

May 15, 1985

Dear David Joravsky:

Summer is a time for relaxing -- but not in the ordinary sense of not "having" to learn and think. I am such a lover of Hegelian dialectics that the very sight of water releases for me the self-determination of the Idea. I write three times faster when I'm on the water as when I'm cooped up in a room. What each does with that type of relaxing is a different thing, but I'm sure that you do not consider summer as a time to be away from thought just because you are away from the University.

My new book is not yet off the press but already I'm thinking of yet another work, this time really delving into the question of "the Party," which has been such a millstone around the necks of revolutionaries. I'm not referring only to Lenin's vanguardist conception, which he held onto even when he grappled seriously with the Science of Logic; I'm thinking of the post-Marx Marxists in the Second International from the start. I was so opposed to any such totalitarian concept (before that word became the category our age has made of it) that in my first major theoretical break with other Marxists, Marxism and Freedom, I had intended to skip the entire period of 1889 to 1914. Marcuse, who read the first draft of my book, asked me: "What about the Second International?" My reaction was full of expletives: "You don't mean I'd have to deal with those betrayers?" He proceeded to give me a lecture on History and would not permit me to skip that period. My "compromise" was to deal with it but not to give it a Section heading, and not to give them credit for developing "the mass party." I called it "Organizational Interlude." But I hardly think that it answers the question of the Party. To trace that question from Karl Kautsky through Lenin in 1914 to Luxemburg in 1919 and to our own age, one must, I think, submit the concept to what I consider the imperative: the Absolute Method. All are ready enough to renounce the totalitarian party and ready to either associate or disassociate with anarchism, but none are ready to recognize the dialectic as having something concrete to say on "the Party."

What do you think? Would you want to "assign" parts of that topic to yourself for your summer vacation? I certainly don't believe in retirement, but I don't think that you need to fear that being away from your students will put you in that class just because you will then not have papers to grade or an "endless stream of deadlines demanding that all else be put aside." At any rate, I'm very much looking forward to meeting you in the Fall and engaging in one of those endless talks that Russians know how to indulge in. Do you have any idea of when it is the Russian History Department would be interested in sponsoring a talk by me, that would be a serious critique as well, of Trotsky as Man and as Theoretician?

Signed in Rousseau - Yours, Royce

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