

Women and Revolution



Journal of the Women's Commission of the Spartacist League X-623

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International Women's Day 1976

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The Inheritance/ACWU

Against Our Will: A Review

Brownmiller, Susan.

Against Our Will: Men, Women and Rape.
New York: Simon and Schuster, 1975.

The main contention of Susan Brownmiller's *Against Our Will* is that rape (or the threat of rape) is the main way in which all women are controlled by all men. While "upper-class" men by and large leave the actual dirty work of raping to "lower-class" men, she argues, they all benefit from the results—subjugated, fearful women.

There are (at least) two things wrong with this theory. First, while rape is a criminal act of sexual coercion, it is not the main social mechanism by which women are oppressed. Women are oppressed principally through their isolation from socially productive labor and their relegation to stultifying household drudgery within the confines of the family. Second (and this is the fundamental flaw in all feminist logic whether one accepts the rape thesis or not), current social institutions are not the result of a plot by men to control women.

Brownmiller's explanation of women's oppression rests on a simple biological premise—men have penises. She writes: "... we cannot work around the fact that in terms of human anatomy the possibility of forcible intercourse incontrovertibly exists. This simple fact may have been sufficient to have caused the creation of a male ideology of rape. When men discovered they could rape, they proceeded to do so." The development of the family is explained as follows: "Female fear of an open season of rape, and not a natural inclination towards monogamy, motherhood or love, was probably the single causative factor in the original subjugation of women by men, the most important key to her historic dependence, her domestication by protective mating."

In *Origins of the Family, Private Property and the State*, Frederick Engels writes:

"The more the traditional sexual relations [group marriage] lost the naive primitive character of the forest life, owing to the development of the economic conditions with consequent undermining of the old communism and growing density of population, the more oppressive and humiliating must the women have felt them to be, and the greater their longing for the right of chastity, or temporary or permanent marriage with one man only, as a way of release. This advance could not in any case have originated with the men, if only because it has never occurred to them, even to this day, to renounce the pleasures of actual group marriage."

This speculation would appear uncomfortably close to Brownmiller's thesis, except for the phrase "owing to the development of the economic conditions with consequent undermining of the old communism and growing density of population." The studies of primitive communism which Engels drew upon proved

that sexual relations had been non-oppressive and non-coercive. He demonstrated that it was the development of class society which laid the basis for the economic, social and sexual subjugation of women.

Engels' pioneering analysis of the woman question identified the family as the main social institution which oppresses women. According to the anthropological data of Morgan on which it is based, land in the Stone Age had belonged to all the members of society in common. While there had been a division of labor



Holly Forsman

Susan Brownmiller

between the sexes, there had also been equality, for each had taken part in productive labor and had contributed to the economic life of the tribe. With the eventual increase in man's capacity to produce, it became profitable to employ slaves—the first form of private property. Herds, land and other forms of property also became privatized for the first time, bringing about a revolution within the family; the domestic labor of women no longer equaled the economic power of men. Thus the establishment of private property and the family laid the basis for the inequality of women which continues to find its expression in various forms of oppression and exploitation, including rape. Engels concluded that women could achieve equality with men only when they took part once again in general economic production on a par with men.

In other words, since real and specific social institutions perpetuate the oppression of women, the only solution is to root them out, and the only means of doing so is a socialist revolution which smashes class

society and frees women from domestic slavery. But Brownmiller cannot see this obvious solution because she remains firmly fixated on the male "ultimate weapon," the penis, which for her reigns supreme throughout history. *To posit an unchangeable, eternally rapacious male psychology, as Brownmiller does, is essentially to despair of significant social change.*

What Is Rape?

Rape in contemporary society is essentially a criminal act of individual hostility directed in the main at women as objects to be defiled. It transforms what is normally a pleasurable act of consensual intimacy for sexual gratification into an experience of fear, degradation and often injury for the victim. The essence of rape is brutality and utter dehumanization—a nightmare of terror.

Brownmiller has assembled a great deal of information on the "typical" rapist, drawn mainly from police studies. This evidence bears out an analysis of rape as part of a continuum of violent crimes against individuals, which include assault, robbery and murder. The "typical" rapist's social profile is intermediate between that of men arrested for violent assault and those arrested for robbery:

"Far from the stereotypic, psychiatric construct of mild-mannered repressed, impotent homosexuals with an Oedipus complex, they are better understood as brutalized, violence-prone men who act out their raging hatred against the world through an object offering the least amount of physical resistance, a woman's body."

Police statistics on rape are quite revealing (even allowing for the fact that rape is universally admitted to be the least reported of crimes). The *Uniform Crime Reports*, which Brownmiller quotes, put out by the FBI and drawn from nationally-compiled police reports, show that 61 percent of accused rapists are under 25

years of age and that 47 percent are black and 51 percent are white. More detailed studies (although not done on a nation-wide basis) reveal that both rapists and victims come primarily from the "lower classes."

That rapist and victim are most typically ghetto residents in American society is not particularly surprising. Unlike the idealists who believed (as did, for



Labor Defender

Demonstration in Defense of Scottsboro 9 (1932)

example, the early SDSers) that the only reason that the poor had not revolted against their wretched conditions was because they had not thought of it, communists understand that the searing poverty, educational deprivation and degrading conditions of ghetto life sometimes create severely disoriented human beings and that high crime rates in lumper neighborhoods, including high incidences of rape, have their basis in the poisonous cauldron of terror, despair and frustration that is the American ghetto. But for many starry-eyed New Left liberals (like Brownmiller) the discovery that the "wretched of the earth," particularly in urban America, are sometimes driven to brutal acts came as a rude shock.

But nothing in the statistics which she cites supports Brownmiller's thesis that *all* men benefit from rape. The fact that lumpenized young males rape lumpenized young females cannot be interpreted to indicate that rape is natural to men. And if, as Brownmiller argues, upper-class men benefit from lower-class rape, they express their gratitude in rather peculiar fashion by visiting swift and violent punishment upon any young ghetto tough who rapes one of "their" women.

Furthermore, there are two important kinds of rape which do not appear in the police statistics—rape

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Women and Revolution

**Journal of the Spartacist League
Central Committee Commission
for Work Among Women**

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Published by the Spartacist Publishing Company,

Box 1377, G.P.O., New York, N.Y. 10001.

Telephone: 925-8234.

Application to mail at second class postage rate is pending at New York, N.Y.

Opinions expressed in signed articles or letters do not necessarily express the editorial viewpoint.

Against Our Will...

among men in prison and rape in war. Although Brownmiller discusses these phenomena, she seems blind to the conclusions which one must draw from them. Men use prison rape as a means of establishing power relationships in a rigidly structured, coercive environment where they have literally no weapons but their bodies. Here, the concept of rape as means of keeping women subservient obviously does not apply. In war, the mass rape of the women of a conquered nation is a means of expressing power over and contempt for the entire conquered population, including the men. Mass rape is forced upon the vanquished, usually of another nation or race, by the conquerors; it is a way of using women as sexual property to humiliate the (male) enemy. (This is by no means to say that the men and women of the conquered nation are equally victimized by the rape of the women. In fact, the "tarnished" women are not infrequently subsequently rejected and further brutalized by their own countrymen, as occurred recently in Bangladesh.)

Black Men, White Women and Rape

In racially tense America, cases of interracial rape, although a relatively small proportion of all rapes, provoke a violent reaction; or rather, cases of black men accused of raping white women create such a reaction. The most outrageous section of Brownmiller's book, particularly for leftists, deals with what she calls the violent intersection of racism and sexism.

Brownmiller's reassessment of the "Scottsboro Boys" case, and in particular the murder of Emmet Till (a 14-year-old black youth who was murdered by two white men in Mississippi in 1955 for "wolfwhistling" at one of the men's wives), carries her feminist position to its logical conclusion. Although she admits that "we are rightly aghast that a whistle could be cause for murder," she nevertheless insists that Emmett Till and J.W. Millam (one of the murderers) had something in common: "They both understood that... it was a deliberate insult just short of physical assault, a last reminder to Carolyn Bryant that this black boy, Till, had in mind to possess her."

What is most interesting about Brownmiller's conversion to feminism is the fact that for years previously she had actively sympathized with Till. Her subsequent violent reaction against the Tills of this world is an

YOUNG SPARTACUS

Monthly Newspaper of the Spartacus Youth League,
Youth Section of the Spartacist League

\$2 • 11 ISSUES

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CONDENMED TO DIE!
Workers
ON JUNE 22nd A HEARING WILL BE HELD ON THE APPEAL OF HAYWOOD PATTERSON—ONE OF THE INNOCENT SCOTTSBORO BOYS!
Fight For the Freedom of the Scottsboro Boys!

DEMONSTRATE
WEDNESDAY, JUNE 21st, 7 P. M.
AT TAYLOR and SIBLEY STREETS

For two years the workers have kept the SCOTTSBORO boys out of the electric chair of the Alabama lynchers. These two years have been long years of waiting in the shadow of the electric chair and constantly abused by their guards, these innocent boys must be freed now. Under the pressure of the granting of a new trial, the Supreme Court granted a new trial. For Haywood Patterson the appeal is to be heard on JUNE 22nd. The workers must realize their determination to save him.

The International Labor Defense, the defender of the boys, will be in court on June 22nd. On that day Judge Horton, the enemy of the Negro masses, will decide whether Patterson will receive a new trial. He will grant no new trial unless the workers demonstrate on the streets and send resolutions for the release of the boys. The whole South, millions of oppressed Negro Scottsboro whites are watching the freedom case. They realize that the freedom of Patterson and the other boys of the beginning of a way out for them. In Chicago and St. Louis and all over in the North the Negro workers are organizing together with the white workers. It will give more coverage to the workers in their fight for the right to live, to fight against discrimination and lynching, police terror and judges, when the workers set the Scottsboro boys free. Organize with the International Labor Defense. **DEMONSTRATE JUNE 21st!**

FREE THE SCOTTSBORO BOYS!
A New Trial for Haywood Patterson
PASS THE CIVIL RIGHTS BILL!!!
FREE MOONEY AND BILLINGS AND ALL CLASS WAR PRISONERS!
International Labor Defense
1705 W. Madison St., Room 6

International Labor Defense leaflet

interesting, if tragic, case study of the worst aspects of guilty liberalism run amuck. Many white liberals in the early '60's took upon themselves guilt for crimes against the oppressed, thus setting in motion a chain reaction of masochistic self-abuse followed by eventual disillusionment and revulsion, resulting in a vicious lashing out at the formerly identified-with oppressed. The scenario can be roughly summarized as: liberal identifies with oppressed element, oppressed victim behaves brutally, liberal recoils and—calls the cops. Which is precisely Brownmiller's solution to rape. As she puts it:

"...for a period of fifteen years after the murder of Emmet Till whenever a black teen-ager whistled at me on a New York City street or uttered in passing one of several variations on an invitation to congress, I smiled my nicest smile of comradely equality—no supersensitive flower of white womanhood, I—... did not white women in particular have to bear the white man's burden of making amends for Southern racism?"

But today, thanks to her "enlightenment" by feminism, it's a different story: "Today a sexual remark on the street causes within me a fleeting but murderous rage." Murderous rage—retrospectively directed against a 14-year-old black youth in racist Mississippi!

But this is only half the story. Eldridge Cleaver, in *Soul On Ice*, speaks up for the bloody revenge fantasies of black males, this time directed against white women, thus neatly closing the vicious circle. When Cleaver was 19, he saw a picture of the white woman Till had whistled at, was attracted to her and felt anger and disgust, both at himself and her. His conclusion: "Somehow, I arrived at the conclusion that, as a matter

of principle, it was of paramount importance for me to have an antagonistic ruthless attitude toward white women. The term *outlaw* appealed to me....” And so, he writes, “I became a rapist.”

His rapes, though barbaric assaults against particular women, were actually aimed at the entire white race and especially at white males and stemmed from a psychology similar to that of mass rapes in war. Brownmiller and the Cleaver of *Soul On Ice* thus assume the roles of spokesmen for sex war and race war respectively. While the objective reality which gave rise to Cleaver's rage was rather different from that which motivated Brownmiller, both suffer from the same rejection of a class perspective in their approach to the questions of racism and sexism.

And who really benefits from all this murderous rage? Both Brownmiller and Cleaver would unhesitat-

ingly answer, “white men”; yet their knives end up, somehow, pointed not at the common “enemy,” but rather at each other. As the shattered remnants of both the women's movement of the late '60's and the various nationalist currents in the black movement continue to turn upon and tear at themselves and each other in ever-narrowing vicious circles of self-accusation, cynicism, apathy and despair, their attempted solutions to oppression (such as Brownmiller's call for more female cops) reveal themselves ever more clearly as dead ends.

The only solution to sexual and racial oppression and exploitation is international communist revolution, which will smash the capitalist state and bourgeois economic relations which perpetuate the vicious humiliation, torture and degradation visited upon both blacks and women in this rotten, decaying society. ■

Lesbianism on Trial in Texas

Defend Mary Jo Risher!

On December 23 a jury in a Dallas, Texas, Domestic Relations Court took from Mary Jo Risher custody of her nine-year-old son, Richard. Risher's former husband had brought her to court to gain custody of Richard, charging that her lifestyle was not conducive to the young boy's proper upbringing. Actually, the lifestyle which the self-righteous guardians of bourgeois propriety find so objectionable is not much different from that in neighboring homes except for one thing—the household unit consists of two divorced women and two children.

Evidence that Mary Jo Risher, 38 and a homosexual, is an “unfit mother” is nil. The father's “concern” for Richard's emotional well-being was belied by courtroom testimony, including that of several psychologists, which described Richard's home life as “excellent, happy and normal” and by the child's expressed desire to remain with his mother. The testimony of the father and an older son, 17-year-old Jimmy, focused on the mother's lesbianism while hostile psychological “evidence” was introduced attesting to Mary Jo Risher's “poor judgment” as a mother. This consisted of allegations that Richard was allowed to wear a YWCA T-shirt and girl's hand-me-downs. Richard is indeed a member of the YWCA, where he takes classes with other children, male and female, and the notorious hand-me-downs were a pair of jeans and a denim jacket; fashionable for both boys and girls, which were once worn by the 11-year-old daughter of Anne Foreman, Mary Jo Risher's companion.

The charges leveled are a gross violation of the privacy of the mother and her companion.

Discrimination against homosexuals is pervasive in bourgeois society, used to buttress the nuclear family, an important mainstay of capitalism. Mary Jo Risher, who is now seeking to appeal the court's decision, is a victim of reactionary persecution and



Dallas News/Larry Reese

Mary Jo Risher (r.) and Anne Foreman.

needs the support of class-conscious militants in her appeal. End discrimination against homosexuals! Stop this victimization! Donations for legal expenses, which are expected to reach \$30,000, can be sent to: Friends of Mary Jo Risher, P.O. Box 174, Dallas, Texas 75221.

