

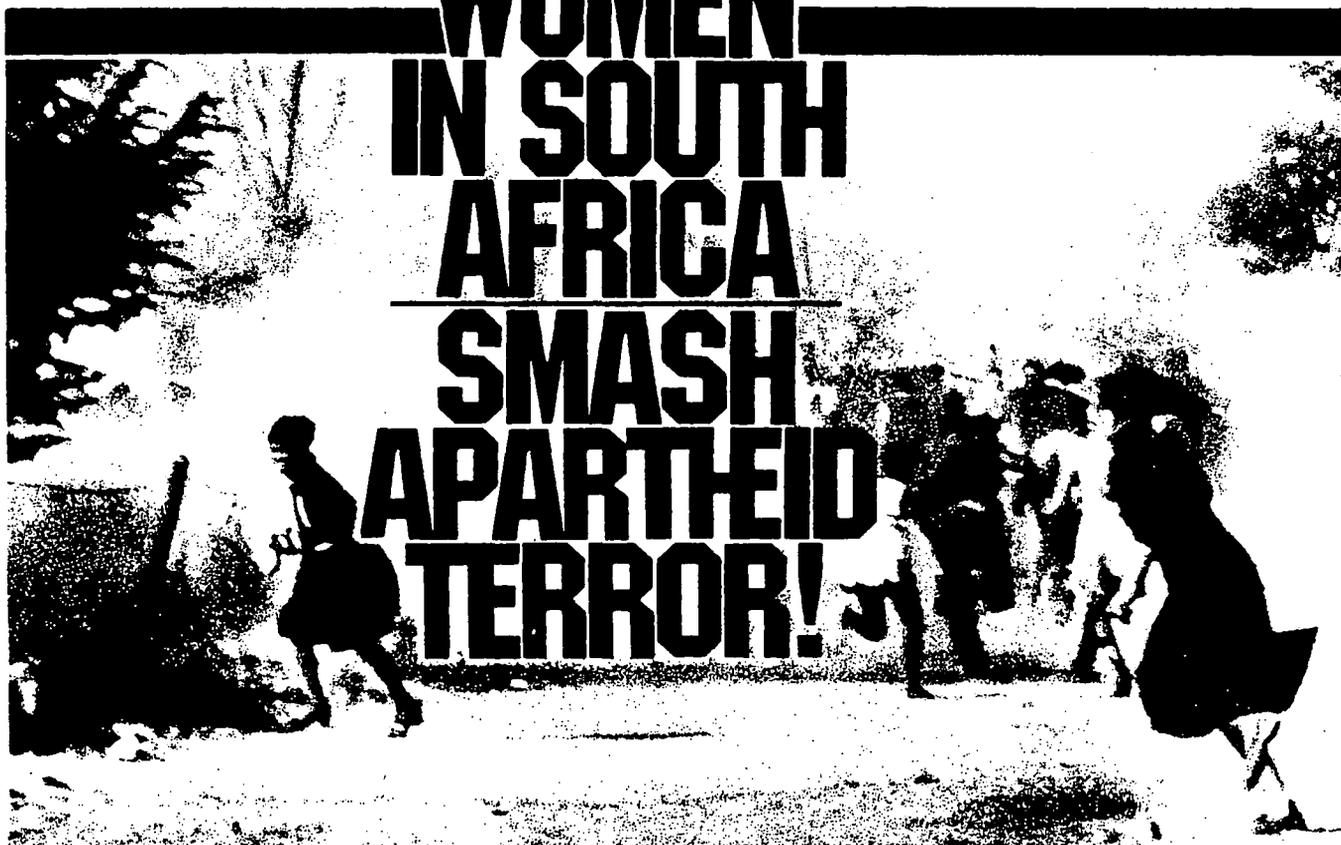
# Women and Revolution



Journal of the Women's Commission of the Spartacist League

50c

## ON BLACK WOMEN IN SOUTH AFRICA SMASH APARTHEID TERROR!



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## On Black Women in South Africa

# Smash Apartheid Terror!

### For Workers Revolution!

Nowhere is it clearer that the oppression of women is a natural measure of general social oppression than in the compression chamber of the savage apartheid system of South Africa. The viciously racist dimension of apartheid is well documented. But in every class society based on special caste oppression, the female members of the lowest caste constitute an even more downtrodden sub-caste which concentrates in more acute form all of the disabilities of class exploitation and caste oppression in that society.

Black women in South Africa suffer all the oppression of black men and, in addition, the special oppression of women. They generally have no right to own land—not even in their so-called homelands—many are separated from their husbands for 11 months a year and relegated to an isolated existence in desolate, barren wastelands, and, of course, they are eligible only for the worst jobs at the lowest wages.

In most advanced industrial countries, the wages paid to a worker include not only the cost of enough food, clothing, shelter and transportation to get him to work the next day, but also enough to cover industrial accidents, health and unemployment insurance and some sort of pension. In addition, the worker is paid enough to reproduce the next generation of workers; i.e., to raise a family. But in South Africa, as in many backward countries, anything apart from the bare necessities to get the worker to work the next day is in general not included in his wages. This is made possible by transforming the black labor force into migrant labor which is allowed into the white area only as long as it is economically productive and insofar as there are jobs. If there is no job or if the worker has a serious illness or an industrial accident or if he grows old or makes "trouble," he is shipped back to the Bantustan with the women.

The apartheid system, which renders blacks foreigners within their own country, is administered by a maze of regulations which subject them to continuous intimidation, terror, arrest and imprisonment. One in every four blacks is arrested every year for technical infringements of laws applicable to blacks only.

Apartheid cannot be fully understood without examining the desperate plight of black women, nor can there be a general emancipation of South African blacks without the all-sided, thoroughgoing and genuine emancipation of black women.

An understanding of the apartheid system and the woman question is equally important for a more general understanding of the colonial question. South Africa contains characteristics of an advanced capitalist economy. Through the superexploitation of black labor, it has secured a relatively high standard of living

for its privileged white population. But it also contains the social and political structure of a colonial country in a more exaggerated way than more economically backward countries such as India, Indonesia and other countries of the African continent. South Africa is a product of what Trotsky called "uneven and combined development." Given its economic predominance and the concentration of a black industrial proletariat, it is key to socialist revolution in sub-Saharan Africa.

### The Myth of Separate Development

The apartheid system is linked to the development of South African capitalism. Until the discovery of diamonds and gold, the Boers (descendants of Dutch settlers) were a nation of sheep-herders, producing wool for the British textile industry.

Gold and diamond mining are hazardous and labor-intensive industries, and demand for their refined products is subject to enormous cyclical variations. Thus, the mines require a large, "elastic" low-paid, unskilled labor force.

At the turn of the century, this labor force was in part recruited from European immigrants. Before the depression of the 1930's, over 30 percent of the economically active white population consisted of unskilled workers. But apartheid and the superexploitation of black workers made possible the transformation of these European immigrants into a labor aristocracy and a middle class of foremen and managers. By 1970 less than three percent of the wage and salary-earning whites were unskilled.

The structure of apartheid served to deprive blacks of economically viable land and to turn the productive portion of the black population into a giant industrial reserve army of illiterate, unskilled, unorganized and terrorized migrant labor that would accept hazardous work at wages *beneath subsistence*. Even in

# Women and Revolution

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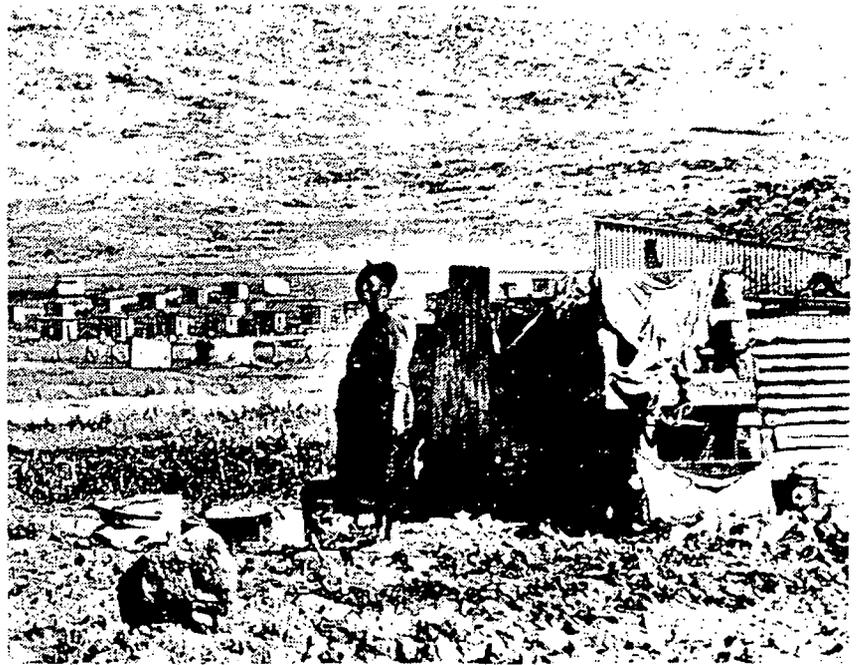
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urban areas, where the standard of living for blacks is substantially higher than in the countryside, a 1970 report stated: "It is calculated that approximately 70 percent of all Africans in the urban area have earnings below the so-called poverty datum line, an amount which provides minimum subsistence for a family of five, omitting any expenditures for amusements, sports, medicine, education, newspapers, public transport other than to and from work, stationery and tobacco."

The ideology of apartheid holds that the people of South Africa constitute ten "nations," each of which is allotted a "homeland." In addition, there are Asians and "Coloured" (racially mixed) peoples, who are assigned to "group areas." All whites, irrespective of place of origin or mother tongue, are grouped together in the white "nation." Although they make up only 20 percent of the population, their "homeland" covers 87 percent of South Africa. It includes all the mines, industries, commercially exploitable agricultural land, all the ports and developed urban areas and the rail system; i.e., all the wealth and development accumulated through the sweat of superexploited black labor.

Blacks are divided into nine "nations," which are supposed to correspond to traditional tribal divisions. Although blacks comprise 70 percent of the population, their "homelands" occupy only 13 percent of the land area—280 scattered plots of the most barren and desolate leftovers of white colonial rapacity. But apartheid's retribalization of the black population had no intention of restoring the old economy and land rights of the African tribes, even if this were possible. It simply recreated, often in a distorted form, those aspects of tribalism which directly served white supremacy and South African capitalism.

Thus, the government approves of marriages contracted according to tribal law as interpreted by white judges and administrators. Women who enter into these "customary unions"—including almost all women living in the "homelands" (also called "Bantustans" or "reserves")—must do so with parental consent and only after *lobolo*—the transfer of cattle and/or cash from the husband to the wife's father. *Lobolo* gives the husband the right to repudiate the marriage unilaterally at any time simply by forfeiting his *lobolo* rights, but the wife has no equivalent right, since *lobolo* is an agreement between her husband and her father. An African woman married by customary union is considered a perpetual minor under the tutelage of her husband. She cannot own property in her own right, cannot sign a valid contract without her husband's consent, cannot sue or be sued. Any money she earns belongs legally to her husband. In some provinces, custody of children may never be given to divorced, separated or widowed mothers, and such



John Seymour

**A woman of Ilinge, a resettlement area in a black South African "homeland."**

women are remanded to the control of their fathers or guardians. According to the minister of Bantu Administration and Development, the aim of his policy of encouraging customary unions was "to restore women to their rightful place... that women occupied in the old society."

According to the myth of separate development, each "nation" is supposed to develop its own "self-determination" in its "homeland"—a separate political economy with a separate language and culture. What gives lie to the myth is that none of the "homelands" is capable of economic self-sufficiency, not even the wealthiest and most privileged white "homeland." The wealth of the white "homeland" is dependent on the superexploitation of black labor.

