SURVEY OF CHINA MAINLAND PRESS

October 12, 1964 No. 3316

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COMMUNIST THEORY

## A Brief Introduction to Discussions on the Question of "Dividing One into Two" and "Uniting Two into One"

(Canton Nan-fang Jih-pao, August 26, 1964)

Recently, many newspapers and periodicals throughout the country have one after another initiated discussions on the question of "dividing one into two" and "uniting two into one." These discussions were first started by Comrades Ai Heng-wu (艾恒武) and Lin Ch'ing-shan (林青山), who wrote an article, "Dividing One into Two and "Uniting Two into One" - Observations on a Study of Chairman Mao's Thinking of Materialistic Dialectics, which was carried in Kuang-ming Jih-pao on May 29 this year. Later, Jen-min Jih-pao on July 17 published an article, Discussing the Question of "Uniting Two into One" with Comrade Yang Hsien-chen, by Comrades Wang Chung (王中) and Kuo P'ei-heng (郭佩衡), pointed out that the theory of "uniting two into one" was first advanced by Comrade Yang Hsien-chen and criticizing his views in this respect. Many newspapers and periodicals in various parts of the country are now discussing more deeply the views put forward by Comrade Yang Hsien-chen. The core of the question under discussion is how to understand the kernel of Marxist-Leninist dialectics - the question of the law of unity of opposites. The discussions now going on deal with many problems of theoretical principle, all having a close bearing on the current revolutionary practice. In order to enable all to understand the various aspects of this controversy, the major problems under discussion and the major points in dispute are now briefly explained as follows:

### What Expresses the Essence of the Law of Unity of Opposites, "Dividing One intwo Two" or "Uniting Two into One"?

On this question, three views have been expressed.

One view holds that the theory of "uniting two into one is the law of unity of opposites. Those who hold this view uphold the indivisible connection between two sides of a contradiction.

Comrade Yang Hsien-chen has said, "What is called unity of opposites? China has an old saying: 'uniting two into one,' meaning that a thing is a union of two [parts] into one. It has the same meaning as 'dividing one into two.'" He has also said:

"The idea that 'combination of existence and inexistence is called origin' means 'unity of opposites.'"

"The idea of unity of opposites refers only to the indivisible connection between two sides of a contradiction."

"Identity of contradictions means only that the two sides of a contradiction are inseparably connected."

"This imposes a demand to study how opposites can be made identical. Here, 'identity' denotes a common demand."

"Dialectics is precisely a study of how to identify (unity) opposites - to seek common ground while letting differences remain."

Comrades Ai and Lin explain the theory of "uniting two into one" by saying: "A thing is composed of two opposite aspects, and the two opposite aspects are indivisibly linked together. The reflection of this situation in man's mind was expressed by the ancient people of China with the phrase, 'combination of two into one.'" (See Tunghsichün [ 东西均 ] by Fang Yi-chih [ 方以智 ] of the Ming dynasty). Comrades Ai and Lin then observe that: "The theory of 'uniting two into one' expresses precisely the most fundamental law of dialectics, namely, the law of unity of opposites."

Another view holds that: "'Dividing one into two' or 'uniting two into one' constitutes only one aspect of the law of unity of opposites and neither can wholly express the content of the law of unity of opposites; only by combining 'dividing one into two' with 'uniting two into one' can a complete picture of the law of unity of opposites be presented."

Comrades upholding this view hold that: "'Uniting two into one' expresses the identity of contradictions while 'dividing one into two' expresses the struggle of contradiction. Since both constitute the two indivisible aspects of the law of contradiction, only by unifying them can a whole picture of the law of contradiction be presented. It is necessary to grasp the opposites from identity while having a firm hold of 'dividing one into two' and to grasp identity from the opposites while mastering 'uniting two into one.'"

Most comrades, however, do not agree with the aforesaid views. They contend that what truly expresses the substance of the law of unity of opposites is neither "uniting two into one" nor the combination of "uniting two into one" with "dividing one into two," but is "dividing one into two."

Comrades sharing this view hold that the first view is basically wrong and that the second view, ostensibly a whole picture but actually a compromise, is also wrong. They maintain that "dividing one into two" constitutes the most dynamic, lucid and scientific generalization and expression of the law of unity of opposites and vividly expresses the kernel and essence of the revolutionary dialectics of Marxism-Leninism.

