

October 30, 1956

TO THE NEB:

Next week I will present some phases of the book to the REB. In this case I present the ideas first to you because it is no longer a question of hoping to hear from you in advance of that meeting (the 6th of Nov.) but of depending on your views. The point is that since the convention there has been no genuine intercommunication between you and the centre as leaders. It is true that the emphasis at the convention was, rightly, on the new organizers and the deeper, lower layers. Locally and nationally, insofar as for example the first lead of the reissued N&L was written by Effie, the new blood that has appeared has laid the basis for the outer move we have now embarked on in a modest way. None of this however has absolved the leadership of its role. On the contrary, all this should have meant that even though the NEB is scattered and has its main work in the various localities where they are, it also should have had more time to be national leaders, that is to say, what we call "REB representatives", feel themselves politically part of the center, and anticipate some of its problems and help map out some of its perspectives. Perspectives do not appear just once a year or once in two years—whenever there is a convention, but those adopted at a convention need constant development and enrichment and it is in this that leadership shows itself. That has not been the case.

Take, for example, the question of establishment of committees as the form of combining N & L and the book. I may not know the detailed functioning of the organization as concretely as the organizational secretary does but my impression is that the NEB members have not exerted the leadership they are capable of and established what is new by manifesting leadership not in any formal "giving of a line", but in creating out of the local material at hand new avenues for the outer move.

Above all, where leadership is needed—because we had moved so steadily away from Marxism during the Johnsonite period—~~there, is a void,~~ <sup>in theory</sup> Let me give you two instances: 1) We alone have restored theory to its genuine Marxist foundation both philosophically and as it gains its source from the actual developing class struggle. Now Marx's discarding his first plan of Critique and substituting for it the structure of CAPITAL as we know it, all arose out of the 1860s, the Civil War in the United States and the struggles for the working day in England, the Polish rebellion and the French strikes. This did not mean that the theoretical work, because it had that new source, got itself written and he, as a theoretician, had nothing to do but accept a post in the newly-formed First International. The most prodigious work theoretically was just when he was organizationally active and, not accidentally, ~~and~~ in turn, the First International had, as its Statutes, the essence of the movement in CAPITAL. Now, with all due proportion and historic settings, what has happened with us when we reestablished these truths, and ourselves undertook to fill a gap not alone by telling the truth of the past, but by doing what we could presently? Nothing much, I'm afraid. With the sole exception of Bessie, I have not had a single letter on the book itself, except a note from Olga asking what could she do. 2) When I returned from the assignment on the book—I must here mention that when I worked on it I did receive a superb and serious, lengthy

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letter on the chapter on the Hegelian dialectic which has been of invaluable help to me in the rewriting—I reported meeting with the publisher and the fact that we no doubt would need to assure it financially, through advance orders. I stated that I had nothing to propose at the time and that I would not do so until the first part of the fund campaign has been completed. This did not mean that the NEB members, on their own, should not have written to me both requesting more information and suggesting ways and means to make the publication of the book a reality.

The publishing field is the hardest to crack and with all his sham name, even when he wrote nothing of Marxism but only on American literature, J never could crack it open. Once you have only a personal (or, as the publishing field calls it, "a vanity" outlet) outlet, the book gets nowhere, as we know from the \$10,000 spent on MRC. IH, which was an exception because of the specific type of book and our heart was more in it, did pay for itself, but it did not get the distribution it would have gotten with established trade channels. MARXISM and FREEDOM is a far different book and it needs every possible channel. The bourgeoisie is certainly not interested in seeing it published. The Communists control what other channels the capitalists do not and have a completely monopoly on Marxism. We have no "ins" for added to the capitalists and the Communists there is the labor bureaucracy which is even more anxious to isolate us for, small as we are, they already feel the impact of N & L and of the book.

This is above all a political matter. We don't know what it means to fill in a void of three decades, and even we will not know all its implications until some months after the publication of the book and our absorption of both its content and its impact. There are moments in history when a small group holds in its hands certain threads of continuity with Marxist tradition that demand of the group the greatest exertions and creativity. They cannot appear until the inner conviction of what it is we are doing has permeated our very bone and marrow.

Now then I was lucky enough to get at least to first base in the publishing field. I got from an established house a promise that IF I can guarantee there will be no financial loss to the house, and IF I do all the technical preparation from typescript through proofreading through certain parts of the promotional, and IF a minimum of 500 copies of the book to be at \$5 or even \$7 a copy; we have no control over that and he will not say the price until he sees the book in full) are ordered and paid for in advance of publication, he might undertake responsibility for publishing even though he knows everyone from the state dept. down would be on his back. It means \$2500 of which \$1500 has to be in his hands at the time we sign contract at end of November. Of the \$1500 needed immediately I can get \$500 from an outside source. This means the organization needs to raise \$1000, which they are only advancing since we will certainly sell more than that. I figure that if each gives \$25 for an advance order of 5 copies, we can do it easily. It is up

11824

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to you to see that this is considered a privilege, not a duty.

Here is what I mean: Naturally this has to be done on a voluntary basis. For that matter, so was the fund; although the responsibility was undertaken by the organization as a whole, he or she who did not wish did not pay. This does not mean that the NEB members do not consider it their responsibility to present the politics of finances in such a manner that no one who considers himself or herself a member feels no sense of responsibility for an organization decision. In the case of the book the voluntary basis is even more prominent for we truly do not want money from anyone who does not feel any sense of exhilaration for the accomplishment of theory without which no truly proletarian action can be successful on its own. I need not belabor the obvious that this makes the task of the NEB the more responsible and creative in finding the one point which makes the difference in a single person, in or out, giving or not giving.

Finally I wish to give you the outline of the work as it has changed in the process of reworking. While the outline can in no way give you that extra dimension both as a worker and as an intellectual that the book itself will give us all, it helps keep the book as a whole in front of our mind:

PART I --From 1776 to 1848: The Basis of the Workers Movement and Marxist Theory

- Ch. I--The Age of Revolutions--Industrial, Social-Political, Intellectual
- Ch. II--Classical Political Economy, the Utopian Socialists and Marx
- Ch. III--A New Humanism--Marx's Early Economic-Philosophic Writings.

PART II--Intellectuals and the 1848 Revolutions

- Ch. I The Year of Revolutions
- Ch. II--Theoretical Interlude--Critique of Political Economy

PART III--MARXISM

- Ch. I The Impact of the Civil War in the U.S. on the Structure of CAPITAL
- Ch. II--The Impact of the Paris Commune on CAPITAL
- Ch. III--The Logic and Movement of CAPITAL, Vol. I
- Ch. IV--The Logic and Scope of Volumes II and III

Part IV--Logical Foundations of the Second International

PART V--World War I and the GREAT DIVIDE IN MARXISM

- Ch. I--The Fall of the Second Int., and L's Phil. Ntbs.
- Ch. 2--Forms of Organization--Relationship of Spontaneous Self Org. of Prol. and "Vanguard Party"

PART VI--THE PROBLEMS OF OUR DAY--STATE CAPITALISM VS. FREEDOM

- Ch. I--Russian State Capitalism--The Three Five Year Plans
- Ch. II--Stalin
- Ch. III--The Beginning of the End of Russian Totalitarianism--June 17, 1953 E Germany--Vorhuta; 1956--Poland
- Ch. IV--TOWARDS A NEW UNITY OF THEORY AND PRACTICE--Automation and the Absolute Idea

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References

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