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# Letter to Oakley C. Johnson in NYC from S.J. Rutgers in Amersfoort, Holland, April 21, 1958

Handwritten document in C.E. Ruthenberg Papers, Ohio Historical Society,  
Box 14, Folder 4, Microfilm reel 8.

Amersfoort (Holland) 21/IV/58

Dear Comrade Johnson:—

Your letter of March 18th [1958] certainly was a great and agreeable surprise! And now I received your book and although I did not yet study it adequately, I find it very interesting not only as a general study, but also in a personal way to refresh my own remembrances of a period [in which] I happened to get in close contact with the American labor movement. I am very thankful that you remembered me and sent me your book with inscription and reference to some pages, where you mentioned my name. I am also in possession of the book *History of the CP* by William Z. Foster and yours is a very valuable addition about a dramatic period and about a most valuable fighter and lovable human being in the formation period of the CP. I'll study it especially also in connection with the period we are now living through, not only in the USA, but also in connection with the world problems and the history of my own country.

Ruthenberg knew how to combine the application of fundamental laws in the development of society with a personal approach towards co-workers that mirrored those fundamentals, but were to play a part in the mass movements that are the expression of those laws in practice. The hero of your book is a splendid example of combining theory and practice and avoiding right and left deviations and thereby achieving results. The form of your book is the more valuable, because the character of a biography can also emphasize the great value of "personality," if combined with real understanding and devotion to a struggle that reflects reality in its changing aspects towards a progressive future.

It is a most opportune moment for your book to appear, since similar problems affect the struggle in your country now, but also in all Western European countries, including just at present in an acute way also Holland. Since the World System of Socialism is getting the upper hand in [the] military and economic sense, the methods of our enemies concentrate on “cold war” on the ideological field, corruption and temporary concessions to certain groups, in order to divide and rule. This leads to right deviations in our ranks and the illusions of the broader masses. More than ever we should learn from history and therefore a book like yours at present is most valuable for those that want to learn from the past. A concise history of the American party with due reference also to the personal side of its leaders, but fundamentally as a picture of the ups and downs of the class struggle in the USA, the effect of alternating deviations to left and right, under pressure of the ruling classes, and the lack of understanding of the masses, might be very effective just now.

Your book is a contribution towards such a better understanding of history as a teacher in the class struggle.

Your book is nicely edited and reads pleasantly, so as to keep the reader interested. The portrait of Comrade Ruthenberg on the cover is suggestive, inspiring confidence, sympathy, and wisdom.

I hope and expect that the book will find a great many readers of the right kind and give inspiration, just at the time that we all need such books and such examples. I am trying to follow events in your country through *Political Affairs* and *The Worker*, and to apply the lessons also in understanding better the difficulties at home. The world is moving fast and we have to move together, united in the great efforts that are awaiting us.

Comradely yours and many thanks,

***S.J. Rutgers.***

[P.S.] Comrade Mrs. Rutgers adds her appreciation and hearty greetings to both of you. Bot of us evidently have the privilege of living and working with our life-companion in high age. My hearty and comradely greetings to A.T. Trachtenberg.

*Edited by Tim Davenport*

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