

Study Guide for *On the Correct Handling of Contradictions Among the People* by Mao Tse-Tung

First Edition

Written by Comrade H. Donovan

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Introduction

On the Correct Handling of Contradictions Among the People by Mao Tse-Tung is part of a three-part series that these study guides will be covering, preceded by *On Practice* and *On Contradiction*. Mao Tse-Tung primarily wrote for largely illiterate peasants, meaning his documents tend to be very easy to understand.

Mao’s works largely function as a common-sense filter, with a particular focus on ensuring Marxist-Leninists actually perform their party work instead of just regurgitating theory. *On the Correct Handling of Contradictions Among the People* will continue the discussion from *On Practice* with the theoretical backing provided by *On Contradiction*.

As new terms come up in the document that may be unfamiliar or have experienced lingual drift, they’ll be clarified for their individual sections. Additionally, to encourage reading the document rather than seeking summaries, key takeaways for different sections will be presented as questions for the reader to answer, allowing them to seek the answers themselves and come to a greater understanding of the document.

This is unfortunately due to the fact that—while being somewhat viable as onboarding to reading Socialist theory, assuming someone is actively encouraged to learn and possibly assisted in doing so (as opposed to berated)—summarized Socialist theory significantly waters down the original documents and will only provide a rudimentary understanding.

The headings beyond this point in this document will simply denote the relevant sections of *On the Correct Handling of Contradictions Among the People*.

Section 1: Two Types of Contradictions Differing in Nature

Important Context:

- The Maoist method is attempting peaceful reconciliation between the national bourgeoisie (of which a distinction is made between them and the imperialists, i.e. international bourgeoisie),

the proletariat (which Mao simply calls workers), and the peasants because the dictatorship of the proletariat *is already in power*, and their unique conditions have permitted this to be an option. This is not a reasonable course of action under the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie, and the appropriate course of action under other proletarian dictatorships will vary wildly based on different conditions.

Key Takeaways:

- What are the two primary functions of the dictatorship of the proletariat, and why? Who exercises this dictatorship, and how?
- Why are bourgeois democracies not truly democratic or free?
- How is democratic centralism used within the dictatorship of the proletariat in regards to the people? What is the method used, in detail? What method should be avoided?
- What is unity-struggle-unity (sometimes called unity-struggle-transformation, here called unity-criticism-unity)?

Section 2: The Question of Eliminating Counter-Revolutionaries

Important Context:

- What Mao refers to as Right and Left deviations here is opportunists and ultraleftists, respectively.

Key Takeaways:

- Why does a Communist Party need to cut out counter-revolutionaries?

Section 3: The Question of the Co-Operative Transformation of Agriculture

Important Context:

- This section is more relevant to largely agricultural countries. Countries within the imperial core are very industrialized, and consequently the peasantry is small to potentially non-existent.
- Co-operatives are a better form of organization than a standard bourgeois business, however they can only profitably function under Socialism, and still carry a degree of exploitation of surplus labour in order to generate that profit. Due to maintaining a petit bourgeois character, they clash with the interests of the dictatorship of the proletariat, and must be consolidated as state property for the whole of the proletariat over time. As peasants' quality of life is increased under Socialism, and contradictions are resolved within the Socialist system, they will be decreasingly inclined to maintain the capitalist method of production.
- As may be obvious from this document, Mao took a radically different approach to dealing with capitalists within the Socialist system, bizarrely inverse to his policy of mass executing landlords. Whether capitalists can be peacefully dealt with after the dictatorship of the

proletariat has begun to be enforced is a matter of specific conditions, which should be determined through investigation, especially through investigation of whether the methods in use are working as intended.

Key Takeaways:

- What must be monitored to resolve contradictions within the peasantry, and between the peasantry and the proletariat?

Section 4: The Question of the Industrialists and the Businessmen

Key Takeaways:

- Is deprogramming (de-propagandization), communal labour, and education (here the combination is called remolding) necessary for everyone?
- Is continual study necessary?

Section 5: The Question of the Intellectuals

Important Context:

- Intellectuals here refers to people who are technically, scientifically, or medically educated, or otherwise educated in complex fields. These people are critical to the creation of a Socialist system, but due to living closer to bourgeois conditions under capitalism (higher pay than average workers, small cliques of workers detached from larger clusters of the proletariat, sometimes close proximity to important officials, etc.), they tend to hold more bourgeois ideas. These people must be swept into the proletarian movement as well.

Key Takeaways:

- What should be the conditions for allowing the intellectuals to perform appropriate work?
- What are the three key tenets of Marxist-Leninist study? Is anyone exempt from this?

Section 6: The Question of the Minority Nationalities

Key Takeaways:

- What is the primary barrier to national unity? (Note: In the USA, this primarily takes the form of racism.)

Section 7: Over-All Consideration and Proper Arrangement

Key Takeaways:

- Should the conditions of the entire nation always be taken into account?

Section 8: On “Let a Hundred Flowers Blossom, Let a Hundred Schools of Thought Contend” and “Long-Term Coexistence and Mutual Supervision”

Important Context:

- These methods are specific solutions adopted for the specific conditions within China. While it's important to learn from them, they shouldn't be copied 1:1 if certain methods aren't applicable, including the criteria outlined by Mao Tse-Tung. To paraphrase Marx: Marxism is a method, not a dogma.
- The Chinese government utilizes a multi-party system under the direction of the Communist Party, requiring that the minority parties must adhere to the criteria Mao outlines in this section; this is due to their specific conditions. In different specific conditions in other countries, investigation will need to be done to determine the best course of action: a multi-party system under the direction of a Communist Party (the system currently in place in China, Laos, and the DPRK), or enshrining the respective Communist Parties as the only legal party (the system currently in place in Cuba and Vietnam). Notably, all five current systems of actually existing Socialism allow independents outside of party affiliations, such as liberals running in Vietnamese elections.

Key Takeaways:

- How should questions of right and wrong be settled?
- Does ideological debate weaken or strengthen Marxism-Leninism? What method should be used?
- What are the six criteria of positive ideological developments in Marxism-Leninism? (Note: These were adopted for the Chinese specific conditions. Investigate whether these will be beneficial in your conditions before applying them, then investigate the success of those applications to modify them as necessary.)

Section 9: On the Question of Disturbances Created by Small Numbers of People

Key Takeaways:

- How should the causes of disturbances within a Socialist system be identified and eliminated? How should Marxist-Leninists respond to those disturbances?

Section 10: Can Bad Things be Turned Into Good Things?

Key Takeaways:

- What is likely to happen if a third world war breaks out? Does this mean that Communists should push for a third world war? What is the appropriate response to warmongering?

Section 11: On Practicing Economy

Key Takeaways:

- What is the split in productive economy that must be practiced? (Note: In the imperial core, heavy focus must be placed on the latter portion. While Lenin previously brings up that the workers must destroy the ready-made state machinery—i.e. a coup d'état isn't enough, and the proletariat must independently build up its own government separate from the existing government—countries in the imperial core will likely still be heavily industrialized.)

Section 12: China's Path to Industrialization

Key Takeaways:

- How should international policy be focused in a Socialist country?