County, Hebei Province, which I suggest you read. This cooperative is situated in a hilly region that was very poor in the past and which for a number of years depended on relief grain from the People's Government. When the cooperative was first set up in 1953, people called it the "Paupers' Co-op." But as a result of four years of hard struggle, it has become better off year by year, and now most of its households have reserves of grain. What this cooperative could do, other cooperatives should also be able to do under normal conditions, even if it may take a bit longer. It is clear then that there are no grounds for the view that something has gone wrong with the cooperative movement.

It is also clear that it takes hard struggle to build cooperatives. New things always have to experience difficulties and ups and downs to get over as they grow. It would be sheer fantasy to imagine that the

cause of socialism is all plain sailing and easy success, with no difficulties and setbacks, or need not make tremendous efforts.

Who are the staunch supporters of the cooperatives? They are the overwhelming majority of the poor peasants and lower-middle peasants. These together account for more than seventy percent of the rural population. Most of the rest also cherish hopes for the future of the cooperatives. Only a very small minority are really dissatisfied. But quite a number of persons have failed to analyze this situation. They have not made a comprehensive study of the achievements and shortcomings of the cooperatives and the causes of these shortcomings; they take part of the picture for the whole. And so, among some people a miniature typhoon has whirled up around what they call the cooperatives having no superior qualities.

How long will it take to consolidate the cooperatives and end these arguments about their not having any superior qualities? Judging from the actual experience of many cooperatives, this will probably take five years or a bit longer. As most of our cooperatives are only a little over a year old, it would be unreasonable to expect too much from them so soon. In my view, we'll be doing well enough if we succeed in establishing the cooperatives during the period of the First Five-Year Plan and consolidating them during the Second.

The cooperatives are steadily being consolidated. Certain contradictions remain to be resolved, such as those between the State and the cooperatives, and those within and between the cooperatives themselves. In resolving these contradictions we must keep problems of production and distribution constantly in mind. Take the question of production. On the one hand, the cooperative economy must be subject to the unified economic planning of the State but at the same time it should be allowed to retain a certain leeway and independence of action without prejudice to unified state planning or the policies and laws and regulations of the State. On the other hand, every household in a cooperative can make its own plans in regard to land reserved for private use and other economic undertakings left to private management, but it must comply with the overall plans of the cooperative or production team to which it belongs.

On the question of distribution, we must take into account the interests of the State, the cooperative, and the individual. We must find the correct way to handle the three-way relationship between the tax revenue of the State, accumulation of funds in the cooperative and the personal income of the peasant, and pay constant attention to making readjustments so as to resolve contradictions as they arise. Accumulation is essential for both the State and the cooperative, but in neither case should this be overdone. We should do everything possi-

ble to enable the peasants in normal years to raise their personal incomes year by year on the basis of increased production.

Many people say that the peasants lead a hard life. Is this true? In one sense, it is. That is to say, because the imperialists and their agents oppressed, exploited and impoverished our country for over a century, the standard of living not only of our peasants but of our workers and intellectuals as well is still low. We will need several decades of intensive efforts to raise the standard of living of our entire people step by step. In this sense, "hard" is the right word. But from another point of view, it is not right to say "hard." We refer to the allegation that, in the seven years since Liberation, the life of the workers has improved but not that of the peasants. As a matter of fact, with very few exceptions, both the workers and the peasants are better off than before.

Since Liberation, the peasants have rid themselves of landlord exploitation, and their production has increased year by year. Take the case of food crops. In 1949, the country's output was only something over 210,000 million catties. By 1956, it had risen to something over 360,000 million catties, an increase of nearly 150,000 million catties. The state agricultural tax is not heavy, amounting only to some 30,000 million catties a year. Grain bought from the peasants at normal prices only amounts to something over 50,000 million catties a year. These two items together total over 80,000 million cat-

ties. More than one half of this grain, furthermore, is sold in the villages and nearby towns. Obviously one cannot say that there has been no improvement in the life of the peasants. We are prepared to stabilize over a number of years the total amount of the grain tax and the amount of grain purchased by the State at approximately something over 80,000 million catties a year. This will help promote the development of agriculture and consolidate the cooperatives; the small number of grain-short households still found in the countryside will no longer go short, so that with the exception of certain peasants who grow industrial crops, all peasant households will then have reserves of food grain or at least become self-sufficient. In this way there will be no more poor peasants, and the standard of living of all the peasants will reach or surpass the level of that of the middle peasants.

It's not right to make a superficial comparison between the average annual income of a peasant and that of a worker and draw the conclusion that the one is too low and the other too high. The productivity of the workers is much higher than that of the peasants, while the cost of living for the peasants is much lower than that for workers in the cities; so it cannot be said that the workers receive special favors from the State. However, the wages of a small number of workers and some government personnel are rather too high—the peasants have reason to be dissatisfied with this—so it is necessary

to make certain appropriate readjustments in the light of specific circumstances.

IV. The Question of Industrialists and Businessmen

The year 1956 saw the transformation of privately owned industrial and commercial enterprises into joint state-private enterprises as well as the organization of cooperatives in agriculture and handicrafts as part of the transformation of our social system. The speed and smoothness with which this was carried out are closely related to the fact that we treated the contradiction between the working class and the national bourgeoisie as a contradiction among the people. Has this class contradiction been resolved completely? No, not yet. A considerable period of time is still required to do so. However, some people say that the capitalists have been so remolded that they are now not much different from the workers, and that further remolding is unnecessary. Others go so far as to say that the capitalists are even a bit better than the workers. Still others ask, if remolding is necessary, why doesn't the working class undergo remolding? Are these opinions correct? Of course not.

In building a socialist society, all need remolding—the exploiters as well as the working people. Who says the working class doesn't need it? Of course, remolding of the exploiters and that of the working people are two different types of remold-

ing. The two must not be confused. In the class struggle and the struggle against nature, the working class remolds the whole of society, and at the same time remolds itself. It must continue to learn in the process of its work and, step by step, overcome its shortcomings. It must never stop doing so. Take us who are present here for example. Many of us make some progress each year; that is to say, we are being remolded each year. I myself had all sorts of non-Marxist ideas before. It was only later that I embraced Marxism. I learned a little Marxism from books and so made an initial remolding of my ideas, but it was mainly through taking part in the class struggle over the years that I came to be remolded. And I must continue to study if I am to make further progress—otherwise I shall lag behind. Can the capitalists be so clever as to need no more remolding?

Some contend that the Chinese bourgeoisie no longer has two sides to its character, but only one side. Is this true? No. On the one hand, members of the bourgeoisie have already become managerial personnel in joint state-private enterprises and are being transformed from exploiters into working people living by their own labor. On the other hand, they still receive a fixed rate of interest on their investments in the joint enterprises. That is, they have not yet cut themselves loose from the roots of exploitation. Between them and the working class there is still a considerable gap in ideol-

ogy, sentiments and habits of life. How can it be said that they no longer have two sides to their character? Even when they stop receiving their fixed interest payments and rid themselves of the label "bourgeoisie," they will still need ideological remolding for quite some time. If it were held that the bourgeoisie no longer has a dual character, then such study and remolding for the capitalists would no longer be needed.

But it must be said that such a view doesn't tally with the actual circumstances of our industrialists and businessmen, nor with what most of them want. During the past few years, most of them have been willing to study and have made marked progress. Our industrialists and businessmen can be thoroughly remolded only in the course of work; they should work together with the staff and workers in the enterprises and make the enterprises the chief centers for remolding themselves. It is also important for them to change certain of their old views through study. Study for them should be optional. After they have attended study groups for some weeks, many industrialists and businessmen, on returning to their enterprises, find they speak more of a common language with the workers and the representatives of state shareholdings, and so work better together. They know from personal experience that it is good for them to keep on studying and remolding themselves. The idea just referred to that study and remolding are not necessary does not

reflect the views of the majority of industrialists and businessmen. Only a small number of them think that way.

V. The Question of Intellectuals

Contradictions within the ranks of the people in our country also find expression among our intellectuals. Several million intellectuals who worked for the old society have come to serve the new society. The question that now arises is how they can best meet the needs of the new society and how we can help them do so. This is also a contradiction among the people.

Most of our intellectuals have made marked progress during the past seven years. They express themselves in favor of the socialist system. Many of them are diligently studying Marxism, and some have become communists. Their number, though small, is growing steadily. There are, of course, still some intellectuals who are skeptical of socialism or who do not approve of it, but they are in a minority.

