

Philosophy Congress

Box 18, Folder 25

HR-018-25-06

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Febr. 15, 1949

Dear Nagel,

many thanks for your telegram and letter. Meanwhile I had Sidney Hook's letter, and on the basis of this information from both you and him I decided, like you, to reject the invitation. I sent a copy of my letter to Argentine to Sidney Hook, who will have told you about it.

There was the possibility of a second course of action: we all could have gone to the congress and given papers in which we insist on academic freedom. This would also have been a demonstration. For the public, the way which you chose is presumably more impressive. And of course, after you and the others had rejected the invitation, it was impossible that I went. In such a case it is very important to act as a homogeneous group. And there is no difference between us as to the aim - since we all have the same opinion about dictators.

But, for this reason, I suggest that you inform all the others. Had I not by chance been informed about your not going, I would have gone. I did not know what you write about the investigation by the Am.Phil.Ass. Do you have the list of all the invited men? I got one from Argentina. They give the following names of invited men from the U.S.A.: Krusé, Brightmann, Montague, Perry, Jaeger, John Wild, Helmut Kuhn, Riezler, Frith Kaufmann, Alfred Schulz, Karl Löwith, Farber, Wolfgang Köehler, Gerhart Husserl, Carnap, Reichenbach, Nagel, Stith Thompson.

From England: N.K. Smith, G.E. Moore, Bertand Russell, M.B. Foster, MacDonald Cornford, David Ross. M. Hallet, John Laird, A.E. Taylor.

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I would suggest that you inform all these men about our not going. Among the Germans, I would inform Karl Jaspers, who is invited too He is now in Basel). We need not inform N.Hartmann and Heidegger, who would suit very well the Argentine pattern.

There are many men invited from other countries, xi and I could give you the list of all, if you want them and do not have them. In particular, Russell should be informed. I think that Koehler, too, should be informed; or has he already declined ?

Many thanks for recommending my manuscript to the Journal !

Cordail regards, yours,

Philosophy Congre

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HR-018-25-07

Columbia University
in the City of New York

[NEW YORK 27, N. Y.]

DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY

301 West 108 St.,
New York 25, N.Y.
Feb. 10, 1949.

Dear Reichenbabb,

I hope the telegram I sent in reply to yours has reached you, and that its contents have been of some use to you. Since I sent it off, I heard from Sidney Hook that he wrote you a detailed letter concerning the Argentina congress, including specific data on the repressive measures that have been taken by the Peron government against teachers in Argentinian universities. I assume, therefore, that by now you are as familiar as I am with the facts in the case, so that I will not burden you with repetitions.

However, I would like to state briefly the reasons which led me to decline the invitation. The Argentinian Congress is clearly being supported (if not actually inspired -- and some Argentinian exiles believe this is the case) by the Peron government, in part to win good-will in a number of foreign countries. Now assuming the reported facts concerning the dismissal of university teachers because of their political views, it seems to me that accepting the invitation to attend the congress involves a form of cooperation with Peron, and therefore a tacit acceptance if not of endorsement of his illiberal policy toward intellectuals. I do not want to be a party to such cooperation. I recognize, of course, that refusal to attend the congress (even if all those invited from foreign countries were to decline the invitation unánimously) does not jeopardize the present Argentinian government. But though it may be only a gesture, I do think the gesture is worth making - in part as an expression of solidarity with all those who suffer persecution in their quest for truth, and in part as a way of strengthening the democratic forces in our ~~own~~ own country. There are mighty few things intellectuals can do to stem the rising intolerance that is appearing almost everywhere; but I myself would at least like, as far as I am able, to keep my practice consistent with my professed principles.

I realize, of course, that other considerations may be taken into account, which may be estimated to weigh no less heavily on the other side of the argument, by those who decide to accept the invitation from Argentina. I do not for a moment think that the case is a ~~black~~ black and white affair, and I certainly do not want to sit in moral judgment upon those who disagree with me in this matter. Nevertheless, I confess that I would feel enormously pleased if you too found your way clear to decline the invitation.

(Over)

