

FA, Cartella 4, 100

30 April 74

My dear Silvia,

I hope that I didn't misunderstand your phone call. I figured you were paying and was nervous about the time. But later it dawned on me that perhaps you weren't and that I shouldn't have been so abrupt, that I didn't have to be. Anyway forgive me and put it down to nervousness about telephone bills. I'll try to call you again next week in the same way so we can chat. But I have to go into town to do that, and everything is very difficult for me physically these days. I just wrote the following to George (R)

"The fact of the matter is that the trip utterly exhausted me, and as soon as I landed I got ill with about half a dozen complaints. I think I've overdone it, and physically I'm flat. Then I had to face a political crisis in the collective, and on top of that going back to typing for the BBC. It's all been a bit much, but I'm coping. The real problem with everything or almost everything in my life now is that a relatively small group of people are in any way reflecting the enormous social acts of the working class here. None of them has the experience that we have (with the exception of Priscilla) or the determination to do it anyway (with the exception of Ruth) in order to battle through the enormous odds that present themselves in the form of not only the left but the shit they have disseminated in the movement (and I'm not only speaking about the women's movement). When in Britain you strip off one layer of social democracy underneath it is - another layer of social democracy. To hold a political line in such (on the grand scale) magnificent times is an agony when (on the small scale - that is, your immediate milieu) the times have barely changed. And I think I detect in myself a growing dissatisfaction with Europe, especially with Britain. The working class is great, but for the first time in almost 20 years I'm tired of being polite about exploitation. The West Indian community has kept me alive politically and in every way, and yet my public political life has been elsewhere. I think it is time to go home. And yet I can't do that either. Ah well, we do the best we can. I'm fine really, but it's better to know your problems than to hide them from yourself, even though there is no immediate solution. The POW journal is a great victory and I'm depressed to see the women don't even know what they have done which is so good and so new and so working class. ...

"I've read Paolo's document very carefully now and made notes. If I have any time and/or energy I'll write a letter to you or Silvia about what I think. I'll also get down to typing out those notes which, as I read them again, I'm convinced are the beginning of the great debate on organisation which is inevitable. We are not against Leninism because it leads. We are against Leninism because of where it wants to lead us. Among other things, this is the only way finally to rid ourselves of our Libertarian followers. The State will not wither away because we are nice to each other in communes. It will not wither away at all unless the work which it is there to see done withers away. To speak of the State today is to speak of work discipline - workers' state, any state. Cuba is the prime example. Who could have done more for the workers? OK, China. And that tears it. But it is not Eurocentric to demand that the wealth be returned to the Third World and not in the form of factories. Only that will build the new international. But this is premised on the proposition that the Third World needs the communist society. And that is a new and revolutionary proposition. It is the opposite of "It will do them good". All this has to be worked out, but I know I'm right, and that shifting from the wageless to the waged and then returning to the waged from that point of view is the class point of view.

↑ But I am alone here, and that is hard.  
+ this is changing too, + Reg. 1974

The last collected and typed should be that this was the first time. There are other women for whom the last year has been an immense journey in politics + in gradually + in their own needs.

And, my dear Silvia, it is hard. Gambino has assured me that I get my "place in the sun" this August, and I shall have to get through May, June and July before I get my sun bonus. But we'll mangle. The trouble in the collective is mainly due to what I describe above. It is difficult for women to commit themselves totally to a politics which, in the context of Britain, seems so way out, so unachievable. And yet there are so many signs here that we are going to go places. Two fourteen-year-old girls at a school where I spoke a few months ago are circulating a petition for wages for schoolwork. A thousands school kids, about 700 black, were shouting it at their recent demonstration protesting three black kids which had been arrested and beaten. Wives of car workers in Cowley, Oxford, went on a demonstration against the union calling their men out on strike all the time - they said they need the money. It is a bit mixed up but 250 women - housewives marching down the street against the union is good enough to begin with. And they said you can't organise housewives! The women in the collective have risen to this magnificently. As I am surprised when they don't see a victory, I'm surprised when they so clearly do, in spite of all the mystification of the women demanding that their men return to work.

And so we go on. On Sunday we will have a meeting to thrash out the problems, and I'm more than hopeful, I'm confident. But I know after this crisis will be another, and another and another, because of how little power we have here, how little they sense the power we have abroad and also - not to be forgotten - to refuse work often goes hand in hand with refusing to do anything in a consistent, organised and disciplined way. That is a working class crisis and we must learn to deal with it, how it is best to live with and work with it. It will not go away.

To business. I've read your article. It's very good, but I think it needs cutting. I've read it once and given it to px Priscilla to read. I want to present it to the collective meeting on the journal which will be some time after the Sunday meeting. I've not yet read the one on welfare.

The two books I left are now rather urgent to me. Can brother Michael post them in any expensive and fast way? If not, sea mail. **DON'T SPEND THE MONEY, PLEASE!**, of sending them by air!

Thanks for the cuttings which arrived this morning. They demand a breadth of understanding now which I feel physically incapable of giving them. My head is a jumble of ideas. But I'll go through them in time, and the Harlan Cy. one is vital.

About Sarita. She's a well-meaning woman, but she always ultimately talks shit, and has no understanding of politics, sense. Every day she changes her mind and wanders through the world making various forms of trouble. You should have been warned. She totally misunderstood the Italian situation, and is probably making a mess about explaining the London situation too. One of the important things about London is that a number of women in the collective have "become" gay. Gay people, especially gay women, have so little power in this country that their first impulse is to cut themselves off from class politics. That doesn't worry me; they will or will not find their way back. It's up to them. There are enough of us to go on in any case. I'll write or call after the meeting on Sunday, to let you know how things stand.