China needs as many intellectuals as she can get to carry through the colossal task of socialist construction. We should trust intellectuals who are really willing to serve the cause of socialism, radically improve our relations with them and help them solve whatever problems that have to be solved, so that they can give full play to their talents. Many of our comrades are not good at getting along with intellectuals. They are stiff with them, lack respect for their work, and interfere in scientific and cul-

tural matters in a way that is uncalled for. We must do away with all such shortcomings.

Our intellectuals have made some progress, but they should not be complacent. They must continue to remold themselves, gradually shed their bourgeois world outlook and acquire a proletarian, communist world outlook so that they can fully meet the needs of the new society and closely unite with the workers and peasants. This change in world outlook is a fundamental one, and up till now it cannot yet be said that most of our intellectuals have accomplished it. We hope that they will continue making progress, and, in the course of work and study, gradually acquire a communist world outlook, get a better grasp of Marxism-Leninism, and identify themselves with the workers and peasants. We hope they will not stop halfway, or, what is worse, slip back, for if they do they will find themselves in a blind alley.

Since the social system of our country has changed and the economic basis of bourgeois ideology has in the main been destroyed, it is not only necessary but also possible for large numbers of our intellectuals to change their world outlook. But a thorough change in world outlook takes quite a long time, and we should go about it patiently and not be impetuous. Actually there are bound to be some who are all along reluctant, ideologically, to accept Marxism-Leninism and communism. We should not be too exacting in what we expect of

them; as long as they comply with the requirements of the State and engage in legitimate pursuits, we should give them opportunities for suitable work.

There has been a falling off recently in ideological and political work among students and intellectuals, and some unhealthy tendencies have appeared. Some people apparently think that there is no longer any need to concern themselves about politics, the future of their motherland and the ideals of mankind. It seems as if Marxism that was once all the rage is not so much in fashion now. This being the case, we must improve our ideological and political work. Both students and intellectuals should study hard. In addition to specialized subjects, they should study Marxism-Leninism, current events and political affairs in order to progress both ideologically and politically. Not to have a correct political point of view is like having no soul. Ideological remolding in the past was necessary and has yielded positive results. But it was carried on in a somewhat rough-and-ready way and the feelings of some people were hurt. This was not good. We must avoid such shortcomings in the future. All departments and organizations concerned should take up their responsibilities with regard to ideological and political work. This applies to the Communist Party the Youth League, government departments responsible for this work, and especially heads of educational institutions and teachers. Our educational policy must enable everyone who gets

an education to develop morally, intellectually and physically and become a cultured, socialist-minded worker. We must spread the idea of building our country through hard work and thrift. We must see to it that all our young people understand that ours is still a very poor country, that we can't change this situation radically in a short time, and that only through the united efforts of our younger generation and all our people working with their own hands can our country be made strong and prosperous within a period of several decades. It is true that the establishment of our socialist system has opened the road leading to the ideal state of the future, but we must work hard, very hard indeed, if we are to make that ideal a reality. Some of our young people think that everything ought to be perfect once a socialist society is established and that they should be able to enjoy a happy life, ready-made, without working for it. This is unrealistic.

VI. The Question of National Minorities

The people of the national minorities in our country number more than thirty million. Although they constitute only six percent of China's total population, they inhabit regions that altogether comprise fifty to sixty percent of the country's total area. It is therefore imperative to foster good relations between the Han people and the national minorities. The key to the solution of this question lies in overcoming great Han chauvinism. At the same time, where local nationalism exists among national

minorities, measures should be taken to overcome it. Neither great Han chauvinism nor local nationalism can do any good to unity among the nationalities, and they should both be overcome as contradictions among the people. We have already done some work in this sphere. In most areas inhabited by national minorities, there has been a big improvement in relations among the nationalities, but a number of problems remain to be solved. In certain places, both great Han chauvinism and local nationalism still exist in a serious degree, and this calls for our close attention. As a result of the efforts of the people of all the nationalities over the past few years, democratic reforms and socialist transformation have in the main been completed in most of the national minority areas. Because conditions in Tibet are not ripe, democratic reforms have not yet been carried out there. According to the seventeen-point agreement reached between the Central People's Government and the local government of Tibet, reform of the social system must eventually be carried out. But we should not be impatient; when this will be done can only be decided when the great majority of the people of Tibet and their leading public figures consider it practicable. It has now been decided not to proceed with democratic reform in Tibet during the period of the Second Five-Year Plan, and we can only decide whether it will be done in the period of the Third Five-Year Plan in the light of the situation at that time.

VII. Overall Planning, All-Around Consideration, and Proper Arrangements

The “overall planning and all-around consideration” mentioned here refers to overall planning and all-around consideration for the interests of the six hundred million people of our country. In drawing up plans, handling affairs or thinking over problems, we must proceed from the fact that China has a population of six hundred million people. This must never be forgotten.

Now, why should we make a point of this? Could it be that there are people who still do not know that we have a population of six hundred million? Of course, everyone knows this, but in actual practice some are apt to forget it and act as if they thought that the fewer people and the smaller their world the better. Those who have this “exclusive club” mentality resist the idea of bringing all positive factors into play, of rallying everyone who can be rallied, and of doing everything possible to turn negative factors into positive ones serving the great cause of building a socialist society. I hope these people will take a wider view and really recognize the fact that we have a population of six hundred million people—that this is an objective fact and that this is our asset.

We have a large population. It is a good thing, but of course it also has its difficulties. Construction is going ahead vigorously on all fronts; we have achieved much, but in the present transitional

period of tremendous social change we are still beset by many difficult problems. Progress and difficulties—this is a contradiction. However, all contradictions not only should, but can be resolved. Our guiding principle is overall planning and all-around consideration and proper arrangements. No matter whether it is the question of food, natural calamities, employment, education, the intellectuals, the united front of all patriotic forces, the national minorities, or any other question—we must always proceed from the standpoint of overall planning and all-around consideration for the whole people; we must make whatever arrangements are suitable and possible at the particular time and place and after consultation with all those concerned. On no account should we throw matters out the back door, go around grumbling that there are too many people, that people are backward, and that things are troublesome and hard to handle.

Does that mean that everyone and everything should be taken care of by the government alone? Of course not. Social organizations and the masses themselves can work out ways and means to take care of many matters involving people and things. They are quite capable of devising many good ways of doing so. This also comes within the scope of the principle of “overall planning, all-around consideration and proper arrangements.” We should give guidance to social organizations and the masses of the people everywhere in taking such action.

VIII. On “Letting a Hundred Flowers Blossom,” and “Letting a Hundred Schools of Thought Contend,” and “Long-Term Coexistence and Mutual Supervision”

“Let a hundred flowers blossom,” and “let a hundred schools of thought contend,” “long-term coexistence and mutual supervision”—how did these slogans come to be put forward?

They were put forward in the light of the specific conditions existing in China, on the basis of the recognition that various kinds of contradictions still exist in a socialist society, and in response to the country’s urgent need to speed up its economic and cultural development.

The policy of letting a hundred flowers blossom and a hundred schools of thought contend is designed to promote the flourishing of the arts and the progress of science; it is designed to enable a socialist culture to thrive in our land. Different forms and styles in art can develop freely and different schools in science can contend freely. We think that it is harmful to the growth of art and science if administrative measures are used to impose one particular style of art or school of thought and to ban another. Questions of right and wrong in the arts and sciences should be settled through free discussion in artistic and scientific circles and in the course of practical work in the arts and sciences. They should not be settled in summary fashion. A period of trial is often needed to determine whether

something is right or wrong. In the past, new and correct things often failed at the outset to win recognition from the majority of people and had to develop by twists and turns in struggle. Correct and good things have often at first been looked upon not as fragrant flowers but as poisonous weeds. Copernicus' theory of the solar system and Darwin's theory of evolution were once dismissed as erroneous and had to win through over bitter opposition. Chinese history offers many similar examples. In socialist society, conditions for the growth of new things are radically different from and far superior to those in the old society. Nevertheless, it still often happens that new, rising forces are held back and reasonable suggestions smothered.

The growth of new things can also be hindered, not because of deliberate suppression, but because of lack of discernment. That is why we should take a cautious attitude in regard to questions of right and wrong in the arts and sciences, encourage free discussion, and avoid hasty conclusions. We believe that this attitude will facilitate the growth of the arts and sciences.