As there are no economic opportunities in their "homelands," black men are forced to migrate, often a thousand miles, to the white "homeland" in search of work, but even this dubious privilege is generally denied to black women. Until 1964 wives were allowed to live in urban townships if their husbands qualified, but since then "influx control" and "pass laws" have prohibited unemployed black wives and widows from taking up lawful residence in the urban areas. Most townships and company hostels do not permit women even for visits.

Influx control restricts blacks from visiting, working or residing in white areas. It is administered through pass laws, which require every black over the age of 16 to carry a "reference book" which contains the holder's identity card, tax receipts and particulars of employment and residence. On the average, nearly 2,000 people are arrested every day for violation of the pass laws.

Blacks in the cities are referred to as "temporary sojourners" or "transient labor units" who are to be

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shipped out to the Bantustans the moment they are no longer economically useful. Permitting women to reside in the cities, it is feared, would lead to the establishment of a stable black urban population, which would be a threat to apartheid. "This African labor force," said G.F. van L. Froneman of the ruling Nationalist Party, "must not be burdened with superfluous appendages such as wives, children and dependents who could not provide service."

The creation of a migratory labor force and the exclusion of "superfluous appendages"—i.e., the great majority of black women—from urban areas has destroyed family life and replaced it with nothing. According to a report covering 1975-77 published by Black Sash, an anti-apartheid organization composed predominantly of middle-class white women:

"The battle for married couples to get permission to live together, when the wife is not already a recognised resident of the same area as her husband, is one of the most frustrating of all. The techniques involved in fulfilling the obligations required defeat all but a very few of the most tenacious and fortunate applicants.

"Of 22 married couples making strenuous efforts to legalise their seemingly so reasonable cohabitation, one [in the Athlone area near Cape Town] has been successful. C. Md. is now officially able to live with her... qualified husband in his parents' house in Guguletu. But every effort was made by the authorities to induce her to leave and she was arrested and fined several times until at last senior officials considered her case on its merits and agreed that she should be allowed to remain with her husband."

—*The Black Sash Magazine* No. 2 (August, 1977)

### Black Women on the Reserves

Four million African women are relegated to the reserves, where, on an inadequate plot of impoverished land, they are supposed to scratch out of the brush and rock the subsistence to nourish and raise a family and care for the sick, the injured, the aged and the unemployed.

The most "fortunate" are the "housewives"—those whose husbands, working in the cities, send home what meager earnings they can spare. An African woman writes of them:

"It is the tragic story of thousands of young women who are widows long before they reach the age of thirty; young married women who have never been mothers; young women whose life has been one long song of sorrow—burying one baby after another and lastly burying the husband—that lover she has never known as husband and father. To them—both men and women—adulthood means the end of life; it means loneliness, sorrow, tears and death; it means a life without a future because there is no present."

—Phyllis Ntantala, "African Tragedy," *Africa South* No. 3 (1957), quoted in Hilda Bernstein, *For Their Triumphs and For Their Tears*

Not only are these women barred from seeking work in the cities, but they are severely handicapped in seeking the few jobs available in the Bantustans. Many jobs are reserved for men; women with children often have no one with whom to leave them and no one to take over the domestic chores which, in a primitive

society, are all-consuming. An entire day may be spent fetching firewood or water; and those widows lucky enough to have the right to occupy their late husbands' homesteads dare not leave them or they will be forfeited. Often, the cost of commuting to a job is simply greater than the minuscule wages paid (women are hired for the lowest paying jobs and are paid less than men for the same work). Consequently, despite the desperate poverty of the Bantustans, in 1970 only 17 percent of able-bodied rural black women were employed—generally as farm hands, domestic servants on white owned farms situated near the Bantustans, or laundresses.

The inhuman conditions of life on the reserves lead inevitably to disease and early death. The South African government keeps no mortality statistics for blacks—although it does for all other South Africans—but it is estimated that in some rural areas infant mortality is as high as 25 percent. A mission doctor writes of women who bring their sick, undernourished babies to the hospital:

"A mother may become infuriatingly inert and difficult to help because the struggle seems so hopeless. Often she struggles on—it is uncomfortable to picture the sort of scenes where distracted women try to comfort hungry children in empty huts scattered through the reserves."

—Trudi Thomas, "Sowing Seeds of Deprivation," *Black Sash* (May, 1974), quoted in Bernstein, *op. cit.*

### Black Women in the Cities

Against all odds, many women in South Africa do manage to enter the urban labor force, chiefly as domestic servants. Like the vast majority of black working men, black working women are subject to inadequate wages, substandard housing without water, electricity or privacy, poor and insufficient medical facilities and a pervasive insecurity stemming from the knowledge that they may lose their jobs and their homes and be separated from their children at any time. In Soweto, for example, a vast black township of over a million inhabitants (300,000 of whom are living there illegally and half of whom are unemployed), people live without most of the facilities which urban dwellers in Europe or North America take for granted even in the worst slum. Eighty-six percent of the homes are without electricity, 93 percent are without a bathtub or shower and 97 percent are without hot water. Since there are only 96,000 homes in the township, it is estimated that an average of ten people live in each home.

Yet residents of Soweto consider themselves fortunate relative to the residents of other black townships because Soweto is one of the few urban areas where black workers are permitted to live with their families.

But over and above the oppression and exploitation based on class and race which black urban working women share with black urban working men, they suffer still greater discrimination because they are women. As late as 1973, there was not one black woman lawyer, judge, engineer, architect, veterinarian, chemist or pharmacist. Unlike black men, black women cannot qualify as building and mining artisans' assis-



International Defence and Aid Fund

Peasant women of the Western Transvaal protest against the issuing of reference books (passes) to women, 1957.

tants, electric wiremen, woodworkers or surveyors' assistants. Of the small number of blacks admitted to technical or vocational schools, males far outnumber females, and the latter are mainly assigned to courses in dressmaking, home management and health care.

In industry, where more and more black women are being drawn in to replace black men as even cheaper labor, and in the professions—including all levels of the educational system and all branches of the public service open to blacks—women's wages are always lower than those of men doing the same work. The official policy of the government Wage Board is to set wages for women 20-30 percent lower than for equivalent jobs performed by men. According to an article in *Financial Mail* (24 October 1975): "Some unions have pressed for less discrimination, but the old arguments that men are more able, stable, and less often absent still hold sway."

Black women in the colleges or the public service who marry have their employment terminated by law—this does not apply to their male co-workers—and then, as "superfluous appendages," they are candidates for shipment to the Bantustans.

Job discrimination reaches even into the prison system, where the pittances paid to prisoners for various kinds of work done under prison regulations are unequal not only among the races, but also between men and women, with black women prisoners receiving the minimum.

Black women are prohibited from being registered tenants in the townships. This means that should those women fortunate enough to live legally with their husbands become widowed, divorced, separated or deserted, they face immediate eviction. Under the circumstances, many unhappily married women suffer any abuse in the knowledge that if their husbands leave them, they will lose the right to remain in the city and possibly the right to remain with their children, as well.

As Sally Motlana, a black South African, states:

"It is a sin for any mother to lose her husband in our urban areas. Some officials demand that the widow must come to their offices a day after the funeral of their husband to discuss the question of the house.... The widow is not entitled to the tenancy of the house."

—Sally Motlana, "The Laws Which Humiliate," *Black Sash* (June, 1972), quoted in Bernstein, *op. cit.*

### "Now You Have Touched the Women...You Will Be Crushed"

Despite the extreme conditions of their oppression, black women have played a significant role in the struggle against apartheid. As early as 1913, black women led a prolonged fight against the government's attempt to issue passes to women. After numerous demonstrations, including a march of 600 women to the municipal offices at Bloemfontein,

where they dumped a sack containing all their passes at the feet of the deputy-mayor, the government abandoned this attempt until 1956. Black women have also played active and prominent roles in trade-union organizing, particularly in the garment and textile industries and in food canning and processing.

Prior to the extension of pass books to women in 1956, this activity was facilitated by a legal loophole—the fact that the primary law covering labor organization, the Industrial Conciliation Act, excluded only "pass bearing natives" from its provisions.

Although black trade unions were not recognized by the government, many black women gained invaluable experience from this organizing work. Among Coloured workers, whose unions were recognized, several women became the best known and most militant of the workers' spokesmen.

During the 1950's, women—many of them organized through the Women's Federation of the African National Congress (ANC)—fought alongside men in the protests, demonstrations, strikes and boycotts which marked the Defiance Campaign Against Unjust Laws—a futile attempt at peaceful reform of the racist South African regime. In the course of this campaign, 8,500 people of all races deliberately invited arrest and imprisonment by defying apartheid regulations.

In 1955, the government renewed its decision to issue the hated passes to black women by announcing that passes would be required beginning in January 1956. One of the first demonstrations against the pass laws was organized by the white, liberal Black Sash, but no black women were invited to participate in it!

This was wholly in accord with the traditions of the organization. As its national president noted in a recently published book (*The Black Sash in South Africa, A Case Study in Liberalism* by Cherry Michelman), when the Black Sash was founded, its prominent

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members "would not have joined any organization which involved direct association with non-whites."

A few months later, a protest initiated by black women (but open to all) in Pretoria drew 2,000 women, and similar demonstrations soon spread to Durban and Cape Town. Women refused the passes, burned them and otherwise resisted the extension of this humiliating practice which has become the particular symbol of the oppression of South African blacks.

On 9 August 1956, which is now designated Women's Day in South Africa, 20,000 women overcame tremendous obstacles to assemble in Pretoria to present petitions against the pass laws signed by hundreds of thousands of people:

"All processions in Pretoria were banned that day, so the women walked to the Union Buildings to see the Prime Minister in groups of never more than three. All Pretoria was filled with women. This was four years before the national liberation organisations were banned, and thousands of women wore the green and black Congress [African National Congress] blouses; Indian women dressed in brilliant saris, Xhosa women in their ochre robes with elaborate headscarves."

—Bernstein, *op. cit.*

When informed—predictably—that the prime minister was not there, the women stood in silence for 30 minutes, then burst into a "freedom song" ("freedom songs" were composed for each new activity of the Defiance Campaign). Its refrain was:

"Now you have touched the women you have struck a

rock, you have dislodged a boulder, you will be crushed."

The protests continued, not only in the cities but in remote rural areas as well, but this time the government won. Old women attempting to collect their miserable pensions were told, "No pass book—no pension." Women without pass books could not register the birth of their children or keep their jobs. In some areas, the government retaliated against resistance with beatings, shootings, the burning of homes to the ground and the banishment of individuals. In the end, the pass books were accepted.

The Defiance Campaign and many of the illusory hopes for reform which it generated were crushed at Sharpeville in 1960, when the South African government murdered 69 unarmed protesters.

In the early 1960's, harsh "anti-terrorism" legislation was introduced, and women were prosecuted on a wide variety of political charges, including treason, terrorism, membership in or assistance to banned organizations, sabotage, helping people to escape from the country, recruiting guerrillas and breaches of banning orders. Sometimes women were jailed simply on account of their husbands' political activities.

Since 1960, the struggle against apartheid has continued largely through illegal organizations and activities, but last year's courageous black uprising, which put Soweto on the map, was a clear demonstration that the vicious Vorster regime has not succeeded in stamping out resistance to oppression. But there is not yet even the nucleus of a revolutionary Trotskyist vanguard party capable of harnessing this militancy to a class-struggle program and laying to rest dangerous illusions in the possibility of liberation through reform.

Two new women's organizations—both thoroughly liberal—have emerged in response to the Soweto uprising: the South African Black Women's Federation and Women for Peace.

The Federation was founded at Durban by 200 black, Coloured and Indian women representing 200 South African organizations. Speakers at the founding conference—including well-known militant and ANC spokesman, Winnie Mandela, who was elected vice-president—stressed the struggle for the legal equality of black women so that they would "not be left out of the decision making on the future of South Africa."