Planning for Collective Living in the Early Soviet Union

Architecture As a Tool of Social Transformation

by Vladimir Zelinski

"Despite all our emancipatory laws, woman remains now as before a *domestic slave*, since she is oppressed, suffocated, dulled, debased by the *petty tasks of housework*, which chain her to the kitchen and the nursery and cause her to dissipate her creative powers in downright barbarically unproductive, petty, unnerving, deadening, depressing labor. The true *liberation of woman*, true communism, will begin only where and when (under the leadership of the proletariat at the helm of the state) the mass struggle against these petty household tasks or, more correctly, their *transformation en masse* into large-scale socialist economy begins."

—Lenin, "The Great Initiative" (1919)

The Bolshevik program for the full emancipation of women through the replacement of the oppressive family structure by alternative institutions for the socialization of domestic labor implied a radically new set of architectural priorities and tasks requiring a rethinking of the fundamental premises of social architecture.

In its announcement of a competition for the design of a communal dwelling in 1926 the Moscow City Soviet explained:

"It is the duty of technological innovation, the duty of the architect, to place new demands on housing and to design in so far as possible a house that will transform the so-called family hearth from a boring, confining cell that at present burdens down women in particular into a place of pleasant and carefree relaxation.

"A new life demands new forms.

"The worker does not desire his mother, wife or sisters to be a nursery maid, washerwoman or cook with unlimited hours; he does not desire children to rob him and particularly their mother of the possibility of employing their free time for social labor, mental and physical pleasures...."

The abolition of the private ownership of the land, which had already been accomplished, pointed the way to a successful resolution of the problems posed for home design (as well as for city planning and the service sector) in carrying out the elimination of the household oppression of women.

Under capitalism, the city planner's life is one of continual frustration, as he tries, in vain, to reconcile the conflicting interests of dozens or hundreds of private property holders and land speculators who then require further appeasement in the form of tax concessions, rent subsidies, zoning variances and the like to ensure the profitability of the shoddy housing that they may (or may not) erect. The growth of cities (and their collapse) is in principle uncontrolled, and physical and aesthetic squalor the accepted norm.

One of the first acts of the new proletarian regime (14 December 1917) had been to forbid all speculation in land. In 1918 a series of laws expropriated without compensation the landed estates of the gentry as well as all city structures yielding an income above that set by the local authorities. Thus the Soviet city planner had (and in principle still has) to concern himself primarily with social values—the creation of a rationally organized, amenable urban environment on the basis of human needs.

But the country inherited by the new workers state was near total collapse. In World War I and the civil war that followed it, Russia had lost some 20 million people. The output of heavy industry was in 1920 only one seventh of what it had been in 1913; the transportation system was virtually non-functioning, while the social base with which to rebuild the country—a trained working class—had suffered extremely great losses in the civil war, since it was precisely the skilled workers who, as dedicated Bolsheviks, had volunteered for the Red Army being constructed by Trotsky. From 1917 to 1920 almost no new construction could be undertaken; the best that could be done was to redistribute to the workers the luxury apartments of the bourgeoisie in the major cities. But construction materials were in such short supply that even the existing housing could not be maintained, and foreign visitors were horrified at the deterioration of the country's entire physical plant.

It was not until 1925 that the new workers state began, albeit only partially, to overcome the circumstances of its birth, so that the architecture of the '20's divided naturally into two parts: 1920-25, a period which saw the creation of some brilliant designs but in which next to nothing was actually built; and 1925-31, when the new architects were able to commence the reconstruction of the nation's physical plant. Even so, it is estimated that no more than 10-12 communal houses were built in the entire country before Stalin's rehabilitation of the nuclear family and "Soviet motherhood" put an end to this work.

In addition to material obstacles, these revolutionary architects, proponents of a functional modern architecture, had from about 1928 onward to contend increasingly with the turn-of-the-century eclecticism promoted by the emerging bureaucracy and its sycophants in the realm of the arts. While striking modern architecture was still being erected as late as 1931-32, this was on the basis of contracts awarded years before. The final death knell of innovative Soviet architectural design was sounded in 1932 when the

bureaucracy awarded one of the surviving hacks of the old regime first prize in a competition for the symbolic structure of the country, the Palace of the Soviets. Only the intervention of World War II prevented this monument to Stalin's megalomania from being visited on the people of Moscow.

Communal Dwellings

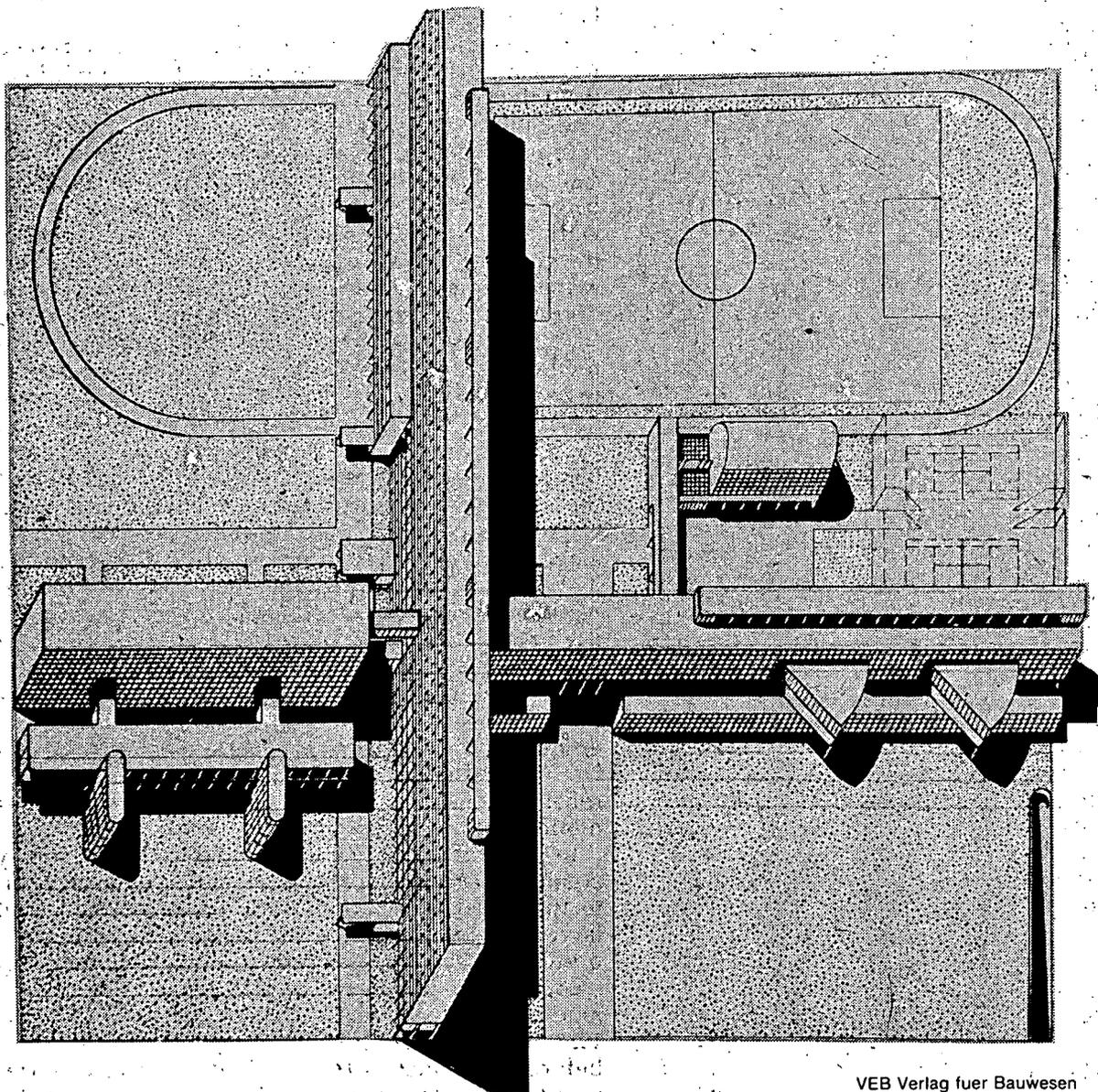
"Are we devoting enough attention to the germs of communism that already exist in this area [of the liberation of women]? No and again no. Public dining halls, creches, kindergartens—these are exemplary instances of these germs, these are those simple, everyday means, free of all bombast, grandiloquence and pompous solemnity, which, however, are truly such that they can liberate woman, truly such that they can decrease and do away with her inequality vis-à-vis man in regard to her role in social production and in public life. These means are not new, they have (like all the material prerequisites of socialism) been created by large-scale capitalism, but under capitalism they have firstly re-

mained a rarity, secondly—and particularly important—they were either *hucksterish* enterprises, with all the bad sides of speculation, of profit-making, of deception, of falsification or else they were a 'trapeze act' of bourgeois charity, rightly hated and disdained by the best workers."
—Lenin, "The Great Initiative"

The communal dwellings of the '20's constituted an initial effort to translate Lenin's demands into reality. Early Soviet planners envisioned the individual dwelling area as a place to which residents would resort mainly for sleeping, reading or the like. Typically, these "cabins" were minuscule, with only 6-9 square meters floor space per person—a qualitative improvement nevertheless over the 3-4 square meters (about 6' by 7') per person that were average for apartments shared by two or more families in major Russian cities in the 1930's. Apart from this, the architects deliberately designed small apartments to render sharing impossible.

Like the workers clubs, the communes of the '20's

continued on next page.



Barsch and Vladimirov's projection for communal dwelling, 1929.

Soviet Architecture...

were conceived as the social matrix for the new society, a culture medium out of which new social attitudes would arise by virtue of the physical and organizational shaping given to everyday life by the new architecture. It is this which, as Lenin noted, fundamentally distinguished them from seemingly similar projects in the West where there was no notion of using architecture as a means to the social transformation of man. As the Russian artist and architect El Lissitzky said: "The basic elements of our architecture belong to the social revolution and not the technological one."

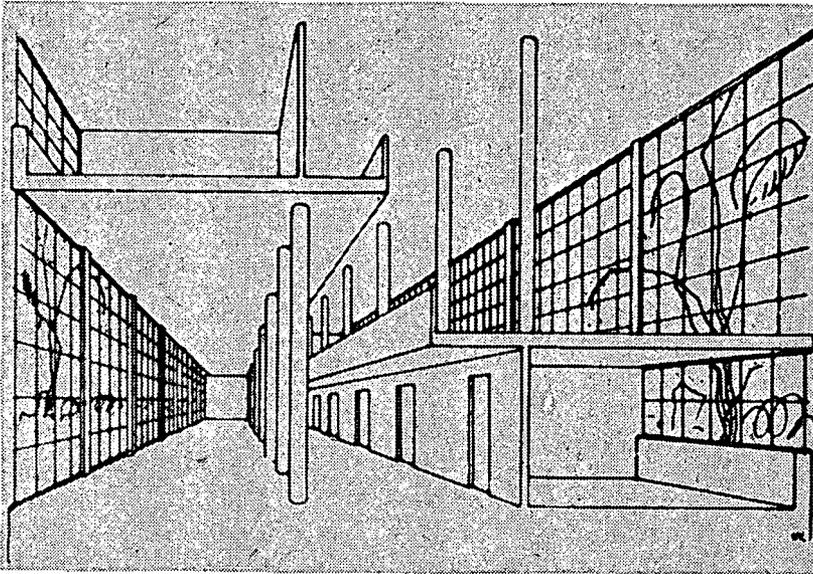
And new social attitudes *did* arise in the new housing units, particularly among women, who benefited from them the most. While the long waiting lists for admittance to the communes reflected less a conviction that they represented a higher form of social interaction than a desire for the facilities with which they were equipped—electricity, heat and running water—most women, delighted to be relieved of the brunt of household drudgery, soon concluded that private family life was intolerable. According to

People's Commissar for Social Welfare Aleksandra Kollontai:

"...where previously the women were particularly anxious to have a household of their own, ... today, on the contrary, it is the husband who suggests that it would not be a bad idea to take a flat, have dinner at home and the wife always about—while the women, especially the growing numbers of women workers who are being drawn into the Republic's creative activities, will not even hear of a 'household of one's own.' 'Better to separate than to agree to a family life with a household and the petty family worries; now I am free to work for the Revolution, but then—then I would be fettered. No, separation would be preferable.' And the husbands have to make the best of it."

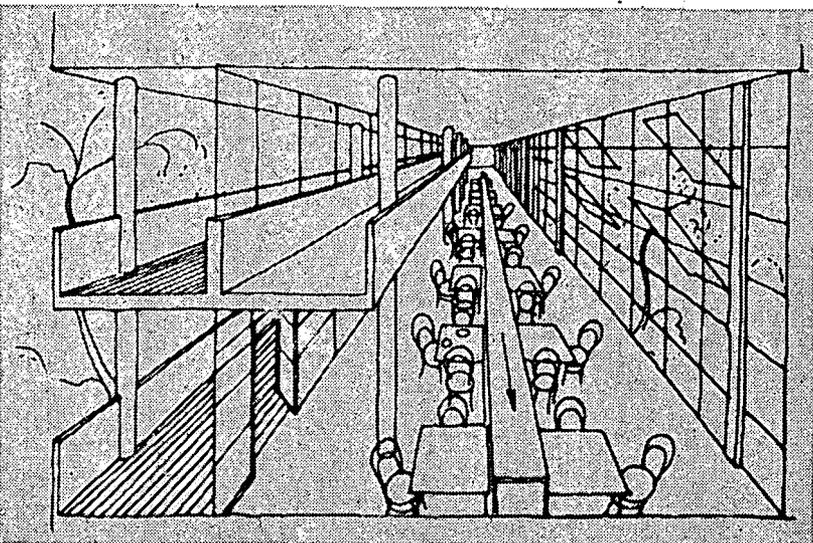
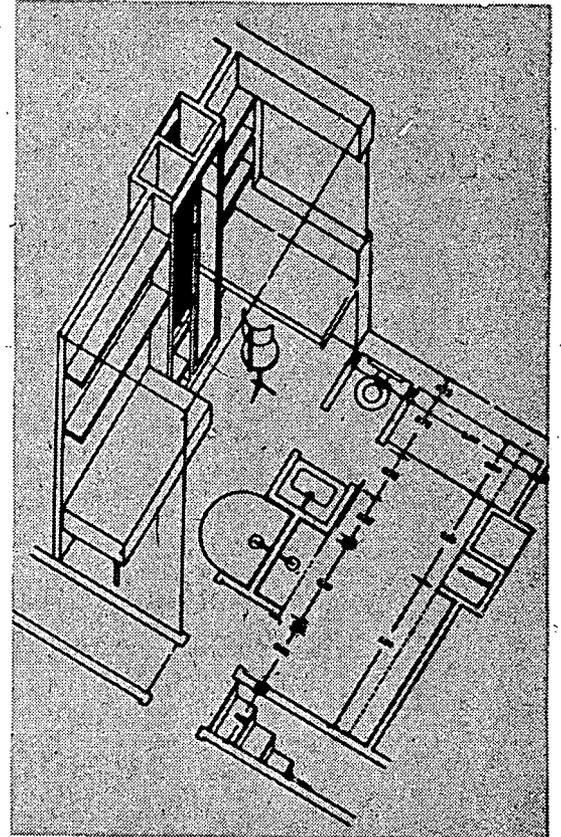
—Aleksandra Kollontai, *Women's Labor in Economic Development*

The architects of the time were characteristically uncompromising in their social goals. Typical of the clarity with which these goals were translated into structural realities is the exceptionally elegant 1929 design by Barsch and Vladimirov for a communal dwelling for 1,000 adults and 680 children. Housing was by age group, with a ten-story main building for adults and, perpendicular to it, a six-story wing for the



Barsch and Vladimirov, communal dwelling: interior views.