Marxism has also developed through struggle. At the beginning, Marxism was subjected to all kinds of attack and regarded as a poisonous weed. It is still being attacked and regarded as a poisonous weed in many parts of the world. However, it enjoys a different position in the socialist countries. But even in these countries, there are non-Marxist

as well as anti-Marxist ideologies. It is true that in China, socialist transformation, in so far as a change in the system of ownership is concerned, has in the main been completed, and the turbulent, large-scale, mass class struggles characteristic of the revolutionary periods have in the main concluded. But remnants of the overthrown landlord and comprador classes still exist, the bourgeoisie still exists, and the petty bourgeoisie has only just begun to remold itself. Class struggle is not yet over. The class struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, the class struggle between various political forces, and the class struggle in the ideological field between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie will still be long and circuitous and at times may even become very acute. The proletariat seeks to transform the world according to its own world outlook—so does the bourgeoisie. In this respect, the question of whether socialism or capitalism will win is still not really settled. Marxists are still a minority of the entire population as well as of the intellectuals. Marxism therefore must still develop through struggle. Marxism can only develop through struggle—this is true not only in the past and present, it is necessarily true in the future as well. What is correct always develops in the course of struggle with what is wrong. The true, the good, and the beautiful always exist in comparison with the false, the evil, and the ugly, and grow in struggle with the latter. As mankind in general rejects an untruth and accepts a truth, a

new truth will begin struggling with new erroneous ideas. Such struggles will never end. This is the law of development of truth and it is certainly also the law of development of Marxism.

It will take a considerable time to decide the issue in the ideological struggle between socialism and capitalism in our country. This is because the influence of the bourgeoisie and of the intellectuals who come from the old society will remain in our country as the ideology of a class for a long time to come. Failure to grasp this, or still worse, failure to understand it at all, can lead to the gravest mistakes—to ignoring the necessity of waging the struggle in the ideological field. Ideological struggle is not like other forms of struggle. Crude, coercive methods should not be used in this struggle, but only the method of painstaking reasoning. Today, socialism enjoys favorable conditions in the ideological struggle. The main power of the State is in the hands of the working people led by the proletariat. The Communist Party is strong and its prestige stands high. Although there are defects and mistakes in our work, every fair-minded person can see that we are loyal to the people, that we are both determined and able to build up our country together with the people, and that we have achieved great successes and will achieve still greater ones. The vast majority of the bourgeoisie and intellectuals who come from the old society are patriotic; they are willing to serve their flourishing socialist

motherland, and they know that if they turn away from the socialist cause and the working people led by the Communist Party, they will have no one to rely on and no bright future to look forward to.

People may ask: since Marxism is accepted by the majority of the people in our country as the guiding ideology, can it be criticized? Certainly it can. As a scientific truth, Marxism fears no criticism. If it did, and could be defeated in argument; it would be worthless. In fact, aren't the idealists criticizing Marxism every day and in all sorts of ways? As for those who harbor bourgeois and petty bourgeois ideas and do not wish to change, aren't they also criticizing Marxism in all sorts of ways? Marxists should not be afraid of criticism from any quarter. Quite the contrary, they need to steel and improve themselves and win new positions in the teeth of criticism and the storm and stress of struggle. Fighting against wrong ideas is like being vaccinated—a man develops greater immunity from disease after the vaccine takes effect. Plants raised in greenhouses are not likely to be robust. Carrying out the policy of letting a hundred flowers blossom and a hundred schools of thought contend will not weaken but strengthen the leading position of Marxism in the ideological field.

What should our policy be towards non-Marxist ideas? As far as unmistakable counterrevolutionaries and wreckers of the socialist cause are concerned, the matter is easy; we simply deprive them of their

freedom of speech. But it is quite a different matter when we are faced with incorrect ideas among the people. Will it do to ban such ideas and give them no opportunity to express themselves? Certainly not. It is not only futile but also very harmful to use crude and summary methods to deal with ideological questions among the people, with questions relating to the spiritual life of man. You may ban the expression of wrong ideas, but the ideas will still be there. On the other hand, correct ideas, if pampered in greenhouses without being exposed to the elements or immunized from disease, will not win out against wrong ones. That is why it is only by employing methods of discussion, criticism and reasoning that we can really foster correct ideas, overcome wrong ideas, and really settle issues.

The bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie are bound to give expression to their ideologies. It is inevitable that they should stubbornly persist in expressing themselves in every way possible on political and ideological questions. You can't expect them not to do so. We should not use methods of suppression to prevent them from expressing themselves, but should allow them to do so and at the same time argue with them and direct well-considered criticism at them.

There can be no doubt that we should criticize all kinds of wrong ideas. It certainly would not do to refrain from criticism and look on while wrong ideas spread unchecked and gain their foothold and

take root. Mistakes should be criticized and poisonous weeds fought against wherever they crop up. But such criticism should not be doctrinaire. We should not use the metaphysical method, but strive to employ the dialectical method. What is needed is scientific analysis and fully convincing arguments. Doctrinaire criticism settles nothing. We don't want any kind of poisonous weeds, but we should carefully distinguish between what is really a poisonous weed and what is really a fragrant flower. We must learn together with the masses of the people how to make this careful distinction and use the correct methods to fight poisonous weeds.

While criticizing doctrinairism, we should at the same time direct our attention to criticizing revisionism. Revisionism, or rightist opportunism, is a bourgeois trend of thought that is even more dangerous than doctrinairism. The revisionists, or right opportunists, pay lip service to Marxism and also attack "doctrinairism." But the real target of their attack is actually the most fundamental elements of Marxism. They oppose or distort materialism and dialectics, oppose or try to weaken the people's democratic dictatorship and the leading role of the Communist Party, oppose or try to weaken socialist transformation and socialist construction. Even after the basic victory of the socialist revolution in our country, there are still a number of people who vainly hope for a restoration of the capitalist system. They wage a struggle against the working class on

every front, including the ideological front. In this struggle, their right-hand men are the revisionists.

On the surface, these two slogans—let a hundred flowers blossom and a hundred schools of thought contend—have no class character; the proletariat can turn them to account, and so can the bourgeoisie and other people. But different classes, strata and social groups each have their own views on what are fragrant flowers and what are poisonous weeds. So what, from the point of view of the broad masses of the people, should be the criteria today for distinguishing between fragrant flowers and poisonous weeds?

In the political life of our country, how are our people to determine what is right and what is wrong in our words and actions? Basing ourselves on the principles of our Constitution, the will of the overwhelming majority of our people and the political programs jointly proclaimed on various occasions by our political parties and groups, we believe that, broadly speaking, words and actions can be judged right if they:

1. Help to unite the people of our various nationalities and do not divide them;
2. Are beneficial, not harmful, to socialist transformation and socialist construction;
3. Help to consolidate, not undermine or weaken, the people's democratic dictatorship;

4. Help to consolidate, not undermine or weaken, democratic centralism;
5. Tend to strengthen, not to cast off or weaken, the leadership of the Communist Party;
6. Are beneficial, not harmful, to international socialist solidarity and the solidarity of the peace-loving peoples of the world.

Of these six criteria, the most important are the socialist path and the leadership of the Party. These criteria are put forward in order to foster, and not hinder, the free discussion of various questions among the people. Those who do not approve of these criteria can still put forward their own views and argue their case. When the majority of the people have clear-cut criteria to go by, criticism and self-criticism can be conducted along proper lines, and these criteria can be applied to people's words and actions to determine whether they are fragrant flowers or poisonous weeds. These are political criteria. Naturally, in judging the truthfulness of scientific theories or assessing the aesthetic value of works of art, other pertinent criteria are needed, but these six political criteria are also applicable to all activities in the arts or sciences. In a socialist country like ours, can there possibly be any useful scientific or artistic activity that runs counter to these political criteria?

All that is set out above stems from the specific historical conditions in our country. Since conditions vary in different socialist countries and with different Communist Parties, we do not think that other countries and parties must or need to follow the Chinese way.

The slogan “long-term coexistence and mutual supervision” is also a product of specific historical conditions in our country. It wasn’t put forward all of a sudden, but had been in the making for several years. The idea of long-term coexistence had been in existence for a long time, but last year when the socialist system was basically established, the slogan was set out in clear terms.

Why should the democratic parties of the bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie be allowed to exist side by side with the party of the working class over a long period of time? Because we have no reason not to adopt the policy of long-term coexistence with all other democratic parties that are truly devoted to the task of uniting the people for the cause of socialism and which enjoy the trust of the people.

As early as at the Second Session of the National Committee of the People’s Political Consultative Conference in June 1950, I put the matter in this way:

The people and the People’s Government have no reason to reject or deny the opportunity to anyone to make a living and give their services to the country, so

long as he is really willing to serve the people, really helped the people when they were still in difficulties, did good things and continues to do them consistently without giving up halfway.

What I defined here was the political basis for the long-term coexistence of the various parties. It is the desire of the Communist Party, also its policy, to exist side by side with the other democratic parties for a long time to come. Whether these democratic parties can exist for a long time depends not merely on what the Communist Party itself desires but also on the part played by these democratic parties themselves and on whether they enjoy the confidence of the people.

