

December 16, 1960

Dear A. N. L. Winat:

While I did not have the privilege of meeting you when I was in Los Angeles, I do want to take advantage of your knowing Bessie to say a few words about one of the books that is evidently on your list of reading, entitled "The End of Ideology" by Daniel Bell. It is a good enough example of their unbridgable gulf from their own age when the world has never been so full of struggles for freedom and, therefore, for the minds of man well that State Department type of ideologists, like Daniel Bell, should choose to call his book "The End of Ideology" and indeed, for him, it is the end.

The book isn't really a book, that is to say, it's not a continuous development of ideas or facts. Rather, it is a hap-hazard collection of essays that Bell has published from time to time for very different purposes and in very different stages of his own development — if his standing still can be called development. Take for example one of the "better" essays on "Work and Its Discontents". It was written originally in 1954 when he was Labor Editor of the super-richman's journal, Fortune. By stealing a little bit from Marx on alienation, and super-imposing upon it some half-baked studies of how dissatisfied the American worker was with his conditions of labor, he managed at least to ~~admit~~ admit the fact that the American worker did not think this the best of all possible worlds. In a word, the negative, the critical features stood out. It is true that implicit in it was what American management has always tried to use psychology for — to soft-soap the unbearable production conditions through so-called "human relations" projects. The workers had a better word for it; they called it "head-shrinking". The worker who didn't keep up with production would be called into the counsellor and asked, in a paternal manner, what was the matter with his family or what was troubling him on finances, or didn't he get along well with the other workers on the line, and then would follow some picayune agreement that some minor thing would be changed, and this, of course, was supposed to have made him so happy with the attention given him that he would produce more and more. But as I said, all these were only implicit, not explicit in the little essay when it was first published. By 1960, when it got put into the book, "The End of Ideology", Bell has not only made this the explicit aim, but he has dared to say that this is the alternate, truly realistic, American, "democratic" answer to the question of alienation, that is to say, feeling of being a foreigner in your own workshop and country.

Nor does Bell have the elementary honesty to call attention to the fact that there has been any change in his view. The re-writing of history is a favorite part-time of Communist totalitarianism and Capitalistic free-enterprises, but that is supposedly for a "cause" — The state. This is the first time the cause is nothing more than the ego of Daniel Bell, one of the heads of "Congress of Cultural Freedom", which is supposed to teach newly-independent nations like Africa the reason they should follow "Democracy versus Communism." Deliberately, very deliberately, for he knows better, Daniel Bell always uses communism and Marxism as if they are synonymous, instead of being what they are: opposites, for Marxism is the theory of liberation, whereas communism is that of enslavement of their own proletariat, as well as fighting for the same type of world domination that America fights for. I said that Bell very deliberately interchanges these two offices in the manner of both Russian Communism and American Capitalism. I should have added he does that at all times, except when he suddenly wants to show how erudite he is and at that time he throws in unobtrusively, that of course Marx wouldn't quite recognize his progeny in Russia.

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Bell's main enemy is Russian Communism only because he lives in America. If he lived in Russia, it would be the exact opposite. He has no more principles than his Russian counterparts, and yet he passes for some sort of expert on Marxism. I will limit myself at this point to one other essay published in a different place, including his book, always with a different title, which is slanted to the precise subject that is being discussed at the moment, so as to give the appearance that it was written for that purpose. I am referring to an essay which I believe was called first "Alienation". It was ~~the~~ delivered at Columbia University on December 29, 1959. At that time, alienation was "the thing". And Nell had the gall to try to say that it was not original with Marx, or for that matter with Hegel, and that in fact it is recognized by all and sundry to be true, as witness his Work and Discontent, which incidentally has at least a correct sub-title "The Cult of Efficiency in America". It was Bell's contention that only the American intellectual shakes off his umbilical cord to the Marxian thought on alienation, would they really be original, etc., etc., etc. By 1960 everyone was talking not about alienation, but about humanism. I do not know whether you are acquainted with my work, "Marxism and Freedom", but there I was not only the first to re-print Marx' essays in English, but to stress throughout that alienation is only the negative aspect of the worker's feelings, but that humanism is both the positive aspiration of the worker and the concrete name that Marx gave to his philosophers. As you no doubt know, we call ourselves Marxist-Humanists and in 1958 when my work was published, the concept was still so new that no one bothered to figure it out -- no one, of course, except us. We stressed the fact that it is no accident that Marx called his philosophy Humanist because he was fighting two enemies; one, the capitalists and therefore class society, which exploited the worker; two, the communists of his day, who thought that all ills of capitalism would be done away with once you did away with private property. Marx' contention was that you will never do away with class society until you have done away with what is most degrading in it -- the division between mental and manual labor. That the abolition of private property was the first step, but if you did not get to the human roots, you would only end up by having, in the place of private capitalism, state capitalists and the workers would still be workers, and the capitalists and intellectuals the "thinkers", leaders who would order the workers around.

