

To Look for the Gap or "The Point in Common?"

by

Han Hsin-liang (韓忻亮)  
Shanghai Iron and Steel Works No. 3

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Comrade Yang Hsien-chen distorts the content of revolutionary dialectics as "combining two into one," and wants us to apply revolutionary dialectics with the method of "seeking the identity and preserving the difference." He says: "Dialectics is to study how opposites are identical (united). The identity is sought and the difference is preserved." He also says: "Dialectics seek to study how the opposites can become identical, and this identity seeks to find a point in common."

Is this viewpoint of Comrade Yang Hsien-chen correct? Absolutely not. Chairman Mao has this to say: "There is only one truth, and he who has discovered truth depends not on subjective exaggeration, but on objective practice. Only the revolutionary practice of millions of people is the yardstick for testing truth." ("On New Democracy"). By setting the "dialectics" preached by Comrade Yang Hsien-chen in contrast with the practice of revolutionary struggle by the masses, we can clearly see that what he peddles is a thoroughly reactionary theory of the bourgeoisie. We can never be deceived by him.

I am going to refute here Comrade Yang Hsien-chen's theory of "seeking the identity and preserving the difference" on the basis of some experience gained from launching the "compare, learn, overtake and help" campaign in our factory.

I am a worker attached to the open-hearth furnace workshop of the Shanghai Iron and Steel Works No. 3. Over the past few years, by way of continuously making technical innovations and launching socialist labor patterns, the output of the two open-hearth furnaces in our workshop has been greatly raised. However, during the emulations in which we gave pursuit to each other, the output of the open-hearth furnaces constantly showed a gap. At one time, for example, the No. 1 furnace which was younger than the No. 2 furnace consumed more raw and semi-processed materials and took a longer time to refine steel than the latter. Obviously No. 1 furnace was backward in production. What should be done? Should we learn humbly from and catch up with the advanced, solve the production problems in good time, and overtake the No. 2 furnace? Or should we cover up the contradiction and maintain the status quo as indicated by Comrade Yang Hsien-chen's method of "seeking the identity and preserving the difference?" The comrades of No. 1 furnace firmly adopted the former attitude and method. This was because if we carried out work in accordance with Comrade Yang Hsien-chen's viewpoint, we would not take the trouble of finding out in which respects we were inferior to other people; we would obliterate and cover up the contradiction, thus preserving the "difference" with the No. 2 furnace in production. Thus we would develop a "more or less the same" idea, closely adhere to the old rules, maintain the status quo, and forever remain backward. Therefore, we persisted in viewing problems with the viewpoint of "one divided into two," acknowledged the gap, exposed the contradiction, and analyzed the cause of the contradiction. At the same time, we believed that with effort, the contradiction of the advanced and the backward could be transformed, and that the only correct way to change the backward aspect was to close the gap by mastering the advanced experience of the No. 2 furnace.

By way of making careful observation and asking for advice, we discovered that the comrades of the No. 2 furnace had great revolutionary zeal; and controlled the use of gas in a better way. We studied their revolutionary spirit and advanced experience. After experimenting with more than 300 loads, we found the method for "making use of gas at different stages," and learned to use different amounts of gas at "the three stages of material feeding, smelting and refining." After this method was adopted, the No. 1 furnace not only caught up with but also surpassed the No. 2 furnace. It also consumed less raw and semi-processed materials and took less time to refine steel than the No. 2 furnace.

When comrades of the No. 2 furnace were aware of the situation, they promptly studied our experience. With our assistance, they quickly mastered the method of "making use of gases at different stages." Following this, we also learned experience in furnace maintenance from the comrades of the No. 2 furnace. Thus did we help and learn from each other and give pursuit to each other, and the level of production of the two open-hearth furnaces was greatly raised. A comparison of the general achievements made by the two open-hearth furnace in 1962 and 1963 showed that the annual output was increased by 14 per cent, the rate of up-to-the-standard steel ingots was raised by 1.77 per cent, the average furnace ability was raised by 16 per cent, the average refining time for each load was shortened by 16 minutes, and the amount of coal consumed and the amount of iron needed for making one ton of steel were also markedly reduced.

It is quite obvious that the ability of the two open-hearth furnaces in our workshop to score these achievements in production principally results from our continuously discovering the gap and analyzing and solving the contradiction under the education of the Party. It is never due to our obliterating the contradiction to look for what is called "the point in common." A gap is a contradiction. In the "compare, learn, overtake and help" campaign, we must first find the gap -- the difference between the units or the individuals -- before we can self-consciously find an opponent for challenge, an example to learn from, a target to overtake, and measures for rendering assistance. Thus, the contradiction can be solved correctly, and things changed in aspect favorable to the revolution can be promoted.

As a matter of fact, in the process of production, between different units or individuals, there is always the contradiction of the advanced and the backward. For example, the output may be high or low, the quality may be good or poor, and the raw and semi-processed materials consumed may be greater or lesser in quantity. The important thing is the attitude we adopt toward it. If we are guided by the dialectics of "one divided into two," we would find out in what regard we are inferior to other people and why we are backward. We would find out in what regard other people are advanced and what the causes are. After that, we would adopt measures to close the gap. In this way the backward can become the advanced, and the advanced even more advanced. If we work in accordance with Comrade Yang Hsien-chen's viewpoint and "preserve" all points of difference, then the objectively existing contradictions between high output and low output, good quality and poor quality, between greater, faster, better and more economical results and lesser, slower, poorer and more expensive results, and between the advanced and the backward would be covered up and reconciled. As a result, the backward will remain backward forever and the advanced will fall in line with the backward -- thus impeding development of production.