George Braziller



younger children and a five-story one for those of school age.

In the main building, the first four floors were planned as a communal area containing a vestibule, dining hall, club and recreation rooms, while the remaining six stories were devoted to small, two-person sleeping rooms. Clearly the architects' desire was to create an environment in which nearly all activity except sleep would be social.

As for the children, the ground floor of the building for pre-schoolers was occupied by the entry and reception rooms, while the upper stories held 12 rooms for 30 children each. Adjacent to this building was one with a large, airy veranda. The building for school children falls into two parts: in the first two stories were the entry and workshops; in the upper three the classrooms and accessory rooms. Each dormitory was designed to hold 28 students and each of the eight classrooms 40.

In occupying only ten percent of the land on which it was to be erected and in resting on columns, thus elevated from the ground which it would occupy, this design has a lightness and airiness characteristic of much Russian revolutionary architecture.

Barshch and Vladimirov's design is a consistent realization of the ideals animating revolutionary architects regarding the replacement of the nuclear family by new ties of comradeship in a radical transformation of everyday life. In his book *Sotsialisticheskie Goroda* (Socialist Cities), written in 1930, L. Sabsovich asserted:

"This socialist reconstruction of the way of life must be begun at once and be carried out for all working people, both in the cities and the countryside, in the course of the next five to eight years.... Every sort of transitional form is the expression of a completely unjustifiable opportunism.... There should be no rooms in which man and wife

can live together.... The rooms will be used mainly for sleeping, individual recuperation and, in a few instances, individual occupations."

In a roughly contemporary article in *Sovremennaya Arkhitektura* Sabsovich defined more clearly his view of the communist way of life:

"When life is organized on a socialist basis each worker may be regarded as a potential 'bachelor' or as a potential 'husband' or 'wife,' to the extent that today's bachelor may be tomorrow's husband and today's couple may tomorrow be separated. [Sabsovich envisaged "divorce" as being effected by a simple locking of the connecting door between two adjoining rooms.] At present many couples are living together unwillingly, compelled to do so, firstly, by the housing problem and also by the necessity of bringing up their children, even though the bond between them may be broken.... When life is organized on a socialist basis, when the everyday necessities are being supplied by the state and the children are being collectively brought up, then these constraints will gradually disappear."

The architect V. Kuzmin, one of the leading proponents of collective housing, was even more categorical in his condemnation of the nuclear family:

"The proletariat must at once set about the destruction of the family as an organ of oppression and exploitation. In the communal dwelling the family will, in my view, be a purely comradely, physiologically necessary and historically inevitable association between the working man and the working woman."

—V. Kuzmin, *O rabochem zhilishchnom stroitel'stve* (On Building Working-Class Dwellings), *Sovremennaya Arkhitektura* No. 3, 1928

Just how strongly entrenched the Bolshevik program was in the minds of party members is revealed by the fact that as late as 1930 Yuri Larin, in a speech before the Communist Academy, called for the elimination of individual kitchens in new apartment buildings, referring to the party's stated aim of feeding 50 percent of the population in communal restaurants. He also called for the construction of communal dwellings with attached nurseries, pointing out that in Moscow there were child-care facilities for only 50 children per 1,000 women—i.e., 1,000 potential workers—and noted the bad effect which the intolerable overcrowding was having on productivity.

Nonetheless it was inevitable that such extreme proposals should arouse opposition, and various attempts at compromise were made. Realizing that the economic backwardness of the country precluded, for the time at least, providing a conventional bourgeois apartment for every family and that those which were being built were in fact being allotted to groups of families, revolutionary architects attempted to find a solution that would both solve the housing problem and further communist consciousness.

It was soon realized that simple miniaturization of the traditional bourgeois apartment was no solution, since apartments with a living area of roughly 50 square meters were less costly to build than miniaturized versions or one-room apartments with the same bath and kitchen. Moreover, the rents of large private apartments would have placed them out of the reach of all but a few highly paid specialists, with the consequence that they would have ended up occupied not

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a monthly organ of revolutionary Marxism for the rebirth of the Fourth International published by Spartacist Publications for the Central Committee of the Spartacist League of Australia and New Zealand, section of the international Spartacist tendency

U.S. \$5—12 issues (airmail)

U.S. \$2—12 issues (surface mail)

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Soviet Architecture...

by one family but by three or four, "thus creating not the framework for a new way of life but an intolerable existence for 60 percent of the population" (report of the Construction Committee of the R.F.S.R.—or "Stroikom"—1928).

In 1928 Stroikom set up a research and design section for the standardization of housing under the direction of Moses Ginzburg, chief editor of *Sovremennaya Arkhitektura*, the leading journal of Soviet architecture. After three months of labor, Stroikom reported that:

"Despite the extreme tightness of state funds, the provision of housing for millions of workers confronts us as one of our chief tasks.

"...the new types of housing must free as much as possible of the workers' time and energy for social and cultural activities, provide suitable means of relaxation, and facilitate the transition from individual housing to more collective forms."

Explaining the aims of the committee, Ginzburg added:

"We consider that one of the important points that must be taken into account in building new apartments is the dialectics of human development. We can no longer compel the occupants of a particular building to live collectively, as we have attempted to do in the past, generally with negative results. We must provide for the possibility of a gradual, natural transition to communal utilization in a number of different areas. That is why we have tried to keep each unit isolated from the next, that is why we found it necessary to design the kitchen alcove as a standard element of minimum size that could be removed bodily from the apartment to permit the introduction of canteen catering at any given moment. We considered it absolutely necessary to incorporate certain features that would stimulate the transition to a socially superior mode of life, stimulate but not dictate...."

"Proletarian Culture"

One of the accusations regularly raised against the radical modernism of avantgarde Soviet architecture was its supposed absence of ties with the masses. These sleek designs, adherents of the emerging bureaucracy charged, had nothing in common with the new proletarian society, and were instead merely a slavish imitation of bourgeois fashions in the West.

The questions raised by such accusations are important. What should be the relationship between the artistic/literary intelligentsia and the proletariat? What sort of creative currents should the party promote? The answers provided by Lenin, Trotsky, Lunacharsky and Bukharin were utterly unambiguous: all were united in asserting the duty of the party to intervene against openly counterrevolutionary currents in art and literature while otherwise insisting on a hands-off policy in the cultural sphere.

Lenin's own tastes in art were rather conservative; he felt little personal sympathy for the radical modernism that came into vogue in Russia after the October Revolution, and it was probably he who approved the choice of a neo-classical entry colonnade in rudimentary Doric style (by ex-bourgeois and later Stalinist hacks Shchuko and Helfreich) as an entry to the

Smolny Institute, where he had met the Revolutionary Military Committee that directed the October uprising.

However, this is his sole reported intervention into artistic decision-making; otherwise he assumed a position of benevolent neutrality, speaking out publicly only when some architectural clique attempted to arrogate to itself exclusive artistic rights to "proletarian" or "revolutionary" art in the young workers state. Similarly, Anatoli Luncharsky, People's Commissar of Art and Education, polemicized vigorously against artistic and literary movements which he felt stood in basic contradiction to Marxism, but promoted full freedom of cultural debate.

Trotsky's position on the role of the party in the cultural sphere was identical with Lenin's. In his "Communist Policy Toward Art" Trotsky stated that, while the party must be irreconcilably opposed to overtly counterrevolutionary art, its tasks were essentially:

"to help the most progressive tendencies by a critical illumination of the road, but it does not do more than that. Art must make its own way and by its own means. The Marxian methods are not the same as the artistic. The party leads the proletariat but not the historic processes of history. There are domains in which the party leads, directly and imperatively. There are domains in which it only cooperates. There are, finally, domains in which it only orients itself. The domain of art is not one in which the party is called upon to command. It can and must protect and help it, but it can only lead it indirectly...."

Trotsky, indeed, explicitly rejected the notion of "proletarian art"—first of all, because of the proletariat's real cultural deprivation at the time of the seizure of state power:

"The proletariat is forced to take power before it has appropriated the fundamental elements of bourgeois culture; it is forced to overthrow bourgeois society by revolutionary violence for the very reason that that society does not allow it access to culture."

—Trotsky, "What is Proletarian Culture and is it Possible?"

In addition, in the initial years of the proletarian regime (at least in backward Russia) the main tasks of the proletariat were necessarily the creation of the material conditions for general access to culture: "That is why a machine which automatically manufactures bottles is at the present time a first-rate factor in the cultural revolution," said Trotsky, "while a heroic poem is a tenth-rate factor... it is good when poets sing of the revolution and the proletariat, but a powerful turbine sings even better."

The very notion of a proletarian culture stands in contradiction to the basic tenets of Marxism:

"...there can be no question of a new culture, that is, of construction on a large historic scale during the period of

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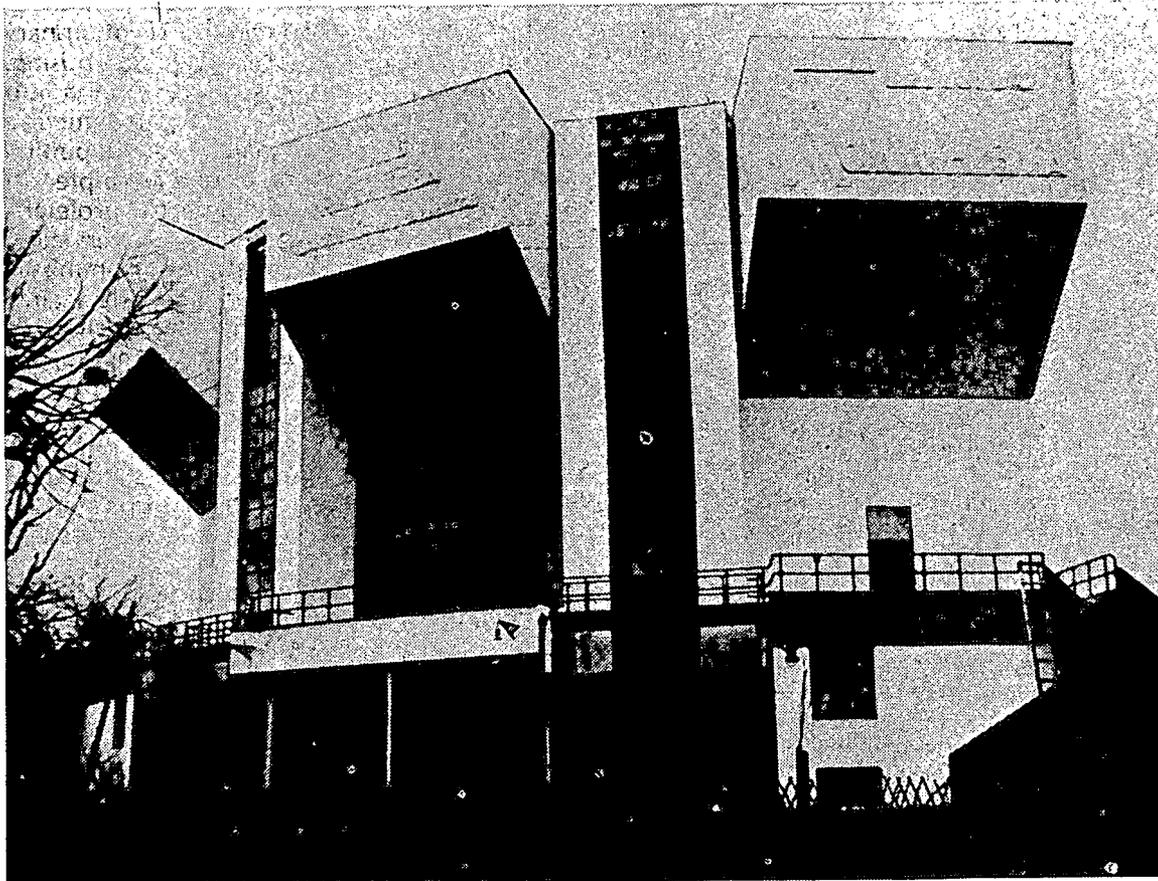
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The Rusakov Workers Club, one of the most famed examples of modern Soviet architecture (1927).

George Braziller

dictatorship [of the proletariat]. The cultural reconstruction which will begin when the need of the iron clutch of a dictatorship unparalleled in history will have disappeared, will not have a class character. This seems to lead to the conclusion that there is no proletarian culture and that there never will be any and in fact there is no reason to regret this. The proletariat acquires power for the purpose of doing away with class culture and to make way for human culture. We frequently seem to forget this."

—Trotsky, *op. cit.*

Trotsky also ridiculed the sort of simplistic reductionism which then, as now, sometimes passed for Marxist criticism. Referring to Raskolnikov, a spokesman for the Na Postu group, Trotsky said:

"In works of art he ignores that which makes them works of art. This was most vividly shown in his remarkable judgment on Dante's *The Divine Comedy*, which in his opinion is valuable to us just because it enables us to understand the psychology of a certain class at a certain time. To put the matter that way means simply to strike out *The Divine Comedy* from the realm of art.... Dante was, of course, the product of a certain social milieu. But Dante was a genius. He raised the experience of his epoch to a tremendous artistic height.... the Italian Marxist, old Antonio Labriola, wrote something like this: 'only fools could try to interpret the text of *The Divine Comedy* as though it were made of the cloth that Florentine merchants provided for their customers'."

