

an ongoing N & L discussion bulletin

INCLUDES

- ⊙ "Organization, Organization, Organization"
-- by Raya , Detroit
- ⊙ From discussion at the Expanded REB of 12/30/78
-- by Kevin, New York
- ⊙ Presentation to Circle Women's Liberation Union
-- by Terry, Chicago
- ⊙ Some thoughts on the Expanded REB of 12/30/78
-- by Peter, New York
- ⊙ Excerpts from presentation on "Marx's and Engel's
Studies Contrasted: The Relationship of Philosophy
and Revolution to Women's Liberation"
-- by Mike, Detroit

NEWS & LETTERS

2832 EAST GRAND BLVD. DETROIT, MI 48211

February, 1979

Price 35¢

5861

Discussion article, Raya

ORGANIZATION, ORGANIZATION, ORGANIZATION

The triple emphasis on organization in the title is not only to call attention to the fact that I am not writing another philosophic letter. Rather, it is to show that it is impossible to be a really good organization person -- and here I don't mean the projector of Marxist-Humanism, but the most rigorous "attendant" regarding the smallest technical details -- unless there really has been so total an er-innoring (internalization) of revolutionary dialectic, that it comes as natural as breathing.

Let's begin with as allegedly a minor detail as creating a special mailing list of non-subscribers to get the chapter from the Rosa Luxemburg book. The very first thing that is required is the pinpointing of what is new in the chapter and, therefore, the type or types of persons you feel must get the chapter.

Well, what is new in the chapter? What compelled the proposal for now classes in Philosophy and Revolution, with one and only one person -- the author herself -- to give them? When you consider the proposal was introduced at the very time when the author had announced she would not have a lecture tour this year and would in fact not be around for organizational work, isn't it time to ask what changed the goal set at the convention?

A single word, or rather, substitute of one word for another, affects that transformation. The word is "of" in place of the word "and". What that says is this is not a series of classes in Philosophy and Revolution. Rather, it is one in philosophy of revolution. The fact is that what was supposed to have been a minor subject (Engels' Origin of the Family) became, instead, a Great Divide, and that between none less than Marx and Engels. It underwent that transformation not only for the classes, but in the Rosa Luxemburg book as a whole. The title became one not only on "Rosa Luxemburg and Today's Women's Liberation Movement" but (and that above all) of Marx's philosophy of revolution.

The way this connects to that minor matter of a mailing list on the part of myself and Olga was that, as we were working out that chapter, we could see what a challenge to all other Leftists this book would become. And also a challenge to socialist anthropologists in academia, as well as a challenge to the feminists, both Marxist and non-Marxist. This, in turn, demanded that we single out, from the various books I was summarizing, authors (both those who would be sympathetic and those who would be very hostile) who should be sent either the section of News & Letters printing the chapter, and those who would get the paper as a whole, depending upon whether we wanted at once to have them draw a Marxist-Humanist organizational conclusion, or just create a ground for such discussion later.

And since we know that we would now have even more enemies than before, it was also a question of revolutionary socialists who did not see it as we did, but who definitely were sick and tired of the elitist party.

- 2 -

It was for this reason that I suddenly began a correspondence with Sheila Rowbotham, and in fact she was sent a copy of the galley and sent via Harry McShane. There was a two-fold reason the latter form was important: (1) that I wanted comments from Harry who was an old male revolutionary who hadn't been oppressively aware of Women's Liberation; and (2) I wanted Sheila, who was not sympathetic to me but who had written a poem dedicated to Harry, to get this from Harry.

OK, for any N&L member, no matter what the locality, to devise his/hor own mailing list would have required re-thinking in a three-fold way: (1) How do I really wish to issue that challenge, not just as a Marxist-Humanist of yesterday but of tomorrow? Clearly, it means that I myself need to understand what anthropology has to do with our organizational growth, to understand how in the heck could anthropology produce the need for a total philosophy of revolution? (2) While I cannot wait for this total internalization before I make up a list, how about reviewing in my mind, or perhaps better, by writing out, every woman's name I had in any sort of dialogue with ever since the Houston convention? (3) And since it is not a "woman's book," but the question of nothing short of Marx's philosophy of revolution; and since the challenge is not just to living Marxists but to Marxists from the very day of Marx's death, beginning with Engels, why the heck make a sex division between man and woman on the question of philosophy of revolution -- so I better make sure just as many men get this issue as women.

Now, let's go reconsider the Dec. 30 expanded REB meeting. Again, in a strictly organizational manner, strictly on its simple appearance. (Phenomena, you must know, is not just show. As a good Hegelian, you must know that essence must appear, and that the decisive test comes when one can sense when appearance is essence and when it is mere show, epiphenomena.)

Please read very carefully Olga's discussion at the Dec. 30 meeting, especially on p.8 of the minutes, beginning with "The chapter demands a restudy of P&R to grasp why the perspective thesis for the first time ever brought P&R directly into the thesis..." And again, "If Engels' attitude to Marx had been to see Marx as philosophy, and not just genius...history might have been different...and can really be a transition point for all of us."

We are still the only organization that has fully 90 days notice of convention-to-be, and 60 for plenums; and, to meet once a year is both expensive and frequent enough, considering how small our number. Nevertheless, because we are so attuned both to the masses from below as well as to the objective situation, we have felt it necessary also to keep up with the flow of events to check ourselves the first quarter. The REB always does, and often that's an expanded REB meeting. The way that could involve most of the NEB and yet not financially break the organization altogether is not to expect the West Coast to come except "via" a single representative. (Or don't you read the constitution and know that plenums demand the attendance of all NEB members?)

5863

- 3 -

In a word, insofar as content, perspective, balance sheet, the Dec. 30 expanded REB meeting was a plenum and one that started, not Dec. 30, but Dec. 18 when the REB set its agenda and heard a preliminary report of what I intended to say Dec. 30. Moreover, even before that, I had already decided upon the new classes and sent out to all members, not just to the NEB, an outline of the classes (5, since reduced to 4). If for no other reason than the listing of the reading material, that should have given notice of the fact that, far from being a class for those who had never read P&R, the classes were in fact a view of P&R that was related to a new stage of philosophic development required by the new book. (Yes, the book-to-be as well as P&R.)

