

February 16, 1979

Dear Friends:

The inter-relatedness of today's world revolutionary developments, the role of the peasantry, and the history of that role in both the 1905 and 1917 Russian Revolutions showed, on two totally different levels, their todayness, not only at the Expanded REB on 12/30/78 when it became clear that the chapter in the RL book was precisely what was most urgent for the ongoing revolution in Iran. And now, accidentally, here is what happened this week in Mexico:

John, Mary and I "happened" to be there. While the woman liberationist Eugene had met seemed to be the one interested in arranging certain meetings for me and the new book-to-be, that was hardly any sort of high-point. What did "accidentally" happen and what did lay the ground for an entirely new relationship with the force of revolution was meeting a peasant leader, G.

The historic occupation of the land in Sonora was organized by this magnificent peasant, who had begun his resistance to the powers-that-be when he was drafted into the Army in the early 1960s, and promptly organized a resistance to military discipline. The experiences thereafter with jails, torture, and the state in general did not keep him from returning home, finding the spontaneous actions of the peasantry in every facet from occupation of the land to actual organization of production and an outright military struggle. But every time they met with defeat -- and many were the defeats -- there was never a retreat backward for G. Rather, he was developing new forms of struggle as at this moment they are trying some legal forms. We taped the whole report, covering more than a decade of struggle. (Mary will no doubt transcribe much of it for the paper in later issues so that you can read these in the words of the activist himself.) The discussion that we carried on at that point was so very concrete and universal at one and the same time, with John, asking both concrete questions and relating them to everything <sup>from</sup> struggles through Amnesty International to American struggles, and G. asking every philosophic-dialectical question possible, as he was so happy to meet a Marxist-Humanist, having already rejected not only Russian and Chinese Communism, but also Castro foco-ism. How someone who has undergone so much torture that his body couldn't even experience sleep, it was so full of nightmares (which is why he ended up, for his health, in Mexico City) could also become a poet, is a story of creativity that I do not care to go into, but the poem will be sent to us and I hope all our Latinos and our poets will make sure we get the most creative translation of that poem to appear finally in N&L.

If any further solid proof was needed to show why, for Marxist-Humanists, book-writing -- whether that be Indignant Heart: A Black Worker's Journal or the book-to-be, Rosa Luxemburg, Today's Women's Liberation Movement and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution, -- was never a matter of "artistic expression", the meeting up with G. was that proof. Neither national boundaries nor class distinctions, whether of industrial worker or peasant or a revolutionary intellectual, could possibly deflect from reason and revolution as both a universal and an ongoing daily activity.

It's in this sense that I wish to conclude this very abbreviated report -- Mary will no doubt include other aspects both in her Lead and later when we see some of the interviews I had (in which she actually was the translator) because only a Marxist-Humanist could be both rigorous in the translation and creative in the explanation. )

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Let me expand a bit about what I mean "in this sense". I began with the inter-relatedness of today's world revolutionary development with both the role of the peasantry and the history of that role in two specific revolutions. But in fact, all this came about because I was working on the RL book and once I met up with those revolutions, they shed light, not just on Rosa Luxemburg, and her theories of spontaneity as well as organization, but on today's struggles and especially the imperativeness of Marx's philosophy of revolution for today, not just as the time of today, but as the Women's Liberation as Movement, which, if it does not grasp the direction from Marx's philosophy of revolution, we would not be meeting the challenge of the times. And the challenge of the times in regard to WLM must not only begin but never move away from the new in the chapter that we printed in N&L: "Marx's and Engels' Studies Contrasted -- Relation of Women's Liberation to Philosophy and Revolution."

Let me cite three different very little things to show the negative feature not only of the middle-class WLM in Mexico as well as our own need to reorganize ourselves, which was so central since the Expanded RBB, but also <sup>some</sup> positive features: 1) As against the intellectuals who were supposed to have been studying my books, especially the one-to-be, because so many were anthropologists to begin with, who said that since they had not yet studied Marx's Ethnological Notebooks and did not know Draper, they would first have to have a further background before expressing a point of view of their own, the simple book at the National Anthropological Museum -- the greatest in the world -- did more than just reproduce beautiful materials from the past. If you bothered to read the text by Maria Antonieta Cervantes, you would have at once found out that she must indeed have a great appreciation for Marx's refusal to make any big division between ancient society and the present, for she at once brought in the following: that whereas different productive activities like hunting and gathering may not have at once shown "the existence of an exploited class above a productive class..." we have to take "into consideration that the main role in social changes is played by the class struggle."

2) As against such Stalinist anthropologists as Leacock, who ignorantly thinks that Engels has "milked" Marx's Notebooks for all they are worth, and therefore we simply have to bring Engels' Origin up to date, or as I expressed it in some of my talks there "Morgan's Ancient Society plus technology = Engels' Origin of the Family", the truth is that unless we understand new beginnings and that becomes the jumping off point, we are sure to regress, even as Sheila Rowbotham did, to reducing Marx's great new continent of thought to a Draperian male-chauvinism.

3) Therefore, I wish to return to what we've been talking about ever since the Expanded RBB, the need for individual self-reorganization. There is no point, for example, to thinking that if someone has been assigned to report on that chapter, that that has ended the question of responsibility for all the new that the book-in-progress demands of us. One must root one's thought in an historic mirror, and it's only in that way that one meets the challenge of today.

One final word on what has not only crossed the border lines between Mexico and the U.S. but reached across the globe to a Russian dissident, who admits knowing absolutely nothing about any Women's Liberation Movement and certainly made no connection between those Ethnological Notebooks in which he is a magnificent specialist. He has seen that, of all things in "ideologically-backward" America, he has met up with a study that requires a reorganization of all he has studied heretofore.

Yours,  
Raya

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P.S. I should not have let my preference for the peasant leader over the middle-class Women's Liberationists keep me from reporting some of the positive features there, as well: 1) First and foremost, the women definitely felt an affinity for N&L Committees and most assuredly will keep us informed of developments in their movement there. They accepted enthusiastically our proposal for an exchange of material and correspondence.

2) Though they may wish to "Mexicanize" our poster on "Woman as Force and Reason", which for us centered around Black, they definitely wished to accept our "slogan" -- i.e. Woman as Reason as well as Force.

3) There is also no doubt that Marta, who took care of most of the arrangements during our visit, was also responsible for seeing that several articles appeared in publications before we appeared, including one piece by her that appeared in the major afternoon paper in the city of Universal, another in the main Left publication Uno Mas Uno (the same paper that published an interview with Eugene). In addition to this main article (which the office sent to you last week) there were two smaller reviews of M&F and P&R.

4) I must also report that we met the Christian Humanists, who are very interested in us, especially one near-Marxist theologian who had written for the public press on two concrete aspects: first, that it was Raya Dunayevskaya who had "prophesied" that the new Pope would be attacking the liberation theology in Latin America as the first point on his agenda; and second, that the Lenin chapter in P&R was the most "brilliant" analysis of that subject he had ever read.

5) Finally, we had two interviews while we were there -- and though we will have to wait to see if they will ever appear, it is important that Marta arranged for them, and they did take place.

And the mails have just brought us copies of Eugene's presentation on the new chapter, which I feel is one of the best I have seen and which should definitely be included as an integral part of the Discussion Bulletin just produced. We are asking Eugene to make sure that sufficient copies are xeroxed and sent to each local.