

Seeing the Essence of Problems

by Chi Ping

CHAIRMAN MAO has always taught us to try to find the essential or main aspects of a problem. We must learn to use this scientific approach in sizing up a situation, analysing a problem or discussing our work.

Criticizing people who go against this approach, Chairman Mao pointed out in July 1955: **"The way these comrades look at problems is wrong. They do not look at the essential or main aspects but emphasize the non-essential or minor ones. It should be pointed out that these non-essential or minor aspects must not be overlooked and must be dealt with one by one. But they should not be taken as the essential or main aspects, or we will lose our bearings."** (*On the Question of Agricultural Co-operation.*)

In estimating a situation, we must try to grasp its essence and mainstream before we can size it up correctly. We must, as Chairman Mao has said, **"apply the Marxist-Leninist method in analysing a political situation and appraising the class forces, instead of making a subjective analysis and appraisal."** (*On Correcting Mistaken Ideas in the Party.*) Only by correctly assessing the relative strength of the different classes in society and the trend of their development can the essence of a situation be ascertained in a maze of complicated phenomena.

During the various historical periods of the Chinese revolution, Chairman Mao always distinguished between the principal and the secondary contradictions of each period by scientifically analysing the balance of class forces and the trend of their development at the time. On this basis, he charted the correct strategy for struggle for the Party and steered the Chinese revolution ahead victoriously.

The same is true for all Communist Party members and revolutionaries. Only when we correctly assess a situation from its essence can we obtain a deep understanding of the Party's line, principles and policies and steadfastly carry them out; only in this way can we remain level-headed and retain a high revolutionary enthusiasm and persist in the correct political orientation.

To Marxists, all kinds of contradictions in the social life of a class society are, in the last analysis, class contradictions. Such contradictions and struggle motivate the advance of society. Chairman Mao has

said: **"Classes struggle, some classes triumph, others are eliminated. Such is history, such is the history of civilization for thousands of years."** (*Cast Away Illusions, Prepare for Struggle.*) Classes, class contradictions and class struggle continue in socialist society, which moves forward in contradictory struggle.

Since China entered the period of socialist revolution, the principal contradiction has been that between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. The existence and development of this principal contradiction decides or influences the existence and development of other contradictions. Reflected in the Party, this contradiction is manifested in the struggle between a Marxist-Leninist line and an opportunist one. The reason why the Party's basic line is so important is that it scientifically analyses the principal contradiction in the stage of socialist revolution and points out the principles and methods for its solution.

To view a situation correctly, we should analyse social phenomena in the basic context of the struggle between the two classes, two roads and two lines. This is our most fundamental starting point. In socialist society, the proletariat constantly gains in strength while the bourgeoisie weakens and the Marxist-Leninist line repeatedly repulses the revisionist line in the course of this struggle. Hence the advance of society and history. Therefore, we can see a situation clearly from its essence only by grasping this fundamental starting point.

The waxing and waning of the respective strength of the proletariat and the bourgeoisie and the latter's final extinction is the general trend of revolutionary development in the socialist period. However protracted the struggle and tortuous the road, this general trend will not change. The key here is that the proletariat must have a Marxist-Leninist line.

Chairman Mao has noted: **"The correctness or incorrectness of the ideological and political line decides everything."** When the line is correct, the proletarian revolutionary cause will spurt forward. This has been amply proven by the 23-year history of the People's Republic of China. Guided by Chairman Mao's proletarian revolutionary line, we have experienced during this period a number of big struggles, including both class struggle in society and line struggle within the Party. Each struggle ended with the strength of the reactionary exploiting classes seriously weakened and

the proletariat and revolutionary people growing stronger through the tempering they received. Thus the revolution goes forward. Such struggles, carried out ceaselessly, will eventually enable us to accomplish our great historic task — that of finally eliminating the system of exploitation and the exploiting classes.

An entirely different situation has been known to appear in the international communist movement when the line is incorrect, as in the Soviet Union. There, the revisionist renegade clique has usurped Party leadership and state power, betrayed the revolutionary principles of Marxism-Leninism and followed a revisionist line. The result is that the dictatorship of the proletariat has been replaced by the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie, socialism has been replaced by social-imperialism and fascism, revolution is undermined and history retrogresses. However, this is a temporary phenomenon. In the end, Marxism-Leninism will certainly defeat revisionism and the proletariat will defeat the bourgeoisie. This general trend of historical development can never be changed.

Foster the Growth of New Things

As the socialist revolution deepens in China, the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, initiated and led by Chairman Mao, is a great struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie and between the Marxist-Leninist line and the revisionist line. Guided by Chairman Mao's proletarian revolutionary line, Party members, cadres and masses, after repeated and sharp struggles, uncovered the handful of renegades, special agents and diehard capitalist-roaders in the Party headed by Liu Shao-chi. Then they went on to smash the plots of political swindlers like Liu Shao-chi to restore the fascist dictatorship of the landlords and comprador-bourgeoisie, destroy their bourgeois headquarters and settle accounts with them for their counter-revolutionary crimes and revisionist line. All this has enormously strengthened China's proletarian dictatorship and the Chinese Communist Party. It was also a very severe blow to imperialism and social-imperialism, which schemed to subvert the socialist system in China through their agents. This tremendous victory has sparked vigorous development in all fields of socialist endeavour and is of extremely far-reaching significance.

