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The Bolshevik revolution and the emancipation of women -Introduction-

The following article gives the views of a study group in Chicago of comrades and friends of the MLP.

This article is the first in a series on the struggle to emancipate women in revolutionary Russia. We will be covering such issues as family law in the Soviet Union, the fight against prostitution, the laws and policies on abortion, the history of the working women's movement in Russia, the work of the Zhenotdel (the Women's Bureau of the Communist Party), political trends in the women's movement, conditions of women workers and the general status of women in the Soviet Union.

We must stress that our work is by no means complete and that all of our conclusions are tentative. The struggle for the emancipation of women is only one side of the revolution, and it cannot be fully understood without a strong grasp of all the other aspects. In fact one of the compelling reasons for publishing these tentative conclusions and reports is to help the many other comrades who are working hard to answer theoretical questions posed by the Bolshevik revolution.

Soviet history itself is very difficult to assess. The revolutionaries were working in very harsh conditions: extreme poverty, bloody civil war and foreign intervention, incredible social and cultural backwardness. Applying Marxist-Leninist principles in such conditions is not easy. Thus, judging the correctness of the Bolsheviks' actions today is very difficult. Keeping these qualifications in mind, we want to encourage comrades to discuss and comment on this material.

Unless otherwise noted, all indented quotes are from Lenin. A working bibliography is appended.

Marxist-Leninist theory and women's liberation

"...the success of a revolution depends on how much the women take part in it." (Lenin, *Speech at the First All-Russia Congress of Working Women*, Collected Works, vol. 28, p. 181, Nov. 19, 1918).

The liberation of women is one of the decisive questions for the working class. The fight against women's oppression, now and historically, has been a vital component of the revolutionary movement against capital. This front

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The racist system has got to go!

Mass outrage swept the country in the wake of the acquittal of the racist goons in uniform who beat Rodney King, as reported in the May 1 issue of the Workers' Advocate. Here we continue our coverage, based on accounts and views by MLP comrades in the areas and actions concerned.

L.A.'s Days of Rage

Below is the text of a leaflet by the L.A. Supporters of the MLP.

The days of rage that gripped Los Angeles last week were the inevitable outcome of subjecting people to years of massive impoverishment and police terror. These attacks on the working class are no mere accident nor an aberration, but instead represent a conscious and deliberate policy in the service of a few thousand super-rich industrialists and banksters. Even now, while issuing their predictable false concern for people in the ghettos and barrios, the servants of the rich in government, Republicans and Democrats alike, are planning to intensify their brutal assault on poor and working people.

Governor Wilson and other reactionaries in the state

legislature want to further cut Aid to Families with Dependent children (AFDC) by 25%, from a measly \$663/month to a paltry \$507/month. To sell this heartless program to the "middle class", Wilson and the Democrats are promoting a racist referendum which scapegoats immigrants, and the poor, i.e., welfare recipients, as the cause for capitalism's current crisis. Additionally, some of the politicians and their apologists, have the criminal gall to attack the residents for South Central L.A., specifically blaming 'welfare programs' for the current civil unrest. Wilson is given plenty of T.V. and radio time by the corporate-owned media to promote his David Duke-KKK-like lies blaming "welfare" for "destroying the Black family." Of course, like all loyal stooges of the rich, Wilson seeks to hide the capitalist origin of poverty, racism and economic crises.

To cover(up) L.A.'s days of rage, the rich unchained their legions of media flunkies to propagandize and throw more dust in the eyes of the people. Glaringly absent from their "reporting" has been any exposure of the denial of basic human rights for millions of working people. They know that millions go without health care (including the scandalously inadequate funding for AIDS research and care), shelter, adequate nutrition, education and meaningful employment. And they know that these conditions are imposed by a racist social order backed up by armed goons in blue.

Although we are told time and again "there is no money for social programs," magically billions of dollars can be found to bail out the real criminal looters who sacked the S&L's, for military contractors, Pentagon brass hats, and of course for whopping pay increases and retirement pensions for Democratic and Republican officeholders. Some reformist and opportunist forces are promoting this Big Lie, that there is no money, and agree that cuts must be made. Their "dispute" with Wilson is merely over the dollar amount and who should be the first to feel the blade of the budget axe.

Take United Teachers of Los Angeles (UTLA) misleaders like Helen Bernstein, for instance. Instead of building sentiment to fight back against all cutbacks and layoffs, they have opted to cut a dirty deal with the likes of [Republican Governor] Wilson and [Democratic leader of the state legislature] Willie Brown. They accept that cuts ought to be made in AFDC, General Assistance, and Supplemental Security Income, and in return for their cooperation were given worthless promises that cuts in education would not be as deep as had been planned.

We must organize to oppose these divide and conquer schemes.

Tax the rich, not the working people!
No more cutbacks—relief for the jobless and the poor!
Full rights for immigrant workers!
Stop police brutality—Justice for Rodney King! □

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Pent-up anger at a savage system erupts in downtown LA, April 29

The night of Wednesday, April 29, the shit hit the fan with a rally of 6-700 people at Parker Center downtown. Few were in the mood for speechifying, so things erupted quickly when the cops set out a phalanx of over 100 cops to clear them of. The protesters gave verbal hell to the cops, bottles flew, the outside podium outside was set on fire, 4 or 5 outside lights were smashed, etc.

Cops in groups of 20 or so began to push people down the streets, and a small riot began. The crowd divided into groups of two or three dozen, smashed up windows, and set many trash fires at government buildings a block or two away. Meanwhile county sheriffs began to reinforce the city cops.

Rocks and bottles flew. Things got ugly as it was now dark. Angry youth began to lash out in any direction. Fights broke out with pedestrians and traffic. In one case even some protesters including some MLP supporters were caught in the middle and mistakenly attacked by other demonstrators, but half a dozen anarchist-oriented youth vouched for the besieged protesters.

MLP supporters took part in the action, talked to many activists, and distributed a good deal of literature, including *Workers' Advocate* and 500 leaflets for a big anti-cutback rally planned for May 9. □

"State of Emergency" in action: Anti-cutback rally banned

The newly-formed School/Community Action Network (SCAN) and other groups have planned for months for a big anti-cutback rally for May 9. (See 'Scan Fights Cutbacks in L.A.' in the April 1 issue of the *Workers' Advocate*.) Given the intervening events, perhaps the rally might also have seen an outpouring of anger against the racist system, police terror, and the iron fist used to suppress the people of South Central Los Angeles. But the Democratic Party-dominated city authorities used the 'state of emergency' to deny the workers and poor their right to express their views and to protest. While the liberal politicians talk about aid to the city, they ban workers from demonstrating against cuts, thus doing toady service for Republican Governor Wilson, Bush, and the cutback offensive of capital.

On May 8, a community group the authorities found acceptable was allowed to hold a demonstration at Parker Center. But on the morning of May 9, the authorities revoked the permit for the anti-cutback rally, and banned the event. When hundreds of people showed up in the civic center area in downtown L.A. for the rally, they were given ultimatums to leave in 5 minutes or be arrested. The National Guard and the police singled out people to arrest, to harass, or to follow out of the area. About 20 people

were arrested. But the next week, liberal politicians Jerry Brown and Barbara Boxer were allowed to hold rallies and meetings in the civic center.

The authorities announced that all permits for protest demonstrations in the streets are revoked. Bush and Kemp are protected by armed guards when they go to L.A. to pose for the cameras; Brown and Boxer are welcomed to the civic center; but the workers, teachers, and minorities of L.A. aren't allowed to meet together or to publicly demonstrate their disagreement with the massive cutbacks devastating their schools, their living conditions, and their communities. □

May Day and the Rodney King uprising

The MLP's May Day meeting in Oakland took place on Saturday May 9. There was a speech on the struggle for women's rights, and two MLP comrades gave eyewitness accounts of the defeat of Operation Rescue in Buffalo, New York. And there was also a speech on the anti-racist uprising in Los Angeles. Below is an excerpted summary based on the notes for that speech:

What took place in LA was a big event in the life of the workers and the poor, and it is being debated everywhere. It needs to be debated and summed up because the establishment spin doctors are putting their own spin on it, trying to prevent us from learning anything of value from what took place.

What the establishment says

The basic spin is that there were two cases of injustice, first Rodney King and, second, the violent outburst, senseless looting, and indiscriminate attacks on whites or Koreans. It is said in different ways, with different interests:

George Bush says he is horrified by excesses of both sides. When he went to LA, he pushed all the right buttons to reassure the forces of law and order. In every other sentence, he referred to the "honest" people or "decent" people (police, merchants, other capitalists); contrasted them to the "evil" people, hoodlums (which are the have-nots, the nobodies). In practical terms, he is sending in federal prosecutors to punish the uprising. Another \$19 million is promised for war on black youth in the name of fighting drugs. More police, more prisons.

Bill Clinton gave a similar rap when he went to LA. But with his training in Democratic Party demagoguery, there was a shade more talk of "understanding" for the victims of racism. He then flew out of LA to Little Rock, Arkansas, where he presided over a hearing which denied clemency for a man facing Arkansas' death penalty. This was his message to the racist law-and-order mob crowd.

Mayor Bradley and the African-American establishment have proclaimed their outrage at the unjust verdict. Yet their first priority isn't fighting for justice; it isn't to organize a mass struggle to break the grip of the racist

police and courts and fight for the needs of the people. Their first priority is putting down what they see as "unjustifiable" acts of rebellion. They are busy helping the LAPD and George Bush put the lid back on. Mayor Bradley, the big AME ministers, and the rest, have been the welcoming party for the national guard and the marines.

Then there is the evening news and *Time* magazine and the other establishment media mills. They are always "evenhanded". Now they are weighing the alleged evils on both sides, and showing the tape of Rodney King being beaten next to the tape of the white truck driver being beaten. And after carefully weighing the subject—thousands of injured, 58 deaths, etc.—they conclude that the African American response to the beating of one black man was "extreme," "irrational" and "senseless".

By any objective criteria, this is an absurd summation of events. Can't be judged by isolated incidents here or there. But have to put the whole situation in balance.

What really happened?

Authority broke down, tens of thousands of people came out into the street to express themselves, to make a statement, to strike out. Lots of different statements were made, different targets hit. But to sum up what happened, we need to look at the background, and we need to look at the main flow of events.

From this standpoint, the L.A. uprising was a revolt of the victims against the victimizers, of the oppressed against the oppressors, of the poor against the exploiters. It was a forceful statement of protest against a cruel and inhuman system by the African Americans, the Latinos, and the other poor workers of Los Angeles.

