

A NEW POLEMIC ON THE PHILOSOPHICAL FRONT

Report on the Discussion Concerning Comrade Yang Hsien-chen's [Yang Xianzhen's]
Concept That "Two Combine Into One"

(by a Red Flag [Hongqi] Correspondent)

(*Peking Review*, No. 37, September 11, 1964)

A new and heated polemic has developed on the philosophical front in China; it concerns the concepts of "one divides into two"⁷ and "two combines into one."

This debate is a struggle between those who are for and those who are against materialist dialectics, a struggle between two world outlooks - the proletarian world outlook and the bourgeois world outlook. Those who maintain that "one divides into two" is the fundamental law of things stand on the side of materialist dialectics; those who maintain that the fundamental law of things is that "two combine into one" stand in direct opposition to materialist dialectics. The two sides draw a clear line of demarcation between themselves and their arguments are directly opposed to each other. This polemic is an ideological reflection of an acute and complex class struggle now being waged both internationally and in China.

Counting from May 29, the date of publication in the newspaper *Guangming Ribao* of the article "'One Divides Into Two' and 'Two Combine Into One,'" by Comrades Ai Heng-wu and Lin Ching-shan, this debate has already been going on for three months. In order to get a better understanding of the present state of this polemic and in order to promote it, the Hongqi [Hung Ch'i - Red Flag] Editorial Department organized a forum on August 24-25 attended by cadres and students from the Higher Party School. Our correspondent subsequently interviewed a number of the comrades concerned. The following is a report on the forum and interviews.

The Polemic Was Provoked by Comrade Yang Hsien-chen

Comrades attending the forum stated that the polemic had started in the Higher Party School long before the publication of the article by Ai Heng-wu and Lin Ching-shan.

Recalling events in the last few years, they all noted that, in line with the situation in the class struggle at home and internationally, the Party had strengthened its propaganda on the dialectical materialist concept that "one divides into two."

Our Party has pointed out that everything tends to divide itself into two. And theories are no exception - they also tend to divide. Wherever there is a revolutionary, scientific theory, its antithesis, a counter-revolutionary, anti-scientific theory, is bound to arise in the course of its development. As modern society is divided into classes and as the difference between progressive and backward groups will continue far into the future, the emergence of such antitheses is inevitable.

The Party has further pointed out: The history of the international communist movement demonstrates that like everything else, the international working-class movements tends to divide itself into two. The class struggle between the proletariat

and the bourgeoisie is inevitably reflected in the communist ranks. It is inevitable that opportunism of one kind or another should arise in the course of development of the communist movement, that opportunists should engage in splitting activities against Marxism-Leninism and that Marxist-Leninists should wage struggles against opportunism and splittism. It is precisely through such struggles of opposites that Marxism-Leninism and the international working-class movement have developed.

The Party has criticized the so-called "new concept" advanced by modern revisionism with regard to the current international situation, pointing out that this concept implies that in the present-day world antagonistic social contradictions of all kinds are waning, and that contradictory social forces are tending to unite themselves into a single whole. For instance, they hold that the conflicting forces represented by the socialist system and the capitalist system, by the socialist camp and the imperialist camp, by one imperialist country and another, by the imperialist countries and oppressed nations, by the bourgeoisie on the one hand and the proletariat and other laboring people on the other in the capitalist countries, by the different monopoly groups in the imperialist countries, as well as the contradictions within socialist countries - that all these are uniting or on the way to uniting into a single whole.

The revolutionary dialectical method summed up in the concept that "one divides into two" has been grasped more and more fully by our comrades and the masses to become a powerful ideological instrument for achieving a correct understanding of the present situation in the class struggle both domestic and international. It helps people to recognize that the contradiction and struggle between imperialism and the revolutionary people of the world are irreconcilable, and that the contradiction and struggle between Marxism-Leninism and modern revisionism are irreconcilable. It enhances people's courage in opposing imperialism, the reactionaries in various countries, and in fighting modern revisionism. It increases people's confidence in victory.

But, while our Party is strengthening its propaganda on the revolutionary dialectics of "one divides into two," Comrade Yang Hsien-chen talks a lot about the concept of "two combine into one," thus setting up another platform opposite to that of the Party.