How, then, could anyone decide to have "their own" type of classes on the same work in "their own" local? Hadn't we drawn any lesson from my attitude to the LA local which did just that last year with its classes on "Marx's Capital and Those Who Try to Truncate It"?

That is to say, even when nothing of the new venture was involved last year, LA felt it had lost out quite a bit by having finished its series on Marx's Capital and Today's Global Crisis before I ever got there. And has anyone really so internalized that pamphlet that they can write a full Marxist-Humanist analysis of the economic situation in the country now?

(You know what is funny? Ernst Mandel has just published a new book, The Second Slump, on that same 1974-5 crisis he said has "run its course", and now another expert Left scholar, Giovanni Arrighi, has appended to his theory, "Towards a Theory of Capitalist Crises," a postscript, taking issue in a most friendly manner with Mandel. Though he is a strict decline-in-the-rate-of-profit man, and Mandel is a strict underconsumptionist, they "criticize" each other only to the extent of being truly alike, i.e. up-to-datish. All this you can read in the latest New Left Review, Sept.-Oct. 1978, an issue devoted to "The Socialist Revolution.")

One word of "theory" regarding the question of overfamiliarity and therefore not really understanding a thesis on a serious, objective level. Take the question of the 1905-6 Russian Revolution. In the next chapter of the Luxemburg book, that's what I will be working on, and we will be challenging Trotsky. You may think: "What's now about that?" The answer is, everything. Everything because when we have criticized Trotsky heretofore, even when it was on the question of permanent revolution first elaborated in 1905, the emphasis was always on the Stalinist period, and the emphasis was always on the fact that Trotsky had not faced the reality of state-capitalism. And because that was the reality, we would discuss the question of permanent revolution, not so much in the 1905 context, but in the context of the Chinese Revolution and the period of 1937. Indeed, that's the way I end the Trotsky chapter in P&R, stressing that any theory that was that far removed from the revolutionary role of the peasantry would automatically collapse out of its own hollowness. But when I will, in this chapter, take issue with Trotsky in relationship to both Lenin

5864

and Luxemburg, the criticism will be, not on state-capitalism, not when he was wrong, but when he developed his most brilliant theory of all directly within the 1905-6 Revolution. So you can see how wrong it is to think one is familiar with a certain situation and thus lose out on the crucial relationship of Reason and revolution as a unit, and thus not get to the total uprooting that Marx had in mind with his philosophy of revolution.

OK, see whether you can anticipate my next chapter, and meanwhile, let's turn our attention to one other concrete matter: CD's tour. I think that one manner in which our members -- naturally very anxious for the organization to grow -- have a tendency to ask too much is to make too many meetings for a visiting member from the REB. This flows from the expectation of immediate results. They think if they only could get one more meeting out of the person, that would really mean new membership. In truth, however, it is they who have to get from each appearance so many new ways of projecting Marxist-Humanism, that rather than asking the speaker for one more talk, they should test themselves with how they approach a person both before having heard our national speaker and after.

In the case of Indignant Heart: A Black Worker's Journal, this is especially crucial since both the publication is now, will need an over-broad periphery, and the Black dimension as proletariat will be forced by the objective situation -- unemployment -- to turn, at one and the same time, to activity and thought. I'm not saying we're on the eve of that type of 1949-50 Miners' General Strike which helped give birth to Marxist-Humanism. But NY will have its hands full and must practice theory as well as activity.

Organization, finally, is second negativity all in itself even if that doesn't come until revolution brings forth all sorts of new forms of organization. It is for this reason when, in the Phenomenology, Hegel arrived at Absolute Knowledge, he spoke of organization of thought at the very height as Absolute reaches Golgotha. If that seems to have no connection with Lenin's "All power to the Soviets," and party work "must be checked by non-party masses," and gets even more complicated with his Will when he finds he has not a soul to leave his mantle to, just give yourself an assignment totally to rewrite Balabanova's "identity" she found between the "chaotic" conditions of the 1907 London Congress and the actual 1917 Russian Revolution, in both of which the only one who was always punctual was Lenin, and the only one who was most meticulous with his notes: "not a single word escaped him, not a gesture. He meticulously took down everything in a sort of diary. When I saw him 10 years later in Moscow, presiding over the sessions of the government, his manner was exactly the same." (Impressions of Lenin, by Angelica Balabanoff, p.18.)

The point -- the organizational essence -- that Balabanova cannot grasp, is that one cannot take such meticulous notes in such absolutely opposite situations as London 1907 and Moscow 1917 unless one like Lenin practices the concept -- "no revolution can be successful without a theory of revolution."

January 26, 1979

Raya
Detroit

Remarks in Discussion at the 12-30-78 Special REB (slightly revised)
by Kevin New York

In Iran today, we have seen that the revolutionaries cannot fall back on pre-capitalist (Islamic) forms if they hope to really uproot the capitalist barbarism of the Shah. Leaving it as if Khomeini is a revolutionary (as do the Trotskyists) parallels the idealization of the ancient gentes by Engels. We need dialectics instead of schematic views of good and evil, whether in Engels' near-return to Rousseau's "noble savage" or in some Iranians' desire for an Islamic Republic and a break with the West.

You can't go back in time and especially the women refuse to do so---as Maxime Rodinson notes in his recent article in Le Monde (Dec. 8, 1978). What we have today in Iran is in danger of being strangled not only directly by the U.S. but internally by the same type of narrow nationalism with its anti-imperialism as truncated the Lebanese revolution in 1975. This is despite the fact that the Trotskyists are happy because the movement today opposes both Russia and the United States.

This type of reductionism---reducing the dialectics of national liberation to anti-Westernism---whose basis is impatience to get to the revolution and happiness over critiques of the bourgeoisie emerging from new directions, must never be confused with the quite valid search for new revolutionary subjects.

We can see this type of reductionism also in Engels' over-enthusiastic embrace of Morgan where, as Raya wrote in the new draft chapter, he skipped over completely that the masses were doing and thinking. Thus Engels ignores the fact that the ancient gentes became for example the basis of the caste system in India just as today's Left ignores how the Algerian Revolution became the Algeria of Boumediene with its return to "Islamic ways" especially for the women.

