

William W. Craik

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Dear Professor Lukacs,

I should like to tell you how much I enjoyed reading the English translation of your literary work on Balzac, Stendhal, Gorky, etc. It has led me to renew, and now deepen, my acquaintance with Balzac in particular. It is nearly forty years since I read most of his books. (I am now 68 years of age.)

Since reading this book of yours, a Dutch friend of mine has lent me a copy of your "Geschichte und Klassen-Bewusstsein", I can read German fairly well, but I must confess to having experienced considerable difficulty in acquiring what is even now still an incomplete grasp of your exceedingly thorough analysis. It is not an exaggeration when I say that during the past six months hardly a day has passed without my having spent an hour or two wrestling with your outline of the evolution of dialectics on the philosophical side. When I have devoted still a few more hours to the study of your theme I think I will have made a fair approximation to an understanding of the unity of theory and practice and of the historical way to its attainment.

Have you in any way developed your views further on the subject? If you have written anything that has been translated into German I should be glad to know of it and try to lay my hands on a copy.

I am not a member of the Communist Party but of the Labour Party. For over 30 years, together with others, I have been engaged in efforts aimed at replacing the purely empirical thought and practice of the Party by

concrete theoretical thinking (or the method of Marx). Although in this classic land of capitalism the going has been hard we have gained ground. Just before World War I, we inaugurated a movement for "independent working-class education". A central institution was founded, "The Labour College". Despite opposition from most of the trade union leaders, rank and file pressure resulted in the Miners' and Railwaymen's Unions undertaking the control and providing the funds for this college. Those organisations established scholarships for two years at this institution. Later other unions also sent students to the college. This went on until the year following the General Strike, when owing to the almost bankrupt financial state of the controlling unions, the College was closed. Although it has not since been reopened, I have not the slightest doubt that in the near future it will have been found necessary to set up another such institution.

But although The Labour College ceased to exist, the classes which from the outset it organised and directed in the provincial centres not only continued to function but to increase in number under the control of a body known as The National Council of Labour Colleges. To-day there are thousands of those evening classes and day schools operating throughout the country. This movement has become strong enough to gain the recognition not only of most of the trade unions but also of the Trade Union Congress and the Labour Party. But those two latter bodies at the same time also recognise and support other educational organisations which have their origin outside the organised working class and derive from official educational circles. They form part of what is known here as the University Extension Movement and are in receipt of State grants. Two of those organisations are the residential Ruskin College and the Workers' Educational Association. They represent themselves as human-

itarian institutions motived only by the desire to end the long exclusion of the workers from the cultural heritage, to "open the doors" of the universities and academies to the people. Unfortunately too many of our leaders in the Unions and in the Labour Party, and consequently many in the ranks are infected thereby, have still no conception of education other than the bourgeois one and imagine that they are in the van of progress in advocating and supporting facilities enabling an increasing number of the workers to "enjoy" this "education." Their "purely empirical" way of thinking, of which pathetically enough they are so proud, prevents them from understanding that a social order qualitatively different from the bourgeois order cannot be won with weapons drawn from the intellectual armoury of the latter. And the fact that they think about education just as the bourgeoisie does unfits them for the ^{political} fight to establish a new social order. Education is for them something outside the entire social complexus, something living a life of its own and quite independent of the very historical developments that have brought forth the very organisations which they lead.

For the above-mentioned organisations education is held to be non-partisan, non-political, impartial. In its controversy with the advocates of working-class education, the Workers' Educational Association devised what its authors evidently thought was a very clever comparison between it and the Labour College: "The Labour College teaches what to think but the W.E.A. teaches how to think." Promptly the answer was given: The difference between them is precisely the difference between two "hows." And a very qualitative difference it is. From it follows the difference between the "whats."

But here I must stop, for you are doubtless a busy man and I do not want to trespass upon your time. I thought, however, you might be interested in our efforts here to help in ensuring that the "Kampf des Proletariats mit

dem auszeren Feind.....zugleich der Kampf des Proletariats mit sich selbst."

With fraternal greetings.

Yours sincerely,

William W. Craik.

MTA FIL INT.
Lukács Arch.