

Women and Revolution



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Liberal Illusions Crumble As Kibbutzim Restore Nuclear Family

For several decades the kibbutzim—rural collectives—of Israel, which serve the government as showpieces of pioneering enterprise while distracting attention from its murderous anti-Arab policies, have been warmly acclaimed by a host of left apologists for Zionism as the “democratic socialist” alternative to monolithic Stalinism.

The reorganization of the family on the kibbutzim, in particular, has excited the intense interest of both socialists and feminists, for the collectives appeared to many to have achieved in practice one of the major goals of the socialist movement—the liberation of women from the narrow and oppressive family structure through the socialization of household labor and child care.

Recently, however, a strong movement has arisen, spearheaded by the younger women of the kibbutzim, for the restoration of the traditional nuclear family. Historically, food preparation and laundry work have been socialized on the kibbutzim, and children have lived apart in their own house or nursery, spending only a few hours in the afternoon or evening with their parents. Now, however, “familistic housing” (children living with their parents) has been introduced in two of the three major kibbutz federations and is being hotly debated in the third.

Another recent innovation is the so-called “hour of love,” actually only a half hour, during which mothers visit with their children each mid-morning. This practice has placed a further restriction on the occupational choices open to mothers, since it requires them to work near the nursery and children’s house.

Reactionaries have gleefully hailed this restorationist trend as definitive proof that the family is an indispensable social unit and that all attempts to do away with it are doomed in advance to failure.

Chief among the proponents of this argument are sociologists Lionel Tiger and Joseph Shepher whose recently published book, *Women in the Kibbutz*, asserts the biological determinist position that there exists an innate division of labor between the sexes and that women are naturally drawn toward activities associated with child rearing. But while the conclusions which Tiger and Shepher draw are manifestly reactionary, their findings, which corroborate a number of previous studies, are quite interesting.

Kibbutz Women: Past and Present

Despite their insistence that kibbutz women are turning their backs on sexual equality, Shepher and Tiger demonstrated a clear-cut division of labor on the

kibbutz along sex lines; i.e., sexual equality is non-existent.

Initially, life on the kibbutzim was fairly austere, and all available workers, including women, were needed for agriculture and construction. Child care was minimal because there were few children, and, since the settlements could not afford to assign as permanent work such tasks as cooking and washing, they were rotated among both men and women. Thus in the 1920’s, over 50 percent of the kibbutz women were active in production. But as the settlements became more stable and children became more numerous, a division of labor developed between the sexes. Typically, women who bore children were refused reinstatement in their old agricultural jobs and relegated to child care, education and service/consumption jobs (e.g., kitchen, laundry, tending the clothes store). Over a period of years, the majority of women were excluded from the more prestigious production jobs and forced into positions of less status.

Today, men comprise 88 percent of all kibbutz workers engaged in agriculture, 80 percent of those in industry, 99 percent in construction and 67 percent in management. Women, on the other hand, are concentrated in service/consumption, education (83 percent women) and child care (85 percent women). Some jobs,

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The care of small children on kubbuzim is assigned exclusively to women.

Wide World

such as the care of small children, are assigned exclusively to women. As a result of being effectively excluded from the more prestigious income-generating jobs, the women participate much less than their male counterparts in those committees that organize the work and economic structure of the collective. Thus the highest offices within the kibbutz are mainly occupied by men.

Sexual inequality on the kibbutz is reflected in every aspect of social life. For example, although males and females attend school for roughly the same number of years, advanced training for males is professionally oriented, while women are concentrated in education and nursing.

At one time kibbutz women shared military duties with the men. They were active participants in the Palmach (the elite commando unit of the Haganah, the illegal Jewish military organization in Mandate Palestine) and were utilized for combat duty during World War II and the 1948 war. Today, however, while both men and women are subject to compulsory military service, women are relegated to non-combat roles.

The early kibbutzniks had rebelled sharply against the traditional Jewish patriarchal family. Though couple relationships, once formed, were fairly stable, marriages sanctified by synagogue or state were unheard of. The couple deliberately pursued social and political activities as individuals rather than as a unit. Children "belonged" not to the biological parents but to the collective. Thus it was the collective and not the parents which named the child. Toys were kept in the children's quarters, never in the parents' apartment, to insure that children would not become too attached to their parents.

Today things are much different. Formal marriages

are the rule, and spouses are expected to engage in many activities—such as participation in the kibbutz general assembly and the night watch—together. Although this change can be partly rationalized as an adaptation to Israeli law, which penalizes "illegitimate" children, the kibbutz exerts tremendous negative social pressure on all unmarried adults, who are considered problems. Only three percent of adults over the age of 30 have never married.

