

My dear Franca and Poldi,

FA, Catalonia, 61 16 September 1974

I thought it might be useful for the three of us if I jotted down (unfortunately in English) some of the things we discussed for the work you all are involved in in "prehistory". As you remember, my comments could not deal with what you've written because I can't read it, but with some of the things you've said and the political implications for now.

1. The value of studying prehistory. As I told you, I've not been much concerned because my experience from 1949 has been that once women (and for that matter men) begin to speak about prehistory they wipe out or distort where ~~the~~ women are now, in terms of exploitation and of struggle against that exploitation. But that is not an absolute, and I can see women of our political perspective making discoveries that others have not been able to make, which reinforces the analysis we have made. I hope you will do that,

or have done that.

In addition, every caste in capitalist society (that, by the way, also includes white men) is always determined to find the historical roots of its caste-ness; that is, they want to find out ~~how~~ not only how capital exploits them specifically but why. The precapitalist roots of capital's hierarchy of labour powers is evident. Though it has been used to show that the hierarchy is not capitalist, we must not be driven to deny the pre-capitalist roots and in fact we must use this to clarify Marx's statement in the COMMUNIST MANIFESTO where he speaks about how capital sweeps everything pre-capitalist away. ~~It swept~~ It swept away what it could not use or <sup>rather</sup> what prevented it from developing and transformed the rest. (Marx, by the way, actually saw a historical moment when the family was disappearing, ruined by the socialisation of reproduction both in the factory (of things) and in the home or more precisely in the community (of people).)

An example of the probing to find the pre-capitalist roots of caste is the work on children and when historically they appeared and why. Another is Rawick's interpretation of racism. Another is the work on tribal life by anti-anthropologists and the discussion now going on in Africa about whether some of its features can be salvaged into the communist society. (A similar discussion seems to have taken place with Marx about 19th century Russian communal peasant life. I know very little about it, but it does exist.) Another is the explosion of studies of the slave trade ~~really~~ really to find out why and how there was created a black labour market. We all want to know. But some of us want to know so we can fight capital better and some of us want to know so we can get out of fighting capital at all.

2. Your theory is based on two modes of labour, a male and female. I can't comment. I can only ask: are you ~~xxxxxxx~~ saying that therefore there was a social relation ~~was~~ based on a contradiction between these modes of labour? Under capitalist there are many modes of labour. The level of power of any caste under capitalist is connected with the mode of labour which she or he largely is involved in being exploited through. But we are all part of the same social relation, the wage relation. That is our specific contribution to feminism and to every phase of Marxism. (After all, most of the world is unwaged and "Marxists" have taken this to assume that they are outside of the wage relation as a result.) What capital changes is the dominant mode of labour and thus incorporates every mode of labour into itself.

3. You seemed uncertain if power - capitalist, male, white, etc. - would finish with communism, or rather with the revolution which will not be followed by communism like days on a calendar. If k this is uncertain then what are we fighting for? Either in a revolution women liberate themselves or we should find something else to do. The Radical Feminists have a solution: they say



let us fight men! ~~they~~ they are in power. Of course they are not. To speak of the ~~the~~ "white male power structure" ~~does not state~~ is not by any means to say that whites and men have power or that white men only have power. ~~It~~ It is to describe the power relations within the working class and their reflection in capital. If the white male power structure were to become more black and more female as it inevitably must - as ~~an~~ reflection of our struggle it would only mean that we are confronting the power relations within the working class and they were reorganising to try to avoid an inevitable unification of forces.

I'm not now discussing when the revolution takes place. I'm discussing a basic assumption from which comes a specific kind of political practice. If even power relations "lingered on" after the revolution and consciousness had not caught up with being, or being lagged behind consciousness, the terms of power and who we all are has to be qualitatively different and I don't think any ~~plans~~ plans can be made for that time.

4. Which of course leads to the point of calling it the "feminist society" rather than the "communist society". From whatever assumptions this ~~springs~~ springs, it narrows the working ~~class~~ class down again to only white females. Why not call it the Black Society since Black people are the majority? Or the ~~Chinese~~ Chinese Society since by another definition there are more Chinese than anybody else? Because the working class is an interweaving of forces and we are trying to destroy ourselves as women and men as men and children as children and trying to become individuals. ~~We~~ We identify the struggle by our caste because that's how we must organise and think and explore the world; we cannot identify the results of our struggle by our caste because that's to assume the struggle will never be over, i.e. we will never win, we will always remain a caste.