Just as modern revolutions (and especially Iran's) compel a questioning of and are measured by their attitude toward the man/woman relation, so with the new book Raya takes this dialectical problem posed by today's Women's Liberation Movement back into a rethinking of Marx's philosophy of revolution. In this new book the man/woman relation becomes central to a re-examination of the Marxian philosophy of revolution, just as it had in recent years for Raya become central to the examination of contemporary revolutions---especially the Portuguese and the Chinese.

Thus the new work with Marx's Ethnological Notebooks can be seen as a continuation of the work begun earlier in analyzing sexism in Portugal and China, by taking that contemporary problem as the jumping off point for a new look at Marx's dialectic.

The new work with the Ethnological Notebooks also opens up ground for continuing the kind of discussion we've had of the peasantry, Black and the Third World ever since the African Revolutions and the chapter on them in PER and the new work recently around MFSAD, and now INDWS. It brings to life her letter this Fall on how the Grundrisse has since 1968 become as crucial for that period as were Lenin's Philosophic Notebooks

for the post-World War II period. This is because of the Grundrisse's discussion of the Asiatic mode of production.

Today we're faced with the kind of narrow nationalism meaning a return to pre-colonial days, that Fanon once opposed. He opposed this without however neglecting what was positive about the communalism of ancient Africa. And today it's the Women's Liberation Movement which much more than the Left punctures these pretensions of return to Muslim law of the seventh century or whatever.

The key point is the concept of a "property career" rather than narrowing that to private property. In the case of China for example, as Raya quotes Etienne Balazs in PER, if capitalism is thought of also as state-capitalism, then in China it is a "heavy old man". For Chinese society did not have private property in the Western sense----yet the Confucian ideal of family and service to the state is no less reactionary and in fact stifled free thought even more effectively than the Church-dominated European Middle Ages did, as Balazs shows in his discussion of Chinese towns which were not centers of free thought at all.

As against the narrow nationalism of some in the Third World and their supporters, or Engelstian schematic views of prehistoric gentes as free of class struggle, Marx's Ethnological Notebooks show a skepticism toward Morgan. Thus his statements are dialectical ----as where Greeks are civilized and yet more barbarous toward women than "barbarians". Lukacs, while dutifully citing Engels (and even Stalin) in his discussion of Hegel's theory of tragedy in The Young Hegel, likewise shows Hegel's view of the establishment of patriarchy by Creon over Antigone's fighter for older tribal forms (where women counted for more) to have been fully dialectical. Hegel sides ultimately with Creon and appreciates (as did Marx) the achievements of Greek society, but does not ignore the price paid in woman's subjugation and in the fact of a slave society as a whole underneath the "philosophers".

Marx goes beyond Hegel but not in the way Engels thought he (Engels) did, but which was really a retrogression to the non-dialectical rationalism of the Enlightenment---to Kant and even back to Rousseau's "noble savage". Marx goes beyond Hegel by taking the mass movement as his foundation---the Paris Commune, the Civil War in the U.S., and toward the end of his life Russia. Lawrence Krader is wrong when he writes that Capital laid bare the contradictions of capitalism and that Marx was trying to begin exploring the origins of capitalism in the Ethnological Notebooks.

No, it was Marx's interest in the non-European world (and especially Russia) as shown by his letter to Zasulich. Raya refers to this probing by Marx at the end of the Trotsky chapter of PER ---and contrasts it to Leon Trotsky's own narrow view of the peasantry. She wrote there that Trotsky's outlook was too Europe-centered. All of this takes on new importance in light of the new projected book.

Apparently Engels too, for all his uncritical plunge into Morgan's prehistory, as Raya writes in the new draft chapter, happened to skip over the question of the Oriental Commune in his analysis of primitive communism in The Origin of the Family. Instead Engels offers us his stage theory of civilization, taken from Morgan.

3

Whether, with Engels, today's vulgar Marxists hold that patriarchy and private property arose at the same time (and therefore socialism will automatically free women) or whether they retrogressively follow Draper in seeing sex division as first and therefore hardest to uproot (and therefore excuse in advance the sexist socialism they're trying to create, not to mention their sexist vanguard organizations)---or whether like De Beauvoir and some feminists one criticizes Engels sharply but doesn't take it back into another look at Marx (or into the mass movement) although she does quote the magnificent passage from 1844 Marx at the end of The Second Sex---none can match the truly dialectical presentation of the problem which Raya has laid before us in the draft chapter.

Once again it has been by going more deeply into Marx that a truly original contribution has been made which does in fact add something new to Marx. As with Marx Raya is not concerned with uncovering origins but with uncovering the new revolutionary subject and its dialectical relationship to the proletariat. Raya writes that we see that Marx returns to probe the "origin" of humanity not for purposes of discovering "new" origins but for perceiving new revolutionary forces: their reason or (Morgan) "powers of the mind".

To return for one moment to Iran before concluding, let me quote Maxime Rodinson: "The women are especially bitter. In Paris they recently were seen shouting their hatred of Islam...a hatred which owes nothing to the maneuvers of imperialism." Further: "For the moment we are very far from a leftist Islam... (we have) anti-Western and anti-American positions and at the same time it exercises pressure for the maintenance of an archaic moral order. One can call that revolutionary if one wishes to." (Le Monde 12-3-78). He goes on to predict a rupture between the Left and the Muslim clergy in Iran, as in 1907. But this is not 1907 and as we learned today, 1907 itself really lasted until 1917. But today such a rupture can mean a genuine mass revolution in Iran.

PRESENTATION ON "MARX'S AND ENGELS' STUDIES CONTRASTED: RELATIONSHIP OF PHILOSOPHY AND REVOLUTION TO WOMEN'S LIBERATION" for Circle Women's Liberation Union by Terry Moon

I'm basing my talk on a new chapter of a book in progress by the Chairwoman of News & Letters, Raya Dunayevskaya. The book is called, Rosa Luxemburg, Today's Women's Liberation Movement and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution and the chapter is titled, "Marx's and Engels' Studies Contrasted: the Relationship of Philosophy and Revolution to Women's Liberation." In the Chapter Ms. Dunayevskaya contrasts Engels' The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State, to Marx's Ethnological Notebooks which were just published in 1972.

I want to talk about this chapter and women's liberation as a question for us today and to start by asking what it means to consider any philosophy of revolution whether we take matriarchy, abortion, the concentration on the ERA, or Marx's new continent of thought. Each of these represents a way of thinking that gives action a certain direction. I want to develop some points which by no means will cover everything so I hope you will raise many questions and comments in the discussion.

