

1966 1.15. abt

W August Grewing XI

HARVARD UNIVERSITY

Dr. Georg Lukács
Belgrad rakpart 2
Budapest V
Hungary

Dear Dr. Lukács,

For the past year I have been involved in research on the biography of Karl August Wittfogel. I want to state immediately that I realize the problems that might be involved in writing you concerning KAW but if at all possible, I would greatly appreciate your cooperation and help.

I am interested, of course, in your early contacts with KAW and a few specific details. He has spoken many times about you with great respect and of your early friendship; he recalls many occasions when you and he discussed problems during the Weimar period. He has followed your work, as I have, with great interest.

Some details concerning the Hegel anniversary in 1931 are still in question. Three specific matters need clarification.

1. The lectures which you and he attended in 1931 at the University of Berlin in connection with the Hegel celebration.
2. A lecture-seminar organized by MASCH at which you and he were the main speakers. I believe this was mainly for workers.
3. The preparation of a volume on Hegel which never appeared. I understand that you and he both wrote articles which were consequently never published. KAW wrote on the Young Hegel and I have a copy of this paper. Did you also write on the young Hegel and was this the beginning of your book Der Junge Hegel?

There are also many other contacts which I would like verified such as a meeting organized by the secretary of ArbPlan, von Harnack at his apartment at which a discussion took place between you, KAW, Ernst Jünger and Valerio Marcue. It would be a great help to me if you could remember some more details about these and other contacts with KAW during this period.

MTA FIL. INT.
Lukács Arch.

1966 1. 15. also M.

In June I will be flying to Berlin and will then make an extensive trip through Russia and Eastern Europe. Would it be possible for me to see you for a short time?

Please feel free to answer in German. Thank you!

MTA FIL. INT.
Lukács Arch.

Respectfully yours,

← WLM

G. L. Ulmen
56 River Street
Cambridge
Massachusetts
USA

27 November 1966

G. L. Ulmen
bei Dr. Joseph Vymetal
Praha-Vinohrady
Boleslavska 18
CSSR

Professor Georg Lukacs
Belgrad Rakport 2. V. em. 5
Budapest V
Ungarn

Dear Professor Lukacs,


I planned to write you long before now, but my stay in Europe was prolonged and thus I have now been here over one/half year. I wanted to thank you for our long talk, not only about Karl August Wittfogel but about many other things.

I hope this month finds you finished with the manuscript on the Ontology of Social Being and beginning your work on Marxist Ethics. I am anxiously awaiting the publication of these books in connection with a manuscript I am preparing on the problem of religion.

I promised you that I would send you any other books that I could find by the author of Set This House On Fire. I will look for these as soon as I return to New York. I was recently in London and reminded of a ~~major~~ young english author, Alan Sillitoe, which I thought might interest you. He has written two books, The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner and Saturday Night and Sunday Morning, plus a long poem entitled The Rats. I think this young writer has dealt more than any other recently with the problems of social alienation. All his work deals with the problems of social and ethical alienation among the working classes. You may already be acquainted with Sillitoe's writings. I will send these also from New York unless in the meantime you notify me that you already have his books.

My best wishes for your work and Karl August sends his greetings.

Yours ever,



Ulmen
420 Riverside Drive
New York, New York

MTA FIL. INT.

Lukács Arch.

9 January 1967

G. L. Ulmen
410 Riverside Drive
New York, New York

Dear Professor Lukacs,

In line with my letter from Prague I am today sending you in separate envelopes two more books by Willian Styron, the author of Set This House on Fire.

Lie Down in Darkness 1951

The Long March 1952

These are the only books I can locate by Mr. Styron and I do not know what he has done recently. At least these are all that have thus far been published.

I am looking forward to your new book but am equally anxious that you write the new introduction to Geschichte und Klassenbewußtsein so that it can be republished. It will also be published here in America in english translation but they also await your new introduction. I spoke with Dr. William Goth (Hungarian), who is now translating the Ferenc Tökei book on the Asiatic Mode of Production for the Aptheker Institute, and he told me of the plans to also publish G und K from the new German edition.

My best wishes for a new year of health and work.

Yours ever,

Ulmen

Ulmen
New York
9 January

MTA FIL. INT.
Lukács Arch.

USA

Aptheker Inst

21 June 1967

G. L. Ulmen
410 Riverside Drive
New York, New York

Professor Dr. Georg Lukács
Budapest V
Belgrád Rkp. 2. Em 5

Dear Professor Lukács,

Forgive me that I write you again concerning Geschichte und Klassenbewußtsein but I do so because of the profound interest in your work and your development both here and in Europe. I do urge you to write the new introduction to G und K so that finally an english edition will be published and the new edition for your collected works in Germany will appear. I have discussed the english edition with the Aptheker Institute and it is for them as well as myself that I write you now.

