June 22, 1982

Dear Mariana,

Just saw your Dear Sisters letter of the 15th and was impressed by your question, "Are we ready for the 'moment' when Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation, and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution will be off the press? I intend to write a practice review of the book for a WL Discussion Bulletin ..." because I do not think we can make the leap needed to become a serious challenge in the Women's Liberation Movement, much less the whole post-Marx Marxist movement, unless we learn to swim in that new work and take every event that happens when it happens as it happens, including our own self-development, until we have so internalized this new work that it becomes heart and soul of this decade's analyses and activities.

For example, when you write further "The past decade of the fight for the ERA represents the development of Marxist-Humanism from the eve of the publication of Philosophy and Revolution to the eve of RLWLMPR ..." I couldn't agree with you more. I've been waiting for that for that whole decade and I must confess I saw no evidence, no serious evidence, that the Women's Liberation right here has done any such thing. So the real problem is not just to ask the questions but to concretize such evidence and answer.

May I suggest that the REB Minutes of May 31 be studied very deeply, really dug into instead of just read as if it were an exercise in reading instead of practicing the dialectic. Let me illustrate what I mean as jumping off points. (All the references are to the discussion.) Eugene was to the point both as he singled out Parts II and III of the Convention Call and, in developing methodology, stressed "There is a constant great tension between the movement from practice and the movement from theory." But, again what is needed is not only to point to it, but to break through.

Bob was correct to single out Second Great Divide, and that, indeed, proved centerpoint for all. But what is needed for WL is to dive into that Second Great Divide as development, for WL as Marxist-Humanist, and not depart from that breakthrough and what RD achieved until you really are ready to supplement the originality of this historic divide. For example, it would be all too easy to show (and prove nothing thereby except self-satisfaction) that WL as force of Revolution and Reason was broken through by me both before breakthrough on Absolute Idea May 1953 (see my document "Our Organization") and after, but the point is to show how before it was instinct and empiric; how after it led to Constitution in 1955 in organizational form, and, above all, only when it became not only an Idea whose time had come but actually became a Movement it became part of P&R both as hailing it and criticizing it AND ONLY WITH RLWLMPR DID IT FINALLY REACH THE STATUS OF GREAT DIVIDE FOR THE WHOLE OF MARXIST-HUMANISM where, instead of just whispering that VIL, in his and actually the world's First Great Divide with his philosophic reorganization which was ground of actual 1917, nevertheless had not done so either on the party question or WL, I finally dared take him on in new book.

Now what a WLer would have to do is to concretize this by taking those 3 little paragraphs Mike refers to, i.e. that I wrote for material for book and try doing it for book review in 3 pages. I meant to go through all the rest of the discussion, especially Jim's very important point on the difference between 1980 version of Marx's Ethnological Notebooks I wrote about when the concentration was Engels and Hal Draper and 1982 when it became part of Part III, strictly Marx's own ground and challenge to us for this age so that it became inseparable from "revolution in permanence" but just have not a moment to spare (I stole this moment from Perspectives which is wrong) but I think my point is clear.

Yours,
Raya

LETTER TO THE YOUTH FOR CONSIDERATION AT THE INTERNATIONALIST MARXIST-HUMANIST YOUTH CONFERENCE ON SEPT. 3, 1982

Dear Youth:

Your most beautifully produced Discussion Bulletin -- in appearance it surpasses any of the bulletins produced at the Center -- and its multitudinous approaches to Marxist-Humanism is impelling me to address you when you will be mapping out your perspectives at your Conference. All the articles in your Bulletin articulate the tasks that will preoccupy all of us at the Convention, facing 1983, that centenary of Marx's death that is most alive in our "three books, not one."

Your Bulletin has led me to entitle the Perspectives Thesis, on which I am now working: "What To Do." Much as Lenin's concept of the vanguard-party-to-lead in What Is To Be Done? has brought ill-repute to that expression*, please note that my "What To Do" includes also "Facing the Depth of the Recession and the Myriad Global Political Crises as well as the Philosophic Void." And that is followed by the parenthetical sentence: " 'As well as' does not mean a third or subordinate point, a sort of 'also ran'; rather, philosophy expresses, dialectically, the meaning of the other two points -- economics and politics -- as both their ground and the path for their resolution, subjectively and objectively -- Freedom."

