

February 14, 1957

Dear Arthur:

Now that at least a facing of problems and hence a political stability has been achieved to a degree in LA, and we can discuss matters objectively and in an orderly and not helter-skelter fashion, I do wish to return to the question of introduction to the book, although it is still not a point on the agenda for the membership for reasons which will become obvious in this letter.

I do not know how much of the disagreements between LT and SWP on the question of translations, editorship, introductions you are aware of. Before I came to be his secretary, there was an underscurrent I could never quite understand and of course none of the leadership dared explain. But there was, first, the History of the RR itself, and when Eastman was chosen not alone as translator but undisputed editor, the Shachtmans, Wrights, etc, etc, shafed at the bit. Naturally no one dared challenge the Old Man, much less accuse him of "opportunism", but that is what they actually thought.

The truth was very different. LT explained to me that the sectarianism and isolationism radicals create for themselves are their own worst enemies, and that he has had to face them ever since the Stalinists deprived him of all channels of communication and yet spoke of capitulation to bourgeois press for him to write in "Liberty". The point was we had forgotten how much Marx swam in all channels from the Herald Tribune to the Left Hegelians and it didn't isolate him either from the workers or the intellectual currents of the time; if the intellectuals ran the other way as they did, it was they, not he, who did the running. Finally the OM showed me that where they should be politically principled, they were not: 1) Those LT Defense Committees were run by the Deweys and LaFollettes politically with us doing all the technical tasks, instead of us building up membership branches and have them control the intellectuals. 2) Partisan Review was allowed to dominate the intellectuals instead of the intellectuals being invited openly to write in NI and us answering as dialecticians to them, not keeping it Shachtman-Burnham. There is much more to all this past but I do not think it is necessary to go into greater detail at the moment.

Now come to the present. Marxism has never taken root here theoretically. We are smaller than any of the groupings that ever attempted it before, and aim higher. Since the break with CP, Trotskyism, outside of LT himself, has never merited a single work being published through established channels not because they were bourgeois and T-ists rev-ries, but because they did not merit it objectively. The most of an intellectual periphery established was on the name of LT, even when they broke with LT and went with Shachtman the Farrells and others were originally attracted by the big name so that Sh. lived off of them as Johnson lived off of the WP-SWP. Independently no one ever commanded an authoritative criticism. Finally I am the "smallest"--without official name that is.

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Yet I achieve recognition from the recognized authority both among Hegelians and philosophical Marxists. He did more with his R & R to establish the early works of Marx than we did, you know, and presided us as well.

Now if even we published alone and I had to beg him to introduce, I should certainly try every possible way to accomplish this critical voice from the outside: here is a real contribution to Marxist thought which has been a desert ever since, etc. As it happens, he not only came to us, not I to him, but he has done everything possible, despite sharp disagreements on American proletariat, to get it published and is still trying; also to get commendations, etc. etc. What is it that I can possibly fear from him--the fact that in a 5 or 10 page introduction he would say something I would disagree with? You mean 500 pages of text will not explain my views clearly enough and I need fear that? Then I don't deserve to be the author of a book reestablishing the continuity of Marxism with all the original contributions that we alone make.

We have to swim, dear Arthur, swim out into the deep ocean of competitive ideas, and then come up the winner. Not through isolating our "purity" and "sanctity" and proclaiming our arrival, but by having others proclaim it and fight it.

At a time when, however, this is all in a stage where all the cards in the bourgeois world are still stacked so high against us and it is not at all sure I will get publication, why get the membership involved, and, with your pardon, on so low a level as you attempted to do--through excitement that something of us was being given away for nothing? No, in due time and when it is concrete--the REB incidentally just left it all in my hands from the very start and El especially thought your proposition most strange since he felt so strongly the need to break out--the membership will hear and have a chance to discuss, and with all the facts and data marshalled out objectively and not in a huff. Rethink your own views very seriously in light of all I said and try your best not to make either a big production out of it or a defense one, but as comrade to comrade and leader to leader if you wish to continue the discussion, you are welcome.

Yours,

Rae