—Trotsky, *op. cit.*

Thus Trotsky could assert that despite "the variations in feelings and states of mind in different classes... you won't deny that Shakespeare and Byron somehow speak to your soul and mine." And when the ignorantist Lebedinsky countered that, "They will soon

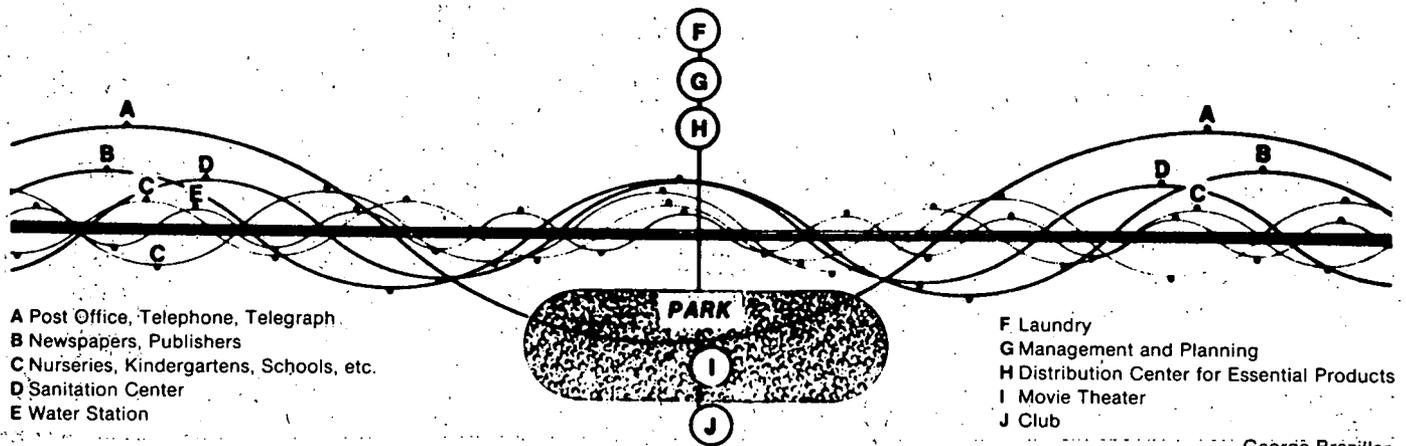
stop speaking," Trotsky replied that the works of Shakespeare, Byron and Pushkin would still be around "when people will stop seeking in Marx's *Capital* for precepts for their practical activity and *Capital* will have become merely a historical document, together with the program of our party."

Urbanists and Deurbanists

Russian society was in the 1920's open to a degree inconceivable to citizens of the deformed and degenerated workers states today. Despite the ban on party factions, the old polemical traditions of Bolshevism were very much alive, so much so that the emerging bureaucracy required over a dozen years—from the death of Lenin to the Moscow trials—to definitively quash all overt political and intellectual opposition. In the meantime, bureaucratic control was asserted gradually and piecemeal throughout the country—first in the party, where the traditions of dissent ran strongest, then in the state apparatus and last in the field of culture, where the bureaucracy had first to achieve a consciousness reflecting its usurpatory role before it could begin to pursue its unequivocally regressive artistic policies.

As the Stalinist bureaucracy hardened, it gradually developed social cohesiveness and a world outlook corresponding to its balancing between imperialism and the proletarian property forms of October. For the revolutionary architects this meant that there was less and less chance of seeing their striking projects

continued on next page



Georgé Brazillier

Proposal of deurbanizers for dispersed housing and facilities. Highway linked zone to industrial centers.

Soviet Architecture...

realized, as the bureaucracy increasingly favored an "impressive" academic eclecticism. Thus the terms of architectural debate were first deformed and then became increasingly unreal, as the revolutionary architects, faced with bureaucratic control over commissions, divided into urbanists and deurbanists. While the urbanists clung to the concept of the communal dwelling, to which they gave increasingly extreme and uncompromising forms, the deurbanists abandoned this synthesis in what essentially amounted to a loss of faith in the possibility of socialist reconstruction of the country's existing physical plant, with consequent abandonment of the city in favor of a pastoral existence based of course on the latest technology—rural electrification, decentralized production and the like.

The chief theoretician of the deurbanists, M. Okhitovich, rejected the notion of the city and put forward the reactionary/utopian program (prior to the achievement of enormous leaps in technology and material superabundance; i.e., socialism) of a Russia dotted with individual dwellings—lightweight structures set in unspoiled natural surroundings. "No, let us be frank," he said, "communal houses, those enormous, heavy, monumental, everlasting colossi, permanently encumbering the landscape, will not solve the problem of socialist resettlement." Despite his avowed desire to introduce collective facilities into his housing, it is hard to see how this could have been done in circumstances of planned isolation, while the diffusion of the population would have militated against any but the lowest-level cultural facilities being accessible to the masses. In fact, Okhitovich's scheme had social rather than architectural roots: an increasing desire to withdraw from the bureaucratically run workers state into individual isolation; to substitute a sylvan idyll for commitment to the socialist ideal.

A complementary plan called for the evacuation of Moscow and the resettlement of its population along highways radiating out from the former urban center. New construction in the capital was to be banned and the abandoned areas gradually landscaped until what was left was an irreducible administrative/cultural core

plus a sort of historical museum of artificially preserved neighborhoods and monuments characteristic of the city's past.

Needless to say, the extreme positions of the deurbanizers and the violent counterproposals of the hard-pressed collectivizing urbanizers were grist for the mill of the emerging bureaucracy and its coterie of architectural hangers-on, organized in an off-shoot of Proletkult, the Vopra (All-Russian Association of Proletarian Architects). As in other fields of creative endeavor, an appeal to supposed Marxist-Leninist orthodoxy served only to becloud the real issue: the conscious undoing of all the October Revolution had stood for.

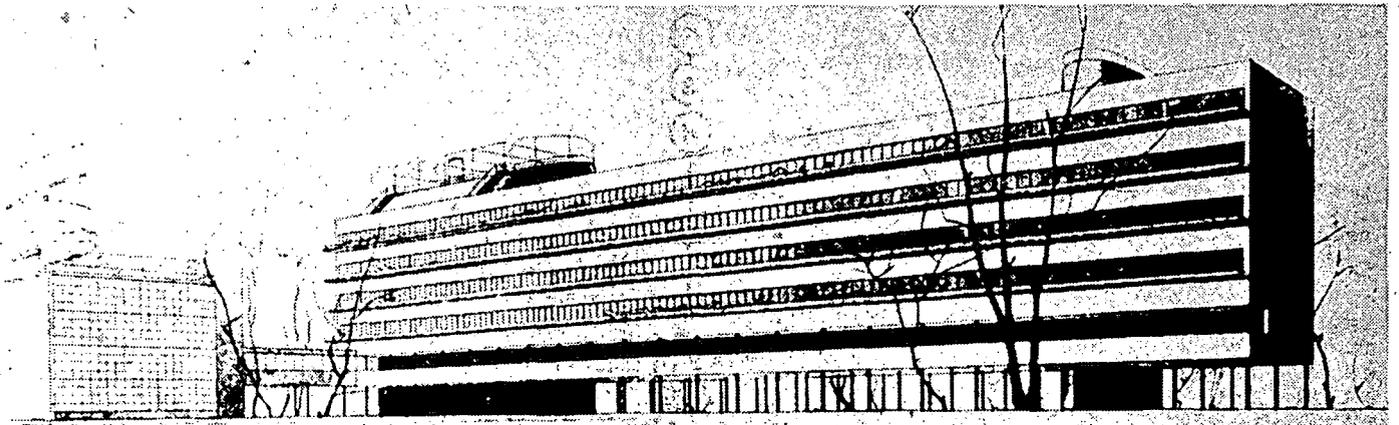
It is important to realize that the dispute was not simply ideological, but had a material basis in the extreme backwardness and impoverishment of Russia in the 1920's. The existing stock of housing was decaying at a frightening rate, as lack of material rendered it impossible to replace broken pipes, missing tiles and window panes. Even in 1931 the average dwelling space per person was around four square meters in Moscow: indeed housing space per person had steadily declined since the Revolution, despite the new building programs, which had barely dented the vast need. These conditions of material deprivation were, as Trotsky pointed out, one of the major causes for the rise of a parasitic bureaucracy; and the role of this emergent bureaucracy as adjudicator of the strife and allocator of what little privilege the new society could offer is as apparent in architecture and public housing as elsewhere.

Stalinization

The Stalinist architectural "program" for the early '30's consisted of the following points:

1. Reduce costs! The government simply decreed (1 March 1931) a reduction in building costs for new housing from an average of 170 to 104 rubles per square meter.

2. Widely publicized campaigns for goals never seriously expected to be met. In 1931 the first major all-out drive to solve the housing problem was proclaimed "by decision of the Council of People's Commissars and at the personal initiative of Cde. Stalin," whereby



George Braziller

Narkomfin apartment building (Moscow, 1930) was meant to serve as transition between traditional apartment house and communal dwelling.

700,000 new dwellings were supposed to be erected for workers in the Donets and Kuznets Basins, the Urals and Karaganda before the year's end. Of course, the country lacked the infrastructure to concentrate all its resources and trained personnel in a few regions, let alone to embark on so mammoth a construction program in the limited time allotted. For workers and functionaries on the spot, trying to cope with this bureaucratically induced chaos, the result was inevitably personal cynicism and disillusionment with the socialist ideals supposedly inspiring such projects.

3. Under the slogan of "radical standardization," the Stalinists instituted a return to "traditional Russian" modes of housing, i.e., the primitive wood log house of the peasant village, the very archetype of Russian backwardness. German architect Wilm Stein, writing from Moscow, described the abrupt turnabout in a 1931 article for *Bauwelt*:

"Everywhere the drums are now being beaten for the 'standard building'; the leap from the new revelation of 'socialist cities' to primitive little wood dwellings, for which plans and designs are being sent out in droves by the Office for Standardization, is being sweetened by the new advantages of the wooden house being discovered daily: 'The standard houses do not require any scarce materials such as iron and cement'; 'instead of 170 rubles per square meter in stone houses the square meter in wood houses costs only 80 rubles'; as further advantages of the standard wood house a savings in man hours for construction workers, the fact that engineers and technicians are not required, the short time of construction, the freeing of the rail system from the transport of building materials, etc., etc. are being mentioned."

Stein termed the decision to shift "from the socialist communal cities and their symphonies in steel, concrete and glass to simple peasant housing in wood" a "blow to communist theory"; this decision, he notes, "was made after a long dispute among the Communists—indeed, in the midst of this dispute—by a ukase of the Central Committee of the Party on 25 March [1931]."

4. The communal dwelling and with it the socialization of household labor were abandoned as "utopian." Thereby the full emancipation of women was deliberately postponed to an indefinite future (even as the Stalinist regime began to nibble away at women's full legal equality with restrictions on abortion and divorce

laws and with the glorification of "Soviet motherhood"). At the same time, ideological attacks were mounted on revolutionary architecture.

The pretentious, neo-classic facades erected from 1930 to 1950 were generally gigantic cover-ups—literally—of internal hollowness. Having catered to and promoted the backwardness of the working class, Stalin evidently felt compelled to buttress his authority and that of the usurpatory bureaucratic regime which he represented by resorting to the outward symbols of bourgeois power. Thus the airy lightness of early post-revolutionary architecture was replaced by a squat, oppressive style that seems a fitting tribute to the dead weight of the bureaucracy resting on the soil of "socialism in one country."

Post-War Soviet Architecture

Even apart from the havoc wreaked by World War II, Soviet housing and city design would have presented a picture bleak and dreary in the extreme. While great advances were made in housing the mass of the population and repairing the damage caused by the imperialist war, the economy remained distorted by bureaucratic usurpation of workers democracy and by generalized want. The housing that was built was either of the most drab, dull barracks type or the pretentiously tricked-out spun-sugar kitsch that appealed to the petty-bourgeoisified administrative hierarchy.

After Stalin's death, the bureaucracy as a whole realized that the current "socialist realist" style in architecture was making the Soviet Union a laughingstock throughout the world and promoting the notion of Russian backwardness, and a turn was carried out, announced by the results of the competition for the Hall of the Soviets inside the Kremlin walls—a structure that makes all the proper obeisances toward the same mid-20th-century steel and glass design which inspired New York's Lincoln Center.

It is not by chance that, despite their obvious advantages and greater rationality, communes have not been erected in the more than 50 years since the Stalinist take-over in Russia. This is simply a reflection of the fact that the oppressive nuclear family can never be

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Soviet Architecture...

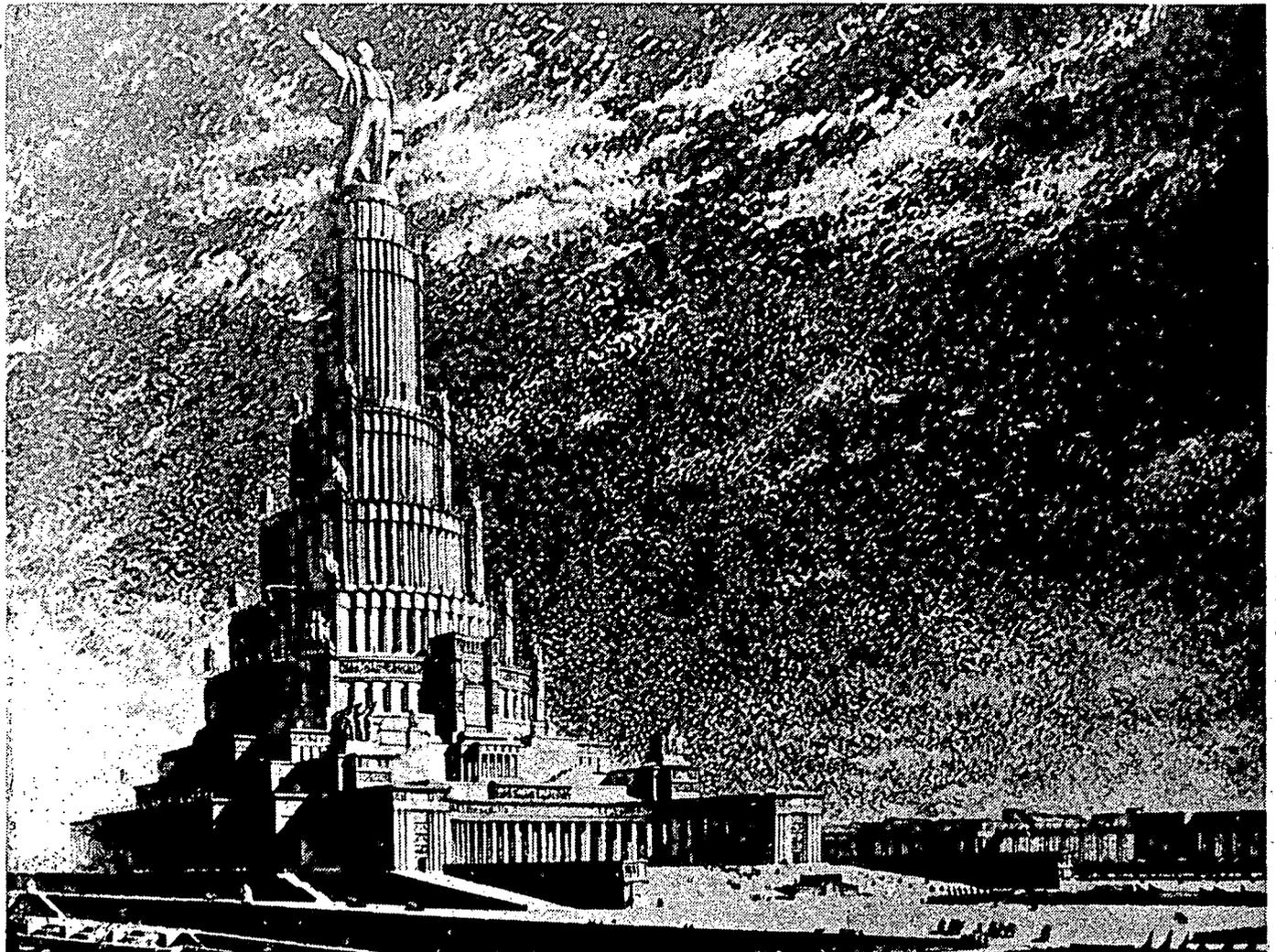
eliminated under the bureaucratic regimes of the deformed and degenerated workers states.