Mutual supervision among the various parties has also been a long established fact, in the sense that they advise and criticize each other. Mutual supervision, which is obviously not a one-sided matter, means that the Communist Party should exercise supervision over the other democratic parties, and the other democratic parties should exercise supervision over the Communist Party. Why should the other democratic parties be allowed to exercise supervision over the Communist Party? This is because for a party, as much as for an individual, there is great need to hear opinions different from its own. We all know that supervision over the Communist Party is mainly exercised by the working people and Party membership. But we

will benefit even more if the other democratic parties do this as well. Of course, advice and criticism exchanged between the Communist Party and the other democratic parties will play a positive role in mutual supervision only when they conform to the six political criteria given above. That is why we hope that the other democratic parties will all pay attention to ideological remolding and strive for long-term coexistence and mutual supervision with the Communist Party so as to meet the needs of the new society.

IX. Concerning Disturbances Created by Small Numbers of People

In 1956, small numbers of workers and students in certain places went on strike. The immediate cause of these disturbances was the failure to satisfy certain of their demands for material benefits, of which some should and could be met, while others were out of place or excessive and therefore could not be met for the time being. But a more important cause was bureaucracy on the part of those in positions of leadership. In some cases, responsibility for such bureaucratic mistakes should be placed on the higher authorities, and those at lower levels should not be made to bear all the blame. Another cause for these disturbances was that the ideological and political educational work done among the workers and students was inadequate. In the same year, members of a small number of agricul-

tural cooperatives also created disturbances, and the main causes were also bureaucracy on the part of the leadership and lack of educational work among the masses.

It should be admitted that all too often some people are prone to concentrate on immediate, partial and personal interests; they do not understand or do not sufficiently understand long-range, nationwide and collective interests. Because of their lack of experience in political and social life, quite a number of young people can't make a proper comparison between the old and new China; it is not easy for them to thoroughly comprehend what hardships the people of our country went through in the struggle to free themselves from oppression by the imperialists and Kuomintang reactionaries, or what a long period of painstaking work is needed before a happy socialist society can be established. That is why political educational work should be kept going among the masses in an interesting and effective way. We should always tell them the facts about the difficulties that have cropped up and discuss with them how to solve these difficulties.

We do not approve of disturbances, because contradictions among the people can be resolved in accordance with the formula "unity-criticism-unity," while disturbances inevitably cause losses and are detrimental to the advance of socialism. We believe that our people stand for socialism, that they uphold discipline and are reasonable and

will not create disturbances without reason. But this does not mean that in our country there is no possibility of the masses creating disturbances. With regard to this question, we should pay attention to the following:

1. In order to get rid of the root cause of disturbances, we must stamp out bureaucracy, greatly improve ideological and political education and deal with all contradictions in a proper way. If this is done, there won't usually be any disturbances.
2. If disturbances should occur as a result of bad work on our part, then we should guide those involved in such disturbances on to the correct path, make use of these disturbances as a special means of improving our work and educating the cadres and the masses and work out solutions to those questions that have been neglected in the past.

In handling any disturbances, we should work painstakingly, and should not use oversimplified methods, nor declare the matter closed before it is thoroughly settled. Those enabling the disturbances should not be removed from their jobs or expelled without good reason, except for those who have committed criminal offences or active counterrev-

olutionaries who should be dealt with according to law. In a big country like ours, it is nothing to get alarmed about if small numbers of people should create disturbances; rather we should turn such things to an advantage to help us get rid of bureaucracy.

In our society, there are also a small number of people who are unmindful of public interests, refuse to listen to reason, commit crimes, and break the law. They may take advantage of our policies and distort them, deliberately put forward unreasonable demands in order to stir up the masses, or deliberately spread rumors to create trouble and disrupt social order. We do not propose to let these people have their way. On the contrary, proper legal action must be taken against them. The masses demand that these persons be punished. Not to do so will run counter to popular will.

X. Can Bad Things Be Turned into Good Things?

As I have said, in our society, it is bad when groups of people make disturbances, and we do not approve of it. But when disturbances do occur, they force us to learn lessons from them, to overcome bureaucracy and educate the cadres and the people. In this sense, bad things can be turned into good things. Disturbances thus have a dual character. All kinds of disturbances can be looked at in this way.

It is clear to everybody that the Hungarian events were not a good thing. But they too had a dual character. Because our Hungarian comrades

took proper action in the course of these events, what was a bad thing turned ultimately into a good thing. The Hungarian state is now more firmly established than ever, and all other countries in the socialist camp have also learned a lesson.

Similarly, the worldwide anticommunist and antipopular campaign launched in the latter half of 1956 was of course a bad thing. But it educated and steeled the communist parties and the working class in all countries and thus turned out to be a good thing. In the storm and stress of this period, a number of people resigned from the communist parties in many countries. Resignations from the Party reduce Party membership and are, of course, a bad thing, but there is a good side to this as well. Since the vacillating elements unwilling to carry on have withdrawn, the great majority of staunch Party members are more firmly united for the struggle. Isn't this a good thing?

In short, we must learn to take an all-around view of things, seeing not only the positive side of things but also the negative side. Under specific conditions, a bad thing can lead to good results and a good thing to bad results. More than two thousand years ago Laozi³⁸ said: "It is upon bad fortune that good fortune leans, upon good fortune that bad fortune rests." When the Japanese struck China, they called this a victory. Huge areas of China's territory were seized, and the Chinese called this a defeat.

³⁸ Laozi, Chapter LVIII.

But China's defeat carried within it the seeds of victory, and Japan's victory carried within it the seeds of defeat. Hasn't this been proved by history?

People all over the world are now discussing whether a third world war will break out. In regard to this question, we must be psychologically prepared, and at the same time take an analytical view. We stand resolutely for peace and oppose war. But if the imperialists insist on unleashing another war, we should not be afraid of it. Our attitude on this question is the same as our attitude towards all disturbances: first, we are against it; second, we are not afraid of it.

The First World War was followed by the birth of the Soviet Union with a population of 200 million. The Second World War was followed by the emergence of the socialist camp with a combined population of 900 million. If the imperialists should insist on launching a third world war, it is certain that several hundred million more will turn to socialism. Then there will not be much room left in the world for the imperialists, while it is quite likely that the whole structure of imperialism will completely collapse.

Given specific conditions, the two aspects of a contradiction invariably turn into their respective opposites as a result of the struggle between them. Here, the conditions are important. Without specific conditions, neither of the two contradictory aspects can transform itself into its opposite. Of

all the classes in the world the proletariat is the most eager to change its position; next comes the semi-proletariat, for the former possesses nothing at all, while the latter is not much better off. The present situation in which the United States controls a majority in the United Nations and dominates many parts of the world is a transient one, which will eventually be changed. China's situation as a poor country denied her rights in international affairs will also be changed—a poor country will be changed into a rich country, a country denied her rights into a country enjoying her rights—a transformation of things into their opposites. Here, the decisive conditions are the socialist system and the concerted efforts of a united people.

XI. The Practice of Economy

Here I wish to speak briefly on practicing economy. We want to carry on large-scale construction, but our country is still very poor—herein lies a contradiction. One way of resolving this contradiction is to make a sustained effort to practice strict economy in every field.

During the San Fan [Three Anti's] movement in 1952, we fought against corruption, waste, and bureaucracy, and the emphasis was on combating corruption. In 1955 we advocated the practice of economy with considerable success; our emphasis then was on combating unduly high standards for nonproductive projects in capital construction, and economy in the use of raw materials in industrial

production. But at that time economy as a guiding principle was not conscientiously carried out in all branches of the national economy, nor in government offices, army units, schools and people's organizations in general. This year we have called for economy and elimination of waste in every respect throughout the country.