Even to us who discovered Marxist-Humanism, and adopted this as our own philosophy, Humanism appeared as only an aspiration, as theory. By the time, however, that all the news came out from the Hungarian Revolution of 1956 against Russian totalitarianism, it became clear that those Freedom Fighters had unfurled the banner of humanism as the concrete demand of the day, the age, the need of the world. At the other end of the world, in Africa, the same question was raised, both theoretically by Leopold Senghor in his "African Socialism" where he clearly states that the essence of Marxism is not economic, but the humanist philosophy, and practically through the urgent need for the Africans to industrialize without wanting to take the path of capitalistic industrialization. The choice before them, therefore, seemed to be America or Russia, but some saw that neither was really an independent road and, therefore, raised the question of new human relations to solve economic problems. I deal with that in "Nationalism, Communism, Marxist-Humanism - Afro-Asian Revolutions, both as it applies to Africa in a nuclear age and as it figured in the early thoughts of Lenin and later thoughts of Trotsky (which I opposed).

To get back to Bell, the essay on Alienation suddenly appears in the Soviet Survey, April-June, 1960, as "In Search of Marxist Humanism". Daniel Bell is expert on peppering his essays and books with so many footnotes, including the most obscure type of references that the reader who doesn't know is sure he has covered the field. In fact, he tailored the field to suit his theses and all references to the opposition view are limited to those who have power. Since I do not, not a single reference to either my book or my pamphlet, although he knows both very well. In fact, once before, a couple of years ago, he wrote a supposedly exhaustive essay on state capitalism in World Politics, without once mentioning me, even though I was the first one to have analyzed the Russian economy through their Five-Year Plans and concluded that they were state capitalists as far back as 1941. In that case, I wrote to the editor an objection to his essay which never bothered to come to grips with what has been written precisely on his subject and sent him a copy. He sent some fantastic excuse and asked whether the editor was publishing it when (1) he knew that they did not publish letters; and (2) that was not the problem.

The essay itself is a mess in much more serious revisions of history than that which concerns my works. It is Marx himself that he perverts and I might say in a much more ignorant way than his knowledge should have compelled him to do; but he has no more fatefulness to knowledge than he has to organizations, ideas and human relations.

The only reason, outside of the fact that this is a book you are evidently reading, that I spend so much time on so inconsequential an intellectual is because he is representative of the type of mind that populates our campuses, and fights tooth and nail outside of them to keep the African revolutions confined to so-called bread and butter issues, not that they give the African people bread and butter, but only in the hope that talking about it will get them off their theoretical demands as well. For Marx knew, and so do these nobodies, who do not want to follow Marx, that the struggle for freedom makes the illiterate masses the superiors to these literati in thought as well as in action. Because to them, both thought and action are inseparable and concrete. It is no accident at all that the slogan of the Freedom Fighters in Europe, fighting against Russian totalitarianism was "bread and freedom" and the banner of the African revolutionary was "freedom and food".

I would like to hear from you on this, as well as on the concrete happenings in Northern Rhodesia. I had the privilege of meeting Kenneth Kaunda when he was here, but our time was very limited, and his tasks are very great and very difficult. I do hope I will be able to see him in person if it will be possible to convince anyone who has money to help pay for this trip, which is integral to my next book on the Philosophic Foundations of the Struggle for Freedom in Africa and Latin America, as well as for the actual activity in which we are all involved in struggling for a new world.