The primary target

What was the primary target? The police. The police headquarters at Parker Center—that was the focus of the storm the first night. Blacks, Latinos, whites. Why were they so concerned about this trial? Because the only thing exceptional about the Rodney King case was that it was caught on videotape. Because practically every person of color in L.A. has either felt the blows of police abuse directly, or has a brother or son or friend who has been in Rodney King's position. Racist police abuse is endemic, systematic, and growing worse from L.A. to Chicago to New York.

Latasha Harlins, a 14-year-old black girl, was killed 13 days after Rodney King's beating, and her killer got probation, while another judge gave a black postal worker six months in jail for shooting a dog. Here was another stark example of racist justice from the courts.

The politicians and media can talk themselves hoarse about how the Los Angeles Police Department could have been better deployed to hold things down. But they are missing the point. People can only be abused, humiliated,

and beaten so many times before they strike back. And they struck back on the Wednesday night of the verdict. They struck back with a force that far outstripped any power of the LAPD and the rest of the forces of the racist law and order.

That's the first thing about the L.A. uprising. The fury unleashed against the LAPD didn't come out of nowhere. It came in response to a regime of police and courts that is systematically racist and unjust.

So the first night at Parker Center there was a clear target, and relatively clear demands against the police and the courts. As well as against the *L.A. Times* and the pro-police and racist bias of the news media. After that first night, the targets became more diffuse. To large extent the police withdrew with tails between their legs. There were some random cases of white workers being attacked, and other mistaken targets. But the principal target became the stores, big and small, that exploit and abuse the community.

A revolt of the have-nots

The establishment would have the ignorant believe that the looting was just gangsters, the evil people preying on the good people. But even the *L.A. Times* can't completely cover up what was going on. Whole families were in the street, from 4-year-old children to grandmothers. People who have successfully avoided police records. Workers, employed and unemployed, who are the backbone of the L.A. economy. The *L.A. Times* reports that diapers were one of the main items stolen, along with baby formula, tortillas and other necessities. Any way you cut it, this was a revolt of the poor, of the have nots, of the hungry and almost hungry, crying out for relief, for change.

Much is said about race relations between black and Koreans. But the looting was not just African-Americans, and instead went across national lines. Underlying it was the conflict between unemployed and poor workers, and the merchants and business owners. Both looters and store-owners were of all races and nationalities. 60% of stores attacked were Latino-owned, and about half those who were arrested for looting were Latino.

In an interview, a Latino worker said that what brought him into street was revenge against store owners who price gouge, never give a break, and sell overpriced goods and shoddy merchandise.

What next?

Everyone is taking stock of where to go from here.

Bush calls for more law and order, for a crackdown. California Governor Wilson's welfare initiative was introduced two days after L.A. erupted. The Republicans blame welfare, want to tighten screws, and whip up lynch mob mentality in the suburbs against the inner-city.

Clinton wants to do the same thing, but without losing votes.

The bourgeois stratum of African Americans have their own agenda. They want, among other things, a variation of enterprise zones.

The promise of small ownership is being held out. It will change little if blacks or Latinos or others own the stores. Indeed, many Latino-owned businesses were ransacked by looters who were also Latino. Would it be different with black owners?

The workers and poor need to take stock, too. Now what? Now we need organization more than ever. We need to build up a movement, one independent of the capitalists. We need a movement with goals higher than a low-interest loan to set up a small business so we can suck the blood out of the family living next to us. We need more of an objective than that.

We need organization. Without organization, revolt will flare up, and it will die out almost as fast as it was ignited. We need an organized mass movement, solid organization that can give orientation for the struggle. For this we also need an ideal that can push us forward, inspire us, shed light on which way forward.

In 1960s and 70s, the African and other national liberation movements helped inspire revolt. Now what? Yes, there is Malcolm X: by any means necessary. To a large extent, Malcolm was within the framework of Lumumba, Fanon and the African national liberation movements of his times. But these are new times. The old liberation movements have given way to a deepening world-wide polarization between labor and capital. On all continents the gulf between labor and capital, rich and poor is deepening.

We need an ideal that can bring the workers of all races and nationalities together. An ideal that can unite the African American and Mexican American, the Asian and white workers into one force in this country. That can unite American, Japanese, Mexican, African, and Russian workers against international capitalism. We need an ideal that can channel and encourage the energy of revolt to the point of smashing up the oppressive state. Above all we need a doctrine that uproot the system of exploitation that breeds racism, poverty and the police state. This doctrine that we are striving for is workers communism, the communism of Marx and Engels and Lenin, which unravels the dog-eat-dog system, and which makes humans masters of industry and commerce, and not their slaves. It will take a lot of fire, a lot of torment, but there is no other way out. □

The San Francisco Bay Area explodes in rage

The national TV news has shown a lot of pictures about L.A., even if the coverage was one-sided, but it didn't say much about the Bay Area. Comrades there report that the outrage was deep and bitter, with even the mainstream *San Francisco Chronicle* comparing it to "similar protests during

the gulf war a year ago".

On the evening of Wednesday, April 29, things were pretty quiet everywhere but Santa Cruz. There 400 students marched from the local campus of the University of California to the police station, whose windows were smashed out.

Thursday, April 30

And then on Thursday, April 30, things began to break out all over. In San Jose, there was two days of rioting and 30-40 arrests. The authorities canceled the Cinco de Mayo Festival, usually the big event of the year.

There were walkouts in the high schools, even in the junior high schools, and in the colleges throughout the Bay Area. Some schools were closed, and many parents kept their children home. Even high schools students from affluent Marin County marched onto the Golden Gate bridge, but were kept to the side and didn't block traffic.

San Francisco State University has been one of the rallying points for protest, with people from the community and the high schools joining the SFSU students. On Thursday they shut down the I-280 freeway for over an hour. 500 protesters closed down 19th Avenue and lit bonfires. On Friday they marched on the huge Stonestown mall, which shut down before the marchers could arrive.

At Laney College in Oakland, 300 black students and others marched off campus to the Alameda Court House and on to the Oakland Police Department headquarters. The organizers however ushered the protest into the waiting arms of an aspiring local politician who put a straitjacket on militancy (for example, forcing the demonstration onto the sidewalk, although the street was available for the taking). The feeling among students runs high. Classes turn into speakouts which are at time tearful or angry.

The most spectacular action on Thursday began with a rally at Sproul Plaza at the Berkeley campus of the University of California. Students marched off campus, gathering people as they went, including a big group from Berkeley High. They marched down to the I-80 Freeway and took it over. Then they marched a good way up to the freeway to the Bay Bridge and held the upper deck for over three hours. This was in the middle of rush hour, when the other freeways and main streets throughout the area were also closed by protests. The police showed the iron fist, arresting 380 people on the bridge, including 46 minors. Meanwhile the toll collectors were pulled off the bridge by the state authority, CalTrans, which was afraid of looters.

Also, at 5 p.m. on Thursday, about 1,000 people rallied at the intersection of University Ave. and San Pablo in Berkeley, next to the black community. They marched half a mile up San Pablo, picking up people as they went. It was a mixed group of blacks, whites, Asians, students and some leftists, and it marched on City Hall. It was blocked from marching onto the UC campus, and it frittered out

with some random looting on a boarded-up Telegraph Avenue.

As evening descended, the protests in San Francisco became bigger and fiercer. Apparently some of this was called by RAW (Roots Against War), the group that called the big night-time marches against the Persian Gulf war. But this time it seemed that the planned actions broke down pretty quickly, and random looting began. Scattered groups of anarchists, mixed with blacks, Latinos and others from around the city, and they were all chased back and forth up Market Street, around Union Square, etc. There was little focus except smashing windows and grabbing things. At 9 p.m. Mayor Jordan declared a state of emergency, and a curfew (for the first time since 1906). The authorities closed down transportation, including downtown BART (the subway), Muni (city buses), cable cars, and the buses to Hunters Point and other black neighborhoods. There were 1200 arrests in San Francisco in a day, with over 300 booked on felonies, and one man shot. Also, with state of emergency powers, they are holding people after booking them to keep them off the street.

Friday, May 1

On Friday, department stores, office buildings, even the Pacific Stock Exchange, and most of downtown San Francisco closed down early in preparation for trouble. Shopping malls around the city have also been shut down.

RAW called for a protest in the Mission district for Friday evening to challenge the second night of curfew. But the police used emergency powers to ban any protest, peaceful or not. Over the bullhorns, police announced that the right to demonstrate and assemble in the city and county of San Francisco had been suspended. It was unprecedented. Two hours before the curfew the police began their sweep, over 400 people were whisked from the streets and put in special holding areas for the weekend. There were also house to house searches in the Mission district.

The media proclaimed the police action as a radical break with the past, and it is spearheaded by the new police chief, Richard Hongisto. Hongisto has a reputation as one of the most liberal city politicians. He was just recently appointed police chief by Mayor Jordan; this was in the name of improving race and community relations, and it took place over the protests of Mayor Jordan's conservative backers. Now Hongisto is coming down with the iron fist, brought to you by liberals and conservatives united against the workers and minorities.

Friday, May 8

And the rampage of the SF police and chief Hongisto continued. On the afternoon of May 8, RAW, ACT-UP, and some others called a march to protest the emergency crackdown in San Francisco as well as the verdict in the Rodney King beating case. It was reported that there was

a negotiated agreement between the police and the organizers to march from Dolores Park to Duboce Park. About 2,000 people marched, peacefully and uneventfully. But somewhere along the way, there was a disagreement about the route. The police then declared the march illegal and carried out a sweep, arresting over 500 people and processing them at Pier 38. Meanwhile in Berkeley, the emergency regulations are even more severe (a 7 p.m. to 6 a.m. curfew, unlike the 9 p.m. to 6 a.m. one in SF).

The most recent report is that Hongisto may be out as police chief. It seems he went so far as to send his police to collect newspapers with an article critical of him. This was too much even for his law and order backers.

It spread to Seattle, too

On Thursday night, a number of people, mostly black youth, made a fuss downtown. But the biggest action took place on Friday.

It started with 400 to 500 students at a noon rally at the University of Washington. At one point, the crowd went to the building where chancellor Gerberding has his office. He refused to come out and talk, and a table was picked up and used to smash the glass doors at the front. Then about 150-200 people moved onto University Avenue, a traditional place for student protest.

Just as during the protests against the Gulf war, the marchers headed to the entrance of freeway I-5. About 30 cops blocked them. But a section of the marchers made an end run through a parking lot and got into the freeway, and then were joined by the rest. The two police lieutenants in charge debated whether to let the marchers walk the two or three miles down the freeway to the downtown exit, where they intended to join a smaller demonstration at the Federal building. However, the cops decided to block the march, and set up a line across the freeway. At that point, everyone sat down on the freeway. After negotiations with the police they were able to proceed, as the police finally decided to get out of the way in order to get things over with and the freeway clear before rush hour began. Meanwhile the drivers on the freeway were supportive of the marchers despite the inconvenience.

