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Revolutionary Dialectics or Reconciliation of Contradiction?

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The recent discussion on "combining two into one" and "dividing one into two" has brought out many questions worthy of consideration. This discussion is of momentous significance both in theory and in practice.

Comrades Yang Hsien-chen, Ai Heng-wu and Lin Ch'ing-shan have advanced the theory of "combining two into one" which is the very opposite of the law of unity of opposites. Comrade Yang Hsien-chen first identifies his "combining two into one" with the Marxist-Leninist "dividing one into two" and then passes "combining two into one" off as the law of unity of opposites.

Comrade Yang Hsien-chen says: "What is called the unity of opposites? A Chinese saying, 'combining two into one,' means that a thing is a unity of two and that 'combining two into one' has the same meaning as 'dividing one into two!'" Having made such a deceptive explanation, Comrade Yang Hsien-chen completely throws away "dividing one into two" and systematically expounds his "combining two into one" theory. Comrade Yang Hsien-chen and Comrades Ai Heng-wu and Lin Ch'ing-shan maintain that "combining two into one" is the basic law governing the development of things, that "combining two into one" is the unity of opposites, and that the unity of opposites "means the inseparable connection" of the opposites. It may be clearly seen from their interpretation of "combining two into one" that their "combining two into one" is fundamentally different in meaning from "dividing one into two" and is an erroneous theory fundamentally incompatible with the law of the unity of opposites.

The unity of opposites is the most fundamental principle of the materialistic dialectics. Lenin said: "The splitting of a single whole and the cognition of its contradictory parts is the essence of dialectics."(1) Clearly defining the contents of the unity of opposites, Lenin said that the identity of opposites is the "recognition (discovery) of the contradictory, mutually exclusive and opposite tendencies in all phenomena and processes of nature (including mind and society)" and held that the unity of opposites is the "division of a unity into mutually exclusive opposites and their reciprocal relation."(2) Developing this thought of Lenin's, Comrade Mao Tse-tung said: "The mutual dependence and mutual struggle of the aspects of contradiction contained in all things determine the life of all things and impel their development."(3)

If we compare Comrades Yang Hsien-chen, Ai Heng-wu and Lin Ch'ing-shan's "combining two into one" with the above Marxist-Leninist viewpoint, we will find out what the "combining two into one" is that they pass off as the unity of opposites. They have systematically described their "combining two into one" and put an exact meaning on it. Comrade Yang Hsien-chen says: "Anything is a 'unity of two'." "Combining two into one" means the unity of opposites, that is, the "connecting together," "unifying," and "integration" of opposites. The "unity of opposites means to say that the opposites are two things which are originally inseparably connected." "The unity of contradiction merely means the inseparable connection of the two aspects of a contradiction." As for the mutual exclusion of opposites, the struggle of opposites and the transformation of opposites, these have completely disappeared. You see, nowhere in their article "Dividing One into Two" and "Combining Two into One" do they make any reference to the struggle of opposites. Thus, there is absolutely nothing in common between the theory of "combining two into one" and the law of the unity of opposites. All things stand for the unity of opposites, and there has never been a law of the unity of opposites that deals only with the "inseparable connection" of opposites but not with the struggle of opposites.

What then is the fundamental difference between "uniting two into one" and the Law of the unity of opposites?

First, "Combining Two into One" Negates the Contradictions in Things Themselves

Lenin said: "In its proper meaning, dialectics is the study of the contradiction within the very essence of things."(4) "Dividing one into two" is an affirmation of the contradiction existing in an entity. Contradictions exist in all things. It is precisely because it recognizes contradictions within things that dialectics has solved the problem of the motive power and the fountainhead for the development of things, that is, it holds that development is a struggle of opposites within a thing. Therefore, to recognize or not to recognize contradictions within things and to recognize or not to recognize that contradictions are inherent in things is a fundamental difference between materialistic dialectics and metaphysics.

(1)(2)(4) Collected Works of Lenin, Vol. 38, p. 407, 408, 278.  
 (3) Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung, Vol. I, p. 293.

"Combining two into one" fundamentally denies that contradictions are inherent in things. Comrade Yang Hsien-chen says: "What is called unity means inseparable connection." Comrades Ai Heng-wu and Lin Ch'ing-shan maintain that a thing is the result of "the combination" of two things or two aspects already in existence.