Let's begin with Karl Marx. What is so exciting about the discovery of his Ethnological Notebooks is that here is a German man in the last years of his life and he returns to deepen what he developed 40 years before when he broke with bourgeois society and wrote his 1844 Humanist Essays. What is it that he said in 1844 that speaks to women in 1979? Let me quote you:

...the secret of the relationship of man to man finds its unambiguous, definitive, open, obvious expression in the relationship of man to woman,... From the character of this relation it follows to what degree man, as a species, has become human, and has recognized himself as such.... To what degree the needs of man have become the human needs is also seen in this relationship, i.e., to what degree another human being is needed as a human being...

Now some, like Shelia Rowbotham in her book Women Resistance and Revolution, claim that all Marx is doing here is taking a measure of society. The position of women is seen by Marx, she says, as an "historical index." What Dunayevskaya has shown us is that what Marx was developing in 1844 is how total, how deep a revolution is needed to uproot this exploitative, alienating social order. We see Marx's vision of what a new society would have to be--what revolution must mean--where a human being is needed as a human being. That was in 1844. In 1883 he delves into the American anthropologist Morgan and Marx gets very excited because he sees how much freedom the Iroquois women had--more than most women today.

But here is where a difference between Marx and Engels emerges. Engels wrote The Origin of the Family after Marx's death, yet many of today's feminists treat that work as if it was written by both Marx and Engels and try and use it as ground for questions of Women's Liberation today.

Engels looked at the Iroquois and at their matrilinear--not matriarchal--society and said this is so great! Look, the women have veto power, even in questions of war. Engels thought this was so great

that we should just modernize their communal form of society--sort of the primitive commune with electricity. In fact, Engels ends his book with a quote from Morgan stating that the higher plane of civilization "will be a revival, in a higher form of the liberty, equality and fraternity of the ancient gentes."

Marx looked at it differently. Yes, women had veto power but it was still the men who made the decisions. The chiefs were men. And how could it be that this golden age of the gens could evolve into what we have today? Marx saw it was because the contradictions were right within the primitive commune, whether that be between men and women or between the chiefs and the ranks. The division that characterizes all class society--that between mental and manual labor--existed.

So, where as Engels got carried away with the equality of the primitive commune, Marx kept showing how horrible capitalism is but simply updating the old is not enough. Let me quote you from the chapter so you can see the kind of work he was doing. (Quote from "Marx didn't take issue with Morgan's findings..." to "Moreover, these weren't successive stages, but co-extensive with the communal form.")

Marx didn't see the solution as going back. Before he studied Morgan he wrote in 1847 that "The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles." Nor would he have rewritten it after reading Morgan even though Engels believed that this meant all "written" history. But again, that is Engels, not Marx.

So what does this mean for today's Women's Liberation Movement? Today's WLM has raised new questions. We began by challenging the Left and saying, if you are talking about freedom I want to see some changes made between you and me right now within this organization. We challenged that whole division between mental and manual labor saying no longer would the women serve the coffee and crank the mimeo machine while the men wrote the leaflets and made the decisions. We took the measure of all so-called "socialist" countries and found women were not free in any. But we have had 11 years and need to look at what has become of many of our battles.

Whether we go as far back as suffrage or look at the fight for abortion or the ERA we are stopped short of where we want to be. The gains we make aren't for everyone and there are set backs. Women thought winning the vote would change everything. We thought we won on abortion, yet, Ms. Magazine just ran a story of Rosie Jimenez who died of a butcher abortion because medicaid would no longer pay for a safe one. (If safe ones there be, given the recent Sun Times series.) We are stopped everywhere because we do not have a philosophy to guide us. Even Phyllis Schlafly (as those who heard the so-called debate last quarter know) even Schlafly had us arguing on her ground. In the debate itself it was Schlafly, not Friedan, who quoted Gloria Steinem speaking at the July 9 rally saying that if women don't get the ERA we will become the revolutionaries the Right claims we are. Schlafly went on to call the 100,000 July 9 demonstrators "lesbians, abortionists, and federal employees." Friedan termed this statement a "slur," thus accepting Schlafly's designations as an insult, and shouted that ERA had nothing to do with abortion. A need for a "constitutional underpinning"--not the revolutionary women's movement--was Friedan's solution to the lack of enforcement of numerous laws "guaranteeing" women's rights.

We cannot be content with only working out a direction for Women's Liberation unless we ^{see} that in the process we are talking about a direction for the world as a whole. Otherwise we end up isolated and short, far short, of where we want, where we have to go.

How can we do this? Especially when it is true that the WLM has never represented all women. But the fact is, since we are human, we can make sure we associate with every force for freedom. One of the forces that has been so important for every freedom movement and from which the WLM learned so much, was through our association with the Black movement. That is true whether in the time of the suffragists who learned how to be leaders and to speak out in public for freedom from Black women like Sojourner Truth and Harriet Tubman; or today when we learned about sit ins, teach ins, boycotts, etc. from the Black civil rights movement of the 1960s. This question that we started with--how deep a revolution has to be--can be seen right in Sojourner Truth and Harriet Tubman. If you saw the TV movie on Harriet Tubman then you remember the last scene that showed her being very proud having a letter read to her from Frederick Douglass. And yet, after the Civil War both she and Sojourner Truth broke with Douglass. (Tell story.)

It is very important the words that Sojourner Truth said because they reveal her vision of how total revolution must be. She told Frederick Douglass that he was "short minded." Now, isn't that beautiful! And here she was the one who was "uneducated" and yet she had developed so beautifully her philosophy of revolution.

On the question of the relationship of white and Black women I want to read a poem that a white woman friend of mine was inspired to write after watching the TV program on Tubman (Quote Marianna's poem.) What I love about this poem is the first and last lines because she has split the word "idea" into "I" and "dea" so that you see that this powerful idea of freedom is in an individual--an I. The last line shows the passion for freedom that is at the bottom of all movements for freedom. I am bringing all this up not to carry on about our roots, but to say how revolutionary and unencumbered with any illusions about human relations in this society are those who experience all the limitations of this world and thus how critical is the Black dimension in working out a direction for the WLM.