Nevertheless, present-day architectural planning and design constitute an exemplary instance of why Trotskyists couple unconditional defense of the gains of the October Revolution with a call for a *political* revolution that would preserve these gains while ousting the parasitic bureaucracy. Just what are these gains, then, in the field of architecture?

First, state ownership of the land, as the basis for rational city planning unhampered by the need to adjudicate the interests of hundreds of individual landholders (with whom under capitalism the "impartial" state administrators are bound by countless ties). Second, state ownership of the means of production and the planned economy, which make it possible to allocate resources on a nation-wide scale in accord with the needs of the population. While considering cost factors (as any society must do in deciding how to allocate its surplus in productive investment), Soviet planning is not based on profitability criteria but on the satisfaction of social needs on a rational, planned basis

(despite the manifest and fundamental perversion of this system by the bureaucracy).

Leninism is still social dynamite, both in and outside the deformed workers states. It, and the fragility of the bureaucracy as a parasitic caste not rooted in the proletarian property forms it ineffectively defends, account for the continued validity of Trotsky's evaluation of the bureaucracy as a historically ephemeral phenomenon—as a caste, not a new class. A working-class *political* revolution with the establishment of democratically elected soviets would, as in Hungary in 1956, bring about a swift dissolution of the bureaucracy, much of which—as the Hungarian example demonstrated—would probably go over to the side of the workers. While prophecies should in general be avoided, it seems safe to assert that as part of the overall activation of the hitherto atomized and passive population following the political revolution, communes embodying the ideals of a proletarian state governed by workers democracy would spring up, as was the case in the 1920's, but starting from an infinitely superior material base. Here, too, the liberation of women will be part of and a consequence of the self-liberation of the working class. ■



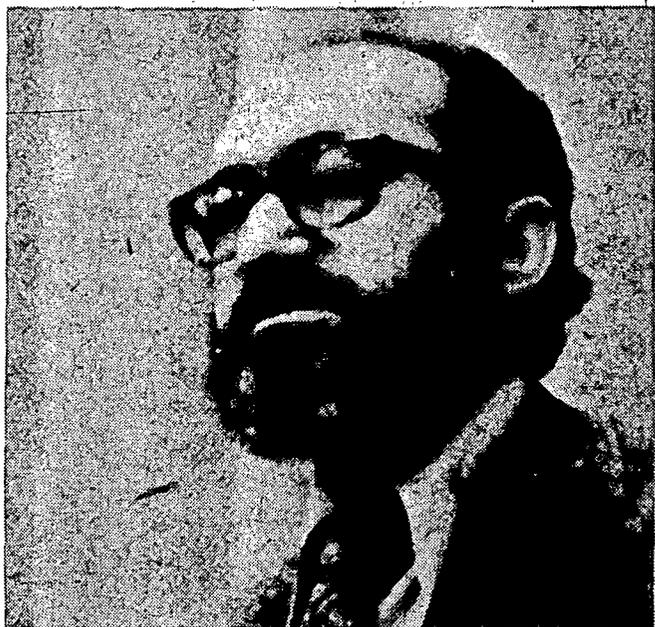
George Braziller

Winning entry in competition for Palace of the Soviets, 1932: Stalin's conception of the role and position of the leader vis-a-vis the masses.

Defend Dr. Henry Morgentaler!

On January 20 the Quebec Court of Appeal upheld the jury acquittal of Dr. Henry Morgentaler, charged, for the second time, with the "crime" of performing an abortion. Two days later a new trial was set on a prior charge for which Morgentaler was serving an 18-month jail sentence. The 52-year-old doctor had been acquitted of the first charge in November 1973 by a Quebec jury. The state took the unprecedented move of appealing the acquittal to a higher provincial court, the Court of Appeal, which overturned the jury's decision and convicted Morgentaler. This was upheld by the Supreme Court of Canada in March 1975.

Liberal uproar at the state's efforts to overturn the first acquittal, the subsequent acquittal on another charge and the many demonstrations and other publicity accorded the case led to the order for retrial.



Dr. Henry Morgentaler.

Labor Challenge

It is an outrage that the twice-acquitted doctor must go through the ordeal of another trial: Victim of a savage witchhunt in which his clinic was closed down and his medical license suspended, he has already had one heart attack since proceedings were begun against him. Morgentaler should never have been tried at all. Abortion is not a crime, but a right of every woman. Morgentaler must be freed unconditionally and his medical license returned! The reactionary law which led to his imprisonment must be wiped off the books and abortion made available without cost to all women, not just the rich. Free abortion on demand! Free quality health care for all!

Anti-abortion legislation is an important prop for the bourgeois family, an institution which operates both to retard the development of women by chaining them in isolation to "hearth and home" and to provide the capitalists with a permanent reserve of unemployed

labor with which to keep down labor costs and divide the workforce.

In spite of the openly reactionary nature of anti-abortion legislation, the reformist League for Socialist Action (LSA) (Canadian "co-thinkers" of the Socialist Workers Party in the U.S.) has until recently adamantly refused to link the Morgentaler case with demands aimed at smashing the anti-abortion laws. Now, giving in to popular pressure, the LSA has finally been emboldened to call for the abolition of these laws; however, in line with its painful step-at-a-time tailing of where it perceives "people are at," it refuses to call for free abortion on demand—the only demand which would really make abortion accessible to all women—and at no time attempts to link this issue to the larger questions of women's oppression within capitalist society.

Both these fakers and their cohabitants in the pseudo-Trotskyist United Secretariat, the Canadian Revolutionary Marxist Group (RMG), choose to tail the "women's movement" which is seen as a revolutionary force in its own right and thus a substitute for a women's section of a revolutionary party which would link women to workers struggles through the most conscious cadres of the workers movement.

Communists must agitate for free abortion on demand by competent medical personnel, for the massive dispensation of safe and effective contraception and against forced sterilization. We also demand extensive maternity benefits—paid maternity (and paternity) leave before and after childbirth, free quality health care for all and free 24-hour child care. We must fight for abortion-law repeal, recognizing that under capitalism reforms are always reversible. Only in a society transformed by socialist revolution can fundamental gains for women be won, consolidated and extended. ■

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Women and Revolution



March 8, 1976





International Women's Day



Women and Revolution celebrates the militant role of women in the history of the class struggle. Forward to women's liberation through socialism!



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Early Communist Work Among Women: The Bolsheviks

Few people today, even among those who take a special interest in the history of women, have ever heard of the Russian League of Equal Rights for

Part 2

Women. Yet in the days following the February revolution it was this organization, a branch of Carrie Chapman Catt's International Suffrage Alliance, to which feminists in Russia and around the world looked for leadership in the struggle for women's liberation.

From its headquarters at 20 Znamenskaia Street in Petrograd the League waged an ardent struggle for women's rights—principally suffrage—through rallies, leaflets, newspaper articles and earnest petitions such as the following:

"Defending the interests of women and maintaining that the realization of peace among the people will be incomplete without the full equality of women and men, the Russian League of Equal Rights for Women appeals to all women of all professions and calls upon them to join the League in order to quickly realize in practice the great idea of complete equality of the sexes before the law.

"In Unity there is Strength."

—*Den*, 9 March 1917

On 15 April 1917 the League witnessed the realization of its long-sought goal as the Provisional Government granted all women over the age of 20 the right to participate in Duma elections. Over the next four months additional legislation enabled women to practice law, elect delegates to the forthcoming Constituent Assembly, run for election themselves, hold government posts and vote in all provincial and municipal elections. Social Revolutionary leader Catherine Breshkovskaia (later to be dubbed by Trotsky the "Godmother of the Russian Counterrevolution") wrote in exultation to the National American Woman Suffrage Association:

"I am happy to say that the 'Women's Journal' can be sure we Russian women have already the rights (over all our country) belonging to all citizens, and the elections which are taking place now, over all our provinces, are performed together by men and women. Neither our government nor our people have a word to say against the woman suffrage."

—Catherine Breshkovskaia, letter to the National American Woman Suffrage Association, 20 May 1917

It is notable, then, that the victorious Russian League has been relegated to historical near-oblivion, while the Bolshevik party is universally acknowledged—even by staunch anti-communists—as the instrument by means of which Russian women achieved an unparalleled degree of social equality. And this is as it should be, for in fact the League's paper victory had virtually no practical significance for the masses of Russian

women. Not only did the new equal rights statutes leave untouched the most urgent problems of daily life—such as widespread starvation—but such reforms as were guaranteed were implemented, as in the West, in a purely tokenistic fashion. American newspaper reporter Bessie Beatty, who attended a Provisional Government political convention in Petrograd during this period, noted that of the 1,600 delegates in attendance only 23 were women. Not that women were absent from the proceedings; far from it. Numerous women served tea, caviar and sandwiches, ushered men to their seats, took stenographic notes and counted ballots. "It was so natural," said Beatty, "that it almost made me homesick."

Bolshevik Pledge: Full Social Equality for Women

Lenin had pledged that "the first dictatorship of the proletariat will be the pioneer in full social equality for women. It will radically destroy more prejudices than volumes of women's rights." With the Soviet seizure of state power and in the very teeth of the bitter struggle against counterrevolution and imperialist intervention the Bolsheviks proved their determination to honor this pledge.

The very first pieces of legislation enacted by the new Soviet government were directed at the emancipation of women in a way which far exceeded the reformist demands of the suffragists. The aim of this legislation was the replacement of the nuclear family as a social/economic unit through the socialization of household labor and the equalization of educational and vocational opportunities. These two goals were key to the undermining of the capitalist social order and to the construction of the new society.

In December 1917 illegitimacy was abolished in law, making fathers, whether married or not, co-responsible for their children and freeing mothers from the burden of a double standard which had punished them for the consequences of shared "mistakes." Subsequent legislation declared marriage to be a contract between free and equal individuals which could be dissolved at the request of either partner, established hundreds of institutions devoted to the care of mothers and children, legalized abortions, assured equal pay for equal work and opened up unheard of opportunities for women in industry, the professions, the party and government. And this legislation was backed by government action. Thus when Soviet working women, like working women in other countries, began to lose their jobs to soldiers returning from the front, the Petrograd Council of Trade Unions addressed the following appeal to all workers and factory committees:

"The question of how to combat unemployment has



Workers and
activists of the
Tversk
Regional
Zhenotdel
(1922).

Gosudarstvennoe Izdatel'stvo Politicheskoi Literaturi

come sharply before the unions. In many factories and shops the question is being solved very simply... fire the women and put men in their places. With the transfer of power to the Soviets, the working class is given a chance to reorganize our national economy on a new basis. Does such action correspond with this new basis?... The only effective measure against unemployment is the restoration of the productive powers of the country, reorganization on a socialist basis. During the time of crisis, with the cutting down of workers in factories and shops, we must approach the question of dismissal with the greatest care. We must decide each case individually. There can be no question of whether the worker is a man or a woman, but simply of the degree of need.... Only such an attitude will make it possible for us to retain women in our organization, and prevent a split in the army of workers...."

—Petrograd Council of Trade Unions, April 1918,
quoted in Jessica Smith, *Women in Soviet Russia*.

This petition was supported by other unions and government organizations, and mass dismissals of women from Soviet industry were in fact checked. Three years later, during another period of widespread layoffs, the government issued a decree providing that in cases where male and female workers were equally qualified they were to be given equal consideration in retaining their jobs, with the exception that single women with children under one year of age were to be given preference. In the event that such women had to be laid off, their children had the right to continue to attend the factory nursery or kindergarten. It was further stipulated that neither pregnancy nor the fact that a woman was nursing a baby could serve as cause for dismissal, nor was it permitted to dismiss a woman

worker during a leave of absence for childbirth.

Surveying the Soviet government's work among women during its first two years Lenin was able to conclude that:

"A complete Revolution in the legislation affecting women was brought about by the government of the workers in the first months of its existence. The Soviet government has not left a stone unturned of those laws which held women in complete subjection. I speak particularly of the laws which took advantage of the weaker position of woman, leaving her in an unequal and often even degrading position—that is, the laws on divorce and children born out of wedlock, and the right of women to sue the father for the support of the child.... And we may now say with pride and without any exaggeration that outside of Soviet Russia there is not a country in the world where women have been given full equal rights, where women are not in a humiliating position which is felt especially in everyday family life. This was one of our first and most important tasks....

"Certainly laws alone are not enough, and we will not for a minute be satisfied just with decrees. But in the legal field we have done everything required to put women on an equal basis with men, and we have a right to be proud of that. The legal position of women in Soviet Russia is ideal from the point of view of the foremost countries. But we tell ourselves plainly that this is only the beginning."

—V.I. Lenin, quoted in Jessica Smith, *Women in Soviet Russia*

Zhenotdel

The transition was not an easy one for women (or for men), particularly in rural areas and in the Muslim East.
continued on next page

Bolshevik Work...

Appreciating the difficulties which women had to overcome in breaking from reactionary traditions, the Central Committee of the Bolshevik party, although it was caught up in the turmoil of civil war, gave additional impetus to its work among women by calling for an All-Russian Conference of Working Women and Peasant Women to take place in Moscow in November 1918. This conference was preceded by the establishment of a bureau of convocation which sent agitators throughout the country, including frontline regions, to inform women about the forthcoming conference and to facilitate the election of delegates. Given the desperate conditions which prevailed, it was estimated that approximately 300 delegates would attend, but at the opening of the first session on November 16, 1,147 women delegates were seated.

Conference discussions addressed a variety of questions, including the problems of working women in Soviet Russia, the family, welfare, the role of women in the international revolution, organizational problems, the struggle against prostitution in Soviet Russia, the struggle against child labor and the housing question.

While affirming in principle that the struggle for communism and women's emancipation could succeed only through the united struggle of all sections of the working class and peasantry, and not through the building of an autonomous women's movement, the delegates also noted that women were often the least conscious elements in these sections and the most in need of special attention. In the light of this approach to special work among women, which had been developed by the German Social Democratic Party and carried forward by the Bolsheviks in the pre-revolutionary period, delegates to the conference affirmed the proposal by Bolshevik leaders Inessa Armand and Konkordiia Samoiloiva that the conference

appeal to the party "to organize from among the most active working women of the party special groups for propaganda and agitation among women in order to put the idea of communism into practice." The Bolsheviks' response was the creation of a Central Committee commission headed by Armand for work among women. It was succeeded the following year by the Department of Working Women and Peasant Women—*Zhenotdel*.

