

January 27, 1983

To Women's Liberation, News & Letters Committees:

Dear Comrades:

Please note that, instead of addressing you as Dear Sisters, which is the usual way, I am most deliberately addressing you as Comrades. The reason is likewise most deliberate: it is to stress that now that we do have a Trilogy of Revolution -- which was climaxed with the focus around Women's Liberation, so that Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution is a most inseparable and most unique unity -- and have that Trilogy this year when it more than just "coincides" with the Marx Centenary, it is high time to test that word, REVOLUTIONARY, when the subject is Women's Liberation. That is to say, "liberation" is not merely a question of "dress" (there are many "women's organizations, as auxiliaries or otherwise, where that can be dealt with, if you have time for such matters). It is not even "culture." Although that definitely is historic, is of the essence when one's lifestory (history or herstory) is very nearly on the level of revolution -- for in many fundamental respects, it is, indeed, an anticipation of that revolution) -- nevertheless, culture, like philosophy, still remains within the class society. Revolution, and revolution alone, can uproot the totality of society as is. Nothing else can. It is precisely because that is so that it is that and that alone which spells out our uniqueness: our insistence that a successful revolution is inseparable from a philosophy of revolution as much as it is inseparable from the forces of revolution as Reason.

Now then, both "Have Thumb, Will Travel" and the National Tour especially are rooted in that Trilogy of Revolution; and it is high time to ask yourselves questions of organization and why autonomy does not mean looseness, void, bereft of serious, dialectical thought. Therefore, ask yourselves: what type of organization do you wish to belong to? Ask yourself, equally seriously: Hasn't history proved, with the collapse of the Second International (and genuine, revolutionary Marxists belonged to it, not only reformists much less betrayers, although it is the latter that nevertheless imparted their retrogressionism to the whole), that, not having listened to Marx's total philosophy of revolution as ground

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also for organization, the betrayal was inevitable, inescapable, deadly?

We must under no circumstances start this national tour, this new ground which precedes nothing short of a Constitutional Convention, by compromiscist attitudes to Marx's Marxism -- that is, Marxist-Humanism -- just to gain an allegedly "mass following."

Let me give you just two examples to show you why I seem hardly elated, though it is women who have had the initial great response to meetings around the new book. The first is the fact that Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution is the first work ever to have brought out the feminist dimension in Luxemburg, revolutionary theorist and activist -- and the reason it half-excused Luxemburg for not revealing her feminist dimension is because it is up to our age to have seen more than she herself saw because she was an original. Being an original meant that she had no worries that her Ego was in exile or that she felt alienated. If you'll forgive me for bowing to culture and agreeing with that male chauvinist D.H. Lawrence, let me point out that as a great artist he knew whereof he spoke when he said that unless writing in some way escapes its author, it really isn't beautiful. That concept of Original is the second example. Let's go into both examples a bit more.

Being an original, Luxemburg's life-style surely was different from all other women, in and out of the movement. Being an original, she felt that though she in no fundamental way disagreed with Jogiches, she could be herself only by separating from him. Being an original, she, in the very midst and at the height of anti-war activity and revolutionary perspective, suddenly called upon Penthesilea, first, to defeat the Achilles in the German Social Democracy, and then decided that they really weren't worthy of Achilles' fate: the GSD had a damned sight more vulnerable places than their heels.

The WLM of today that failed to pay attention to Luxemburg and in their narrow-mindedness failed to see her feminist dimension because they disregarded her revolutionary nature, life and thought,

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actually proved the opposite, the very opposite of what they thought they were bringing out as new -- woman, woman, WOMAN. And the proof need not lie in Rosa Luxemburg but is as American as apple pie (or whatever you think is indigenous) -- namely, Margaret Fuller. As for the Black dimension, academia and NOW have yet to have the slightest perception of what theory is, and why Sojourner Truth's calling Douglass "short-minded" and naming herself not a proper name but a philosophy entitles her to being studied as a theoretician. Above all, seeing how it is that "masses in motion" do make revolutions that a great "personality" simply cannot has escaped them. Just consider Tatyana Mamonova and contrast her either to the IWD in 1917 that toppled the centuries-old Tsarism, or to the fact that presently she talks of Marxism but sticks to NOW and other such organizations -- to help her overthrow Russian state-capitalism? Really???:!!!

Please, please, please -- call a meeting -- not for the "masses" but strictly and only for the few of you to take a second look at the new book, limited to the single question of what it is that you should want to do, first, to prepare ground for the tour, and second, to follow-through right up to the Constitutional Convention.

