

Beiträge zur Marx-Engels-Forschung. Neue Folge

Statement about targets and topics.

By Rolf Hecker, London, April, 1999.

Since 1991 we have edited the *Beitraege zur Marx-Engels-Forschung, Neue Folge* [Contributions to Marx-Engels Research, New Series]. The journal serves as a discussion forum for Marxist theory, publication history and reception history. To date, ten issues and a special number on the publication history of the first MEGA in the 1920s have appeared. The 1999 issue has just been published. 700 copies per issue are printed and distributed world-wide. 150 copies to Japan alone. We have contacts with similar journals both in Germany and abroad. These include '*Studies in Marxism*' and '*Critique*' in the UK, as well as '*Actuel Marx*' in France and '*Marxismo oggi*' in Italy. As a result of extensive contacts with Marx-Engels researchers and editors in Japan, we enjoy a regular exchange of publications with the Far East.

These international contacts are reflected in our journal, the '*Beitraege*'. In 1996 we were able to assemble an editorial advisory board consisting of 10 scholars from 7 countries. Since 1991 we have published 177 articles, 63 of which [35 percent] were written by authors from 12 countries outside our own. In the past years the number of articles from outside of Germany has continually increased. We hope that meetings such as this one today can aid us in further broadening our circle of contributors.

The chief concern of our journal is to support the publication of the MEGA. Our journal originated from a series of publications of the Marx-Engels Department of the (East)Berlin Institute for Marxism-Leninism, who had been one of the publishers of the MEGA until 1989. Between 1977 and 1990, 29 issues had appeared up to that time. By then, it was more or less an internal bulletin. Our '*New Series*' [of the *Beitraege*] is now institutionally independent, that is, independent of any political party, be it international or academic. Supporting the publication of the MEGA means, above all, critically evaluating extant MEGA volumes, increasing their influence in scholarly circles as well as promoting broader publicity for the MEGA. In addition we have included different editing problems of Marx's manuscripts, for example the edition of the economic manuscripts and of '*Capital*' in the Second Section of the MEGA.

Each issue features a central theme. That way we hope to reach a broad audience of readers. This means that topics may be treated historically, philosophically or with an orientation toward political economy. Our choice of themes reflects a clear break from the dogmas of Marxism-Leninism. We are putting forth new research results, which have grown out of the investigation of previously untreated problems in the life and works of Marx and Engels. Thus we have examined '*Sources and Limits of Marx's Understanding of Science*' as well as '*Convergence and Divergence in the Relationship of Marx and Engels*'. Two issues were devoted to differing perspectives concerning Marx's materialist conception of history. Our 1995 issue was devoted to Engels' editing of Marx's manuscripts for Volume III of '*Capital*'. With this issue we sought to advance the debate over "*Marx's Economic Critique in 'Capital'*".

Our new series has established a new and independent field of research - concerning '*Marx-Engels Research and Editions in Historical and Political Context*'. The history of the first MEGA, what means, its founding by Ryazanov and its termination in the Stalin and Nazi eras, can now be depicted in considerable detail through the first publication of numerous sources previously withheld in Moscow archives. One special issue of the '*Beitraege*' has already been devoted to this topic. In the next few months, a second special issue - focusing on the history of the collaboration between the Frankfurt Institute for Social Research and the Moscow Marx-Engels Institute during the 1920s - will be appearing. We also take into account the critical and self-critical confrontation with the dogmatic elements of editions of the second MEGA up to 1989.

We have been very gratified with the reaction to the issues we have published thus far. The highest recognition of the quality of our work has been the decision by the new MEGA editors to incorporate our findings in the MEGA editions themselves. In the three volumes of the MEGA which have appeared since the end of 1998 the 'Beitraege' was not only included in the index, but often cited in commentaries. In the reviews we have received - among others from '*Studies in Marxism*' as well as journals in Denmark, Japan and Germany - there has been a common theme. Our reviewers stress that we have produced a journal in which East-West as well as North-South differences in their approach to Marx/Engels research have been bridged. It is particularly encouraging when our scholarly efforts enhance international discussions. Typical in this connection was a review of the previously-mentioned 1995 issue in the journal '*Capital and Class*'. Another review stated that the 'Beitraege' was 'indispensable' and it had helped make the MEGA 'more exciting than ever'. We will do our best to keep up this reputation in the following issues of the 'Beitraege'.