

March 13, 1984

Dear Friends:

Whether International Women's Day was celebrated as a special meeting, as it was in Ann Arbor, where we were one of four sponsors, or whether as in Detroit, it became part of the classes themselves, or as in Chicago, where Terry had a chance to speak on a university panel-- the point is not to act as if that fact were not related to a body of ideas just because it is also a movement or because the participants from those meetings may not return to other classes. The proof of the close relationship between IVD and the Marxist-Humanist body of ideas can be seen in what happened in Portugal, where again there was no direct relationship between the two.

I'm referring to the fact that Isabel do Carmo, the head of what is now the Revolutionary People's Party, and what was during the revolution the PRP-BR, and who told our comrades when they were in Portugal in 1977 that she was no feminist, now says "I'm beginning to think our whole struggle, the struggle of the Revolutionary People's Party, was really a fight carried on by women". She is as wrong now as when she refused to recognize women as reason as well as a revolutionary force, and it is quite fantastic to say that the Portuguese revolution was made only by women. What is of the essence is that she is still not fully conscious of the power of Marxist-Humanist ideas. Yet the fact is that we and we alone saw women as one of the four new forces of revolution as reason back in the 1950s, when there was neither Women's Liberation as a movement, nor any other tendencies calling themselves Marxist creating such a category.

Put otherwise, when the objective situation and the subjective response of Marx's Marxism correspond, that is when a new category can be made. This new category, flowing from the recognition that we have entered a new age where the movement from practice is itself a form of theory, is what created for us the anticipation of the revolutions of the 1970s and the importance of what used to be arrogantly referred to as "the role of women".

There are two other events this week where the whole question of when a fact is not just a fact but a leap in cognition brings us back to the classes with their stress on the trilogy of revolution as a body of ideas in which no force can claim to be decisive when separated from reason-- that is to say, to think of something as only theory or only practice is one-sided. Take the relationship of philosophy to revolution as it is expressed in the final chapter of RLWLM. It is clear there that without Marx's philosophy of revolution as the determinant, singling out any one force of revolution as the only one is wrong. That is why dialectics is a genius.

The two events I had in mind were 1) my article in Praxis, and 2) from the opposite point of view, Terrell Carver's new book Marx and Engels: the Intellectual Relationship. Just as some of the intellectuals who seem to be interested in new forces as peasantry, as "populism", as Third World, as Black world, as opposed to "Marxian dogmatism"-- Shanin, Vitkin,

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Wada, Cedric Robinson-- turned out to be quite far away from dialectics and from us, so Terrell Carver, who came so close as to see the differences between Marx and Engels after Marx's death, turns out to be even further away because women as reason or even just as force is the last thing in his mind. (He doesn't even mention the Origin of the Family.) A bit of this type of separation between philosophy and revolution comes out, I'm sorry to say, from the VLM, including some of our own comrades. Why otherwise would this article in Praxis which has brought so many new openings-- from the invitation to participate in the projected Yugoslav Encyclopedia of Contemporary Socialism, to new relations with Swedish Marxists, to the review by such a non-believer as G.A. Kelly and others I could cite but won't-- have not brought forth either reviews or even discussion from within WL-N&L? Will it form ground for discussion in preparation for the upcoming Convention?

The whole question of timing, of when in current events there is an actual new category in retrogression, and not only in revolution, is crucial. All of us as writers for N&L have to hold this in mind, since it concerns when a fact is to be analyzed not only as fact but as manifestation of retrogression. Take the question of the N&L editorial for next issue, for which Suzanne has volunteered. It is indeed about the Reagan retrogressionism, not only as seen in the latest vulgar campaign for prayers in the schools-- even though what we have learned from childhood is that what was great about our "New World" was the separation of church and state-- but also how the Supreme Court, following that retrogressive lead by Reagan, has carried out a campaign against women's liberation, against labor, against Black America, against children. That of course is the focus for the Editorial. Nevertheless, it would also be international in the sense that whether the religion is Christianity, or Judaism, or Islam, and so forth, nothing in the "and so forth", however, would keep us from singling out that absolute horror, Khomeini. If one claims to be the direct representative of God, with a golden key to heaven, how can any other mortal argue? The actual cases we have seen from Iran-Iraq battlefields showed 12-year-olds saying that they were not afraid to die because they will go to paradise since Khomeini says they are martyrs. The other retrogressionist, Reagan, doesn't send 12-year-olds to war. Yet both claim the right from God to commit mass murder-- Reagan by nuclear holocaust. Precisely because I so often quoted Marx's great critique of religion, which nevertheless distinguished what religion is to the masses and what it means to the oppressors, I must stress this new barbarism. This is something so new and so horrendous and so characteristic of the totalitarian nuclear age's search for ever new rationalizations for the irrational that we must begin an open attack, which could commence with this editorial.

The third way of practicing projecting our body of ideas in everything we do no matter how distant it may appear on the face of it, is the following: when we have to write for academia-- and none have been more disdainful of academia than we have been-- we too often disregard any positive feature. I know that many did not fully appreciate my listing Kevin's thesis as part of the classes, and now

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that we have so many new openings in the Latino world, we get so pre-occupied with the imperatives of support committees that we too often ignore the specificity of Marxist-Humanism there. And yet it is just as imperative to know how to present as one, idea and activity, theory as well as practice. What I have in mind specifically is Eugene's thesis "Jose Carlos Mariategui and Karl Marx: Paths to Revolution in the Third World". Why can't we begin to say "Jose Carlos Mariategui" for the Latin world, as we say Frantz Fanon for the Black world? It isn't that we present him as a Marxist-Humanist. It is that we show that when a vision is connected with a need that is concrete it is articulated in a new way. We have our ears so much to the ground that we know how to single out the new in a way that shows an affinity to ideas, as Mariategui did.

Finally, which is what I wanted to start with, Olga and Eugene are in Chicago, and we had been hoping that they would be able to come up with an address for the new office that we could use, even though we aren't moving till July. It became important to try to get a new address that early because of the two pamphlets scheduled for publication before the move. The Afro-Asian Revolutions is otherwise ready for publication now. The pamphlet on the 1949-50 miners' strike will be out this spring. Unfortunately it has proved impossible to concretize an address now. Mike has had to ask LA to hold off for another month on their printing of AAR. Olga and Andy will be off to West Virginia, where Andy is hoping to talk with miners for the Lead in the next N&L on U.S. labor as well as final research on the pamphlet. Both of them will be meeting with our new contacts in Morgantown. The 49-50 pamphlet will, of course, cost plenty. We were very pleased to get a specially generous donation from Ron this week, and we hope others will find ways of assisting us in raising the money for the printing costs.

Though I had meant the last point to be first, if we had a new address to report, I'm actually glad that it is the last point, not for any pollyana reasons, but because it allows me to return to what has been the red thread throughout this letter. That is how to see a new category emerging when objective and subjective coincide, and that most favorite phrase of mine, "at one and the same time", becomes its proof. In this case, "at one and the same time" unites that 49-50 pamphlet with Marxist-Humanism as a body of ideas from its origin in M&F to the projected move of the Center to Chicago because the task is for each and every one of us to become a walking body of ideas.

Yours,

Raya

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