

*M. M. Rosental, The Marxist Dialectical Method, translated from the German version, Die marxistische dialektische Method, Berlin : Dietz Verlag, 1953, pp. 274-5, 288-9, 291-2, 293, 294-5. This work was in turn translated from Marksistskii dialekticheskii metod, Moscow: Gospolitizdat, 1952.*

Antagonistic contradictions are those contradictions in social life which bring out the fundamental oppositions of classes and the fundamental difference of interests of those classes, and which can only be overcome through irreconcilable class struggle....

Non-antagonistic contradictions are of a completely different character from antagonistic ones. Hostile classes with directly opposed interests do not stand behind such [non-antagonistic] contradictions in social life. The contradictions, for example between the working class and the laboring peasantry are non-antagonistic. Although their class positions are opposed to one another in capitalist society, they become joined into one single powerful camp under the leadership of the working class through their common interests in the struggle against capitalist exploitation and against misery and impoverishment, a struggle directed against the camp of the exploiters.

The antagonistic and non-antagonistic contradictions naturally have different content, and therefore the ways and means of overcoming them are also different...

The development of antagonistic contradictions leads unavoidably to an ever deeper division of society into powers opposed to each other, powers which fight each other in a life-and-death struggle. Antagonistic contradictions are not evened out or lessened in the process of development, but are deepened and take on sharper and sharper forms.

These contradictions appear very abruptly, especially in the relations of production. The growth of contradictions between the forces of production and the relations of production reaches a point in every antagonistic society where they can no longer exist in the previous frame of relative unity. The sharpening of contradictions in the relations of production is expressed in the class struggle. The presence and the sharpening of class struggle does not lead, as all representatives of vulgar theories assume, to the ruin of society. The struggle of oppressed classes against the exploiting classes does not destroy society, but drives it forward to higher and higher forms....

The overcoming of antagonistic contradictions can ... only succeed by way of the revolutionary overthrow of existing exploiter regimes, but way of revolutionary class struggle....

During the transition period from capitalism to socialism in the USSR, there was also a contradiction of a different kind, the contradiction between the working class and the peasantry. This contradiction consists in the fact that, in opposition to the proletariat, which possesses not private property in the means of production, the peasant class constructed their economy on the basis of small private property, a source which feeds capitalism. It is not possible to construct socialism, however, if the peasantry is not convinced of the necessity of the transition to large-scale socialist agriculture, if its consciousness as an owner of private property is not changed.

Stalin's historical service consisted in his having taken Lenin's work further, having treated the problem of the particular, non-antagonistic character of the contradictions between the working class and the peasantry, and having advocated the only correct path which leads to the overcoming of these contradictions.

"We have," said Comrade Stalin in his report "On the Results of the Work of the 14th Conference of the CPR(B)" in 1925, "two main classes before us: the proletarian class and the class of private-property-owners, i.e., the peasantry. Hence, contradictions between them are inevitable. The whole question is whether we shall be able by our own efforts to overcome the contradictions that exist between the proletariat and the peasantry. When the question is asked: can we build socialism by our own efforts? what is meant is: can the contradictions that exist between the proletariat and the peasantry in our country be overcome or not?" [J. V. Stalin, "Results of the Work of the Fourteenth Conference of the R. C. P. (B.)," *Works*, Foreign Languages Press, Moscow, 1954, vol. 7, p. 111.]

A bitter struggle took place in our party between the Leninists and the opportunists over this question. The various positions taken on this question and its solution clearly reveal the difference between the dialectical world view of the party, and the metaphysical essence of opportunism of all sorts.

How did the Trotskyists, who hid behind a "Left" mask, stand on this question? The Trotskyists held that the peasantry was a completely homogeneous reactionary mass, a class which contained no inner contradictions. They did not see the dual nature of the peasantry and did not distinguish what makes the peasant a man who works hard and what makes him a small property owner. They threw these two sides together and drew the conclusion that the peasantry is a power hostile to the working class, and that a collision between the working class of our country, which had taken the power into its hands, and the peasantry, is unavoidable. The general conclusion that resulted from this was that it is impossible to construct socialism on our country.

