

The Development of the Law of the Struggle of Opposites in “Capital” by Karl Marx

M. M. Rozental

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I

“Capital” is the greatest work of scientific socialism. If socialism was transformed from utopia into science, it was primarily thanks to “Capital.” “Capital” is devoted to an analysis of the laws of capitalist society. This work, for the first time, comprehensively demonstrates how the development of capitalism, based on glaring antagonistic contradictions, inevitably, lawfully, and by virtue of natural historical necessity, prepares the conditions for the transition to socialism. While utopian socialists constructed socialist theories without being able to elucidate the objective mechanism of capitalism, the development of which leads to its demise, Marx’s achievement lies in the fact that he showed socialism not as a pious wish of people, but as a necessary, natural result of social development. Therefore, without Capital, there is no scientific socialism. “Capital” is also a great philosophical work of Marxism. “Capital” would be unthinkable without dialectical and historical materialism. The philosophical foundation, the soul of “Capital,” is dialectical materialism, the materialist understanding of history. Lenin wrote that if Marx did not leave us “Logic” with a capital “L,” that is, did not give us dialectics in a systematically presented form, then he left us logic with a small “l,” the logic of “Capital,” and this must be utilized to the fullest extent. Lenin pointed out that in “Capital”, Marx applied dialectics, dialectical logic, and dialectical theory of knowledge to one science, and applied them not abstractly, but specifically to the analysis of an entire socio-economic formation – the capitalist system. In a review of Marx’s book, A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy, which is of extraordinary value to us and in many ways serves as a guiding thread in the consideration of the question of the method of Capital, Engels wrote: “We consider the development of the method which underlies Marx’s critique of political economy to be a result which in its significance is hardly inferior to the fundamental materialistic view.”¹. It’s difficult to overestimate the importance of Capital for the development of the Marxist dialectical method. Capital is a veritable encyclopedia of materialist dialectics. In his work, Marx subjected Hegel’s idealist dialectic to a comprehensive critique and contrasted it with his own method – the only scientific method of materialist dialectics. In the afterword to the second edition of Volume I of Capital, Marx states: “My dialectical method is not only fundamentally different from Hegel’s, but represents its direct antithesis.”

Not Hegel’s idealistic, mystified dialectic, but Marx’s materialist dialectic, which found its fullest and most profound expression in Capital, armed revolutionary Marxists with a powerful method of theoretical knowledge and revolutionary action. The materialist dialectic of Marx and Engels was further developed in the works of the great leaders of the Russian and international proletariat, Lenin and Stalin, who honed this powerful theoretical weapon through the experience of a new historical era – the era of imperialism and

proletarian revolutions, the era of building socialism and communism. Marx's method, profoundly developed in *Capital*, is characterized, first and foremost, by its revolutionary, partisan nature from beginning to end. The revolutionary-critical nature of Marxism is powerfully revealed in *Capital*. With his method, Marx fearlessly lays bare the contradictions of the capitalist mode of production, reveals its incurable wounds, and demonstrates its doom. Every step of Marx's analysis is grounded in a veritable Mont Blanc of objective facts, yet at the same time, this analysis is imbued with revolutionary passion, hatred of the bourgeoisie, and a profound love for the proletariat, in which Marx sees a champion for a happy future for all working humanity. Marx's method is not only a method for studying capitalism but also a method for critiquing the theories of capitalism's defenders, a method of fierce revolutionary struggle against the apologetic conclusions of all bourgeois political economy. It is no coincidence that *Capital* bears the subtitle "Critique of Political Economy." Not without reason, in one of his letters, joyfully announcing the completion of the first volume of *Capital*, Marx wrote that it was "the most terrible projectile ever fired at the head of a bourgeois." It is easy to understand, therefore, that the study of the dialectics in *Capital* is of more than just enormous theoretical interest. Marx's application of dialectics to the analysis of capitalism teaches us how to wield this most incisive theoretical weapon. The study of this work and its method also has pressing political significance. After all, what is the dialectic in *Capital*, to put it briefly? It is, above all, a profound analysis of the contradictions of the capitalist mode of production – contradictions whose movement, the development of which, inevitably leads capitalism to its demise. This is precisely why all enemies of Marxism, including modern ones, fire their arrows against *Capital*, against its revolutionary method, against the brilliant works of Lenin and Stalin, which offer a dialectical analysis of the contradictions of the final stage of capitalism – imperialism – and which represent a creative development of the ideas of *Capital* in application to new historical conditions. Contemporary right-wing socialists furiously attack the fundamental tenets of *Capital*. Like their predecessors Bernstein, Kautsky, and others, they are waging a struggle against the revolutionary dialectic of *Capital*. This is explained very simply: remove dialectics from *Capital* to deprive it of its living soul. Without dialectics, there is no *Capital*, nor is there the revolutionary-critical spirit that is characteristic of *Capital*. The analysis given in *Capital* is a dialectical analysis of capitalism. Therefore, the struggle waged by modern traitors to the working class against Marx's dialectic is a struggle against revolutionary Marxism, against the revolutionary conclusions that follow from *Capital*, a struggle against scientific socialism. The attacks of modern right-wing socialists against dialectics are nothing more than a device, a means of combating the revolutionary edge of Marx's analysis of capitalism. Any class-conscious worker can expose the falsifiers of Marxism and, in Marx's own words, reveal the true reasons for the hatred of right-wing socialist advocates of the bourgeoisie for dialectics.

