

# Revisionism and the Dialectics of Inner-Party Struggle

As we learned in a previous column, a dialectical contradiction is a unity of opposites, two sides that are connected with each other but also interfere with each other. Over time, dialectical contradictions tend to “heat up” and become more intense. That is, the two sides come to interfere with each other more and more. Intensification eventually leads to resolution of the contradiction. As Marx put it, resolution happens when the two sides “fight to a decision,” until one wins, for example, the working class overthrows the capitalists.

This general principle, that contradictions are only resolved by becoming more intense, applies to the internal contradictions of the working class and of the party. Contradictions inside the party are normal and unavoidable as we struggle to learn from the experience of class struggle. As we intensify the contradictions between correct and incorrect ideas and actions to resolve our internal contradictions, we must fight for the most advanced line we can work out, not the line that most people readily agree with. Both inside the party and in the mass movement, we should fight for a “higher unity,” that is, agreement with critical communist ideas that are necessary to move forward, not just popular viewpoints.

In most circumstances the best attitude toward people who make mistakes is to try to “cure the disease to save the patient,” that is, to defeat wrong ideas but continue to unite with the people who have had them. In the struggle against revisionism, however, situations arise in which this outlook is not correct. In the last dialectics column we saw that revisionism, the capitalist ideas and practices inside the com-

munist movement, not only prevents the victory of communism, but reverses gains already won. The struggle against revisionism is the struggle against the enemy’s outlook inside the communist movement. People who are committed to this outlook cannot necessarily be won away from it, any more than bosses can be won over to communism. Such people have to be defeated, not merely their ideas.

People sometimes believe that comrades who have contributed to the communist movement at one time can’t turn into revisionists. But this is perfectly possible, and the examples of people like Plekhanov and Mao Zedong prove it. Their transformation illustrates an important idea of dialectics, that in the certain circumstances, a thing can turn into its opposite.

We apply this principle when we try to turn an economic crisis or imperialist war into an advance for the communist movement. Likewise, someone who lacks confidence in the working class or fears defeat or repression can be transformed from a communist into a revisionist.

Dialectics also teaches us, as Lenin put it, that the *unity* of two opposites is “temporary and conditional,” but their *struggle* is absolute. Communism and revisionism are opposites. If one side is not defeated inside the party, the struggle of these opposites sharpens, and overcomes any previous unity. Sometimes the result is a split in the party.

A split in a communist party represents a significant setback, since it means that part of what was created by the struggles of many comrades is no longer advancing the movement for communism but is hold-

ing it back. However, splits can be a necessary part of the advance of the communist movement in the struggle against revisionism.

A split in the movement led to the formation of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, originally called the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party (Bolsheviks). It was the Bolsheviks who led the great victory of the October Revolution in 1917. That victory would not have been possible if the Bolsheviks had remained united to the revisionist Mensheviks, who actually fought an armed struggle against the Bolshevik seizure of power in 1917.

After the victory of revisionism in the Soviet Union in the 1950s, many new parties, including the Progressive Labor Party, were formed by splitting from revisionist-led, pro-Soviet parties. This is also the process by which ICWP was formed by splitting from PLP.

Our task in the ICWP is to turn the setback of the victory of revisionism in the PLP into its opposite, into a new step forward in the march toward communism. Dialectics tells us that the struggle does not move forward in a straight line, but advances by twists and turns. Join us and move forward with us in humanity’s most important struggle, the fight for communism.

Note: ICWP is committed to make the study of dialectics a mass activity, not limited to a few “experts.” We invite you to send in examples of dialectics from your own experience or political work, as well as questions you would like to see answered in *Red Flag*.