In previous columns, we have seen that processes develop through a series of qualitative changes called “dialectical negations.” These transitions are called negations because they involve the end of one quality and its replacement by an opposite quality. This happens, for example, when a child becomes an adult, or a tire goes flat. These transitions negate the childhood of a person or the inflation of a tire.

Dialectical negations follow each other, one after the other, as long as a process lasts. If a negation happens and a second one follows, the result can be similar to the starting situation, but it will never be exactly the same. If you melt an ice cube and re-freeze it, or drop a bowl of Jello and pick it up again, it won’t turn out the same. This principle is called the “Law of the Negation of the Negation.” It says that there are no complete reversals or circles in the history of a process, but that there can be partial reversals. You might get the Jello back in the bowl, but it won’t look like it did at the beginning.

The negation of the negation principle applies to processes of all kinds, but it is particularly important in the process of fighting for communism. A crucial part of building up the movement to wipe out capitalism is the struggle against revisionism, capitalist ideas and practices inside the movement itself. Revisionism constantly recurs because of intense capitalist propaganda for patriotism and reformism, as well as fear of defeat and of capitalist repression.

Fighting revisionism is crucial because it can reverse previous gains in the fight for communism. Before Working Class Power 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 the dictatorship of the working class back into the dictatorship of the capitalist class.

In Russia and in China, the working class negated capitalist rule by revolution. Later, the victory of revisionism negated workers’ power by turning the communists in power into a “Red Bourgeoisie,” but with significant differences from before the revolution. Those countries now have new capitalist classes that rely on a lot of economic development and education that was the result of the socialist period, and a huge working class to exploit.

The working class of all countries also got something new from this negation, however. The experience of the mass struggle for a socialist order in Russia and China has become the basis of a more advanced line in the battle against revisionism and capitalism.

That experience made it possible to understand that socialism, by keeping the wage system and the market, where exchange value dominated over use value, were huge concessions to capitalism that guaranteed revisionism’s triumph. The idea that the working class must refuse socialism’s fatal compromises and fight directly for communism was developed in the 1980s in Progressive Labor Party. This vital step forward negated the mistaken socialist line of the old communist movement. Unfortunately revisionism eventually won out in PLP, turning it into a reformist movement and negating its major advance. Now we have to negate this revisionist victory by building the ICWP and developing anti-revisionist communist work much further.

To do this, we have to analyze the successes and failures of the past and figure out how to move the workers’ movement forward, including the fight against revisionism. ICWP has already made important steps in this process. As Red Flag shows, ICWP makes communist revolution primary in its work in schools, trade unions, and the military. We have also developed “communist centralism” further inside the Party, so that all members understand disputed issues and the whole Party is involved in the struggle to develop the line and fight revisionism in theory and practice. The communist philosophy of dialectics, including the law of the negation of the negation, gives us a powerful tool for understanding this process.

Despite partial and temporary reverses, the weaknesses of capitalism and the strengths of the working class will allow us to win the final victory.

To strengthen couples and the working class:

Smash Sexism with Communist Revolution

Thanks to “Red Couple” for their frank and thoughtful discussion of the contradictions in marriage (Red Flag 9/83). The very helpful is their emphasis on the role of the collective in sharpening contradictions to resolve them in favor of our class. This applies to much more than marriage, and we need to get better at it.

I think we should add a little about the role of sexism in creating and aggravating problems within marriages and other relationships. Capitalism puts forward theories about couples but it also institutionalizes gender inequality and the gendered division of labor.

Sexism arose with private property, class society, and the accumulation of wealth by a small ruling class. When the masses of women and men became “property” of the ruling class, women also became “property” of men.

This reality – justified by religion and enforced by the state – fostered divisive sexist ways of thinking that perpetuated the exploitation of both women and men in the laboring classes.

In agricultural societies, men and women often shared labor in the fields. But under capitalism, workers became wage-slaves who must sell their labor power in order to survive. This labor-power is itself produced and reproduced mainly within the family. This is the work of cooking, cleaning, making and fixing clothes, nursing the sick, raising the children, and so forth.

Ruling-class families paid (or enslaved) women to do domestic chores in order to survive. This labor-power is itself produced and reproduced mainly within the family. This is the work of cooking, cleaning, making and fixing clothes, nursing the sick, raising the children, and so forth.

Urban work was not “real work.” It is clearly helpful is their emphasis on the role of the collective in sharpening contradictions to resolve them in favor of our class. This applies to much more than marriage, and we need to get better at it.

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Women and men were taught to think that women were dependent on men (because the men were the only ones allowed to earn wages) and that men should therefore dominate a marriage. This created a major contradiction because, of course, a couple mutually depends on each other.

Industrial capitalism demanded the low-paid labor of women and even children outside the home, but even women who lived outside the home were (and often still are) expected to do most of the work at home as well. This “double shift” puts an additional stress on relationships while the sexist division of labor reaps super-profits for the bosses.

In the present crisis of capitalism we see that every attack on the working class creates more “couples problems.” Workers are forced to leave families behind to find a job elsewhere. When black workers (and others) were excluded from the labor market, where exchange value dominated over use value, were huge concessions to capitalism that guaranteed revisionism’s triumph. The idea that the working class must refuse socialism’s fatal compromises and fight directly for communism was developed in the 1980s in Progressive Labor Party. This vital step forward negated the mistaken socialist line of the old communist movement. Unfortunately revisionism eventually won out in PLP, turning it into a reformist movement and negating its major advance. Now we have to negate this revisionist victory by building the ICWP and developing anti-revisionist communist work much further.

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Communism Will End the Material Basis of Sexism

Of course communism won’t solve every “couples problem.” But some causes of these problems will disappear, and we will be qualitatively better able to deal with the ones that inevitably remain.

- Communist ideas (collectivity, principled struggle, egalitarianism) will have the force of the whole social organization to back them up. We will finally have the tools to defeat capitalist ideas in ourselves and our class.
- Young people will learn as they first become conscious to see and treat each other as comrades and equals. They will be educated to fight racism and sexism and to analyze everything around them using dialectical materialism.
- Couples will not suffer economic hardship in a society that has abolished money and the wage system. Where there is scarcity, we will all share in it and work to produce more of what we need.
- They will not have to solve childrearing problems alone because we will all help to raise and educate the children.
- We will be far more collective in organizing the work of reproducing our labor power to continue to produce the goods and services our class needs.
- We will eliminate the gendered division of labor and put an end to a conscious struggle against sexism.

We have much to learn (both positive and negative) about fighting sexism and strengthening relationships from the 20th-century revolutionary experiments (Soviet Union, China, Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution). And – as “Red Couple” say – we have much to learn from our own experiences as well.