"...Dialectics," wrote Marx, "inspires only malice and horror in the bourgeoisie and its doctrinaire idealists, since it includes in its positive understanding of the existing order the understanding of its negation, its inevitable destruction. It views every realized form in motion, and therefore also from its transitory

side. It bows before nothing and is by its very nature critical and revolutionary.”² For the same reason, right-wing socialists harbor anger toward revolutionary dialectics. It is no accident that they undertake the hopeless task of refuting dialectical materialism. Marxist dialectics, when applied to the politics of the proletarian party, teaches that it is not the reformist smoothing over and glossing over of capitalism’s glaring contradictions, but the fearless revolutionary struggle of the proletariat and all oppressed slaves of capital against imperialism that drives society forward and is the decisive force of development. Marxist dialectics teaches that it is not quantitative reformist improvements introduced into the existing capitalist system that can eliminate the misery, poverty, and ruin of the working masses, but a fundamental, qualitative change in the system of exploitation, the destruction of the capitalist system, and the construction of socialism. But it is precisely this kind of struggle, this kind of revolutionary leap, that right-wing socialists, these sycophants of the capitalists, fear. Hence their fervor against dialectics, against dialectical materialism, hence their efforts to declare dialectical materialism a “phantom,” a “fiction,” and to obliterate its existence. Within the confines of this article, it is, of course, impossible to exhaust, or even summarize, the fundamental questions of dialectics, dialectical logic, and the theory of knowledge developed by Marx in *Capital*. All aspects of materialist dialectics are profoundly developed in Marx’s great work. But, for obvious reasons, Marx devoted particularly considerable attention to the crucial question of dialectics – the question of contradictions, the unfolding of contradictions as the source and internal content of development. For the analysis of the capitalist mode of production, characterized by its profound contradictions, this aspect of dialectics is of paramount importance. Of all the questions related to the development of dialectics in *Capital*, we will take precisely this question.

II

A distinctive feature of *Capital*’s method, as opposed to that of bourgeois economists, is the application of the dialectical theory of development to the analysis of the capitalist mode of production. In the history of political economy, this was a major revolutionary advance. Smith and Ricardo approached the capitalist mode of production as an eternal, natural expression of social life. As bourgeois ideologists, they taught that the capitalist mode of production is a given, unchangeable mode of production. Marx’s greatness lies in the fact that, as the ideologist of the proletariat, he approached the analysis of capitalism from the perspective of the dialectical theory of development. Marx himself, in the preface to the first edition of Volume I of *Capital*, speaks of this fundamental difference between himself and his predecessors. He points out that “present-day society is not a solid crystal, but an organism capable of transformation and in a constant process of transformation.”³ Marx counters the anti-historicism of the old bourgeois economists with his dialectical historicism. The most important feature of the old economists’ method was their disregard for the historical specificity of capitalist production, the specific forms that labor and all social relations take under capitalism. They were characterized by quantitative analysis, such as the analysis of value, profit, rent, and so on. But they ignored why social

relations between people take on precisely this character, and not another; that is, they ignored the qualitative aspect of capitalism, and consequently, its historically transitory nature. Marx, in contrast to older, bourgeois economists, focused entirely on analyzing the historical form that labor takes under specific conditions, and on the qualitative uniqueness of the capitalist mode of production. He explored why, under the dominance of commodity production, the products of human labor acquire a certain amount of value and surplus value, etc. It was precisely this approach that helped Marx revolutionize the science of the capitalist mode of production and examine it in the process of its emergence, development, and demise, as a phenomenon caused by specific historical conditions. Marx himself declared that the ultimate goal of his work was “the discovery of the economic law of motion of modern society.”⁴ Applying the dialectical principle of development to the analysis of capitalism, Marx provides a comprehensive treatment of the question of contradictions using concrete material.

Lenin called the question of contradictions the essence, the salt, of dialectics. In his notes on dialectics in the Philosophical Notebooks, he specifically draws attention to this aspect of Capital. Indeed, the richness of Capital in this sense is inexhaustible. Development occurs in contradictions. The struggle of opposites is the driving force of development. Capitalism is particularly characterized by the antagonism of the social relations that prevail within it. To scientifically demonstrate the emergence, development, and inevitable demise of the capitalist mode of production means demonstrating how the contradictions of capitalism arise, how they develop and intensify, transforming into irreconcilable extremes, how, at a certain stage of their development, these contradictions explode the capitalist system from within, leading to a revolutionary leap, to the necessary, logical transition from capitalism to socialism. This is why Marx devotes so much attention to the question of capitalist contradictions and thereby develops the dialectical doctrine of contradictions in general. Marx points out that the source of all dialectical development is contradictions, their development, and their overcoming: “...The development of the contradictions of a given historical form of production is the only historical path of its disintegration and the formation of a new one.”⁵ This is the true key to the entirety of Capital! Marx’s position is directed against idealists, petty-bourgeois socialists, romantics, and other assorted enemies of the proletariat who fear the development of contradictions and who, if they do see them, try to neutralize, synthesize, and reconcile them, transferring them to the realm of thought, consciousness, and logical categories. Marx had to contend along these lines with Smith and Ricardo, with Hegel, Proudhon, and other philosophers and economists. For Marx, logical concepts and their development are a reflection of the contradictions of life itself, and his primary concern is to reveal how contradictions develop and are resolved in reality itself. In “The Poverty of Philosophy” and in several of his letters, Marx criticizes Proudhon for his pathetic attempts to balance and synthesize the real, glaring contradictions of capitalism through the operations of thought. In a letter to Annenkov, Marx writes: “In his desire to reconcile contradictions, Mr. Proudhon completely evades the question: should we not overthrow the very foundation of these contradictions?” He resembles in every way a political doctrinaire who wishes

to preserve the king, the Chamber of Deputies, and the Upper House as integral parts of social life, as eternal categories. He merely seeks a new formula for balancing these forces, the equilibrium of which consists precisely in their present movement, where one of these forces is now the victor, now the slave of the other. Thus, in the eighteenth century, many mediocre minds tried to find the true formula for balancing the social classes, the nobility, the king, parliaments, and so on, but the next day there was no king, no parliaments, no nobility. The true equilibrium of this antagonism was the overthrow of all social relations that served as the basis of these feudal institutions and the basis of the antagonism between these feudal institutions.”⁶ This remarkable statement by Marx profoundly reveals the fundamental flaw in the method of bourgeois philosophers and economists. Bourgeois philosophers and economists strive to reconcile contradictions, to find a formula that, without destroying their constituent parts, would balance them in a new way. According to Marx, true development consists in the destruction of the real basis of these contradictions, and therefore of the contradictions themselves. Consequently, the task is not to reconcile contradictions, but to examine how they develop, are resolved, and are overcome in life. This is precisely one of the fundamental differences between Marx’s method and Hegel’s idealist dialectics. Having demonstrated that, in contrast to Hegel’s idealist dialectics, his dialectical method is materialistic, Marx writes that Hegel’s dialectics is characterized by the sanctification of existence, and therefore the reconciliation of contradictions, while materialist dialectics approaches everything that exists from the standpoint of its origin, development, and inevitable demise. These ideas of Marx’s are fundamental in his analysis of the entire capitalist mode of production in *Capital*. As a guiding idea for understanding this issue, it is necessary to cite Engels’ statement from his review of Karl Marx’s book “A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy,” which was essentially the first stage of Marx’s work on “*Capital*.” Engels demonstrates how Marx analyzes contradictions. Engels writes: “With this method, we start from the first and most simple relation...the primary economic relation...We analyze this relation... In doing so, contradictions arise that require resolution. But since we are here considering not an abstract process of thought that takes place only in our heads, but an actual process that has taken place or is still taking place, these contradictions also develop in practice and have probably found their solution. We will trace how they were resolved and find that this was achieved by the establishment of a new relation, and that we must now develop the two opposite sides of this new relation...”⁷

