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My dear Rosa,

27 July 1973

Enclosed is a draft of a letter to A. which you suggested I write. Let me know if this is what you think will help. There is probably going to be a mess now also because the women here I think have heard that I ~~wrote~~ wrote it with you. But that is easy to handle, relatively. I can or cannot sign what I like. (As a matter of fact, in England I was criticised recently for signing what I wrote. These (Libertarian) people don't understand what power it gives the movement to have people who are known, and whom many women feel they can rely on to defeat their enemies - which in Britain and I think everywhere means the left women and their allies the liberals.)

In any case I think you should eventually say something about my role in the book. It has got to a state where it is causing all kinds of messes everywhere. If you think about it and find the proper occasion you will know best how to do it -if you want to. I think it should be done but really don't want to think beyond that or even talk about it.

first

The/Collective meeting that I will attend is Sunday and I'm anxious to see how they go about their business. I'm sure it's in a helter-skelter way. But during the conference, you would hardly have recognised the women. Suzie, Esther, all of them, were transformed. It seemed 100 years since the London ~~XXXX~~ conference in November. They had so developed, were so bouyant, the only ones at the conference who seemed to expect a future! I sat largely silent and enjoyed in a "matronly" way their joy at having reached above the British political plane. It was very nice. The rest of the conference was boring and meaningless. Every publication now is either for us or against us, but cannot ignore us. We are what is happening in the women's movement. The wages for housework button (attached) has been a great success. Women stop us in the street asking where we got them from, what organisation, can they get one. One Black bus~~x~~ conductress begged Beese for hers and put it immediately on her uniform. Worth £1,000 of publicity. There may also be an hour-long radio programme on wages for housework, and we are just beginning the discussion of a journal. Also the women are now interest~~ed~~ed in publishing L'OFFENSIVE in English. All good things, se dice in inglese, come to those who wait. But what hard work is there ~~xxx~~ while waiting.

Personally, I am OK. I wish it were not summer because that's the time when everyone comes to London and there is a traffic through the door, with beds, sleeping on the floor, phone calls, <sup>PEOPLE</sup> from the K US, Italy, the West Indies, Canada, all converging on Staverton Road. I feel as though I am under siege. Of course I make an exception of Pia and her friend Lisa. They are delightful to have here and no trouble. Only smiling serious faces. Pia is a great woman and absorbing the politics of the house. A shame she doesn't speak English or I would take her everywhere with me, to Darcus, Althea, etc., so she should know about the great world outside of Padova. Laura also has become part of the house, and I begged her to stay for the collective meeting on Sunday so they could report on the Padova split in a "non-sectarian" way. It is important that events like that are not relegated to gossip and women treat their own movement as seriously as they have treated the men's movement.

In other senses I am OK, back to typing, which is even more painful now. It gets worse all the time. But ~~xxxx~~ the trip has done me a lot of good, and there is a very nice, very quiet area of calm where there was turmoil before. I ~~never~~ never saw F, but we are in communication again, and I've more than hinted that I want to see him for more than political reasons. We will see what and how he replies. I think the best thing is to have a man who is far away. Even if it is only prospects. In any case, I seem to ~~xxxx~~

have a decreasing need for a life ~~xx~~ which is "private". I could never imagine that would have happened to me, and I'm sure it is partly that there seems little prospect of any other kind. But I'm quite content to be alone, and I'm not lonely.

You have sounded very cheerful in a personal way on the phone. I suppose the split must have taken a lot out of you. Silvia also indicated that it had to some degree worn down your confidence. You must not let it. The problem of Lotta Femminista which, it seems to me, magnifies every problem which it shares with the whole of the feminist movement is that it had a political line before it ~~had~~ was formed. And there is no other revolutionary political line but that one. They resent your power, OK. That situation I know. They refuse to take the responsibilities that would give them power, OK, I know that one too. But that your power derives from the fact that you gave them the political line is really the last straw. The question of organization is not an easy one for any group; for a feminist group it is tougher yetx to find and hold that balance between structure and totalx involvement. I think it would be useful if in a month or two, no hurry, you all wrote a document on the split and sent it for ~~discussion~~, discussion, proposing a joint meeting on the document and anything they would publish a month or two after its publication. (I see the Milan women want to use me against you. Well, what else is new? I've told the women here, by the way, that that is not any kind of way to handle a political dispute.) You were right when you disagreed with me about going to the factory gates last year. ~~xx~~ The patience which you showed then I think can come in handy now.

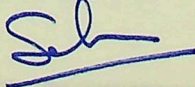
I hope in any case that you are calmer in yourself, and I gathered from the phone conversation that there is someone you might go away with for the holiday. Very good. Or at least I hope it's very good. I would like to see you gloriously happy with a really nice feminist guy who is, in your words, "beautiful".

Thank you for the ~~lovely~~ gift which fits me perfectly and will look even better now that I am gaining weight and going to stop smoking (which means I will become fat and not be the lithe Selma I once was - and still am). I had no need to wear it in jail. The trial was very interesting and all of us did very well in the court without a lawyer. Between us, after about a half hour I saw that I could be a lawyer with no trouble. All you need is a sharp tongue and a logical mind. But the procedure was so boring. Anyway we mark it down to experience. Thanks also for the cable which was circulated.

My dear, this is Friday and I am always most tired on Friday. But if I didn't write tonight, I would not have anything for Laura to bring for you. I send of course the two copies of POW. They are selling like bread in the US. Orders continue to come in. I've asked Piera and Carol in San Francisco to transcribe your talks and when I get them I'll send them to you. I don't know what my plans for the summer are. I would like to go for two weeks to read. But where? Noplace is safe, really. I can't go somewhere in England and eat their filthy food. To go to Italy is too far and too expensive. I'll probably stay here until Sept or Oct, make some money and come and visit my second home in Padova. I hope Jeremy and Suzie will come with me. But my mood changes from day to day and even what I want to eat is not the same. I shall live this year purely by instinct. What a nice thought.

Enjoy the sunshine, think of me, make love, have funx. I think we made a very good pair in the US and Canada, and blew their minds. The vibrations are still arriving.

Much love,



My dear A,

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 ~~be~~ 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 ~~xxx~~ should be 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 worklike 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 ~~xxxxxxx~~ already in skeletal form in A WOMAN'S PLACE but enriched by a study of Marx.

in Padova

I was there the first evening/when Rosa read her first draft. We were 12 women. Of those 12, only Rosa 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, nobody would complain about who signed it. But it is a success internationally, and that is why ~~is~~ this kind of ~~xxxxxxx~~ discussion is even raised.

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 ~~xxxxxxx~~ they'd mind. They didn't then, and that was because they were glad it was written.

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, 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 in Italy (and of course elsewhere), and do not distinguish us from them. This to me is a much more serious question than whose name appears on what book.