Women for Peace was founded by Mrs. Bridget Oppenheimer, wife of the world's leading diamond and gold magnate, Harry F. Oppenheimer. Modeling itself on the "Peace People" of Northern Ireland founded by Betty Williams and Mairead Corrigan (see "Peace Women in Bloody Ulster," *Women and Revolution* No. 15, summer 1977), Women for Peace defines itself as a non-political, multi-racial, multi-class organization working for peaceful reform.

But in South Africa, as in Northern Ireland, "peace" means different things to different people according to their respective class interests. While Mrs. Oppenheimer may be satisfied "to promote communication and better understanding of the country's many races and cultures," South African working men and working women will remain exploited and oppressed so long as

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## French Feminists Call for Class Collaboration

# “Workers’ Wives, Bourgeois Wives, Cops’ Wives, Join Us!”

Ten years after its inception, the women’s liberation movement in the United States lies practically inert. Ten years of dead-end feminist politics and benighted instant-liberation schemes have taken their toll in the coin of passivity and despair. The few “radical” feminists, “amazons” and “witches” of the ‘60’s who have not retreated entirely into private lives are barely able to rouse themselves sufficiently to register their protest to the widespread and vicious attacks on women which have in the last several years all but nullified the gains of the past decade—notably in the area of abortion reform.

In Europe, however, the women’s liberation movement is thriving. Indeed, it appears in many ways similar to the American movement of five to seven years ago. An outstanding dissimilarity stems from the existence of mass reformist parties in Europe and a heritage of class consciousness which is reflected in feminist propaganda, which must appeal to a more highly politicized constituency than exists in the U.S. European feminists are not likely to spend years arguing—as did their American counterparts—whether or not to discuss politics!

Nevertheless, the similarities between the two milieus are sufficient that the European movement threatens to recapitulate in its larger aspects the history of the American—including all its betrayals of women. Despite a generally more class-conscious rhetoric, feminism is feminism; which is to say that it is centered on the primacy of a sex line and not a class line. And, as in the U.S., fake-leftists opportunistically pander to these backward feminist ideas, thus delaying the victory of the socialist revolution and the genuine emancipation of women.

Only a Trotskyist vanguard party can point the way forward to women’s liberation through international proletarian revolution and enlist the masses of women necessary for the victory of this struggle, transforming them into class warriors. The Ligue Trotskyste de France, sympathizing section of the international Spartacist tendency, is the nucleus of this vanguard in France. We print below these comrades’ report on the current state of the women’s liberation movement in France:

PARIS, 15 November—“Workers’ wives, bourgeois wives, cops’ wives, join us!”—this blatantly anti-working-class banner of the 4,000-strong women’s contingent, which brought up the tail of the giant 1977 May Day parade in Paris, graphically demonstrates the criminal misleadership of the Stalinist and social-democratic parties which dominate the French left and

union movement today. The women who made up the contingent—most of whom marched with their unions before reassembling at the rear and who consider themselves class-struggle militants—were persuaded to place “sisterhood” before the unity of the working class as a whole.

In its political essence and conclusions, contemporary French feminism does not differ from the feminism of other times and places, but, developing in the context of powerful mass reformist parties and in the wake of the May 1968 uprising, it generally views itself as part of the labor/left. Tendencies such as *Féministes révolutionnaires* and *Psychanalyse et Politique*, which reject all reference to class struggle, play only a marginal role in the women’s movement and remain essentially ingrown.

The treachery of the women’s movement is, therefore, the treachery of the left, which conciliates feminism by spreading the insidious doctrine of an “autonomous” women’s movement in which different political currents representing different class interests would supposedly coexist in harmony and which—without being based on a clear program of class struggle against the basis of women’s oppression, capitalism—would nevertheless be “subversive” and “revolutionary.”

### Union of the “Left” Bandwagon: Tailing the Tailists

The 1968 upheavals demonstrated to the French bourgeoisie the fragility of its state apparatus and brandished the potential revolutionary power of the heavily organized French working class. Supported by widespread disaffection among sectors of the petty bourgeoisie, the workers offensive ground to a halt just short of dual power—sabotaged primarily, though not solely, by the treachery of the French Communist Party (PCF).

The popular-front coalition which subsequently arose was part of an attempt by the bourgeois Left Radicals to guarantee against any recurrence of this threat to capitalist state power by containing the tremendous militancy of the French proletariat within “acceptable” bounds.

For the reformist misleaders of the Communist Party and the Socialist Party (PS), partnership with the Left Radicals has offered bureaucratic advancement and insurance against rebellion in the ranks. The popular front’s “Common Program” provided a convenient

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excuse for the inadequacy of their demands—the need to obtain the assent of their bourgeois bed partners.

For the working class and the oppressed, the popular front can lead only to disastrous defeat—just as the Chilean Unidad Popular paved the way for Pinochet's bloodbath. Yet the leaders of the women's movement, tailing their "far left" (left-of-PCF) mentors—who in turn tail the PCF/PS reformist bureaucrats—persist in pandering to the futile and suicidal illusion of "pushing leftward." "From the right, we expect nothing! What we want we must seize from them... From those who call for socialism, for the end of exploitation and all oppression, we expect more than words," declares the women's group of the 15th arrondissement in Paris. By "those who call for socialism," the feminists mean the same PCF and PS bureaucrats who are busily building the popular-front coalition and whose task it is to tie the workers movement firmly to bourgeois interests and crush its militancy.

### The "Far Left"

The fake-Trotskyist Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire (LCR—section of the "United" Secretariat or "USec") views its goal as bringing to the workers movement the "enrichment" of a petty-bourgeois "feminist dimension." The proletariat is thus reduced to an adjunct of the women's movement: "It is up to the working-class movement to join the women's movement in struggling against all aspects of oppression from sexism to cultural and economic underdevelopment."

The LCR's polyvanguardism is reflected within the organization in the form of male-exclusionist caucuses. These have been developed to such a degree that the Central Committee was recently forced to remind the comrades that these groups should not dominate the entire political life of the organization. But at the Second Congress of the LCR in January 1977, the LCR leadership capitulated even more to feminism, declaring that: "The feminist dimension is recognized as a political enrichment of our program and that, as such, the recognition of this dimension, including women's self-organization, is a condition of membership in the organization."

At the special LCR women's conference held on June 25 and 26 of this year, no less than five women's tendencies (TF: "Tendances Femmes") were formed! All of them agree on capitulating to feminism, and TF 2 is merely the most consistent when it states that the women's movement is "the place where we feel most comfortable" (*Women's Internal Bulletin No. 5* of the LCR), and that "in this sense it is anachronistic that a mixed organization should impose on women [members] organizational discipline with respect to feminism" (*Women's Internal Bulletin No. 4*).

Solidarizing with this sentiment, a group of male LCR comrades adds: "It is not obvious that the political hegemony that the party attempts to win in mass movements is the end goal of the organized presence

of revolutionary militants in the women's movement" (*Women's Internal Bulletin No. 5*).

In capitulating to feminism, the LCR openly rejects Leninism and the traditions of the first four congresses of the Communist International. Thus, a leading comrade of the LCR, Catherine Verla, in an editorial in the LCR's theoretical magazine, *Critique Communiste* (No. 4), uses the fact that women are not liberated in Eastern Europe as "proof" of the need for an autonomous women's movement. By failing to mention the Stalinist reaction, which reversed so many of the gains made by women in 1917, she equates Lenin's International with the present-day bureaucratic leadership of the Soviet bloc.

Similarly, in an article in *Inprecor* (26 May 1977), magazine of the USec's Majority Tendency, Jacqueline Heinen cites the reactionary attitudes of reformists toward women to "explain" the need for a feminist movement after a socialist revolution—as if a socialist revolution would be made under reformist leadership! She straightforwardly repudiates the resolutions on the woman question of the Third Congress of the Communist International, which she criticizes for not incorporating feminism. Claiming, against all historic fact, that the Bolsheviks were unable to recognize the specific oppression of women, she says:

"[This]... also explains why the Communist parties of the International as a whole believed that the struggle for women's emancipation could occur only through the struggle of the workers movement for the overthrow of the bourgeois state. This is true but insufficient. Their energetic rejection of any separate organization of women in the trade unions or in any other workers organization, like their assertion that 'there are no "specifically feminine" questions,' clearly shows that revolutionaries in the 1920's totally underestimated the importance and duration of the struggle on the subjective level, in the ranks of the workers movement, against dominant ideas and against the automatic acceptance of the inferiority of women."

—J. Heinen, *Inprecor*, 26 May 1977

But far from being "automatically" accepted in the post-revolutionary Soviet Union, the relegation of women to traditional (i.e., inferior) roles had to be carefully orchestrated by Stalin. In fact, it was not until the mid-thirties, after years of propagandistic preparation, that he dared to reverse such gains for women as abortion and divorce on demand—something which Heinen fails to mention.

The Maoid Organisation Communiste des Travailleurs (OCT), shackled by the contradictions of Stalinism, is unable to present anything more than a strongly workerist orientation, concentrating on neighborhood and shop-floor struggles. Its program for women, a mixture of feminism and economism, is nothing more than a laundry list of reforms concerning employment, working conditions and wages and is devoid of any perspective for ending the oppression of women.

Another ostensibly "far left" organization, the Organisation Communiste Internationaliste (OCI), keeps a tight-lipped silence on the woman question and hides behind the correct but ultimistic assertion that the liberation of women will come about only through socialism, as an excuse to ignore the issues that are concretely posed right now and to abstain from

struggle. For the OCI, the unity of the working class means unity on the basis of the present level of reformist and male-chauvinist consciousness. Its refusal to criticize the oppressive family structure is but one consequence of its capitulation before social democracy.

The OCI is, in addition, notorious even among French "leftists" for its sexist practices both inside and outside the organization. Grossly sexist insults and intimidation—even slander and physical violence—are often substituted for political argument.

### The Vincennes Conference

In June an international women's meeting was held at Vincennes outside of Paris which brought together more than 3,000 women from many countries. This meeting was convened and organized by the "class-struggle tendency" of the French women's movement behind which lurked the LCR and OCT. These fake militants declared to the many women who had come to discuss the class struggle that this subject could not be raised because clarity was lacking! At the same time, they took responsibility for tracking down men in the corridors and denying them entry and for shutting off all meaningful political debate, so that the conference ended simply with the adoption of resolutions affirming the ABC's of feminism. These resolutions included a demand for a law guaranteeing women 50 percent of all jobs in Italy, which could only undermine the solidarity of the working class in the fight against unemployment.

The women's group of the Crédit Lyonnais banks (an LCR stronghold) put forward a resolution at the conference which said:

"The liberation of women will be the work of women themselves, but they must not neglect any base from which to intervene and to raise the problem of specific alliances with unions and parties.

"We women must regroup into an autonomous movement, although, on the other hand, if we belong to organizations of the working class, we must not neglect, when possible, to intervene there. The evolution of these organizations and their taking up of women's demands is an additional guarantee that women's demands will be fulfilled."

In other words, not the fight for the party's positions in the women's movement, but the fight for feminism in the party! This resolution is consistent with the LCR's position that "It is up to the working class movement to join the women's movement."

In "Sex Struggle or Class Struggle" (*Inprecor*, 29 September 1977), the LCR's Jacqueline Heinen, without mentioning the international Spartacist tendency (iSt) by name, completely distorts its intervention at



Rouge

French feminists call for "autonomy" for women, May Day 1977.

Vincennes. Heinen quotes *Effe* (July-August, 1977), one of the most widely read feminist journals in Italy and perhaps in all of Europe. *Effe* charges that the position of the USec expressed at the Vincennes conference was that:

"It is counterrevolutionary to work to build an independent women's movement, since on the one hand this would divide the working class and on the other would tend to lay the basis for unity that should not exist, unity among women of different social classes."