We still lack experience in construction. During the past few years, great successes have been achieved, but there has also been waste. We must gradually build a number of large-scale modern enterprises as the mainstay of our industries; without these we shall not be able to turn our country into a modern industrial power in several decades. But the majority of our enterprises should not be built in this way; we should set up a far greater number of small and medium enterprises and make full use of the industries inherited from the old society, so as to affect the greatest economy and do more things with less money. Since the principle of practicing strict economy and combating waste was put forward in more emphatic terms than before by the Second Plenary Session of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China in November 1956, good results have been obtained. This economy drive must be carried out in a thorough, sustained way. Just as it is with criticism of our other faults and mistakes, combating waste is like washing our face. Don't people wash their faces every day? The Chinese Communist Party, the other democratic parties,

democrats not affiliated to any party, intellectuals, industrialists, and businessmen, workers, peasants, and handicraftsmen—in short, all the 600 million people of our country—must increase production, practice economy, and combat extravagance and waste. This is of first importance both economically and politically. A dangerous tendency has shown itself of late among many of our personnel—an unwillingness to share the joys and hardships of the masses, a concern for personal position and gain. This is very bad. One way of overcoming this dangerous tendency is, in our campaign, to increase production and practice economy, to streamline our organizations and transfer cadres to lower levels so that a considerable number of them will return to productive work. We must see to it that all our cadres and all our people constantly bear in mind that, while ours is a big socialist country, it is an economically backward and poor country, and that this is a very great contradiction. If we want to see China rich and strong, we must be prepared for several decades of intensive effort which will include, among other things, carrying out a policy of building our country through hard work and thrift—of practicing strict economy and combating waste.

XII. China's Path to Industrialization

In discussing our path to industrialization, I am here concerned principally with the relationship between the growth of heavy industry, light industry and agriculture. Heavy industry is the core

of China's economic construction. This must be affirmed. But, at the same time, full attention must be paid to the development of agriculture and light industry.

As China is a great agricultural country, with over eighty percent of its population in the villages, its industry and agriculture must be developed simultaneously. Only then will industry have raw materials and a market, and only so will it be possible to accumulate fairly large funds for the building up of a powerful heavy industry. Everyone knows that light industry is closely related to agriculture. Without agriculture there can be no light industry. But it is not so clearly understood that agriculture provides heavy industry with an important market. This fact, however, will be more readily appreciated as the gradual progress of technological improvement and modernization of agriculture calls for more and more machinery, fertilizers, water conservancy, and electric power projects and transport facilities for the farms, as well as fuel and building materials for the rural consumers. The entire national economy will benefit if we can achieve an even greater growth in our agriculture and thus induce a correspondingly greater development of light industry during the period of the Second and Third Five-Year Plans. With the development of agriculture and light industry, heavy industry will be assured of its market and funds, and thus grow faster. Hence what may seem to be a slower pace of

industrialization is actually not so, and indeed the tempo may even be speeded up. In three five-year plans or perhaps a little longer, China's annual steel output can be raised to 20 million tons or more from the peak pre-Liberation output of something over nine hundred thousand tons in 1943. This will gladden people both in town and countryside.

I do not propose to talk at length on economic questions today. With barely seven years of economic construction behind us, we still lack experience and need to accumulate more. We had no experience to start with in revolutionary work either, and it was only after we had taken a number of falls and learned our lessons that we won nationwide victory. What we must do now is to cut the time we take to gain experience in economic construction to less than it took us to get experience in revolutionary work and not pay such a high price for it. We'll have to pay some sort of price, but we hope that it will not be as high as that paid during the revolutionary period. We must realize that a contradiction is involved in this question between the objective laws of development of socialist economy and our subjective understanding, a contradiction that needs to be resolved in practice. This contradiction will also manifest itself as a contradiction between different persons, that is, a contradiction between those who have a relatively accurate understanding of objective laws and those whose understanding of them is relatively inaccurate. And so this is also a contra-

diction among the people. Every contradiction is an objective reality, and it is our task to understand it and resolve it as correctly as we can.

In order to turn our country into an industrial power, we must learn conscientiously from the advanced experience of the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union has been building socialism for forty years, and we treasure its experience.

Let us consider who designed and equipped so many important factories for us. Was it the United States? Or Britain? No, neither of them. Only the Soviet Union was willing to do so because it is a socialist country and our ally. In addition to the Soviet Union, some brother countries of Eastern Europe also gave us assistance. It is perfectly true that we should learn from the good experience of all countries, socialist or capitalist, but the main thing is still to learn from the Soviet Union.

Now, there are two different attitudes in learning from others. One is a doctrinaire attitude: transplanting everything, whether suited or not to the conditions of our country. This is not a good attitude. Another attitude is to use our heads and learn those things that suit conditions in our country—that is, to absorb whatever experience is useful to us. This is the attitude we should adopt.

To strengthen our solidarity with the Soviet Union, to strengthen our solidarity with all socialist countries—this is our fundamental policy, and herein lies our basic interest. Then, there are the

Asian and African countries, and all the peace-loving countries and peoples—we must strengthen and develop our solidarity with them. United with these two forces, we will not stand alone. As for the imperialist countries, we should also unite with their peoples and strive to coexist in peace with those countries, do business with them and prevent any possible war, but under no circumstances should we harbor any unrealistic notions about those countries.

SPEECH AT THE CHINESE COMMUNIST PARTY'S NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON PROPAGANDA WORK

March 12, 1957

Comrades,

This conference has gone very well. Many questions have been raised during the conference and we have learned about many things. I shall now make a few remarks on questions the comrades here have been discussing.

We are living in a period of great social change. Chinese society has been in the midst of great changes for a long time. The War of Resistance Against Japan was one period of great change and the War of Liberation another. But the present changes are much more profound in character than the earlier ones. We are now building socialism. Hundreds of millions of people are taking part in the movement for socialist transformation. Class relations are changing throughout the country. The petty bourgeoisie in agriculture and handicrafts and the bourgeoisie in industry and commerce have both experienced changes. The social and economic system has been changed; individual economy has been transformed into collective economy, and capitalist private ownership is being transformed into socialist public ownership. Changes of such magnitude are of course reflected in people's minds. Man's social being determines his consciousness. These

great changes in our social system are reflected differently among people of different classes, strata and social groups. The masses eagerly support them, for life itself has confirmed that socialism is the only way out for China. Overthrowing the old social system and establishing a new one, the system of socialism, means a great struggle, a great change in the social system and in men's relations with each other. It should be said that the situation is basically sound. But the new social system has only just been established and requires time for its consolidation. It must not be assumed that the new system can be completely consolidated the moment it is established; that is impossible. It has to be consolidated step by step. To achieve its ultimate consolidation, it is necessary not only to bring about the socialist industrialization of the country and persevere in the socialist revolution on the economic front, but also to carry on constant and arduous socialist revolutionary struggles and socialist education on the political and ideological fronts. Moreover, various complementary international conditions are required. In China the struggle to consolidate the socialist system, the struggle to decide whether socialism or capitalism will prevail, will take a long historical period. But we should all realize that the new system of socialism will unquestionably be consolidated. We can assuredly build a socialist state with modern industry, modern agriculture,

and modern science and culture. This is the first point I want to make.

Second is regarding the situation of intellectuals in our country. No accurate statistics are available on the number of intellectuals in China. It is estimated that there are about five million of all types, including both higher and ordinary intellectuals. Of these five million the overwhelming majority are patriotic, love our People's Republic and are willing to serve the people and the socialist state. A small number do not quite welcome the socialist system and are not very happy about it. They are still skeptical about socialism, but they are patriotic when it comes to facing imperialism. The number of intellectuals who are hostile to our state is very small. They do not like our state, the dictatorship of the proletariat, and yearn for the old society. Whenever there is an opportunity, they will stir up trouble and attempt to overthrow the Communist Party and restore the old China. Between the proletarian and the bourgeois lines, between the socialist and the capitalist lines, they stubbornly choose to follow the latter. In fact this line is not practicable, and therefore they are actually ready to capitulate to imperialism, feudalism, and bureaucrat-capitalism. Such persons are found in political circles and in industrial and commercial, cultural and educational, scientific and technological, and religious circles, and they are extremely reactionary. They account for only one or two or three percent of the

five million intellectuals. The overwhelming majority, or well over 90 percent, of the total of five million, support the socialist system in varying degrees. Many of them are not yet quite clear on how to work under socialism and on how to understand, handle and solve many of the new problems.

As far as the attitude of the five million intellectuals towards Marxism is concerned, one may say that over 10 percent, comprising the communists and sympathizers, are relatively familiar with Marxism and take a firm stand—the stand of the proletariat. Among the total of five million, they are a minority, but they are the nucleus and a powerful force. The majority has the desire to study Marxism and have already learned a little, but they are not yet familiar with it. Some of them still have doubts, their stand is not yet firm and they vacillate in moments of stress. This section of intellectuals, constituting the majority of the five million, is still in the middle. Those who strongly oppose Marxism, or are hostile to it, are very few in number. Some actually disagree with Marxism, although they do not openly say so. There will be people like this for a long time to come, and we should allow them to disagree. Take some of the idealists for example. They may support the socialist political and economic system but disagree with the Marxist world outlook. The same holds true for the patriotic people in religious circles. They are theists and we are atheists. We cannot force them to accept the Marxist world outlook.