As is well known, Marx begins his analysis of capitalist production with the commodity. The very first lines of *Capital* begin with the statement that “the wealth of societies in which the capitalist mode of production prevails is a ‘vast accumulation of commodities,’ and the individual commodity is its elementary form.”⁸ The choice of this starting point alone is ingenious. Why does Marx begin with the commodity? The very choice of this starting point for his research is ingenious. Why does Marx begin with the commodity? Marx answers this question: because the wealth of capitalist society is a vast accumulation of commodities, and the individual commodity is its elementary form, its cell. And, just as an organism grows from the proliferation of

individual cells, so too does commodity production grow from the proliferation of the commodity cell – first simple, then capitalist production. Marx begins with an analysis of the commodity, for under certain historical conditions, the products produced by people take on the form of a commodity. When connections between people, due to the social division of labor and the existence of private property, are realized not directly but through exchange, the product takes the form of a commodity. Commodity production and circulation existed long before the advent of capitalism, but only in bourgeois society did they become dominant. In bourgeois society, says I. V. Stalin, “everything takes the form of a commodity; the principle of buying and selling reigns everywhere. Here you can buy not only consumer goods, not only foodstuffs, but also people’s labor power, their blood, their conscience.”⁹ Therefore, in the commodity form, in the commodity cell, in the simple act of exchange, lie all the secrets of capitalist production, the germ of all capitalism’s contradictions. Clearly, without a preliminary analysis of the commodity, it is impossible to understand everything else: the emergence of money, surplus value, the entire mechanism of the capitalist mode of production, or the historically transient nature of capitalism. Beginning his analysis of capital with the commodity, Marx immediately reveals the historical uniqueness of the capitalist mode of production, demonstrating that capital is not an eternal category, but only a stage in human development. Already in the form of the commodity, as Marx himself states, “the specific, and by no means absolute, character of social bourgeois production”¹⁰ is analyzed. By examining the commodity, Marx immediately reveals the contradictory nature of this initial cell. The commodity is both use value and exchange value; it is the unity of these opposites. The labor that creates commodities also contains an internal contradiction: it is the unity of concrete and abstract labor, private and social labor. These contradictions inherent in labor express the anarchic nature of commodity production, based on private property. Marx attached great importance to the analysis of contradictions, the dual nature of the commodity and the labor that produces it.

Bourgeois economists, even when they spoke of the difference between use value and exchange value, glossed over the contradictions between them, not understanding and not wanting to understand the social nature of this contradiction. They completely failed to see the dual, contradictory nature of labor. Marx was the first to establish this fact. And Marxism rightly prides itself on this discovery of abstract labor, for without distinguishing concrete and abstract labor, the entire mechanism of commodity production and exchange, the production of surplus value, is incomprehensible. The contradictions within commodity and labor already contain the fundamental contradiction of the capitalist mode of production – the contradiction between the social nature of production and the private property form of appropriation. Therefore, only an analysis of these contradictions – an analysis of the growth, development, and transformation of the contradictions of simple commodity production into the contradictions of capitalist production – can reveal the true laws of bourgeois society, its emergence, development, and inevitable demise. In his fragment “On the Question of Dialectics,” Lenin emphasizes the importance of Marx’s analysis of the contradictions of the simplest, most ordinary relationship in bourgeois society – the exchange of goods. “Analysis,” writes Lenin, “reveals

in this simplest phenomenon (this 'cell' of bourgeois society) all the contradictions (respectively, the germ of all contradictions) of modern society. The subsequent exposition shows us the development (and growth and movement) of these contradictions and of this society, in its two (in total – M.R.) separate parts, from its beginning to its end."¹¹ It is therefore not difficult to understand why bourgeois economists, apologists of the capitalist system, could not and did not want to reveal these contradictions in the commodity and labor. Marx waged a struggle against bourgeois economists who glossed over the profound contradictions of labor under the conditions of commodity production. Based on the metaphysical concept of the commodity as the identity of use and exchange value, they painted an idyllic picture of bourgeois society, in which goods are supposedly produced for consumption. From this came the conclusion that crises of overproduction were impossible. Quoting the relevant passage from Ricardo, Marx ironically remarks: "What a charming depiction of bourgeois relations!"¹² Regarding one of Mill's propositions, the meaning of which lies in the erasure of the opposition between use value and exchange value, Marx writes: "...What he (i.e., the commodity producer. – M.R.) wants is to free himself from a certain quantity of use value; what he wants to have is the value of this use value. Both things represent everything but identity."¹³ (emphasis – translator). But bourgeois economists deliberately present use value and exchange value as identical, purging commodity and labor of contradictions in order to prove the coincidence of supply and demand, the impossibility of crises of overproduction, and so on.

