

## CHAPTER IV

# ANALYSIS OF THE MOVEMENT OF THE CONTRADICTION OF A PROCESS FROM ITS BEGINNING TO ITS END

LENIN wrote of Karl Marx's *Capital*:

"Marx in his *Capital* at first analyses the simplest, the most ordinary, fundamental and commonplace thing, a relation to be observed billions of times in bourgeois commodity society: the exchange of commodities. In that simple phenomenon (in that cell of the bourgeois society) the analysis reveals all the contradictions (and their embryo as well) of modern society. The subsequent exposition shows the development (both growth and movement) of these contradictions and that of society in the sum total of its fundamental parts, from beginning to end. Such must also be the method of exposition (and of study as well) of dialectics in general."<sup>1</sup>

Such indeed must be the method of studying any process, i.e. our task must be to find its simplest, basic relations, to disclose in it the basic contradictions, to investigate their development and their conflict; to investigate how the development of a contradiction prepares its resolution and determines the form of its resolution; to investigate the qualitative changes in the successive phases of development of a process, the relative independence of movement

<sup>1</sup> Lenin, vol. xiii, p. 324.

of contradictory aspects, their mutual connection, their transitions one into the other; to disclose in the development of the conflict of opposites in any process the necessity and also all the conditions and possibilities of its conversion into its own opposite. Such must be the course of study of any process in its emergence, development and decay.

In *Capital* Marx begins from the simplest, basic relations of merchant-capitalist society—the exchange of commodities. He at once shows the ambiguity, the contradictory characteristics of a “commodity,” an article made simply for sale, as a unity of price and value, discloses its internal contradictions, the ambiguous character of the labour that creates the article, the concrete labour on the one hand and on the other the abstract labour that creates the value.

Marx further shows that the internal contradiction concealed in the commodity finds the forms of its movement in the external contradiction, which emerges as the relation of the relative and the equivalent forms of value, which are polar opposites, indissolubly connected with each other. The further development of this relationship, which reflects the development of the commodity, goes through three stages of a simple, a developed and finally a universal form of value. In the last of these stages, the article takes on the double form of the commodity itself and its monetary equivalent.

The development of money, in its different functions, being the result of the extension and complication of commodity relations and at the same time the condition of the development of these relations, is the further form of development of its initial contradictions.

Marx shows further the process of the development of money into capital, the internal contradiction of the general form of movement of capital and the continual resolution of this contradiction in the buying and selling of labour power. The appearance of the latter denotes the higher development of the initial contradiction, the development of the law of value on a very universal scale. At this point

development takes place more quickly and with more intensity than formerly, because by the separation of the means of production from the producer (and the stage of development of commodity relations that we are discussing inevitably leads to such a separation) the basic productive power—labour power—is turned into a commodity. Production of commodities for sale becomes capitalist. Thus we arrive at the basic means of production of a new social structure. The conversion of money into capital denotes the development of the law of value into a new qualitatively unique law-system—into the law of Surplus Value which is the “source of the self-movement” of capitalism.

Marx shows that the capitalist organization of production “denotes the concentration in great workshops of the hitherto disconnected means of production and their conversion by this means from the productive forces of separate persons into social productive forces” but under conditions of individual appropriation. He further shows how the pursuit after a continuous increase in the rate of surplus value, which depends on the physiological limitations of the working day and the resistance of the working class, leads to the growth and intensification of the contradictions between the social character of production and individual appropriation—that basic contradiction of capitalism—leads to the growing of simple capitalist co-operation into manufacture, and thence into production by machinery. Marx showed that the increase of the rate of exploitation requires an uninterrupted expansion of production, that reproduction leads to the concentration and centralization of capital and consequently to the ruin of small-scale capitalists. From another point of view, the same process of capitalist reproduction<sup>1</sup> creates an industrial reserve

<sup>1</sup> *Reproduction*. A technical term in Marxian economics. In order to maintain the flow of commodities the instruments of production must be renewed; at the same time every commodity wears out or is destroyed. Industry therefore shows us various kinds of commodities being produced, used and produced again. There is a constant reproduction of things. See Marx, *Capital*, vol. i, p. 621.

army, and ever more and more intensifies class contradictions. Marx disclosed in all its terrible nakedness the general law of capitalist accumulation, with the absolute impoverishment of the working class as its obverse side, thus showing the inevitability of the collapse of capitalism.

In disclosing the essence of capitalism and its deep, ever changing contradictions, Marx shows the emergence, on their basis, of contradictory phenomena. To this are devoted the second and third volumes of *Capital*, where Marx shows the process of the circulation of capital and its reproduction, and the division of surplus value into the forms of profits of enterprise, interest, profits of commerce and ground rent. Marx shows here how the law of value is developed in its external forms, growing into a law of costs of production. He shows how production is expanded, how the organic composition of capital grows and how, under the influence of this, the rate of profit falls although the hope of its rise is the very thing which drives capitalism to develop the forces of production. He further shows how capitalist contradictions ever more and more intensify, finding their temporary solution in certain characteristic phenomena—*crisis, depression, recovery, boom*—the trade cycle, which appears as the forces of production emerge in ever more irreconcilable conflict with the social law of their development. The social structure of capitalism hampers the development of productive forces. The bourgeoisie becomes unable to control production. The movement of capitalist contradictions gives rise to the necessity and also to all the conditions and possibilities of the collapse of capitalism.