With the news of the demonstration all over the radio, the action at the Federal building swelled by 5 p.m. to well over 500. There were mostly white youth, but also a fair number of blacks. They marched two blocks to the downtown offices of Mayor Rice (a black liberal Democrat), where the crowd took up the slogan "We want Rice!" But the leadership wanted to make this a pro-Rice slogan, despite the fact that Rice had earlier in the year publicly praised the police for their "restraint" on January 25 when the cops protected Nazi skinheads while harassing and clubbing anti-racist demonstrators (see 'Seattle: Youth confront neo-nazis and cops' in the March 1 issue of the *Workers' Advocate*, and related articles in the February 20 and April 20 Supplement).

The march continued, and by 7 p.m. 300 or 400 demonstrators had reached nearby Capital Hill. After marching around a bit, they stopped, speeches were given, and a debate broke out over what to do next. MLP comrades and others advocated marching to the Central District, which is heavily minority and was about a mile and a half away. A number of people liked this idea, and began to march, but it soon appeared that only 60 were marching, while perhaps 300 stayed behind on Broadway (the main street on Capital Hill). So the marchers returned to the 300, and the debate became hotter on whether to go to the Central District.

Among the most influential opponents of going to the Central District were petty-bourgeois black students who either didn't care much to go to the Central District or were even dead set against it. "Why go there and encourage people to smash up their own neighborhoods?" they argued. This was accompanied with incredible statements, indicating the desire to find any reason not to go: "People there are sleeping now, why wake them up?" On Friday night, at 8 p.m.! The essence of the line, however, was that if the demonstrators went to the Central District, violence would break out and the protesters would be responsible. Other people countered that no one could predict what might happen, but whether or not there was violence was entirely minor compared to going there, having people join us, and enlarging the action. But the influence of the black reformists could not be overcome.

So, instead, the protesters marched half a mile to the police station, where 20 or 30 cops formed a line in front. At this time, there were about 150 protesters. About 10 youth, mostly from the University District, put bandannas over their faces and began to pelt the police station with bottles and rock. The windows were specially made, so none broke, but the bottles made a spectacular sound when they hit the sidewalk. Some street youth set a dumpster on fire and pushed it toward the cops, who remained passively in line. The cops were clearly under orders to avoid an incident for the time being, but, as we shall see, they were also marshalling their forces.

Some protesters, especially anarchist youth, threw rocks, while others sat down in the street, but demonstrated their pacifism by chanting "we want peace". Debate again broke

out over what to do. A small section agreed with the MLP comrades that it would be better to leave the police station and march to the Central District, but most were divided between the anarchists and the pacifists, who were busy denouncing each other. Most of the major opportunist trends had little presence or influence at the action, so the debate between anarchist and pacifist views took place largely between rank-and-file activists who shouted at each other. However, both sides realized from previous experience that it was better if they stayed together because there was safety in numbers, and security from the police. So they were compelled to stick to one another like glue. Meanwhile police activity on nearby streets eventually led the marchers to realize that it was time to move on or be surrounded.

Finally the people decided to march back downtown. For the anarchist youth, this opened up targets of opportunity for rock throwing. They darted around in their bandannas and bashed in the windows of about a dozen places. This included not just a BMW showplace and a post office, but also a number of random small businesses. Later that night, a few dumpsters were set on fire and a vacant building burned, possibly arson, and a nearby apartment building had to be evacuated.

Meanwhile, an MLP comrade overheard two black youth discussing the "white kids" who were with them. "These kids have never even been arrested" one said to the other. His friend replied: "They're just here because they want to be down with us." The first youth responded by saying that this was cool.

On the way downtown, the police executed a "crush" where police detachments approached the march from two sides. The majority of activists decided that this was the time to flee, and they darted along alleys and various escape routes, while perhaps 30 marchers held their ground and got arrested. The youth discussed whether to regroup downtown, but the area was blanketed by police. Groups of youth of mixed race would form and disperse downtown, and a few random cars (Volkswagen's) were turned over. But by this point things were pretty much over. □

Correspondence:

The continuing harassment of postal workers

In April New York City postal worker Michael Deas wrote to us describing management's efforts to harass and fire him. Mr. Deas's case is typical of how the post office abuses its employees. It was only last November that management harassment drove Royal Oak letter carrier Tom McIlvane to tragedy, when he gunned down several supervisors and then took his own life. Afterwards, management promised it would treat workers with respect. But, as the Deas's firing shows, management tyranny still reigns.

Mr. Deas's problems began when he objected to harassment by his supervisor, Mr. Andre Cherigo. Thereafter he was labeled a troublemaker and management hounded him time and again. When Deas and many coworkers sent a complaint on this to higher managers, there was only more retaliation.

Below we carry excerpts from a letter Deas wrote explaining his plight. The facts in the letter are corroborated by several eyewitness accounts also sent to us by Deas.

Excerpts from Michael Deas's letter

To Whom It May Concern:

I, Michael A. Deas assigned to Gracie Unit, pay location 742 as flatsorter operator for Morgan Station, 341 Ninth Avenue, New York, NY 10001, have been on emergency suspension since the incident occurred on January 30, 1992 between supervisor Andre Cherigo and myself. Mr. Cherigo has been fabricating false stories to other supervisors which has negatively affected my personal and professional reputation.

Indeed Mr. Cherigo has embarked on a systematic course of harassment and humiliation in an effort to provoke me into a confrontation since October 29, 1988.

On October 29, 1988, Mr. Cherigo humiliated and disrespected me.... After I repeatedly asked him to 'leave me alone,' Mr. Cherigo made a verbal threat 'I know which way you walk.' [A letter from a coworker corroborates that this was a threat to trail Mr. Deas after work.—*Supplement*] To avoid confrontation as well as disciplinary actions or removal from the Post Office, I was transferred to the flatsorter on the fifth floor.

During the month of January 1990, I was transferred back to the Gracie Unit....After a few months all the machine operators were moved to work flat pieces on the third floor. Quite naturally I became apprehensive about working under Mr. Cherigo again....

On Monday, July 8, 1991 at approximately 3:30 pm, Ms. Duchense [general supervisor] and I had a discussion about the rumors that 'I was on the top of the hit list.'

On Friday, September 6, 1991, Ms. Duchense and I had another conversation. This time it was about seniority. I asked her why I was not honored seniority on the flat case?

Ms. Duchense replied 'You don't deserve it.' ...

On Tuesday, October 22, 1991, there was an official complaint to the Tour Superintendent with signatures from letter clerks, mailhandlers and flatsorter operators against General Supervisor Lucy Duchesne. I believe this further fueled hostility against me.

On Tuesday, October 23, 1991, Mr. Hairston, supervisor of the city section approached me at approximately 4:15 pm with a statement that Mr. Cherigo said I am a stiff and I'm not for shit. ...

On Friday, October 25, 1991, Mr. Cherigo did not let me work my bid assignment....

[Mr. Deas' letter also describes how management denied a request for leave by a coworker because the coworker, like Deas, signed a complaint, against how they were being treated, that was sent to the shift superintendent. And it goes on to relate how Deas was harassed by supervisor Cherigo for allegedly taking too much time for an approved phone call. Deas' letter then continued:]

On Tuesday, December 24, 1991...acting general supervisor Andre Cherigo [accused Deas of not being at his work area. When Deas answered that he was at his work area, Cherigo] proceeded to verbally threaten me by saying 'I will kick your butt'... Mr. Cherigo also denied me to work my bid assignment at 3:30 pm.

[Mr. Deas' then tells of how Cherigo falsely accused Deas of being late for work and then used this to build a trumped-up case that Deas should be fired for attendance problems. The letter continues:]

On Thursday, January 30, 1992, Mr. Cherigo and Lucy Duchesne presented me with a notice of removal [firing] at approximately 4:30 pm. After I received my notice I went to my assignment on the sixth floor. Mr. Cherigo was winking one eye at me, and disrespecting me while I was working on the belt, in an attempt to instigate a confrontation. I refuse to fall for his attempt to incite me.

[Nevertheless, supervisor Cherigo had Deas physically expelled by the postal police.]

At approximately 8:45 pm, Mr. Cherigo called for the postal police to have me removed. While at headquarters, I asked what the charge was. The Sergeant told me 'threatening a supervisor.' I then queried 'what did I say?' The Sergeant said 'it's not clear.' I was not given a statement for removal from the Post Office from Mr. Cherigo or the Sergeant. Everything was done orally, there was never any written document explaining my removal from the Post office.

[In a written statement the policeman confirms that 'Mr. Cherigo stated that he really wasn't threatened...' Clearly the supervisor, having unjustly fired Deas, concocted a phoney threat in order to remove Deas from the premises and prevent him from gathering support from his coworkers.] □

In brief

More protests against the Cracker Barrel

The year-long campaign against the anti-gay bigotry of the Cracker Barrel restaurant chain continued with protests in April. These included actions by 90 people near Fredericksburg, Virginia; 50 people on Interstate 20 east of Atlanta; and 50 people in Belleville, Michigan.

The Cracker Barrel management employed its usual tactics of police harassment and arbitrary arrests against the demonstrators in Georgia. It charged five with "criminal trespassing" for briefly stepping on the edge of the parking lot. A few days later similar charges were dismissed against 10 men and women who had been arrested after picketing the same restaurant last June.

Similarly, in Michigan most of the trumped-up charges against the 23 protesters who had been arrested in last fall's series of militant protests have also been dropped. Not only has heavy-handed repression failed to stop the protests against discrimination, but the mass pressure has forced the company to retract its official policy of refusing to employ homosexual workers.

This is a partial victory for the movement. But Cracker Barrel management still hides behind the reactionary banner of traditional "family values" and religious bigotry. It still refuses to affirm equality regardless of sexual orientation. And it still refuses to rehire the 12 or more gay and lesbian workers who it fired under the old policy. The struggle continues! □

Supreme Court OK's re-segregation of schools

Prodded along by the Bush administration, the Supreme Court has given the green light to the re-segregation of public schools. Late in March it voted 8 to 0 to strike down a Court of Appeals decision and allow the DeKalb County school district—which encompasses the northeastern suburbs of Atlanta, Georgia—to be freed from court orders to integrate its schools.

Originally, back in 1969, DeKalb was ordered to eliminate its dual education system. It did eventually close the black-only schools. But then it assigned the black students to only certain of the white schools. And as more black people moved into the area, lines were drawn and redrawn to push blacks into the schools in the southern part of the county and to keep the northern schools lily white. This actually contributed to housing segregation, which was also fostered by greedy real estate developers who pushed whites into panic selling and moving to the northern part of the county.

