

September 8, 1964

No. 3294

 * NATIONAL *

COMMUNIST THEORY

Discussing the Question of "Combination of Two into One" with Comrade Yang Hsien-shen

by

Wang Chung (王中) and Kuo P'ei-heng (郭佩衡)

(Peking Jen-min Jih-pao July 17, 1964)

On May 29, the Kuang-ming Jih-pao carried on its supplement page dealing with philosophy an article by Ai Heng-wu (艾恒武) and Lin Ch'ing-shan (林青山) entitled "Division of One into Two" and "Combination of Two into one." This article puts forward the following views:

"An objective thing is a 'combination of two into one.' In order to know it, it is necessary 'to divide one into two,' and when guidelines and policies are formulated for transforming the world and dealing with work, it is also necessary 'to combine two into one,' to grasp unity among opposites, and to grasp opposites, and to grasp opposites in unity."

What is "combination of two into one?" Comrades Ai and Lin explain it 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 [東西均] by Fang Yi-chih [方以智] of the Ming Dynasty). Comrades Ai and Lin then "demonstrate" in different ways this proposition of "combination of two into one." They hold that: "From the different phenomena of Nature to human society and thought, there is nothing which is not based on 'combination of two into one.' 'Combination of two into one' manifests precisely the most fundamental law of dialectics, namely, the law of the unity of opposites." "It is precisely because things represent a 'combination of two into one' that the method of knowing things is based on 'division of one into two,' and that is universal." "The series of guidelines, and policies of our Party are all formulated on the proposition of analyzing things based on 'combination of two into one' by means of 'division of one into two,' and of finding out the conditions for uniting and integrating the opposite aspects."

Comrades Ai and Lin also hold that the object of studying dialectics is "first to find out the conditions for linking together and uniting the opposite aspects, and to unite and integrate the opposite aspects in work."

The article by Comrades Ai and Lin has aroused enthusiastic discussions in the academic circle.

After reading the article by Comrades Ai and Lin, we feel that the aforesaid viewpoint of theirs is very familiar to us. We cannot help from recalling that back in November, 1963, the material of instruction called "What is the meaning of 'yes - yes, no - no; yes - no, no - yes,'" which was printed for distribution by Comrade Yang Hsien-chen (楊獻珍) when he lectured at the Higher Party School's class for training by rotation, had put forward this viewpoint of "combination of two into one." After that, when Comrade Yang Hsien-chen gave a talk on "It Is Necessary to Carry Out Work Through Learning to Grasp the Unity of Opposites and to Respect Dialectics in Practical Work" at the Sinkiang Class in April, this year, he again made a detailed exposition of the question of "combination of two into one." After the publication of the article by Ai and Lin, we read over Comrade Yang Hsien-chen's lecture notes and the notes of the students once again. The more we read, the more we feel that the idea of "combination of two into one" as advanced by Comrade Yang Hsien-chen is worthy of discussion.

Now, let us give below some excerpts from what Comrade Yang Hsien-chen has said on "combination of two into one" according to his lecture notes and the notes of the students.

"The unity of opposites' means that everything is composed of opposites or contradictions, and is not like an iron plate. 'One is divided into two,' 'two are combined into one,' and 'two are based on one.' In Chinese language, a thing is called 'tunghsi' [meaning east and west]. This shows that the thing itself includes the positive (east) and the negative (west) aspects. The description of a thing as 'tunghsi,' in effect, gives expression to the idea of 'unity of opposites,' or the idea that "combination of existence and inexistence is called origin." (合有無謂之元) Many things of this kind are used in everyday language. There are, for example 'on and off' [switches], 'compass and square' [rules], 'square and circle,' 'inhale and exhale' [breathing], 'positive and negative,' 'life and death,' 'fire and water,' 'anabolism and catabolism,' etc. Many more examples can be given."

"Everything is based on 'combination of two into one.' Therefore, when problems are observed, it is necessary 'to divide one into two,' and to adopt the method of 'division of one into two.'"