The Kibbutz Movement

The degeneration of the position of women on the collectives cannot be understood without a broader overview of the history of the kibbutz movement and of class relations in Israel. The early kibbutzniks were part of a current within Zionism—so-called "labor Zionism" or "socialist Zionism"—one of whose major theoreticians was Ber Borochov. Borochov described the Jewish people as an inverted pyramid: no toilers forming the base of society and an overabundance of bourgeois and petty-bourgeois elements where there should be an apex. This pyramid, said Borochov, must itself be re-inverted before Jews could participate in a socialist transformation of the world; i.e., a "normal" Jewish working class and peasantry would have to be created. This was to be achieved by emigration and colonization of the land.

Zionism was essentially a defeatist ideology. Its social base was the Eastern European and Russian Jews, who in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century were repeatedly victimized by mass pogroms. Despairing of any possibility of improving the position of Jews in Europe, Zionists argued that Jews should emigrate to

continued on next page

Kibbutzim...

Palestine. While Borochov and the labor Zionists called themselves "socialists," they were politically counterposed to all tendencies within the Russian Social Democracy. Although there were differences within the Social Democracy on the Jewish question (the Bolsheviks were revolutionary assimilationists, while the Mensheviks absorbed the Jewish Bund, which advocated "cultural autonomy" for Jews), the Social Democrats as a whole vigorously opposed the Zionist solution.

The early kibbutzniks borrowed heavily from the Narodniks in their idealization of peasant communalism, an idealization which intersected certain material factors extant in Palestine. Unlike the few Zionist pioneers of the nineteenth century, the "socialist Zionists" were unwilling to hire labor. However, they found it extremely difficult to get jobs. The employers, including the Jewish bourgeoisie, preferred Arabs, who were willing to work for less. Refusing to accept these low wages and fundamentally opposed to uniting in struggle with the Arab poor, the new Jewish immigrants saw agricultural and artisan collectives and cooperatives as one of the few available means of survival. But for this the "socialist Zionists" would need their own land—land occupied by indigenous Arabs.

The founding in 1909 of Degania, which is generally considered to be the first permanent agricultural collective, illustrates this historical development. The Degania settlers had previously worked as hired agricultural laborers, but when their boss decided to employ Arab workers, they went out on strike and eventually quit. They were then given the use of farmland at Kinneret owned by a Zionist agency which they were allowed to manage as well as to work. Having turned a profit, they decided to set up their own collective, which became Degania. Thus from its inception the kibbutz was based on the exclusion of Arab labor.

With the Bolshevik victory in 1917 the "socialist Zionist" movement underwent a political split. The October Revolution was a living refutation of Zionist defeatism, and some of the Jews in Palestine recognized this. At the Zionist Workers Party Congress in 1922 one group broke away from Zionism to form the Communist Party. There were splits within some of the agricultural collectives, as well. The anti-Zionists either returned to Europe or oriented politically toward the Arab population. Thereafter the kibbutz movement was composed of hard Zionists who had reaffirmed their position that Zionism was primary.

Today, although there are three different federations of kibbutzim, which engage in a considerable amount of organizational squabbling, there are no fundamental political differences among them. This is demonstrated by the fact that each federation is affiliated to a political party, all of which agree with each other on critical issues. In fact, two of them, Achdut Ha'avoda and Mapai (the party of Golda Meir and the dominant party of the Israeli government) have merged to form the Israeli Labour Party. The third kibbutz federation,

Kibbutz Artzi, is affiliated to Mapam, the loyal opposition to Mapai. Data provided by Tiger and Shepherd show that all three federations exhibit the same fundamental tendencies with respect to changes in the status of women, although the pace of introducing these changes varies somewhat.

At first the kibbutzniks encountered opposition within the Zionist movement as well as outside it. The



Micha Bar-Am

Kibbutz children in separate living quarters.

Zionist authorities, who controlled the subsidies given to Jewish immigrants, were strongly opposed to collectives, which they regarded as "communist." They favored the setting up of private farms and agricultural cooperatives, which preserved the family as the basic economic unit. Thus during the 1920's they prohibited the construction of any permanent dwelling that was not suitable for family use.