Today, although 60% of its public school students are black, more than half of the black students attend schools that have 90% or higher black enrollment. And more than a quarter of the white students are in schools where over 90% of the student body is white.

This is not only re-segregation. It is, as well, an obvious case where re-segregation has been pushed along by the school board.

But Justice Anthony Kennedy—who wrote the court opinion—argued the segregation was "caused by demographic factors", and ruled "the school district is under no duty to remedy imbalance that is caused by demographic factors." He claimed it is essentially impossible to deal with such racism because that would "require ongoing and never-ending supervision by the courts."

The Court is eliminating one bar after another to racism. The DeKalb case has set a precedent which will be used to dismantle court-supervised integration plans in some 500 other school districts around the country. □

Racism alive at Olivet College

On April 1, a white female student at Olivet College in Michigan told a story. She claimed to have been attacked by 4 black students and left unconscious in a field near the campus. She was not hospitalized and no warrants were issued after her story was investigated by the police. Actually, college officials doubt her account.

But the story was amplified quickly on the small campus in this rural town of 1,700 people, almost all of whom are white. Later that night, two trash cans were set on fire outside the dorm rooms of several black student leaders. A few months before, white male students made a fuss against black men dating white women.

The next day a white sorority member called her brother fraternity for help, claiming she was being harassed by some male students. Two of the men who had knocked at her door were black, one white. One of the black students had come to ask about a paper she was typing for him. Within minutes, about 15 members of the Phi Alpha Pi, a white fraternity, came and confronted the two black men in the dorm's lobby. The confrontation turned into a brawl as more white and black students rushed over to the scene. Racial epithets and slurs were hurled at the black students.

After the incident, the black students protested, demanding that there be a required course on ethnic diversity, more black teachers, and someone to coordinate activities that address the interests of minority groups. Some of them walked off campus April 8 and finished their classes by mail. Some said they would not return until changes are made. Facing such protests, the school agreed to many changes and the president resigned. □

More racist injustice in Los Angeles

After eighteen long years, Clarence Chance and Benny Powell were finally released from the California prisons where they had languished even though they were innocent of the murder they were imprisoned for. During the entire

time the two African-Americans struggled to prove that they had been framed by the Los Angeles Police Department.

On December 12, 1973 an off-duty Sheriff's deputy was killed during a gas station robbery in the area of Expo Park. Immediately the LAPD threw out a dragnet and grabbed "suspects". Chance and Powell, both in their early twenties at the time, were picked up. Initially they were released since the only eyewitness, a 11-year-old girl, did not identify them. As well, Chance was shown to have been in police custody at the time the murder had occurred.

But LAPD detectives were not satisfied, and over the following months they began carefully constructing their case. Desperate for revenge for the cop's death, they rearrested Chance and Powell, who were then railroaded through the courts with a court-appointed lawyer and given life in jail. They were convicted even though their fingerprints did not match those found at the crime scene; there was no connection shown between them and the gun used or getaway car; and one of them was in jail until an hour after the shooting.

For years they and their family members filed writ after writ which were simply dismissed. They wrote letters and did everything they could to get someone to listen. Finally they contacted an organization which works for free to help what it calls "the convicted innocent." For four years the organization dug through police files and trial documents, and interviewed witnesses, getting them to sign affidavits.

What they found was a mountain of proof that the police had coerced witnesses, bribed a jailhouse informant, and suppressed relevant evidence disproving Chance's and Powell's guilt. Three of the witnesses were young girls who later recanted their testimony explaining they had been pressured and frightened by the police into falsehoods. One, who was fourteen at the time of the trial, said the police threatened to remove her from her grandmothers' home and put her in foster care. The jailhouse informant had testified that Powell had confessed the murder to him. But Powell's and Chance's investigators found that not only had he failed a lie detector test, but he had at first identified two different men. Indeed he was even hypnotized to help him recall the supposed confession. They also discovered that this information was kept from the jury, the defense and even the prosecuting attorney.

Finally with such overwhelming evidence in favor of Chance and Powell, a court recently overturned their convictions and released them. The establishment shrugged, saying the injustice was just the work of over-zealous detectives. The infamous Police Chief Gates discounted it as a simple "procedural error."

But as in the case of Rodney King, the mistreatment of Chance and Powell was not some rare accident. It is rather routine treatment meted out to the workers and the poor, and especially the minorities, by the police apparatus of the American ruling class. □

The condition of the Iraqi working class under the Ba'ath regime and its wars

We are reprinting the following interview and appeal from Worker Today, vol. 2, #22, February 1992. The interview gives a picture of some of the conditions facing the Iraqi workers, the hatred of the people for Hussein's incessant wars, and the views of some Iraqi activists, while the appeal refers to some of the struggles within the Kurdish movement. It should be remembered that the reprinting in the Supplement of these or other materials from other organizations does not necessarily mean that we endorse the views expressed in them, but simply that these materials contain useful information or express the stand of various activists or political trends. Indeed, we do not agree with Worker Today's views on how to develop the political stand of the working class. For one thing, we do not agree with its credulous attitude towards, and promotion of, various reformists in the unions of various countries. In the February issue, for example, it promotes the bureaucrat

opposition, New Directions, in the United Auto Workers, through an interview with Jerry Tucker, its national director. Or, for example, it is hard to see how ducking the Kurdish issue in the conditions of present-day Iraq would help develop working-class unity and consciousness, which is not an issue of economic demands only.

Worker Today is published by Iranian activists. It contains material on events in Iran, as well as material on the movement in other countries. It is mostly in Persian, with a few pages in English. It prefaced the following interview as follows:

Hussein Manuchehri, a Worker Today co-worker in Kurdistan, talked to two labour activists in Southern Iraq (whose identity is not being disclosed for security reasons) on the situation of the labour movement in this region and on the events following the US war. Excerpts:

Worker Today: How did the situation in the South [of Iraq] begin? What was the role of the workers? What about the role of the left and religious forces?

Answer: To explain the situation in the South after the ceasefire in the war with the US and its allies, we have to go back a little. Except for the one month of the people's rising, the situation of the people has been characterised by savage repression and massacre.

In 1978 the Ba'ath government launched a wide-scale attack on the left forces; this was a time when the Iraqi Communist Party enjoyed cordial relations with the Ba'ath Party. In these years the Iraqi Communist Party had a large workers' influence. There were hardly any labour activists who were not linked to the Communist Party, which was the most serious left party in the South. Over the two years of 1978 and 1979, around 100,000 people were arrested, the fate of many of them still uncertain. At the time of the February 1979 uprising in Iran, the Islamic forces in Southern Iraq became quite active. The Hezb-o-Da'va party, of a long tradition in the Iraqi bourgeois opposition, became a more important force, and a more dangerous force for the government. This gave a pretext for the Ba'ath government to launch another round of massive attacks on the people, on the workers and the left forces.

With the start of the Iran-Iraq war, another wave of offensive was launched on the standard of living of people, particularly the workers. This reached untold proportions in the city of Basra which has the highest concentration of industries. The attack was accompanied by persecution of labour activists. Forced conscription was a weapon in the hands of the regime with which to organise its campaign in purely military forms. Workers were forced to either enlist in the army and go to the fronts, or submit to work in the military industries. Obviously, to avoid going to the fronts, workers preferred to work in the military industries. I should add that almost all heavy industries in Iraq are part of the military industry.

During these years resistance by the bourgeois opposition took on different forms. For example the Islamic forces took up armed resistance, but were suppressed. The Communist Party's infrastructure had disintegrated, and they only gave out a publication in the South. Some fringe groups also organised an armed resistance in the cities and along the border without success. By this time a large section of workers had been drafted into the army, and the rest were working in the military industries. The working conditions in the military industries were very savage: 12-hour shifts and a pay at the level of soldiers' pay. In these industries military discipline was in force; anybody disobeying them was sent to military camps. Anyone absent from work for one day would get military punishment: he would be undressed and forced to crawl on hot rocks and gravel. There was not even (the one-day—*WT*) week-end break, with only one day being off every month. The voicing of any grievance would be met by immediate dismissal and by being sent to the first line on the war fronts. A large

number of active workers were slaughtered in this way.

The military factories had an intelligence organ called Special Security, the head of which was Hussein Kamel, Saddam's brother-in-law. Anyone making even the slightest pause during work, would be thrashed by cable wire for one and a half hours. Of course now the Special Security is gone. The military industries still exist, but the severity of the punishments and the working conditions is not as much. For example in the BG power station the official working time is 16 hours a day: 12 regular hours, and 4 hours overtime. The same conditions exist in the BG oil refinery: 16 hours a day!

In the South the killings, poverty, high prices and the military repression has so reduced people's expectations that they can't properly think about political issues. They want to be freed of the military life and want things to return to normal. But even this is now a mere dream.

No sooner had the Iran-Iraq war ended than people were again mobilised for the war in Kuwait. People were so infuriated that one hour after the announcement of the news of the Iraqi attack on Kuwait, almost all the towns in the South shut down.

After the Iraqi attack on Kuwait, economic embargo was another factor which added to people's misery. Many of the towns in the South have connections with the Arab countries, but the economic boycott cut their access to supplies of the basic necessities. If in Northern Iraq the border regions provided access to some basic supplies through smuggling, even this was not possible in the South. Many workers and poor people were eating hay mixed with saw dust. The consequences of the economic embargo were very painful, and many died of starvation in this very period. People were asking "what did we gain from the Iran-Iraq war to want to fight the Kuwait war?"

The start of the Iraqi attack on Kuwait was followed by another round of attack on the entire opposition—from the Islamic forces to labour activists. The situation at the military industries was revived, and I won't go into this any more.

The whole of this situation made the structure of the government very shaky, and this was before the offensive of the allies against Iraq. In the months of November and December 90, the incapacity of the government heads was fully apparent. Arab nationalism, headed by the Ba'ath Party, had lost all its credit among the people. One month after the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, people's resistance showed itself in refusal to join the army. Mass desertions had reached their highest proportions. The situation in the Iraqi army too was very bad. The soldiers had food rations of only one piece of dry bread every 48 hours.

Iraq's rapid defeat in the war made social explosions a new reality; and the killings and the slaughter inflicted is common knowledge. In the air attacks, as admitted by Sa'doon Hamadi, 22,000 civilians, and in the ground war 100,000 to 200,000 soldiers were killed. Also 64,000 soldiers were captured.

