

Nov. 26, 1977

Dear Sisters:

The two developments on Women's Liberation since the plenum that merit further discussion both because they will become ground for your summary of first quarter (come Dec. 31), and will determine your activities and your thought extensions are: (1) the WL discussion on Channel 53, centering mainly around Sexism, Politics and Revolution; and (2) the IWY conference at Houston, an analysis of which is now going to press (N&L will be mailed Thurs.). Let me begin with the second point, both because, as objective event, it is sure to have repercussions which will continue to have our intervention, and because, unless we learn DIALECTICS as methodology of praxis, we will constantly be left at first negation: pessimism.

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Naturally, the negative--1st negative, 1st reaction--predominated, for what else could you expect of a govt-sponsored-and funded affair. Unfortunately, without going through 2nd negativity, you would be jumping to absolutes as conclusions that become every bit as abstract as their singleness of issue. Thus, one thinks in "lesser evil" type of choice and "Alternative" is reduced to the naming of "other" as "Grass Roots" when, in fact, the masses are present not only as careerist and politician-seeking advances, but welfare mothers, Black, Latina, native American.

First, therefore, let us linger on that word, Alternative, having in mind what was so named in PHILOSOPHY AND REVOLUTION: Trotsky, Mao, Jean-Paul Sartre. Now these are great high Stalinism vs events that every right to be considered alternative (1) Stalinism, LT certainly fought the bureaucracy & thought repeating, just repetition of what Lenin said, without working out for oneself the new of what happened since the death, objectively and subjectively, was the "true alternative." (2) Maoism had even more right to think itself the alternative to Russia's Khrushchevism; he achieved no less than a great national revolution, and on greater space-mass ever; whereupon he decided "Superstructure", "Culture" was the revolution, world at that. (3) And the Outsider-looking-In, Sartre, though only an intellectual, likewise had "title" to being Alternative since, at one and the same time, he developed new philosophy--Existentialism--and disoriented a whole generation of post-war youth.

Now we rejected all, proving with Ch. 9 as with Ch. 1, that unless it is total, unless it is new, unless it meets the challenge of the times with "new passions and forces"--as Force & Reason, concrete, etc.etc.

So, how in the heck can we think that the mere naming of some group in NY as such, without their unfolding any new, much less total, banner, means that the masses who came did have an alternative to the government-ran confab, with such open counter-revolutionary patrolling streets--and other conf. to patrol streets--and "should" have gone there? And in neither was there any confrontation of ideas--a single person, if she could have been gotten with our leaflet or brochure or actual sale, would have been a great deal more crucial than considering those 2 as "alternatives."

As for "broader issues"--they actually came from below and were concrete--truth always is--and on that level we could have seen a different direction than the pessimism into which some may have been thrown into. But even that could have shown

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direction only if we didn't consider that we aren't in quantitative measurements still just because we don't use numbers; broaden or "more" aren't qualitative terms, not in any dialectical sense leading to totality which demands NEW&CONCRETE AS WELL THEORY AND PRACTICE.

You will note, when W&L comes off the press, two crucially new phenomena. One I now use not only Woman as Reason but as Revolutionary. And the movement from practice, even where limited to "substitute resolutions", as "recognition of Self as social being, Women Liberationists in action, thus:

"Because these new substitute resolutions that were passed so overwhelmingly were so concrete, it was clear that it was not what was done there at the conf. that was the most important, but what remains to be done afterward. That task was recognized as the one to be done by themselves, not left to those above". It was the recognition of Self as social being, Women Liberationists in action."

And to draw to a conclusion even where the horrid opposite--the counter-revolution--forced upon the conf. not just the question of any single resolution, or all, but accusing all of revolution forced all to face the truth, thus: "The counter-revolution with its slanders against the very subject of the conference, did change the question from any single issue to the totality of revolution. That unfolds an entirely new banner: Woman as Reason and as Revolutionary. Nothing short of it will help uproot this exploitative, sexist racist society."

Now it is exactly this, but in this case, moving the question of Sexism, Politics and Revolution from Mao's China to USA. Suzanne singled out, for her question, the relationship of Roxane Witke to organizations like NOW, and Tommie wanted explanation of how should Chinese both ghettoize the African students, and fortify the Chinese from solidarizing even such low material levels as combs or whatever. This gave me the opportunity to point to these American facts: Roxane Witke was not an individual academic; she certainly was sympathetic to Chiang as feminist, bourgeois feminist, and therefore because she manifested all the middle class characteristics totally deaf to revolution, she refused to extend her trip; thus she not only cut herself out of walking into history through the Chinese Revolution at the critical moment of total transformation, but it actually swallowed her feminism as well. This was seen not only in the 5 years and 500 pages working up a week-long interview, but in fact that though Ting Ling was likewise dear to her, and yet she asked not one question of Chiang either about Ting Ling's struggle with Mao in 1937 or 1957. On the other hand, though Ting Ling was a revolutionary feminist, and though much could have been learned from her by such male chauvinists as Mao himself, she still was not a Marxist-Humanist, that is to say, Woman as Reason, that is to say, challenging Mao not just on question of WL, but theories of revolution and thus association with youth who were then asking that, in place of going back to Chiang when Japan invaded, opening a "Second Lenin Front."

Whether or not that strategy was the correct one, the point is that the subject was quintessential for we do not fight for anything short that a totally new humanist society and the philosophy and revolution needed as unity. Which was shown even more once they did have power, once internationalism was reduced by Mao to degrade the African Revolutions and, while claiming to be for American Blacks, as anti-US imperialism, retaining all the prejudices on the greatest revolutionary force in the US.

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Finally, but actually primarily, both for IWY conference follow-up and Channel 56 discussion, is ORGANIZATIONAL consequences. The comrades at IWY did distribute about 2,000 leaflets, and some hundreds brochure; did sell Sexism-Politics and Revolution pamphlet and met one Iranian who had evidently heard mein LA in 1978. If now, she is naturally so concerned with Iran, that she can't discuss M&F or whatever, nevertheless the fact that she remembered that far back means there is such passion for philosophy, for uniting that with revolution, that we must learn how to be concrete as to how we present Marxist-Humanism in organizational terms.

Perhaps we should begin now, not only in general, ~~what~~ but specifically the women who kept signing our mailing lists to see whether we shouldn't begin concentrating on the classes that will begin on Marxism in mid-Jan.

C Perhaps we should begin writing letters to ^{tell} old and new friends and, again, Marxist-Humanism, or Woman as Reason and Revolutionary, or classes in concrete terms. That is to say, it is not only the announcement of date and place, but single out something to tell them that you know from them would interest them.

O Take the most recent development--that the strikers at Essex in Chicago we have worked with have asked us to picket UAW offices while they are having some sort of powow they know about. If they knew how to contact and ask for aid; why can't we know how to single out a direct relationship to P&R. Surely, there were many Latinas at the IWY--by no means just token either as Latinas or Blacks--did anyone establish any relationship re Spanish editions?

P (Incidentally, if I may tell one "anecdote" which is perhaps why I wasn't so arcusend against govt-funding. But during the Depression, if t weren't for WPA, or ERA and other matters from relief to theatre, to culture, to history, not only would we have starved¬ so beautifully at that, but much "propagandizing" would have lapsed. Ah, well, let's begin anew.)

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Yours,
Raya

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