"What is called the unity of opposites? There is in China an old saying 'Combination of two into one.' This means that things are combined from two into one, and is the same in meaning as 'division of one into two.'"

"According to the Annals of Lant'ien hsien, Li Ta-lin wrote a book called Laotzu Tan. According to Ch'ao Kung-wu, this book means mainly to say: 'The use of the philosophy of Laotzu to combine existence with inexistence is called origin. It is thought that this is the origin of the way and even life.'"

"'Combination of existence and inexistence is called origin.' 'Mutually contradictory and complementary.' 'All things in the world in ancient and modern times are made up of two. There is always intercourse between two things, and there is nothing which is not two in one.' 'Combination of two into one.' (Quoted from page 24, Tunghsichün by Fang Yi-chih toward the end of the Ming Dynasty) 'There must be two when there is one, and two are based on one.' All this represents the brilliant thought of ancient China concerning the unity of opposites."

"In the phrase 'Combination of existence and inexistence is called origin,' 'existence' and 'inexistence' can also be taken as signs representing the two opposite aspects of an entity. In the phrase 'Positive and negative make the way,' the two characters 'positive' and 'negative' are also such signs."

First, what is the fundamental law of objective things? Comrade Yang Hsien-chen's answer was: "Combination of two into one."

Comrade Yang Hsien-chen said: "What is the unity of opposites? There is in China the old saying: 'Combination of two into one.' This saying means that a thing is combined from two into one." He not only said again and again: "A thing itself is a 'combination of two into one.'" Moreover, he also lauded it as "a brilliant thought of ancient China concerning the unity of opposites."

What is "combination of two into one?" Comrade Yang Hsien-chen has a very definite interpretation. He insisted on saying "combination of two into one" was the unity of opposites, and he also gave an incorrect interpretation to the unity of opposites. He only stressed the indivisibility of opposites, but did not stress their militant character. He said over and over again: "The idea of the unity of opposites only says that the two sides of a contradiction are indivisibly linked together." "Unity of contradictions means only that the two aspects of a contradiction are indivisibly linked together."

Obviously, in the eyes of Comrade Yang Hsien-chen, the "nature" of things "seeks only" to link together the opposite aspects and make them indivisible, but does not seek to develop the struggle of opposite aspects. This means that the "nature" of things is based on "combination of two into one," and not the division of one into two.

Comrade Yang Hsien-chen's viewpoint is not in correspondence with the Marxist-Leninist viewpoint.

The Marxist-Leninists have never interpreted the unity of opposites to mean only that the opposite aspects are indivisibly linked together. Engels said: "So-called objective dialectics prevails throughout nature, and so-called subjective dialectics, that is, dialectical thought, is only the reflection of the motion through opposites which asserts itself everywhere in nature, and which by the continual conflict of the opposites and their final passage into one another, or into higher forms, determines the life of nature." (Engels: Dialectics of Nature, Chinese edition, page 174) This is Engels' interpretation of the law of the unity of opposites. Can it be said that such an interpretation can be expressed with "combination of two into one?" Can it be said that this can also be interpreted to mean that "the idea of the unity of opposites only says that the two sides of a contradiction are indivisibly linked together?"

Lenin has also given a simple and succinct definition to the law of the unity of opposites. Comrade Mao Tse-tung has quoted and developed this definition in his "On Contradiction." Comrade Mao Tse-tung said: "Engels said: 'Motion itself is a contradiction.' Lenin defined the law of the unity of opposites as 'the recognition (discovery) of the contradictory, mutually exclusive, opposite tendencies in all phenomena and processes of nature (including mind and society). Are these views correct? Yes, they are. The interdependence of the contradictory aspects of a thing and the struggle between them determine the life and impel the development of that thing.'" (Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung, Vol. I, page 293)

We see that Comrades Engels, Lenin and Mao Tse-tung have pointed out with emphasis the contradictory, mutually exclusive and opposite tendencies in all things as well as the interdependence of and struggle between these things. What identity is there between this and Comrade Yang Hsien-chen's idea which describes the unity of opposites as only "a combination of two into one" and as "the indivisible union of opposite aspects?"

