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May Day, 1982.

DEAR PHYLLIS!

Thought I'd honour you by putting a brand-new typewriter ribbon in, but it turns out to be so black you can barely read it ... Here goes the letter anyway, since it is long overdue. Listen, my re-adjustment to Mexico City has been far more difficult than the original adjustment ever was. The air is so polluted that sometimes I feel like I'm suffocating (they say that just breathing here is the equivalent of smoking a pack of cigarettes per day). Grimy soot is everywhere. The streets are loud and congested and pushy. Our apartment is so spartan and too crammed with people; previously I rationalized it in terms like "living simply" and living with a "community", but now it ~~is~~ just feels like squalor. Various political fronts are showing tendencies which disappoint me (more on that later). Then there's the fact that Christine and Jorge, our closest peers and fine comrades, have left for Europe (eventually Africa) and I don't have anybody whom I can really talk to about personal or political matters. To make a long story short, I'm lonely and generally depressed.

Having stated that, there are however some positive things to write about. Tom, for instance. Oh Phyllis, we are just so happy together! He is always kind and generous and patient, I can't fathom how he keeps it up. Of course the sexual aspect is important (and wonderful) but what I like the most is that we are good friends and thoroughly enjoy each other's company ... day after day! Another happy something is what I announced to you from the States already, namely my pregnancy. In a few days I'll be starting my third month. So far it has gone extremely well: I have no morning sickness whatsoever, always feel fine, and have a ravenous appetite. The only problems are breast soreness (imagine me wearing a bra! Weird, after all these years of freedom, but it does help the nips) and also a constant feeling of tiredness. I lie down a lot and walk slower than usual. A small price to pay for such an easy first trimester. Did I tell you that the due date is 1 December.

I hope to work right up til then. I've quit my typing job because it involved a lot of commuting and was drastically underpaid. Instead, I now teach English classes 5 days a week. Every afternoon, for a total of 12 class hours, with 3 different groups but they are all in the same company and it is located a mere 1/2 hour's busride from here. I enjoy the teaching a lot, and I think my students are having a good time too. Tom continues his journalism for that scientific research magazine, and is still writing on his own book too -- slow but steady progress. Running the household takes up a lot of our remaining time and energy, plus polit. work of course. We sort of live from day to day, and are quite satisfied with these arrangements, just getting by. From my work in the hospital in the States I still have some savings, and we'll use these for our Cuba trip.

Yes, Cuba is looming big on our agenda. The Mexican system requires that tourists leave the country every 6 months, and may then re-enter if they wish. Hence the timing of our trip to PA, and our plans for going to Cuba sometime in September (our current 6 months expire Oct.8). A week ago the US government forbade its citizens any travel to Cuba, but we'll see if Tom can go as the spouse of a Canadian. We want to go as individuals, not in the commonly-used tour package, and stay for 2-3 weeks. If we take a cheap 36-hour train ride to the coast, the hop across to the island is very inexpensive. The big issue is how to get you there. We've been to endless travel agencies, including Aeroflot and Cubana, and over here they just claim not to have the info about flights from Europe. Strange, for I'm sure

the flights exist! We will continue to make inquiries, but also perhaps you can find out more when you are in London, that travel hub of the world. We know, for example, that there are reasonable rates for flights from Kington Jamaica to Havana and back to Kingston; considering London's ethnic composition, there must be constant excursion flights from London to Kingston. It is something to be checked out. The visa situation you will need to arrange from Europe. Please, Phyllis, don't just let this matter drop -- we really want to have you come and see your son (AND US) at our expense, as I already said on the telephone to you. If we would know your available dates a bit more precisely, it would be good. How late can it be, before you get into trouble with your employers? Please let us know, and in the meantime we'll try to find out more about the travel scene.

Got a whole batch of your letters when I was in Akron, plus clippings and copies etc. Thanks! Too bad about the difficult time Suks had with her father; am still waiting for a letter from her. How is it to have her back? Has she changed? And what about you? I've really been thinking about that offer from Sheffield University for you to read African Lit. there. My response boils down to this: I think it would be marvelous for you to spend a year or more in England. I'm convinced that a change from Maseru is exactly what you need. The only doubt I have is whether Sheffield would be the best place to go; the studying aspect would surely go well, but compared to the cultural richness of London and also the large exile community to be found there, I wonder whether the "quaintness" of such a small place would provide you with enough stimuli and with any sort of social support network. But you should definitely consider sojourning in England for a while. And studying literature is always fun! As for your up-coming trip, I do hope all goes well and you get the medical attention you so badly need. This will be a chance to get yourself into as good a shape as possible -- don't skimp. And if you see Judy, please give her a big hug from me and tell her to write. By the way, where will Sukthi be during your wanderings? And will you get to Eastern Europe at all? One doesn't hear much news from Poland now that the utterly stupid Malvinas/Falklands squabble is dominating the news. Colonialist Maggie and fascist Galtieri are both so completely wrong, it is silly to see even progressive nations (like Cuba) take sides in their dispute. Remember WWI and how it confused many socialist parties. Anyway, go and see what the Brits are up to, Phyllis.

