

"The Theory of Two Points,"
by Hsueh Li,
Beijing Review 15, no. 2, 14 January 1972, 9-10.

The article "Commemorate the 50th Anniversary of the Communist Party of China" by the editorial departments of "Renmin Ribao," "Hongqi" and "Jiefangjun Bao" (see "Peking Review" no. 27, 1971) called on our Party members and cadres to "follow the theory of two points, not the theory of one point." Some readers have asked for an explanation. We publish the following article for their reference. -- Ed.

What is the theory of two points? It is what we usually call materialist dialectics; it is the Marxist-Leninist theory of the fundamental law of the universe. In this regard, Chairman Mao has given a comprehensive and penetrating explanation in his *On Contradiction*. Here we only give a brief account of our understanding gained through study.

What is the law of the motion and development of the universe? A scientific answer was given to this question only after the emergence of the theory of Marxist philosophy. While dealing with the law of the tendency of the rate of profit to fall, Marx pointed out in *Capital* that the law is **"this inner and necessary connection between two seeming contradictions."** Marxism holds that all objective things have two opposite tendencies which are interdependent and struggle against each other. The interdependence and the struggle between the two determine the life of all things and push their development forward. Lenin said: **"In brief, dialectics can be defined as the doctrine of the unity of opposites."** He called it **"the kernel of dialectics."** Chairman Mao has pointed out: **"Marxist philosophy holds that the law of the unity of opposites is the fundamental law of the universe. This law operates universally, whether in the natural world, in human society, or in man's thinking. Between the opposites in a contradiction there is at once unity and struggle, and it is this that impels things to move and changes."**

The law of the unity of opposites is the Marxist world outlook and methodology. Marxist world outlook means regarding all things as the unity of opposites in accordance with the law of self-movement and development of objective things, and Marxist methodology means using this law to know and change the world. This methodology is what is usually called the dialectical method of analysis. Lenin described it as **"the splitting in two of a single whole"** and Chairman Mao termed it **"one divides into two."**

In revolutionary practice, it is extremely important to use the Marxist world outlook and methodology correctly. Without grasping this scientific, dialectical method of analysis, it is not possible to have a correct knowledge of the world. Still less to change it. That is why Chairman Mao has often taught our Party cadres that they should be good at using this scientific method of analysis. To facilitate their understanding, Chairman Mao has, in view of the different objects referred to, often expressed it in popular, lively and easily understandable terms -- the more commonly used ones being the theory of two points, the theory of splitting in two and dual nature. Different as the terms are, they all mean the law of the unity of opposites.

In dealing with any question -- such as appraising work, studying production systems, analyzing the world situation or directing a revolutionary war -- it is essential to adhere to the theory of two points and adopt the dialectical method of analysis.

Chairman Mao has taught us that **"our attitude towards every person and every matter should be one of analysis and study"** and that **"it is necessary to make a clear distinction between right and wrong, between achievements and shortcomings."** Whatever work he undertakes, a genuine revolutionary can contribute to the revolution as long as he works in the interests of the people and carries out a correct line: his achievements should be considered primary and his shortcomings secondary. But a concrete analysis should also be made in appraising his work. While it is wrong to regard everything he has done as positive -- only achievements and no shortcomings or mistakes -- it is equally wrong to regard everything as negative -- only shortcomings and mistakes but no achievements whatsoever.

Similarly, it is essential to take this analytical attitude towards difficulties and the bright future. There are many twists and turns on the road forward for the oppressed nations and peoples in their struggle against foreign imperialists and domestic reactionaries. In each step forward, they have to get over many obstacles. In these circumstances, it is necessary to see both the difficulties and the bright future. They must recognize difficulties, analyze them and combat them, and not lose sight of the bright future which can surely be won after making efforts and overcoming all difficulties.

Achievements and shortcomings, difficulties and the bright future -- these are two aspects of a single process and are the unity of opposites. We would be blindly clinging to achievements and the bright future if we overlook our shortcomings and difficulties, and this would lead to complete failure in our work. On the other hand, we would equally be blindly clinging to shortcomings and difficulties if we overlook our [p. 10] achievements and lose sight of the bright future, and this would lead to passiveness and pessimism and eventual

abandonment of struggle because of loss of hope in victory.