Materialistic dialectics acknowledges the interconnection of opposite aspects. But what is called dialectical interconnection? Dialectical interconnection refers in effect to the relationship of contradictions. It includes the interdependence of

and the struggle between contradictions, but is not something which "only says that the two aspects of a contradiction are indivisibly linked together." "The interdependence of the contradictory aspects of a thing and the struggle between them determine the life and actuates the development of that thing." In this connection, the most important thing is the "uninterrupted struggle" between opposite aspects, which converts the opposite aspects of a thing into each other, or converts the thing to a higher form. What is the connection between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat? It is the connection between the exploiter and the exploited. In a unified capitalist society, the interdependence of the exploiter and the exploited and, what is more important, the struggle between them promote the development of the capitalist society until this society is destroyed and transformed into a higher form of socialist society. Are not such a connection, such a tendency of development, and such law of development precisely "the division of one into two?" Can the uninterrupted development and aggravation of the struggle between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, and even the elimination of the bourgeoisie be described as "the combination of two into one" in regard to the bourgeoisie and the proletariat?

Of course, the opposite aspects are interconnected and interdependent. However, first of all, it can never be said that the dialectical unity of opposites "only says" that the opposite aspects are indivisibly linked together, because it must also mention the struggle between the opposite aspects. It is wrong to describe the linking of opposite aspects which continuously struggle against each other as "combination of two into one." Second, Lenin has pointed out that the unity of opposites is relative, conditional and temporary, while the struggle between opposite aspects which exclude each other is unconditional and absolute. Comrade Mao Tse-tung's works have also brought this thought of Lenin into play for a number of times. Since identity is relative, conditional and temporary, this means that the so-called "indivisible union" and interdependence are also relative, conditional and temporary, while the disintegration of interdependence and the splitting of interconnection caused by struggle are absolute as far as the tendency of the development of things is concerned.

For example, in the capitalist society, the interdependence and connection of the bourgeoisie and the proletariat are relative, while the struggle between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, and the tendency of development marked by the disintegration of the interdependence of the two classes through this struggle till the elimination of the bourgeoisie is absolute. Such a tendency and law of development can only be based on "division of one into two," but can never be described as "combination of two into one." If the unity of opposites between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat is described as the connection between the two classes without stressing the struggle between them, if it is held that the unity of opposites between these two classes "means only" that these two classes are "indivisibly linked together," does this not signify that the interdependence of these two classes is unconditional and absolute and that the bourgeoisie must be preserved forever?

Again, truth and fallacy are interconnected under certain conditions. However, if the unity of opposites between truth and fallacy is described as "combination of two in one," if it is held that the unity of opposites between them "means only" that they are indivisibly linked together, does not this mean that we must tolerate the peaceful co-existence of truth and fallacy, must not combat fallacy, must not overcome fallacy, and must not sever us from fallacy and enable fallacy to move in the opposite [right] direction? How then can we drive our work and thought forward?

Can it still be said there is anything in common between these ideas of Comrade Yang Hsien-chen and the ideas of Comrades Lenin and Mao Tse-tung? Can it be said that Comrade Lenin and Mao Tse-tung's idea of "division of one into two" is "artificial" and "runs counter to the nature of things," while Comrade Yang Hsien-chen's idea is in conformity with the objective laws and the nature of things? Truth is after all truth, and only "division of one into two" can express the fundamental law of the development of things, that is the law of the unity of opposites. Comrade Yang Hsien-chen's attempt to replace it with "combination of two into one" will prove to be vain in the end.

Second, what is the object of the study of dialectics? Comrade Yang Hsien-chen's answer is: "The study of dialectics seeks to learn the ability to link together two opposite ideas." In another place, he also says: "The study of the law of the unity of opposites seeks to learn the ability to link together two opposite ideas."