Only Marx's brilliant analysis of the contradictions of the initial "cell" of commodity production – an analysis of the contradictions of labor – allows us to understand the subsequent development of commodity production, its transition to capitalist production, the growth of capitalism's contradictions, and so on. Marx reveals how these contradictions find the form of their movement, their development, in reality itself. He provides an analysis of the forms of value, the development of the forms of value in the process of exchange – a development culminating in the bifurcation of the unified, i.e., the bifurcation of the commodity into commodity and money. The contradiction between the use value and exchange value of a commodity, like any contradiction, requires its overcoming, its resolution. Actual movement in the historical process of exchange creates the real form of overcoming this contradiction. For Marx, the logical analysis of contradictions is an expression of the real objective movement, the development of the contradictions of commodity production itself. In other words, behind this logical analysis, behind the economic categories that Marx examines, lies a colossal historical material, summarized in *Capital*. Even in "The Poverty of Philosophy", criticizing the idealist method of Hegel, as well as Proudhon, who, in Marx's words, reduced this method "to even more pitiful dimensions," Marx pointed out: "Economic categories are only theoretical expressions, abstractions of the social relations of production." That is why the economic categories formulated by Marx are so profound, vital, and flexible is because they are abstractions, i.e., generalizations of the actual "social relations of production" – relations studied not statically, but dynamically, not as motionless, but as developing and changing. The transition from one economic category to another, for example, from the simple to the complex form of value, from the

complex to the universal, from commodity to money, from money to capital, etc., reflects in Marx a real objective development and is based on a careful study of a vast amount of factual material. Marx caustically ridicules Proudhon, for whom, by virtue of his idealistic method, economic categories take on the appearance “as if they had just been born in a head full of pure reason: to such an extent do these categories seem to generate one another.”¹⁴

For Marx, it is not economic categories that generate movement. Categories merely summarize the actual movement of production and the entire set of social relations of capitalism. Marx shows that profound contradictions between use value and exchange value do not arise immediately; he reveals the nature of the various forms of value: simple or individual, complex, universal, and monetary. These forms of value are milestones on the path of the deepening development of the contradictions of the commodity and commodity exchange. The singular form of value corresponds to the period of economic development before commodity exchange, when primitive communes (hence the accidental form of value) encountered each other by chance and exchanged their surplus products. But in this accidental exchange, there already exists a significant distinction, the beginning of a contradiction between use value and exchange value, for the products exchanged no longer have any use value for their producers, but only exchange value. The growth of production and the growth of exchange lead to an ever-increasing production of goods specifically for exchange. Production increasingly takes on a commodity character. Under these new conditions, any one commodity can be exchanged for a number of others. And this signifies a further deepening of the contradictions, the gap between use value and exchange value. A new, complex form of value arises. But the process of development does not stop there. The development of commodity exchange leads to the emergence of a single commodity as the mere symbol of value, expressing the value of all other commodities. Later, gold becomes such a universal form of value. Money emerges as a distinct commodity, characterized by its ability to be exchanged for any other commodity. This distinct commodity embodies value, separated from use values; it expresses social wealth, independent of the specific forms of this wealth. The development of commodity contradictions culminates in the splitting of the single commodity into commodity and money. What was initially a relative unity is shattered into external opposites, opposing each other. We thus see how contradictions and forms of their resolution arise in reality itself. Marx had no need, like Hegel, to invent an artificial “synthesis” when analyzing such a contradiction as that between the use and exchange values of a commodity. The very objective development of this contradiction gives rise to a specific objective form of its overcoming. But this overcoming signifies not disappearance or reconciliation, but a further deepening of the contradictions. The contradictions of the commodity are only the beginning of the movement of the contradictions of commodity production, and the splitting of the commodity into commodity and money expresses not the elimination of these contradictions, but their deepening and intensification. “The development of the commodity,” says Marx, “does not remove these contradictions, but

creates the form for their movement. This, in general, is the method by which real contradictions are resolved.”¹⁵

The form of the further movement of the contradictions of the commodity is the newly emerging opposition between commodity and money. “The process of exchange,” writes Marx, “gives rise to the division of commodities into commodities and money – an external opposition in which commodities express the immanent opposition between use value and value. In this opposition, commodities as use value confront money as exchange value.”¹⁶ Money divides the single act of sale and purchase into two independent acts. The exchange of commodities for money does not immediately transform money into commodities. The realization of exchange value, existing in the form of commodities with specific use values, depends on external conditions and may not occur. The single process of exchange bifurcates into opposing parts: C-M and M-C. And in this, as Marx shows, the possibility of crises is already inherent. But this is still only a possibility. This possibility is already inherent in simple commodity production and circulation. The conditions for transforming this potential for crises into reality are created only by the development of the capitalist mode of production. Marx writes on this subject: “The opposition between use value and value, immanent in the commodity, the opposition between private labor, which at the same time must express itself as directly social labor, the opposition between particular and concrete labor, which at the same time has the significance of only abstractly universal labor, the opposition between the personification of things and the reification of persons – this immanent contradiction receives the developed forms of its movement in the oppositions of the commodity metamorphosis. Consequently, these forms already contain the possibility – but only the possibility – of crises. The transformation of this possibility into reality requires a whole set of relations that do not exist at all within the framework of simple commodity circulation.”¹⁷ Marx points out that during a crisis, the opposition between a commodity and the image of its value – money – “grows into an absolute contradiction.”¹⁸ Having examined the contradictions of simple commodity production, Marx proceeds to an analysis of the contradictions of capital, the self-expansion of capital. Here we come to the central point of Marx’s work, to the analysis of surplus value, that is, to the analysis of new contradictions – the contradictions of capitalist commodity production. Marx points out that the final product of simple commodity circulation is money. Money, at the same time, constitutes the first form of manifestation of capital. The motto of simple commodity production is firstly the production of use values, then the exchange of commodity for commodity through money. The motto of capitalist commodity production is the production of increasing value for the sake of enriching the capitalist. “Simple commodity circulation,” says Marx, “selling for the sake of buying – serves as a means to achieving an end result that lies outside.”¹⁹ For the capitalist, the primary goal is the production of surplus value, the passionate pursuit of value.”²⁰ “Therefore, use value can never be regarded as the immediate goal of the capitalist.”²¹ But what is the magical ability of value, of money, to self-expansion? This fundamental question was a stumbling block for all bourgeois political economy that preceded Marx. It groped its way toward understanding

the mystery of surplus value, but was unable to reveal it. This was done by Marx, and this is his immortal merit.