Our own recent trip went very well. Took a train up to the Mexican border, then hitch-hiked all the way from Laredo Texas to Lancaster Pennsylvania. That took 5 days, and we had good luck and good weather the whole time. Fortunately we got long hauls with truck-drivers for the night-time stretches. We spent a week with our respective parents (they live about an hour's drive from each other) and then went to New York City. There we did only political work, specifically on the Haitian refugee issue, looking up lots of people and talking with lawyers and visiting relatives of the fellows locked up in Fort Allen etc. There is now a class action suit in the court, which if it is won (against the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service) will mean that all the Haitians will be let out of the camps; this has much greater prospect than doing it on an individual case-by-case basis, so we are expecting a verdict within about one month. Then it might be another month or two before the red tape is handled for the actual freedom, but at least hope is in sight. Am enclosing a clipping for you, both sides of which you'll find interesting.

Then I spent about 10 days with my sister Ruth and her kids, and a great time was had by all. We managed to re-establish some of our former closeness despite our differences. Then back to Lancaster, and lots of socialising with old friends. Also, my parents had a small wedding reception for us in their home, which allowed them to feel involved in the whole event, and we enjoyed it. Our marriage was

definitely worth it -- my parents were sincerely pleased and were able to welcome Tom and me into their home without hesitation. We had good visits with them and with his parents too; both fathers tend to be very dominating and a bit hard to swallow, but both mothers are just saints and Tom and I both love our mother-in-laws dearly. By the way, we asked people to refrain from giving us presents but that if they did want to give us something it should be money for direct aid to Guatemalan refugees here in Mexico. There was a good response to this, and it provided us with lots of opportunities to tell people about the war situation. I often thought of you and was tempted to channel some of the funds your way, but felt that it is best to tell people about that in which I am immediately involved, and accept their response accordingly. You can understand that. The UNHCR has its hands completely tied here, there are no programs at all for the refugees because the issue is too hot for Mexico to touch. So the refugees come across the border when they flee the army raids on their villages, and they have absolutely nothing except the clothes on their backs. They do have their malnutrition, disease, and wounds, and often there are small children involved. It is really frustrating to try and help in a situation where there is no organised assistance. And the political front of the refs in exile is so caught up in its bureaucratic quagmire that it does little. They claim to be (and maybe even think they are) socialist, but we have talked personally with enough of the leaders and have read carefully enough of the literature to realise that the movement is purely a nationalist anti-imperialist effort with strong leanings toward "social democracy" a la Willy Brandt and the Socialist International, i.e. not a hint of class struggle. You have the same flaw within your ranks: those people who truly believe that all you have to do is get rid of the white power structure and set up a black government somehow vaguely "of the people" and then presto everybody will be happy. They forget the vicious and destructive persistence of antagonistic contradictions within any class structure. Look at Zimbabwe. I know I'm sounding harsh, but this is a deadly serious mistake which a liberation movement can avoid if it is scrupulously careful early enough. I really hope the ANC realises that the Gatsha Buthelezi's of this world are not aberrations -- they grow from a specific class milieu and will continue to pop up even after "victory" if their class basis is not squarely faced and dealt with by the progressive forces. So much for my little lecture. Ah yes, the other disappointment I referred to earlier was that the local CP is thoroughly into electoral politics, campaigning with their baby-kissing candidate for Presidency and promising piddling reforms. Shit, that's no way to overthrow the Vendome Column.

Let's see, where was I? Oh yes, our pleasant visit in Lancaster! Well it came to an end and we flew back to Mexico City, not having enough time to go overland again. Arrived on 8 April, and I've told you about the scene since then. Did you receive the bunch of pictures I sent from the States? Have you heard from Kathy? We got together with her briefly and spent a really nice time together. She hadn't answered my letters for over a year, Phyllis, so don't worry too much if you don't hear from her -- she's still the same loving & lovable person we all cherish. Will I hear from you during your trip? I know only too well how difficult it can be to keep up any correspondence while travelling. In any case, from now on use the address at the top of this letter, being careful to write it exactly as it is so that letters don't get lost. We plan to have the baby here and stay until next March, then move on to who knows where. So you can get lots of practice in writing/typing this address! And be sure to tell me where I should send my letters after the end of May. How will Sukhthi get mail? Please greet Robin from me, and later on Fern and Monroe too. Take care, Phyllis ... Tsamaya hantle.

LOVE,

R.

P.S. The black ink ended up actually smearing on the page, so I'm sending you the carbon copy I'd made for myself instead.