In short, the attitude towards Marxism of the five million intellectuals may be summed up as follows: those who support Marxism and are relatively familiar with it are a minority, those who oppose it are also a minority, and the majority support Marxism but are not familiar with it and support it in varying degrees. Here there are three different kinds of stands—resolute, wavering, and antagonistic. It should be recognized that this situation will continue for a very long time. If we fail to recognize this, we shall make too great a demand on others and at the same time set ourselves too small a task. Our comrades in propaganda work have the task of disseminating Marxism. This has to be done gradually and done well, so that people willingly accept it. We cannot force people to accept Marxism; we can only persuade them. If over a period of several five-year plans a fairly large number of our intellectuals accept Marxism and acquire a fairly good grasp of it through practice, through their work and life, through class struggle, production, and scientific activity, that will be fine. And that is what we hope will happen.

Third, is the question of the remolding of the intellectuals. Ours is a culturally underdeveloped country. For a vast country like ours, five million intellectuals are too few. Without intellectuals our work cannot be done well, and we should therefore do a good job of uniting with them. Socialist society mainly comprises three sections of people: the

workers, the peasants, and the intellectuals. Intellectuals are mental workers. Their work is in the service of the people, that is, in the service of the workers and the peasants. As far as the majority of the intellectuals are concerned, they can serve the new China as they did the old, serve the proletariat as they did the bourgeoisie. When the intellectuals served the old China, the left wing resisted, the middle wavered, and only the right wing stood firm. Now, when it comes to serving the new society, the reverse is the case. The left wing stands firm, the middle wavers (this wavering in the new society is different from that in the old), and the right wing resists. Moreover, intellectuals are educators. Our newspapers are educating the people every day. Our writers and artists, scientists and technicians, professors and teachers, are all educating students, educating the people. Being educators and teachers, they have the duty to be educated first. And all the more so in the present period of great change in the social system. They have had some Marxist education in the last few years, and some have studied very hard and made great progress. But the majority still have a long way to go before they can completely replace their bourgeois world outlook with the proletarian world outlook. Some have read a few Marxist books and think themselves quite learned, but what they have read has not sunk in, has not taken root in their minds, so that they don't know how to use it and their class feelings remain

unchanged. Others are conceited; having picked up some book-phrases, they think themselves terrific and are very cocky. But whenever a storm blows up, they take a stand very different from that of the workers and the great majority of the working peasants. They waver while the latter stand firm, they equivocate while the latter are forthright. Hence it is wrong to assume that people who educate others no longer need to be educated themselves and no longer need to study, or that socialist remolding means remolding others—the landlords, the capitalists and the individual producers—but not the intellectuals. The intellectuals, too, need remolding, and not only those who have not changed their basic stand; everybody should study and remold himself. I say “everybody,” and that includes all of us present here. Conditions are changing all the time, and to adapt one’s thinking to the new conditions, one must study. Even those who have a better grasp of Marxism and are comparatively firm in their proletarian stand have to go on studying, have to absorb what is new and study new problems. Unless they rid their minds of what is unsound, intellectuals cannot shoulder the task of educating others. Naturally, we have to learn while teaching and be pupils while serving as teachers. To be a good teacher, one must first be a good pupil. There are many things that cannot be learned from books alone; one must learn from those engaged in production, from the workers, from the peasants and, in schools, from

the students, from those one teaches. In my opinion, the majority of our intellectuals are willing to learn. Given their willingness, it is our duty sincerely to help them study; we must help them in an appropriate way and must not resort to compulsion and force them to study.

Fourth, is the question of the integration of the intellectuals with the masses of workers and peasants. Since they are to serve the masses of workers and peasants, intellectuals must, first and foremost, know them and be familiar with their life, work and ideas. We encourage intellectuals to go among the masses, to go to factories and villages. It is very bad if you never in all your life meet a worker or a peasant. Our state personnel, writers, artists, teachers and scientific research workers should seize every opportunity to get close to the workers and peasants. Some can go to factories or villages just to look around; this may be called "looking at the flowers on horseback" and is better than doing nothing at all. Others can stay for a few months, conducting investigations and making friends; this may be called "dismounting to look at the flowers." Still others can stay and live there for a considerable time, say, two or three years or even longer; this may be called "settling down." Some intellectuals do live among the workers and peasants, for instance, technicians in factories, technical personnel in agriculture and teachers in rural schools. They should do their work well and become one

with the workers and peasants. We should make it the common practice to get close to the workers and peasants—in other words, we should have large numbers of intellectuals doing so. Not all of them of course; some are unable to go for one reason or another, but we hope that as many as possible will go. Nor can they all go at the same time; they can go in batches at different times. In the Yanan days, intellectuals were urged to make direct contact with workers and peasants. Many intellectuals in Yanan were very confused in their thinking and came forth with all sorts of strange arguments. We held a forum and advised them to go among the masses. Later on many did, and the results were very good. Until an intellectual's book knowledge is integrated with practice, it is incomplete or indeed very incomplete. It is chiefly through reading books that intellectuals acquire the experience of our predecessors. Of course, reading books cannot be dispensed with, but by itself it does not solve problems. One must study the actual situation, study practical experience and factual material, and make friends with the workers and peasants. Making friends with the workers and peasants is no easy job. Today also there are people who go to factories or villages, and the results are good in some cases but not in others. What is involved here is the question of stand or attitude, that is, of one's world outlook. We advocate "letting a hundred schools of thought contend," and there may be many schools and trends in every branch

of learning, but on the matter of world outlook, there are basically only two schools in our time, the proletarian and the bourgeois. It is one or the other, either the proletarian or the bourgeois world outlook. The communist world outlook is the world outlook of the proletariat and of no other class. Most of our present intellectuals come from the old society and from families of nonworking people. Even those who come from worker or peasant families are still bourgeois intellectuals, because the education they received before Liberation was a bourgeois education and their world outlook is fundamentally bourgeois. If the intellectuals do not discard the old and replace it by the proletarian world outlook, they will remain different from the workers and peasants in their viewpoint, stand and feelings and will be like square pegs in round holes, and the workers and peasants will not open their hearts to them. If the intellectuals integrate themselves with the workers and peasants and make friends with them, the Marxism they have learned from books can become truly their own. In order to have a real grasp of Marxism, one must learn it not only from books, but chiefly through class struggle, through practical work and close contact with the masses of workers and peasants. When in addition to studying some Marxism our intellectuals have gained some understanding of it through close contact with the masses of workers and peasants and through their own practical work, we will

all be speaking the same language—not only the common language of patriotism and of the socialist system, but probably even that of the communist world outlook. If that happens, all of us will certainly work much better.

Fifth, is rectification. Rectification means correcting one's way of thinking and style of work. Rectification movements were conducted within the Communist Party during the anti-Japanese war, during the War of Liberation, and in the early days after the founding of the People's Republic of China. Now the Central Committee of the Communist Party has decided on another rectification within the Party to be started this year. Non-Party people may take part or abstain as they wish. The main thing in this rectification movement is to criticize the following incorrect ways of thinking and styles of work: subjectivism, bureaucracy, and sectarianism. As in the rectification movement during the anti-Japanese war, the method this time will be first to study a number of documents, and then, on the basis of such study, to examine one's own thinking and work and unfold criticism and self-criticism to expose shortcomings and mistakes and promote what is right and good. On the one hand, we must be strict and conduct criticism and self-criticism with respect to mistakes and shortcomings seriously, not perfunctorily, and correct them; on the other hand, we must use the method of the "gentle breeze and mild rain" and that of "learning from

past mistakes to avoid future ones and curing the sickness to save the patient,” and we must oppose the method of “finishing people off with a single blow.”

Ours is a great Party, a glorious Party, a correct Party. This must be affirmed as a fact. But we still have shortcomings, and this, too, must be affirmed as a fact. We should not affirm everything about ourselves, but only what is correct; at the same time, we should not negate everything about ourselves, but only what is wrong. Achievements are the main thing in our work, and yet there are not a few shortcomings and mistakes. That is why we need a rectification movement. Will it undermine our Party's prestige if we criticize our own subjectivism, bureaucracy and sectarianism? I think not. On the contrary, it will serve to enhance the Party's prestige. This was borne out by the rectification movement during the anti-Japanese war. It enhanced the prestige of our Party, of our Party comrades and our veteran cadres, and it also enabled the new cadres to make great progress. Which of the two was afraid of criticism, the Communist Party or the Kuomintang? The Kuomintang. It prohibited criticism, but that did not save it from final defeat. The Communist Party does not fear criticism because we are Marxists, the truth is on our side, and the basic masses, the workers and peasants, are on our side. As we used to say, the rectification movement

is “a widespread movement of Marxist education.”³⁹ Rectification means the whole Party studying Marxism through criticism and self-criticism. We can certainly learn more Marxism in the course of the rectification movement.