As a matter of fact, all things in the world stand for the unity of opposites. Now, under Comrade Yang Hsien-chen and Comrades Ai Heng-wu and Ling Ch'ing-shan's pens, mutual struggle of opposites is taken away and only "inseparable connection" is left. Without the connection of struggle, how can there be contradictions in things?

Here it is necessary to point out that while in their articles they cite many instances to prove "combining two into one" is the law governing the development of things, they cite no instance of class struggle. Inasmuch as "combining two into one" is a universal law, class society cannot be made an exception; yet, according to Comrades Ai and Lin's logic, the movement of class society is composed of the ruling class and the ruled class, the exploiting class and the exploited class - "two combined into one."

The instances cited by Comrades Ai Heng-wu and Lin Ch'ing-shan seem to deal with the unity of opposites too; actually, the opposite is the case. Dialectics holds that every objective thing exists as an entity and includes two aspects of a contradiction which are interconnected and struggle against each other, thus impelling the movement and development of things, and that the movement of a thing is not composed of two sides "combined into one." Mechanical movement itself as an entity contains the contradictory action and reaction and it is not true that the two sides, action and reaction, are "combined into" a mechanical movement. The movement of human knowledge as an entity contains antithesis between materialism and idealism and between dialectics and metaphysics and is not composed of materialism and idealism, dialectics and metaphysics, "combined into one." In short, objective things are not based on "combining two into one," or the unity of things which contain no contradiction, but are based on "dividing one into two," with inner contradictions in all things.

The theory of "combining two into one" advocated by Comrades Yang Hsien-chen and others actually denies that there are contradictions within things, and that movement is impelled by contradictions within things, and represents movement as the result of "combining into one" two external things. We all know that the movement of things is always induced by inner contradictions. For example, the development of social production is the result of the struggle between the new productive forces and the backward relations of production and of overcoming the backward relations of production. If, instead of constantly resolving the contradiction between the productive forces and the relations of production, we merely "combined them into one" and "made them inseparably connected with each other," it would be impossible to develop social production. With the inner contradiction in things negated, motion, even mechanical motion would be rendered impossible. That is why Engels said: "Motion itself is contradiction."<sup>(5)</sup> Comrade Mao Tse-tung holds that "contradiction is movement"<sup>(6)</sup> These words are fundamentally opposite to "combining two into one." They affirm that contradiction exists in things and that the inner contradiction impels the development of things.

#### Second, "Combining Two into One" Negates the Struggle of Opposites

Materialistic dialectics affirms that contradiction exists in things, that where there is contradiction there is struggle, that the struggle of contradiction runs through the whole process from the beginning to the end and converts one process into another. The struggle of contradiction is unconditional and absolute.

"Combining two into one" negates contradiction in things, cuts struggle and unity apart and, inevitably, negates struggle. As a matter of fact, in their articles advocating "combining two into one," they talk a great deal about the inseparable connection of opposites as the unity of opposites but say nothing about the struggle of opposites. Further, Comrade Ai Heng-wu and Lin Ch'ing-shan call for the "combining two into one," and the "integration," and the "linking together" of opposites in the course of transforming the world, and represent "combining two into one" as the

<sup>(5)</sup> Anti-Dühring, p. 123

<sup>(6)</sup> Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung, Vol. I, p. 307.

"inseparable connection" of opposites. The articles by Comrade Yao Yung-k'ang, P'an Ch'ing-pin and others directly admit that "combining two into one" is only related to interdependence and interconnection but not to struggle.\* It must be pointed out that the "connection and integration" they have in mind are not dialectical connection and integration but the mechanical putting together of two things.

Materialistic dialects holds that interconnection is integrated with mutual exclusion and mutual struggle and that the interconnection of opposites is conditional and relative while the mutual exclusion and mutual struggle of opposites are unconditional and absolute. The struggle in contradiction is a decisive force for developing things and for converting one thing into another. Yet the theory of "combining two into one" precisely negates the absoluteness of the struggle within the contradiction and regards the conditional and relative unity, i.e. interconnection, as absolute, asserting that the opposites are "inseparably connected."

