

Dialectics and the Struggle Against Revisionism

Part One: The constant struggle against capitalist ideas

The idea of communism has existed in various forms for most of human history, but communism only became a science about 150 years ago. Marx and Engels, and later communist revolutionaries developed scientific communism, based on the experience of the working class struggle for communism. As they learned from revolutionary successes and failures, communists needed to revise their ideas. ICWP has learned, for example, that socialism and its wage system leads back to capitalism, not communism.

Inside the communist movement, however, there must be a constant struggle against capitalist ideas and practices that contradict communism. Intense capitalist propaganda for patriotism and reformism, as well as fear of defeat and of capitalist repression, influence people to give up on communism or look for an easy way to get there. This is the origin of *revisionism*, that is, capitalist ideas and practices that prevent the victory of communism.

Before World War I, revisionism turned the socialist parties in most countries into supporters of imperialist war. In the 1950s in Russia and the 1970s in China, the victory of revisionism turned socialism back into capitalism. Revisionist tendencies are always found in the communist movement, and fighting them is absolutely essential to move forward and to prevent past victories from being reversed.

One kind of revisionism says that direct struggle for communist revolution isn't necessary. It claims that

reforms lead eventually to revolution, that some "lesser evil" capitalists are allies of the working class, that elections can advance the communist movement, or that imperialism does not have to lead to war.

An opposite revisionist view does not recognize the opportunity that the sharpening internal contradictions of 21st century capitalism give for revolution, claiming that revolution is impossible or that capitalism will be too strong to defeat for generations. These opposite views have in common that they lead to compromising with capitalism, either because it can't be beaten or because it isn't that bad.

Although there were big struggles against revisionism by the Bolsheviks, led by Lenin, in the Chinese Cultural Revolution, a mass movement against revisionism by millions of workers and students, and in the Progressive Labor Party in the past, revisionism eventually won in all these movements.

One of ICWP's most important tasks, as it builds up the communist movement, is to carry out the struggle against revisionism, both inside and outside the party.

Internal Contradictions are Primary

The importance of the struggle against revisionism is an example of a general principle of dialectics. This principle says that how something changes and what it becomes are due primarily to its internal contradictions. Although external conditions make a

difference, it is mainly the contradictions inside a process or system that determines how it will change. The history of class society, for example, is the "history of class struggle," as the *Communist Manifesto* said. The conflict of the social groups inside society that have opposite relationships to production determines how society develops. This means that social change does not come about primarily by factors outside society, like climate or natural environment, although these things certainly make a difference. Instead, the effect that external factors have on society is mainly determined by factors internal to it.

The internal is also primary in determining the growth of the party. Internal factors such as its line, its composition, its leadership and its size mainly determine how it grows. Probably the most important thing to understand about internal contradictions for our work is that *our weaknesses hold us back more than external conditions*.

This means that we can only win by making a determined struggle to overcome internal weaknesses, including tendencies toward revisionism. But you can't struggle against weaknesses you don't know about or don't face up to, so the struggle against them requires being honest and self-critical with our comrades, our friends, and the masses we are trying to win.

Next issue of the Red Flag — The dialectics of inner-party struggle.