Zhenotdel was to become a major vehicle for the recruitment of women to the Bolshevik party, but its primary purpose was not recruitment but the instruction of non-party women in the utilization of their newly-won rights, the deepening of their political awareness and the winning of their cooperation for the construction of the proletarian state.

While special work among women was carried out by many agencies, *Zhenotdel* was unique in that it offered women practical political experience. In annual elections women chose their delegates—one for every ten working women or for every hundred peasant women or housewives. These delegates attended classes in reading and writing, government, women's rights and social welfare, and they took part in the organization of conferences, meetings and interviews designed to arouse the interest of their constituents and draw them into political activity. They were entitled to representation on the Central Committee of the Bolshevik party, and those who were elected to represent *Zhenotdel* pursued a special program of political education which included reviewing the reports of district committees, co-ops, trade unions and factory directors. Some *Zhenotdel* delegates became full-time paid functionaries in government institutions or trade unions where they participated directly in the administration of the government.

Zhenotdel carried out extensive propaganda campaigns through its publications. By 1921, it was publishing a special page devoted to women in 74 weekly newspapers. In addition, it published its own weekly bulletin and the monthly journal *Kommunistka* (*The Communist Woman*), which had a circulation of 30,000. In addition, *Zhenotdel's* literary commission supervised the publication of leaflets and pamphlets dealing with party work among women—over 400,000 pieces of literature during the first six months of 1921 alone.

Finding themselves confronted at every step by the enormous barrier of illiteracy among women, *Zhenotdel* delegates threw themselves into the work of organizing over 25,000 literacy schools in which they themselves were often the majority of the students. They also set up co-operative workshops for women, organized women who had been laid off from factories and established orphanages and colonies for homeless children.

Within a few years *Zhenotdel* had succeeded in creating out of the most backward sector of the working class and peasantry an organized, active, politically conscious stratum of women citizens devoted to the Soviet republic. Of these astonishing women delegates, the Russian poet Mayakovsky wrote:

WORKERS VANGUARD

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The First All-Russian Conference of Working Women and Peasant Women meets in the Hall of Columns, Moscow (16 November 1918).

Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo Politicheskoi Literaturi

"They come
From the machines
From the land and washtubs
Under red kerchiefs
Tucking in the strands,
Hundreds of thousands
Of women-delegates
Chosen
To build and govern."

—Quoted in V. Lebedeva, "Zabota o materiakh i detiakh," in A. Artiukhina et al. (eds.), *Zhen'shchina v revoliutsii*

Women Rally to Soviet State

While the Soviet regime had its detractors, even among working women in the major cities, all evidence indicates that the great majority of working women, for whom there could be no going back to the life they had known under the old regime, remained loyal to the government through famine, epidemic and Civil War. Wearing red head bands, women marched through the streets of Petrograd, during its darkest days, singing that although typhus and counterrevolution were everywhere, the world revolution was bound to save them. One woman who spoke for many wrote:

"I am the wife of a Petrograd worker. Earlier I was in no way useful to the working class. I could not work.

"I sat at home, suffocating in the cellar and preparing dinner from garbage which the bourgeoisie had not found fit to eat.

"When working class rule began, I heard the call for us

ourselves to rule and build our lives. Well, I thought, how can the generals and their daughters have yielded their places to us? I began to listen....

"They chose me for a Kalachinska District conference. I learned a great deal there. A literacy instructor was assigned to me....

"If life is difficult for us now, all of us will bear it and not one will give the bourgeoisie reason to celebrate that they can again keep all the people in chains. We may suffer for a while, but to our children we will leave an inheritance which neither moth will eat nor rust will corrode. And we shall all support strong soviet rule and the Communist Party."

—V. Tsurik, *Bednota*

But the clearest indication of support for the Soviet government was the enthusiasm with which women took up arms against the counterrevolution. Soviet women were members of Red Guard units from the first days of the October Revolution, and they fought side by side with men on every front during the Civil War. Like women in bourgeois countries, they initially volunteered as nurses, with the difference—as Alexandra Kollontai points out—that they regarded the soldiers not merely as "our poor soldier boys," but as comrades in struggle. Soon, however, they became scouts, engineers of armored trains, cavalry soldiers, communications specialists, machine-gunners and guerrillas. They also took the initiative in forming "stopping detachments," which captured deserters and persuaded them, whenever possible, to return to

continued on next page



Students in leadership training course (1922). In the center is N. K. Krupskaya.

Gosudarstvennoe Izdatel'stvo Politicheskoi Literaturi

Bolshevik Work...

their positions. Lenin praised these detachments, saying: "Smash the traitors ruthlessly and put them to shame. Eighty thousand women—this is no trifling military force. Be steadfast in the revolutionary struggle."

When the fighting ended, an estimated 1,854 women soldiers had been killed or wounded and many more taken prisoner. Sixty-three women were awarded the Order of the Red Banner for military heroism.

The Work Goes Forward

By 1921 it appeared as if a wholly new type of woman was about to make her appearance in Soviet Russia. According to Alexandra Kollontai's personal ideal, this woman would be self-supporting and would live alone; she would take part in social and political work and would engage freely in sexual love; her meals would be eaten in a communal restaurant; her children would be happy in a state nursery; and her home would be cleaned, her laundry done and her clothes mended by state workers. Other communists cherished other visions of the fully emancipated socialist woman, but for all of them the future was full of promise—so much had been accomplished already.

It was too early to know that just ahead lay bitter defeats for Soviet women, for the Soviet working class as a whole and for the international proletarian revolution. The bureaucratic degeneration of the Soviet state, which arose in the first instance out of the backwardness, isolation and poverty of post-

revolutionary Russia and out of the failure of proletarian revolutions in the technologically advanced countries of Western Europe, constitutes another chapter. The privileged, conservative bureaucratic caste which emerged out of these conditions reversed at will many of the gains which women had achieved through the Revolution: abortion was illegalized; the women's section of the party was liquidated; coeducation was abolished; divorce was made less accessible; and women were once again encouraged to assume their "natural" tasks of domestic labor and child rearing within the confines of the oppressive family.

But despite these defeats, the lessons of Bolshevik work among women have not been lost to succeeding generations of revolutionists, and the work goes forward. Just as Kollontai pointed out to Bessie Beatty during the first flush of the Soviet victory: "Even if we are conquered, we have done great things. We are breaking the way..." ■

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Reactionary Backlash Targets Women's Rights

Although a handful of anti-women's liberation groups existed at the height of the women's "movement" of the late sixties and early seventies, it is only lately that a genuinely widespread anti-woman backlash has reared its ugly head.

Backlash sentiment has animated (thus far successfully) the recent attempts to block the ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) and the renewed efforts of "right-to-lifers" to deny women access to abortion and birth control. It is also behind the publication of a number of anti-woman books and articles, many of them peddling the fantasy that women who devote themselves utterly to husbands and housework will be rewarded with love, self-fulfillment, financial security and sexual ecstasy.

The "Total Woman": Kinder, Küche, Kirche

The best known of these tracts is *The Total Woman* by Marabel Morgan, the wife of a wealthy Ft. Lauderdale attorney. Its notoriety, attested to by a long stint on the best-seller list, has been due, at least in part, to a lengthy article in the *New York Times Magazine* (28 September 1975) written by Joyce Maynard, the *Times'* self-proclaimed spokesman for post-radical youth. A sneering, unserious comment, the article ridicules the fears and anxieties of women trapped and isolated in their separate homes, unable or forbidden to work, burdened with the total responsibility for housework and childrearing and vulnerable to religious and other reactionary propaganda.

But this book cannot be so easily dismissed. The decaying capitalist system is now suffering its worst economic downturn since the 1930's, and the resulting massive unemployment, together with the slashing of what meager social services have existed in the areas of daycare and government-sponsored job-training programs, have forced thousands of women—traditionally the last hired and first fired—out of their jobs and back into the home.

Books such as *The Total Woman* have a part to play in this process; they deliver a sugar-coated rationalization for the continued oppression of women within the family which—by creating a conservative, repressive atmosphere where bourgeois values and respect for authority are instilled in the youth and women are isolated from the process of production and the political struggles of the working class—serves as a supporting pillar of bourgeois class rule. By asserting that each woman can solve her own problems—which are assumed to be purely personal—through positive thinking and prayer, the book reinforces the myth—so convenient to the ruling class—that women need not look beyond their homes and churches for solutions to

the difficulties which confront them.

Two-thirds of *The Total Woman* deals with sex. This preoccupation, which certainly would have been absent from a similar book written 20 years ago, is a distorted reflection of the so-called "sexual revolution"—a revolution which must somehow be confined within the marriage bed of the nuclear family. The "total woman" must be not only a thrifty housewife and a good mother, but also an accomplished, aggressive, tantalizing lover; lest her husband waltz out the door with a woman who is.

Because it is conceded that mindless domestic tasks can leave a housewife exhausted, irritable and sexually "unavailable" by the end of the day, Morgan advises women to conduct time-study plans of their work day and create master lists. As they check off each unpleasant, menial job, they should feel a sense of accomplishment; and if that doesn't work, Morgan counsels them to pray over their lists, which, she says, may add "an exciting, new dimension" to life. For those women who feel skeptical or embarrassed by advice to "thrill him at the front door" and to be "mentally and physically prepared for sexual intercourse every night," Morgan reassures that sex within marriage is "as clean and pure as eating cottage cheese."

The slogan "Kinder, Küche, Kirche" (children, kitchen, church) defined the spheres of activity for women under the German Third Reich; *The Total Woman* is an updated version of the same reactionary position. Morgan's "principles"—really nothing more than a series of gimmicks—boil down to absolute submission of the wife to her husband, total sexual availability and faith in the "divine power source." This last point is important, for the backward social attitudes expressed with regard to marriage, divorce, childbearing, pre-marital sex, homosexuality and sex-role stereotypes are essentially identical to the tenets of Protestant fundamentalism, and in fact "Total Woman" courses are taught largely under the auspices of the Baptist Church.

"Sisters" in the Service of Social Reaction

One of the reasons it is important for communists to undertake special political work among women is that unless women, whose vision is often bounded by the walls of the home, are drawn to take part in the proletarian struggle, they become susceptible to right-wing forces. Thus, in Chile, under the "Marxist" regime of Salvador Allende, masses of housewives were mobilized by right-wing forces for anti-government demonstrations. Capitalist enterprises count on the wives of striking workers to pressure their husbands to return to work, and play on their fears for the family

continued on next page



40,000 "right-to-lifers" in Washington D.C. demonstration (January 1976).

Wide World Photos

Reactionary Backlash...

livelihood. In early 1975, the wives of striking British auto workers picketed their husbands' picket lines, demanding that they return to work.

It is not surprising, therefore—feminist claptrap notwithstanding—that the anti-woman *The Total Woman* was written by "sister" Marabel Morgan and that campaigns against the ERA and the right to abortion are also led and supported by women in the service of social reaction.

Moreover, those women who are the most vocal champions of women's "special status" in the home are likely to be the same ones who oppose the Equal Rights Amendment, support the "right-to-life" movement, campaign for conservative politicians and hurl epithets (or rocks) at black children attempting to integrate white schools. What unites them is their terror of and hostility toward anything which they perceive as threatening their tiny domain—the family.

Thus Annette Stern, a suburban Westchester, New York housewife, decided to organize "Women United To Defend Existing Rights" after hearing Betty Friedan say that women should be freed from home and child care. She later told the *New York Times* (18 September 1975) that the ERA could destroy the family which is "under attack in America and that the ERA could be the turning point on whether family life, as we know it, will survive."—Indeed, one anti-ERA flyer pictures the amendment as a shark (à la "Jaws"), surfacing in the direction of a hapless American family, while another

warns that if you let women out of the house, before you know it you've got "homosexuality, abortion and disrespect for family and religion."

Recently, Stern's organization has banded together with the DAR, American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars, Catholic Daughters of America and the Conservative Party under an umbrella organization called Operation Wake-Up, which claims 100,000 members. Its name alone evoking memories of cold-war McCarthyism, the organization brings together rabidly anti-communist, anti-labor and pro-imperialist formations, along with the medievalist Catholic Church.

Setbacks for ERA

The defeat of the state ERA in New York and New Jersey—two states which were among the earliest to ratify the federal amendment—must be understood in the context of the current rightward political swing, a result of the American population's frustration over a worsening economic situation and widespread distrust of bourgeois politicians and liberal solutions.

The ERA, a simple statement of formal equality between men and women under the law, is an entirely supportable bourgeois reform (see "Why We Support the ERA," *Women and Revolution* No. 4, Fall 1973). That this amendment has been so passionately contested is a measure of an increasingly hard-line polarization on social issues.

Adversaries of the amendment have been greatly strengthened by the defeats in New York and New Jersey, which, according to the *New York Times* (5 November 1975), "will undoubtedly be read as a sign

that the national mood has turned against the idea." Foremost among these adversaries is Phyllis Schlafly, publisher of "The Phyllis Schlafly Report." A September 1975 sales pitch for the report begins:

"Dear Conservative Friend:
"The PHYLLIS SCHLAFLY REPORT is the reason why the Equal Rights Amendment was not ratified during 1975...."

And, indeed, Schlafly has been tireless in her efforts to stop ratification of the amendment: saturating the country with dishonest, scare-mongering leaflets warning that passage of the ERA will lead to sexually integrated public toilet facilities, the loss of protective legislation for women in industry and compulsory military conscription for all.

Recently, Schlafly has launched the Eagle Forum for God, Home & Country, a proto-fascist formation

which, as a descriptive brochure spells out, is dedicated to the defense of Christianity, bourgeois morality, Yankee imperialism and the nuclear family:

"WE SUPPORT THE FAMILY...
"WE SUPPORT THE FAMILY AS THE BASIC UNIT OF SOCIETY, WITH CERTAIN RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES, INCLUDING:

1. The responsibility of the parents (not the government) for the care of pre-school children.
2. The right of parents to insist that the schools:
 - a) permit voluntary prayer,
 - b) teach the 'fourth R' (right and wrong) according to the precepts of Holy Scriptures,
 - c) use textbooks that do not offend the religious and moral values of the parents,
 - d) use textbooks that honor the family, monogamous marriage, woman's role as wife and mother, and

continued on next page

International Women's Day Forums

AMHERST

Which Way to Women's Liberation?

D. L. REISSNER

Editor, *Women & Revolution*

SL Women's Commission

March 10 at 7:30 p.m.

U. Mass. at Amherst

ANN ARBOR

Women, Class and Culture

HELEN CANTOR

SL Central Committee

March 4 at 7:30 p.m.

Michigan University

General Assembly Room

BERKELEY

Women in Struggle

SHEILA DELANEY

March 13 at 7:30 p.m.

Unitas House

2700 Bancroft Way

CHILD CARE AVAILABLE

Not Sponsored by Unitas House

BOSTON

Which Way to Women's Liberation?

D. L. REISSNER

Editor, *Women & Revolution*

SL Women's Commission

March 8 at 7:30 p.m.

Harvard U/305 Emerson

CHICAGO

Women and the Colonial Revolution

Janis Gerard

March 10 at 8 p.m.