As is well known, Marx discovered the source of surplus value in the exploitation of workers by capitalists. From this point on, the focus of Marx's analysis of contradictions is the analysis of the contradictions between the working class and the capitalist class. The previously identified contradiction between concrete labor, which creates use value, and abstract labor, which creates value, is transformed at the new stage of development of commodity production into a contradiction within the process of capitalist production. Here is what Marx writes on this matter: "The distinction, therefore, previously drawn from the analysis of commodities, between labor in so far as it creates use value, and the same labor in so far as it creates value, now appears as a distinction between the different aspects of the process of production. As the unity of the labor process and the process of value creation, the production process is the process of commodity production; as the unity of the labor process and the process of valorization, it is the capitalist process of production, the capitalist form of commodity production."²² This contradiction is uniquely expressed in the contradictory nature of labor power: the value of labor power and the value created by the worker in the process of its consumption are two different quantities. With the sole goal of producing surplus value, the capitalist is interested in minimizing the labor required to replace the value of labor power and maximizing surplus time. The worker, on the other hand, is interested in working as little as possible for the capitalist. This irreconcilable contradiction between the fundamental interests of workers and capitalists is the basis of the fierce struggle between them. "Thus," writes Marx, "in the history of capitalist production, the regulation of the working day appears as a struggle beyond the working day – a struggle between the aggregate capitalist, that is, the capitalist class, and the aggregate worker, that is, the working class."²³ Marx goes on to reveal the paths and methods of producing absolute and relative surplus value. He paints a shocking picture of the bourgeoisie's exploitation of workers – both adults and children – and the inhumane treatment of workers and their families by the new formation of slave owners. In six remarkable chapters on the production of absolute and relative surplus value, Marx shows how the contradiction between the working class and the bourgeoisie is ever deepening. With the introduction of machines, a contradiction arises between the natural limits of labor power and the machine's ability to operate like a perpetual motion machine. A machine can work for as long as desired throughout the day, exploiting it day and night, but labor power cannot be exploited 24 hours a day. The capitalist seeks to overcome this contradiction by forcing the worker to work harder, squeezing all the vital juices out of him like a press. The working class, Marx points out, "represents the absence of development, so that other classes may serve as representatives of human development."²⁴

The old, bourgeois political economy, represented by Smith and Ricardo, although it did not, as vulgar political economy did, gloss over the contradictions between the working class and capitalists, nevertheless attempted to demonstrate the harmony of class interests. Marx, with his brilliant analysis of the contradictions of capitalism, destroyed the notion of a

harmony between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat and raised the consciousness of the working class to the level of understanding the fundamental opposition of its interests to the interests of the bourgeoisie. Marx's further analysis of the contradictions in the chapter on the general law of capitalist accumulation and elsewhere reveals the growth and deepening of the contradictions between the working class and the bourgeoisie. The process of capitalist reproduction is the process of reproducing, on an expanded basis, all capitalist relations, with all their contradictions. Extended reproduction signifies a further expansion and deepening of the contradictions of the capitalist mode of production, and above all, the contradictions between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. "Just as simple reproduction," writes Marx, "continually reproduces the capitalist relation itself – capitalists on the one hand, wage-laborers on the other – so reproduction on an expanded scale, or accumulation, reproduces the capitalist relation on an expanded scale: more capitalists, or larger capitalists, at one pole, more wage-laborers at the other."²⁵ The process of capital accumulation is accompanied by an increase in its organic composition, which leads to a relative decrease in the variable portion of capital (human labor power – translator). As a result of the growing concentration of capital and the concentration of production, colossal wealth is concentrated at one pole – the pole of the bourgeoisie – while at the other pole – the pole of the proletariat – colossal poverty and the absolute impoverishment of the working class grow, and the industrial reserve army grows. As a result of a profound analysis of the contradictions of the process of capitalist accumulation, Marx formulated the famous general law of capitalist accumulation, which expresses in concentrated form all the acuteness and antagonism of the contradictions of the capitalist mode of production. "The greater the social wealth," writes Marx, "the functioning capital, the size and energy of its expansion, and consequently the greater the absolute magnitude of the proletariat and the productive power of its labor, the greater is the industrial reserve army. Free labor power develops for the same reasons as the force of expansion of capital. Consequently, the relative size of the industrial reserve army increases with the growth of the forces of wealth. But the larger this reserve army in comparison with the active labor army, the greater the permanent surplus population, whose misery is inversely proportional to the torments of its labor. Finally, the greater the miserable strata of the working class and the industrial reserve army, the greater the official pauperism. This is the absolute, general law of capitalist accumulation."²⁶ And further: "Consequently, the accumulation of wealth at one pole is at the same time the accumulation of misery, the torment of labor, slavery, ignorance, savagery, and moral degradation at the opposite pole, i.e., on the side of the class which produces its own product as capital."²⁷ The process of capitalist accumulation brings to an extreme aggravation the fundamental contradiction of developed capitalism – the contradiction between the social character of production and private capitalist appropriation.

In the preparatory works to *Capital* and in *Capital* itself, Marx profoundly reveals and vividly demonstrates the movement of contradictions of the capitalist mode of production and circulation. He shows how, in its movement, capital itself creates limits on its path, which it must overcome only to encounter new limits, and so on, until the very existence of capitalism

