

# Reading Notes on the Soviet Text *Political Economy*

Excerpts, 1961-62

[SOURCE: *Long Live Mao Zedong Thought*, a Red Guard Publication.]

## 32. Contradiction Is the Motive Force of Development in a Socialist Society

Page 443, paragraph 5, admits that in a socialist society contradictions between the productive forces and the production relations exist and speaks of overcoming such contradictions. But by no means does the text recognize that contradictions are the motive force.

The succeeding paragraph is acceptable; however, under socialism it is not only certain aspects of human relations and certain forms of leading the economy, but also problems of the ownership system itself (e.g., the two types of ownership) that may hinder the development of the productive forces.

Most dubious is the viewpoint in the next paragraph. It says, "The contradictions under socialism are not irreconcilable." This does not agree with the laws of dialectics, which hold that all contradictions are irreconcilable. Where has there ever been a reconcilable contradiction? Some are antagonistic, some are non-antagonistic, but it must not be thought that there are irreconcilable and reconcilable contradictions.

Under socialism [*The transcriber of the 1967 text comments that Comrade Mao may have meant "under communism".*] there may be no war but there is still struggle, struggle among sections of the people; there may be no revolution of one class overthrowing another, but there is still revolution. The transition from socialism to communism is revolutionary. The transition from one stage of communism to another is also. Then there is technological revolution and cultural revolution. Communism will surely have to pass through many stages and many revolutions.

Here the text speaks of relying on the "positive action" of the masses to overcome contradictions at the proper time. "Positive action" should include complicated struggles.

"Under socialism there is no class energetically plotting to preserve outmoded economic relations." Correct, but in a socialist

society there are still conservative strata and something like "vested interest groups." There still remain differences between mental and manual labor, city and countryside, worker and peasant. Although these are not antagonistic contradictions they cannot be resolved without struggle.

The children of our cadres are a cause of discouragement. They lack experience of life and of society, yet their airs are considerable and they have a great sense of superiority. They have to be educated not to rely on their parents or martyrs of the past but entirely on themselves.

In a socialist society there are always advanced and backward persons, those who are steadfastly loyal to the collective effort, diligent and sincere, fresh of spirit and lively, and those who are acting for fame and fortune, for the personal end, for the self, or who are apathetic and dejected. In the course of socialist development each and every period is bound to have a group that is more than willing to preserve backward production relations and social institutions. On many many questions the prosperous middle peasants have their own point of view. They cannot adapt to new developments, and some of them resist such developments, as proved by the debate over the Eight-Word Constitution<sup>1</sup> with the prosperous peasants of the Kuangtung rural areas.

Page 453, the last paragraph, says, "Criticism and self-criticism are powerful motive forces for the development of socialist society." This is not the point. Contradictions are the motive forces, criticism and self-criticism are the methods for resolving contradictions.

## 33. The Dialectical Process of Knowledge

Page 446, paragraph 2, says that as ownership becomes public "people become the masters of the economic relations of their own

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<sup>1</sup> The Eight-Character Charter for Agriculture, propagated during the Great Leap Forward, called for paying attention to water, fertilizer, soil (conservation), seeds (selection), closeness (in planting), protection (of plants), implements, and (field) management.

society,” and are “able to take hold of and apply these laws fully and consciously.” It should be observed that this requires going through a process. The understanding of laws always begins with the understanding of a minority before it becomes the knowledge of the majority. It is necessary to go through a process of practice and study to go from ignorance to knowledge. At the beginning no one has knowledge. Foreknowledge has never existed. People must go through practice to gain results, meet with failure as problems arise; only through such a process can knowledge gradually advance. If you want to know the objective laws of the development of things and events you must go through the process of practice, adopt a Marxist-Leninist attitude, compare successes and failures, continually practicing and studying, going through multiple successes and failures; moreover, meticulous research must be performed. There is no other way to make one’s own knowledge gradually conform to the laws. For those who see only victory but not defeat it will not be possible to know these laws.

It is not easy “to possess and apply these laws fully and consciously.” On page 446 the text quotes Engels. “Only at this time does the fully conscious self begin to create history. For the first time to a great extent and to an ever greater extent people can create the effects they aspire after.” “Begin to” and “to an ever greater extent” are relatively accurate.

The text does not recognize the contradictions between appearances and essences. Essences always lie behind appearances and cannot be disclosed except through appearances. The text does not express the idea that for a person to know the laws it is necessary to go through a process. The vanguard is no exception.