Many comrades observe that: "'Dividing one into two' and 'uniting two into one' are two fundamentally opposite kinds of world outlook and methodology. The former is materialistic dialectics and the latter is the metaphysical theory of reconciliation of contradictions. They hold that "uniting two into one" is a philosophy that renounces class contradiction and class struggle and serves as the philosophical basis of class conciliation.

Comrade Sa Jen-hsing ( 撒仁兴 ) said: "What is the theory of 'uniting two into one' advanced by Comrade Yang Hsien-chen? The basic point is that it repudiates the struggle of the opposites and their mutual transformation into each other under certain conditions, thus using the conciliation of the opposites to neutralize the struggle of the opposites. In other words, it castrates the critical, revolutionary spirit of materialistic dialectics and promotes the metaphysical theory of reconciliation

of contradictions." He also said: "This philosophy of repudiating contradiction and struggle and the mutual transforming of the two sides of a contradiction into each other under certain conditions will inevitably lead to repudiation of class struggle and advocacy of the theory of class conciliation, and thus lead to a negation of the proletarian revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat."

Comrade Hsiao Shu (萧述) holds that: "The theory of 'uniting two into one' advanced by Comrade Yang Hsien-chen one-sidedly sums up the whole relationship between two contradictory sides of a thing into these words: "a common demand to seek common ground while reserving differences." This is extremely pernicious metaphysics, it is not dialectics. Comrade Yang Hsien-chen speaks of dialectics as only a study of 'a common demand to seek common ground while reserving differences' of the two opposite sides. This view is in effect not very different from Deborin's idea of 'conciliation of opposites."

Some comrades hold that: "The identity referred to in the theory of 'uniting two into one' does not mean the identity of contradictions. Rather, it repudiates the dead and rigid theory of identity of metaphysicians." Comrade Hsiang Ch'ing (项晴) said, "Since the idea of 'uniting two into one' expounds only interconnection and unity and not struggle...it can only be related to metaphhsics, and this is very plain without any need of explanation."

Some comrades also hold that the connection referred to in the theory of 'uniting two into one" is fundamentally different from that of materialistic dialectics. Comrades Wang Chung and Kuo P'ei-heng hold that Marxist-Leninists have never interpreted the unity of opposites to mean that the opposite aspects are indivisibly linked together. They maintain that materialistic dialectics acknowledges the interconnection of opposite aspects, but dialectical interconnection refers in effect to the relationship of contradictions, including the interdependence of and the struggle between contradictions and not something which "only says that the two aspects of a contradiction are indivisibly linked together."

## What Is the Motive Force in the Development of Things, Contradiction and Struggle Or "Uniting Two into One?"

One view holds that "uniting two into one" is the motive force in the development of things, but Comrade Yang Hsien-chen thinks that "everything is based on 'combination of two into one'." He cites as examples positive and negative, life and death, fire and water, anabolism and catabolism, etc. to explain his point. Comrades Ai and Lin put it even more specifically by saying: "From the different phenomena of Nature to human society and thought, there is nothing which is not based on 'combination of two into one.'" They cite these examples: "The 'combination of two into one' of action and counteraction of matter becomes the mechanical movement of matter. The 'combination of two into one' of attraction and repulsion between the particles of matter constitutes physical movement. The 'combination of two into one' of integration and disintegration of atoms constitutes chemical movement. The 'combination of two into one' of assimilation and decomposition of the organic substance of proteins, formed by the chemical elements of carbon, hydrogen, oxygen and nitrogen, constitutes the metabolic movement of life. The 'combination of two into one' of productive forces and production relations on the one hand and the economic base and its superstructure on the other constitutes the movement of human society." Comrade P'an Ch'ing-pin (潘庆斌) holds that "This perpetual 'division' -- 'combination' -- 'redivision' -- 'recombination' ... is precisely the dialectical development of objective things and the substance of movement."