I do understand your hesitation but it is important that we all be instructed by the arguments which later led you to reject this early work. I remember that last year you told me that you came to a new position during the early 1930s in Moscow after having read Marx' 1844 Philosophic Manuscripts--that you decided that Entfremdung and Entäußerung were not the same thing but occurred separately in time. It is just these important considerations which make the new introduction necessary. It would be unfortunate if they published the book again without your new introduction. If even to guard against another Minuit edition.

Professor Morris Watnick took up a correspondence with me and came to New York a few weeks ago to discuss with me the progress of his biography and study of you and your work. He sends you his greetings.

Please let me know if there are any others books which I can send you from here or if I can help you in any other way.

Yours ever,

Ulmen

Ulmen
New York
21 June 1967

MTA FIL. INT.
Lukács Arch.

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megválaszolatlan

15 September 1967

G. L. Ulmen
410 Riverside Drive
New York, New York

Professor Dr. Georg Lukács
Budapest V.
Belgrad rkp. 2.
Hungary

Dear Professor Lukács,

I have been away from New York for some weeks attending conferences and thus only now do I have an opportunity to answer your kind letter of 15/7.

I wish primarily to express my pleasure and gratitude that you have written "ein großes Vorwort" for the new edition of Geschichte und Klassenbewußtsein. I discussed with Aptheke the problem with Merlin Press and it is hoped that the english translation will be able to appear concurrently in London and New York.

I hope this letter finds you in good health.

I send you again expressed greetings from Karl August Wittfogel.

Yours ever,

G. L. Ulmen

Ulmen
New York
15 September/67

MTA FIL. INT.
Lukács Arch.

4 December 1967

G. L. Ulmen
410 Riverside Drive
New York, New York
10025

Dear Professor Lukács,

Under separate covers I am sending you the following:

1. the latest novel of William Styron, The Confessions of Nat Turner; Herbert Aptheker's book, Nat Turner's Slave Rebellion; and a copy of Political Affairs containing Aptheker's critique of the Styron book.
2. a selection of the most significant articles by Karl August Wittfogel from 1938 to the present; a copy of Wittfogel's Magnum Opus, Oriental Despotism; and two critical articles on Wittfogel
3. a copy of an article by the young greek philosopher, Nicos Poulantzas containing a critique of Geschichte und Klassenbewußtsein

As some explanation is in order for showering you with such a flood of paper and ink, I will continue:

WILLIAM STYRON

I am sending you Styron's fourth and latest novel so that you may have all of him before you. This novel has created quite a stir here in the U.S. and has received mixed reviews. But its impact cannot be discounted. I am sending the Aptheker materials because Nat Turner plays a particular role in Aptheker's whole work on the negro problem in the U.S. and I thought it would make the novel more interesting for you. Aptheker, as you will see, is not disposed either to Styron or the novel. Aptheker told me that he ~~lent~~ lent Styron the ms. of his book on Turner and helped Styron with many problems and then Styron refused to acknowledge Aptheker's help. Thus there is a personal as well as theoretical-political problem between them. Concerning the Styron novel, I think Styron still falls short of understanding and expressing the problem of alienation. The novel is too romanticized even with its generous share of blood. And I must concur with Aptheker in many of his criticisms of the book. But Aptheker never comes to grips with the problem of class-consciousness in relation to 1. the negro in slavery, and 2. the negro in contemporary America. What was the form and character of Nat Turner's class-consciousness, if any?

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Lukács Arch:

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1967 dec. 4.

Was it class-consciousness or a consciousness of a different sort? If it was class-consciousness, is it the same as "proletarian class-consciousness"? What is the difference between the revolutionary consciousness of slaves and that of the proletariat? Aptheker claims that "Turner the slave rose in rebellion against slavery. Turner hated slavery and desired its termination." But he goes no further. Certainly the difference between rebellion and revolution is also, at least in part, one of consciousness. Aptheker has similar problems when I ask him about the "black proletariat" today--its character and where it fits into Marxism. But I can appreciate Aptheker's problem for this peculiar problem of race in America requires analysis on its own terms and this has clearly not been done. In any case, here is this unholy trio: Styron, Turner and Aptheker.