The transformation and construction of China depend on us for leadership. When we have rectified our way of thinking and style of work, we shall enjoy greater initiative in our work, become more capable and do a better job. Our country has need of many people who wholeheartedly serve the masses and the cause of socialism and who are determined to bring about changes. We communists should all be people of this kind. Formerly, in the old China, it was a crime to talk about reforms, and offenders would be beheaded or imprisoned. Nevertheless there were determined reformers who were dauntless and published books and newspapers, educated and organized the people, and waged indomitable struggles under every kind of difficulty. The state, the people’s democratic dictatorship, has paved the way for the rapid economic and cultural development of our country. It is only a few years since the establishment of our state, and yet people can already see the unprecedented flowering of the economy, culture, education and science. In building up the new China we communists are likewise

³⁹ “On Production by the Army for Its Own Support and on the Importance of the Great Movements for Rectification and for Production” in *Selected Works of Mao Zedong*, Vol. III, Foreign Languages Press, Paris, 2021, pp. 259–263.

not daunted by any difficulties. But we cannot accomplish this all on our own. We need a good number of non-Party people with high ideals who will keep to the socialist and communist orientation and fight dauntlessly with us to transform and construct our society. It is a colossal task to ensure a better life for the several hundred million people of China and to make our economically and culturally backward country a prosperous and powerful one with a high level of culture. And it is precisely in order to be able to shoulder this task more competently and work better with all non-Party people who have high ideals and the determination to institute reforms that we must conduct rectification movements both now and in the future, and constantly rid ourselves of whatever is wrong. Thoroughgoing materialists are fearless; we hope that all our fellow fighters will courageously shoulder their responsibilities and overcome all difficulties, fearing no setbacks or gibes, nor hesitating to criticize us communists and give us their suggestions. "He who is not afraid of death by a thousand cuts dares to unhorse the emperor" —this is the dauntless spirit needed in our struggle to build socialism and communism. On our part, we communists should create conditions helpful to those who cooperate with us, establish good comradely relations with them in our common work and unite with them in our joint struggle.

Sixth, is the question of one-sidedness. One-sidedness means thinking in terms of absolutes—that is, taking a metaphysical approach to problems. In the appraisal of our work, it is one-sided to affirm everything or to negate everything. There still are quite a few people inside the Communist Party and many outside it who do just that. To affirm everything is to see only the good and not the bad, and to welcome only praise and not criticism. To talk as though our work is good in every respect is at variance with the facts. It is not true that everything is good; there are shortcomings and mistakes. But neither is it true that everything is bad; that too is at variance with the facts. Here analysis is necessary. To negate everything is to think, without prior analysis, that nothing has been done well and that the great task of building socialism, the great struggle in which hundreds of millions of people are participating, is a complete mess with nothing commendable about it. Although there is a difference between many of those who hold such views and those who are hostile to the socialist system, these views are very mistaken and harmful and can only dishearten people. It is wrong to appraise our work either from the standpoint of affirming everything or from the standpoint of negating everything. We should criticize those people who take such a one-sided approach to problems, though of course we should do so in the spirit of “learning from past

mistakes to avoid future ones and curing the sickness to save the patient,” and we should help them.

Some people say: since there is to be a rectification movement and since everyone is asked to express his opinions, one-sidedness is unavoidable, and therefore it seems that in calling for the elimination of one-sidedness, you really don't want people to speak up. Is this assertion right? It is naturally difficult for everyone to be free from any trace of one-sidedness. People always examine and handle problems and express their views in the light of their own experience, and unavoidably they sometimes show a little one-sidedness. However, shouldn't we ask them gradually to overcome their one-sidedness and look at problems in a relatively all-sided way? In my opinion, we should. We would be stagnating and we would be approving one-sidedness and contradicting the whole purpose of rectification if we did not make the demand that from day to day and from year to year more and more people should view problems in a relatively all-sided way. One-sidedness violates dialectics. We want gradually to disseminate dialectics and to ask everyone gradually to learn the use of the scientific dialectical method. Some of the articles appearing today are extremely pretentious but empty, without any analysis of problems or reasoned argument, and they carry no conviction. There should be fewer and fewer articles of this kind. When writing an article, one should not be constantly thinking, “How smart

I am!" but should put oneself on a completely equal footing with one's readers. You may have been in the revolution for a long time, but if you say something wrong, people will refute you all the same. The more you put on airs, the less people will stand for it and the less they will care to read your articles. We should do our work honestly, take an analytical approach, write convincingly and never strike a pose to overawe people.

Some people say that while one-sidedness can be avoided in a lengthy article, it is unavoidable in a short essay. Must a short essay inevitably be one-sided? As I have just said, it is usually hard to avoid one-sidedness, and there is nothing terrible if it creeps in to a certain extent. Criticism would be hampered if everyone were required to look at problems in an absolutely all-sided way. Nevertheless, we do ask everyone to try to approach problems in a relatively all-sided way and try to avoid one-sidedness not only in long articles but also in short articles, short essays included. Some people argue, how is it possible to undertake analysis in an essay of a few hundred or one to two thousand words? I say, why not? Didn't Lu Xun do it? The analytical method is dialectical. By analysis, we mean analyzing the contradictions in things. And sound analysis is impossible without intimate knowledge of life and without real understanding of the relevant contradictions. Lu Xun's later essays are so penetrating and powerful and yet so free from one-sidedness

precisely because by then he had grasped dialectics. Some of Lenin's articles can also be called short essays; they are satirical and pungent, but without one-sidedness. Almost all of Lu Xun's essays were directed at the enemy; some of Lenin's essays were directed at the enemy and others at comrades. Can the Lu Xun type of essay be used against mistakes and shortcomings within the ranks of the people? I think it can. Of course, we must make a distinction between ourselves and the enemy, and we must not adopt an antagonistic stand towards comrades and treat them as we would the enemy. One must speak warmly and sincerely with a desire to protect the cause of the people and raise their political consciousness and must not indulge in ridicule or attack.

What if one dare not write? Some people say they dare not write even when they have something to say, lest they should offend people and be criticized. I think such worries can be cast aside. Ours is a people's democratic state, and it provides an environment conducive to writing in the service of the people. The policy of letting a hundred flowers blossom and a hundred schools of thought contend offers additional guarantees for the flowering of science and the arts. If what you say is right, you need not fear criticism, and through debate you can further explain your correct views. If what you say is wrong, then criticism can help you correct your mistakes, and there is nothing bad in that. In our

society, militant revolutionary criticism and counter-criticism is the healthy method used to expose and resolve contradictions, develop science and the arts and ensure success in all our work.

Seventh, is whether to “open wide” or to “restrict?” This is a question of policy. “Let a hundred flowers blossom and a hundred schools of thought contend” is a long-term, as well as a fundamental policy; it is not just a temporary policy. In the discussion, comrades expressed disapproval of “restriction,” and I think this view is the correct one. The Central Committee of the Party is of the opinion that we must “open wide,” not “restrict.”

Two alternative methods of leading our country, or in other words two alternative policies, can be adopted—to “open wide” or to “restrict.” To “open wide” means to let all people express their opinions freely, so that they dare to speak, dare to criticize and dare to debate; it means not being afraid of wrong views or anything poisonous; it means to encourage argument and criticism among people holding different views, allowing freedom both for criticism and for counter-criticism; it means not coercing people with wrong views into submission, but convincing them by reasoning. To “restrict” means to forbid people to air differing opinions and express wrong ideas, and to “finish them off with a single blow” if they do so. That is the way to aggravate rather than to resolve contradictions. To “open wide,” or to “restrict?” We must choose one or the

other of these two policies. We choose the former, because it is the policy that will help to consolidate our country and develop our culture.

We intend to use the policy of “opening wide” to unite with the several million intellectuals and change their present outlook. As I have said above, the overwhelming majority of the intellectuals in our country want to make progress and remold themselves, and they are quite capable of being remolded. In this connection, the policy we adopt will play a big role. The question of the intellectuals is above all one of ideology, and it is not helpful but harmful to resort to crude and heavy-handed measures for solving ideological questions. The remolding of the intellectuals, and especially the changing of their world outlook, is a process that requires a long period of time. Our comrades must understand that ideological remolding involves long-term, patient and painstaking work, and they must not attempt to change people’s ideology, which has been shaped over decades of life by giving a few lectures or by holding a few meetings. Persuasion, not coercion, is the only way to convince people. Coercion will never result in convincing people. To try to make them submit by force simply won’t do. This kind of method is permissible in dealing with the enemy, but absolutely impermissible in dealing with comrades or friends. What if we don’t know how to convince others? Then we have to learn.