Comrade Yang Hsien-chen's idea of reconciling contradictions and negating struggles was formed a long time ago. In November 1961 when lecturing in the Higher Party School, he said: 'The unity of opposites, the unity of contradictions means: The two opposites are inseparably connected.' 'What we want to learn from dialectics is how to connect two opposite ideas.'

Since the Party strengthened its propaganda on the concept of "one divides into two," Comrade Yang Hsien-chen has disseminated his idea of reconciling contradictions with even greater zeal. In November 1963, he generalized his idea as "two combine into one," and made this public while lecturing in the Higher Party School.

In April 1964, in a lecture to a class of Sinkiang students at the Higher Party School, he further developed this thesis, making it more "systematic," and more "complete."

Subsequently, he attempted by every means to propagate this thesis, trying to thrust in his anti-dialectical viewpoint wherever possible.

Comrade Li Ming, lecturer of the Research and Teaching Group in Philosophy,

also publicized Comrade Yang's thesis in the classroom. On May 14, in a class, Li declared that there had been too much talk about "one dividing into two," and too little about "two combining into one." He even encouraged his class to write articles propagating this latter concept. What Li Ming actually meant was that there had been too much talk about Marxism-Leninism, about the revolutionary dialectics of Mao Tse-tung's thinking, and too little about Comrade Yang Hsien-chen's anti-dialectical views. According to him, more articles should be written on Yang's anti-dialectical views.

Both Ai Heng-wu and Lin Ching-shan said that while writing their article, they several times consulted Comrade Yang Hsien-chen. Yang helped them to revise it. Li Ming, too, twice gave suggestions for the article and revised it. Ai Heng-wu recalled that when they heard that the concept that "two combine into one" was described as a deliberate attempt to put over something new and different, and felt uncertain whether to publish their article or not, they went to Yang. Yang said: "Who said that it is something new and different? Whoever said that is ignorant." He continued: "The concept that 'two combine into one' is a matter of world outlook; the concept that 'one divides into two' is a matter of methodology." Soon after, he again encouraged Ai and Lin, saying: "The viewpoint of your article is well-founded; send it out!"

In this way, Comrade Yang Hsien-chen's concept that "two combine into one" was spread from the Higher Party School and made public through the article by Ai Heng-wu and Lin Ching-shan. Thus the debate between "one divides into two" and "two combine into one" was unfolded in the press.

This polemic on the philosophical front was therefore provoked by Comrade Yang Hsien-chen.

Criticism and Repudiation of Comrade Yang Hsien-chen's Concept

After the article by Ai Heng-wu and Lin Ching-shan was published in *Guangming Ribao* [*Kuang Ming Jih Pao*], the leading comrades in the Higher Party School, seeing that the debate involved a matter of principle and that it was a debate between revolutionary dialectics and anti-dialectics, asked the Research and Teaching Group in Philosophy to hold a discussion on it. When Comrade Yang Hsien-chen was told of this by Li Ming, he was very displeased and angry.

On July 17, Comrades Wang Chung and Kuo Pei-heng wrote an article in *Renmin Ribao* [*Jen Min Jih Pao*], exposing and criticizing Yang's concept that "two combine into one."

At the same time, quite a number of comrades in the Higher Party School rebutted this concept in discussions and in articles in the school magazine and papers. Yet there were still some who insisted that it was correct.

Comrade Yang Hsien-chen's concept that "two combine into one" has also evoked a great deal of controversy among the general public. Some people support it; but, many criticize and reject it. Up to the end of August, more than 90 articles on the subject had been published in newspapers and in magazines, both national and local. Theoretical workers in Party schools, universities and colleges, and research institutes in various places have held forums on it.

At the present time the central question in the debate is whether or not to recognize the law of the unity of opposites as the fundamental law of objective things,

and materialist dialectics as the world outlook of the proletariat.

The majority of the students and staff workers of the Higher Party School have come to see clearly from the words and deeds of Yang Hsien-chen and others that it is not fortuitous that Comrade Yang Hsien-chen should at this time have made public the concept that "two combine into one." He has done this with the aim and plan of pitting the reactionary bourgeois world outlook against the proletarian world outlook of materialist dialectics.