KARL AUGUST WITTFOGEL

What possible justification can I have for sending you so much Wittfogel? Perhaps none! But I will try. I must stress that the spirit in which I send it is much more important than the act itself. Marx has mainly been interpreted for me through the work of you, Wittfogel and Karl Korsch and to a lesser extent Mannheim, Gramsci and Bloch. Max Weber was for me, before Wittfogel. But it was Wittfogel who first interested me in your work and the work of Korsch. Karl August and I have discussed in particular, Geschichte und Klassenbewußtsein and Der Junge Hegel. Wittfogel places great emphasis on your Hegel book. Of late, I have been in turn trying to interest Wittfogel in other of your works and he has just completed a reading of The Historical Novel together with the literature mentioned in that work. Together we have been having what we call a Lukács-Korsch 'renaissance'!

Recently Morris Watnick drew my attention to the new publication of Gespräche mit Georg Lukács. When I read your comments on historical development and the Asiatic mode of production I decided to send some of Wittfogel's recent work on the chance that you might be interested in what has transpired in the past twenty years or so. Perhaps I secretly wish that our Lukács-Korsch 'renaissance' here in New York might be matched by a Wittfogel 'renaissance' in Budapest. It has become obvious to me as well as many others that "heresy" ("revisionism") has contributed more to Marxism, to the social sciences, and to history than "orthodoxy"--be this "heresy" within the movement (Lukács), irgendwo in zwischen (Korsch) or outside (Wittfogel). To illustrate this, I am also sending two critical articles on Wittfogel: one by a Czech Marxist, Lubomir Sochor and the other by a Dutch non-Marxist, Dittrich. By far the most interesting is the one by Sochor. I met Sochor in Prague and he is writing a history of Marxism. There will be a large section on Wittfogel. I send also the English translation I made from the Czech last year. Sochor said that he was sorry Wittfogel was no longer a Communist but that he could not disregard his contribution to Marxism. This is the kind of spirit that I would like to develop. Perhaps it is coming.

1967 dec 4

Concerning your comments in the Gespräche, I was generally pleased with what you said. I have just completed a long article dealing with the debate on the Asiatic mode of production and social formations with particular reference to the work of Ferenc Tökei. I am very critical of his work. I think you said more in those few pages dealing with the problem than Tökei has said in some two hundred pages (Valosag etc.). He misrepresents (misunderstands??) Marx and even Hegel in dealing with the problems of social and historical development. The whole problem of the historical "Sackgasse" in slavery he misses as well as the problems of "staatlicher Überbau" and the "bürokratischen Zentralisationstendenzen" which we also discussed when I was with you last year. I will send you a copy of my article when the reprints are ready and also my soon to be published study of Wittfogel.

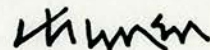
But enough of Tökei and enough of me. For whatever purposes you may desire, a selection of Wittfogeliana is on the way.

NICOS POULANTZAS

Since 1965, three articles have appeared in Temp Modernes by a very promising young Marxist, Nicos Poulantzas: "Preliminaires a L'étude de L'hegemonie dans L'état", "Vers une théorie marxiste" and "La théorie politique marxisme en grande-bretagne". A book is soon to appear, Le Politique et la Lutte des Classes. The article on political theory in Great Britain, which also appeared in the New Left Review, I am sending you because it contains a critique of your Geschichte und Klassenbewußtsein. I think that Poulantzas has greatly over-simplified your argument and I intend to write an answer to him early next year. I thought you would at least like to know about him. I have ordered two copies of his forthcoming book, one for you and one for myself thus I am not sending all of his articles. If you want them, in the meantime, I will ofcourse send them to you.

Wishing you good health and strength for your work, I am

Yours ever,



Ulmen
New York
4 December 1967

MTA FIL. INT.
Lukács Arch:

12 January 1968

Gary Ulmen
410 Riverside Drive
New York, New York
10025

Professor Dr. Georg Lukács
Budapest V
Belgrád Rkp. 2. Em 5

Dear Professor Lukács,

Thank you for your wonderful letter. I was very pleased to learn that you found the materials I sent you interesting and that you enjoyed the Styron novel. Here in New York, the snow is on the ground and we are having an intense cold-spell; yet with 0° the sun is shining brightly on this morning und es ist gut zum Denken und Leben! My apartment is to the Hudson as yours is to the Danube and the river is now almost frozen over as it was in Cooper's Satanstoe.

APROPOS STYRON

If I may, I would certainly agree with you that Styron comes closer to understanding and expressing the problem of alienation than most other writers today. However, I think that the contradictions in American society are becoming more and more acute and at such a rapid pace that any work of literature either consciously dealing with - or unconsciously reflecting - alienation is bound to be outstripped by the reality of present-day America. Living in this qualitatively "new" America, which I, still in my 20s, do not recognize from the America that I was born into perhaps makes me more impatient with much of our literature, Styron included, which is not fully dealing with or reflecting the great turmoil we are going through and the great problems that confront us. This is especially true concerning the Negro problem. These are the reasons for the statements I made in my last letter concerning Styron. I am admittedly impatient for our literature and theater to catch up to the present for the ideology of today is the school of tomorrow. And most of our theater and literature is still concerned with yesterday. But there are new stirrings and experiments which are coming of age. Wozu Amerika?