The key breakthrough for the kibbutzim came, significantly, only in the 1930's, when their military potential was recognized. This was the period when the Arab masses in Palestine were beginning to stir. From 1936 to 1939, there were massive confrontations between the Arabs on the one side and the Jews and British authorities on the other. Under these conditions, it was quickly realized that the kibbutzim could efficiently combine agricultural work with military operations against the Arabs. Kibbutz settlements were soon planted in outlying districts in Upper Galilee, the Jordan Valley and the Negev to prevent the Arabs from

retaking the land. Typically such settlements consisted of armed camps surrounded by stockades and topped by watchtowers. From 1936 to 1947 was the period of greatest growth of the kibbutzim: the number of settlements increased from 47 to 115—kibbutzniks boasted of such feats as erecting 11 pioneer settlements in the Negev in one day in 1946—while the kibbutzniks more than doubled their numerical weight in the Jewish population of Palestine, increasing to 7.5 percent.

The kibbutzim have thus always been far more than hardy pioneer settlements, transforming the barren desert into a land of milk and honey. The farm collectives from the beginning played a conscious role as instruments of Zionist expansionism both before and after the war of 1948. Sites, often disadvantageous from the standpoint of agricultural production, have been selected from the standpoint of their military value. They have served as beachheads in predominantly Arab territories, providing a foothold for future military and civilian influxes and as buffer zones separating the general Jewish population from the Arabs. Thus almost one-half of the kibbutzim lie within five miles of the 1967 borders! Many others lie amid Arab populations in the Negev, in the Judean mountains and in "occupied territories" such as the Golan Heights.

Within the "labor Zionist" parties, which have dominated every Israeli government since 1948, the kibbutzim played a role far out of proportion to their numerical size. Practically all the old-guard politicians were drawn from the collective movement. Kibbutzniks were active in the Haganah and provided (along with members of the *moshavim*, the farm cooperatives) most of the commanders of the Palmach. After 1948, when the Israeli army was established, these same individuals became its military officers.

Since 1948 the role of the kibbutzniks in the army and the dominant parties has declined somewhat. However, as late as 1961 kibbutzniks were a majority of the parliamentary delegation of Achdut Ha'avoda and Mapam and made up 20 percent of Mapai's delegation (which was not insubstantial, considering that the collectives accounted for only 3.2 percent of Mapai's total vote). And even today one-third of the kibbutz-bred youth who are drafted become officers in the army.

In return for their political loyalty, the "socialist" kibbutzim have been liberally rewarded by the capitalist Israeli state. The extent of the largesse of which the kibbutzniks are beneficiaries is generally not well known. Land rent, for example, is essentially nominal. Land is generally leased from the government and the Jewish National Fund, a special public institution, on a long-term lease of 49 years, with rental charges estimated not to exceed .4 percent of gross farm output.

While earlier it was up to the kibbutzniks themselves to prepare the land for settlements, today the arduous labor necessary for this undertaking is largely performed by special army units (Nahal) whose members are selected from the youth movement attached to the kibbutzim. Irrigation pipes are laid, roads built and settlement buildings erected before the permanent

settlers arrive. At least 70 percent of the investment costs are provided through public investment financed by the Jewish Agency and the state. Before 1930, the capital was provided free by the Zionist movement at large; today it is available in the form of long-term, low interest loans. Key resources, such as electricity and water, are furnished to the kibbutzim at reduced rates. Government price supports and still other subsidies are also available.

The kibbutzim and their leadership, then, are bound by a hundred personal and political ties to the higher echelons of the capitalist Israeli government. And like the high-ranking politicians and military officers, the kibbutzniks are drawn from the more privileged Jews of European origin. Not only do the kibbutzim exclude Arabs, but for the most part they exclude Jews of African and Asian origin as well. (This does not, of course, prevent the kibbutzim from hiring these poorer Jews and Arabs in the capacity of menial laborers in kibbutz-run industry and agriculture!) This national and ethnic exclusiveness acts as a further profound conservatizing influence.

Zionism and the Oppression of Women

The Zionist state which the kibbutzniks support is not only capitalist, but clerical as well. The "Jewish state" enshrines the Jewish religion, and Judaism, like all religions, perpetuates reactionary attitudes toward women and is a vociferous defender of the family which enslaves them.

Rabbinical law is replete with codifications of the subjugation of women. If a woman's husband disappears and she cannot prove he is dead, she is not free to remarry. If he dies, she must obtain "release" (*halitzah*) from his brother in order to remarry. As there is no separation of church and state in Israel, rabbinical law is visited not only on believers but on every Jewish citizen. Civil marriage, for instance, is not recognized by law—only marriages performed by the rabbis. For

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Kibbutzim...

patriotic as well as religious reasons, large families are encouraged, and the Israeli government offers a monetary award to any Jewish mother who has ten children. Abortion rights, not surprisingly, are sharply restricted. Only those women with sufficient money and connections are generally in a position to get abortions.

