

10/28/77

Dear Nat:

I have turned over a copy of your Oct. 19 letter to Doug, Gus, and the N.O. because most of it is of concern to them but not to me. I would suggest that you send such letters to Doug hereafter since he will be handling the decisions on such matters.

I will give you my opinion about the 1929-30 debate when and if you send me a copy. Your hope that I am not in a hurry is misplaced, because I am in a hurry or what you would call a hurry. Please send me the information I requested by the end of November or tell me that it is not coming.

Thanks to your information, I now have a clearer idea of what the French are doing about the publishing project. But I have no idea how correct it is for you to get involved, or how much.

Yes, I am aware of Vereecken's bulletin. Joe showed me a copy of it last year when I reviewed V's book. I assume Joe or Gus could tell you what to do about this.

As for the gossip about me I don't give a damn about it, but of course I will avoid hereafter writing anything to anybody over there that might complicate what we are trying to do.

I never have heard of "Stambouli" and I can't tell you the answers to any questions about him. Perhaps Gus can.

Regards to Caroline.

Comradely/GB

George Breitman  
Pathfinder New York

Dear George,

This letter is not in answer to your recent request on the birth and death dates of Denise Naville, Parajanine, etc. An incredible crush of work has prevented me from dealing with this yet. I hope you are not in a hurry. Let me know if you have a sharp deadline.

The first part of my project is done: a detailed study of the debate on the national question between Trotsky, Naville, Ta Thu Thau and others in 1929-30. You will receive copy through Barry. Please let Gus and Gerry know, because of their interest in the national question. Also Feldman because of his work on Indochina. Please let me know what you think of it, as it is only the first step in a broader project. (I have not forgotten the 1930 trade union debate, either).

There is no reaction to report yet on the Crisis book, because it has not been widely distributed. However, I have just received a number of copies, and I know of several people who are reading it, including Frank. Will let you know what I hear.

This letter deals with three recent conversations I have had. The first was with Gadchau and dealt with the publication of the Trotsky Writings in French. The second was with Prager and dealt with numerous questions, including the historical research he is doing, the material published by Pathfinder and the possibility of translating Cannon into French. The third was with a comrade who works for Editions de la Taupe Rouge the LCR's "publishing house". It dealt with the possibility of translating and publishing Pathfinder titles into French. Surprisingly, each of these three discussions was initiated by the French comrades, not by me.

The first discussion was with Gadchau. I met him by accident at a meeting and explained to him some of the work on the Trotsky history and research I had been going. He asked me if I would join the commission which is preparing to edit the writings of Trotsky into French. He is planning to propose it at the next meeting of their commission.

You may have heard the final details from others but I will repeat what I know about the project at the present time. The original idea to publish "by theme" instead of chronologically has been abandoned. The current project is to publish 20 volumes from 1933 to 1940. This will include some material currently available in book form, plus books that are out of print in French (such as Stalin) plus the Writings. As far as I know, the projection is still to have the works published jointly by Maspero and EDI. They are counting on EDI to give them the rights to many works already published by them, such as In Defense of Marxism. In the editorial committee is Godxhau and Broue, of course, plus Prager for the LCR. As I told you earlier, I found out

independently that Dreyfus from the BDIC library at Nanterre is working on the project. The indications that I get from several sources is that the general form is now definitely fixed and they are about to begin the concret work. There may still be some problems, but I believe that there are none which are insurmountable. One such problem could be a rather ambiguous thing which Prager told me which indicates that he may not feel it necessary to keep In Defense of Marxism in its present form. I do not know if he is toying with the idea of breaking it up chronologically or not. I do not suppose that Broue or Godchau would let him do that.

I accepted Godchau's offer to go on the commission with a few misgivings. Things are moving very fast over here and I am convinced that there will be very shortly many more such openings than it will be possible to fill. It will be necessary to pick and choose what are the most important things to do, the most important forms of collaboration which will have the most long-lasting effect. After all, the Ligue and Broue etc are quite capable of putting out the writings whether or not I am there. Is it worth the time and effort that I could spend on other things? I decided to go ahead for numerous reasons, and everything since then seems to have confirmed that this was correct.