Here, Comrades Yang Hsien-chen, Ai Heng-wu and Lin Ch'ing-shan gloss over the fundamental distinction between metaphysics and materialistic dialectics over the question of connection. As we know, both dialectics and metaphysics deal with interconnection but the two are only identical in form, while antithetic to each other in substance. In the metaphysical view, interconnection is like an iron plate which is "inseparably connected" and mutual exclusion and mutual struggle are negated. Dialectics holds that interconnection cannot be separated from mutual exclusion and mutual struggle and that under given conditions, i.e., when struggle reaches a point at which the entity cannot accommodate it, the transformation of opposites will result, and the interconnection will break up.

Comrades Yang Hsien-chen and others deal with "integration," "unity," and "inseparable connection" without reference to struggle. Actually, what they advocate is precisely the abstract identity advocated by metaphysicians and criticized by Engels. To advocate identity apart from struggle and to advocate interconnection apart from mutual struggle is not dialectics, nor an aspect of dialectics, but downright metaphysics.

If in a class society the exploited advocates "inseparable connection" and "uniting two into one" with the exploiter without waging a struggle, can the exploited win emancipation? The emancipation of all the exploited and oppressed people has always been the result of destroying the old entity, breaking through the old interconnection and overthrowing the exploiting class through acute class struggle.

The interconnections of all opposites are temporary and will dissolve in the process of development. Consequently, the interconnections are not "inseparable" but can separate, can be split apart. The point lies in the conditions. When the conditions have been fulfilled, the unity will break up, that is, the entity will dissolve. This is the objective law governing the development of things. "Combining two into one" makes the interconnection absolute. It can only signify that the opposites will forever remain fixed in the old entity and are not to be broken through. According to this view, the proletariat should not overthrow capitalism through struggle. To overthrow capitalism would undermine the "inseparable connection" between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. The proletariat should give up struggle and practice "peaceful co-existence" with the bourgeoisie. In essence, this is a theory of class reconciliation.

### Third, "Combining Two into One" Glosses over Transformation of Opposites

Materialistic dialectics recognizes the interconnection of opposites and also the mutual transformation of opposites. Comrade Mao Tse-tung said: "All contradictory things are interconnected, and they not only coexist in an entity under certain conditions, but also transform themselves into each other under certain conditions -

\* Only P'an Ch'ing-pin's article has been translated (page 5 of this issue). - CB Ed:

this is the whole meaning of the identity of contradictions." (7) The dual meaning of the identity of contradictions reflects two states of the process in which things develop. The two aspects of contradiction coexist in an entity under certain conditions: this is the state of quantitative change of things. When the two aspects of contradiction are transformed under certain conditions, it is a state of qualitative change.

Some advocates of the theory of "combining two into one" maintain that "combining two into one" is merely a profile of identity, that is to say, the interconnection does not include transformation. The majority of these advocates take "combining two into one" as identity of contradictions. As they deny the internal contradictions in things and the absoluteness of the struggle of contradiction, the identity they have in mind is not the identity advocated by materialistic dialectics. They completely gloss over another meaning of identity of contradictions which is the more important aspect, namely mutual transformation of the opposites of a contradiction under given conditions. Identity is cut apart from struggle and from the transformation of the two aspects of a contradiction under given conditions. Represented as interconnection and interdependence, identity is turned into a dead and congealed identity.

Advocates of the theory of "combining two into one" negate the transformation of opposites and the leap of things. This also finds expression in the fact that they impose "combining two into one" directly on the transformation of opposites, asserting that transformation of opposites means "combining two into one."

Theoretically speaking, transformation of opposites means dissolution, disintegration of the old entity and birth of a new thing. In whatever sense, the transformation of opposites is not "combining two into one." The dissolution of the old entity is a qualitative change and the leap of things and is the most important content of "dividing one into two." To get rid of this content is tantamount to getting rid of the revolutionary essence of "dividing one into two." The dissolution of the old entity means transformation of the positions of the opposites with one side triumphing and overcoming the other. How can this be called "combining two into one"? If it refers to the new-born thing, it is also difficult to understand. With the contradiction in old things resolved, the new things contain new contradictions which come into being together with the new things. How is it that a new thing is "two things combined into one"? If the opposites in old things have been transformed in the contrary directions, certainly they cannot be "combined into one."

Comrade Mao Tse-tung said: "What is the emergence of a new process? It is that the old unity and its constituent opposites yield place to a new unity and its constituent opposites, and the new process then emerges in place of the old. The old process is completed and the new one emerges. The new process in its turn contains a new contradiction, and the history of the development of its own contradiction begins." (8) This passage shows in the clearest terms that the process of development of things is the process of "dividing one into two."