Participants in the forum pointed out that Yang Hsien-chen had all along, repeatedly and painstakingly, propagated the idea that "the tendency in everything is for 'two to combine into one.'" He had talked with great zeal about "the inseparable connection" between antitheses, the "inseparability" of things, and asserted that the task of studying the unity of opposites lies solely in seeking "common demands," or "seeking common ground while reserving differences." If things are viewed in the light of his concept that "two combine into one," their internal contradictions disappear and the struggle of opposites within them disappears; the concept that one side of a contradiction must of necessity overcome the other side, that the outcome of struggle is the destruction of the old unity and the emergence of a new unity, and that old things are replaced by the new - all this, too, disappears. In this way, Marxist-Leninist materialist dialectics is completely negated.

The concept that "one divides into two" is the kernel of the revolutionary philosophy of materialist dialectics, the world outlook of the proletariat. Using this world outlook to apprehend things, the proletariat recognizes that contradictions are inherent in everything, that the two sides of a contradiction are in a state both of unity and of struggle, and that contradiction is the motive force in the development of things. While the identity of opposites is relative, their struggle is absolute. Therefore, the task of materialist dialectics has never been to cover up contradictions, but to disclose them, to discover the correct method for resolving them and to accelerate their transformation, in order to bring about the revolutionary transformation of the world. Using the world outlook of materialist dialectics to analyze class societies, the proletariat recognizes class contradiction and class struggle; it recognizes class struggle as the motive force of social development; it firmly maintains that the proletariat must carry out the class struggle through to the end and so bring about the transformation of society.

But to view relations between the various classes of society in accordance with the concept that "two combine into one" as advocated by Comrade Yang Hsien-chen will inevitably lead to obscuring the boundaries between classes, and to repudiating the class struggle, and thus lead to the theory of class conciliation.

Comrades Yang Hsien-chen, Ai Heng-wu and Lin Ching-shan gave an intolerably distorted picture of the basis on which the Party maps out its principles, lines and policies. They arbitrarily asserted that the Party's general line for socialist construction, the principles of political life of the Party and the State, the Party's economic, foreign and cultural policies, etc., were all worked out in accordance with their concept that "two combine into one." Thus, they themselves have raised a fundamental question of political principle. However, the defenders of Yang Hsien-chen's concept that "two combine into one" are unwilling to admit that a question of political principle is involved. Actuated by ulterior motives, they have even said that an academic question should not

be turned into a political question.

Some comrades maintain that Comrade Yang Hsien-chen described the concept that "two combine into one" as a matter of world outlook and the concept that "one divides into two" as a matter of methodology, and point out that this runs completely counter to the materialist theory of the unity of world outlook and methodology. The fact that Comrade Yang Hsien-chen has time and again stressed that the aim of studying the dialectical method "is to acquire the ability to unite into one two opposite ideas." This precisely shows the complete unity of his world outlook and his methodology; both conform to the concept that "two combine into one."

Comrade Mao Tse-tung has taught us:

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.⁸ Comrade Yang Hsien-chen's concept that "two combine into one" treats the connections between the two sides in a contradiction as precisely "dead and rigid things." Utilizing every opportunity to disseminate this kind of view, he has tried to mislead many people, thus playing a role which serves the reactionary classes.

In the debate, some people made statements which, though differing slightly, coincide in the main with Comrade Yang Hsien-chen's concept that "two combine into one." For example, some said that the controversy is merely concerned with phraseology or usage; and added that, anyone can make a slip or two when lecturing in the classroom. Others, pretending to be fair and to see the question from all sides, have advanced the idea of using the concept that "two combine into one" to supplement the concept that "one divides into two," thus making the former into one aspect of the law of unity of opposites; they assert that only in this way can we avoid "one-sidedness." Other again, pretending to make a concrete analysis of contradictions, divide contradictions into two types: Those which have "unity as their main feature," and those which have "struggle as their main feature," claiming that the concept that "two combines into one" should be used in handling contradictions which have "unity as the main feature." Still others describe the concept that "one divides into two" as a means of analysis and the concept of "two combine into one" as a means of generalization, asserting that each is a component part of the dialectical method of cognition. All these assertions, however, are nothing but attempts to defend the thesis that "two combine into one."