The whole point of the Perspectives is the concreteness and practicality of philosophy. Let me begin by saying that, while I was impressed with every single article in it, I wish to take two very different types of articles as my point of departure here. One type is shown both in Laurie's article, "Challenges to the Anti-Nuclear Movement," which, at one and the same time, speaks concretely of activities in that movement and the lack of methodology, and in Rickie Rae's, which is likewise both concrete (indeed, she is the only one who has already contacted a professor for the Spring Lecture tour) -- and speaks about the totality of our approach to the "three books, not one." The other type is the most original because, as a worker, Ned (as the personification of the movement from practice that is itself a form of theory) expresses, precisely, what is so new with us not only in discovering the movement from practice, but in adding that telling little phrase "as a form of theory." The determinant in Ned's article is easily grasped: it is what Marx designates as the "differentia specifica" -- "at the point of production."

First, Ned shows that the real nuclear war is already going on and he further specifies where: "in the mines, factories and fields of the country." He doesn't let go of that burden to life, but carries it through to death -- and that long before the actual outbreak of nuclear war. Who, after reading his article could think of Colorado as beautiful instead of as the locale of the uranium mines which killed his uncles? What is a worker's life worth in capitalist society which deals him cancer and "black lung"? Who can forget the "worker who got crushed to death because they didn't put up

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* Many youth today may not know that Lenin took that title from what was a very popular novel by the radical social philosopher, Chernyshevsky, or that what the novel was about was Women's Liberation and "free love," not bound either by marriage licenses or conventions. It was a book that dealt, philosophically and concretely with the need to get rid of this damn system and have a commune-type of new social order.

wood supports in the mine because of this speed-up." Such concreteness is not separated from the totality of the system we oppose, as Ned immediately follows that with: "It's not just the radiation from the mine which kills you, it's the whole system of production." To make sure you don't think this is just a regional story, he tells us about the seepage into the ground water and into the surrounding streams, concluding: "The whole Southwest and Mexico live off the Colorado River. If an accident should happen, millions of people would be contaminated. Who says the nuclear war is the biggest danger?" The very last sentence of his article brings us back to philosophy -- and the need for re-thinking: "The anti-nuclear movement will be great if it connects to this re-thinking and opposes the war going on today."

Our need is to connect this with the challenge we are issuing to all post-Marx Marxists and to do so, not just rhetorically, but most concretely -- which means many sales of our books. Let me stress, once again, that I'm addressing this letter to the Youth. Remember, please, that one of the take-off points in Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution occurs two years before Marx broke openly from bourgeois society, two years before he made that first famous statement that we used to have as the News & Letters motto: The Root of Mankind is Man. That was Marx's answer to the question he had been asked about why he, as a bourgeois youth in the university, became a radical. He had answered: "To be a radical means to grasp things at their root, and the root of mankind is man." He concluded that a society that exploits and alienates that "root" must itself be uprooted. It was, as I have pointed out, two years before Marx came to that conclusion, that, as a Young Hegelian still, he was laboring on his doctoral thesis, "The Difference Between Epicurean and Democritean Philosophy," and articulated a Promethean vision against slavery, even if it were only slavery to the gods. Marx's praise of Prometheus' rebellion against the gods, and of Epicurean philosophy speaks through the ages about the creative nature of mind. It is what led Marx to the recognition that it is not great men who make history, but masses in motion.

It is that which made him see movement in, of all things, the swerve of the atom which Epicurus described. The young Marx was thereupon not stopped even by Hegel's phenomenal concept of the creativity of absolute negativity as the impulse and decisive force in the transformation of reality. Instead, he criticised Hegel for not practicing that dialectic in the analysis of Epicurus. His claim that he was taking issue with the master philosopher because Hegel was so preoccupied with the whole history of philosophy, from ancient to modern times, that he could not pay attention to details actually permits us to become witnesses to the emergence of Marxian dialectics. Though rooted in the Hegelian dialectic, Marx is on his way to discovering a new continent both of thought and of revolution.

