

THREE MAJOR STRUGGLES ON CHINA'S PHILOSOPHICAL FRONT

(1949-1964)



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1st Edition, 2025

<https://prairiefirepublishing.com/>

Original Publisher's Note: The four articles contained in this book may help to acquaint our readers with the major struggles on New China's philosophical front since its founding in 1949. Written by the Revolutionary Mass Criticism Writing Group of the Party School under the Chinese Communist Party Central Committee, they first appeared separately in *Renmin Ribao* (People's Daily), *Hongqi* (Red Flag) and *Guangming Ribao* (Kwangming Daily). The present translation is made from an abridged version of the Chinese text.

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I. THREE MAJOR STRUGGLES ON CHINA'S PHILOSOPHICAL FRONT

The philosophy of the Communist Party is the philosophy of struggle.¹

Marxism can develop only through struggle, and not only is this true of the past and the present, it is necessarily true of the future as well.²

Between 1949 and 1964, three major struggles of principle took place on China's philosophical front, centering around the question of China's economic base and superstructure, the question of whether there is identity between thinking and being,

¹This expression is reflective of Mao's philosophy and is attributed to him, but no direct source currently available in English can be found for this quote. — *PPF*.

²Mao Zedong, *On the Correct Handling of Contradictions Among the People*, 1957.

and the question of “one divides into two” or “two combine into one.” These struggles were provoked one after another by Yang Xianzhen, agent of the renegade, hidden traitor and scab Liu Shaoqi in philosophical circles, at crucial junctures in the struggle between the two classes (the proletariat and the bourgeoisie), the two roads (socialism and capitalism) and the two lines (Chairman Mao Zedong’s proletarian revolutionary line and Liu Shaoqi’s counter-revolutionary revisionist line). They were fierce struggles between dialectical materialism and historical materialism on the one hand and idealism and metaphysics on the other, and were a reflection on the philosophical front of the acute class struggle at home and abroad.

1.

The founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949 marked the basic conclusion of the stage of China's new-democratic revolution and the beginning of the stage of its socialist revolution. In his Report to the Second Plenary Session of the Seventh Central Committee of the Communist Party of China held in March 1949, our great leader Chairman Mao pointed out that after the countrywide victory of the Chinese revolution the basic contradiction in Chinese society was **“the contradiction between the working class and the bourgeoisie”**; he urged the people to continue the revolution, strengthen the people's democratic dictatorship, *i.e.*, the dictatorship of the proletariat, and **“build China into a great socialist state.”**

At the end of 1952, Chairman Mao went further to formulate the general line for the period of transition: bringing about, step by step, the socialist industrialization of the country and the socialist transformation

of agriculture, handicrafts and capitalist industry and commerce. Running counter to this, Liu Shaoqi openly opposed the spirit of the Second Plenary Session of the Party's Seventh Central Committee. As early as 1949, the year the session was held, he desperately preached the fallacy that "exploitation is a merit" and advocated the development of capitalism. Waving the tattered banner of the "theory of productive forces" after liberation, he dished up a sinister program for developing capitalism which called for "cooperation among the five sectors of the economy³ to consolidate the new-democratic system." This showed that he blatantly opposed the Party's general line for the period of transition.

At that moment of acute struggle between Chairman Mao's proletarian revolutionary line and Liu Shaoqi's counter-revolutionary revisionist line, Yang Xianzhen, at the bidding of Liu Shaoqi, churned out the

³The five sectors of China's national economy were the state-owned economy, the cooperative economy, the individual economy of the peasants and handicraftsmen, the private capitalist economy, and the state-capitalist economy.

so-called theory of “synthesized economic base,” thereby provoking the first big struggle on the philosophical front. Yang Xianzhen claimed that the economic base during the period of transition was of a “synthesized nature,” “including both the socialist sector and the capitalist sector of the economy” which “can develop in a balanced and co-ordinated way.” He babbled that the socialist superstructure should, without discrimination, “serve the entire economic base,” including the capitalist sector of the economy, and “also serve the bourgeoisie.” This was the notorious theory of “synthesized economic base.”

It is obvious that, in putting forward these reactionary absurdities, Yang Xianzhen obliterated the diametrical antagonism and struggle between the socialist economy and the capitalist economy, and denied the class nature of the superstructure, his aim being all-round class collaboration and class capitulation in all spheres, from the economic base to the superstructure. This was an attempt to change the nature of the dictatorship of the proletariat in our country,

oppose the establishment of a socialist economic base, and perpetuate capitalism in China.

The theory of “synthesized economic base,” which advocated the development of capitalism, was nothing new. It was just a variant of the “theory of productive forces” which old and new revisionists in China and other countries have held sacred for scores of years. According to this “theory,” China must not carry out the socialist transformation of the private ownership of the means of production, it cannot go in for socialism but can only allow capitalism to spread unchecked, because its productive forces are backward and capitalism is not developed.

As soon as Yang Xianzhen trotted out his reactionary fallacy, he was dealt a head-on blow by the proletariat. Not reconciled to defeat, he concocted, in 1955, an article entitled *On the Question of the Base and the Superstructure During the Transition Period in the People's Republic of China*, preaching his theory of “synthesized economic base” more systematically than ever. When he sent his

sinister article to Liu Shaoqi for examination, the latter openly supported him and said: “You are right,” adding that private capitalism “is a component of the base.”

Chairman Mao sternly criticized Liu Shaoqi’s reactionary program of “cooperation among the five sectors of the economy to consolidate the new-democratic system,” pointing out that its reactionary nature lay in its advocating the development of capitalism. Under the guidance of Mao Zedong Thought, the socialist transformation of the ownership of the means of production was basically completed in 1956 and the Party’s general line for the period of transition was successfully implemented. Yang Xianzhen’s theory of “synthesized economic base” not only went bankrupt theoretically but was thoroughly smashed by revolutionary practice.