Place to Be Announced

CLEVELAND

Marxism vs. Feminism—Which Road for Women's Liberation?

March 6 at 8 p.m.

303 Thwing Hall

Case Western Reserve U.

DETROIT

Women, Class and Culture

HELEN CANTOR

SL Central Committee

March 4 at 1 p.m.

Wayne State University

261 Student Center Building

LOS ANGELES

Women in Struggle

SHEILA DELANEY

March 4 at 8 p.m.

The Haymarket

715 South Parkview

MADISON

Women and the Colonial Revolution

JANIS GERARD

March 14 at 7:30 p.m.

U. Wisc./Memorial Union

NEW YORK

Which Way to Women's Liberation?

KAY BLANCHARD

SL Women's Commission

Editorial Board

Women & Revolution

March 6 at 7:30 p.m.

Columbia University

Ferris Booth Hall

Schiff Room (216)

PHILADELPHIA

Which Way to Women's Liberation?

D. L. REISSNER

Editor, *Women and Revolution*

SL Women's Commission

March 17 at 11 a.m.

Room 309

Student Activities Center

Temple University

SAN FRANCISCO

Women in Struggle

SHEILA DELANEY

March 6 at 7 p.m.

Buchanan YMCA

1530 Buchanan at Geary

CHILD CARE AVAILABLE

STONY BROOK

Which Way to Women's Liberation?

KAY BLANCHARD

SL Women's Commission

Editorial Board,

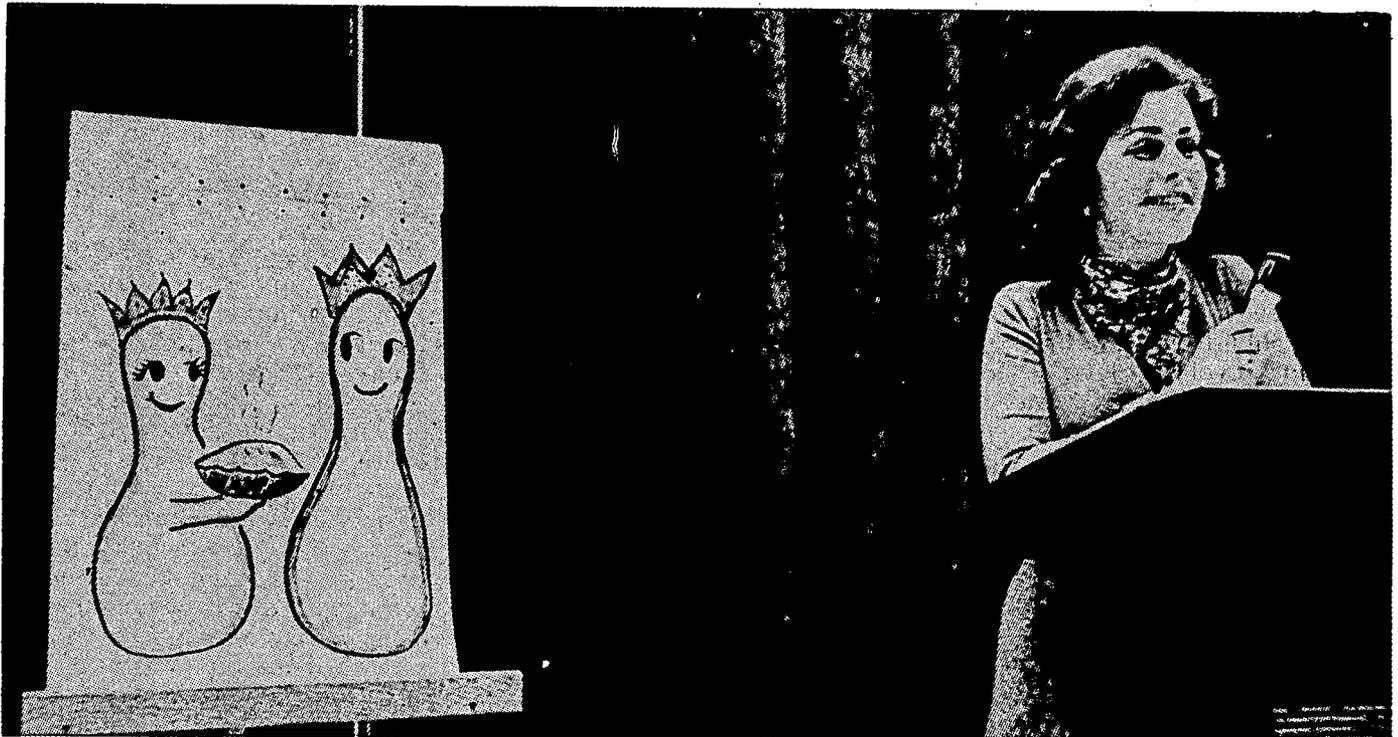
Women & Revolution

State University of New York

at Stony Brook

Time and Place to Be

Announced



Total Woman seminars teach total subservience and self-deprecation.

New York Times/Jill Freedman

Reactionary Backlash...

- e) man's role as provider and protector;
 - e) teach basic educational skills such as reading and arithmetic before time and money are spent on frills,
 - f) permit children to attend school in their own neighborhood,
 - g) separate the sexes for sex education, gym classes, athletic practice and competition, and academic and vocational classes, if so desired.
3. The right of employers to give job preference to a wage-earner supporting a family.
 4. The right to defend the institution of the family by according certain rights to husbands and wives that are not given to those choosing different lifestyles."

Anti-Abortion Campaign

This past year has also been a period of renewed agitation against women's democratic right to abortion and birth control by "right-to-life" committees, largely controlled by (but by no means limited to) the Catholic right wing. Like the ERA, abortion is an issue which has served as a rallying point for reactionary forces in defense of the family and against "the breakdown of moral standards" (see "Anti-Abortion Laws: Weapon of Church and State," *Women and Revolution* No. 9, Summer 1975).

The right to abortion and birth control is so threatening to the Catholic Church that in San Diego, Bishop Leo Maher singled out the Democratic Party-dominated, petty-bourgeois National Organization of Women (NOW) for "slandering agitation for abortion" and called for the denial of communion to those Catholic members who refused to renounce NOW's pro-abortion position. Always in the forefront of the

fight against medievalism and obscurantism, the San Diego NOW chapter responded by holding a bell, book and candle ceremony at a local church to protest this denial of church sacraments.

The "pro-lifers" are intensifying their efforts now because it is an election year, and the abortion question will be a hotly-debated issue in the approaching campaigns. Despite Betty Ford's pronouncement on the television show "60 Minutes" that the 1973 Supreme Court decision legalizing abortion on request during the first 28 weeks of pregnancy was "the best thing in the world... a great, great decision," her husband's opinion that the Supreme Court went too far and that abortion should be resorted to only to save the life of the mother appears likely to carry considerably more weight among bourgeois politicians fearful of a "slaughter of the innocents" label from the "pro-lifers."

Presidential candidate Birch Bayh is skipping primaries in Illinois and Wisconsin where abortion is a major issue. At a recent press conference he admitted that abortion is the most difficult issue he has to face. Liberal Democratic hopeful Sargent Shriver grudgingly supports the 1973 Supreme Court decision, but would rather develop a "national system of life support clusters" where a woman with an unwanted pregnancy could make a choice. However, in racist American society, the only choice likely to be offered to impoverished black and minority women is the choice frequently offered them now—sterilization or the loss of welfare benefits.

No Liberation Under Capitalism

While the current backlash must be strenuously opposed and such reforms as the Equal Rights

Letter

Austin, Texas
5 December 1975

Women and Revolution

To the editor:

While disagreeing fundamentally with the Leninist perspective of your group, I have still found many articles published in your journal to be informative and thought-provoking. However, the article in issue no. 10 purporting to "unmask" Emma Goldman is so far below your usual standards of both political honesty and good journalism as to demand a reply.

The title of the piece labeling Goldman an "Anarchist Fraud" is outrageous and itself fraudulent. A fraud is one who is deceitful or faithless. Nowhere does your author attempt to prove this....

Continuing in the same style, the author describes Goldman's experience in the Soviet Union so as to place her "in the ranks of the counterrevolution (sic)", without once touching on her reasons for opposing the Bolshevik Party, *not* the Russian Revolution, which appear to be identical in the mind of your author. Goldman and Berkman did in fact, as you admit, lend critical support to the Lenin Government so long as they felt it could possibly promote the interests of the workers, support lent not from "afar" but *in Russia*. Her determined opposition to that regime did not "climax" with the Kronstadt Revolt but originated with it.... But your article merely cites the "mutiny" (a White Guard plot?) and avoids any need to defend the "iron discipline" and police terrorism imposed on the most advanced sectors of the working class (railways, Petrograd metal industry, Kronstadt) by the government over the objections of many of the proletarian rank-and-file of the Bolshevik Party itself.... To characterize Goldman's attacks on Lenin as "even more fanatical than those of extreme reactionaries" is absurd. Her criticisms were not "hysteria" but her experience in Russia as seen from the perspective of the interna-

tional anarchist labor movement....

The only solid political criticism comes in the denunciation of the FAI's entry into the Republican government during the Spanish Civil War....

Emma Goldman was not necessarily responsible for the actions of her Spanish comrades.

It's unfortunate that the author could not resist the temptation of dragging out the great bogey of Anarchism—organization. While the article claims Goldman suffered from "her hostility to *all forms* of political organization, and her failure to recognize the primacy of the class struggle," it is interesting to note that she was a delegate to the 1907 Congress of the International Workingmen's Association (anarchist)....

Clearly anything other than your own version of Trotskyism is regarded by your author as failure to recognize the class struggle and therefore not revolutionary. This is a matter of opinion subject to rational argument. However, the declaration that Goldman "block(ed) with the forces of vicious White terror against the only proletarian revolution in history" is a lie. I sincerely hope you see fit to either make a suitable retraction or at least print the relevant points in this letter and rebut them. Save your invective for contemporaries who can at least reply in kind.

for socialism and self-management,
Jesse McCoy

W&R replies: Since there is no "suitable" retraction of the truth, we have complied with your *second-choice* request to "at least print the relevant points in this letter," and we shall deal with these numerous points in roughly the order in which they are raised:

You begin by objecting to our labeling of Goldman as a fraud, protesting that she was sincere in her political convictions. We have no reason to doubt it. Many
continued on next page

Amendment, free abortion on demand and busing supported, it must also be understood that women will never achieve genuine emancipation in a society which depends for its survival upon the oppressive institution of the family. The absolute precondition for women's liberation is the replacement of the family as an economic unit by the socialization of household labor in a workers state. The proletarian revolution which alone can make this precondition a reality requires the active participation of masses of women.

How will these women be won to the necessity for class struggle? Certainly not by mindless exhortations to "fight back" and for "sisters unite" (in the manner of the reformists of the Stalinist/Maoist organizations or of the Socialist Workers Party). The capitulation of these reformists to the present backward consciousness of the working class over such issues as abortion, homosexuality and the defense of the family—whether

as opportunistic efforts to be at one with the class or as apologies for the anti-Marxist glorification of the family in the Soviet Union, China or other deformed workers states—ensures the postponement of revolutionary class struggle and the continuing victimization and exploitation of women under capitalism.

Working-class women will be won to the program which addresses their immediate needs—decent housing, health care, child care, job opportunities, equality, freedom from household drudgery—and fights for those reforms which will provide even a partial solution; while at the same time demonstrating that *only* a workers state can adequately provide for these needs and putting forward a winning strategy for the creation of such a state. This transitional program is the program of Trotsky and the Spartacist League. Armed with it, masses of women will take up positions in the front lines of the class struggle. ■

Letter...

people are sincere in their political convictions—the pacifist Leo Tolstoy, for example, or the Left SR leader Maria Spiridonova—but for communists (materialists) sincerity is not the only issue, or even the most important issue, to consider in assessing the contribution of someone who claims to offer a *revolutionary* program. Goldman made such a claim, and *this claim was fraudulent!* To the extent that people believed in her and put confidence in the utopian anarchist program which she expounded they were, *in fact*, whether by design or by simple incapacity on her part, misled, defrauded.

It is unfortunate that through the feminist resurrection of the “Red Emma” myth still more potential revolutionists will be persuaded to drink the anarchist potion of romantic idealism and self-imposed impotence from a bottle mislabeled “revolution.”

Several of the next points raised deal with Goldman’s “support” for the Bolshevik Party/Russian Revolution (yes, during the early years of the Soviet workers state the party and the revolution were inseparable). First, you insist that Goldman’s support to the revolution was lent “not from ‘afar’ but *in Russia*.” Yet it is an undisputed fact that Goldman was in the United States (as “afar” as it is possible to be) until two years after the revolution, at which time she was deported to Russia along with hundreds of others by Attorney-General Mitchell Palmer.

Next, you claim that Goldman’s opposition to the Bolshevik regime *originated* with the Kronstadt mutiny, yet a year before this event she had written: “Its [the revolution’s] manifestations were so completely at variance with what I had conceived and propagated as revolution that I did not know anymore which was right. My old values had been shipwrecked....” And to a request that she send a message to the workers abroad (still prior to the Kronstadt incident) she replied:

“May they emulate the spirit of their Russian brothers in the coming revolution, but not their naive faith in political leaders, no matter how fervent their protestations and how red their slogans! That alone can safeguard future revolutions from being harnessed to the State and enslaved again by its bureaucratic whip.”

—Goldman, *Living my Life*

And what of the Kronstadt mutiny itself, so dear to the hearts of anarchist mythologists? You are outraged by the very word: (“‘mutiny’ [a White Guard plot?]”). No, it was not a White Guard plot but a rebellion of the backward peasantry (the heroic Kronstadt sailors of earlier years had been completely withdrawn from the area to fight at the fronts) for special privileges and against revolutionary discipline. Nevertheless, every reactionary element in Russia and abroad immediately seized upon the incident as a pretext for attacking the Soviet Union, and White emigres demanded aid for the insurrectionists. And these are the forces with which Goldman politically allied herself; “blocked” with, if you will.

Seventeen years later the issue was raised again. This time the anarchists blocked with the Menshevik emigres and ex-Kadet leader Paul Miliukov. “How can

the Kronstadt uprising cause such heartburn to anarchists, Mensheviks, and ‘liberal’ counter-revolutionists, all at the same time,” asked Trotsky.

“The answer is simple: all these groupings are interested in compromising the only genuinely revolutionary current which has never repudiated its banner, has not compromised with its enemies; and which alone represents the future. It is because of this that among the belated denouncers of my Kronstadt ‘crime’ there are so many former revolutionists or half-revolutionists, people who have lost their program and their principles and who find it necessary to divert attention from the degradation of the Second International or the perfidy of the Spanish anarchists.”

—Trotsky, “Hue and Cry Over Kronstadt”

But this has nothing to do with Goldman, you will protest. Why, Goldman was not even “necessarily responsible for the actions of her Spanish comrades.”