We must learn to conquer erroneous ideas through debate and reasoning.

“Let a hundred flowers blossom” is the way to develop the arts, and “let a hundred schools of thought contend” the way to develop science. Not only is this a good method for developing science and the arts, but, applied more widely, it is a good method for all our work. It enables us to make fewer mistakes. There are many things we don’t understand and are therefore unable to tackle, but through debate and struggle we shall come to understand them and learn how to tackle them. Truth develops through debate between different views. The same method can be adopted in dealing with whatever is poisonous and anti-Marxist, because in the struggle against it Marxism will develop. This is development through the struggle of opposites, development conforming to dialectics.

Haven’t people discussed the true, the good and the beautiful all through the ages? Their opposites are the false, the evil and the ugly. The former would not exist without the latter. Truth stands in opposition to falsehood. In society as in nature, every entity invariably divides into different parts, only there are differences in content and form under different concrete conditions. There will always be wrong things and ugly phenomena. There will always be such opposites as the right and the wrong, the good and the evil, the beautiful and the ugly. The same is true of fragrant flowers and

poisonous weeds. The relationship between them is one of the unity and struggle of opposites. Only by comparing can one distinguish. Only by making distinctions and waging struggle can there be development. Truth develops through its struggle against falsehood. This is how Marxism develops. Marxism develops in the struggle against bourgeois and petty bourgeois ideology, and it is only through struggle that it can develop.

We are for the policy of “opening wide”; so far there has been too little of it rather than too much. We must not be afraid of “opening wide,” nor should we be afraid of criticism and poisonous weeds. Marxism is scientific truth; it fears no criticism and cannot be overthrown by criticism. The same holds for the Communist Party and the People’s Government; they fear no criticism and cannot be toppled by it. There will always be things that are wrong, and that is nothing to be afraid of. Recently, ghosts and monsters have been presented on the stage. Some comrades have become very worried by this spectacle. In my opinion, a little of this doesn’t matter much; within a few decades such ghosts and monsters will disappear from the stage altogether, and you won’t be able to see them even if you want to. We must promote what is right and oppose what is wrong, but we need not be frightened if people come in contact with erroneous things. It will solve no problem simply to issue administrative orders forbidding people to have any contact with perverse

and ugly phenomena and with erroneous ideas, or forbidding them to see ghosts and monsters on the stage. Of course, I am not advocating the spread of such stuff, I am only saying "a little of this doesn't matter much." It is not at all strange that erroneous things should exist, nor should this give any cause for fear; indeed it helps people learn to struggle against them better. Even great storms are not to be feared. It is amid great storms that human society progresses.

In our country bourgeois and petty bourgeois ideology and anti-Marxist ideologies will persist for a long time. Basically, the socialist system has been established in our country. While we have won basic victory in transforming the ownership of the means of production, we are even farther from complete victory on the political and ideological fronts. In the ideological field, the question of who will win out, the proletariat or the bourgeoisie, has not yet been really settled. We still have to wage a protracted struggle against bourgeois and petty bourgeois ideology. It is wrong not to understand this and to give up ideological struggle. All erroneous ideas, all poisonous weeds, all ghosts and monsters, must be subjected to criticism; in no circumstances should they be allowed to spread freely. However, the criticism should be fully reasoned, analytical and convincing, and neither rough and bureaucratic, nor metaphysical and dogmatic.

For a long time now people have been leveling a lot of criticism at dogmatism. That is as it should be. But they often neglect to criticize revisionism. Both dogmatism and revisionism run counter to Marxism. Marxism must necessarily advance; it must develop along with practice and cannot stand still. It would become lifeless if it were stagnant and stereotyped. However, the basic principles of Marxism must never be violated, otherwise mistakes will be made. It is dogmatism to approach Marxism from a metaphysical point of view and to regard it as something rigid. It is revisionism to negate the basic principles of Marxism and to negate its universal truth. Revisionism is one form of bourgeois ideology. The revisionists deny the differences between socialism and capitalism, between the dictatorship of the proletariat and the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie. What they advocate is in fact not the socialist line but the capitalist line. In present circumstances, revisionism is more pernicious than dogmatism. It is an important task for us to unfold criticism of revisionism on the ideological front now.

Eighth and last, it is imperative for the Party committees of the provinces, municipalities and autonomous regions to tackle the question of ideology. This is a point some of the comrades present here want me to touch upon. In many places, the Party committees have not yet tackled the question of ideology, or have done very little about it, mainly

because they are busy. But tackle it they must. By “tackling it” I mean that it must be put on the agenda and studied. In the main the large-scale, turbulent class struggles of the masses characteristic of times of revolution in our country have come to an end, but there is still class struggle—chiefly on the political and ideological fronts—and it is very acute too. The question of ideology has now assumed great importance. The first secretaries of the Party committees in all provinces, municipalities and autonomous regions should personally tackle this question, which can be solved correctly only when they have given it serious attention and gone into it. Meetings on propaganda work similar to our present one should be held in all these places to discuss local ideological work and all related problems. Such meetings should be attended not only by Party comrades but also by people outside the Party, and people with different opinions should be included. This will be all to the good of these meetings, and no harm can come of it, as the experience of the present conference has proved.

WHERE DO CORRECT IDEAS COME FROM?⁴⁰

May 1963

Where do correct ideas come from? Do they drop from the skies? No. Are they innate in the mind? No. They come from social practice, and from it alone; they come from three kinds of social practice, the struggle for production, the class struggle, and scientific experiment. It is man's social being that determines his thinking. Once the correct ideas characteristic of the advanced class are grasped by the masses, these ideas turn into a material force, which changes society and changes the world. In their social practice, men engage in various kinds of struggle and gain rich experience, both from their successes and from their failures. Countless phenomena of the objective external world are reflected in a man's brain through his five sense organs—the organs of sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch. At first, knowledge is perceptual. The leap to conceptual knowledge, i.e., to ideas, occurs when sufficient perceptual knowledge is accumulated. This is one process in cognition. It is the first stage in the whole process of cognition, the stage leading from objective matter to subjective consciousness, from existence to ideas. Whether one's consciousness or ideas

⁴⁰ This passage is from the "Draft Decision of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party on Certain Problems in Our Present Rural Work," which was drawn up under the direction of Comrade Mao Zedong. The passage was written by Comrade Mao Zedong himself.

(including theories, policies, plans or measures) do correctly reflect the laws of the objective external world is not yet proved at this stage, in which it is not yet possible to ascertain whether they are correct or not. Then comes the second stage in the process of cognition, the stage leading from consciousness back to matter, from ideas back to existence, in which the knowledge gained in the first stage is applied in social practice to ascertain whether the theories, policies, plans or measures meet with the anticipated success. Generally speaking, those that succeed are correct and those that fail are incorrect, and this is especially true of man's struggle with nature. In social struggle, the forces representing the advanced class sometimes suffer defeat not because their ideas are incorrect, but because, in the balance of forces engaged in struggle, they are not as powerful for the time being as the forces of reaction; they are therefore temporarily defeated, but they are bound to triumph sooner or later. Man's knowledge makes another leap through the test of practice. This leap is more important than the previous one. For it is this leap alone that can prove the correctness or incorrectness of the first leap in cognition, i.e., of the ideas, theories, policies, plans or measures formulated in the course of reflecting the objective external world. There is no other way of testing truth. Furthermore, the one and only purpose of the proletariat in knowing the world is to change it. Often, correct knowledge can be arrived

at only after many repetitions of the process leading from matter to consciousness and then back to matter; that is, leading from practice to knowledge and then back to practice. Such is the Marxist theory of knowledge, the dialectical-materialist theory of knowledge. Among our comrades there are many who do not yet understand this theory of knowledge. When asked the sources of their ideas, opinions, policies, methods, plans, and conclusions, eloquent speeches and long articles, they consider the questions strange and cannot answer it. Nor do they comprehend that matter can be transformed into consciousness and consciousness into matter, although such leaps are phenomena of everyday life. It is therefore necessary to educate our comrades in the dialectical-materialist theory of knowledge, so that they can orientate their thinking correctly, become good at investigation and study and at summing up experience, overcome difficulties, commit fewer mistakes, do their work better, and struggle hard so as to build China into a great and powerful socialist country and help the broad masses of the oppressed and exploited throughout the world in fulfillment of our great internationalist duty.

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