Yours,

RAYA

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January 31, 1983

Dear Diane: (copy to all M&I Committees)

If, at yesterday's meeting, I surprised you by showing such interest in the question that had been put to the Women's Liberation committee members by a non-member about which books to read, the truth is that, far from considering such questions minor, I consider them so essential that I am actually going to send a copy of this letter to the locals. The reason for my very nearly making a universal out of this is that little word I never stop repeating: dialectic.

Methodology, methodology, methodology. Because as Marxist-Humanists we are always stressing the quintessential, so that "dialectics" is always followed by "of liberation," (or "of revolution" or "national self-determination", and so forth and so forth), we may forget that dialectic methodology applies to all things, and not just what we consider quintessential. Without it, there is no way, in an analysis of any topic, small or large, that we can trace a process of development seriously enough to know the movement. Not knowing the movement, whether in the subjective or objective sphere, there is no way to perceive the direction. Also lacking, then, is its true origin, for, even if one knows the "facts," one would still need to know the dialectic of its evolution -- that is to say, its historic origin.

Take such simple questions as: "What books can I read on Women's Liberation? There are a lot and I don't want to waste my time. Where can I obtain the type of book that would show me the opposite point of view? When should I read these? Together with those assigned for the class, or before, or after? And who is the most exciting writer on WL?"

That no one thought about so simple a matter as looking at the footnotes in Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution, which are almost as essential as the text itself, and that no one thought of looking at the bibliography -- which is divided in such a way as to relate various books to different theoreticians, to different topics (from Black dimension to Marx's philosophy), and to different historic periods (separating

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the books on the early WLM and those on today's movement) -- reveals a self-consciousness about what the new book truly is. (I'm using "self-consciousness" not in the dialectical sense but in the ordinary sense of a blush.) If, instead, there had been such self-confidence about how great the work they were proposing to study was -- and why it related, very concretely related, to the precise subject that interested the individual who had bothered to attend a meeting on WL, no matter how informal -- then the conveners of the meeting would have taken at least 10 minutes to answer the question about which books to read.

Allow me to suggest the kind of introductory talk that would apply to any class on the new book, or, indeed, any one of the trilogy of revolution. Let's assume that the class is to be on Part II of RLWLM. It should not be called "Part II," which would give the impression that participants will have missed something by not starting with Part I, or ending before the book ends. The dialectic of Part II would easily enough soon reveal that, in fact, Part II projects all three parts of the book. Therefore, the class would be called: "Women's Liberation -- Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow." A sentence would follow that would show that it is not only a question of time as past, present and future, but time in the Marxian sense of "space for human self-development." Moreover, it would be a good idea to follow that with the four quotations that head Part II, because everyone would then see the topic as both comprehensive and yet very personal and exciting, including Luxemburg as a great revolutionary, D.H. Lawrence as a great writer, Louise Michel as a great Communist, and Karl Marx as the philosopher of revolution.

Whether or not you do include those quotations, you would state that you propose that the class consist of three chapters and that you consider the footnotes in each chapter so important that you propose having two reporters at each session (or take two weeks, one for the chapters and one for the footnotes), and that you are proposing this because you want other views aired.

Thus, the main reporter for the seven pages of Chapter 6 would have a chance to speak both on the past, including a world historic event like the First Woman's Rights Convention, and on our age, contrasting Marcuse and Simone deBeauvoir, as well as on the difference between individu-

alism (be that seen in a Rosa-Luxemburg or a Sojourner Truth) and masses in motion (be that the Women's War in Africa 1929, or the Russian Revolution, 1917). At the same time, another reporter (or reporters) would take up the 21 footnotes to that chapter. Some are just a reference to another work and some add a commentary. For example, Ftn. 3, which refers to Chevigny's work on Margaret Fuller¹ contains also a quotation from Fuller's Woman in the Nineteenth Century: "Let it not be said wherever there is energy or creative genius, 'She has a masculine mind.'" I believe somebody would be sufficiently interested in finding out about the woman who said this in the 19th century (specifically as early as 1845) to volunteer to report on her biography. Or take such simple footnotes as Ftms. 1 and 2 -- where the one on Nat Turner is followed by the one on Black women. Someone would surely want to report on the Black dimension, don't you think?

Now take the next chapter (Ch.7), which is also a brief one of eight pages. Yet you have there the very topic -- the break-up of Luxemburg and Jogiches -- which only Marxist-Humanists have explained in a way that has so inter-related the Man/Woman relationship (even where both of them are revolutionaries and very much in love with each other) to the historic period that all can see any easy answer is impossible. And it is because nobody can have a quick answer that you see women, as women, in a sharp confrontation with the rightwing Social-Democrats who are betraying. At the same time, the footnotes give us readings that include everyone from Kollontai to Nettl, who, though he has written the most comprehensive work on Luxemburg, is so sharply criticised that one sees that, far from being an easy characteristic to expose, male chauvinism lies very deep, indeed, within even those who consciously try to be "fair."