Aside from the obvious point that the anarchist betrayals in Spain flowed from the same anarchist politics to which Goldman subscribed, your disclaimer of political responsibility (on behalf of Goldman, who, unfortunately, is not here and so cannot reply to our invective in kind) makes a joke of your (and Goldman’s) insistence that anarchism is not at variance with organization. Just what kind of “organization” was it which leaves Goldman absolved of all responsibility for the historic betrayal of her “comrades”?

But getting back to the Russian Revolution—while Goldman’s description of Bolshevism as “only left-wing fascism” adequately supports our assertion that her attacks on Lenin and the Bolsheviks were “even more fanatical than those of extreme reactionaries,” we will add that she referred to the Soviet government (as early as 1919) as “the bureaucratic Frankenstein monster” and to Lenin as its “principal spook.” He was, she said, “the greatest menace, more pernicious than the combined [imperialist and White Guard] interventionists....”

Also:

“I confess I am opposed to every school of the Marxian tendency. I cannot see how anyone who has seen its workings in every country, and who loves freedom can still be a Marxian.”

—Goldman, quoted in Ethel Mannin, *Women and the Revolution*

And again:

“True, none of us had fully realized to what proportions the Marxian menace would grow. Perhaps it was not so much Marxism as the Jesuitical spirit of its dogmas. The Bolsheviks were poisoned by it, their dictatorship surpassing the autocracy of the Inquisition.”

—Goldman, *Living My Life*

Finally, you counsel us to save our invective for contemporaries—but *what contemporaries?* Goldman, who misled, betrayed and, yes, blocked with counterrevolutionary forces against the only proletarian revolution in history, is among the *best* that the anarchists have produced, standing head and shoulders above her present-day imitators.

So this is the problem: even were we not committed in principle to taking political positions with regard to the past, we would still be left with the seemingly insurmountable problem of locating a contemporary anarchist with something to say.

Union WAGE...

(continued from page 32)

lacking connections in the upper echelons of the International bureaucracies, WAGE has little chance of following in the footsteps of, for instance, the Coalition of Labor Union Women (CLUW). Like typical union bureaucrats out of power, Union WAGE champions "democracy" as the cure-all for the labor movement. To this point they tack on their "program" of nickel and dime reforms which they seek to accomplish through reliance on the bourgeois state. But even with this pitiful strategy, WAGE appears to the left of CLUW, whose top leadership vigorously *opposed* a resolution encouraging rank-and-file democracy in local unions (CLUW founding convention, March 1974).

Though WAGE will not publicly criticize CLUW (its press has remained silent on the subject since it characterized CLUW as a "Giant Step Forward" for working women in May 1974) it enjoys capitalizing on

its own "left" image. Thus WAGE was able to draw around 500 "socialist-feminists" and other former CLUW enthusiasts to a conference sponsored jointly with the Berkeley-Oakland and San Francisco Women's Unions last November. There, representatives of about two dozen unions and pseudo-unions painted a rosy picture of life outside the AFL-CIO. Speakers blamed miserable conditions, low wages and the lack of union organization of the female proletariat on "male-dominated traditional unions," conveniently ignoring Meany & Co.'s marked lack of enthusiasm for organizing anybody. As these experienced union misleaders ought to know, it is not the sex of the bureaucrats which stands in the way of serious organizing drives of oppressed women workers but the pro-capitalist politics which the bureaucrats espouse. By advocating independent unionism, WAGE is forsaking the most powerful weapon for union organizing—the collective muscle of the ranks of the labor movement.

Throw Out the Bureaucrats—Not the Unions!

Militant unionists interested in organizing the masses of women workers must build a programmatic alternative pole whose aim is to discredit and oust the present leaderships of the "traditional" unions who devote themselves to a balancing act between their working-class base and the capitalist exploiters at the expense of the needs of the working class. While this gang is indifferent to the special oppression of women workers, it is also racist, social-patriotic and politically conservative and must be thrown out for the health of the entire working class. In its place, the ranks of the labor movement must be won to a leadership committed to reorganizing the unions into instruments of militant class struggle. Such unions would take the lead in fighting the capitalist class through real labor solidarity: from secondary boycotts and militant picket lines to factory occupations and general strikes.

Some of the only lively political discussion at the November WAGE conference centered on the tragic history of the United Farm Workers (UFW). This union has been virtually destroyed by Teamster/grower collusion because of the UFW leadership's refusal to call on other unions to hot-cargo (refuse to handle) scab goods, hold sympathy strikes or secondary boycotts and because of its insistence on ineffective consumer boycotts, and pacifist pleading. Supporters of the Militant Action Caucus, a class-struggle opposition within the Communications Workers of America, argued at the WAGE conference that a class-conscious opposition in the Teamsters union (UBT) would have mobilized the widespread rank-and-file disgust with the raiding policies of its leadership into real support for the beleaguered UFW.

In contrast, so-called oppositions like the I.S.-supported "Teamsters for a Decent Contract" refused to take a stand on this criminal raiding policy or on the UBT's strikebreaking of the UFW. WAGE spokesmen had nothing better to offer. In a speech titled "If Unions were Organized in the Interests of Workers," the conference keynote speaker envisioned such changes

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Union WAGE...

as more female union officers and more community-supported boycotts as gimmicks to "revitalize the labor movement."

"Union Independence" in Action

But one topic was carefully avoided by WAGE tops: the long discussion of independent unionism within WAGE. The debate centered around one Maxine Jenkins, formerly a leader of WAGE, a staff organizer of Service Employees International Union (SEIU Local 400, representing 3,000 San Francisco city workers) and an I.S. supporter. Jenkins was a shining light of WAGE. An avowed "labor feminist"—woman leader and union organizer—Jenkins was glorified in the pages of *Union W.A.G.E.*; that is, until WAGE was forced to denounce her in a banner headline, "Jenkins/Statzer Betray City Clerks" (September-October 1975).

How did Jenkins fall from favor? It began in mid-1975 when Jenkins and Louise Statzer, as Local 400 staff organizers, ran into conflicts with Jerry Hipps, then president of Local 400. Hipps fired them on trumped-up charges and Jenkins organized a "rank-and-file" caucus with "fight the firing" as the sole programmatic point. Both women were popular with the union ranks,

and Hipps was forced to back down and rehire them. But 19 days later he fired them once again, resigned as president and handed the Local into the receivership of the International. Behind the conflict was an important question. Jenkins was interested in organizing clerical workers in private business and was thus running up against the SEIU's apparent complicity in keeping the union out of the Montgomery Street "white collar ghettos."

After the Local was placed in receivership, and with the backing and encouragement of Union WAGE, Jenkins and Statzer led a move out of Local 400 to form the Union of City Employees (UCE) over the vocal opposition of the majority of the several dozen members of their "rank-and-file" caucus who wanted to stay and fight. The UCE was heralded by Jenkins and WAGE as a new type of union with built-in democratic guarantees. But a few weeks after its formation, Jenkins was caught out in secret affiliation negotiations with the leadership of the Laborers International Union of North America #261 and, it was rumored, was being promised a salary of \$18,000 a year! On August 6, UCE voted to affiliate to the Laborers Union though the deal later fell through.

The split out of Local 400 with forty militants, abandoning the Local 400 ranks to the International, was a fatal error from the beginning. UCE could only be built by a further raiding operation carried out against the SEIU. Even worse, Jenkins justified her secret merger negotiations by the argument that the Laborers Union carried a lot of weight in City Hall—presumably Democratic Party fake friends of labor were the answer to the tiny new union's impotence! WAGE has since tried to minimize its association with this entire debacle. While taking responsibility for the formation of UCE, it avoids mentioning the fact that Maxine Jenkins had been a leading member of WAGE (*Union W.A.G.E.*, January 1976).

Union WAGE learned from the Jenkins incident another classic betrayal in the trade-union reformists' bag of tricks—taking the unions into the bourgeois courts! In this case it advocates calling on the U.S. Department of Labor and going to court against the power of the International unions to place locals in receivership: "The old adage 'keep government out of the house of labor' is no longer valid... It is time for Congress to investigate the activities of the Labor Department through national public hearings, clean up the stench of that department and insure that it properly represents the democratic rights of union members" (*Union W.A.G.E.*, November-December 1975). Reformists like those of Union WAGE believe that the bourgeois state can gradually be reformed to harmonize the interests of workers with those of employers. Communists, on the other hand, recognize that the state is never a neutral agent but represents the ruling class. Workers who look to the bourgeoisie in the form of its courts, cops and agencies for episodic redress will find little relief at the hands of the class enemy. Whatever token concessions are awarded to the rank and file by the courts are "won" at an impermissibly high price: the increased ability of the

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Union WAGE member Anne Draper receives ERA resolution signed by Mayor Joseph Alioto.

Union W.A.G.E.

class enemy's government to intervene in union affairs.

Naturally, WAGE has nothing but applause for the efforts of the "Miners for Democracy" who brought the bourgeois state into the United Mine Workers to elect Arnold Miller. WAGE fails to mention Miller's record since his election or to explain how a "champion of union democracy" could proceed to smash the militant West Virginia miners' wildcat or maneuver to eliminate the right of locals to strike over health and safety violations. For Miller, Jenkins and countless other aspiring out-of-office bureaucrats, "democracy" is a cheap and empty promise. Democracy gives way when the bureaucrat has to curb the militancy of his membership to preserve class peace. Real union democracy is conceivable only under a class-struggle union leadership which has no fear of workers' militancy.

"Legally" Reversing the Eight-Hour Day

WAGE has had numerous opportunities to see just how far it can pressure government agencies. In the spring of 1974, the California state Industrial Welfare Commission (IWC) revoked the regulation eight-hour day for women (requiring overtime pay after 10 hours for everyone), eliminated mandatory coffee breaks and allowed for "working lunch periods." The danger to masses of working men and women without union protection (about 64 percent of California labor) was very real. California labor should have responded immediately by marshaling all the power it could in strike actions for jobs for all and a 30-hour week with no loss in pay. Instead the AFL-CIO filed a lawsuit to halt the new provisions. As a result the California Superior Court temporarily set aside the new regulations until the IWC meets again and holds new hearings, at which point the regulations will probably be adopted. Predictably, WAGE advocates the following course of action for the labor movement:

"...groups who are able to do so should file amicus

curiae (friend of the court) briefs... to help educate the Supreme Court about the enormous effect of their decision on the lives of millions of working people across the nation."

—Union W.A.G.E., March-April 1975

Perhaps after sufficient "education" the Supreme Court will be won over to the workers' cause?

Now, almost a year later, the IWC is finally holding hearings to set minimum wages, hours, working conditions and health and safety regulations for all industries. Joyce Maupin of the Union WAGE staff sat as a member of one of the boards in January. Manya Argue, a WAGE member, a member of the United Action Caucus in the CWA and a supporter of the I.S., is scheduled to sit on another board in March. Argue tries to show a left face by boldly propounding her ultimate answer: "Organize everybody into unions"! While professing that the IWC is simply a bosses' agency, she has no qualms about lending it credibility by joining it as a member of one of its working bodies!

Militants who wish to end the oppression of women and the exploitation of all working people must adopt a strategy counterposed to Union WAGE-style reformism. The present union misleaders must be challenged by a program which replaces their class collaboration with a strategy aimed at destroying the system of class exploitation itself. Union caucus formations such as the Militant Action Caucus of the CWA must be formed to mobilize the ranks of workers to fight for:

- No Protectionism! For International Labor Solidarity!
- No Support to the Democrats or Republicans! Out the Bureaucrats!
- For A Workers Party Based on the Trade Unions!
- End Racial and Sexual Discrimination!
- Hiring on a First-Come First-Served Basis through Union Hiring Halls!
- For Free Upgrading and Job Training for All!
- Expropriation of Industry! For Workers Control!
- Forward to a Workers Government!

Union WAGE: Labor-Reformist Junkyard

Union Women's Alliance to Gain Equality (Union WAGE), a San Francisco Bay Area club for female out-bureaucrats, has recently evidenced some minimal signs of life by holding a conference to discuss "Independent Unionism." WAGE, a stodgy outfit with a perfect record of minimalist reformism, has never been attractive to younger union activists or members of the petty-bourgeois women's movement. From its early days of organizing car pools to Sacramento to lobby the California state legislature to its current proposed alliance with the U.S. Department of Labor against the unions, WAGE has always provided a home for weary feminist reformists, safe from the wear and tear of the class struggle.

As a self-proclaimed "politically non-partisan" organization (Statement of Purpose), WAGE has carefully avoided having one serious political debate in the course of its five-year history. The International Socialists (I.S.) and Communist Party (CP), which have both dutifully served the interests of the WAGE leadership, have never challenged its total lack of class-struggle politics.

Union Pie Card Leads the Way

Although Union Wage dislikes mention of the political sympathies and history of its members, it would certainly never deny that without Anne Draper (who died two years ago) there probably would not be a Union WAGE. Draper founded and molded WAGE and brought to it the same "third camp" politics (which equate Stalinism and imperialism) which carried her through the Korean War, McCarthy witchhunt period and the Cold War. Anne and Hal Draper were also founding members of the Independent Socialist Clubs, as the I.S. was called when it emerged from the Socialist Party swamp in the early 1960's. She left the I.S. in 1971, splitting to the right with a small grouping. For twenty years Anne Draper was a paid functionary of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers in San Francisco. As education director, she coordinated Amalgamated's splashy, social-patriotic "Buy American" campaign. Though she, no doubt, set aside her "third camp" convictions (choosing to back American capital over the international working class) while she was running the campaign, the I.S. had no qualms about begging her and the rest of the grouping to return to the fold. "We regret losing them from the only organizational expression of revolutionary Third Camp politics in this country and invite them to return to this organization again" (National Action Committee motion, January 19, 1971).

Anne Draper founded WAGE in March 1971 according to her conceptions of "working with the unions as a whole" which, to her, meant working with the



Union W.A.G.E./Cathy Cade

Louise Statzer (l.) Maxine Jenkins (r.)

bureaucratic union leaderships. Her pet project was a campaign for the extension of protective legislation to men to ensure that the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) would not cover for the elimination of important gains for women workers, not in itself an unsupportable endeavor. Her strategy, revealed in the countless articles in *Union W.A.G.E.* citing the voting records of certain "key" Democrats on "women's issues," relied on the ability of labor tops to pressure the government to grant a few reforms. One of her "victories" was pressuring San Francisco mayor Alioto and the San Francisco Board of Supervisors to pass a toothless resolution offering the opinion that the ERA should be amended to "protect the gains of Labor." This whole business served only to give this villain a cover as a "friend of labor." Two years later he and the Supervisors proceeded to smash the San Francisco city workers strike and then helped push through several viciously anti-labor Propositions. Furthermore, Draper, WAGE and the I.S. stood *opposed* to the ERA and actively fought it as long as the extension of protective legislation was not guaranteed.

WAGE vs. CLUW

WAGE has never been happy, however, with its local isolation and its leaders, like those of a myriad of other tiny feminist groups, aspire to "go national." But

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