

June 8, 1957

Dear Friends:

This letter concerns itself with one thing that is central to the promotional of the book--the building up of a mailing list.

Between now and July when we will have the jacket blurb to begin that promotion each--and I mean each, not groups or even couples but each for each of us has led a separate life even if in the past years there are no friends that you have that are not shared--each of us, then, must delve back into his memory to high school days, factory working days, neighborhood days, or what you will, and list every name and address.

It does not matter that you have not followed the whereabouts of these people and are not sure of the present whereabouts; sometimes the "wrong" person picking up such an advertisement is better than the person addressed to.

It does not matter whether you wish to be associated with the book or not to this individual; the letter need not carry a return address or my word by you, although where you do know an individual word is of course best. The main point however is that it will contain the jacket blurb which will summarize the contents of the book, tell who the author is, and have the publisher as the address where they can order from.

Nor does it matter that the person is not interested in what he considers to be "politics". In this case we are not interested in people because they are interested in the book. We are only interested that all as widely apart as possible--in every conceivable field, whether working class or intellectual; and in every conceivable place either in this country or abroad--should hear that there is such a work being published.

To search your memory requires some concentrated work and cannot be done in a single evening. That is why it is important to begin right now searching through your address books, letters, mementos, etc., etc. and build up this address list. You can add to those you know, those your families know, and any names and addresses you chance upon in the daily press.

The jacket blurb will be sent to each person and while the organizer should check up as to how many were sent out, each individual does this in the leisure of his home and in the concentration of his memory and vision.

But since there is nothing we do--no matter how seemingly technical it is--that is not at the same time of the highest politics, I would like to sum up all the main points of the book into the proof of its unusual character so that you should see why all previous categories as to who is and who is not interested does not apply in this case. The contribution that sums up all other contributions lies in the part called "The Relationship of the So-called Vanguard Party" to the Spontaneous Self-Organization of the Proletariat." It covers the period 1902-1923. In those 20 years Lenin, who is known in history as the theorist for the Vanguard Party, changed his position on the question at least 6 times, thus:

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(1) In 1902-03 he was most adamant on the fact that socialism or the new society can come only through a vanguard party who would bring it into the masses "from the outside." By themselves, he said, the workers can reach no further than trade union consciousness. It is true that he was even then distinguished from the rest of the Social-Democracy because he put the stress on the working class members in the party disciplining the intellectuals. But the point of concentration were not the masses, but the vanguard. To this day the old radicals see only this point in Lenin's theory of the party.

(2) During the 1906 Revolution itself, however, he threw overboard, in the main, this concept of bringing socialism "from the outside", and insisted that the Russian Revolution showed that the workers spontaneously come to socialist ideas.

(3) In 1908, during the period of the Tsarist counter-revolution, Lenin and all Russian socialists were forced to work underground. While he did not revert to his 1902-03 position in full, the conditions of functioning imposed on the party then seemed to once again think of socialist ideas as coming from books and being introduced into the mass movement by "the vanguard party." Actually, however, Lenin fought all the intellectual tendencies within the party, including Trotskyism which was not part of the Bolsheviks, for fighting for influence over the proletariat instead of seeking out the objective economic basis of the specific stage of production, the subjective, proletarian reaction to that stage of production, and then build the theory of the vanguard party on that.

(4) When war broke and the Second International betrayed the socialist proletariat, he not only fought the betrayers, and said a party must be built along entirely different lines that do not permit the artistry of labor to dominate the thinking of the party. He also put in a special place, as a "bacillus" to bring on the proletariat on the historic scene. That special place was occupied by the National Question: from the Irish Rebellion to the colonial struggles of the East as well as the Negro Question in the United States.

(5) In the actual 1917 Revolution he had so far changed his original position on vanguard that he stated that the rank and file of the party was 10 ten times more revolutionary than the leadership and the working masses on the outside 100 times more revolutionary than the rank and file of the party.

(6) Finally, after the conquest of party and the ~~masses~~ growth of bureaucracy in the first workers state he said the only hope is that the non-party masses check the party.

Now then for anyone to say I am a "Leninist" and mean the 1902-03 conception is just fantastic, as fantastic as for some one else to say I certainly am not a Leninist because he thinks of Leninism as the present Russian Communist totalitarianism. In a word, we cannot follow old categories, or judge people by what they say when we know that what they will read in MARXISM AND FREEDOM will be so different from anything they have ever read that they themselves will ~~at~~ change their present position.

That is why it is important, critical, that in compiling a list of names and addresses you yourselves free your minds of the idea that you know best as to who "should" and who "should not" get this announcement, and sent it to all.