The Toronto trip was a terrible mess in many ways. The ex-New Tendency women (Judith is still in and so is Frances) are just now coming to feminism. In the year since we were there, Angela and four other women formed what can only be described as a clique. They talk constantly about being "into the perspective", but have not grasped what it means and Angela

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Since writing the above a great many things have happened. First, Priscilla had a hysterectomy two days ago and is still in the period of pain, will be for a couple of days yet. So it has meant a lot of phone calls and rushing back and forth to hospital. But she is a brave woman and will make it.

Second, we had an excellent collective meeting. I'll send you the documents that have been written by different women (I don't have extra copies right now). The one that really pulled the collective together was one by a black sister who said that the problem was that ~~some~~ some women identified their own needs as separate from the needs of other women, and that that was the basis of racism. For example, if a woman was ~~xxx~~ single without children, she saw the problems of the full-time housewife/mother as outside her own need. So how could she, if she was white, see the black woman's needs as her own? Here are the notes on Leninism again: the homogeneity of working class need and the heterogeneity of working class experience. The women really understood this.

Just as important, the radical feminists who left the collective have already been replaced by some women in Reading (about 50 miles from London) who are superb. In many important respects, the last collective meeting was really the first working class meeting I've ever attended in the women's movement. It's clear from this that the journal has to take now another direction; it must go down. That is, it should be aimed, or rather tend to be aimed, at women around the women's movement and outside it, rather than to those inside it, who have already ~~xxxxxx~~ suffered the impact of the left.

In addition, I've had two long discussions with the woman in Mexico, who is English (and the grandniece of the woman who originally proposed Family Allowance), who is arranging for publication of POWER OF WOMEN there. She is very fine, is returning <sup>in</sup> September, and has given us for publication an article on the Mexican movement. Together with the stuff from Italy, we have the basis of a real international number. She believes, by the way, that once the book is published Rosa and/or I might be invited to Mexico to speak. That would be sensational.

The next issue of RACE TODAY will carry a double size editorial on the Portuguese coup. I think you will recognise the style. ~~y~~ We had to do it in a great hurry, with the printers breathing down our necks, but it will still be the best thing published in Britain about it. Here again, the wageless have overturned a State power. This time it was primarily the wageless of Portuguese Africa. I had rather an argument with an associate of Toni Negri who told me about the working class which was "marginalised". That is really the logic of capital. They marginalise you and it is assumed by these extraparliamentary geniuses that you allow yourself to stay marginalised. It is really quite absurd. And it is so nice to have the proof of Portugal.

The news of your group is great. I think Jane's paper is fine, and it doesn't worry me that she speaks about "specialism". She is making her way to something and if she uses words that people are familiar with, and infuses them with another content, that may itself be useful. Do tell her I think it's a great beginning.

The people who have read your article here like it very much. Ruth is ecstatic! She doesn't want to cut anything. I still think it can be trimmed, and I'll have another look at it. It is suitable here because a lot of groundwork has already been ~~pa~~ laid, but I can see that

the US were would have to be explained until people get used to the newness of the ideas. *I'll write some comments that may be helpful for the indicated.*  
 Talking of the newness of ideas, listen to the letter we got from a woman in Windsor, Canada.

"Dear People,

Please start my subscription with the issue following: Vol. 1 No. 1 March/April '74. Thank you.

I really enjoyed Vol.1. No.1. Besides being informative, it was also challenging. Wages for housework as a perspective, for me, poses a new way of looking at class struggle. But it is hard to come to grips with for so many of the old traditional ways of looking at things hold on. The first issue helped me explore more concretely what wages for housework means particularly the shoplifting article, On the Spot and Leaving Home.

Thank you and keep publishing.  
 In struggle, Reni"

I'll send the address to Judith. But the handwriting indicates that it is not an academic, & just an ordinary human genius.

The news of the film on up is great, and Esther would dearly love to take a flight immediately to NY to be involved. If there is any way we can help from here, let us know.

A woman from LF in Padova just last night delivered all the stuff of March 8/9/10. It is really formidable. I also have the speeches that different women made on the 10th and from what Marialba said it is Pelda's speech which needs translating most. So we'll try to do it here for the journal. (All ideas for the journal of course must go to the collective, but I'm preparing because we are already a bit later than we intended. Thanks, by the way, for the bread. We need all we can get.) Also we expect to get some photos of the event.

I interviewed the two 14-year-old women yesterday and they were magnificent. You will get a copy of the interview when I transcribe it. There is very little about politics that the younger generation has to learn. These two are planning to organise the whole of south London, and then come north. They are thinking in terms of strikes and demonstrations, and are trying to involve their parents, with quite good success. They have opened the whole question, by the way, of the financial fate of children if their mother has a wage. These two have mothers who work outside of the home and are quite aware that they have spending money because of that. Isn't it like a puzzle and every day a new piece fits in, giving more of an idea of what the whole picture is like?

So I am much more hopeful and buoyant than when I wrote on the 30th, and not half as tired. I've been taking it quite easy, really, except that there remain the pressures. I think I shall not let myself get that tired ever again except for the insurrection itself. Thanks for all you have sent. I'll try to call you again. Much love, and power to all the sisters.

PS. Thanks for all the money. That \$150 came at a good time. Special kiss for Leoncito and Marielena.