

FA, Costella 3, 37

20 Staverton Road  
London N W 2  
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My dear Antonella,

We here have been told that some of the women in Lotta Femminista believe that Rosa did not have the right or in any case should not have signed the book POWER OF WOMEN. I was saddened to hear that because it so misunderstands the relationship of the movement to individuals who do particular pieces of work. I'm writing to you about this because we know each other from before the formation of Lotta Femminista and would be friends if even we were not in addition comrades of the same movement and the same political tendency within that movement. So we are able more to understand each other.

There has never been a book written, not even Marx's CAPITAL (and most especially Marx's CAPITAL!) which did not owe its revolutionary ideas to the mass movement either in a public organised form or in that day-to-day massive wormlike action by which the exploited subvert capitalist domination. The individual is fortunate indeed who can even for a moment in time be the sounding board of any of these vibrations. POWER OF WOMEN is a case in point. Without a women's movement, it could not have been written. The ideas represent the digestion of the body of literature and practice of the movement seen from a point of view already in skeletal form in A WOMAN'S PLACE but enriched by a study of Marx.

I was there the first evening in Padova when Rosa read her first draft of what became "Women and the Subversion of the Community". We were about 12 women. Of those, only Rosa, Pia and I are in the feminist movement. You were at the second meeting (and I remember seeing Carolina for the first time there too) where the document was distributed in duplicated form. From that meeting came Lotta Femminista.

That document represents a great many years of thought and the political experience of the working class in Italy, the United States, Britain and the West Indies. It was not written by Lotta Femminista. It was the specific act which laid the basis for Lotta Femminista to come into existence.

I feel that if the book were not a success, there would not be complaints about who signed it. But it is a success, internationally and that is one reason why this kind of discussion is even raised. Often behind disputes of this kind are hidden ideas and impulses which for a variety of reasons people don't want to or are yet unable to express. It's important always, ~~as~~ it seems to me, for these to emerge so they can be treated on their merit. In other words, a dispute of this kind is an effect, not a cause of ill-feeling.

You may remember in the second expanded Introduction to the edition in Britain, I wrote the following about A WOMAN'S PLACE. "Though it bears my name, I was merely a vehicle for expressing what women, housewives and factory workers, felt and knew..." But I felt and knew these things too, and I wrote them down, my neighbours did not. Should they complain that my name is on it? I don't think they'd mind. They didn't then, and that was because they were glad it was written. (Also it is so simple and so direct that people do not feel threatened by it.)

I am myself more worried about what I heard in North America, from good people who meant no harm. They believed the book came out of the extra-parliamentary left in Italy, not from women internationally and their movement. (I've heard the same in England.) They seem not to understand the provincialism, racism and sexism which permeates the extra-parliamentary left everywhere in Europe, and do not distinguish us from them. This to me is a much more serious question

than whose name appears on what book.

There is finally the question which Silvia told me is being discussed by some women in Lotta Femminista: the question of anyone signing any articles or books. It seems some people feel that this helps to obliterate power relations within a feminist ~~book~~ group. In my view, the question of power relations in any political group is such a deep ~~xxx~~ and ~~inxxxible~~ insoluble one under capitalism that, aside from the many advantages of individuals signing articles and books and also of its necessity (after all, we don't all agree and will never all agree), to pose the question in this way reduces the ~~xxx~~ contradiction of power relations to a popularity context. In that way it prevents the real difficulties from being seriously tackled. There is now being widely read in the women's movement in the US and Britain a pamphlet called "The Tyranny of Structurelessness" by Jo Freeman. It begins the discussion of how refusing to ~~have xxxxxx~~ <sup>have xxxxxx</sup> leaders does not result in not having leaders. To pose it more succinctly: those of us who reject the Leninist Vanguard Party, what do we put in its place? Since I think this is one of the most difficult questions the Feminist and all other working class movements ~~has~~ <sup>has</sup> to face, I don't think there are facile answers. It cannot be helpful to pose it as a facile question.

Power to the sisters,

My dear Rosa, find  
 Hope you will find  
 some one who can make  
 it possible for us to talk  
 longer. I want to know how  
 you are.  
 I told Antonella I was  
 sending you a copy. Give  
 sent none to anyone else,  
 or kept Silvia's & hope it  
 clears a little air.  
 S.

P.S. Antonella's husband has been  
 very kind to me in my care.  
 I must find some way to thank him.