It is interesting to note that before the attack on Iraq by

the allied forces, the entire government apparatus was paralyzed and the people had lost their illusions in Bush's policies. They had lost their hope in the US and would back up any force prepared to take up arms. The people stood without alternatives. Even the Islamic forces were saying that if the Iraqi Communist Party comes they would support it.

Under these conditions the allies' attack on Iraq fuelled the illusions once again. The allied forces advanced 400 km into Iraqi territory, reaching Koot 100 km outside Baghdad; they encountered no resistance. People were at the height of their illusions; they were saying "there is no need for us to move, the allies will overthrow Saddam". The Iraqi army retreated 600 km and many were killed. They distributed a large number of guns among the people. The army told of its retreat to the people who were awaiting a spark.

This spark was lit in the town of Zabir in the South. The defeated army, on entering the town, gunned Saddam's portraits. This was the spark which ignited the gunpowder. It was repeated in the town of Amareh; all the garrisons were captured and the people annihilated the Intelligence (Estekhbarat) and the Security (Amn) forces. The army was on the side of the people in these actions, and forces sent to suppress the people would join the people. One by one all the towns in the South fell into people's hands. But the freed towns lacked any alternatives. The religious forces, because of their religious profile, played their role; they were social forces. The left, mainly as scattered circles, failed to take part as an independent force and in fact dissolved in the movement. The reason for this was that the left forces had their largest influence among petty-bourgeois intellectuals, thus lacking any real influence. The workers, on the other hand, had their own independent demands during these revolts, but they saw no alternative before them. There was a chaos in which the religious forces were trying to gain the upper hand.

Workers played a big role in the uprising and in fact their actions were the most effective—in particular in Basra which on the whole is a working class city. What was lacking, however, was a communist worker organization. As a result workers mixed with other social strata, in a general popular movement. Workers were not so familiar with clear economic demands since historically their demands would under the conditions of war quickly assume a political profile and become severely suppressed. On the whole, working class consciousness was low.

WT: How were the worker protests carried out before these upheavals?

A: There is a large textile factory in the town of Mousel. The government killed 60 Egyptian workers in this factory, their offence being to have called for shorter hours and higher pay.

Workers' protests have a spontaneous form (before and after the war). For instance in the Koot textile plant the workforce, in protest against the long hours, broke the

machines. There were similar actions in the petrochemical plant and in the tile-making factory in the city of Karkouk.

WT: Could we speak of a strike movement before the uprising?

A: Yes, it was a large movement; and the main cause of it was the same pressure of the economic crisis, the embargo and the militarization of the workplaces.

WT: Approximately how many workers took part in these strikes?

A: I can't say exactly, but thousands of workers work in every one of these industries and in the other major industries.

WT: What form of struggle is traditional in the struggles of the workers in the South?

A: More often stopping work and going on strike. Workers get together, hold a general assembly, elect their representatives and send them to their respective state unions. Although everyone knows that the leaderships of these unions are linked to the Security Force, nevertheless workers regard their own representatives as caring and sympathetic to their interests.

In some cases attempts were made to set up solidarity funds, which were successful in a number of workshops, but the Intelligence forces severely suppressed them, their excuse being that the collected money may be used to fight the state. Such funds were set up notably in the cement factory in Karkouk.

WT: Is the First of May a tradition?

A: The First of May is an official holiday, but in 1991 it was not a holiday; they used the excuse of post-war reconstruction. But in 1990 workers of Iraq's biggest printing works in Baghdad went on strike on this day.

The government usually holds its own ceremonies on the First of May, but the workers rarely take part in them; and they do not hold large independent ceremonies either. But in the tile-making factory in Karkouk in May 1990 workers all went to the suburbs for their celebrations, in effect boycotting the state ceremonies. But such actions are not common.

WT: What demands are the struggles concentrated on right now?

A: Many of the industrial centres have come to a halt since the war and are not in operation. Since the war and at the present time the working hours are very long, but the government has raised the wages a little. We now work officially 12 hours, and there is no limit to overtime work. Many times the factory buses return to the workers' homes

at night to take them back to work. And no extra money is paid for overtime work. There is only a year-end pay based on the hours of overtime work. The demands I think are focused on shorter working hours and higher wages.

WT: You consider yourselves as belonging to the trend of worker communism. Could you talk about this.

A: It is clear that I regard all worker actions and protests as part of the worker communist tendency. Worker communism, as a separate school of thought which is different from the traditional Communism, truly represents working class practice. In the South it is weak (I stress) as a *current of thought*. In this sense it relies more on the shoulders of a number of worker leaders. The war was a very negative factor in the spreading of our views. The isolation of the Iraqi Communist Party, which we supported in the past, was questioned by us. The same is true of the pro-Pere-stroika and the East-European, etc., currents.

We broke with the Iraqi Communist Party, and at that time a worker tendency grew which supporter workers' struggles and had its own circles. At this time the writings of Mansoor Hekmat reached us and we became supporters of these views among our worker comrades. Of course we have read very little of his writings. I myself have only read three of his works, *Our Organising Policy Among the Workers*, *Worker Membership* and *Our Differences*.

WT: In your view what specific problems should the worker communist current address in the South?

A: The immediate issue for us is raising workers' political consciousness and the solidity of their ranks; the issue of specific demands in the face of the present crisis; and the uniting of workers' ranks in Southern and Northern Iraq. The question of the right of self-determination for the Kurdish nation should not delay the unity of worker leaders. □

Appeal by workers in Iraqi Kurdistan

The appeal below was carried by Worker Today under the heading "Labour organisations urged to support Iraqi workers Appeal by worker paper in Iraqi Kurdistan", with the following introduction:

Following the intensification of acts of repression against the labour movement in Iraqi Kurdistan by Kurdistan Front (which includes the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, led by Jalal Talebani, and the Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iraq, led by Masoud Barzani), which have been going on from the very start of the events last year in Iraq, recently the paper Serinji-Karîkar (Workers' View), which is published in Iraqi Kurdistan,

issued a statement calling on labour organisations world-wide to give their support to labour activists in that region. The following is the full text of this statement—a copy of which was sent to Worker Today—translated from the Kurdish original.

To All Labour Organisations and Unions, To Labour Leaders and Activists Throughout the World!

Comrade Workers!

The working class in Iraq is denied of the most elementary economic and political rights. It lives and struggles under very harsh condition: low wages, long working hours, layoffs, mass unemployment, and the denial of the right to strike and organise (in trade unions or workers' councils).

These conditions, because of the prevailing war conditions and the dual rule of the Ba'ath government and the Kurdistan Front in Iraqi Kurdistan, are even harsher for the workers in this region. The Kurdistan Front is now the major force in the cities of Suleimanieh, Valir and Dehook. It has functioned as the direct executor of the policies of the West, in particular the United States. It has taken upon itself the task in line with George Bush's New World Order—the task of suppressing the ongoing labour movement in the region, particularly in Iraqi Kurdistan.

The Kurdistan Front has now openly adopted the policy of intimidation of worker leaders (summoning labour activists and intimidating them under various pretexts; labour leaders who in the April 91 events [the Kurdish uprising—*Supplement*] played a prominent role in pushing forward the workers' and the council movement). So far, a number of labour and council leaders have been summoned to the offices of the Kurdistan front and threatened to death.

The Workers' View calls on you:

To voice your protest in every possible way against the reactionary policies and acts of the Kurdistan Front and to condemn these anti-worker policies. Now more than any other time, in a situation where the workers in Iraqi Kurdistan are deprived of every kind of their mass and political organisations and are more unorganised than ever (due to the mass flights and factory shut-downs), they need your support and solidarity, as class comrades.

Today the international labour movement is more than ever in need of unity and solidarity. In its all-sided onslaught, the bourgeoisie has turned its market and its policies into a global market and policy. The bourgeoisie has never before been so united. Seeking more and more profits, they want to impose an unprecedented hunger, poverty, privation and lack of rights on the working class.

No doubt the workers too will, with their united millions-strong ranks, demonstrate to capitalism their international voice and power. □

The Bolshevik revolution and the emancipation of women

Continued from the front page

covers a whole series of fights that must be waged against the capitalist system which maintains women in a super-exploited status: equal rights, abortion and reproductive rights, equal pay for equal work, equal job opportunities, child care, the struggle against abusive treatment of women and cultural degradation, and others. But it is not just on "women's issues" and in a women's movement that women must fight. Women must participate in all fronts of the revolution and the class struggle.

In Russia in 1917 proletarian women were a sizable and active part of the workforce; the proletarian dictatorship needed their support. This meant not only winning the support of women workers but breaking down the restrictions placed on them so that they could participate fully in building socialism. In fact, proletarian democracy demands the training of large numbers of people, including women, to run the country. In the countryside, any hope of winning the peasants to socialism and transforming the small-scale production of the peasant economy to collective, socialized production also had to include breaking down the age-old patriarchal oppression of women. Thus, the emancipation of women was a major goal of socialist revolution.

The Bolshevik revolution showed that the initial victory over capital opens up a broad fight for women's liberation and that the emancipation of women is inseparably bound up with the struggle to radically transform society from capitalism to socialism. The revolution is not the end of the fight but the beginning of a new round.

Of course, prior to the revolution there is still the urgent need to fight the oppression of women. Women have won significant gains through sharp struggles and active mass movements. The full emancipation of women, however, is only possible with a radical social transformation.

Frederick Engels, in *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, explained:

"The democratic republic does not abolish the antagonism between the two classes; on the contrary, it provides the field on which it is fought out. And, similarly, the peculiar character of man's domination over woman in the modern family, and the necessity, as well as the manner, of establishing real social equality between the two, will be brought out into full relief only when both are completely equal before the law. It will then become evident that the first premise for the emancipation of women is the reintroduction of the entire female sex into public industry; and that this again demands that the quality possessed by the individual family of

being the economic unit of society be abolished." (Ch. II 'The Family', midway in Sec. 4 'The Monogamiam Family', 82).

Engels goes on to explain what some of these radical transformations are:

"Private housekeeping is transformed into a social industry. The care and education of the children becomes a public matter." (*Ibid*, p. 83)
"...the emancipation of women and their equality with men are impossible ... as long as women are excluded from socially productive work and restricted to housework, which is private. The emancipation of women becomes possible only when women are enabled to take part in production on a large, social scale, and when domestic duties require their attention only to a minor degree. And this has become possible only as a result of modern large-scale industry, which ... moreover, strives to convert domestic work also into a public industry." (Ch. IX, 'Barbarism and Civilization', p. 152).

