

October 15, 1945

Mr. Joseph Buttinger
336 Central Park West
New York, New York

Dear Joseph Buttinger:

Meyer Schapiro has spoken to you of a book I am working on which I tentatively call Marxism and Freedom. The book centers on the first systematic study of Russian state capitalism and the philosophical foundations of Marxism. Heretofore the philosophy has been handled as a 19th century humanitarian adjunct to Marxist political economy. Today, the search for freedom makes it clear that, far from being an incidental Marxist philosophy is pivotal.

The problem is to find a publisher who recognizes the possibilities of such a work and is willing to advance \$1000 to enable me to spend three months to complete the book and prepare the manuscript for publication. I have already developed the ideas quite fully and have drafted the major chapters in preliminary form. These notes I have submitted to various people for their comment and criticism. Herbert Marcuse recently wrote me:

"I have read your notes and I should like to tell you that I must encourage you to go ahead with the elaboration. Your ideas are a real oasis in the desert of Marxist thought."

I am familiar with your work, In the Twilight of Socialism, and for a long time have wanted to meet you. Now that I have something concrete to offer in my own light, I actively sought out the introduction and asked Meyer Schapiro to speak to you.

At the beginning of World War II, working from Russian sources, I made the first Marxist analysis of Stalin's three Five Year Plans. With this as background, I was able to recognize the significance of the Communist revision in the theory of value in 1944. I wrote two articles for The American Economic Review at that time, in which I analyzed the revision not only as a break in Marxist theory, but as a break in theory which reflects the Russian reality of a state capitalist society fighting for world domination. I believe Peter Bergman may have mentioned these articles to you when they appeared, which was several years before I met Peter.

The economic revisions of necessity involved a break with the dialectic structure of Marx's Capital. By 1947 Zhdanov proposed that the philosophers discover nothing less than "a new dialectical law" -- "criticism and self-criticism" -- to replace the dialectical law of development through contradiction. That year was critical the world over. Everyone from the Existentialists to the Christian Humanists were groping for a total outlook and were flirting with Hegelian dialectics. Yet when I translated Lenin's Philosophical Notebooks for the first time into English I could find no publisher in America.

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The American empiricists who, since the Summit Conference in Geneva, thought they could counter each new Russian thrust as it comes, have been left gasping by the ruthlessness of the current Khrushchev-Bulgaria tour of Asia. Since the Zhdanov speech it was already clear that nothing less than an all-embracing approach could combat Russian totalitarianism. My book projects a comprehensive theoretical approach.

As to the commercial possibilities of my book, here are a few indications worth considering:

1) My article in the American Economic Review (September 1945 and September 1945) appeared at the height of American-Russian wartime collaboration when the official world refused to recognize the Russian reality. Nevertheless, my brief analysis was reported on the front page of The New York Times and became the center of a debate that lasted for an entire year.

2) Although more than ten years have elapsed, those articles are well known to the academic world and are referred to as a standard text on Russian economy and Marxism. As recently as two months ago, in October, I was invited as a guest lecturer to address the Economics, Sociology and Philosophy Departments in a number of California universities, including the University of California at Los Angeles, University of Southern California, Occidental College, and the Berkeley University.

Despite all this, a publisher without your background, interests and experience may hesitate to give me the advance necessary to complete the work. That is why I appeal to you.

Sincerely yours,

Raya Dunayevskaya
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