Many comrades pointed out that the Marxist-Leninist concept that "one divides into two" has its definite meaning and that the concept that "two combine into one" put forward by Yang Hsien-chen, likewise, has its definite meaning. As a technical term, "one divides into two" very accurately, vividly and colloquially expresses the kernel of dialectics, that is, the essence of the law of the unity of opposites, whereas the concept that "two combine into one" put forward by Yang Hsien-chen is systematic metaphysics from beginning to end. These are two fundamentally opposite world outlooks. How can

one possibly mix them together and not distinguish the one from the other?

Class Struggle in the Realm of Ideology

At the forum, many comrades touched upon the great significance of this debate in philosophy.

Philosophy is a part of social ideology; it has its distinct Party character, that is, class character. The struggle on the philosophical front invariably reflects class struggle on the economic and political fronts. In class struggle, different classes, proceeding from their respective class interests, are bound to put forward different points of view and make philosophical generalizations of these viewpoints, which are either revolutionary or reactionary. There is the revolutionary philosophy of the proletariat, and there is the reactionary philosophy of the bourgeoisie. Thus, the struggle between the two antagonistic groups is reflected on the philosophical front. Those individuals within the ranks of the proletariat who have a bourgeois world outlook or who are influenced by the bourgeois world outlook, likewise often use bourgeois philosophy to oppose the revolutionary philosophy of the proletariat.

At the present time, internationally, the revolutionary struggle waged by the people of various countries is developing vigorously against imperialism, headed by the United States, and its lackeys. Inside the international communist movement, a fierce struggle is being waged between Marxism-Leninism and modern revisionism. In our country, the class struggle between the proletariat on the one hand and the bourgeoisie and the remnant feudal forces on the other, as well as the struggle between the socialist and capitalist roads have advanced to a new, deep-going stage. Confronted with this situation in the class struggle internationally and at home the Central Committee of the Party and Comrade Mao Tse-tung place great emphasis on using the concept that "one divides into two" and the Marxist-Leninist theory of the class struggle to combat modern revisionism and to arm our people and have proposed to crush the offensive launched by the bourgeoisie and the remnant feudal forces by carrying out a widespread movement for socialist education in the cities and the countryside. Comrade Yang Hsien-chen's propagation of the concept that "two combine into one" at such a time is precisely and deliberately designed to meet the needs of modern revisionism and aid the modern revisionists in their propaganda for class peace and class collaboration, and also for the theory of reconciling contradictions. It is at this same time deliberately designed to meet the needs of the bourgeoisie and the remnant feudal forces at home by providing them with so-called theoretical weapons for resisting the movement for socialist education.

It has already become very clear that this new polemic, that concerns the question of who will win over whom on the philosophical front, is a serious class struggle in the realm of ideology.

That such a debate should have arisen on our philosophical front is not difficult to understand. History has shown that whenever a sharp class struggle develops in the political and economic fields, there is bound to be acute class struggle in the ideological field as well. Social life in the Soviet Union was in a period of drastic change towards the end of the 1920's. The unfolding of the movements for agricultural collectivization and socialist industrialization and the desperate resistance put up by the kulaks and the

bourgeois forces has made the class struggle in Soviet society very acute. At that time the anti-Party group of Trotsky and Bukharin emerged within the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. The deeper the socialist revolution went on the economic and political fronts, the greater the shock it caused ideologically to various classes and strata. It was at this crucial moment that Deborin's anti-dialectical philosophical views became the ideological weapon of the anti-Party group, while the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union headed by Stalin sharply criticized and rejected the philosophical position of the Deborin school. That struggle in the realm of ideology was precisely a reflection of the acute class struggle in Soviet society.

At the present time, the debate which has started on the philosophical front in our country is continuing. In terms of numbers of participants or of its widespread influence and great significance, a debate such as this has rarely been seen in our academic circles for many years now. It seems that it is still far from being concluded. Step by step, it is deepening, truth always develops in struggle. Through this debate, the dialectical way of thinking will certainly triumph over the anti-dialectical and the political and theoretical level of our people will be greatly raised.