V.I. Lenin reiterated this, denouncing housework in harsh terms:

"Notwithstanding all the laws emancipating woman, she continues to be a *domestic slave*, because *petty housework*, crushes, strangles, stultifies and degrades her, chains her to the kitchen and the nursery, and she wastes her labor on barbarously unproductive, petty, nerve-racking, stultifying and crushing drudgery. The real *emancipation of women*, real communism, will begin only where and when an all-out struggle begins (led by the proletariat wielding the state power) against this petty housekeeping, or rather when its *wholesale transformation* into a large-scale socialist economy begins." (*A Great Beginning*, Collected Works, vol. 29, p. 429, July 1919, emphasis as in the original)

V.I. Lenin further argued that real equality for women required full participation of women in the administration of the economy and government:

"We want the working woman to be the equal of the working man not only before the law but in actual fact. For this working women must take an increasing part in the administration of socialized enterprises and in the administration of the state....

"Elect more working women to the Soviet, both communist women and non-party women." (*To the Working Woman*, Collected Works, vol. 30, pp. 371-2, Feb. 21, 1920)

"...Unless women are brought to take an

independent part not only in political life generally, but also in daily and universal public service, it is no use talking about full and stable democracy, let alone socialism." (*The Tasks of the Proletariat in our Revolution, Collected Works*, vol. 24, p. 70, in the midst of pt. #12, April 10, 1917).

To summarize, there are three points outlined in the above quotes which we view as essential requirements for the emancipation of women.

The first is that legal equality is necessary but does not equal emancipation.

The second is that women must participate fully in economic, social and political life.

The third point is that women's fullest participation is only possible with a transformation of the family, specifically, that the family must no longer be the basic economic unit of society. Society must take responsibility for the survival of all its members and provide socialized domestic services. The quality of life for individuals, especially children and the elderly, must not depend on their families' income. The family will continue, but radically changed economic relations will undoubtedly change its form and content, and change it in ways that are difficult, if not impossible, to predict. (See Engels, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, end of Chapter 2, "The Family")

What is required for the emancipation of women

Full legal equality for women. Legal equality is necessary not only for its own sake, but most importantly it opens the door to class struggle. Achieving full equality before the law is only a beginning in the fight for women's liberation.

Despite all of U.S. imperialism's talk of "democracy" and "freedom", this "modern" capitalist society still does not provide even formal equality to women. A revolutionary working class regime will quickly grant legal equality to women. More importantly, under the dictatorship of the proletariat the state becomes a force for the emancipation of women, pushing ahead the class struggle and actively supporting women against reaction.

"Take the position of women. In this field, not a single democratic party in the world, not even in the most advanced bourgeois republic, has done in decades so much as a hundredth part of what we did in our very first year in power. We actually razed to the ground the infamous laws placing women in a position of inequality....But the more thoroughly we clear the ground of the lumber of the old, bourgeois laws and institutions, the more we realize that we have only cleared the ground to build on, but are not yet building." (*A Great Beginning, Collected Works*, vol. 29, pp. 428-9, July 1919).

Full participation in political, economic and social life. This means not just opening doors and providing opportunities,

but that the revolutionary proletarian state must encourage and prepare women for every facet of social and economic life.

For centuries since the beginning of class society women have been confined to domestic slavery. This kept half of society chained to the household, and it meant that the women of the oppressed classes faced a double enslavement. Women were kept in a backward state with their horizons limited to the four walls of the home.

"It is the chief task of the working women's movement to fight for economic and social equality, and not only formal equality, for women. The chief thing is to get women to take part in socially productive labor, to liberate them from 'domestic slavery, to free them from their stupefying and humiliating subjugation to the eternal drudgery of the kitchen and the nursery." (*International Working Women's Day, Collected Works*, vol. 30, p. 409, Mar. 4, 1920).

One very important condition for women's liberation is their involvement in social production. Modern capitalism has already accomplished this on a wide scale. Of course, in capitalist society this is a two-edged sword. Frequently confined to the most stultifying and tedious work, many women face the double burden of working for a living and being responsible for the care of the family as well, meaning they are doubly overworked. It is true in the U.S. today and even more so in pre-revolutionary Russia, that day-care, home services, etc., are only available for those who can afford it. These services are run only for profit and are geared to the more affluent technical and professional women. Thus, the entrance of women in large numbers into the workforce means a serious lack of care for children while their mothers work. In Czarist Russia this caused a big increase in infant mortality and many other social evils

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(orphans and abandoned children, juvenile delinquents, gangs).

Capitalists have always superexploited women. In the U.S. today while the absolute majority of women are working and 45% of the workforce is female, women make on average 68% the wages of men. In pre-revolutionary Russia the situation was much worse. The absolute majority of women were peasants and in no way the equal of their exploited brothers, fathers, husbands and sons. They were often considered to be no more than "beasts of burden." Women were not allowed to own land and in many areas were under the veil. Not infrequently women were bought and sold as brides, concubines, servants or even draft animals!

In the cities, working class women typically held only menial jobs in sweatshop conditions with much lower wages. Domestic servant was the most common occupation for women followed by textile worker. During World War I women were brought into other industries besides textiles but mostly as unskilled laborers in the worst kinds of jobs. For example, in construction women hauled the bricks, in steel mills they separated scrap metals, in the mines they gleaned for coal.

Then after a long day's work of backbreaking labor, working women had to put in another full shift of housework. A survey made in 1923-25 calculated that on the average, running an individual household took 12 hours a day.

Nevertheless, the fact that capitalism brought large numbers of women into the workforce meant that they were no longer confined to the homestead and to labor connected to their family. Women with jobs gained new income, and sometimes with it a new degree of independence. They also gained new social and political experience. Once out of the house women did not rest content with their oppression. This is one reason why a fight for women's emancipation is a feature of any revolutionary movement against capitalism.

There was a broad movement of working class women in Russia before, during and after the revolutionary victory in 1917. (There was also a bourgeois women's movement in Russia which we will discuss in another article.) Capitalism was starting to develop rapidly in Russia. The capitalists in Russia, as elsewhere, desired cheap female labor. By 1913, according to factory inspection reports, 30% of the industrial workforce was female. With World War I millions of workmen were sent to the front and the number of women factory workers jumped to 40% by Jan. 1917. Still, on the whole Russia was a peasant country and working women were only a small minority. The strong feudal traditions and fetters complicated the class struggle and made the fight for women's liberation more difficult.

Women were relegated to low-paying, backbreaking work. All the social questions facing women—their low wages, the double burden of care for the family along with work, etc.—were intensified by the crisis brought on by the First World War. Crisis and hunger drove many more

women into the workforce. Frequently they were the sole support of their families and they also were the ones standing in long lines for rations. The social conditions moved women to take part in the general revolutionary movement. These same social conditions dictated that this movement had to stand for the liberation and full equality of women and that no revolutionary movement could achieve its aims without the support of women workers. Finally, the victory of this revolution meant an acceleration of their struggle for equality.

In general, a revolutionary society must make sure that women can and do participate in all spheres of economic, social and political activity. It is absolutely necessary to fight for better conditions and equal opportunities. Yet simply holding jobs, even at wages equal to men, is not sufficient. Women must be brought into the administration of the economy and of society as a whole.

Socialism aims at eliminating the differences between skilled and unskilled labor, the inequalities between managers and employees. There are many aspects to doing this such as cutting the high salaries and eliminating class privileges for the managers. Another aspect that is especially important is promoting the lower strata of society, and here we are talking about working class women, into skilled, technical, managerial and administrative positions.

The same holds true for politics. Women must be given the opportunity and the training to become political leaders and organizers of the working masses, as well as movement participants.

But how can there be equal access to economic, social, and political life if the family remains the economic unit of society?

Elimination of the family as the economic unit of society.

Society must take over the basic economic responsibilities of the family. In capitalist society, care of the family members devolves upon the individual family unit. Housekeeping duties, maintenance of a home, care of children, care of sick family members and a whole number of other responsibilities must be dealt with by the individual family. While recognizing this we must also acknowledge that such burdens, cares and responsibilities devolve first, and many times exclusively, on the woman. Lenin was adamant on this point:

"Here we are not, of course, speaking of making women the equal of men as far as productivity of labor, the quantity of labor, the length of the working day, labor conditions, etc., are concerned: we mean that the woman should not, unlike the man, be oppressed because of her position in the family. You all know that even when women have full rights, they still remain downtrodden because all housework is left to them. In most cases housework is the most unproductive, the most barbarous and the most arduous work a woman can do. It is exceptionally petty and does not include anything that would in any way promote the development

of women." (*The Tasks of the Working Women's Movement in the Soviet Republic, Collected Works*, vol. 30, p. 43, Sept. 23, 1919).

To remove this burden, housework must be socialized. In addition to socialized medicine, adequate pensions, and child care for every family that needs it, laundry services, cafeterias and house-cleaning services are needed to rescue women from domestic drudgery. Household maintenance performed as a "public industry," affordable and available to every working class family, will give women (and the few men who actually do some of the housework) more time for social and political activity. But this is possible only with a radical economic transformation of society, a transformation that is only possible with a socialist revolution.

Today there is a lot of talk about changes in the family, and in a sense the family has changed quite a bit. The "traditional family" that the bourgeoisie loves to talk about barely exists these days. Today women make up 45% of the workforce and the overwhelming majority of women have jobs. There has been a large increase in the number of single parent families and a growing number of homosexual couples raising children.

However, the right wing crusade for the "traditional family" is not only an attack on the rights of working women and gay and lesbian couples. The bourgeoisie plans to attack any movement or fight for the improvement of conditions of women and working class families with its "traditional family values" campaigns. Their ideology is that women belong in the home, so any social problems that exist must be the fault of working mothers and not the poverty caused by the rich and their exploitation of labor.

The increase in "non-traditional families", though an important social change, should not be exaggerated. Marxists look at the economic and class relations underlying the family. Its character as the economic unit of society does not change if "the family" is a single mother or father with children or a gay or lesbian couple. Whether "traditional" or not, the burdens of survival fall on the individual family unit. The maintenance and well-being of its members depends entirely on the family's income. If there is no one who can maintain the family, most frequently its members are left without adequate food, clothing, shelter, medical care, etc. Therefore, regardless of what form the family takes in capitalist society, its economic character must be changed.

Capitalism is incapable of providing for the masses, but it nonetheless has already laid some of the basis for socialized domestic work. Witness the growth of fast food restaurants. Today the amount of money the average family spends in restaurants now equals the amount it spends on groceries. In retailation, supermarkets are offering more pre-cooked food. A working class regime could build on this to provide families with better and less expensive meals, either in restaurants or as pre-cooked take-home food.

House-cleaning services have grown rapidly, but workers

can't afford them. Day care has also expanded though it is grossly inadequate for workers; the petty bourgeoisie is the main beneficiary.