That is the picture unfolded by Marx in *Capital* and completed by Lenin and Stalin in their works on imperialism and the general crisis of capitalism.

The method applied by Marx in *Capital* has necessarily to be applied in the study of any process. A model of the masterly application of this method is the analysis of development of the struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie given by Marx and Engels in the *Communist*

*Manifesto*. This same method lies at the basis of the analysis of the origin, development and abolition of classes and the state given by Engels in his work *The Origin of the Family*, and by Lenin in *The State and Revolution*, and of the analysis of the origin and development of capitalism in Russia given by Lenin in his celebrated work on *The Development of Capitalism in Russia*.

An analysis of the movement of contradiction in its emergence, development and decay is the only way to a knowledge both of the basic laws of the development of a process and of the diverse concrete forms of its appearance at different stages and in different conditions.

The mechanistic conception not only cannot show the movement of opposites in their emergence and development, but really inhibits such a method of getting to understand actuality, because from its point of view every process begins its movement from stable equilibrium, when either there are no contradictions or they are reconciled and balanced and therefore cannot be a stimulus to further development. Contradictions appear only at a known stage of the movement of a process, as a result of the action of *external causes*, as a result of the upsetting of equilibrium.

The group of Menshevik idealists, forsaking concrete actuality for the field of pure abstractions—of the self-movement of mere ideas, also came out with a revision of this method. The Deborin group uncritically accepted the Hegelian way of stating the question of the unity of opposites without noticing its idealistic features.

Hegel in founding his whole philosophic system, proceeded, as we have said earlier, from the self-development of absolute spirit. However, in distinction from other idealists—and in this lies his great service—he took as a “model” for the different forms of absolute spirit the stages in the development of social knowledge, which stages he understood and interpreted in his own way. After schematizing the different forms of thought which he had observed in history, he came to the conclusion that dialectical knowledge (which contains in its own categories, and in their

order, in a purely theoretical fashion, the history of knowledge) passes in its understanding of any object through stages of identity, difference, opposition and contradiction. To say nothing of the fact that Hegel wrongly represented "identity" as the first step in knowledge, the organic defect of all his philosophy was this, that he connected his scheme of the development of knowledge, of subjective mind, with the objective world as the law of development of all its subjects. In this the idealist, Hegel, stands out clearly.

Deborin did not notice that Hegel, by making absolute certain characteristic features of our thought, by declaring them to be the movement of absolute spirit, by constructing a formalistic scheme of the movement of categories, was also forcing actuality and its developments into the Procrustean bed of such a scheme.

According to Deborin (following Hegel) the development of the processes of objective actuality proceeds from abstract identity to difference, from difference to oppositeness and thence to internal contradiction. Deborin wrote:

"When all the necessary steps of development—from simple identity through difference and oppositeness have been traversed, then begins the epoch of the 'resolution of contradictions.'"

In Deborin's opinion and that of his followers, contradiction appears in a process, not at its very beginning, but only at a certain stage of its movement; but this can mean only one thing, namely, that until this stage is reached, the development of the process is *not* by virtue of its inward contradictions. This view-point is not only a revision of dialectic at its central point, but is close to the mechanistic conception of development. Because if the development of any process begins and proceeds up to a given moment not by virtue of its internal division—assuming it be at the beginning still undeveloped—then the process, until this moment, must be due to external causes. But that is also the view of the mechanists. Deborin, by accepting Hegel's

scheme, which identifies the development of knowledge with the development of matter, has, in his understanding of the basic law of dialectic, lapsed into mechanism, against which he had waged such a desperate conflict. The only logical dialectic can be materialistic dialectic.

By applying this view on the development of contradiction to the analysis of the concrete question of the relations between the proletariat and the peasantry in the conditions of the U.S.S.R., Deborin and Luppel came to the conclusion that they are not contradictory relations but only relations of difference, i.e. they came to a right-opportunist watering down of the contradiction between the two classes. Karev, proceeding from the same point of view, declared that in the Third Estate of pre-revolutionary France, there were no internal contradictions but only differences, i.e. the relations of the proletariat and the bourgeoisie were not contradictory. In actuality the interests of the proletariat and the bourgeoisie were contradictory from the very moment of the emergence of these antagonistic classes.

It is quite true that contradictions move, become intensified, go through a number of stages in their development, forming at each one of them new qualitative properties. It is also true, that the knowledge of the contradictions of this or that process emerges most fully and visibly at the highest developed stage of the process. The proletariat, we know, becomes as a whole ever more and more conscious of the irreconcilability of its interests with those of the bourgeoisie, according as the capitalist contradictions intensify. But from these true positions it is impossible to conclude, as does Deborin, that contradictions appear only at a given stage of the development of a process. No, they belong to it from the very beginning.

Deborin's view blunts our apprehension of the contradictions of the initial stages in the development of processes, leads to a watering down of them and in this way is a perversion of dialectic; *it pursues the Menshevik line.*

The development of a process at all its stages is the movement of its contradictions.