What position did the Right take on this question? These enemies of the party also considered the peasantry in a purely metaphysical way. Since they did not see the peasantry's contradictoriness in the essence, they left the side of the peasantry as small property owner wholly unconsidered, consciously blurred the difference between the working peasant and the kulak, and denied the presence of contradictions between the peasantry and the working class. From this resulted a whole series of Right opportunist measures which were based on the metaphysical "equilibrium" theory, according to which not the struggle of opposites but their reconciliation, kulakism "growing into" socialism, is the source of the "development" to socialism....

Comrade Stalin revealed the characteristic mark of the non-antagonistic contradiction between the proletariat and the peasantry when he showed "that, besides contradictions between the proletariat and the peasantry, there are also common interests between them on fundamental problems of development, interests which outweigh, or, at all events, can outweigh those contradictions, and are the basis, the foundation, of the alliance [*smychka*] between the workers and the peasants." [*ibid.*, p. 112]....

In any case, the overcoming of all non-antagonistic contradictions takes place through the path of struggle. Stalin's 1925 characterization of the particular features of the non-antagonistic contradiction between the working class and the peasantry had the result that in addition to the bond between these classes, a "struggle inside the alliance" also existed, "a struggle whose importance is outweighed by that of the community of interests, and which should disappear in the future, when the workers and the peasants cease to be classes -- when they become working people of a classless society" [J. V. Stalin, "Questions and Answers: Speech Delivered at the Sverdlov University, June 9, 1925," *Works*, vol. 7, p. 179].

That was the struggle over the question of prices, about taxes, the struggle against the influence of the kulaks on the middle peasants, the struggle against the instinct of private ownership, concerning the socialistic re-education of the laboring peasantry.

But the overcoming of non-antagonistic contradictions proceeds completely differently from the case of antagonistic contradictions. In the first publication of Stalin's "Letter to Comrade Ch," in volume 13 of Stalin's collected works, Comrade Stalin shows very clearly the different possibilities for resolving non-antagonistic and antagonistic contradictions. These Stalinist indications are important mainly for understanding the particular nature of different types of contradictions. Stalin spoke of contradictions between the proletariat and the laboring peasantry and showed as a result that "it is a matter of the contradictions [inside the smychka] (the union, the bond between the proletariat and the peasantry--M. R.), which will be evened out and overcome satisfactorily as industrialization increases, that is, as the strength and influence of the country's proletariat grows." [J. V. Stalin, "Letter to Comrade Ch," November, 1930, *Works*, 1955, vol. 13, p. 21.]

The contradiction between the proletariat and the kulaks, that is, the antagonistic contradiction, develops in a completely different way. Here the subject is "contradictions between the proletariat and the kulaks, thus, contradictions that lie outside the scope of the bond [between workers and peasants] and will grow and become more acute until we eliminate the kulaks as a class." [*ibid.*, pp. 21-2].

Consequently antagonistic contradictions increase in the course of struggle and become sharper, until one of the opposite powers is removed. Conversely, non-antagonistic contradictions become evened out and moderated in the course of struggle, and find a satisfactory solution in the interests of progressive development.

The program of socialist re-education of the peasants achieved a complete victory in the course of the struggle for the collectivization of agriculture. In his report "On the Draft Constitution of the USSR" Comrade Stalin explained that the economic and political contradictions between the working class and the peasantry "fall away and disappear," that from the essence of these classes new classes have come about, classes of socialist society.

The overcoming of the contradictions between the working classes and the old, small capitalist peasantry in our country has showed the people of the world for the first time that contradictions are resolved through the re-education of a whole class and its being convinced of the appropriateness and necessity of a new path of development, not on the basis of a bloody and deadly struggle. Such a resolution was possible since the contradiction between the working class and the peasantry has a non-antagonistic character.