Today some companies do provide some modest services to certain employees. Some firms offer day-care for their employees, usually just for the white-collar workers, but some even have it for blue-collar staff (though even when subsidized it may be a painful expense for production workers). But those are the exceptions. Most workers today don't even have health care, let alone company-subsidized day care.

Capitalists would never underwrite such services for the working class as a whole. Such public industries will have to be subsidized, as are other important public services under capitalism (postal, mass transit, roads and bridges). This would be a considerable social investment. It will be very worthwhile for the working class. It will provide jobs, especially jobs for unskilled workers, and will make life easier for everyone who has a job. But to the rich parasite who sees every crumb given to the masses as a drop of his own blood, such large subsidies for working families would be an unforgivable crime against capital. These days the bourgeoisie won't even adequately fund mass transit, highways or public education!

While it is possible through struggle to win some concessions from the bosses, to provide the whole working class with affordable home services will certainly require a revolution and total victory over the rich.

For socialism, the main benefit of converting housework into a public industry is that women, now freed from drudgery, will be able to participate in political life and the government. Lenin, Kollontai and others spoke repeatedly about this. Of course, there is a need to have men share the burden of housework and child care along with women and a socialist state must educate and convince men to do their share. A "public industry", on the other hand, is far more efficient than individuals working out of synch. Household maintenance performed as a public industry, affordable and available to every working class family, will allow more people to hold jobs and most importantly, will give people more time for political and social activity.

Here we have outlined steps along the road to women's liberation. How to pursue these goals in a revolutionary movement, both before and after the victory of the revolution, is a major question. Our study of the work carried out in revolutionary Russia for the emancipation of women provides many insights.

What were the results of the Bolshevik revolution?

Compared to any prior revolution, compared to any bourgeois state, the October Socialist Revolution made great strides toward the emancipation of women and had tremendous impact throughout the world. A full account of its accomplishments and its shortcomings requires an elaboration beyond the scope of this article. We will

attempt to cover the issues raised here in more detail in future issues of the *Supplement*.

Formal Legal Equality

One of the first things that the revolutionary movement accomplished, on the heels of the October Revolution, was legal equality for women. In November 1917 the Soviets decreed new marriage and divorce laws. Prior to this the only legal marriages were Church weddings and there was no divorce except by special dispensation from the Patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church. Within a year the Soviets had "razed to the ground the infamous laws placing women in a position of inequality." Socialist Russia was the first country in the world where women gained full equality before the law. This was an earthshaking event; it was a tremendous inspiration to women's rights activists around the world.

Abortion was immediately decriminalized and then legalized in 1920. They decriminalized prostitution. And they established protective legislation for women in the workplace.

They made advances in undermining patriarchalism in the countryside. Child marriage was abolished, as well as the selling of brides (brideprice). In Muslim areas, the workers' state made it illegal to attack women who took off their veils. In time they succeeded in eliminating the "veiling" of women altogether. (Note that women had already won the right to vote in May 1917, under the provisional government, but none of the bourgeois regimes had dared to change any of the reactionary czarist family laws.)

In the area of family law, the Family Code of 1918 and the Revised Family Law of 1926 were the most progressive laws enacted up to that time. Soviet law was aimed at breaking down patriarchy and eliminating the stranglehold of the church over women. It abolished illegitimacy and entitled all children to parental support. It gave women equal rights to land. The Revised Family Law of 1926 expanded the conditions for receiving alimony, recognized *de facto* (or common law) marriage, and increased rights for peasant women. However, it still put responsibility for women and children onto the husband or partner and not on the state. Both these laws deal with property relations, including child support, in a more or less capitalist context. We have a number of concerns related to these family laws and we will discuss them in later articles.

Unfortunately, most of the gains from the 1918 and 1926 laws were rescinded with the Family Policy of 1936. Among other things, the Stalinist regime outlawed abortion, criminalized homosexuality and made divorce more difficult to obtain. In 1944 they took a further step backward, reviving "illegitimacy."

One undeniable conclusion from the Bolshevik Revolution is that equality before the law, once achieved, will prove that more sweeping social changes are needed to liberate women.

Participation in economic, political and social life

Perhaps the most positive feature of the young Soviet state and the Bolshevik Party in this area was that it encouraged and assisted the mass movement of women for their emancipation.

"We say that the emancipation of the workers must be effected by the workers themselves, and in exactly the same way the emancipation of working women is a matter for the working women themselves. The working women must themselves see to it that such institutions ['model institutions, dining-rooms and nurseries, that will emancipate women from housework'] are developed, and this activity will bring about a complete change in their position as compared with what it was under the old, capitalist society." (*The Tasks of the Working Women's Movement in the Soviet Republic, Collected Works*, vol. 30, p. 44, Sept. 23, 1919)

The revolution brought millions of women into economic, social and political life. This was a big leap from Czarism but it only went so far.

The formation of the Zhenotdel, the women's section of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, was an accomplishment in itself. Women communists built an organization which led the women's movement in Russia to several victories and effected permanent change. Over 10 million women passed through the delegate system of Zhenotdel. This was a step to bringing women into the administration of the state and the economy. Through Zhenotdel and other forms, many women received political training and gained experience in organizing the working masses for class struggle.

In the economy the Bolsheviks had mixed results. The NEP was an especially bitter setback for women. They were hardest hit by the big layoffs, and often when male soldiers returned from the front women were thrown out of work to make room for them.

In the mid to late 1920's, as the economy recovered somewhat (in 1926 they had only recovered to pre-World War I levels) women came into the workplace in larger numbers and they received a great deal of job training. Still, women were largely unskilled and even where they did hold skilled positions they were mainly at the low end of the technical/professional scale.

The goal of training large numbers of women as managers and technicians was never quite fulfilled. Women were trained but not in large numbers and not consistently. In the rural Soviets there were a lot of women delegates but there were virtually no women in the higher levels of the government, party, or economy. After 1930 there were a number of women involved in the management of collective farms. Often because of a lack of men in certain industries the Soviets trained a large number of women engineers for those industries. However, they never rose very high and it seems that the strain of family duties held them back, a

point that re-emphasizes the importance of transforming the family so that women can play an equal role in the administration of society.

Social reforms and socialist measures

Starting from the extreme backwardness of Czarist Russia, the Soviet government made great strides on many fronts. It set precedents for social welfare, and many of their social programs, which were extremely radical for the early 20th century, became demands of the working class movements of other countries.

The Soviet Union was the first country to offer unemployment compensation and social security-style pensions. They made great advances in maternal and child care, nurseries, and literacy. In fact their maternity care hospitals, sanitariums, and special provisions for maternity protection were precedent-setting. They established not only maternity leave, but also abortion leave.

For a while, they had some initial success in rehabilitating prostitutes, though prostitution proved to be a stubborn problem and the NEP and the economic hardships undermined their program.

Education for women, especially Central Asian women, was a very big advance. Against illiteracy, they carried out successful mass campaigns which were particularly beneficial to women as czarist Russia had refused to educate them. They sent women on to higher education in large numbers. Overall, they succeeded in greatly improving the cultural level of the masses.

Women also benefited greatly from the general program of the revolution. Increases in the standard of living and industrialization provided more opportunities for women.

The Bolsheviks faced extreme difficulties. The advances made were hard fought and often called for great sacrifices. Reaction was strong in the countryside and many women activists were murdered by priests, mullahs and outraged husbands or male relatives. In the first three months of 1929 approximately 300 hundred such murders took place in Central Asia.

In the cities the working class was also infected with male chauvinism and many workers, and workers' organizations, often proved to be an obstacle to the emancipation of female labor. In the soviets, factories, unions and even in the Bolshevik Party itself (which could not but reflect the strengths and weaknesses of the Soviet working class) opposition to programs for women's liberation was a serious problem.

Without a doubt one of the most serious obstacles to the development of socialism in the Soviet Union was the lack of modern industry. Setting up the large-scale operations that are needed to socialize housework, provide day care for every family, etc., requires a very productive industrial base which the Bolsheviks just didn't have. Nonetheless they looked for ways to encourage the masses to move in the direction of socialism, to create enthusiasm for socialism, such as volunteerism. "Communist Saturdays" and the

communal kitchens set up during the Civil War were examples of this. (In *A Great Beginning*, Lenin refers to such volunteerism as "shoots of communism.")

These communal kitchens were very successful because it was the most efficient way to feed the population in an emergency situation. After the war, however, they mostly died out. Once the war ended, food and fuel were available and people could cook and eat at home and this was a big factor in both the success and failure of these kitchens. Unfortunately, there were a lot of illusions that these crisis measures were shortcuts to communism. It turns out there are no shortcuts, but communists must find ways to mobilize the masses for socialist construction because it is the masses who build socialism! Again unfortunately, it appears that the Bolsheviks gave up experimenting with "shoots of communism," perhaps as early as 1922.

On the whole, the Bolsheviks' work on this front was a very mixed bag. Soviet society showed revolutionary energy from the masses connected with mass movements and social reforms well into the 1920's, but the looming question is whether it was in the direction of building socialism or consolidating state capitalism.

The ruined economy and the consequent lack of money prevented them from carrying out their initial plans. During the NEP the situation worsened and many of the programs that had been initiated were wiped out.

For example, they designed model communal housing that would efficiently share facilities but they never built any. They planned housecleaning services and communal laundries but never got them off the ground.

By the late 1920's general social welfare programs and other transitional socialist measures were often opposed or downplayed by Stalin's regime. They were considered a hindrance to "Industrialization". At the same time, a large number of public schools, creches, and cafeterias were established under Stalin. This development was directed at freeing women up to work, since at a certain point in their industrialization they suffered a big labor shortage. It does not appear that it was meant to open the way to women's full participation in all public affairs. This conclusion is backed up by at least two things:

One, these services were provided sparingly and only to the more important enterprises, and their hours of operation were limited to employees' work hours (so there was no childcare for political activity or night school). Two, women did not advance. They were kept in low-paid positions, and in order to hold them there as an oppressed source of cheap labor, several progressive social and legal measures were reversed.

While many public institutions and services established in the 1930's may look "socialist" (i.e. publicly-owned, helped people to live and work) they were actually consistent with large-scale capitalist industry—especially when the capitalists are seeking cheap female labor. It was state-capitalism.

In the 1930s factory cafeterias were set up in large numbers but for what? To lighten the load of domestic

work, to socialize the family kitchen, or to make labor available for capitalist industrialization? Model child care facilities for factories were also established, but only for the most profitable, the most prosperous ones.

In fact, a stratification of the working class took place. Social services were connected to factories. If you worked in a new, modern plant, you got the services. If you worked in a low-paying sweatshop you got nothing. Socialism, on the other hand, opposes such stratification and demands that child care and other such services be provided to the whole class.