So what has this to do with Marx? One thing is his emphasis on totally new human relationships. In the Grundrisse Marx has a chapter on the Asiatic Mode of Production where he looks at this backwards mode of production in China. Yet what is important to him is that, in the 1850's in a backward commune, the people developed the Taiping Revolution which was fighting off the British imperialists. In the last year of Marx's life he wants to answer a letter from a Russian woman revolutionary, Vera Zasulich, who wants to know the future of the Russian Commune--could it lead to communism without needing to go through capitalism? He wrote 3 drafts before he wrote the finished letter to her. In each one he stressed, not "the commune" but the "needed Russian Revolution." He sees that there is a "dualism within in (the commune which) permits of an alternative: either the property element in it will over come the collective element, or the other way." Engels saw not dualities, only straight line development. "Marx was projecting not just the overthrow of the old but...that a new society must change human relationships totally, actually as well as philosophically."

The need to counterpose Marx and Engels can be seen in what is happening in the WLM. Last month Eleanor Leacock spoke on "Engels and the Origin of Women's Oppression" at the School for Marxist Studies in New York. Most of the people who came were Women's Liberationists who wanted to know what did Marx really do on women. Not only did Leacock never even mention Marx's Ethnological Notebooks, but when a woman from News & Letters asked her about them in the question period Leacock answered that Marx's Ethnological Notebooks were only created because "there were no xerox machines back then" and that Engels was greater than Marx because he "squeezed everything you could get out of those notebooks." The level of the presentations were that in 2000 BC the men made the outsides of the snowshoes and the women made the inside. Can this kind of discussion help our movement today? Sheila Rowbotham in Women Resistance and Revolution treats Marx and Engels as one. She quotes Engels thus: "...prostitution is based on private property and falls with it. Thus communist society, instead of introducing community of women, in fact abolished it." What Engels is saying is that community of women would fall with the fall of private property. What Marx says is very different:

"The relation of private property remains the relation of the community to the world of things. Finally, this movement of counterposing universal private property to private property is expressed in the animal form that marriage (which, of course is a form of exclusive private property) is counterposed to having women in common. Hence the woman becomes communal and common property. We might say that this idea of communal women expresses the secret of this quite vulgar and unthinking communism. In the same way that the woman is to abandon marriage for general prostitution, so the whole world of wealth, that is, the material essence of man, goes from the relation of exclusive marriage with the private property owner for the relation of universal prostitution with the community."

So you see what is key to Engels is private vs. public property while to Marx it is the question of totally uprooting all forms that would fragment the individual.

Even someone like Marcia Freedman, the Israeli feminist, at her speech at Northwestern, talked about the overthrow of a supposed prehistoric matriarchy. She certainly agreed with Engels that that overthrow was "the world historic defeat of the female sex." Evelyn Reed of the SWP develops similar ideas based on Engels and never even mentions Marx in her book Women's Evolution. Right here at Circle Sandra Bartky will be having a class on Feminism, Matriarchy, and Marxism. To me, as a feminist, this debate is very important because what so many of the so-called Marxists are doing by saying that for women to be free we must first abolish private property is telling us to wait for our freedom until after the revolution. They are putting a pre-requisite in front of our struggle for liberation. It was opposition to just such ideas that was the basis of the birth of the WLM. If you are not absolutely concrete about this new force and reason of revolution, the WLM, then it shows right away and you have a slogan such as, "Women's Liberation through Socialist Revolution" instead of "Socialist Revolution through Women's Liberation, Black Liberation, Workers Liberation and Youth Liberation."

So our vision can't be one of simply exchanging one set of property relations for another but of totally new human relations.

I would like to conclude with a quote from Marx's Eighteenth Brumaire:
The Social Revolution...cannot draw its poetry from the past,
but only from the future, It cannot begin with itself before
it has stripped itself of all its superstitions concerning
the past. Earlier revolutions relied on memories out of
world history in order to drug themselves against their own
content. In order to find their own content, the revolutions
of the nineteenth century have to let the dead bury the dead.
Before, the expression exceeded the content; now, the content
exceeds the expression.

So sisters, we too must let the dead bury the dead and begin
working out a new beginning for our age. We can begin right now.

Terry Moon, January, 1979

SCME THOUGHTS ON EXPANDED REB OF DECEMBER 30 --- Peter, NY

(Excerpts of presentation to NY local 1/24/79)

The expanded REB meeting in Detroit Dec. 30 broke new ground in Marxist-Humanist philosophy and organization that we have to consider very seriously and continuously in trying to meet our Perspectives this year. What struck me repeatedly in Raya's presentation and in the discussion was the new type of response we have to now make because of the world situation so laden with the need for a total break with bourgeois society. The most important concretization of this need was the proposal for a series of five classes on Philosophy and Revolution to be given by Raya herself this spring. While the idea of the classes was discussed before the 12/30 meeting its integrality to the philosophic discussion taking place there was so important that unless we catch this as "the new" we won't meet the challenges facing us.

By centering on the concept of the classes the 12/30 meeting developed a continuity with the spirit of our September convention by posing a discontinuity. In the Convention Perspectives Report it was shown how the philosophy of Marxist-Humanism had become an objective force of world affairs as important as any ongoing revolution, and the ideas of Rudi Bahro were cited as an indication of that. We saw the demand for a total break with bourgeois society could not be left to the realm of working out methodology in the abstract, but that Marxist-Humanists had to engage in the battle of ideas based on a new method of activity as well. The concluding part to the report, the Praxis of Philosophy, flowed from this perspective. This began to be concretized just days after the convention by Raya in her September letters on re-organization, touching on organizational matters ranging from Olga's work with her on the new book to the new responsibilities facing new members at convention.

Just as re-organization at convention centered on the Praxis of Philosophy -- the integrality of Marxist-Humanism with objective world events that in turn demands our relation to the objective to center on our role as a philosophic action group -- so does re-organization spelled out after 12/30. Only now the response we are responsible for making in our activities has grown greater than ever, because the past four months have made our ideas a greater force of revolution than ever before, shown by the publication of the Farci translation of the Dec. N&L Two Worlds column and the publication of Parts I and II of Indignant Heart: A Black Worker's Journal. Most important, since the convention the book to be on Rosa Luxemburg, Today's Women's Liberation Movement, and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution has developed and is opening all sorts of new doors to us. Re-organization today then entails experiencing the workings out of the new book as it comes to be, for the ideas taken up in the new chapter published in the Jan.-Feb. N&L have a lot to say about our pressing organizational tasks.