What I am driving at here is the creative nature of Marx's mind. It is this which led to his being attuned also to all the struggles, from that against Prussian censorship to the weavers' strike that was soon to erupt. It was Marx's rigorous and dialectic attitude to philosophy which inspired his fight against the Prussian censorship and his new sensibilities to masses in motion, and made Marx a Marxist. That Promethean vision that initiated a whole new continent of thought and of revolution continued throughout his life so that the new moments Marx discovered in the last decade of his life became the trail all the way into the 1980s.

It is this that we must project, must concretize. For that, Youth is a key; the year 1982-83 is crucial. Both of these facts must find further articulation so that "three books, not one" is not just rhetoric but spells out that total uprooting that requires "three books not one" as its ground. The concretization of this, just this, will not just be sales of books, ever-wider dissemination of Marxist-Humanism throughout the world, but such growth of membership that Marx's philosophy of revolution, not "the party to lead," will signal the coming of the revolution itself.

Time is a peculiar element that disregards itself when it becomes the time when ideas and revolution merge, so it doesn't really matter whether you were here (I mean whether you were yet born) in 1957 when Marxism and Freedom was completed. Today you are still living through the three pages of freedom opened in those mid-1950s -- when the workers battling Automation in the U.S.; when the workers rising up against both "work-norms" and political tyranny in East Europe; and when the Black dimension internationally were all showing that we had, indeed, reached a new movement from practice that was both itself a form of theory and totally global.

Were you born when the youth in revolt in May 1968 had to confront the startling fact that its revolution had aborted? Did that start your journey of discovery, of working out a totally new relationship of theory to practice, of philosophy to revolution, the historic development of humankind from ancient times to today's WL in that most fundamental of all relations, Man to Woman? Then, whether or not you knew the book, you met Philosophy and Revolution, which was published in 1973, the eve of such a structural crisis of capitalism as to sound its doom: no more "booms."

The very fact that your task at this Conference is to disseminate Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution tells you the answer to the relationship of philosophy to revolution in so personal a form that you see it physically as well as philosophically in that great personality, Rosa Luxemburg. Rosa Luxemburg and today's unique Women's Liberation Movement is one way to concretize Marx's philosophy of revolution and its actual realization -- i.e. to have it be. Whether you are in the anti-draft or anti-nuke movement, or at the point of production in the factory, or on the campus, or fighting Reagan's retrogressionism with women and the Black dimension, you no doubt feel the compulsion not to leave it just at your projection, but to have others wanting to read M&F, P&R and the new book for themselves, as theoretical preparation for the American revolution.

How about it? What is it in your agenda that will not recoil from the word , "sale," but will see it as the way to create new friendships, and even new memberships? How will you show the world that "Have Thumb, Will Travel", far from remaining only in its hobo-ist origins, is the actual roadway locally, nationally and internationally, to get to the future? A future that will be non-exploitative, non-sexist, non-racist, with truly and totally new human relations.

Take such a simple date as the early 1950s about which we speak so often as the most crucial manifestation of the new age, because it was then that the very first revolution from under Communist totalitarianism was born. It now turns out that those early 1950s saw also the very first revolution in Latin America, Bolivia's, this time from Western imperialism. How do you propose to project that into the struggles against Reaganism in El Salvador in the U.S.? For that work with the Spanish-speaking dimension, we have both

Marxismo y Libertad and Filosofia y Revolucion as well as our bilingual pamphlet on the "Unfinished Latin American Revolutions" and much more.

In Africa, too, and in of all places -- Namibia, we now find that they had handed in their first petition against South Africa to the UN in 1951. That is the very place that has become so alive and close to us by virtue of Luxemburg's sharp attacks not only against the German imperialists' savage General Von Trotha, who had driven the Hereroes into the Kalahari Desert where they were massacred, but also against the opportunism of the German Social-Democracy's main theoretician, Karl Kautsky. It was this which signalled the revolutionary anti-war movement of that day -- which remains relevant for today's anti-war movement. You can see how very todayish is Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution.

I shall look forward to hearing on Sept. 5 what you have decided on September 3.

Yours,

RAYA

August 16, 1982