

SEP 19 1980

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Dear Friends:

Everybody no doubt is busy executing the convention decisions and that means more and more organizational work, so you should appreciate a little diversion to methodology, even if that is the "wrong" method. At least it is "wrong" in so far as it is the method of intellectuals, and Marx spent a great deal of time lecturing to them that first, they are nowhere as original as they think; that in the long run their thought is hardly more than a reflection of what is. Secondly, in the Grundrisse (you can also read it as appendix to The Critique of Political Economy), he made such a profound generalization about that that there is hardly a Marxist who hasn't abused the statement at one time or another in order to play down the originality of thought in a way Marx certainly did not intend.

We all knew when arguing with the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois intellectuals who tried to say that Marx was all wrong in Vol. I of Capital on value and the alleged "proof" was in the fact that Vol. III finally gets down to their type of reality and shows that prices are "the reality" instead of value. We knew not only the opposite to be the case, but could prove it by showing that all 3 volumes had been written before the first was published. Far from "correcting" himself, he was showing in Vol. III that no matter how much "cheating" the capitalist did and monopoly manipulation in the world market, there was absolutely no escape from the value, and in fact the capitalists could see it even in their own realm, by the decline in the rate of profit.

I brought in something totally new in showing, (1) how greatly Vol. I was restructured under the impact of the Civil War in the U.S. and the struggle for the shorter working day, and again on the basis of the Paris Commune; (2) that if you look at the draft as Engels listed it in the introduction to Vol. II of Capital, you can also see that dialectically, Marx had decided not only to start with commodity, but to go directly to the mode of production, and transfer hundreds of pages over to Vol. III or even Vol. IV. In relationship to Vol. IV (theory of surplus value) I would over and over again emphasize that if you must argue with all other theoreticians, you have to wait for IV. In a word, all the emphasis I made on the restructuring of Capital--all correct both historically and dialectically--were related to Vol. I. It never dawned on me that he had not written that first, no matter how many reorganizations it went through before publication.

Now it turns out "confidentially"--confidentially is Marx's phrase, not mine--that on Nov. 3, 1877--the very same year when all the great things were happening in the U.S. ~~with which~~ with which Marx was so impressed that he thought the International could be revived and a real "working men's party" built in the U.S.--he writes to Sigmund Schott:

"Confidentially speaking, I in fact began 'Capital' in just the reverse (starting with the 3rd, the historic part) of the order in which it is presented to the public, except that the first

15241

2.
volume, the one begun last, was immediately prepared for publication while the two others remained in the primitive state characteristic of all research at the outset."

(What Marx calls 3rd because he expected all of the material he left for Capital to be divided into 3, but since Engels died before he could finish Theories of Surplus Value and that was published separately and was by itself 3 volumes, it has been referred to as Vol. IV, with its own title.)

Now then, all you who get too easily tired waiting for the second negativity, look what poor Marx had to go through, writing some 5,000 pages, working on it a decade and more, and after he finished, arguing with every theoretician before he ever got down to ~~publishing~~ working out in full his new continent of thought. And once he decided to start with Vol. I--and no wonder he wrote to Engels that even he, Engels, wouldn't be able to prepare it for the printer; no matter what his health, he would have to do it himself--far from considering that finished, look how very rigorously he followed not only all economic developments or even being fully satisfied with his great discoveries, but the working class struggles, not only as they were "in themselves," but how they transformed the law of motion of society as a whole. Please reread the first section of the "most economist" last part on the law of accumulation, the constant growth of constant capital at the expense of variable capital, and see that he no sooner states "the law," than he at once relates it to the conditions of the worker at the point of production.

The more I think that I know all there is to be known about Marx, the more I find new things. It's really great to work on the last decade of his life, which has been so maligned, but in fact he not only is rounding out all of his thoughts and discoveries, but is constantly looking for the new, the young--I mean really, really young, like when you are just born--here is what he wrote to his daughter on April 29, 1881, congratulating her on the birth of her son; since children born today face "the most revolutionary period that human beings have ever had to live through. It is no good to be so old that one is capable only of foreseeing, and not of seeing."

Yours,
Raya

15242