In her presentation at the 12/30 meeting, Raya began with Iran and ended with N&L as organization, and I don't think this is any accident. In the new chapter Raya shows that unlike Engels' uncritical acceptance of primitive communism as a higher stage of human development -- in which Engels upset the dialectical structure of Marx's Communist Manifesto in taking issue with the statement "the history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggle -- Marx saw primitive communism as containing a duality between chiefs and tribesmen that with the accumulation of wealth developed into full forced class antagonisms. I think what is being said here is that for Marx the division of mental from manual labor is the key relation of society, and he did not confuse the social division of labor with the division of tasks; that man

5874

and women performed separate tasks in primitive communism was to him not as important as that in performing those tasks they were being fragmented by the division between chief and tribe, decision and executor, mental and manual. The class line for Marx was never a question of who owned property but of what type of activity society forced the individual to perform. Raya then says that it is in the transition to a new order that the internal contradictions manifest themselves, showing how Marx examined primitive communism not to derive a unilinear evolutionism from history as did Engels, but to perceive new subjective revolutionary responses from the oppressed of his own day. I think this is why Marx's letters to Vera Zaslitch on the possibility of the Russian peasant commune serving as a basis for socialism are so important; for Marx the Russian revolutionary subject could go straight to socialism if it related to new outbursts in the west.

All of this tied into the discussion of the 12/30 meeting where the unique dimension of Marx's thought was related to the 1905 revolution and the Second Congress of the Russian Social Democratic Party in 1907 in London, and ongoing revolution in Iran, and our own organization. Raya showed that with the first of the Russian revolutions in 1905 Lenin recreated Marx's method in the Ethnological Notebooks in 1907 by singling out subject as Reason of revolution in seeing the new Third World revolts. This ties in very tightly to today as the Iranian revolution of 1979 demands that singling out and acting upon the Popular Revolution as integral to the reason or philosophy of revolution. This demands we preserve and recreate Marx's and Lenin's method by confronting those who shackle revolution with stages as do the Popular Frontists, dooming spontaneous upheaval to the back-door deals of a Khomeiny. Unlike all the other radicals, the Trotskyists especially, who forget their Marxism just at the moment when contradictions reach their breaking point in order to latch on to a short-cut for revolution, we have to project our philosophy in opposition to the stage-ifiers and evolutionists in practice, just as Marx did in the Ethnological Notebooks in theory. The work on the Ethnological Notebooks then, far from being only a re-statement of what Marx said 100 years ago, is the actual product of the objective situation yearning for a response that can advance the world revolutionary movement. Just as the objective situation pointed to at Convention compelled a whole new series of reorganizations from us, so now Raya's work on the book-to-be has caught the essence of the task revolutionaries face today.

What is most interesting to me is the way we can see a single dialectical process upsurging within this historical period and in the very discussion within our organization. News & Letters caught the movement from practice for a total break with bourgeois society with Marxism and Freedom and this allowed us to anticipate the thoughts and actions of the new generation of revolutionaries in the 1960s. Then with Philosophy and Revolution we took up the movement from theory to practice that was missed in the 1960s and which digging into in the 1970s becomes the most important preparation for revolution. Now we are entering a new phase in the history of our organization and the world, where the new book is working out these two movements merged, and what flows from the unity of philosophy and revolution becomes crucial. Hence we have to join in the process of the book's coming-to-be, not in the sense of anyone but Raya writing it, but in the sense of our organizational developments down to the smallest detail becoming infused with its process of becoming. When placed in relation to the new book, even technical details then cease to be minor, but become conduits for the concretization of a new continent of thought. Thus we have to see all the proposed reorganizations -- from the new tasks of Mike and Olga, to the new center, to my own move to LA in June -- are then not minor footnotes at all, but the way we are trying to practice the new of Philosophy and Revolution.

The 12/30 meeting was an important step in each one of us figuring out how to measure up to that perspective for ourselves. I see it being the measure of all our activities; for instance, we have to see Denby's tour in NY not as an opportunity for project hatching, or small mass party-ism, but rather center our activity on inviting contacts to hear Denby and taking upon ourselves the task of deepening the profound ideas he will develop once he leaves town. Not facing up to re-organization means leaving all the workings out to another. Why do we so often then forget our philosophy just when we get to the concrete, when we are attacking the Popular Frontists and those with the Second Attitude precisely for this reason?

We are now facing a great challenge to measure ourselves this month with the new Jan.-Feb. issue where the new chapter is placed in relation to the editorial on Iran. Making this integral connection clear to ourselves and to others is essential. For if our philosophic legacy is being born out of the latest objective events and if we are not taking seriously that legacy, both as archives and as method, does that not mean we will be impotent in dealing with the objective situation? In other words, how are we even in this day to meet the depth of the movement from practice at all if we do not articulate the movement from theory as a force of revolution, and convince others of it too? After all, have we not said again and again that Raya's method is the grounding of all our work from Working Women for Freedom to Frantz Fanon, Soweto and American Black Thought to Part II of Indignant Heart: A Black Worker's Journal? In this sense, as Mike said in discussion at the 12/30 meeting, the proposal for the new P&R classes is not a substitute for those we had planned at the convention around the archives but a deepening of the very concept in light of totally new developments.

For these classes will be very new for us, and by that I don't mean we'll have a new project to work on. Raya herself will be giving all the lectures and it will be the most explicit rendering of the great divide between Marxist-Humanism and all others ever given. We can develop the new type of revolutionary activity so sorely needed by inviting our closest contacts to them, sitting down beforehand with them and trying to work out the new in their response to them. Since all activity of the classes is around the explicit ground of P&R given in a new way, each doing surrounding it, as long as our perspectives are foremost, becomes a form of critical-practical-revolutionary activity. Even involving the outside in helping us put up notices for the talks, working on publicity, developing things to bring up in discussion, will open new doors if they are doing those things because they are catching the historical new in the talks from us. For let's not forget that in drawing the great divide between Marx and Engels, Raya is also in a new way distinguishing her development of Marxist-Humanist philosophy from everything else. By this I don't mean ego: as she put it in her summation to the 12/30 discussion, "under-estimation of what we represent starts with not truly realizing that one not two has nothing to do with egos." And as Olga put it, "If Engels' attitude had been to see Marx as philosophy, and not just genius, history might have been different." Rather, I mean the classes provide a unique opportunity to make the great divide between ourselves and all other tendencies precisely on the ground of the new chapter published in this issue of N&L.