becomes an absolute obstacle to the further development of society. Capital is forced to expand its production of goods without limit in order to increase profits, and at the same time, through its exploitation of its primary consumers – workers and all toilers – it undermines the very branch on which it rests. The contradictions of commodities, the contradictions between use value and exchange value, between private and social labor, and so on, are intensified to the highest degree. The capitalist knows and does not want to know the limits of value production. However, there is no value without use value. The more value the capitalist produces, the more use value he produces. But the latter must be present in a certain quantity, and if there is more (relative to the buying power of the consumers – translator), they cannot be transformed into the general form of value, into money. Produced commodities, in Marx's words, cannot be "silvered." "In order to be transformed into the general form of value," writes Marx, "use value can only be present in a definite quantity, a quantity whose measure does not lie in the labor embodied in it, but flows from its nature as a use value, and, moreover, a use value for others." In this regard, Marx reveals a characteristic feature of the antagonistic contradictions of capitalism: their insolubility within the capitalist mode of production. "Capitalist production continually strives to go beyond these immanent limits, but it overcomes them only by means which again place these limits before it, and on a more colossal scale. The real limit of capitalist production is capital itself, that is: capital and the self-expansion of its value are the starting and ending point, the motive and goal of production; production is only production for capital, and not vice versa: the means of production are not simply means for the constant expansion of the life process of the society of producers."²⁸ The contradiction between the desire for unlimited development of production and the limits to this development that capitalism erects, ruining the mass of producers and plunging the workers into the abyss of poverty and misery, could be resolved only if production were subordinated to the vital interests of the masses. But then capitalism would cease to be capitalism. Its goal is production for the sake of self-expansion of value. This is why resolving the contradictions of capitalism within capitalism itself is impossible. Such a resolution can only be achieved by abolishing the capitalist mode of production and creating a socialist one, for behind all the contradictions of capitalism lies a fundamental contradiction – the contradiction between private capitalist appropriation and the social character of the productive forces, which have outgrown the framework of bourgeois production relations and demand a new, socialist form of production relations.

Capitalism, at its peak, was able to advance production because its then-progressive production relations facilitated this. These production relations were in complete harmony with the productive forces. But over time, capitalist production relations transform from forms of development of the productive forces into their fetters. And then, only the abolition of these production relations can open the way for the further development of society. "The contradiction between the general social force into which capital is transformed," writes Marx, "and the private power of individual capitalists over these social conditions of production is increasingly developing into a glaring contradiction and carries within itself the resolution of this relationship, since it at the same time presupposes the transformation of the conditions of

individual production into general, collective, social conditions of production.”²⁹ In other words, the operation of capitalism’s own laws, the mechanism of competition, and the capitalists’ boundless thirst for profit result in a tremendous growth of society’s productive forces, the development of comprehensive interdependence and interconnectedness between the individual parts of the production process, and the growth of a social, or, as Marx put it, cooperative, nature of production. The social nature of production urgently demands a different, planned organization of production in accordance with its objective content. But the capitalist class stands in the way of such an organization, subordinating social production to the private interests of its own enrichment. Hence the inevitable crises of overproduction and economic catastrophes, periodically, and each time with increasing destructive force, shaking the social organism. What at the beginning of the development of commodity production was only an embryo, a potential for glaring contradictions, has become a reality under capitalism. From these initial, undeveloped forms of contradiction, catastrophic contradictions have emerged and unfolded, confronting humanity with a dilemma: either perish, or, having freed the productive forces from the shackles of capitalism, move forward to a new, socialist organization of society. It’s quite curious to note how contemporary bourgeois political economy attempts to “remove” these contradictions of capitalism.

Characteristic in this regard is the theory of the English economist Keynes, who has become almost a prophet of modern capitalists and their servants in the right-wing socialist camp. It is no longer possible to ignore the contradictions of capitalism, particularly the contradictions between supply and demand, between the masses’ miserable level of consumption and production. Keynes is forced to declare that the old economists’ views on the harmony between supply and demand supposedly existing under capitalism have proven to be an illusion. It is impossible not to see the real “difficulties,” Keynes says. But Keynes’s entire theory is aimed at obscuring the real causes of capitalism’s “difficulties,” in order to shield the bourgeoisie and absolve it of responsibility for all the troubles it heaps upon millions and tens of millions of workers. It turns out that a certain “fundamental psychological law” is to blame for everything: people tend to increase their consumption as their income rises, but to a lesser extent than their income rises! Hence, unemployment (which, again, modern bourgeois economists can no longer remain silent about), economic crises, and so on. Keynes, the hired ideologist of imperialism, refuses to admit that the catastrophic decline in mass consumption under capitalism is the result not of a “psychological law,” but of the very nature of the capitalist mode of production, which condemns workers to poverty and hunger. He is afraid to acknowledge the fact, irrefutably established by Marx: that the lag between the purchasing power of the masses and the growth of production is, in fact, an expression of the fundamental contradiction between the social nature of production and the private capitalist form of appropriation. Keynes attempts to prove that the contradictions and “difficulties” of capitalism can be overcome within the capitalist system. But the “proofs” and recipes he concocts for saving capitalism can only serve as evidence of the extent to which bourgeois “political economy” has degenerated in our time. In *Capital*, Marx irrefutably

demonstrated that the contradictions of the capitalist mode of production can only be overcome by abolishing capitalism. Emphasizing the impossibility of resolving the antagonistic contradictions of capital on the basis of capitalism itself, Marx demonstrates how the force that resolves these contradictions is created within bourgeois society. This force is the proletariat.

In a remarkable section of Chapter 24 of Volume I of *Capital*, "The Historical Tendency of Capitalist Accumulation," Marx summarizes his study of the contradictions in the development of capitalism. He demonstrates that whereas previously the capitalist expropriated the worker, now the capitalist himself is subject to expropriation: "The monopoly of capital becomes a fetter on the mode of production that has grown up under it. The centralization of the means of production and the socialization of labor reach a point where they become incompatible with their capitalist shell. It explodes. The knell of capitalist private property strikes." "The expropriators are expropriated."³⁰ In one of his letters to Engels, in which he outlined the plan for *Capital*, Marx wrote: "...As a result of everything (i.e., the entire movement of contradictions of capitalism. – M.R.) – the class struggle, in which this movement finds its resolution, liquidates all of this rubbish..."³¹

