

January 8, ~~1981~~ ¹⁹⁸¹

Dear Raya:

It was truly an exciting and historic moment to be there on January 3, 1981, when you first unveiled fully the completed draft of the book, and the meeting plus the draft point in many new directions not only for organization and Marxist theory in general, but for my own personal development, from Lenin thesis to local organization to Europe trip.

It is in that spirit that I am writing to propose some topics for a theoretical essay article for N&L, which I would hope to complete before going back to Europe. I am of course going to give greater priority to work around your lecture tour (where I am happy to report we already have some money committed now from both Columbia Russian Institute and CUNY Grad Center), and preparations for my Europe trip, but I do feel there would also be time to complete something, certainly by around the time you come to NY, or even sooner.

I have three possible topics in mind:

(1) The most exciting theoretically but most difficult to execute would be to read closely the entire French edition of Capital, and write an article outlining some of the differences between it and the English editions, which all appear to be based on the quite different Third and Fourth German editions. Even if I did not succeed (as with the Lenin essay) in creating something good enough to publish, I'm sure my notes could help as background to the book.

(2) Another possibility is a more immediate political piece, generally along the lines of what Eugene has written on Latin America. Here I have in mind some thing like "East Europe, from 1968 to Today's Poland", where I would examine both masses in motion and the ideas the intellectuals created around that. Thus it could be Kosaik and Svitak and ME generally in Czechoslovakia 1968, Bahro's alternative and East Germany in the 1970's, and then Poland 1976-1981 including a bit on Kuron and Michnik plus mention of Kolakowski's early work and the young Kuron. To help me with the latter part, I have the French translation of the Gdansk paper the workers published up to the end of the shipyard occupation in September. This alone runs over 50 pages, since they ran about 4 pages per issue.

(3) The final possibility is to write on the African Revolutions after 20 years, where I could look at what happened to African Socialism, to Machel's Scientific Socialism, etc. -- limiting myself to a few countries as examples of different tendencies such as Senegal, Tanzania, Mozambique, Zimbabwe. Then at end I could discuss Biko's Black Consciousness as possible reconnection with best of earlier African Socialism on a higher more proletarian centered level, and stripped of any illusions of "using" East vs. West a la Padmore and Nkrumah.

Another possibility is for Bahro review to run separately under Reviews section. It might give me something to discuss in Germany, but there I feel it might be even better to have something more on the U.S. What do you think?

Yours,

Jarin

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January 16, 1981

Dear Kevin:

Your letter of the 8th was very welcome, both because we obviously are going to have some paid lectures in N.Y. and because there's nothing more pleasurable than when the universal and the individual merge. Of the three topics you suggested, the first is an absolute yes, and the second an absolute no, and let's leave the third for another time. But first let me begin with the absolute no, because that actually will help you have a certain type of direction for questions to Andy on the trip to Poland. What I mean is that there were certain embarrassments on that trip which makes it necessary not to ask questions until a good many questions are cleared up, and we don't know when that will be. At the same time, speaking objectively politically-philosophically, ~~THAT~~ that second topic on East Europe is certainly something I've ~~NEVER~~ been writing about since 1943, and at this particular moment we will have a load on just what's happening; to think that you have no less than 50 pages just on Gdansk shows there is too much material on it already.

On the other hand, your first suggestion is truly exciting both theoretically, practically, and really totally unknown. First and foremost, it is Marx; it is Capital; it is the French edition; and both in France and everywhere else everyone has monkeyed with that edition even though it was Marx himself who edited it. In the 60s I remember reading that Althusser decided that Roy was no good and made a completely new translation. Do you know anything about it? What I read about it was only the Althusser introduction, and that was totally Stalinist, in which he didn't even give Stalin credit for having suggested in 1943 that Chapter I should not be taught where it is, but... If you can't get that introduction I'm sure I have it somewhere. Secondly there is Rubel, and he can be trusted on that subject, and even on the subject of Engels, at least to the extent to which the French edition was concerned. Then there is the whole dispute that both Lukacs and the Existentialists started against Engels' Dialectics of Nature; I would keep completely away from that subject; that is not our problem. Our problem is: Capital, the Communist Manifesto editions after ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ Marx's death, and the Ethnological Notebooks.

The point of concentration is Capital. You would have something no one has had if you really went seriously into a comparison between the French-German and the English. I consider that this would be valuable not only as an Essay for N&L, but a truly original contribution to your own thesis on Lenin. I don't know whether I ever went into the following fact: there is a world of difference between Lenin's Essay at the beginning of 1914 on Marx, and Lenin's Philosophic Notebooks. Indeed, it is because Lenin suddenly (i.e. when he reached the Syllogism) decided that unless you knew the whole of Science of Logic, you didn't know anything of Capital, that he tried to get his essay back from the Encyclopaedia. So much for "Three Constituent Parts of Marxism" instead of the single dialectic.

There is another thing one has to watch out for, and that

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there are altogether too many anti-Engelsites, and not at all for the reason that we are anti-Engels. It's a good way to act as if you really understood that Marx was really genius and Engels was only talent, and then not at all appreciate either because you are MARX writing as an academic and not as a revolutionary. Thus there is a Norman Levine, author of The Tragic Deception: Marx Contra Engels, (20th Century Series, Clio Books, Oxford/Santa Barbara), who has written a 250 page book and supposedly taken up everything from nature to "philosophical anthropology" (this is not the EN but the 1844 mss.), not to mention, of course, dialectics, dialectics, dialectics. Near the end of it all, you feel like saying: What is that supposed to prove?

Yours, by concentrating on Capital, with a side view on the CM, but on the whole leaving EN out, would, as different from everybody whether as great as Lukacs and Sartre or as superficial as Levine, would first and foremost be concerned with Marx, Marx, Marx. What did he want to say in Capital? What did he spend the greater part of his adult life on, and still have things to add to it on his deathbed? And why did he insist that even if you read the original German, you must really read the French?

Don't go directly to the differences between the French and the German and English. Instead, begin with the letters between Marx and Engels as Marx was already sending it to the printer. I remember I was absolutely shocked to death to realize, one, that Engels had not known the work before he read it on the galleys, and some of his questions were quite elementary: two, the whole correspondence on the question of adding the section on the form of value is certainly of great importance, and I dare say that Engels has to be given credit that Marx cannot take so much knowledge for granted on the part of the reader; that he must explain historically as well as dialectically the whole history of the form of value from barter to money. But then you realize that, god in heaven, what has Engels understood? In any case, that will give you enough background so that you know you are talking of Engels as a totality whether 1867 or 1884, I.M.X. i.e. after Marx died.

You need not be concerned about whether it would overlap sections of my book. I pay very little attention to the subject.

Yours,

P.S. By the way, Jacek Kuron has turned right insofar as Marxism is concerned; he is working with the masses, but intellectually what he is writing is The Left Without Marxism.