The proletariat, through the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, has further enlarged its positions in the superstructure, including all spheres of culture, while the ideology of the bourgeoisie and all other exploiting classes suffered harsh blows. In literature and art, education and other realms where the bourgeoisie had long been entrenched, a profound revolution has taken place, with the proletariat taking over these ideological positions.

As Chairman Mao's proletarian revolutionary line and principles and policies are carried out in all spheres of the superstructure, large numbers of socialist new things have emerged. These include the creation and

popularization of model revolutionary theatrical works, enrolment of worker-peasant-soldier students in universities and colleges, settling of educated city youth in the countryside, participation of cadres in productive labour, development of co-operative medical services and emergence of "barefoot doctors" in the rural areas, shifting of medical workers to the countryside. All these have a common class nature: they are advantageous to the proletariat and detrimental to the bourgeoisie and benefit socialism while harming capitalism. Although some are still in an imperfect state, lack adequate experience or are passing or have yet to pass the test of various struggles, they possess, nonetheless, immense viability and have an illimitable future. They show the direction of our advance and the rapid progress of the socialist revolution. As Chairman Mao has said: "It is always so in the world, the new displacing the old, the old being superseded by the new, the old being eliminated to make way for the new, and the new emerging out of the old." (*On Contradiction*.) To actively protect new-emerging things, enthusiastically foster their growth and correctly sum up experience and lessons is to persist in revolution and in progress.

Distinguishing Between Principal And Secondary Aspects

In class society, class struggle is "always the great motive force of historical progress." (Engels; *International Socialism and Italian Socialism*.) Such noteworthy changes in favour of the proletariat in the balance of class forces have an important bearing on the overall situation of socialist revolution and socialist construction. Their powerful influence is felt in every field, on every front and by every part of the overall situation. Historical experience proves that a major class or line struggle never fails to bring a leap in the various fields of revolution and construction.

In the course of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, we have destroyed the bourgeois headquarters of Liu Shao-chi and other political swindlers and smashed their counter-revolutionary revisionist line; Chairman Mao's proletarian revolutionary line has taken firm hold of people's hearts, and the Party's principles and policies are implemented even better so that the socialist enthusiasm of the cadres and masses are further aroused. All this has enabled every field of work in China to advance triumphantly along the socialist road. Shortcomings and problems which appear during the rapid growth of the socialist cause are non-essential and minor things not difficult to overcome, and certainly can be overcome, once Chairman Mao's correct line is put into action. In viewing the situation on different fronts or in different fields or in considering a partial situation, the overall situation of the class struggle must not be forgotten, and neither should the essential and main aspects. Concrete analysis should also be made of the minor or secondary aspects. The principal and the secondary aspects form a unity of opposites. The secondary aspects reveal the

new contradictions arising in the progress of things, and they will remind us to solve the problems and thus bring about sounder development of the main aspects.

As socialist revolution moves ahead, the victories we win by no means indicate the end of the struggle. These victories can be consolidated and developed only by persisting in continuing the revolution under the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Chairman Mao has taught us: **"We have won great victory. But the defeated class will still struggle. These people are still around and this class still exists. Therefore, we cannot speak of final victory. Not even for decades. We must not lose our vigilance."** Historical experience since the founding of New China proves that each major class struggle with its resultant changes evokes a different response from different classes, strata or social cliques.

The proletariat and the masses of labouring people are elated by their victories, while the reactionary exploiting classes lament their defeat. Liu Shao-chi and other political swindlers did everything in their power to nullify the great achievements of China's socialist revolution and construction and of the Great Cultural Revolution, slander the fruits of the revolutions in art and literature and in education and other fields of struggle-criticism-transformation and sling mud at the excellent revolutionary situation. They hoped by this to oppose Chairman Mao's proletarian revolutionary line and achieve their criminal aim of sub-

verting the proletarian dictatorship and restoring capitalism.

To be able to see the essential and main aspects of things correctly, we must firmly adhere to a proletarian stand. Chairman Mao has pointed out: **"Our stand is that of the proletariat and of the masses. For members of the Communist Party, this means keeping to the stand of the Party, keeping to Party spirit and Party policy."** (*Talks at the Yen-an Forum on Literature and Art.*) This is our fundamental point of departure in approaching all problems. Only in this way can we firmly keep in mind the great historic task of the proletariat, correctly recognize the objective laws of class struggle, grasp the trend of social development, observe at all times what conforms to the maximum interests of the masses and to the advance of society and vice versa, and thus analyse and judge the situation correctly.

Anyone who keeps to the stand of an individual or a small clique instead of that of the proletariat will see problems through prejudiced eyes; he will fail to correctly analyse class contradictions and class struggles and thus see the situation in an incorrect light. It is imperative, therefore, that we carry out Chairman Mao's instruction to **"read and study seriously and have a good grasp of Marxism,"** consciously remould our world outlook and keep firmly to the proletarian stand through constant tempering.

(Slightly abridged translation of an article from "Hongqi," No. 3, 1973. Subheads are ours.)