The only women who do not have to follow the rabbinical laws are Arab women; *Eretz Israel* is, after all, the land of the Jews. Arab women are left instead to the mercies of the Moslem tradition, which is even more reactionary. There is no systematic dissemination of birth-control information in Israel. Such information and contraceptive devices are available only upon request from the various health services which, vastly inadequate as they are, are virtually unavailable to Arab women, who do not belong to the Histadrut or to any of the political parties or religious organizations offering health services. In Arab villages, modern contraception is generally unknown, leaving induced abortion as the common method of birth control.

Of course, the status of kibbutz women is far

different from that of Arab women—or of Orthodox Jewish women, who appear in public with covered heads, long sleeves and skirts well below the knee; who are kept segregated from the men in the synagogue and who are totally subordinated within the traditional patriarchal Jewish family. Nevertheless, the degeneration in the role of kibbutz women which has occurred steadily over the past three decades reflects the incessant pressure of the dominant clerical, bourgeois society in which the collective farms exist. The ideological adaptation of the kibbutzim to this society is facilitated both by their relatively small size (3.5 percent of the population) and by their willing adherence to Zionist principles.

A case in point is the resurgence of religious ceremony. The early kibbutzniks dissociated themselves from religious practice and demonstratively broke Jewish religious laws by, for example, eating bread on Passover. This militant atheism is no more. Even in the "left" Kibbutz Artzi Federation Jewish holidays are now celebrated, although ostensibly as "Jewish festivals" and not as religious occasions. Over 80 percent of kibbutzniks now prefer a traditional Jewish wedding ceremony, and since the 1967 war and the wave of spiritual chauvinism which accompanied it synagogues have begun to spring up on the kibbutzim.

Abolition of the Family?

Marxists have always rejected as utopian the viewpoint that the emancipation of women can be achieved through pure voluntarism. As Leon Trotsky wrote: "The family cannot be abolished, it must be replaced." The fundamental precondition for this is the abolition of poverty, the root of inequality. Only with the destruction of capitalist property relations and the tremendous development of society's productive powers can want and poverty be eliminated and women integrated into the labor force on an equal basis. Conversely, the poorer a society and the more perilous its terms of existence, the greater the pressure for social inequality to emerge.

Contrary to the widespread assertions concerning their self-sufficiency, the kibbutzim are essentially marginal economic institutions whose survival has always depended heavily on aid from the world Zionist movement. Today such aid continues to be channeled to the kibbutzim through the Zionist Jewish Agency and the Israeli state.

Despite this assistance, the kibbutzim have become increasingly indebted to the banks. The average load of debt amounts to 130-150 percent of the yearly output of the kibbutzim. One half of kibbutzim belonging to Kibbutz Artzi in 1966 were paying from 5 to 10 percent of their output in interest, while a quarter were paying more. A number of collective farms are always on the verge of bankruptcy.

This continual economic pressure under which the kibbutzim find themselves has not been insignificant in determining the sexual division of labor. The desperate drive to lift productivity made the collectives increasingly reluctant to rotate the more skilled jobs. This was a major factor in refusing to permit women returning from pregnancy leaves to resume their old jobs.

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Kibbutz woman hangs out communal laundry.

Particularly in the early years, the primitive conditions of labor, requiring arduous physical exertion, also discouraged the integration of women into the work force. These considerations only added to the ideological barriers to sexual equality which have been discussed and to other factors, including conditioned sexist prejudice (men on the kibbutzim, for example, were rarely assigned to child care, even in the early years) as well as to the dominant clericalist influence of the Zionist society as a whole.

Most kibbutz women, therefore, must labor full-time at menial, uninteresting, low-prestige jobs which afford them neither personal satisfaction nor recognition. It is under these circumstances that many have begun to envy even the meager deference traditionally accorded wives and mothers and to consider that cooking and washing for just one family might be preferable to cooking and washing for a whole community.

The strengthening of the family in these conditions does not in the least confirm the ahistorical assertion that it is a permanent and irreplaceable institution in human society. In fact, the kibbutz experience represents a negative confirmation of the Marxist thesis

that new forms of relations between human beings cannot simply be imposed without regard to the class character and level of development of the society in which they live.

The founding of the kibbutzim was neither a step forward nor an essentially harmless venture such as the short-lived communes founded by the utopian socialists, a number of which also experimented with eliminating the family. While Marx and Engels mercilessly criticized the illusions created by the Owenites and Fourierites, they ascribed these movements mostly to the immaturity of the working class of the time and not to a conscious betrayal of its historic interests.