It can be seen that Comrade Yang Hsien-chen's world outlook and epistemology 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." Although Comrade Yang Hsien-chen has also said that "the study of the theory of unity of opposites seeks to learn the method of analysis, that is what is called division of one into two," yet he has not taken this as the principal direction. The principal direction of his methodology, as he has stressed again and again, is "to link together two opposite ideas." In Comrade Yang Hsien-chen's system of thought, there is in effect also no standing for "division of one into two" as epistemology.

The question is whether or not the object of studying the law of the unity of opposites lies only in linking together "two opposite ideas," linking together the bourgeois thought and the proletarian thought, linking together Marxism and non-Marxism, linking together correctness and error, and linking together merits and shortcomings. What is the significance of learning the ability to link things together? According to the aforesaid viewpoints of Comrade Yang Hsien-chen, it is very clear that he seeks to combine two opposite ideas into one. Can it be said that this is the object of the study of dialectics?

The object of the study of dialectics has been clearly explained by Comrade Mao Tse-tung. He says: "This dialectical world outlook teaches man chiefly how to observe and analyze skillfully the movement of opposites in various things and, on the basis of such analysis, to find out the methods of solving the contradictions." (Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung, Vol. I, page 292) What Comrade Mao Tse-tung preaches is to analyze and solve the contradictions, and this is completely different from Comrade Yang Hsien-chen's methodology of "combination of two into one."

Two opposite ideas can only reflect the opposite aspects of an objective thing. In order to understand how two opposite ideas are related, that is, the contradictions of the ideological sphere, it is first necessary to analyze the contradictions of objective things. Marxism pays attention to the universality of contradiction as well as the particularity of contradiction. It lays emphasis on the concrete analysis and concrete solution of contradictions. Comrade Mao Tse-tung says: "The use of different methods to solve different contradictions is a principle which Marxist-Leninists must strictly observe." (Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung, Vol. I, page 299) Comrade Mao Tse-tung made masterly use of the method of class analysis based on division of one into two to analyze concretely the contradictions of different classes at different periods of the Chinese revolution and socialist construction, and in accordance with the different states of development of these contradictions, formulated different guidelines and policies for solving the social contradiction of different periods. These policies reflect the conditional identity of different classes at a certain historical period as well as the absolute struggle between them. They reflect the way to solve the contradictions of different classes with different methods of struggle, and also point out the struggle between opposite ideas and the way to solve the contradictions between them.

Our Party has always proceeded from reality. It analyzes the class situation at home and abroad on the basis of conducting careful investigation and study to determine the inter-relationships of the different classes and to make class appraisals, and on this foundation, to formulate guidelines and policies. In the article "Strategic Problems of China's Revolutionary War," Comrade Mao Tse-tung says: "History tells us that correct political and military lines do not emerge and develop spontaneously and smoothly, but only in the course of struggles. On the one hand, they have to struggle against 'left' opportunism and on the other against Right opportunism. Without struggling against and thoroughly overcoming such harmful tendencies that endanger the revolution and the revolutionary wars, the

establishment of a correct line and victory in the revolutionary war are impossible." (Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung, Vol. I, page 179) Our Party has been formulating its guidelines and lines precisely in accordance with this thought of Comrade Mao Tse-tung, and is thus ever triumphant in revolution and construction.

Comrade Yang Hsien-chen, however, lays emphasis on "the linking together of two opposite ideas," but not on the solution of ideological struggles and ideological contradictions. He even interprets dialectics in this way: "Dialectics studies the identity (unity) of opposite aspects. It finds out the identity and preserve the difference." If we work in accordance with the views of Comrade Yang Hsien-chen, we can only "link together" the proletarian thought and the bourgeois thought, Marxism and non-Marxism, the correct and the wrong things, the merits and the shortcomings, "find out the identity and reserve the differences," but do not carry out struggle and solve the contradictions. Can it be said that this method to reconcile the opposite aspects is dialectics? Can it be said that the policies of our Party are built on the foundation of "combination of two into one" and "finding out the agreement and reserving the difference?"

We do not intend to comment in this article on all of Comrade Yang Hsien-chen's remarks on "combination of two into one," and only the aforesaid two points of view are put forward for the deliberation of Comrade Yang Hsien-chen.