The point that was raised for calling the new society "feminist" is that all women will come together. They won't. I don't agree that white women will overcome their racism any more than ~~white~~ <sup>black</sup> men will overcome their sexism. I think that is objectively rooted in the organisation of capitalist work (and by the way part of this is who is involved in what mode of labour) and therefore it is impossible to overcome subjectively for any of us what we have not transcended objectively, materially. The certainty of this does not come from a "clever brain" but from the struggle in those countries where the working class traditionally has not been homogeneous in appearance apart from the division between the sexes and generations. No South African or American who is not liberal, of the right or left would tell you that because they have seen ~~the~~ or been part of the manifestation of power which ~~is~~ imprinted on ~~the~~ their consciousness (the very front part) the necessity to acknowledge the autonomy of the (in this case) black movement. PO was at one point (Rosa will tell you about it) ready to throw out the whole concept of two labour markets when they changed their line on immigrants - let alone not assuming that the labour market is also divided sexually and that all four labour markets are underpinned by labour which never appears autonomously on the market - our work in the home. Are we ready to throw that over now and choose one of the four as the key? Or even a basic underpinning, housework, as the key section of the working class? I am not. I know we must break our labour on and off the market and that the others can't break theirs unless we do, but the opposite is also true. That is why I'm not a Radical Feminist. ~~xxxxxx~~

Exactly how this interdependence is expressing itself and will increasingly express itself, Franca, is something which is not so hard to see. When, as Rosa tells me, there is a rebellion about housing in Rome and a



24-year-old woman uses a gun, a whole leap has taken place in men's thinking about who needs whom, and in women's thinking too. But it is only on ~~needx~~ the basis of sections of the working class needing each other that the battle against sexism and racism will be ~~xxxxx~~ advanced.

I want to add one more thing here. There is a commonly held belief in the women's movement (which we neither of us discussed) that even though women participate in the revolution (Algeria is the classic case but Cuba is another, etc., etc., etc.), they are thrown back into servitude after the revolution. This is a truth which hides a greater truth. Everyone is thrown back into servitude if we do not advance to the communist society, but wake up the next morning with a new form of capitalism. ~~W~~omen in Algeria were re-enslaved as men were and because men were. That our slavery there is more brutal and is delivered at the hands of men does not alter this basic fact.

5. Polda in an earlier discussion mentioned infanticide as the woman's control of her labour. Aside from the fact that this must be strictly related to the need to survive and to try to help children to survive (~~xxxxxxx~~ both of which may have been simultaneously true), and that this represents a brutality much greater than killing animals (killing animals was a labour saving device), there is the direct relation to the movement today. The Trotskyists in the US who led the struggle for abortion reform said, "The right to abortion is the right to choose". We must be very careful that we don't glorify this in its more primitive form. The right to kill infants is not the right to choose anything except to someone who is not like us. This is my lingering hesitation in what little I've heard (and all of it through translation). They were not us. They didn't need what ~~we~~ need and we don't need many of the things that they considered socially necessary. I shall not forget George Rawick running a class for American Indians (probably all male) one of whom was an Eskimo who spoke of "my friend the walrus". I would like the walrus to be my friend but he is not. If he were I would not call him my friend because he is available for me to kill him so I can live. I have a different conception of friendship and of walruses. I am a capitalist person and I would not presume to say, for example, as an American Indian mother said when she was asked why she let her child go around with long hair in his eyes when she could have cut it: "He didn't ask me." Then I know that woman is a stranger and I must not impose the social relation which has shaped me upon her. I wonder, no matter how much research we do, what we will ever know about her.

6. Engels begins ORIGIN OF THE FAMILY with the division between "production" and "reproduction". It is an anti-Marxist assumption, ~~—~~ begins with the premise that all production is at the same time reproduction, not of things but of capital. In precapitalist societies we could make a division between production and reproduction; to confuse these two today is to confuse value with use value, machines with people, capital with the working class.



I wish very much that I could read what you have written. Certainly the line I was able to understand about the transition from animal to human is an important one. As I said, Marx did not believe that animals worked; he had no information to that effect. But since this is so, the move from the natural to social began to take place even before animals became human and were perhaps part of this process. If you are saying that it was, you must make clear I think that it is the activity which transformed them. You must make clear also that the division of labour - whatever that division was, and I'm far from convinced that there were not societies way, way back where there was a division of labour opposite to the one we know, where the man was the direct nourisher of children - did not imply a higher and a lower order, but was the basis for a higher and lower order. Marx's point was if even there is no higher and lower order of labour, the division is itself a deprivation to all involved in it - appropriating <sup>all</sup> human possibility and the level of human development. For the first time only with communism does that cease to be true. I am impatient for it, but I hope you believe that it is not my impatience but my experience within the black and women's movements which has taught me that the most difficult political task is to see ~~white~~ men as workers and the enemy, to see whites as workers and the enemy, to see parents (mothers and fathers) as workers and the enemy. ~~SenxxxKixxxgxxx~~ An American writer once said that <sup>you</sup> had to "keep two opposing ideas in your head at the same time and still retain the ability to function." He was not political. The political statement is: only with two opposing ideas can you develop a serious and revolutionary ability to function. *If you're not you consist between these opposing ideas, you're not in politics.*

*which prevents them from*

Love and power,

*S. J.*