*Effe* also accuses these women of trying "to control the proceedings...in a very rigid manner"—by which is meant that there was a speakers list and timed speaking rounds to insure a democratic discussion.

Heinen protests that the comrades accused of these "crimes" were not members of the USec, but "a group of Trotskyist women (American, English, German, and French)," who spoke at a workshop "on 'feminism and Marxism,' which was called on the spontaneous invitation of women in the French movement."

In fact, the forum, which was entitled "Feminism or Marxism," was organized by spokesmen for the American, English, German and French sections of the iSt after their exclusion from another conference commission because they had dared to raise a class-struggle program. Unlike the USec, the iSt pleads "guilty" to the offenses of insisting on the ideological counterposition of feminism and Marxism and on following procedures consonant with workers democracy.

The iSt supporters argued for the perspective of building integrated revolutionary trade-union fractions based on a class-struggle program to fight to replace the bureaucrats. Although this would necessarily include a struggle against the oppression of women, the iSt supporters emphasized that this is a struggle which must be carried forward by *all* communists, men

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## Decades of Debate over Working Women's Rights

# For the ERA! Extend Protective Legislation!

Every single year between 1923 and 1972 an attempt was made to introduce an amendment into Congress which stated, sometimes with minor variations, that "Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex."

For nearly a half-century, this amendment was defeated until in 1972 it was finally passed subject to ratification by 38 states within seven years. At present, such ratification appears extremely uncertain. Like the issues of free abortion on demand and democratic rights for homosexuals, the ratification of the ERA has become a target in the current right-wing offensive to roll back the partial gains made by minorities and oppressed sectors of society during the last decade.

But opposition to the Equal Rights Amendment comes not only from the right but from the left. Many currents within the workers movement—including the AFL-CIO bureaucracy and the Maoist Revolutionary Communist Party—have come out against ratification, along with the Ku Klux Klan, the John Birch Society and the National Council of Catholic Women (the Communist Party USA, which has opposed the ERA for over 50 years, has just switched to a pro-ERA position for the sake of "unity" in the women's movement). Why?

Although Stalinists of pro-Moscow, pro-Peking and even pro-Tirana persuasions feel as obliged as Birchers to defend the sanctity of the nuclear family, controversy over the ERA within the left and labor movements has historically focused not on the ERA's supposed threat to this most oppressive institution, as it has among right wingers, but on the question of protective labor legislation for women. The ERA, it has been argued, would allow the capitalists to use the pretense of equality to destroy the hard-won gains of working women embodied in state protective laws.

Protective labor laws do represent an important victory for the working class. It is no insult to women to acknowledge real physiological differences between the sexes, although technological advances under capitalism have rendered these differences less and less significant for productive capacity. Except in cases where protective legislation has been enacted primarily to exclude women from certain branches of industry (e.g., prohibitions on night work for women), it must not only be defended by the working class but extended to cover all workers.

### The Evolution of Protective Labor Legislation

But under capitalism (and to a lesser extent under Stalinism) protective labor laws have been a mixed blessing for working women. In his *Critique of the*



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**Women did "men's" jobs at Republic Steel plant in Buffalo during World War II.**

*Gotha Programme*, Karl Marx advocated protective labor legislation for women precisely in order to prevent their exclusion from industry, but many radicals and labor bureaucrats have sought to use protective labor legislation to "protect" women right out of their jobs. As early as 1867 the Sixth General Meeting of the General German Workers' Association, founded by Ferdinand Lassalle, passed a resolution which stated:

"The employment of women in the workshops of modern industry is one of the most scandalous abuses of our times. Scandalous, because it does not improve the material situation of the working class but makes it worse, and because the destruction of the family in particular reduces the working class population to a wretched state in which even the last remnants of its ideal possessions



Library of Congress

**Members of Women's Trade Union League of New York demonstrate in Manhattan shortly after the turn of the century.**

are taken from it. This gives us all the more reason to reject the current efforts to increase even further the market for female labour."

—quoted in W. Thonnessen, *The Emancipation of Women*

This Lassalleian position was popular in the early American labor movement, as well. The call for "women out of industry" was raised in the American socialist press (e.g., the *Ohio Socialist*) as late as 1919.

Despite the widespread opposition on the part of left and working-class organizations to protective labor legislation on the grounds that it interfered with the right of the individual to contract freely with relation to his labor, such legislation did eventually prevail in the courts. The difficulty in characterizing the process by which this came about resides in the fact that protective labor legislation was sponsored by a variety of groups and for a variety of reasons. Women's labor unions, bourgeois charity organizations, job-trusting craft unions, factory inspectors and reform politicians all had a hand in shaping these laws. The following statement of the American cigar makers in 1879 clearly indicates their particular interest in "protective" legislation:

"We cannot drive the females out of the trade but we can restrict their daily quota of labor through factory laws. No girl under eighteen should be employed more than eight hours per day, all overtime work should be prohibited, while married women should be kept out of factories at least six weeks after confinement."

—quoted in A. Henry, *The Trade Union Woman*

A landmark decision in the history of protective legislation was handed down by the Supreme Court in 1908 in the case of *Muller v. Oregon*. Curt Muller, a laundry owner in Portland, was found guilty of violating Oregon state law by employing laundresses for more than ten hours a day. The case took on national interest when Muller made it clear that he was prepared to carry

it to the Supreme Court, which in 1905 had found (*Lochner v. New York*) that limiting bakers' working hours to ten a day was unfair and unreasonable interference with the right of free contract.

As the case made its way to the Supreme Court, the National Consumers League, under the leadership of Florence Kelley, a former member of the Socialist Labor Party and translator of Frederick Engels into English, undertook to defend the protective statutes of Oregon. She first sought the aid of the well-known New York lawyer, Joseph H. Choate, who said to her: "Big, strong Irish laundry women? Why shouldn't they work longer?"

Louis B. Brandeis, later to become a justice of the Supreme Court, volunteered as counsel for the League. Working with his sister-in-law, Josephine Goldmark, he assembled a veritable army of researchers who combed the Columbia University Library, the New York Public Library and the Library of Congress, gathering information which would prove the necessity for limiting the workday for women. The resulting "Brandeis brief" contained two pages of law and over a hundred pages on the life of the working woman documented by physicians, sociologists, criminologists, experts in housing and hygiene, factory inspectors and industrial commissions in both the U.S. and Europe.

On 15 January 1908, Brandeis argued his case before the Supreme Court and won. During the following eight years, 41 states enacted new or improved legislation limiting the number of hours for which women could be employed.

### **The National Women's Trade Union League**

One organization which led the fight to extend protective labor legislation for women in the first

*continued on next page*

## Working Women's Rights...

decade of the 20th century was the National Women's Trade Union League (NWTUL). Generally speaking, the early feminist movement and the early trade-union movement in the U.S., as in Europe, remained quite separate. The feminist movement was bourgeois and petty-bourgeois in composition and led by women from old American families. Its primary aim was woman suffrage. The working women's movement, led for the most part by Irish and Jewish immigrants, was much less interested in the vote and much more concerned with jobs at decent wages.

The legendary Mother Jones, for 50 years an organizer for the Knights of Labor and the mineworkers, once shocked a meeting of genteel suffragists by telling them that women did not need the vote to raise hell like she did—only convictions and a strong voice. In Colorado, she said, women had had the vote for two generations, and men and women were still bound in the slavery of the mines. Politics was the servant of industry, and for working women, economic justice came before the vote. She counseled the suffragists to help the unions first, and get the vote afterwards.

In the main, this advice went unheeded by the suffragists, the goals of the two movements being dictated by their respective class interests. But for a brief time in the first decade of the century the settlement houses established in working-class neighborhoods by such reformers as Jane Addams, Lillian Wald and Margaret Dreier Robins did lead to some joint work by working women and middle-class suffragists.

In 1903 a small group of trade unionists and some "friends of labor" from the settlement houses formed the National Women's Trade Union League. Its program was:

1. Organization of all workers into trade unions
2. Equal pay for equal work
3. A minimum wage scale
4. An eight-hour day
5. Full citizenship rights for women
6. All economic principles included in the program of the American Federation of Labor [AFL; i.e., an explicitly capitalist economic program].

Subordinated from its inception to the program of the AFL's craft-union bureaucracy, the NWTUL soon degenerated from a group dedicated to organizing working women to one strictly concerned with lobbying for protective legislation—a far more familiar and comfortable role for the settlement house do-gooders. During the decade or so of its existence, however, the NWTUL participated in a series of important strikes of women workers. These included the New York garment workers strike (1909); the Chicago garment workers strike (1910-11); and the Lawrence Textile strike (1912).

After 1913 the NWTUL retreated increasingly into eclectic social work, and, following the U.S. entry into the war in 1917, the NWTUL, like similar organizations in other belligerent countries, abandoned even these feeble efforts in favor of an intensive drive to aid the

war effort. Not at all coincidentally, the NWTUL was to emerge in the post-war period as a leading opponent of the Equal Rights Amendment.

### Birth of the Equal Rights Amendment

Of all the feminist organizations in the U.S., only the Women's Party continued to agitate for suffrage during the war. The Women's Party was an offshoot of the Congressional Unions of the National American Suffrage Association, which had been led by Harriet Stanton Blatch (daughter of pioneer suffragist, Elizabeth Cady Stanton) and Alice Paul. With the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment, giving women the vote, on 18 August 1919, the Women's Party turned its attention to a new campaign for an Equal Rights Amendment to the Constitution. The proposed amendment immediately faced opposition in the trade-union movement on the grounds that it would undermine protective legislation for women.

Initially, although it continued to oppose in principle any legal differentiation in the treatment of men and women, the Women's Party compromised with the labor movement by adding a clause to the proposed amendment exempting protective factory legislation.

The NWTUL, however, having undergone a right turn, continued to oppose the ERA even with the escape clause. The Women's Party then suggested that protective labor legislation not be eliminated but rather extended to men. But opposition continued.

Although the AFL had done little to fight for protective legislation for women before World War I, during the war AFL president Samuel Gompers became intrigued with its potential for controlling the masses of working women flooding the factories and for getting rid of them when the war was over.

The communist Workers Party opposed the ERA from the beginning on the ultra-leftist argument that women had nothing to gain from legal equality:

"The laws desired by the Women's Party are mainly such as concern middle-class women and with that in mind it is obvious that women of the proletariat have nothing to gain from them. On the other hand there is a feature [the elimination of protective legislation] which is of great danger to them if this bill is adopted."

—"Bourgeois Women's Bill of Rights Before the Assembly," *The Worker* 1 April 1922

Finally, the ERA was opposed by the League of Women Voters, which saw its task as the education of the newly enfranchised female population. Through education, the League believed, all society's ills could be eliminated—one by one. The League felt that a blanket endorsement of equal rights for women was too radical.

In 1923 the Women's Party dropped its proposal to extend protective legislation and instead mounted a campaign to eliminate it, thus removing it as an obstacle to support for the ERA. It opened this campaign by challenging the constitutionality of a Washington, D.C. minimum wage law for women, and winning. The Supreme Court ruled that the law was unconstitutional. This ruling, which became a widely cited legal precedent, had a devastating effect on minimum wage legislation for a considerable period of time.

Proponents of protective legislation were enraged at



**New York garment workers following a victorious strike for a shorter work week, 1919.**

National Archives

this vicious betrayal of working women by the Women's Party. Trade-union militant and socialist, Ella Reeve ("Mother") Bloor, charged that the once-militant Women's Party had degenerated to "a narrow, anti-labour sect," but, in truth, most of its members had simply reverted to their fundamental bourgeois concept of freedom and equality. Disgusted with these "friends of labor," Bloor turned, at the age of 57, to the new Communist Party(CP).

For nearly 50 years the opposition of the left and labor movements to the ERA would remain solid.