Finally, the third and most demanding chapter² (Ch.8) is on the unfinished tasks of today. I dare say that nobody can read pages 100-101 on the new voices and not be moved by the newness that today's WIM has brought, and yet be very conscious that even though Women's Liberation has moved from being an Idea to being a Movement, we are just at the very beginnings of anything that could be called success. Indeed, I believe that whether we are talking about China, or Sheila Rowbotham, or current movements from Iran to Portugal, the desire would be to spend three meetings on just that one chapter,

full of anxiety to move into a study of Marx himself.... Indeed, it is this chapter that makes us conscious of the need to study philosophy as action, and, seeing the Subject as revolutionary force and Reason, to study that original great revolutionary to which the first part of the work is devoted.

As for the footnotes, which begin with Kate Millett's Sexual Politics and continue through Fatima Mernissa's Veiled Sisters, not to mention the U.S. itself and its working women -- and who would want to miss Edith Thomas' Women Incendiaries? -- you would certainly not only want to cover each one, but be sure to point to our own books and pamphlets not only in English but in Farsi, in Japanese, in Spanish, in French, in Italian, in German, in order to show the world character of Marxist-Humanism, and especially appeal to the Third World in their own languages.

The whole point of this letter and the reason for sending it to the locals is that I feel that once we get the method of what a Marxist-Humanist class is -- it is always a preparation for one type of revolution or another -- it wouldn't matter whether you try to take up the book as a whole, or only a part of the book, or the whole trilogy of revolution.³ What is necessary is that we should know where we're going in order to create the kind of attitude to objectivity and subjectivity which means grasping our original, fundamental, historic contributions to Marx's Marxism not as dogma, much less "orders from above," but as being able to share the joy of finding the link to so sweeping a continent of thought and of revolution that, though it is 100 years old, that is where we will find the trail to the 1980s. It is the trail to today whether that be on WL, on Labor, on the Black dimension, on the peasantry, or on Youth as that new generation of revolutionaries that was lucky enough to be born when a whole new Third World emerged, full blown not from the head of Zeus but from their own mass self-activity. This kind of inter-communication between the ages is able to create such new human relations that, though we live in the capitalist-imperialist nuclear world, we have a view not of extinction but of the future that is in the present.

Yours,

RAYA

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FOOTNOTES:

1. Unfortunately, the title of Chevigny's book in this footnote does not include the name of Margaret Fuller, since we followed the idiocies of the publisher's rules which do not require subtitles in footnotes, and because, again unfortunately, Chevigny included Fuller's name as a subtitle. It is correctly listed in the Bibliography.

2. I wish I could transmit to every reader, whether member or not, just how demanding that chapter is, and that by "demanding" I mean the individual responsibility for working out Marx's philosophy of revolution in such comprehensive and concrete terms on the history and development of Women's Liberation that future generations could say, "Oh, that's where they should have started."

3. I don't mean that the "Overview" of Part II is what holds for all three books. I do mean that the methodology, which allowed me to present all of Part I in Marxism and Freedom as the "Movement from Practice," was due first to the new Universal that I abstracted from the actual movement from practice which made me see that that was exactly what Marx did regarding such simple matters as the weavers' strike, and that therefore it also applied to periods long before 1844. For example, this being an American book, it was important to note that the engines of revolution were the Committees of Correspondence. Since I couldn't prove that point without writing very nearly a whole new book, I simply noted it only as a footnote. (That is a most significant aspect of footnotes. If you study them carefully, you can get a whiff of the next book in the writer's mind. That holds true also for RLWLM.) It took many years before Frank wrote the pamphlet, America's First Unfinished Revolution, which developed the question of the Committees of Correspondence.

As for Philosophy and Revolution, its development began with the Hegelian dialectic "in and for itself" (Ch. 1) and then traced its recreation in Marx (Ch. 2), followed by what it became in Lenin, as the Great Divide in Marxism (Ch. 3). Philosophy and Revolution, by the end, could show the dialectic's continuing, pivotal "nature" by pointing to Fanon's recreation of it for illuminating the revolutionary opposition to colonialism. In addition to studying the footnotes in P&R, please read carefully the new Introduction to the 1982 edition, and see how I answered the academic Hegelian who accused me of "creating" an unchained dialectic. Then see how I used the phrase for the organization in my Summation at the Expanded REB on Jan. 1, 1983.