

Dear Terry,

I have written this letter in my mind hundreds of times and should have seized the chance to send it much sooner. If you want to send or make your criticisms of the time we spent together I would certainly be grateful to hear it, to hear from you or see you.

It was truly an honor to live with you, be in struggle with you and participate in the birth of your child. You were coming off an action which called for the highest test of revolutionary courage and commitment. You were in danger. Many of your most dearly loved comrades were inside.

I feel that we betrayed the trust that you placed in us, in many ways, and rejected the struggle and criticism you raised with us. Struggles against my/our leadership and politics over the last year and a half have exposed the national chauvinism and racism of our organization. While we were together you criticized us for racism. We dealt with your criticism in only the most minor ways ('it was John's fault') - but the project was put together on a racist, white basis: we made sure that we had all the power. We attempted to make all the decisions without you, to cut you off from your own organization, to set the terms ourselves. I feel that you were in struggle against this the whole time, gave leadership in the face of it, and that saved us from disaster.

A lot of this came down around 'security' questions. We based the project on putting our own and our organization's safety first (no phone calls, no visits to the house for you, everything on our terms and 'turf', no contact for you with your comrades). This was a betrayal of our responsibilities as white revolutionaries to support Black liberation. We put our own interests first. And of course you were the one who was really in danger, who was an enemy the state feared and needed to attack, while we had already begun to make our peace with the enemy, had not carried out very much in the way of action, and were not being hunted. We thought and acted as if the losses your organization had suffered were caused by your recklessness and bad security - that is, we blamed you - rather than by the enemy's ruthless attack on all Black and Third World revolutionary forces, especially armed forces. We treated your organizational work with contempt, not letting you deal with your own work and responsibilities while we were together, until you absolutely insisted.

I also think that we took some unnecessary risks around the birth. One was Lucy - with all her experience - leaving early to deal with priorities for our organization. Another was that we excluded a trained midwife sister from the project because of her politics - which were to challenge the racism and male supremacy of the organization.

Although while we were together we put forward unity as women, I think that only masked the reality. We certainly were - in practice, in everything that came later - denying the basis for revolutionary sisterhood with you: support for the liberation, self determination and power for Black people. We also freely criticized your comrades

for sexism, while hiding the incredible sexism in our organization, where women took a secondary place in every way. We also hid the contradictions going on among us that summer. Instead we arrogantly put ourselves forward as a model. You raised the possibility of writing things together, and above all, the possibility of coordinated women's action. This was the real test of revolutionary woman's solidarity, and we turned it down, on the basis of 'disagreements.'

I feel deeply self critical for the arrogant letter I wrote you in response to your generous and beautiful letter to us. I laid out our 'disagreements.' These served us as an excuse to avoid our absolute obligation to raise the level of our own struggle against the state, on our front (as your letter had put it) and to follow the leadership through fighting - of national liberation struggles.

During that summer we were putting out Prairie Fire and putting our plans into operation to organize our members and supporters into a classic "Marxism-Leninism," basing the US revolution in the white working class at the expense of Black and Third World people and of women. We were also attempting to make moves to take over control of as much of the white left as possible, to move it away from whatever genuine solidarity with Third World, prison, international movements existed. We were also determined to move away from armed struggles, even on the minimal level we had been carrying it out, to try and win over a bigger base among white people. Our "ML" politics became our excuse for not fighting. It meant taking advantage of our privilege as white people to accommodate the state. As you could clearly tell from our time together, we had set up and become accustomed to a very comfortable and non-combative way of life.

In my letter I wrote you that you underestimated the need for organization. Now I feel that we were elevating organization as such far above revolutionary politics, and self preservation above the struggle against the state. The lesson you were arguing, from the Panther experience, was about collective work - the danger of glorification of leaders. We argued arrogantly for ourselves as leaders, our preservation at the expense of struggle, criticising you for adventurism and justifying our compromises. We also laid out Marxism Leninism as a disagreement. But our ML was merely a mask to establish ourselves as overall leaders in the left, and a repetition of the pattern of white leftists for generations - using the working class to sell out national liberation and women. The scene of us forcing a study of the Paris Commune, rather than hear your criticisms of our racism, certainly stands out in my mind. I feel now that the Message to the Black Movement, which came out several months after this time, represents a major step forward for revolution in the US, and applies ML theory and experience to the conditions of Black people and the reality of life in the US. Finally, we put out that we were more 'anti-imperialist' than you were - trying to deny the leading revolutionary and anti imperialist struggle of Black people.

I feel that we made a difficult time in your life even harder, by denying you contact with the brother you were relating to, by isolating you in a white context.

For myself, I know that I lost an opportunity to learn from you and your comrades. I have a little baby now, and have been trying to work through some of the questions you posed for yourself and us -

about the struggle to have children and be a fighter. I wonder how your children are doing, how they are growing into revolutionaries. You taught me - in words and in practice - about revolutionary courage and revolutionary love. I denied and attacked these values., But they are what we have to live up to. In your letter to us after you left, you describe us as fighting the same struggle, on a different front. We failed to carry this through. I only hope that I am able to carry out this responsibility now.

- Maggie/Jean