### **The ERA and Protective Legislation During World War II**

Although the ERA continued to be put forward and defeated every year, it was not a major issue again until 1943. In that year, the amendment finally made its way through the seemingly endless maze of Congressional committees and appeared on the docket of the 78th Congress as Bill No. 1.

The Second World War, like the First, brought masses of women into the work force, and renewed support for the ERA fit into efforts to eliminate all laws which stood in the way of their maximum utilization for war production. This put the Communist Party in the awkward position of formally defending protective legislation against the threat of the ERA while actually seeking every opportunity to suspend such legislation on behalf of increased war production, supposedly in defense of the "Soviet fatherland":

"The women workers of America, like their brothers, are willing to cheerfully make any sacrifice necessary to win the war. They have not protested against suspension of some rules, such as those which apply to night work, if it is essential to production. But labor will not tolerate legislative attempts to rob them of their industrial rights. Their wartime abrogation is a voluntary act by labor as a contribution to the war effort."

—Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, "Who's Behind the Bogus 'Equal' Rights Amendment?" *Daily Worker*, 12 January 1943

The CP favorably compared working women's "voluntary act" of waiving protective legislation for the duration of the war with the heinous no-strike pledges which it championed in the trade unions—while hypocritically proclaiming its "relentless" opposition to any *permanent* betrayal of the working class.

The *Daily Worker* advised its readers to depend on "brave and well-informed" congressmen and senators to oppose the ERA and protect the rights of working women: "Progressive labor men and women, a large and valiant part of the win-the-war forces, must make very clear to them the issues involved.... Write your Congressmen and senators today on this issue." One article (Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, "Some Fundamental Reasons for Opposing 'Equal' Rights Law," *Daily Worker*, 21 January 1943) praised the "excellent statement" of opposition to the ERA made by the National Council of Catholic Women and lamented: "It is unfortunate that Congressmen of Catholic faith are not as clear sighted as these women were...."

The then-revolutionary Socialist Workers Party (SWP) also opposed the ERA on the grounds that in the context of an overall campaign to crush the independence of the working class in the name of the war, it represented a capitalist attack on the class which had to be defeated. In opposition to the CP, the SWP denounced chauvinist support for the inter-imperialist war, declared its commitment to defend and extend the hard-won gains of the working class embodied in protective legislation for women, offered working women a program which both addressed their immediate needs and pointed the way forward to a society based on concern for human well-being, and counseled workers to place no confidence in the bourgeois government but to rely solely on the collective strength of the working class:

"The Dec. 27 *CIO News* suggested a 'New Year's Resolution' for all government agencies concerned in recruiting women for war jobs: the launching of a

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"Mother" Jones picketing a Pennsylvania steel plant in 1919. To her right is future CP leader William Z. Foster.

United Steelworkers of America

## Working Women's Rights...

national campaign to help solve the problems confronting women workers. Its author pointed out that money now wasted in training women who cannot remain in their jobs could pay for adequate child care facilities, recreational programs for young people, government restaurants where meals could be served at cost, and so forth. In addition, shopping facilities and laundry services could be improved.

"The mere publication of these suggestions however will not end the problem, nor will it 'pressure' the government into action....

"The unions have the responsibility of taking the lead in aiding women workers, by demanding a continuation and strengthening of protective legislation, to minimize physical causes of fatigue; staggered shopping time, to make continuation of home duties possible; equal pay for equal work, and adequate nurseries, conveniently located in working class neighborhoods, financed by the government, and run under the direction and control of the unions.

"This represents a minimum union program today to meet the needs of women workers who comprise a majority of the working force in many industries. Such a program will prove to the women workers, many of whom are new to unionism, that their problems can only be solved through the instrumentality of the labor movement."

—R. Johnson, "Problems of Women Workers in War Industry," *The Militant*, 11 March 1944

## The ERA Today

Today the Equal Rights Amendment is again challenged on the grounds that it threatens protective labor legislation, with leftists, feminists and working-class militants divided on the question.

Clearly, neither support for nor opposition to the ERA is in itself a reliable indicator of an over-all class-struggle perspective. It is historical irony that the SWP, which in its revolutionary period erred in opposing the

ERA—along with Eleanor Roosevelt and the National Council of Catholic Women—today, when it has degenerated into a reformist organization, correctly supports the ERA—along with Rosalynn Carter and the bourgeois National Organization for Women.

The Spartacist League, which is committed to the full emancipation of women through workers revolution, supports the Equal Rights Amendment (see "Why We Support the E.R.A.," *Women and Revolution*, No. 4, Fall 1973), but it refuses to choose between equality of democratic rights and protective labor laws.

To accept the proposition that any further extension of democratic rights for women must be "paid" for by the loss of protective legislation is to accept the terms of capitalism and to abandon the struggle for full democratic rights for women. These terms are accepted by opportunist labor bureaucrats and other reformists who admonish the working class that it must give up something in order to get something—give up job seniority, for instance, to get more job opportunities for women and blacks through "affirmative action" programs. These terms are unacceptable.

The tasks of the vanguard party encompass the struggles for every immediate need of the working people—e.g., free 24-hour childcare; free quality health care; union control of hiring on a first-come, first-served basis; equal pay for equal work, etc.—in the context of seeking to mobilize the proletariat to smash capitalism and constitute a workers government.

Like its revolutionary predecessors, the Spartacist League entrusts its confidence for the liberation of women solely to the working class. We support the ERA from the standpoint of the working class and with no illusions that it will achieve equality for women. We support it as we would support any statement affirming democratic rights, but our support in no way diminishes our determination to defend and extend the gains which the working class has fought so hard to achieve. ■

## French Feminists...

(continued from page 9)

and women, in the trade unions and elsewhere. As Lenin stated in *What Is to Be Done?*, a revolutionist must seek to be "a tribune of the people, able to react to every manifestation of tyranny and oppression, no matter where it takes place, no matter what stratum or class of the people it affects."

The many aspects of the Trotskyist program raised at the forum convened by the iSt effectively demonstrated that the "woman question" is not an isolated question. The reactionary positions on the woman question put forward by the bureaucrats, reformists and centrists call their entire programs into question.

### Not "Autonomy" But a Woman's Section of the Reforged Fourth International

It has been amply demonstrated that the bogus "autonomy" of the women's movement is always and everywhere a code word for anti-communist exclusion. In opposition to the petty-bourgeois illusion of autonomy and the self-defeating sectoralism of the feminists, Cde. Lenz of the German section of the iSt, the *Trotzkistische Liga Deutschlands* (TLD), outlined at Vincennes the iSt's winning strategy for women's liberation based on that of the Third Congress of the Communist International (CI) under Lenin and Trotsky.

Realizing that prolonged oppression retards the social development of the oppressed, the CI had sought to adopt special organizational forms to reach the masses of women—often isolated by ignorance, illiteracy and confinement to the home—and to encourage their political development. Special bodies of men and women were created which, under the guidance of party leadership, were to carry out this work.

But in creating women's sections of the party, the CI by no means endorsed the concept of an autonomous women's movement. On the contrary, the women's sections were an *arm* of the proletarian party. While a degree of *organizational* independence was considered desirable for a women's section—as for a youth section—in order to facilitate the development of cadres, such a section was intended to be neither a substitute for nor an opponent of the vanguard party, but was to be politically subordinate to the party and linked to it through its most conscious cadres. Its program was to be the full transitional program of the vanguard party.

The *Ligue Trotskyiste de France* alone offers French women a revolutionary perspective—one dedicated to combatting the special oppression of women without sinking into the swamp of anti-working-class feminism. In collaboration with other sections of the iSt, the LTF seeks to construct the nucleus of a Trotskyist party in France linked to the traditions of Bolshevism and the Fourth International of Leon Trotsky; a party which will mobilize masses of women in the struggle for the dictatorship of the proletariat. It is in the furtherance of this goal that the LTF intervenes in the women's movement to advance the line of class struggle against the dead-end ideology of feminism and to lead working women to a revolutionary perspective. ■

## Smash Apartheid Terror...

(continued from page 6)

class society continues to exist. Their road to "peace" will one day lead to the expropriation of the Oppenheimer empire. In the meantime, Mrs. Oppenheimer's little charity provides a liberal cover for the naked brutality and reactionary policies of the South African government and sows the insidious illusion of liberation through class collaboration. Apparently this illusion is shared by the ANC (which is built and politically guided by the Communist Party), since the South African Black Women's Federation which it supports has pledged its "firm support" to Women for Peace—and thus by implication to Harry Oppenheimer's liberal Progressive Federal Party.

### Women, Apartheid and the Colonial Question

South Africa, like many colonial countries, seeks to transform its labor force into a giant, migratory industrial reserve army which trudges to the urban shantytowns in times of boom and is sent back to the hinterlands in times of bust. Those men used up and crushed by capitalist exploitation are to be dumped back into the countryside to be added to the burdens of women struggling to raise the next generation of wage slaves. Women who partially escape the drudgery of family life (or what passes for it) to sell their labor on the market, generally in jobs that are extensions of domestic work, daily encounter countless acts of discrimination and degradation.

These conditions are standard for women in all colonial countries. Apartheid has merely rendered them more acute and "institutionalized" in South Africa.

Capitalism long ago fulfilled its historic mission of raising an independent bourgeoisie to power through enfranchisement of part of the population, national integration that swept away feudal autarky and an agrarian revolution that destroyed the medieval estates and serfdom. Apartheid is the product of a nascent imperialist power striving to take its place in the world market at a time when capitalism is in its death agony.

Every step in the development of South African capitalism has necessitated running the film of bourgeois revolution backward: the disfranchisement of a people, the creation of tribal autarky, the creation of feudal and pre-feudal property relations in land. But at the same time, every step in the development of South African capitalism has necessitated the development of an increasingly *powerful* black industrial proletariat. The ruthless repression of apartheid is predicated upon the bourgeoisie's *fear* of that proletariat, which it knows to be its gravedigger.

Apartheid can be smashed only by smashing capitalism. At the same time, backed by the social weight of the industrial proletariat, the class struggle against apartheid in all of its manifestations will surely unleash the boulder that crushes white supremacy and opens the road to a black-centered workers and peasants government where the laboring masses of South Africa can reclaim their wealth and their birthright. ■



**OCT. 7th**    INDIANA FAIR GROUNDS  
**COLISEUM**    **8:00 P.M.**



**DR. JERRY FALWELL.**

**OUR GOALS: TO REINSTATE SODOMY AS A FELONY IN THE STATE OF INDIANA — TO STRENGTHEN THE LAWS ON RAPE, PORNOGRAPHY, CHILD PORNOGRAPHY, ETC. — TO ELECT RESPONSIBLE LAWMAKERS LOCAL, STATE AND FEDERAL. WE ALSO OPPOSE ABORTION ON DEMAND AND E.R.A.**



**DR. DON BOYS**



**ANITA BRYANT**  
 IN CONCERT  
 SINGING INSPIRING SONGS  
 TAKING A STAND FOR DECENCY

The anti-homosexual hate campaign led by Anita Bryant has rallied the most viciously reactionary elements in capitalist society.

Gay Community News

## Homosexual Oppression...

(continued from page 24)

as a result of their appetites to chase after every constituency that's "in motion," end up presenting "programs" for each separate group, and often "programs" at the implicit expense of other courted sectors—a direct contradiction of the role of the vanguard party to represent the historic interests of the proletariat and therefore to defend all of the oppressed. The most notorious of the "polyvanguardists" is of course the Socialist Workers Party with its "revolutionary programs" for women, blacks, Chicanos, homosexuals, etc. In the SWP's case this is conscious revisionism in the service of opportunist appetites. But the RFU was not trying to tail its "constituency," and we even thought we had rejected sectoralism. In our case, we were groping for a communist program and had not yet broken from the idea of being the left wing of the gay milieu. Through discussions and political struggle—something quite different from Maoist "crit/self-crit"—with the SL we came to see that our central slogan represented a programmatic distillation of sectoralism. To resolve the outstanding differences the RFU had to come to terms not only with the revolutionary approach to homosexual oppression but also with the meaning of program for communists.