Most comrades, however, are not in agreement with the aforesaid views. They maintain that everything is always based on "dividing one into two" and not "uniting two into one," and that to regard "uniting two into one" as the motive force of the development of things is to negate contradiction and struggle as the motive force of the development of things, which in effect is to deny the transformation and development of things. Comrade Ch'i Chen-hai (齐振海), Comrade Yeh Li-hsüan (叶立煊)

and others hold that contradiction and struggle between contradictory sides provide the motive force for the development of things and that without this struggle it is impossible for one side of a contradiction to prevail over the other and to accelerate the transformation of contradictions and achieve the purpose of resolving contradictions, much less to promote the development of things.

Some comrades also hold the view that the development referred to in the concept of "uniting two into one" is by no means dialectical development, but a repudiation of the cycle theory of development. This cycle theory is perpetual division -- combination and redivision-- recombination, moving perpetually in a circle. Comrade Chang En-t'zu (張恩茲) said, "This cycle theory is the inevitable result of the repudiation of the internal contradictions of things by the advocates of the theory of 'uniting two into one' and also the basic features of all metaphysical world views."

## What Is the Object of the Study of Dialectics?

In Comrade Yang Hsien-chen's opinion, "The study of dialectics seeks to acquire the ability to link together two opposite ideas. To study the law of unity of opposites, it is necessary to acquire the ability to link up two opposite ideas. It is constantly necessary to remember that the two sides of a thing are indivisibly linked together, and it is constantly necessary to remember to grasp the opposite aspects in the unity of opposites. In this way, one-sidedness can be avoided in practical work."

Some comrades hold that the object of the study of dialectics, as explained by Comrade Yang Hsien-chen, is in effect to urge people to use the concept of "uniting two into one" to understand and change the world. Comrade Wang and Kuo said: "It can be seen that Comrade Yang Hsien-chen's world outlook and methodology are completely identical. Since he holds that the fundamental law of the objective world is 'combination of two into one,' and the opposite aspects 'are only' indivisibly linked together, then the method to know the objective world also calls for 'linking together two opposite ideas,' that is, 'combination of two into one.'" They also said, "If we do according to what has been said by Comrade Yang Hsien-chen, we can only 'link together' bourgeois thought and proletarian thought, Marxism and non-Marxism, correctness and error, and merits and shortcomings, and 'seek agreement while reserving differences,' but do not carry out struggle and resolve contradictions."

Many comrades hold that the object of the study of revolutionary dialectics is to analyze contradictions and reconcile contradictions, promote the transformation of contradictions, and achieve revolutionary objectives. Comrade Yüan Ping (原冰), Shen Chu (沈竹) and Shu Li (樹立) said: "In a class society, this first of all calls for firmly taking the proletarian stand and resolutely carrying on the revolutionary struggle by using the class viewpoint and the method of class analysis, and carrying on this struggle to the very end."

## What Is the Substance of the Controversial Points?

One view holds that the disputed point of the debate concerns the question of interpreting the phrase, "uniting two into one," or that of explaining the original meaning of the title cleverly conceived by the other party. Comrade Yao Yung-k'ang (姚永抗) said, "As to the concept of 'uniting two into one' itself, like any other concept, it should have a clearcut and specific meaning and the present divergence of opinion is only due to the different interpretations of various people."

Many comrades are in disagreement with the aforesaid views and hold that the debate is not over phraseology but a divergence of opinion over the principle of Marxist-Leninist dialectics. Comrade Sa Jen-hsing said, "The divergence of opinion in the big debate is over the basic principle of acknowledging whether the fundamental law of things is 'division of one into two' or 'combination of two into one;' whether the divergence of opinion is for materialistic dialectics or against materialistic dialectics; whether or not the divergence of opinion is over the Marxist-Leninist theory of class struggle and the theory of class conciliation; and whether or not the basic divergence of opinion is over the revolutionary, proletarian world view and the bourgeois

world view." They maintain that the theory of "combining two into one" is the philosophical basis of the theory of class conciliation. Comrade Yang Hsien-chen's philosophy of repudiating contradiction and struggle is not a new thing, but a compromise of the most vulgar and shallow kind and the decadent world outlook of the bourgeoisie. It is by no means accidental for him to propagate this philosophy today, for it is a reflection of the acute and complex class struggle now going on in China and on an international scale.

(Fang Szu 方思 and T'an Ch'eng-fa 覃承发 )

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