

April 28, 1967

Dear Friends:

This week's news is of a success story. I have signed a contract for the publication of the book this fall. I have retained the exclusive rights for the foreign market because I believe I have a better chance that way to get bigger publishing houses abroad especially since a friend is going to Germany; Italy and France are interested, and through another person I am gaining access to a British house.

The ramifications, implications, political and financial responsibilities that all the above news spells out for the organization will first be presented to the organization after we have heard from the LA NEB who are discussing, as the W.Va. NEB already discussed, some of the problems of this new stage which the NEB had presented to the national leadership even before the contract was negotiated.

For the time being, therefore, outside of just the information, there is one problem that the friends should discuss and inform the NEB next week of the results of the discussion on the following matter: a preface to be written to the book by an outstanding Hegelian-Marxist who is a professor rather than an activist, and who is not one of us organizationally. I trust that a member of the NEB in each locality will know how to expand on his credentials, while I limit myself to the importance of such a preface for the book.

The old radicals could maintain their alleged orthodoxy through sheer exclusiveness, that is to say, sectarianism. No Marxist in this country, for example, outside of Trotsky himself who was not of this country, was published by a regular bourgeois trade channel and knew how to take his chances in the competitive world of ideas. The Trotskyist group, on the other hand, tried rationalizing their position on the ground that by keeping to themselves they were "pure". They should have used the word, "empty". In any case, LT was very sharp with them not only in general, but in the very specific case of his greatest work, "The History of the Russian Revolution", which he had translated not "officially" but by a standard translator, who, moreover, had very openly and sharply broken with the movement, Max Eastman. Not only that, that man edited the work as well.

This is only one example that could be multiplied a hundred-fold to show how, in addition to their wrong politics and isolation from the American workingclass, they completed their isolation also from the intellectual world.

From the first I took the exact opposite road. Even before the break from the Johnsonites I had taken a tour in which, while introducing myself as the TW columnist, I had also spoken of the book, and particularly to this particular Hegelian because his work in 1941 rhymed precisely with our own discovery of the Early Philosophic works of Marx and we gained greatly from that book. We established a friendship in ~~1963~~ 1963 and during the break he was most encouraging in asking me to develop my ideas in following the manner in which I wrote the work as a collective work although he could never have done so, and in actually trying to get a publisher. There is no doubt that having had the authority to use his name has helped in concluding a contract.

12163

The REB naturally discussed this question at every stage in the development of the book, and particularly so last fall when I completed the work and had my interview about the possibility of a preface, and had myself called a "romanticist" for considering that it is precisely the American working class and precisely because it is empiric America that is the rightful inheritor of the dialectical philosophy. The REB felt that the very fact that there is a difference of view and yet an admiration for the independence of view as well as its scholarship would help the book not merely in sales but in the politically competitive world of ideas.

There was originally a questioning of the advisability of such a preface on the part of one NAB alternate, Arthur, but after a correspondence and clarification of what exactly is involved in such a ~~questioning~~ step, I believe there is no fundamental disagreement. In any case, this is the time and place to discuss all views, for and against, and come to a decision on the matter.

The final editing will be done in the next couple of weeks. If we want the October publication date, the book, in its final shape and complete, must be in the hands of the printer 6 months before publication. It is intended that the book reach the printer the third week in May, so please inform the center of your views before that date.

Rae

One other good piece of news is that a biography of Wendel Phillips, the great Abolitionist, will be published by the same house this fall. The publisher was so impressed with the American roots of Marxism as analyzed in the book, and as I had occasion to speak about it orally, that he invited also to write to the author of the Phillips biography, all of which opens up new avenues of circulation of our ideas.