### Sectoralism and Program

In June 1977 we accepted orthodox Marxist views about revolutionary program in an article entitled "Introduction to the Revolutionary Program" (*Red Flag* No. 1, June 1977):

"The program is the basic document of the party, the concentrated written expression of its analysis of the world, its aims, and the methods by which those aims are pursued. It includes a concrete plan of action and demands. It is the summation of the common understanding that is the basis of the party's unity and all its actions. The concrete demands, which are also the party's key slogans, form the bridge between the presently felt needs of the masses and their historic role, between their currently limited and even backward consciousness and their objective tasks in changing the world."

Furthermore, our study of Trotsky had convinced us of the idea that building the vanguard party could be accomplished only on the basis of firm programmatic agreement:

"Finally, the program is the basis for the cohesion and discipline of the party, without which it is inconceivable that revolution can be accomplished. Trotsky put it very well in some conversations with American revolutionaries about the draft of the transitional program. 'Now what is the party? In what does the cohesion consist? This cohesion is a common understanding of the events, of the tasks, and this common understanding—that is the program of the party'...."

Yet our residual sectoralism narrowed our programmatic focus to the attempt to find the road to liberate homosexuals. Our article entitled "What Is the Importance of Gay Liberation?" (*Come Out Fighting*, May 1977) was devoted to arguing that homosexual oppression is not central to the class struggle. We were unequivocal about the relative social weight and importance of homosexuals and blacks in the U.S.:

"A strategic question is any contradiction that poses a fundamental block to the unification of the working class and is incontestably a principal obstacle to revolution; without its correct resolution, the seizure of power, the beginning of socialist revolution, cannot be achieved.... The Black question is a strategic question, and the Gay question is not."

But we had not yet drawn the full programmatic implications from this understanding. We were still influenced by sectoralist pressure from our milieu; we wanted to find "programmatic" guarantees that gay oppression would not be perpetuated after the socialist revolution. We were also trying to forestall the charge that we were abandoning the cause of gay liberation.

At the end of this long article we put forth the "L&RU's Program for Gay Liberation," the "exact programmatic demands we will raise." This special "program for liberation" included a number of democratic demands relating to gay oppression under capitalism. But then, "under workers rule," we called for "nationalization of, with state support for, gay bars, baths, community centers, clinics, restaurants, publications, etc."—a sort of community control of the gay ghettos. All of these demands, we said, "can be summarized" in the slogan "Gay Liberation through Socialist Revolution." After we coined the slogan, it was adopted by a variety of fake-left groups.

It took a certain amount of political courage for us to raise such a slogan in opposition to "gay is good," for example. Our intent was to distinguish ourselves from the reformist right wing of the gay movement by

explicitly rejecting the notion that homosexual oppression could be eliminated under capitalism.

But the slogan was a reflection of our sectoralist political background. For sectoralists, the communist movement is seen as an amalgam of various oppressed strata rather than as a solitary movement with a singular program. In this context it seemed logical that the task of the "revolutionary" elements among each oppressed group should be to call on their constituency to support the socialist revolution. But the sum total of individual programs which address the various forms of capitalist oppression is not a communist program.

The program of the revolutionary party must express the *objective* historical interests and tasks of the international proletariat. There is only one communist program. Thus, the purpose of Trotsky's Transitional Program is to mobilize the entire working class—to bridge the gap between felt needs and objective tasks, between consciousness of oppression and the need to take state power under the leadership of the proletariat vanguard.

There is no special revolutionary program for homosexuals. The communist program includes demands which address the special oppression of homosexuals. But unlike sectoralists, revolutionaries understand that the fate of homosexuals—like that of any other oppressed group—is determined by the course of the class struggle.

Revolutionary Marxists approach the question of homosexual oppression as the only consistent defenders of democratic rights for all the exploited and oppressed. These rights are indivisible and can be secured only with the proletariat in power. The slogan "Full Democratic Rights for Homosexuals" means a commitment not only to fight against such abuses as job discrimination and legal inequality, but also to mobilize the power of the working class in defense of homosexuals' democratic rights. It is not a separate demand for homosexuals, but a demand in the interests of the entire working class.

The Trotskyist program is not only the Transitional Program, which Trotsky described as "a program for action from today until the beginning of the socialist revolution"; it is also everything the party stands for—on both sides of the proletarian revolution.

### The Program and the Revolution

The socialist program is committed to the eradication of homosexual oppression, which is linked to the special oppression of women. The sexual division of labor based on child-rearing became a source of social oppression in class society. The nuclear family conditions sex roles which are inherently oppressive to those who deviate from the accepted sex role norms. While proletarian rule will do much to end homosexual oppression, the final eradication of all ideological oppression of homosexuals cannot occur until the family is replaced in socialist society.

Unlike the oppression of women or blacks in the U.S., the oppression of homosexuals is not directly based on the *economic institutions* of capitalism. Black workers, for instance, are disproportionately concen-

trated in the least skilled, lowest paid layers of the working people and among the unemployed. Thus, the overturn of capitalist productive relations will be a decisive and immediate step toward ending their oppression. Much of the oppression of homosexuals is situated in the realm of discriminatory denial of democratic rights. Homosexuals (like blacks and women, for that matter) will benefit immediately from the victorious proletarian dictatorship's assault on discriminatory laws and practices. But they will still continue to suffer from pervasive hostile social *attitudes* deeply ingrained in the residual nuclear family sex role norms of the culture of a transitional society.

The new transitional society can no more legislate away such attitudes than it can eliminate the family by legislation. To arrive at socialism requires a tremendous leap in the productive forces and the gradual development of real social freedom. The withering away of the family as the basic institution defining sexual relations will result in the eventual disappearance of male chauvinism, and with it of generalized anti-homosexual prejudice.

### The Russian Revolution and the Bolshevik Program

The ultimate abolition of the family has been part of the Marxist program since the *Communist Manifesto*. The Russian Revolution of October 1917 provided the example of how even a backward, largely peasant country began to create the basis to replace the family. In the first few years of the proletarian dictatorship, under the leadership of Lenin and Trotsky, anti-homosexual laws were struck down and many measures were undertaken with the goal of liberating women from household slavery: kitchens, child care, laundry, dwellings and schools were collectivized. This task was pursued even under the harsh conditions of war and famine.

But the Bolshevik program also recognized that the revolution isolated in Russia could not advance to socialist society. For that, there would have to be revolution in the West. And so the Bolshevik program was necessarily *internationalist* at its core. It was Stalin who concocted the rationale for the consolidation of a bureaucratic caste in Russia with the nationalistic program of "Socialism in One Country." The revolution degenerated, and with that came Stalinist class colla-

*continued on next page*

## WOMEN AND REVOLUTION

*published by the Women's Commission of the Spartacist League*

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NEW YORK, 12 November—Two thousand people demonstrated here against Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare, Joseph Califano, protesting HEW cutbacks in health care and the reactionary Hyde Amendment, which stopped all federal Medicaid funding of elective abortions.

Last year 300,000 women depended on state and federal funds for abortions. With these sources cut off, thousands of poor women will be forced to put themselves in the hands of back-alley butchers.

The Hyde Amendment has already claimed its first known victim. In October a 27-year-old Mexican-American woman died in a hospital in McAllen, Texas, from complications resulting from the cheap abortion she had had in a nearby Mexican border town. The woman carried a Medicaid card, but it was worthless to her since the federal government had stopped paying for abortions for poor women on August 4. Dozens of other women have also been admitted to hospitals suffering complications from illegal abortions. More deaths are certain to follow.

Jimmy Carter, who hypocritically extols "human rights," once more exposed his callous disregard for human beings when he coldly commented on the discriminatory Hyde Amendment: "There are many things in life that are not fair." Carter has also backed up Califano, who says that he is personally opposed to abortion and would not support the use of Medicaid funds even in instances of rape or incest. And to clear up any lingering doubts about his position, Califano appointed Dr. Mildred Jefferson, former president of the National Right to Life Committee, to head family planning services for HEW!

But apparently this has not been sufficient to deter reformist and feminist organizations from their strategy of pathetic pleading and "pressure tactics" directed at the government and the liberal Democrats who dominated the protest demonstration.

For years the Spartacist League counterposed the demand for free abortion to the Socialist Workers Party's (SWP) "Repeal all abortion laws!"—a minimal demand designed to conciliate bourgeois feminist opinion in its Women's National Abortion Action Coalition (WONAAC) front group. Now many abortion laws have been repealed—but the poor women who continue to die from illegal, unsanitary abortions constitute the sharpest denunciation of the SWP's criminal policy of class collaboration. The SWP continues to pander to feminism by making every effort to blend into the bourgeois feminist National Organization for Women (NOW). Prominent SWPers, such as Diane Feeley, who spoke at the demonstration, identified themselves only as members of NOW.

The Spartacist League intervened, as it has for more than a decade, with the perspective of an independent working-class mobilization to win the right of abortion on demand for all women. *For Free Abortion on Demand! For Free Quality Health Care for All!*



W&R Photo

## Homosexual Oppression...

boration and terror. The nuclear family was reinforced, and laws against homosexuals were reinstated.

The Russian Revolution demonstrates how the proletariat led by its vanguard party moves immediately to establish institutions appropriate to its rule. So it establishes soviets (workers councils) while it seeks to lay the basis for replacing the nuclear family. But where capitalism is overthrown by peasant and petty-bourgeois forces, such as in China or Cuba, under the class-collaborationist program of "Socialism in One Country," the bureaucracy fosters institutions appropriate to the peasantry and Stalinism—institutions which replicate the product of the Stalinist degeneration of the Russian Revolution: prison camps for revolutionaries and "deviants," the strengthening of the nuclear family.

Many New Leftists fall into the bourgeoisie's trap of equating Leninism with Stalinism; the degenerated workers state in the USSR is seen as the "natural"

outgrowth of the Bolshevik revolution. In actuality, the revolution fell prey to a political counterrevolution. The goal of abolition of the nuclear family which had hitherto been a hallmark of the communist program was replaced by the Stalinist program of the family as a "fighting unit for socialism." No "autonomous gay movement" could have exempted homosexuals from the consequences of the Stalinist political counterrevolution, which exterminated the "Old Bolsheviks," liquidated the workers councils, reversed the drive toward progressive social institutions and turned the Communist International into an instrument of class collaboration and "peaceful coexistence."

It was only when the RFU came to grips with the continuity of revolutionary Marxism—Trotskyism—that we were able to explain the degeneration of the Russian Revolution and its consequences for homosexuals in the "socialist" countries. Because the Spartacist League uniquely understood the Russian question and the primacy of program, it could play the decisive role in the transformation of the comrades of the RFU from gay left activists into revolutionary communists. ■

# FUSION DECLARATION

—reprinted from *Workers Vanguard* No. 171,  
2 September 1977

The Spartacist League/U.S. and the Red Flag Union (formerly Lavender & Red Union), a collective which developed out of the gay liberation/Maoist/New Left milieu have reached programmatic convergence on essential questions facing revolutionary Marxists:

I. Trotskyism is the revolutionary Marxism of our epoch, today embodied in the program of the international Spartacist tendency. The urgent task is the construction of the Trotskyist vanguard party to resolve the crisis of revolutionary leadership.

