

March 17, 1980

ON MARX'S BIRTHDAY, MAY 5

To the REB-NEB:  
Dear Colleagues:

The nearer I approach the conclusion of the book (and I hope nobody thinks I'm anywhere near that -- but in thought I am), the more the littlest things suddenly stand out as imperative, and the more angry I feel as to why anyone ever thought it was a "little" thing. Concretely, what I'm thinking of is Marx's birthday, May 5. Consider that we celebrate (and by "we" I mean the movement, whether in your lifetime or not); January as the month of the three L's; April as the month of the April Thesis; and that there has been a celebration of the 100th anniversary of Lenin, of Trotsky, of Luxemburg, not to mention the 200th of Hegel. But if there were any of Marx -- and in my many years I don't recall one -- it certainly wasn't of Marx's philosophy of revolution. The most the movement would ever take serious account of was Marx's theory of proletarian revolution -- with such great emphasis on proletarian that talk of social revolution really meant proletarian and not total, human new relations, except in so far distant a future that class-less meant the millennium.

In any case, I have felt that though I don't intend to return to the organization until June (if I was ever away), I would like to come in on May 4 (since that's a Sunday) for the purpose of having a special meeting that day, the eve of Marx's birthday, on Marx's philosophy of revolution.

You are all aware, I'm sure, of the reason for my "jumping the gun" on myself ever since the calendar new year started. The move to a regular 12 page N&L means so serious a transformation of the paper into a theoretical as well as an activist organ that preparations for it necessitate a great deal more than the three months pre-convention discussion which we all know is by no means limited to a single topic, no matter how crucial. Since the focus of the convention must be on the analysis of the objective situation of both the year preceding Convention and the perspective and anticipation for the year to come, the projection of the 12 pager would not have had the time required for assuring regular issuance of a paper on an expanded and more theoretical level. Hence the Feb. 3 REB-NEB meeting. Hence the varied suggestions for who should produce what articles before the convention. Hence the need for "overly Marxist-Humanist a theoretician." Hence the many individual letters and "footnotes" I have written in the process of working out the Rosa Luxemburg book.

You will have noticed from the Dear Sisters letter I wrote on March 11 to WL-N&L that the stress of their pre-convention meeting this year will be grounded in the book rather than "taking that for granted" while proceeding with "practice."

What we need now -- or rather by May 5 -- is a view of the totality of the book before it is finished. That is what I hope to be able to project at the proposed celebration of Marx's 162nd birthday.

I am not proposing a "super-big" meeting -- i.e., one either on the campus or with an outside forum. I'm most interested that this one be at our headquarters, and that, though it is not exclusively for members, it should not involve a great output of leaflets. Rather, a simple mailing to our regular list and a good amount of telephoning of close sympathizers, as if it were, indeed, "by invitation only" -- i.e. for those so seriously interested in Marx's philosophy of revolution that they are wondering how does it happen that that comes after Rosa Luxemburg and Women's Liberation in the title of the work.

Yours, RAYA

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