I think Raya herself provided a most concrete bridge between these pressing organizational concerns and the work on the great divide between Marx and Engels in taking up Marx's phrase that non-actuality must become actual. Marx used this phrase versus Hegel as early as 1841 and just as Marx began his new continent of thought with a

fundamental break from Hegel precisely on the question of Hegel's Absolute being posed so abstractly as to confront the empirical world as "the enemy" so today our restatement of the Absolute Idea through our new continent of thought demands breaking with the entire approach to activity that is unable to live a philosophy of revolution. In this sense I see our activity spelled out in relation to the coming P&R classes -- which start right now in the sense of laying down our method of work for the year -- to be our great divide of equal importance to drawing the division between Marx and Engels in a new way. Making the totality of Marx's new continent of thought the grounding of our activity through them can provide forward motion to this world crisis and that begins here, right now, with us.

Michael, Detroit:

Excerpts from presentation on Marx's and Engels' Studies Contrasted: The Relationship of Philosophy and Revolution to Women's Liberation 2/4/79

.... Throughout the pages of this special issue of News & Letters, this crucial question appears: How do you keep an on-going revolution on-going? That is what confronts those fighting for freedom in Iran, in Nicaragua, in Southern Africa, right now That is what Raya was expressing in very concrete terms when, immediately after the 1975 Portuguese counter-coup she wrote, "Will the Revolution in Portugal Advance?" Reread it. In my view, its method is very closely linked to that of the work we will be discussing today.

This is because the philosophy I am speaking of here is Marxism -- as Marx developed it over the 40 years from his break with bourgeois society and his 1844 Economic-Philosophic Manuscripts, through his greatest work Capital, to his final studies on anthropology and the Russian commune at the end of his life.

His philosophy stands in stark contrast to many calling themselves Marxists today, who are forever ready to rush in and divert every on-going revolution, rather than looking at what it means for their own needed re-organization. The truth is that every generation of Marxists since Marx died has served only to progressively narrow and stunt Marx's philosophy of revolution from its original concept of a total uprooting.

The betrayal does not have to be conscious. Yet it reveals itself not only in relation to on-going revolution, but in relation to Marx as well, if we only look at the title of the first section of the Draft Chapter:

I Why a Century to Publish Marx?

Despite the fact that ever since Marx's death nearly 100 years ago, countless parties and groups have claimed to follow his ideas -- to say nothing of the great number of non-party intellectuals -- the revealing truth is that "it has taken nothing short of a series of revolutions to bring out the unpublished writings of Marx."

What we have to confront today, is that the contemporary Women's Liberation Movement, even as it did challenge the men not to separate thinking from doing, and did break organizationally from much of the Left, did not bring out Marx's final work, the Ethnological Notebooks, written from 1880-82 as he studied anthropology -- a new science calling itself nothing less than the "study of man", and concentrating on the stages of human history before modern capitalist society, especially the Man/Woman relationship

I don't want to understate the difficulty of the Ethnological Notebooks in the very unfinished form they were left when Marx died. Professor Kradner's meticulous transcription of the Notebooks, in all their original multilingual character, does not make easy reading. I have studied them for the past week, and I have the advantage of reading some German, as well as having studied anthropology in college. So I have something of a feel for the terms and ideas of Morgan, Maine, Phelan and Lubbock as they struggled to create anthropology as a science.

Yet it was still a very difficult task. And as I followed Raya's points

as she takes them up in the draft chapter, going back and forth to the Notebooks, what became clear to me was that what was involved wasn't any question of anthropology or of German -- but that the shared language between Marx and Raya was the language of revolution. That is what allowed her to see Marx's sharp differences with Morgan, and where they led

II Hal Draper Misconstrues

For Draper, the point both of departure and of return seems to be his assertion that for "Marx and Engels" the Woman Question is rooted in the "primordial division of labor" between the sexes. Placing its origin before all others, he proclaims that "this division will be most resistant to uprooting." So Biblically-based does this sound, that Women's Liberation cannot help, in Draper's view, but be something to be first confronted after the Socialist Revolution.

Far from that being Marx's view, the Man/Woman relationship to Marx actually showed how total a Revolution was needed to uproot all the "pre-history of humanity". By "pre-history" Marx meant not history before writing, but all the history of humanity where shackles of class, or race, or age, or sex prevented the full expression of human talents -- that is, all history up to today

In truth, Marx's views on the family had been expressed and redeveloped again and again. There was something very new within Marx's final studies, but it was not any question of Marx sharing Engels' designation, "the world historic defeat of the female sex." For Marx, the critique of Morgan stressed the social division of labor even within the family, as it emerged, rather than the sexual division of labor alone.

What becomes very clear, is that there is a profound difference between how Engels viewed Morgan's study of the family and Marx's views. Where Engels becomes fixed on "The Family", devoting 52 pages of his 150 pages to the discovery of "matriarchal society" and its "world historic defeat", seeing it as the opposite of the primitive commune, Marx's view is nowhere near as simple -- or as Raya characterizes Engels' attitude, "unilateral" as opposed to "multilateral"

That Marx looked at the same "facts", the same anthropological "data" as Morgan, followed with the greatest interest each report -- whether new research or 2000-year-old quote -- YET read with the most critical eyes, is clear from a dozen or more arguments in the Notebooks with Morgan, and far more with Maine The pivotal point in the collapse of the gens and the establishment of private property for Marx isn't what Morgan singles out -- the monogamous family -- it is the new oppositions arising between the Chief and the masses, within the gens

It is nevertheless quite a surprise to return to your copy of Origin of the Family and read that Engels' first preface, written in 1884, credits Morgan with "discovering afresh in America the materialist conception of history discovered by Marx 40 years ago". And by the Fourth Edition in 1891, Engels' Preface cites the "re-discovery of the primitive matriarchal gens" as having the same importance for anthropology as Marx's theory of surplus value had for political economy

The point is that no matter what the data-- the subject matter -- at hand, Marx's relation is first to revolutionary transformation. No one could possibly accuse Draper of that attitude to his subject since his conception of the

revolutionary history of women is yet another exercise in not seeing what women have done

Draper once again compounds Engels' mistake as his conclusion leads further than ever from Marx's philosophy of revolution. Returning to "the world historic defeat of the female sex" as the problem to be overcome only after ... after ... after. Counterposing women's freedom and social revolution is Draper's final title "Social Revolution Comes First."