A brief summary of a programmatic model for a principled internationalist regroupment was recently presented in *Workers Vanguard*:

1. No political or electoral support to popular fronts; for conditional opposition to workers parties in open or implicit class collaborationist coalitions;
2. Uphold the Trotskyist theory of permanent revolution; for proletarian leadership of the national-social struggle;
3. For military support to petty-bourgeois nationalist forces fighting imperialism, but absolutely no political support to such forces; for Trotskyist parties in every country;
4. For unconditional defense of all deformed/degenerated workers states against imperialism; for political revolution against the bureaucracies; no political support to competing Stalinist cliques and factions;
5. Against violence within the workers movement;
6. For communist fractions in the unions, based on the transitional program;
7. For the communist tactic of the united front from above; for the tactic of regroupment to unite subjective revolutionists in the vanguard party; for intransigent exposure of centrism;
8. Rejection of the claims of ostensibly Trotskyist internationals to speak for the Fourth International, destroyed by Pabloism in 1951-53;
9. For the reforging of a democratic-centralist Fourth International which will stop at nothing short of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

II. In particular, the principled Trotskyist fusion of the SL-RFU affirms the Leninist position on special oppression, democratic rights and the vanguard party. The special oppression of homosexuals, unlike that of blacks in the United States, is not a strategic question for the proletarian revolution. At the same time, the defense of democratic rights—which are indivisible and include full democratic rights for homosexuals—is essential to the intervention of revolutionaries in the class struggle.

These positions were codified during the fusion process in the press of both organizations:

"The oppressed of society are generally painfully aware of their own special oppression; in fact, the radicalism of the 1960's made a principle out of the separate organization of strata of the oppressed: blacks, women, homosex-

uals, for example. But it is only when consciousness of oppression transcends the subjective and partial and becomes class consciousness that an effective fight against the common enemy—the capitalist system—can be waged on behalf of all the exploited and oppressed....

"The vanguard party of the working class is the force which integrates the will to resist all forms of degradation by the capitalist system. The vanguard party must be the 'tribune of the people,' championing the rights and aspirations of all the working people and specially oppressed....

"Unity of the opponents of social oppression can be achieved only on a clear class program, which has no place for Stalinist conciliationism of backward prejudices or for the comforting illusion of 'personal liberation' within this viciously racist and sexist capitalist society."

—"Stop Anita Bryant," *WV* No. 162, 17 June 1977

\* \* \*

"A communist, who is homosexual, or any communist, does not for the most part have the luxury of 'coming out.' A communist seeks to be identified exclusively in people's minds in terms of the party and program they represent. The sexual identity or personal characteristics of the individual are not the concern of others. By being a representative of the communist vanguard one makes oneself a walking target for the bourgeoisie, one invites harassment even above and beyond that suffered by the oppressed masses. Therefore, it is the obligation of the party to do everything in its power to shield its supporters from such victimization."

—"Closet Rule Frame-Up," *Red Flag* No. 2, July 1977

\* \* \*

"The SL and the RFU... seek to intercept the left wing of the gay liberation milieu in order to win the most advanced elements to the program of Trotskyism. At the same time, revolutionaries do not seek to build the gay 'movement'....

"The SL won the RFU not by tailing its polyvanguardism, but through a sharp struggle to break the group from sectoralism and to win it to a defense of the deformed and degenerated workers states against imperialism."

—"Gay Liberation and the Left," *WV* No. 168, 29 July 1977

\* \* \*

III. The SL-RFU fusion demonstrates the power and correctness of the Trotskyist analysis in drawing the class line on the Russian question, against which a small minority broke from the RFU to anti-Soviet Shachtmanism:

"The Bolshevik Revolution of October 1917 was a monumental historic advance; all opponents of capitalist exploitation and oppression must learn its lessons.... An important revolutionary act, guided by the principle that the state has no business interfering in private consensual sexual relations, was the abolition of reactionary anti-homosexual legislation. The revolution laid the material basis for replacing the stultifying enslavement of women in the nuclear family with personal relations freed from economic coercion and philistine moralism. Thus, the

*continued on page 23*

# SL/RFU Fusion Rattles Freedom Socialist Party

In one of its rare political outings away from Seattle, the "socialist-feminist" Freedom Socialist Party (FSP) ventured to appear in Los Angeles on June 10-12 at the Stonewall '77 Conference called by the Red Flag Union (RFU, formerly Lavender & Red Union). This conference played a decisive role in paving the way for the fusion of the Red Flag Union and the Spartacist League (see the fusion declaration elsewhere in this issue of *Women and Revolution*). The conference came at the culmination of a long period of intense, clarifying political struggle between the RFU and the Spartacist League, during which time the RFU underwent a decisive internal struggle over the class nature of the Soviet Union and the deformed workers states which resulted in a factional split in the organization. A small minority declared its loyalty to the latter-day Shachtmanites, the Revolutionary Socialist League (RSL), while the RFU majority and the SL reached programmatic agreement on most of the important questions facing the working-class movement.

The political transformation which the RFU was experiencing, and the various political currents which had emerged in the process, were naturally reflected at this conference, to the amazement and consternation of the FSPers. Having come to cheer on the gay militants and boost their sectoral struggle for gay rights, the FSPers were bewildered to find themselves confronted with a heated debate on the Russian question and the question of the nature of a Leninist party—a debate from which they abstained. Unexpectedly relegated to the sidelines and cheated out of the pleasure of encouraging and exhorting their gay "brothers," the FSPers found solace in slandering the SL with the epithet "anti-gay," which is these opportunists' way of saying that the SL refuses to capitulate to polyvanguardism and sectoralism. This "anti-gay" slander, absurdly directed at the organization which has just effected fusion with the most advanced section of the gay liberation milieu, is now immortalized in the erratically published in-house newspaper and family album of the FSP ("Spartacist Betrayal: Lavender & Red Union Dumps Gay Liberation," *The Freedom Socialist*, Summer 1977).

The article, which is ominously illustrated with vultures—presumably representing SLers picking over the bones of the RFU—laments the RFU's "cynical abandonment of the gay movement" as demonstrated by its fusion with the "notoriously antigay and anti-feminist Spartacist League." Under a section entitled "They'll None of Them Be Missed," The FSP bitterly attacks the former RFUers as "gay Uncle Toms," whom, they say, "will never be able to shuffle away the movement's dynamic force, vitality and future." Such vituperation is hardly surprising from an organization which had just been spurned in its own efforts to attract

the RFU despite its manifest willingness to surmount every obstacle to political affiliation—not excluding political principle. What is more shameless is the vilification of the very same RFUers who had just been characterized in the previous issue of *Freedom Socialist* as "joining the thousands of other radical independents searching for direction," and credited for struggling throughout the three-year existence of the L&RU/RFU "to develop a doctrine capable of linking gay liberation with socialism." But this was written when the FSP still entertained hopes of pulling the RFU into its orbit.

The real basis of the FSP's attacks is its anti-Marxist position that the woman question has "equal and interlocking status with the class question." What the FSP terms a "cynical abandonment of the gay movement" is, in fact, the RFU's assertion of the primacy of the proletariat in revolutionary struggle; i.e., the RFU's decisive turn to Marxism.

Despite the FSP's claim that the RFU will not be missed, the fusion of the RFU and the SL dealt a heavy blow to the FSP's efforts to regroup a U.S. section of the United Secretariat which would be loyal to the International Majority Tendency (IMT) led by Ernest Mandel. The RFU/SL fusion robbed the IMTers of a component of organizational stability so lacking in this regroupment and undercut its pretensions to holding an exclusive franchise on the struggle for women's and gay liberation.

Apparently fearful that its ridiculous "anti-gay" slander would be insufficient to indict the SL beyond all reasonable doubt, the FSP article also features a rogue's gallery of mug shots of various SL spokesmen (including three ex-RFUers) captioned with choice examples of the SL's supposedly anti-homosexual vituperation:

"When you say communist, that's not feminist! Affirmative Action is bullshit! It's just a ploy of the government! ...

"We do not believe communists should build the autonomous movement! What communists must do is to lead it; we do not need to build it! ...

"Gay identity is not a good thing. Sissies will not make the revolution! ...

"Yes, we have a closet rule in the Spartacist League for everybody! There are certain things you are willing to give up! ...

"The gay struggle is purely peripheral to the class struggle, a secondary issue!"

As fragmented and removed from context as these statements are, they are not embarrassing to the SL. On the contrary, these quotes do credit to various aspects of our analysis of the gay question; particularly our insistence that gay oppression is not central to the class struggle and that, while communists aggressively defend the democratic rights of homosexuals and other oppressed social sectors, they seek to lead a working-

class revolution which transcends all sectoral struggles. They do not build petty-bourgeois movements of the oppressed but rather include the struggle for democratic rights within the struggle for proletarian rule.

The statement made by an RFUer which the FSP finds so shocking that "Sissies will not make a revolution," is an affirmation that homosexual leftists who want to be effective proletarian fighters must seek to throw off their oppression rather than wallow in it, as the FSP would have them do, and join the ranks of the vanguard party.

### FSP Needs No "Closet Rule"

The RFU minority, the FSP and the Revolutionary Socialist League have all tried to scandalize the SL by "exposing" its so-called closet rule. This refers to a long-standing organizational rule applicable to all members without exception which states:

"Members will not in their personal appearance, habits, conduct or life styles be either a serious or chronic detriment to the SL."

Its importance for comrades who happen to be homosexual was pointed out in an article which appeared in *Red Flag*, the newspaper of the Red Flag Union:

"A communist who is a homosexual, or any communist, does not for the most part have the luxury of 'coming out.' A communist seeks to be identified exclusively in people's minds in terms of the party and program they represent. The sexual identity or personal characteristics of the individual are not the concern of others. By being a representative of the communist vanguard one makes oneself a walking target for the bourgeoisie, one invites harassment.... Therefore, it is the obligation of the party to do everything in its power to shield its supporters from such victimization...."

—"Closet Rule Frame-Up," *Red Flag* No. 2, July 1977

It is the policy of the SL to avoid facilitating the isolation and possible repression of its comrades by unnecessarily affronting bourgeois social norms in non-political or secondary matters.

The hypocrisy of the RSL's indignant "exposé" of this "scandalous" policy was made clear by the SL's "revelation" that the RSL and most other ostensibly revolutionary groups have essentially the same policy. If the FSP is an exception, it is only because its trade-union work is predicated on sectoralism. That is, the primary



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**FSP spokesman Laurie Morton at Stonewall '77 Conference in Los Angeles. FSP abstained from debates on Russian question and party question.**

axis of its work is sex, race or sexual preference rather than class. A "closet" rule is, therefore, unnecessary. On the contrary, conspicuous oppression is viewed as a virtue by the FSP, since it measures revolutionary potential by the severity of one's oppression.

Already intoxicated by visions of the most wretched of the earth storming the citadels of imperialist power, the FSP reached new heights of ecstasy during the wave of anti-Anita Bryant protests, which it idiotically described as "a fierce counter-offensive of historic proportions." At a joint forum prior to their fusion, the RFU and SL emphasized that far from being budding revolutionaries or even militant defenders of democratic rights for the oppressed, the gay rights demonstrators were overwhelmingly "alarmed 'liberated' homosexuals defending their right to live unaccosted by rabid animals like Anita Bryant." This was borne out by the anemic response of the "gay community" to even the liberal series of nationwide protests engineered by the SWP and supported by the FSP, which demanded that Carter extend his anti-communist "human rights" campaign to homosexuals (the FSP believes gays are the "tip of the human rights iceberg"). In the period of a few short weeks, the "fierce counter-offensive" had fizzled out.

