

Concluded because the history of the age is always a shift of meaning has never ended

RL'S REVIEW OF THEORIES OF SURPLUS VALUE, JAN. 8, 1905

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The first part of the review is devoted to the fact that Karl Marx is a quarter of a century dead and still "the mind of his prodigious labor of thought has still not been exhausted." That this nourishment for the 20th century has shown new phases since Mehring published his early works and now Kautsky has published "the last unpublished opus". And naturally she contrasts this with the continued degeneration of a vulgar economy.

Nevertheless she still stresses that it's a draft and not the finished work. And it's very complimentary to Kautsky.

When she gets down to the book itself, she begins by quoting Anti-Duhring and it's all about how great Marx was and the Theory of Surplus Value. "The crystal core around which the entire present day social order has precipitated" (RL is quoting FE). She spends a lot of time on what is productive labor: "Marx employs here, as in all questions, the dialectic method; and he demonstrates that the concept of 'productive labor' is not an object of personal inclination, or of the esprit of individual economists, but a historical product of society." (historical)

And obviously this is predominant in her mind since she continues: "The critical review of the great controversy between classical and vulgar economy over the concept of 'productive labor' is the deepest and most splendid part of this work of Marx's, which leads by a totally new way -- although in perfect logical connection with the whole Marxian system -- to insight into the capitalist economy and its historical contingency."

And because cpc can no longer explain this scientifically; only Marx could cut through this Gordian knot (p. 6). She then goes into Quesnay, as well as Anti-Duhring: "likewise, the problem of the resolution of the total social product into wages and revenue is already presented, in incomparably more developed & precise form in the second volume of Capital." And again she thanks Kautsky for "mistakenly sifting out and publishing this great second appendix in the volume offered us."

"It was Marx's utterly transformed position vis-a-vis his object of investigation -- the position of the socialist, who glances over the boundaries of the bourgeois economic form from a higher viewpoint -- in short, it was the dialectic method of Marx which created the possibility of bringing analysis to bear on the particular problems of economics... For those who wish to seriously study the problem of crises, this fragment will be in many ways as important and suggestive as the corresponding chapters in the second volume of Capital."

The best quotation, however, is KM's: "contradictions of capitalist production which extricates itself from feudal society, which interprets the later more and more bourgeoisly, but which has still not found its own proper form: somewhat as philosophy first construes itself out of the religious form of consciousness and therewith, on the one hand, annihilates religion as such, yet on the other hand still moves positively only in this religious sphere -- idealized and dis-solved in thought."

NB RL in reviewing the early essays of Marx -- they didn't include the famous 1844 mss. -- but did include some parts of 1844 (Holy Family), and even went up to 1847, which Mehring edited, and which she never stops praising to the skies, there is the most fantastic reference to permanent revolution, as if we were still talking about bourgeois revolutions only, in the NRZ: "But a third element is added in; namely, the original conception which Marx and Engels then had of the March revolution -- the hopes for the so-called 'revolution in permanence' -- the anticipation that the bourgeois revolution would be only the first act, immediately concluded in the petty bourgeois and ultimately in the proletarian revolution. In this sense, the position of Die Neue Rheinische Zeitung appears to be only a well-considered, crafty tactic which aimed at using the bourgeois revolutionary upheaval as a first step in the ultimate proletarian one, to drive it on to the border line at which it must break down and give place to a second more radical revolution of the revolution. Seen from this viewpoint the tactic of NRZ was no abdication of socialism, no helping hand to the rule of the bourgeoisie; on the contrary, it was a conscious utilization of the rule of the bourgeoisie as a brief first step -- reckoned at a few years, at most -- of the proletarian victory."

ON RL

Joan Robinson's Introd. to Acc. interests me this time from a different point of view, i.e. previously I was interested in showing how the bourgeois economists and semi-socialists welcomed her position of effective demand. This time, however, JR interests me because she at least tries to take in the totality of the book, even though she, too, concentrates only on a single topic. The point is that not a single one -- and I must have read at least 2 dozen critiques -- from Bukharin to Nettle to Dick Howard to Sweezy, etc. -- has taken it as a whole.

JR begins by first of all giving "the objective" situation, by which she means, of course, just what is in academia; nevertheless, she thereby establishes that only recently, i.e. post WWII, academic economists were looking at anything other than static equilibrium, so that now when they finally turn to a dynamic model, and the fact that she raised their problem, should make them want to engage in "the process of digging it out" even though the central core of the analysis is presented in "a rich confusion". (213)
Another thing that was important is that she knows how to defend Marx though she opposes him, especially on the point of gold: "RL garbles this argument considerably and brushes it away as beside the point". On the other hand, she sees a greater affinity between RL and Hobson rather than Keynes. She then does go into the other economists that RL criticizes, especially Rodbertus and Tugan-Baranovski, so that the historical exposition of the problem which RL presents in three rounds -- it is that third round -- Struve, Bulgakov, Tugan-Baranovski vs. Nikolai-on, "Section 3 is broader, more vigorous and in general more rewarding than the 2 preceding parts." And no doubt it is

14726

closer to her own period and because she then presents her own model vs. Marx which allows for technical progress.

If I remember rightly JR in "An Essay on Marxian Economics" praises Marx's division of the total national economy into but two departments as a genuine mark of genius cutting through 100 unnecessary "scientific refinements" of her own scientific colleague ~~Marx~~ empiricists. Luxemburg wants to make a third department, but I'm not sure whether the following sentence does refer to that specific point: "The method of argument is by no means rigorous. Nothing follows from the fact that one particular numerical example fails to give a solution..." This is a reference to the p. 337 and then the next reference is to p. 341 in which JR says "RL seems to regard this process as impossible but for what reason is by no means clear."

"The analysis of militarism in the last chapter over-reaches itself by trying to prove too much."

"She is left with only one influence (economic imperialism) to account for a continuous capital accumulation so that her analysis is incomplete. All the same, few would deny that the extension of capitalism into new territories was the mainspring of what an academic economist has called 'the ~~last~~ secular boom' of the last 200 years... but the academic economists are being wise after the event. For all its confusions and exaggerations this book shows more prescience than any orthodox contemporary could claim."

RL's review of THUSKI

Jan. 8, 1905, RL reviews in Vorwärts the first volume of Theories of Surplus Value (reproduced ⁱⁿ ~~Gesammelte~~ Werke, Vol. I pp462-476.) Her attitude is : How great and relevant the work is, though Marx is already dead 25 years, and though this is something from the beginning of the 1860s which Engels had promised in 1885, and which Kautsky has finally produced; very complimentary to Kautsky. That "superficially" it is not "a finished, consummate history, but rather a brouillon -- a first-draft of a work..." "that the book is wholly Kautsky's, but every thought and every word is Marx's : and what we are offered is an organic whole with a highly developed form."

She quotes Engels Anti-Duhring how Marx "exposed the crystal core around which the present-day social order has precipitated" in a word the theory of surplus value. She also praises the work as making a profound and conclusive contribution to all of Marx's theory, which may have remained unclear either in CPE or Capital.

14728