Comrade P'an Ch'ing-pin says: "... When the proletariat leaps to the position of the principal aspect of a contradiction, it will overthrow the capitalists at one stroke and bring the struggle and unity of this 'division' and 'combination' to a new turning point, namely, the capitalists are completely destroyed and the two aspects of the contradiction are "combined into one." (Kuang-ming Jih-pao of June 19)

What do the two aspects of the contradiction refer to here? If they refer to the original bourgeoisie and the proletariat, have not the capitalists been destroyed "at one stroke"? How can they be "combined from two into one"? In fact, having seized political power, assumed the principal aspect of the contradiction and built socialism, the proletariat cannot destroy the bourgeoisie "at one stroke"; the state under the dictatorship of the proletariat will certainly destroy the bourgeoisie but in doing so will have to go through a process of protracted struggle. Throughout the period of

(7)(8) Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung, Vol. I, p. 307, 318.

transition from capitalism to communism, there exists struggle between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, and between the capitalist and socialist roads; each case is "dividing one into two" and not "combining two into one." If during the period in question the proletariat is required to "combine into one" with the bourgeoisie, it would mean letting the proletariat practice "peaceful coexistence" with the bourgeoisie and negating the thesis that the proletariat must carry through the revolution to the end and completely destroy the bourgeoisie.

In practice, this viewpoint is extremely harmful. In the revolutionary struggle, the transformation of old things into new things coincides with the period of the most violent and acute struggle within the contradiction. The substitution of new things for old things is the result of a life-and-death struggle between the new and old things. Struggle is of decisive significance; without struggle, there is no transformation of opposites and there will be no birth of new things. If in the revolutionary struggle, instead of strenuously impelling the struggle of the revolutionary class against the reactionary class, the revolutionary class is "combined into one" with the reactionary class, the revolutionary forces will be unable to triumph over the counterrevolutionary forces with the result that the revolutionary people will continue to be ruled and oppressed.

#### Fourth, "Combining Two into One" Negates the Development of Things

Dialectics holds that things continue to develop from the lower phase to the higher phase. Contradiction is the motive power for the development of things. Comrade Mao Tse-tung said: "The basic cause of the development of things does not lie outside but inside them." (9)

"Combining two into one" basically negates the contradiction in things, negates the struggle within the contradiction, and negates the development of things. On the face of it, the comrades who advocate "combining two into one" are also in favor of the development and movement of things, but the development they have in mind is not dialectical development and at best is nothing but quantitative increase or decrease and change of ground.

Comrade P'an Ch'ing-pin presents a formula of so-called movement of contradiction: "The substance of the natural law of the unity of opposites - law of contradiction - is 'dividing one into two' and 'combining two into one.' This antithesis, unity, more antithesis and more unity; this 'division' - 'combination' - 'more division' - 'more combination' . . . . going on in proper sequence is the substance of the dialectical development of things."

He cuts antithesis (struggle) and unity apart, and holds that antithesis is antithesis and unity is unity and that there is no antithesis in unity. He regards unity and antithesis respectively as independent stages in the development of contradictions. Such an absolute distinction between unity and antithesis and such a negation of the antithesis in unity may be clearly proved by the instances cited by Comrade P'an Ch'ing-pin.

Comrade P'an Ch'ing-pin says: "In the era in which the feudal society was in decline and capitalism was in the ascendancy, capitalists, workers and peasants constituted one side of the class struggle, and the feudal nobility and others constituted the other side; the former toppled the latter and founded the capitalist society and eliminated the feudal society and its rulers. But simultaneously with building the capitalist state power, one side (capitalists, workers and peasants) of the struggle (contradiction) was 'divided into two,' and one aspect of the contradiction was divided into two aspects of the contradiction, thus constituting a new contradiction." That is to say, when the capitalists, workers and peasants opposed the feudal system together,

(9) Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung Vol. 289-290.

they were "combined into one" as an absolute unity, a unity without contradiction; it was only when the capitalist society had been founded and the bourgeoisie had taken the State power in its hands that there was an antithesis between the capitalists and the workers and peasants and they were "divided into two."