Seeking to recapture the exhilaration of the first heady days of the Dade County protests, the FSP has started a "new gay organization in Los Angeles based on multi-issue solidarity," making it a natural twin of the FSP's Radical Women organization. "Multi-issue

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## WORKERS VANGUARD

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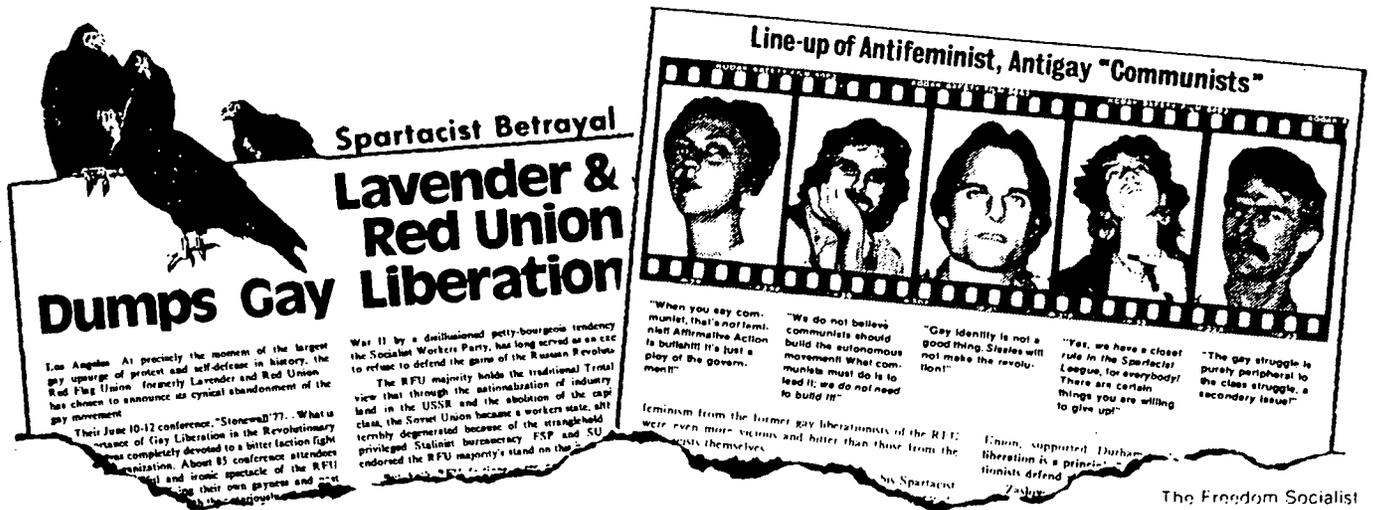
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Freedom Socialist Party seeks to smear principled SL/RFU fusion by depicting SLers as vultures and anti-homosexual "rogues."

### SL/RFU Fusion...

solidarity" is FSP double talk for its position that class struggle will be viewed as one "important" though secondary concern of such a group. These organizations serve two purposes: they are FSP front groups in particular arenas (since the FSP, which panders to the backward, sectoralist notion that only women can liberate women and only homosexuals can liberate homosexuals, finds it difficult to intervene in its own name), and they serve within the party as control commissions which purport to defend the interests of the specially oppressed against the party leadership. Such a view was codified in the Draft Statement of Purpose of the IMT regroupment, which said that the Committee for a Revolutionary Socialist Party "guarantees the right of any specially oppressed grouping in our midst—racial minorities, women, gays—to organize into caucuses for the purpose of promoting its rights and resisting any manifestation of racism, sexism, or homophobia in the organization...."

This view is completely outside Leninist norms for a vanguard party, which does not relegate the task of fighting special oppression to the specially oppressed. The FSP cannot accept the fact that any vanguard party could adequately defend the rights of homosexuals, since in its sectoralist view only gays can defend gays. But the Spartacist League insists that it is only the vanguard party as a whole which has the responsibility and the power to defend the rights of the oppressed.

### RFU and SL Deserve Each Other

Starting with the methodology that the most oppressed are the most revolutionary, the FSP reached the conclusion at the Stonewall '77 Conference that the less oppressed must be inherently more reactionary: "It's interesting that here we have a group of men turning their backs on being open gay liberation fighters, because they can afford to. They don't have to worry about possibly being brought into court over a fight over their kids...something a lesbian mother has to worry about all the time."

It is this methodology which recently led the FSP to harbor a security guard in a study group which it

sponsored, because she is a "hard-pressed Chicana feminist," while the SL was asked to leave "on the obvious grounds that they are acknowledged and virulent antifeminists" (see "Seattle Radical Women Fronts for Cops," *Women and Revolution* No. 15, Summer 1977). Incidentally, while an irate letter to the SL signed by members of the study group, including a supporter of the FSP, denies categorically that the study group was organized by or affiliated with Radical Women, *Freedom Socialist* reports: "Radical Women in San Francisco organize[d] a study group for feminists" ("Spartacist League Crazies Ride Again," *Freedom Socialist* No. 2, Summer 1977). Either the members of this study group are lying to us or the FSP has been lying to them (i.e., the FSP is operating a front group). In any case, the FSP's appeal to mushy-headed moralism on this issue is simply an attempt to divert attention from the fact that it refused to defend the elementary class-struggle position that armed agents of the bourgeoisie be excluded from the group.

The FSP, along with various other opponent organizations, is currently consoling itself after its failure to recruit the RFU with the observation that the RFU and the SL deserve each other. The Spartacist League agrees, and the Stonewall '77 Conference went a long way to demonstrate that this is correct. The *Freedom Socialist* article complains that at this conference the RFU "was even more vicious and bitter than those from the Spartacists themselves." Indeed, having recently fought its way out of the cesspool of the divisive, anti-communist gay liberation/feminist milieu in which the FSP is so at home, the RFU had an urgent message to bring to other homosexual radicals—that the first step toward socialist revolution must be the decisive rejection of the sectoralist methodology espoused by the FSP, which serves only to keep the working class divided and weak; that socialist revolution demands the building of a powerful vanguard party based on the revolutionary Trotskyist program and the reforging of the Fourth International to fight in the interests of all workers and oppressed people; and that the Spartacist League is the nucleus of that vanguard party. ■

## Fusion Declaration...

(continued from page 19)

Bolshevik program held the key to ending the oppression of homosexuals."

—"Full Democratic Rights for Homosexuals,"  
WV No. 169, 12 August 1977

\* \* \*

"To briefly summarize, our position is that of Trotsky's Fourth International supplemented by the correct extension of Marxism to the understanding of the other so-called socialist countries which is the unique contribution of the international Spartacist tendency. We call for the unconditional military defense of the gains of the October Revolution—the elimination of the bourgeoisie as a class, the creation of nationalized planned economies and the monopoly of foreign trade in the Soviet Union and the deformed workers' states—against imperialist attack and against capitalist-restorationist counterrevolution. But we stand in uncompromising opposition to Stalinism in all its nationalist varieties. We call for workers' political revolution to overthrow the ruling bureaucracies, to regenerate Soviet democracy (the democratic rule of the working class through freely elected workers' councils, or 'soviets') and to give birth again to proletarian internationalism. This revolution, we believe, can only succeed under the leadership of Trotskyist parties of the working class, united in a revolutionary international."

—Red Flag No. 2, July 1977

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The SL and the RFU, having arrived at agreement concerning the essential programmatic elements necessary for the early construction of a party capable of leading a socialist revolution, resolve to merge their human and technical resources and create a common leadership of a common organization.

14 August 1977

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## Down With "Anti-Gay" Slander!

The Freedom Socialist Party's vile slander of the Spartacist League as being "anti-gay" is refuted not only by the SL's recent fusion with the Red Flag Union (formerly Lavender & Red Union), the most advanced sector of the gay liberation milieu, but by the SL's long and intransigent history of struggle for full democratic rights for homosexuals.

The FSP cannot claim ignorance of this record. As recently as 18 August at a meeting of the National Lawyers Guild in Seattle attended by representatives of the FSP, the Partisan Defense Committee, a class struggle legal defense organization in accordance with the political views of the Spartacist League, put forward the following motion:

WHEREAS: Carter's anti-Soviet "human rights" campaign has created a fertile climate for right-wing mobilizations of all kinds, and

WHEREAS: Anita Bryant's vicious anti-homosexual campaign has joined hands with the reactionary opponents of busing, the ERA and abortion, and

WHEREAS: Democratic rights are indivisible, and an attack against the democratic rights of homosexuals is an attack against the democratic rights of all the oppressed, exploited and the entire working class, and

WHEREAS: The schools have become a focal point for several anti-democratic right-wing forces—from segregationists to book burners, to witchhunters against homosexual teachers, therefore be it

RESOLVED: That 1) the National Lawyers Guild goes on record in support of full democratic rights for homosexuals and opposes all legislation which discriminates against homosexuals (i.e., in matters of housing, employment, child custody and consensual sexual conduct), and 2) in particular—recognizing the threat to teachers—the NLG will defend the right of homosexuals to teach, will oppose any discriminatory "loyalty oath" requirements, and will encourage and support efforts of teachers' unions to defend victimized members.

IMPLEMENTATION: That the National Lawyers Guild seek the abolition of all anti-homosexual legislation.

Partisan Defense Committee

Jacob Braun

Valerie West

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18 August 1977

# Homosexual Oppression and the Communist Program

On August 14 the Red Flag Union (RFU, formerly Lavender & Red Union) and the Spartacist League merged their organizations and political futures. The fusion conference, which was the culmination of several months of intense discussion and political collaboration—including around the defense of democratic rights for homosexuals against Anita Bryant's right-wing attack—concretized the final step in the RFU's evolution from the gay liberation/New Left/Maoist milieu to the nucleus of the international Trotskyist vanguard.

The Lavender & Red Union, which was founded in Los Angeles in 1974, originally defined itself as a "Gay liberation-Communist organization." Its members viewed themselves as gay liberation activists who felt a "cultural and political identity with our people and work for our liberation," but they also realized that their aim of socialist revolution necessitated the building of a vanguard party to fight in the interests of the working class and all the oppressed. Three years later, at the point of fusion, an RFU spokesman was to say: "We did not know that we were founded on a political contradiction."

Unlike other left groups, which for their own opportunist reasons patronized the RFU, the SL sharply confronted these "gay liberation-Communists" (as it has repeatedly confronted "socialist-feminists"), seeking to clarify the contradiction between sectoralism/New Left lifestylism and genuine revolutionary Trotskyism (see "Who Lost Out...and Why," Workers Vanguard No. 172, 9 September 1977).

The SL's principled refusal to capitulate to sectoralism posed a hard programmatic choice before the RFU comrades. In the course of a political struggle and split within the RFU, the majority was solidly won to the revolutionary program of the international Spartacist tendency. Our entire organization has been enriched by fusion with these cadres.

We reprint below an article from the last issue of Red Flag, the newspaper of the Red Flag Union, which appeared as a special fusion supplement to Workers Vanguard No. 172, 9 September 1977.

The Red Flag Union and the Spartacist League have completed a fusion of our organizations on the basis of decisive programmatic agreement that developed during fusion discussions and in the process of joint political work. Before those fusion discussions began the RFU had adopted much of the Trotskyist analysis: the permanent revolution; the degeneration of the Russian Revolution and the nature of Stalinism; the crisis of revolutionary leadership and the need to reforge the Trotskyist world party, the Fourth International (see "Fusion Declaration" in Workers Vanguard No. 171, 2



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**Spartacist League/Spartacus Youth League contingent at November 3 rally in New York City against persecution of homosexuals.**

September). But programmatic stumbling blocks remained.

Much of the unclarity centered on the nature of the revolutionary program itself. As might be expected in a group shaped in the gay liberation milieu, this centered on the question of sectoralism. Thus as late as May of this year, after we had taken a theoretical position that homosexual oppression was not a "strategic question" in the revolutionary process; after we had criticized our sectoralism; after we changed our name from Lavender and Red Union to the RFU; and even after we had published an article which in the abstract offered a Marxist definition of program—then we offered our "L&RU Program for Gay Liberation." And we summarized this "program"—actually a shopping list of demands—in the slogan, "Gay Liberation through Socialist Revolution!"

While explicitly sectoralist groups such as black nationalists or "socialist-feminists" obviously present sectoralist "programs," many avowed socialist groups,

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