It is also necessary to adhere to the theory of two points in recognizing the reactionary forces. That is to say, it is necessary to take note of their dual nature. They represent the decaying classes and set themselves against the people of their own countries and of the whole world and therefore their doom is inevitable. Chairman Mao's famous thesis **"Imperialism and all reactionaries are paper tigers"** was put forward in accordance with this principle.

On the other hand, it is also necessary to see that imperialism and all reactionaries are temporarily strong, because the state machine and even such things as nuclear weapons are still in their grip. In this sense, they are real tigers, man-eating tigers and therefore must be dealt with seriously.

Basing himself on an analysis of the dual nature of the reactionary forces, Chairman Mao stated that "strategically we should despise all our enemies, but tactically we should take them all seriously." This is the proletarian strategic thinking of defeating the enemy.

Chairman Mao's paper tiger thesis has been borne out by the history of the Chinese revolution as well as by revolutionary practice in many countries.

It is also necessary to adhere to the theory of two points in analyzing the world situation. In his solemn statement *People of the World, Unite and Defeat the U.S. Aggressors and All Their Running Dogs!* issued on May 20, 1970, Chairman Mao pointed out: **"The danger of a new world war still exists, and the people of all countries must get prepared. But revolution is the main trend in the world today."** "The danger of a world war" and "revolution" are the two aspects of an "entity" -- the world situation. What are the conditions regarding these two aspects? Chairman Mao pointed out: The former "still exists" and the latter is "the main trend." This is the incisive conclusion Chairman Mao came to regarding the special features

of class struggle in the world after observing and analysing the development of the world situation over the past 20 years and more and studying the change in the relative strength of the world's revolutionary people on the one hand and U.S. imperialism and its lackeys on the other.

The 20-odd-year history since World War II is one in which the people of various countries have repeatedly waged bitter struggles against U.S. imperialism and its lackeys, while the latter have been continuously launching wars of aggression and the former have been continuously fighting revolutionary wars to defeat the aggressors. By its wild attempt to dominate the world and its acts of aggression, interference and sabotage everywhere, U.S. imperialism has enabled the peoples of all countries to see its aggressive nature and inherent weakness more clearly and engage in revolutionary struggles against aggression and oppression. As the basic contradictions grow sharper and sharper and the political consciousness of the people in all countries steadily rises, the revolutionary movements of the world's people are forcefully surging ahead. A new upsurge in the struggle against U.S. imperialism is developing vigorously throughout the world.

Countries want independence, nations want liberation and the people want revolution; this has become an irresistible trend of history which shows the main trend of development in the world situation today.

The world is changing in a direction increasingly favorable to the people of all countries. This is one aspect, a principal aspect. But we must also see the other aspect -- the aggressive nature of imperialism will not change. Never reconciled to its defeat, U.S. imperialism has not for a moment relaxed its arms expansion and war preparation efforts and has not in the least given up its aggressive ambitions. Lenin said: **"Modern war is born of imperialism."** As long as imperialism exists, there will be no tranquility in the world. The danger of a new world war still exists. This is another trend in the development of today's

world. It is dangerous if we see only the raging flames of the revolution without noticing the enemies sharpening their swords and think we can lower our vigilance because of the excellent situation.

To uphold the theory of two points, it is imperative to oppose the theory of one point. The latter means idealist metaphysical methodology; it means thinking in terms of absolutes and a one-sided approach to a problem. As Chairman Mao has pointed out: **"The metaphysical or vulgar evolutionist world outlook sees things as isolated, static and one-sided."** If one takes this viewpoint towards the world, one will see the objective world either as irrelevant or as rigid and immutable and will mistake one part of phenomenon for the whole. This idealist world outlook and methodology runs counter to the law of development of objective things. When one adopts this viewpoint to analyze the situation, handle his work and direct a battle, one is bound to fail.

Whether one can uphold the theory of two points and overcome the theory of one point is not simply a question of method but a question of world outlook. The theory of two points belongs to the proletarian world outlook and the theory of one point belongs to the world outlook of the bourgeoisie and all other exploiting classes. Without exception, the thinking of people living in class society is stamped with the brand of a class and is invariably influenced by the political orientation of the class they belong to. Although some people are not from the exploiting classes, they are unavoidable affected by the idealism and metaphysics universally existing in class society. Therefore, everyone in the revolutionary ranks should see to it that the idealist and metaphysical viewpoint is eliminated from his mind and that he should make constant efforts to remold his subjective world while changing the objective world. Only in this way can the theory of two points be upheld and the theory of one point overcome.