

## Dialectical Philosophy

# Revisionism and the Negation of the Negation

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 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 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 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 unsuccessful anti-revisionist struggle 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.