APROPOS WITTFOGEL ?

Only with some trepidation did I send you the Wittfogel-materials and I can fully appreciate that you are skeptical about a "Wittfogel Renaissance" in Budapest. I am naive enough to hope for the day when all of the major contributions to Marxism and to Western thought in general can be recognized and utilized sans "Ost und West".

MTA FIL. INT.
Lukács Arch.

1968 jan. 12.

I can see a unity of thought amidst the political and intellectual diversity of Marxism in the Twentieth Century--in the seminal and lasting contributions to that great intellectual explosion called Marx. I assumed that you would give the Wittfogel-materials over to be utilized by others: Tökei etc. I am more concerned that you continue on with the Ontologie/Entfremdung book than that you spend time reading Wittfogel. I am pleased to hear that you are now on the last chapter. It is you who stand at the center of Marxist philosophy for the first half of the century as Thomas Mann stands at the center of bourgeois literature. And as you so beautifully stated in your essays on Thomas Mann: "In life, on the other hand, we are almost always concerned with incomplete phenomena; even a persons death is only the end of his career in a very relative sense; his deeds and works continue to make themselves felt. Whatever sources we may find for our mistaken views of life, one thing is certain--these views will bear the terminus a quo imprint of the present." This American edition of the Thomas Mann essays was the first book of yours that I read. Thomas Mann was for me the greatest aesthetic experience of my student days. His Gesamtausgabe is here on my bookshelves. Under Wittfogel's influence, I first read Geschichte und Klassensbewußtsein. I could not obtain the old Malik Verlag edition and thus I had it photocopied and bound. After my conversations with you I became more aware of my lack of understanding of dialectics and an insufficient knowledge of your thought. I have now ordered your Gesamtausgabe from Luchter, plus the two volumes, Schriften zur Literatursoziologie and Schriften zur Idologie und Politik. Also the Festschrift for your 80 th birthday. I already have Lenin and some of your shorter works and Wittfogel's copy of Der Junge Hegel is sitting here on my desk. In short, I am making a total approach to your thought. With the considerable study of your works which I have undertaken in the past few months, I am obviously sehr begeistert. I have a penchant for completeness and a desire to know and understand the total man. Apropos Lukács!

Apropos Tökei

Perhaps I was a little unfair in my comments about Tökei but you will see that my arguments with Tökei are primarily theoretical and only ex post facto political. I think Tökei destroys the inner unity of Marx's theory of historical materialism by misunderstanding the relationship between property relations and the mode of production. For me, the theory of the Asiatic mode of Production is both a historical and a philosophical problem. But you can make a judgement on my position after you have read my article. On the other hand, the only existing copy of the english translation of Tökei's book and articles has been with me for the past few weeks and I am anonymously editing it for my friend, Dr. William Goth, and the Aptheker Institute. I have also had many discussions with Goth on his introduction to the book. Thus while disagreeing with Tökei, I am helping to make his work available to english readers. I somehow always find myself in such impossible situations.

MTA FIL. INT.

Lukács Arch.

1968 June 12


1968-10-21/10

I am imposing upon your Freizeit two more books:

- 1) Truman Capote's novel, In Cold Blood, which is creating a lot of excitement here in America. Capote calls it an experiment in a "non-fiction" novel because the story is true and he spent six years doing research for it. It might be called journalism raised to the level of a novel. But it is well done--expressing different psychological and sociological forms of alienation. I think it will interest you.
- 2) I do not want to leave you with such a devastating view of America as one finds in Styron and Capote. Thus I am also sending you the Complete Poems of the American bard, Carl Sandburg. If one wants to catch the spirit of America, one will find it here. I like him very much and I hope you will too. Sandburg died just a few months ago and an exposition of his Memorabilia just opened in New York. He was 89. And in his own way revolutionary!

And now, I have written too much and yet too little.

Yours ever,



gary ulmen

This old anvil laughs at many broken hammers.
 There are men who can't be bought.
 The fireborn are at home in fire
 The stars make no noise.
 You can't hinder the wind from blowing.
 Time is a great teacher.
 Who can live without hope?

In the darkness with a great bundle of grief
 the people march.
 In the night, and overhead a shovel of stars for
 keeps, the people march:

"Where to? what next?"

(Carl Sandburg:
 from The People, Yes