

June 28, 1955

Dear Herbert Marcuse:

Thanks for the letter and the return of the MSS; I will be in a position to send it back to you in a week since you do seem interested. This is not, however, the form of the book I intend to write now. I had done it as *State Capitalism in Marxism* in 1947 when there was a possibility that Oxford University Press would publish it and I had already completed a study of the Three Five Year Plans of Russia from original sources and in general written a whole series of articles on the French edition of *Capital*, the revisions of Marxism going on in Russia during the war, and the concrete data of this stage of capitalism.

When Oxford University Press backed out and I turned more to philosophy than economics, I wrote only isolated chapters of the work on Marxism. I enclose one such brief chapter on Lenin's method after 1915 along with a letter on his *Philosophic Notebooks* that I had written at that time. Although these are very rough sketches, you can see how comprehensively I try to deal with the transformation of Lenin's mode of thought after 1914 for that is the crux. Not the betrayal, nor even the stage of monopoly capitalism that was the economic foundation for the transformation of the Second International that had been going on for years and burst forth into betrayal, but, above, all, the mode of thought which allowed for no self-movement or impulse from the masses. You know I'm sure that he didn't treat monopoly as just one more stage in the development of capitalism, but as a new category, a new absolute from which all else flows. That is why "transformation of one thing into its opposite" meant so much to him, why he did not leave that truth only in its economic guise as transformation of competition into monopoly but in its social and human form as the breakdown of the International.

Naturally I do not mean when I go further in the *Logic* and say the Absolute Idea "is" the proletarian self-emancipation or liberation from the party that there is such a direct relationship between the laws and movement of the logic and the field of human freedom. It is always a dialectical relationship and will need to be developed in all its manifoldness. But that "is" is an absolute necessity to cut through not alone detail and the gibberish of so much that passes for Marxism these days but to open up those closed intellectual cars of ours to the fresh impulses from the workers. That is why I dropped any work on the book for two years and came here to work on the paper. As soon as *NEWS & LETTERS* gains a certain momentum of its own, I will return to the work. But note how I mean to return to it so that you will see what I mean by method of work and impulse from the only theoretically new thoughts from the proletariat itself. This is not simple movement from theory to practice—I'm sure you above all know that in both Hegel and Marx—but one from practice to theory not as mere verification of the latter but its creator.

In any case, here is my plan: In fall I will prepare a series of 4 lectures on what I see the book as. These are to be given not on campuses but to small groups of workers and intellectuals, mainly workers, and given in a form where they know that that is not a definitive piece of work but will be greatly changed by what they have to say. I will begin in West Virginia where we have some miners who are

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interested, then to Detroit and L.A. (I hope also to stop in New York especially if you can be there for I consider you very integral to all this and I would like to spend more time than just on the fly. Does your move to Massachusetts mean you will not be in NY or what?)

By December when I have studied all the back and forth that went on in these talks I ought to know how I wish to cast my work on which I have been at over a decade. At that time I could work out an outline of the actual work for any publisher and begin to work on the book itself. It is not, I believe, a very long job--6 months ought to do it.

Would you know where I can get hold of a Chronique of Marx's life, in Russian preferably but I will accept it in French or German if I can't get the Russian. It is a very good reference work but I have been unable to obtain a copy for myself and to photostat it from the Slavic Division copy would cost a bit more than I have money to spare at the moment. I would be very grateful if you could direct me to a place where I could obtain--perhaps your own library. I sympathize with your trials and tribulations of moving a library--I'm always on the go and that ~~is~~ is the one thing that gets heavier with each moving. I trust you will like Cambridge. I lived there in the Depression days--in fact taught a group of Russian students English. But when they found out I was "some creature called a Trotskyite" and informed Moscow about it that was the end of my earning my livelihood. I did succeed in selling a complete set of Trotsky's Opposition Bulletin to the Harvard Library that grim year of 1931.

Yours,

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