The second discussion I had was with Prager. He walked into the Rouge bookstore when I happened to be there. I've only met him once or twice and was quite surprised when he came over to talk. As you know he is working on a history of the Trotskyist movement during the Second World War. He told me he had written to you, which I already knew, and that you had asked for more details. He asked me if I know what Pathfinder material might be useful for him. He mentioned that you had told him about Cannon's 1939 report to the New York local on his return from his last trip to France. Since I had a photocopy of the text I offered to loan him mine and mentioned that I had other material as well. The result was that he came over to my house later and we spent half a day discussing the historical research being done by different people, what things Pathfinder had published etc. It was at the end of this discussion that he suggested on his own initiative that the LCR publish some Cannon. He suggested in particular Cannon's History of American Trotskyism, but refused the Struggle for a Proletarian Party as not having a wide enough audience. Since Prager is a member of the LCR's publishing commission (which is not the same thing as the commission dealing with the Trotsky Writings) this is quite important. He promised to bring this up at a future meeting of the commission. I repeated this promise to him in a subsequent telephone call. We will see what he does with it.

Prager is not particularly sympathetic to the SWP. As I told you, he had a very factional reputation towards the FLT and would attack anyone leaning in the FLT's direction as being Lambertists. During these discussions I was able to learn more about him. He was indeed a Molinierist before the war. He was with Molinier during the French Crisis. He still defends much of that period, for instance. During the war, he held the Molinierist positions on "the national liberation of France" and implied that he still believed that Morrow's, that is Molinier's, position was correct. I believe he spent

several years in the PSU as well. Thus it is safe to assume that his viewpoint on many historical questions would not be the same as the SWP's.

One result of his personal background is that he knows everyone and their pseudonyms. He spotted numerous errors and omissions in the book Documents of the Fourth International, such as Pablo's pseudonym, etc. He borrowed my copy of the book and should write to you about it. He noted an error in Cannon's Letters from Prison. On page 215 Cannon discusses the fusion which had taken place in France. He noted that La Verité was the name of the PCI not of the section. This is repeated in the footnote on page 347. This is wrong. La Verité was the journal of the official section, during the war. He promised to write to you on this as well. He would be an enormously helpful "resource" person.

He has maintained ties with many people from previous periods in the movement. One of them is Vereeken. He told me that Vereeken published some sort of bulletin which he sends to Prager "for old times sake". Prager was quite interested in Vereeken's charges about GPU'ism - which he says he doesn't believe. He even wrote one or two letters to Vereeken's bulletin criticizing some factual errors. I sold him a copy of Healy's Big Lie. Are you aware of Vereeken's "Bulletin"? Should I ask Prager for copies and see what he does? Prager mentioned that he sees V. whenever he comes to Paris. Also Pablo, and probably many others.

Prager strikes me as an old militant who has not forgotten old quarrels - nor old gossip. It's a congenital disease in France - in his case incurable. However, I have one major interest - getting Cannon's Struggle into French. That will take care of the old gossip. Prager is "well-placed" to either aid or block that. Do you have suggestions on how that can be done?

One last bit of Prager's gossip concerns you. I have found out through other sources that Vergat had waged a struggle to block the publication of the the Trotsky writings being worked on by Broue. He proposed that the LCR "go it alone" and launch a rival project. Later Vergat approached me concerning the publishing project, which I informed you about. Vergat was apparently supposed to work with Broue on it - apparently he had been assigned to do this by the LCR. He didn't, as you well know. When Godchau took over, I told you that Vergat had apparently folded up and was moving off into some sort of political oblivion. Although he is still formally a member of the LCR, I understand that he now devotes his time to managing a movie theater. Prager's bit of gossip is the following: You had allegedly written something nasty concerning Vergat to Broue. Broue had then allegedly quoted you in a letter he sent to a list of people. Prager, no doubt, has his own list of people to whom he is repeating his choice tidbit. Oh well, such is the sorry state of life in the jungle!

9 Oct 77

By the way, I never mentioned to Prager that I had spoken to Godchau and that Godchau had proposed me for the Grotzky Commission. I do not think there was any reason for him to be fully up on everything in advance.

My next task is to find out more about the publishing commission of the LCR - who's on it, who decides what is to be done, who is willing to collaborate with Pathfinder, etc. That's where the third discussion comes in. I was, once again, in the Rouge bookstore, when I was approached by a comrade whose name is, I believe, Stambouli (or something like that). He is one of the people in charge of Editions de la Taupe Rouge. He asked me for a Pathfinder catalog because they wanted to discuss what things they might want to publish in France. Was he approached previously by Prager? by Godchau? I will try to have a meeting with him (individually) where we can discuss concrete cases. However, this should really be done officially, through Pathfinder.

My general impression is that there is some sort of deep motion going on here as part of the new collaboration and that this has opened up the door for publication and distribution of Pathfinder. This should be pushed as far as possible.

Comradely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Nat' or similar, written in a cursive style.