In my opinion, this view is wrong and is not in accord with the actual state of affairs. Contradiction and struggle existed between capitalists and workers at all times and in all places; that they opposed the feudal system together does not mean that there was no contradiction or struggle between them. The only difference was that at the time of their anti-feudal struggle the contradiction between them was temporarily in the secondary position. That is why upon the conclusion of the anti-feudal struggle and after the capitalist society had been founded the contradiction between them became acute and the struggle between them became violent. Yet Comrade P'an Ch'ing-pin regards them as absolute unity without contradiction, and takes the view that struggle and "division" began only after the establishment of the capitalist society. Similarly, his view that the contradiction in the capitalist society contains only "division" and "struggle" and no unity is also not correct. The struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie is likewise the unity of opposites.

We cannot but ask Comrade P'an Ch'ing-pin: Divorced from struggle can unity itself move and develop? Without unity, how can there be struggle between the linked-together opposites? With opposites and unity cut apart, there can be no movement of opposites in things. As Comrade Mao Tse-tung said: "The combination of conditional, relative identity and unconditional, absolute struggle, constitutes the movement in opposites in all things." (10) Thus, your view of the development of contradiction poses a very important question. What is the thing that impels the development from "division" to "combination," from "combination" to "division," from antithesis to unity, and from unity to antithesis? How is it that "division" is changed into "combination" and antithesis is changed into unity? This question is evaded by both Comrade Yang Hsien-chen and Comrade P'an Ch'ing-pin. In my opinion, that they do not answer the question is not fortuitous and is a reflex of their common difficulties which arises from their advocacy of "combining two into one." The reason is that "combining two into one" excludes contradiction and struggle and negates the inner exciting cause of the development of things. If they are to answer this question, they must have recourse to an external force, which will bring to light their metaphysical world outlook, i.e. the theory of external causes.

In fact, the development they have in mind is not dialectical development but the cycle theory that negates development. This cycle theory preaches ceaseless division - combination, more division - more combination, and ceaseless antithesis - unity, more antithesis - more unity. But it always goes round and round in a circle. This cycle theory is the inevitable result of negating the inner contradiction in things by the theory of "combining two into one" and is a basic characteristic of the metaphysical world outlook. The reason is that with the negation of the contradiction in things, the negation of transformation of opposites as the development of things, and the negation of the struggle of new things against old things, there will be no upward development and forward movement, and there can only be quantitative changes and simple repetitions.

Only materialistic dialectics, which regards contradiction as inherent in things and affirms the struggle and unity of opposites as development of things, has solved the question of the fountainhead of the development of things and found the law of the development of things. The development of things is not a cyclical development but a transformation of opposites and a process in which the new things takes the place of the old. In this process, the development of things is always based on the "division of one into two." Before qualitative change takes place in a thing, the "division of one into two" is at the stage of quantitative change, and its characteristic is that the two aspects of the contradiction exclude each other, struggle against each other, and are interconnected and interdependent within an entity. When the struggle within the contradiction in the entity becomes acute, the entity will dissolve and a new thing will come into being. This is a state of qualitative change, based on the "division of one into two." A new thing itself has its contradiction, that is, "division

(10) Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung, Vol. I, 321.

of one into two;" and when this contradiction has developed to such an extent that it cannot be accommodated by the entity, the entity will again dissolve and the opposites will transform themselves. Thus, the law of development of things always evolves from the "division of one into two" in the state of quantitative change to the "division of one into two" in the state of qualitative change to the "division of one into two" in the new state of qualitative change. The development from the lower to the higher phases always assumes the form of "dividing one into two."

To sum up, "combining two into one" makes the interconnection of things absolute, negates the contradiction inherent in things, negates the struggle within the contradiction and the transformation of opposites, and negates the development of things. Consequently, it sinks into the theory of reconciliation of contradiction. Such is the substance of "combining two into one." "Combining two into one" is a theory of reconciliation of contradiction, and this is admitted even by some of those comrades who are in favor of "combining two into one." For instance, Comrade P'an Ch'ing-pin openly expresses the opinion that it is reasonable to represent "combining two into one" as reconciliation of contradiction. In substituting "combination of two into one" for the unity of opposites, Comrade Yang Hsien-chen, Ai Heng-wu and Lin Ch'ing-shan essentially substitute reconciliation of contradiction for revolutionary dialectics.

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