III

Marx's brilliant analysis of the contradictions of the capitalist mode of production, given in *Capital*, allows us to draw some extremely important conclusions for the doctrine of Marxist dialectics on contradictions. First of all, this conclusion concerns the significance of the moment of struggle of opposites in the process of development as the main and decisive moment. Lenin subsequently developed this Marxist position, formulating the well-known thesis on the absolute nature of the struggle of opposites. Marx waged a brutal war against the pack of vulgar bourgeois economists who glossed over the contradictions of capitalism, bringing to the forefront the moment of unity, not contradiction, of struggle. Characterizing the method of one of the representatives of this political economy – John Stuart Mill – Marx writes: "Wherever an economic relation – and consequently also the categories that express it – contains opposites, presents a contradiction, and precisely the unity of contradictions, he emphasizes the moment of the unity of opposites and denies the opposites. The unity of opposites he transforms into the immediate identity of these opposites."³² And also: "If a relation contains opposites, it is therefore not only an opposition, but a unity of opposites. Therefore, a unity without opposition is Mill's logic, with the help of which he eliminates "contradictions."³³ Marx's method of analyzing economic relations, as we have seen, consists in revealing their internal contradictions. In any economic phenomenon of commodity production – in goods, labor, exchange, capital, etc. – Marx discovers contradictions, contradictory aspects, and analyzes them most thoroughly. He demonstrates that the juxtaposition and combination of contradictory aspects in any economic phenomenon signifies a struggle between them, a struggle that leads to the resolution of the given contradiction and the emergence of a new, deeper contradiction. The entire brilliant analysis of the contradictions of the bourgeois mode of production in *Capital* provides irrefutable proof that struggle, not the reconciliation of contradictions, serves as the driving force of development. Marx studies

contradictions in their development, their movement, and investigates the real, objective forms of their overcoming, which are created by this very development, the deepening of contradictions. Therefore, Marx's economic categories and concepts are devoid of the immobility, staticity, and anti-historicity so characteristic of the economic categories of Smith and Ricardo, not to mention those of vulgar economists. For him, they are mobile, flexible, fluid, transforming, passing into one another in accordance with the development and transformations of reality itself.

Noting the fact that Marx in *Capital* reveals contradictions in every economic category of bourgeois society and then traces their growth, their development, "from its beginning to its end," Lenin demonstrates the significance of this for dialectics in general. "Such, too, must be," he writes in the fragment "On the Question of Dialectics," "the method of exposition (respective study) of dialectics in general (for the dialectic of bourgeois society for Marx is only a special case of dialectics)."³⁴ Emphasizing the struggle of contradictions as the decisive moment of development, Marx also does not ignore the moment of their unity. *Capital* contains very important indications regarding the significance of this moment in the process of development. Here, of course, we are not referring to the "unity" of bourgeois economists, who purify this concept of internal contradictions, but to a dialectical unity that contains internal contradictions. Through a concrete analysis of the living economic phenomena of bourgeois society, Marx demonstrates that since opposites, which tend to increasingly separate from one another and bifurcate, nevertheless constitute a relative unity – that is, they presuppose one another and are linked for a time – this leads not to a mitigation but to an intensification and unfolding of the struggle between them. If opposites had no relation to one another and existed independently of one another, there would be no contradiction between them and, consequently, no struggle. Therefore, the moment of unity, the interconnectedness of opposites, is, according to Marx, also an important moment that determines not a mitigation or reconciliation, as metaphysicians believe, but an intensification and unfolding of contradictions. This can be seen in the example of the unity of such opposites as the sphere of production and the sphere of circulation in bourgeois society. The sphere of production and the sphere of circulation in capitalist society largely acquire an independent character. But in fact, these two opposite spheres are internally connected with one another, and precisely because they are internally connected, because they are a unity of opposites, at a certain stage of their separation from one another, a crisis erupts, which forcibly and temporarily restores this unity of the two spheres.

"If they (the phases of production and circulation. – M.R.)," writes Marx, "were merely separated, without simultaneously representing a unity, then the forcible restoration of their unity would be impossible, a crisis would be impossible. If they represented only something unified, inseparable (i.e., without contradictions. – M.R.), then their forcible separation would be impossible, which again represents a crisis. It represents the violent creation of a unity between isolated moments and the violent isolation of moments that essentially represent a single whole."³⁵ Finally, Marx's analysis of the contradictions of the capitalist mode of production is of great importance for

dialectics because he brilliantly revealed the type of development characteristic of the dominance of antagonistic contradictions. Marx demonstrated that, on the basis of antagonistic contradictions, development occurs through the progressive bifurcation of the unified, the deepening and intensification of contradictions, logically culminating in the destruction of one of the opposites, i.e., the liquidation of the bourgeoisie and the victory of the proletariat. In this regard, it is necessary to consider that the dialectic of development in capitalist society, as expressed in *Capital*, is merely, to use Lenin's expression, a particular case of dialectics in general.

Clearly, it would be dogmatism of the worst kind to simply transfer Marx's propositions on the dialectic development of antagonistic contradictions to a socialist society, where contradictions of an entirely different order, contradictions of a non-antagonistic nature, operate.(TN.1)

Marx himself, in *Capital*, makes numerous valuable observations demonstrating the entirely different laws of development under socialism. He repeatedly points out that under socialism, production will exist not for the purpose of extracting surplus value from workers' labor, but for the "expansion of the life process" of the workers themselves, and that this fact alone will fundamentally alter the picture of societal development. To understand the entirely new nature of development after the abolition of capitalism, it is sufficient to refer to the experience of Soviet society, where production exists not for the sake of producing surplus value, but for the sake of enhancing the material and cultural well-being of the workers. Having overcome the fundamental contradiction of capitalism – the contradiction between the social nature of production and the private capitalist form of appropriation – the socialist system in the USSR removed, abolished, all barriers to social development. Comrade Stalin teaches that the fundamental economic law of socialism consists of ensuring the maximum satisfaction of the ever-growing material and cultural needs of the entire society through the continuous expansion and improvement of socialist production based on the latest technology. This explains the completely different relationship between production and mass consumption under socialism compared to capitalism. The contradiction characteristic of capitalism between the growth of production and the lag in consumption (purchasing power) of the masses, which is an expression of the contradiction between the productive forces and the relations of production, has given way, as I. V. Stalin demonstrated, to an entirely different relationship between them under socialism: the growth of consumption (purchasing power) of the masses here constantly outpaces the growth of production, thereby creating incentives for the endless development of production.