Tragic counter-revolution

It is a historical tragedy that many of the gains women made from the revolution were only temporary. This is part of the larger tragedy of the betrayal of socialism by Stalin and the Bolshevik Party in the late 1920s.

While the Soviet Union managed to pull itself out of the depths of poverty following World War I and the long years of foreign intervention and the Civil War, while it managed to industrialize and modernize its economy, it failed to build socialism. The Communist Party of the Soviet Union was not organizing the working class for socialist construction nor approaching the working class in a revolutionary way. Instead, they built what became a state capitalist economy.

Social programs remained throughout the 1930's but these were not socialist in content but welfare state

capitalist. The emancipation of women and the building of socialism took a backseat to the capitalist industrialization and collectivization programs and the consolidation of Stalin's regime.

The Communist Party of the Soviet Union abandoned socialism as its goal, and with this it reversed many of the gains women had previously won. Just as the transition to socialism is inseparably bound up with the liberation of women, the process of consolidating state capitalism demanded that the family be enshrined once again as the basic economic unit of society. The failure to carry through with socialist measures (especially child care, socializing housework) undermined the position of women. Then legal equality itself was reversed with reactionary laws passed in 1936 and 1944.

In 1930 most of Zhenotdel was dissolved (it was maintained only in rural Asian areas). The leadership of the CPSU said to women, in essence, "this is socialism and you are liberated," and therefore no special institution for organizing women to fight their oppression was needed.

Along with these practical changes came ideological ones. The Marxist theory of women's emancipation and the family was discarded. Marx and Engels were abandoned in favor of bourgeois experts (like Makarenko) who asserted that the traditional bourgeois family structure is what socialism requires.

The eventual failure of the revolution however does not negate its importance. The study of Soviet history is just as valuable for its shortcomings as well as for its successes. □

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More on the material basis for socialism in the modern world (4)

The remarks below, by comrade Joseph of Detroit, continue the discussion whose earlier parts appeared in our January, February, and April issues.

Some notes on theory

In his 'Rough thoughts' in the Feb. supplement, comrade Fred puts forward some views that concern me.

What did he say?

For one thing, in discussing economic issues in these notes, it seems to me that Fred sometimes uses a high-flown language that is hard to understand. I worry that the fascination with this language distracts from the need for careful work. Restating things with the word "value" and using one generality after another can make things seem more profound, but it can sometimes remove any real content or consistency from them.

- We are told that the capitalists are those who "manage the circulation of value". Who does this refer to? Merchants and others in commerce? Or stockbrokers? No, it seems to be simply a fancy way of drawing a distinction between those who work and those who do something else.

- Workers are defined as those who "create value". But, generally speaking, both workers and peasants "create value", and yet the working class and the peasantry are distinct classes, with distinct tendencies of thought and action. Just about anyone who does something useful in a factory may create at least some value. For example, Marx points out that managerial work in general has a "double nature" under capitalism: it is partly productive work, as a certain coordination is necessary in any form of large-scale production, and partially slave-driving. (*Capital*, Vol. III, Ch. XXIII, Interest and profit of enterprise, pp. 383-4)

All that actually seems to be intended is to draw a contrast between those who are really building something, and those who don't. This can be a useful agitational touch. It has an indispensable and important use as an appeal for all working people to rally together. But it isn't a scientific definition of class; it slurs together different classes and strata; and it doesn't make it better when it is stated in terms of value.

- Many of Fred's main points center on the concept of private property. He talks of "distinct asset-owning property units (private property)". So this defines private property as property units, but ones which are distinct and themselves own assets. Doesn't this seem confusing if not downright circular?

"Distinct asset-owning property units" may bring different things to the minds of different people. It reminds me of corporations: they are regarded in Western law as

distinct property units (for example, they have legal status in the courts in their own right), and they themselves own assets. Ironically (since Fred is using this definition to make a contrast with the Soviet Union), enterprises were also "distinct asset-owning property units" for most of Soviet history, and I think they generally had a legal standing of one sort or another in their own right.

- Fred says that we must go deeper than previous conceptions of how to arrive at socialism, and must see that, for example, "value itself must be abolished." But the economic category of value simply reflects the existing economic system. Whether it is a real and meaningful concept depends on whether the system is still capitalist, or has communist ownership by society as a whole. In a classless society, the concept of value will be meaningless; it will explain nothing; it will be "abolished" in reality; and it will have vanished even if 100,000 economists labor tirelessly to assign a numerical rating to every useful article in sight. And on the other hand, if a system of communist production still doesn't exist, and if "value is abolished" anyway, by government decree or by hyper-inflation or by a planning ministry using other figures to calculate with, it won't eliminate state capitalism or even prevent value from continuing to exist as an economic category that explains quite a bit about what is really going on in the economy.

- Fred says that "non-equivalent exchange in the production process" is how "capital gets surplus value". Later the paragraph says that "whoever manages the circulation of value will appropriate surplus value since it is a portion of total value." This seems to muddle together the process of production and that of circulation (which Marx analyzes separately).

More importantly, the working class gives up surplus value even if it is paid the full value of its labor power. Marx, in *Capital* and elsewhere, was at pains to make this point. It is important practically because, among other things, it cuts against the idea that exploitation can be eliminated if wages and prices just reflected the fair value. Perhaps agitationally one might talk of non-equivalent exchange in some circumstances. But in a theoretical article, it seems strange to do so, particularly without any explanation of what point is being made.

- Finally, Fred says that "knowledge as opposed to manual skill is far and away the greatest source of wealth in modern economy" and of "knowledge as capital". What happened to surplus value as the source of capitalist wealth? Was all that talk about inequivalent exchange, and value, and who managed circulation all for naught?

True, a certain amount of knowledge may serve as fixed capital (patents, and other legal rights to inventions and manufacturing processes, etc.) But the general situation is not that knowledge is capital, but that factories and

machines must be built and run according to the prevailing standards of knowledge, or otherwise they won't be able to produce efficiently and they will have to shut down. This has always been the case in capitalism, and is not especially new. One of the great advantages of Marxism is that it laid stress on the constant change in the form and technique of production (hence taking account of the knowledge embodied in it) and what this meant for economic evolution.

There are things about knowledge that have changed over the years, but they should be analyzed concretely. For example, the amount of effort spent on education and industrial research is far greater now than in the past. This is important. But it still is not schools and colleges and industrial research facilities that dominate capital, but capital that enslaves knowledge.

White collar and blue collar

One of the main themes of Fred's "Rough Thoughts" bears on the class nature of communist revolution and of revolutionary organization. In his theorizing, he takes a rosy view of the more technical and professional sections of the working people.

Fred says that "a growing relatively educated section is a positive cultural factor for a revolutionary working class movement". He seems to equate the fact that a higher cultural level for the whole working class is favorable for communist organization with the concept that the best educated or skilled sections of the working class are particularly revolutionary. Although he is answering Pete's remarks in the Jan. 20 Supplement, he barely refers to the issues Pete raises about what type of education and culture form a socialist consciousness among the working class. He mainly dismisses the issue as something that shouldn't be taken to the extreme of regarding the higher-paid workers as not part of the working class (which, incidentally, Pete didn't do). It is as if culture is reduced to technical knowledge.

Fred instead thinks that it suffices to show that many white collar workers are indeed workers. So he argues that it is possible that "many white collar are workers, proletarians, wage slaves, just as much as blue..." And he talks of "60,000 white collars—management, professionals, engineers, technical workers, and general office (secretaries, etc.) are the official categories—at Boeing in the Seattle area, for example." This list alone should have been the tip off that "white collar" and "blue collar" are not scientific categories, and can only be used with caution. "White collar", for example, as he used it, groups together "management" and professionals with clerical workers. So this is not just a question of higher or lower-paid workers, but of management and the petty-bourgeoisie as well. But Fred doesn't comment on the categories he listed among the white collar (although I presume he must regard some of these categories as what he calls the "petty bourgeois section of the white collar").

Fred goes on to say that "the majority [of the white collar] average less pay than the 40,000 blue collar. The lowest paid white collar makes several dollars an hour less than the lowest blue collar. Of 10,000 engineers, a significant minority make less than the average blue collar." (He qualifies this by adding that a consideration of Boeing's subcontracted work would lower the average blue collar wage.) Actually, these statistics don't show that distinctions don't exist among different classes in the the work force and different strata among the working class, but instead reinforce the arbitrary nature of the white and blue collar classifications. They may also suggest that Boeing is overall (white or blue collar) a place of more skilled or higher-paid labor.

Some of Fred's statements resemble special pleading: the white collar aren't paid so much (if you average them all together), they have some unions, and "there are definite prejudices against white collar workers among blue collars who make more money, that are divisive to the economic struggle", etc. Why, the "prejudices" against the white collar reflect an "aristocratic attitude" among the blue collar workers which is seized upon by the union hacks. Fred seems to be intent on the experience of a particular strike, and ignores the more general issue of whether there is anything positive in the workers recognizing distinctions with the "white collar", and whether it is possible for a revolutionary sentiment to develop without workers pondering these distinctions. His list of white collar workers includes management and professionals as well as technical workers and office staff, and he himself distinguishes among them by referring to a "petty bourgeois section of the white collar", yet gives as an example of workers recognizing such distinctions only narrow-minded "craft chauvinism" in a particular economic struggle. It is quite possible for workers to recognize the specific features of the professionals and higher-paid workers, as well as the technical workers and office staff, without scabbing on them, and such recognition is needed to understand what is going on in general in the economic and political struggles.

As mentioned above, at one point Fred distinguishes the value creators from the "highly skilled and highly paid like the petty bourgeois section of white collar". But on what basis can he do so? Don't the highly-skilled and highly-paid create value too? And if it is accepted that they create value, doesn't the need to separate them off as "petty-bourgeois sections" undermine Fred's own definition of the working class as all those create value? His socialist instinct here speaks against his own theorizing.

Fred's stands on these questions about the different strata of the working masses surprise me, and more so coming from the same comrade who worried about the economic basis behind the stands of the workers towards the Gulf War. I think Fred has thought about a number of concrete issues that come up at Boeing and among technical workers. He has seen the craft chauvinism of the bureaucrats, the disunity that is fostered between the

technical and production workers, and the experience of the last strike at Boeing, and he certainly wants and agitates for the workers to recognize distinctions with "management". But he has jumped to grandiose theorizing rather than a calmer and more careful analysis, and the results are

worrisome. And even more so when his view of the "white collar" is contrasted with his harsh treatment of the "underclass", which was commented on by comrade Frank in the *April Supplement*. □