What happened to the social division of labor today -- never mind in the primitive commune? What happened to the struggle to be whole human beings that characterizes every opposition to class society? When Marx posed the division between mental and manual labor as the hallmark of all class societies -- it was as well to pose its revolutionary opposite, that the greater the fragmentation of the human being, the greater is his quest for universality. And when sexism is added to the question of class, doesn't that mean that far from working women having to wait and wait because their oppression supposedly originated first, that they will be among the most revolutionary?

It isn't just a question of the nineteenth century either. It is exactly what we found in practice in the Civil Rights Movement, 1966, as we went to Baltimore to organize the Maryland Freedom Union. We had a whole plan worked out on who to organize first, and how the whole campaign would go. But when we put out the word that we were there for anybody who didn't have a union and wanted one to join, we were flooded with hundreds of calls. And we told them to wait, so we could follow the strategy. But the first ones to walk out were nursing home workers making 35¢ an hour and working 72 hours a week. It was something to see Black working women on poverty wages suddenly telling not only the owner and the city what to do, but the civil rights leadership also.

The point, as Raya puts it, isn't what Engels wrote in 1884 -- it is whether the ground laid by Draper as he misconstrues what Engels had already failed to grasp from Marx's Ethnological Notebooks helps today's Women's Liberation Movement or not.

It is one thing to catch the new -- and it is very exciting then, as when Women's Liberation arose just as the '60s were proving their inadequacy to the task of revolution. But ten years later -- against all the diversions and pulls of bourgeois society -- it is again the question of how you keep an ongoing revolution ongoing that tests every tendency with pretensions to offering a philosophy of revolution for our age.

III Marx's Notebooks: Then and Now

In tracing Marx's critique of the dissolution of the primitive commune, the question of "duality" -- internal duality -- constantly reappears. Consider that when he looks at the Northwest Coast Indian tribes, it is not alone sexual division of labor that concerns him. It is also the social division of labor as the potlatch ceremonies provide for the exchange of surplus products and the specialization of production. Consider that when Marx looks at what in the nineteenth century was called "primitive" society he did not draw any such "unbridgeable gulf" between those societies and the "so-called civilized ones." It is not only that he viewed Sir Henry Maine, founder of legal anthropology, as a "blockheaded Englishman" filled with colonial attitudes. It is also that within primitive society Marx saw no utopia, but rather the origins, in miniature, of every antagonism -- every contradiction -- of present-day life, if only in embryo.

It isn't that Marx and Engels were presented with different facts -- indeed, Engels had Marx's Notebooks. The problem is much deeper and more difficult than any collection of facts, at least to me. What is clear is that, after Marx's death, with Engels facing plenty of new data on marriage and the family, as anthropological research blossomed, these new "empiric facts" were not the same thing in Engels' hands as they had been in Marx's. It isn't that Marx disregarded the newest information. On the contrary, he followed it more closely than the anthropologists who gathered it. For Marx, each question of organization within the gens was followed historically through transformation into opposite as caste. Look at his notes on Maine's analysis of Ireland and see for yourself the limitations of anthropology

To me, the publication of this chapter is an historic moment for revolutionary thought. It is not that no one has ever suggested a sharp divergence between Marx and Engels before. Plenty of intellectuals have posed it -- even to the point of saying ridiculous things like "the worst thing that happened to Marx was to meet Engels." But Engels was a revolutionary, a true collaborator with Marx. It was only when there was no Marx that Engels had to face working out new territory alone. And then the question of having grasped the totality of Marx's "new continent of thought", his method, became crucial

What Raya has done to reach this historic divide is a genuine digging out not alone of facts but of method. It is a "digging out" that has nothing in common with Draper's claim to "excavating" Marx's work. What it is related to is keeping one's finger on the pulse, both of today's freedom struggles AND of Marx's philosophy of revolution.

Consider these two points on the question of theoretic preparation, of anticipation of what will actually burst out:

- (1) Reread Raya's "Dear Sisters" letter of August 9, 1978, in the N&L Pre-Convention Discussion Bulletin #3, written fully two months before she ever saw a copy of the Ethnological Notebooks, and had access only to the few excerpts Engels included in the Origin of the Family. (Quote from bottom p. 2 and top p.3)
- (2) Reread also Raya's "Note on Pope John Paul II" in the Nov. N&L to see what having your finger on the pulse of the movement means even when you are supposedly "away" from all activity and confined to the nineteenth century.

We discussed earlier the series of revolutions needed to bring out the unpublished writings of Marx, and mentioned how although Marx's Economic-Philosophic Manuscripts were published after the Russian Revolution, it took all the way to the Hungarian Revolution of 1956 to place them on the historic stage. That's not the whole story, at least on this question of anticipation, of theoretic preparation for revolution. Raya had studied the essays in 1943 and made them central to the opposition to the new state-capitalist age. She had spent the 13 years before Hungary 1956 following the logic of their movement as Marx established his philosophy of revolution, beginning with the Man/Woman relationship as the measure of all human relations. And so when Hungary did explode and it was finally learned that they were calling themselves Marxist-Humanists, only she was prepared to publish a Marxism and Freedom as a contribution to working out the philosophy of revolution against state-capitalism, and to call Marxist-Humanism the new world stage.

It is in that sense that we are proposing to study, this April, Philosophy and Revolution, in a series of four lectures which RD will give at Wayne State U. The needed re-organization of each one of us as we absorb what is involved in both the realization of the contrast between Marx and Engels, and in the maturity of the philosophy of revolution today which brought that contrast to light, will be first on the agenda in these classes. They are needed now if we are really to meet the challenge of keeping the on-going revolutions on-going. Each of you is invited to join in reading and working with us then, just as we invite you to participate freely in today's discussion. Both are part of fulfilling our responsibility to see that the relationship of philosophy and revolution to women's liberation remains not for some later date, but is the true character of 1979.