The "metabolism" between production and consumption under capitalism was constantly disrupted due to the exploitative nature of that society. In contrast, the socialist system, by eliminating antagonistic class contradictions, creates all the conditions for a normal "metabolism" between them: increased production raises the standard of living of the masses, and this rise in the standard of living of the masses drives production forward. All this determines a completely different type of development in a socialist society compared to a

capitalist one, a different nature of contradictions and the forms of their overcoming under socialism. (TN 2)

Lenin and Stalin, using the experience of the USSR, revealed the unique nature of the dialectic of development under the conditions of the struggle for socialism and the victory of the socialist system. Marx's analysis of the contradictions of the capitalist mode of production, an analysis carried to the point of the inevitable "expropriation of the expropriators" through proletarian revolution, retains its full validity for the current stage of capitalist development. Lenin and Stalin, drawing on the ideas of *Capital* and creatively developing them, provided a theoretical analysis of imperialism as the highest and final stage of capitalism and discovered the laws of capitalism's economic and political development at this stage. They demonstrated that all the contradictions of the capitalist mode of production, revealed by Marx in *Capital*, not only persist but manifest themselves with even greater acuteness at this stage. Lenin demonstrated that imperialism is precisely the stage in capitalist development when the conditions for the "expropriation of the expropriators" are created. Lenin called imperialism the eve of the social revolution of the proletariat. Lenin and Stalin exposed the sophisticated tactics of the revisionists and reformists, who attempted to dull the edge of Marx's analysis of the contradictions of capitalism by portraying the new stage of capitalism – imperialism – as a stage of class harmony between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, a stage of "organized capitalism." Contemporary right-wing socialists continue the socially treacherous line of the old reformists in even more vile forms. In a period of particularly acute class struggle, when the world has split into two camps – the camp of imperialism and war, and the camp of socialism, peace, and democracy – right-wing socialist lackeys of the imperialists shamelessly assert that Marx's analysis of the contradictions of capitalism is "outdated," that a new era of development has dawned, in which the "polemical" stage, in Blum's words, has been replaced by a "peaceful" stage free of contradictions.

Right-wing socialists, seeking to cloud the consciousness of workers, preach that, unlike the era when Marx wrote *Capital*, a class "community" now exists in capitalist countries – a community between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. There's no need to prove that this "community" exists only in the imagination of right-wing socialists. What kind of "class community" can we talk about when, for example, in the United States, capitalists earn fabulous profits, while workers lack the means to satisfy their basic needs! In this country, which right-wing socialists present as a model of supra-class "democracy," the deficit in the worker's minimum budget is approximately 30%. In the United States, 60% of families earn incomes 25-30% below the subsistence level! The chatter of right-wing socialist leaders about the "obsolescence" of *Capital* is needed to cover up the glaring contradictions of decaying imperialism. If there is a difference in the situation, it is only that the contradictions of modern capitalism, due to the characteristics it acquired during the stage of imperialism, have reached their apogee. Lenin and Stalin, developing Marx's economic doctrine, demonstrated that the transformation of old, pre-monopoly capital into financial monopoly capital, the growth of cartels and trusts, the spasmodic, uneven development of capitalism, requiring

periodic re-divisions of the world through imperialist wars, etc., are exacerbating the contradictions of capitalism to an unprecedented degree. "The extent to which monopoly capitalism has exacerbated all the contradictions of capitalism is well known," wrote Lenin. "It is enough to point to the high cost of living and the oppression of the cartels. This exacerbation of contradictions is the most powerful driving force of the historical transition period that began with the final victory of global finance capital."³⁶ Comrade Stalin teaches the same. "Imperialism," writes I. V. Stalin in his work "The Foundations of Leninism," "carries the contradictions of capitalism to their utmost limits, to the extreme boundaries beyond which revolution begins."³⁷ Comrade Stalin reveals the principal contradictions of imperialism that make proletarian revolution "a matter of immediate practice."³⁸ These are the contradictions between labor and capital, the contradictions between various financial groups and imperialist powers in their struggle to seize foreign territories and sources of raw materials, and the contradictions between the imperialists and the colonial and dependent peoples of the world.

In the contemporary imperialist stage of bourgeois society, capitalists are no longer satisfied with the profits they previously earned. Comrade Stalin teaches that the fundamental economic law of modern capitalism is the pursuit of maximum profit, achieved through the brutal exploitation of the workers of their own countries and the enslavement and plunder of the peoples of other countries. This explains the policy of unleashing predatory wars, which are a bonanza for capitalists. Thus, thanks to the operation of this fundamental economic law of modern capitalism, the contradictions between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, labor and capital, which Marx examined in *Capital*, have not only not been mitigated but, on the contrary, have become more acute than ever. Based on an analysis of the aggravated contradictions of monopoly capitalism, Lenin and Stalin further developed the tenets of the Marxist dialectical method of development as a struggle of opposites. Comrade Stalin demonstrates that the struggle of opposites is a struggle between the new and the old, the nascent and the dying, the obsolete. Capitalism was once a new, advanced system compared to feudalism. But it has long since become a hindrance, the destruction of which is essential to the further development of society. The victory of the Great October Socialist Revolution in the USSR, which resolved the contradictions of capitalism on one-sixth of the globe along the path outlined by Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Stalin, was the greatest triumph of the Marxist analysis of the contradictions of the capitalist mode of production. The breakaway of the People's Democracies from the chain of imperialism as a result of World War II, the victory of the Great Chinese Revolution, and the powerful national liberation movements in other Asian countries serve as further, striking confirmation of the correctness of Marxism. The dialectical analysis of the contradictions of capitalism given by Marx in his immortal work is valuable because it teaches a revolutionary approach to reality, because it demands, in the words of Comrade Stalin, not to gloss over class contradictions, not to extinguish the class struggle against the bourgeoisie, but to bring it to the end, to the complete victory of the proletariat.

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TN 1: . (translator's note – Rozental was mistaken on this, although he is correct to point out that socialism is qualitatively different from capitalism and that the antagonistic contradictions of capitalism cannot be mechanically transferred to explain antagonistic contradictions under socialism. Refer to the theories of Hoxha and the Albanian communists for an accurate assessment of antagonistic contradictions under socialism).

TN 2; (translator note – while this is true, commodity production and exchange still existed in the USSR, albeit not in the sphere of primary importance – the means of production, hence there were still contradictions to overcome which Rozental glosses over. Stalin's "Economic Problems of Socialism in the USSR" elaborates on this.)