The existence of a gap in production achievements is often due to the existence of a gap in thought, in revolutionary zeal, in work method, or in technical level. Only by making a comparison can we proceed from the gap in production achievements, gradually and penetratingly discover the merits of other people and our own shortcomings in various fields, remedy our defects by learning from the merits of other people, consistently press ahead, and go on to develop our own merits.

Apart from conducting "compare, learn, overtake and help" activities between furnaces in the factory, we have also challenged other fraternal factories in the municipality to labor emulations in comparing with the advanced, looking for gaps, giving pursuit to each other, and learning from and helping each other, and have thus solved many problems in production.

For example, Shanghai Iron and Steel Works No. 1 constantly exchanged information with us on how various targets were accomplished for comparison purposes. Once one factory was found to be backward in a specific target, the personnel concerned would be promptly organized to learn from the other. The open-hearth furnace workshops of our two factories are equipped and staffed in about the same way. But in the concrete course of production, gaps constantly emerged. On one occasion, when we compared various targets with Shanghai Iron and Steel Works No. 1, we discovered that our

rate of technical accidents in steel casting was higher than theirs. The head of the workshop led a group of persons to Shanghai Iron and Steel Works No. 1 to study things, and found that the reason why they had less technical accidents in steel casting was that they had a stronger sense of responsibility, that they had established a sound system of responsibility for various work stations, and that their labor was rationally organized. After studied their advanced ideas and experiences and improved our own work, there was a marked decrease in the number of technical accidents in our factories. In 1963, the comrades of our open-hearth furnace workshop alone went to study in Shanghai Iron and Steel Works No. 1 more than 40 times. The comrades of Shanghai Iron and Steel Works No. 1 also constantly came to our factory to see and study things and to pass on their experience to us. Now, it has become an established custom for us to communicate with brother factories and to learn from the advanced.

There is no end to advancement. It is necessary to press ahead again and again. In the case of some experience, what is advanced at one time in one place may not necessarily be advanced at another time in another place. In order to overcome arrogance and self-complacency and to catch up with the advanced level at home and abroad, we must also learn from the advanced units in other places.

Since the second half of 1963, our factory has organized groups of management personnel, workers and technical personnel, led by leading cadres, to learn experience from Anshan, Chungking, Peking, Tayeh and Tangshan. The head of our open-hearth furnace workshop also led eight persons, including the shift leaders, the furnace masters, the furnace maintenance technicians, the steel-casting foremen and the heads of technical groups, to learn advanced experience from the Chungking Iron and Steel Works. At that time, our factory was experimenting with the making of a kind of heavily pressed thin plate for the enamelware industry. The demand of the masses for this kind of steel is very high, and the content of ferrous oxide in the slag cannot be higher than 14 per cent. We tried to make this kind of steel for a number of times, but the content of ferrous oxide in the slag was always higher than the standard set. As a consequence, many molds cracked when pressed and became rejects. With this problem in mind we went to Chungking Iron and Steel Works to study things and adopted the method of setting men against men and generals against generals to work with the shifts. Whenever we found anything which was more advanced than ours -- be it the system of management, a method of operation, or the innovation of a small tool -- we treated it like a treasure, and made a record of it. What was especially important was that we noticed that the comrades of Chungking Iron and Steel Works were able to make good steel although the temperature there was higher than that of Shanghai, and some concrete conditions were inferior to those of Shanghai. This kind of revolutionary spirit and revolutionary zeal impressed us very much. Upon return to our factory, we seriously studied their advanced ideas and absorbed their advanced experience. The content of ferrous oxide in the slag registered a marked decline and amounted to between 10 and 12 per cent, thus attaining the advanced level. Formerly, the life-span of a top-hole could handle only 4 or 5 loads of steel. This was also quickly raised to between 20 and 22 loads, and to 25 loads at the maximum.

By way of these activities, we have not only tasted "sweetness" from the "compare, learn, overtake and help" campaign but also learned that only by guiding our thought and action with the viewpoint of "one divided into two" can we forever uphold the modest attitude, aim high, and promote the continued development of production. If we adopt Comrade Yang Hsian-chen's viewpoint and look only for "points in common" by "seeking the identity and preserving the difference," then as soon we would feel we have achieved something -- we would sit in the well to look at the sky, become short-sighted, and fail to see the advanced factors of other people. When we are backward, we would not look backwardness in the face, analyze the cause of backwardness, and humbly learn from and catch up with the advanced. As a result, we would inevitably become conservative, thus obstructing the development of production.

In the course of launching the "compare, learn, overtake and help" campaign, we have clearly seen that the revolutionary dialectics of "one divided into two" is a fundamental method for bringing revolutionary zeal into play, for raising the level of production, and for implementing the Party's general line of building socialism. Comrade Yang Hsien-chen, however, advocates "combining two into one" and the obliteration and covering up of contradiction. He wants us to find only "the point in common" to the two opposites and "preserve" the difference. What is all this? Are we not openly urged to eliminate the "compare, learn, overtake and help" campaign and do something that runs counter to the Party's general line of building socialism? There is not the slightest scent of revolutionary dialectics in it!

The theory of "seeking the identity and preserving the difference" which Comrade Yang Hsien-chen energetically preaches is in every respect a metaphysical viewpoint which seeks to obliterate contradiction, to eliminate struggle and to reject revolution. We must draw a clear line of demarcation with this kind of fallacy not only in class struggle but also in production struggle, in scientific experiments and in all kinds of work. (Reproduced from Chiang-fang Jih-pao, December 18, 1964)

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