But the founding of the kibbutzim was *reactionary*, for it was based on the oppression and exclusion of the Arab masses. The kibbutzim are the "participatory" window-dressing of the clericalist-racist, war-mongering capitalist state of Israel. While the kibbutzniks play with egalitarianism and the "pioneer spirit" in their sandboxes, the kibbutzim function as garrisons and outposts of the militarism and expansionism of the Zionist bourgeoisie. By tying itself to Zionism and thus subordinating itself to the Jewish bourgeoisie, the kibbutz movement could only serve as a roadblock to the smashing of capitalist property relations in the Near East, and thus to the emancipation of women.

There has never been a solution to the woman question within the framework of the kibbutz. More broadly, there can be no emancipation of kibbutz women without the liberation of Arab women as well. Marx endorsed Fourier's observation that the progress of civilization is most clearly reflected in the status of its women, because sexual oppression is the most deep-rooted of all forms of human oppression and very likely the last one that will be destroyed. Conversely, it can be stated that in whatever society one finds national and racial oppression, one will find the oppression of women as well. It is not accidental that both racist Zionism and Arab nationalism are adamantly opposed to social equality for women.

The strengthening of either capitalist Israel or the capitalist Arab states (including all the "progressive" Arab states) will only prolong the continuation of national and sexual oppression. Genuine social equality, which was never approached on the kibbutzim, will become a reality only in the course of a powerful, united struggle of the Hebrew- and Arab-speaking masses, dedicated to the annihilation of capitalism internationally and to the building of a socialist federation of the Near East. ■

The Pankhursts

Suffrage and Socialism

In 1894 Emmeline Pankhurst and her husband, Dr. Richard Marsden Pankhurst, who had been moving in the direction of socialism for some time, joined the tiny, newly formed Independent Labour Party (ILP) of Britain. Mrs. Pankhurst was initially too shy to speak in public, but, encouraged by her husband—a longtime radical who had founded the Women's Suffrage Society of Manchester when Emmeline was only a child of seven—she eventually began giving talks at socialist meetings. After his death in 1898 she continued to be an active member of the party and served as an ILP member of the Manchester School Board.

It was not until 1903 that a small group of ILP women met in Mrs. Pankhurst's home and formed the male-exclusionist Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU) and not until 1907 that the WSPU initiated an independent election campaign, with Mrs. Pankhurst declaring that although she had been "loyal to Socialism on every point," she would surrender her ILP card if forced to choose.

Sheila Rowbotham, a supporter of the British International Socialists, has concluded from this early history of Emmeline Pankhurst and the WSPU—a history which has recently been much popularized by the book and television series *Shoulder to Shoulder*—that "there was a close connection between feminism and socialism in the early years of this century and the divorce between the two was long, painful and protracted."

Nothing could be further from the truth. The counterposed ideologies of feminism and socialism came into conflict in England, as elsewhere, very early (see "Feminism vs. Marxism: Origins of the Conflict," *Women and Revolution* No. 5, Spring 1974). Only the relative social quiescence of turn-of-the-century England obscured for a brief time the contradiction between revolutionary socialism and reformist feminism and permitted the rise of the "socialist-feminist" illusion. But with the impending war and the sharpening of class antagonisms, women found that they were, indeed, forced to choose. As one "socialist-feminist" of the period, who had labored in vain to link the autonomous feminist movement to the socialist



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Emmeline Pankhurst (r.) and her eldest daughter Christabel.

movement, complained: "...the women's party... is branded by many as a middle class affair, possessing no fundamental connection with the Labour movement...."

By the outbreak of World War I, when the WSPU, in a paroxysm of chauvinist exuberance, changed the name of its newspaper from the *Suffragette* to *Britannia*, while at the same time the East London Federation of Suffragettes, headed by Mrs. Pankhurst's left-leaning daughter Sylvia, changed the name of its newspaper from *The Women's Dreadnought* to *The Workers' Dreadnought*, the implications of the choice had become inescapably clear. And when, a few years later, Mrs. Pankhurst journeyed to Russia in a last-ditch effort to save the crumbling Kerensky government from the Bolsheviks, while Sylvia made the same trip shortly thereafter in order to meet with the victorious Lenin and hammer out a revolutionary strategy for England, the consequences of this choice were carried to their logical conclusion.

The story of Mrs. Pankhurst and her daughters is the history of "socialist-feminism" split asunder in the face of social crises. Those who subscribe to this illusion in our own time would do well to study this history with great care. Contemporary socialists and feminists are already driven apart by the necessity of choosing between solidarity with women of all classes or solidarity with workers of both sexes; between "affirmative action" for women or defense of the hard-won union seniority system; between the autonomous organization of women or the leading participation of women as cadres of the vanguard party. The sharpening of the class struggle will demolish any remaining ambiguities and will expose the "socialist-feminist" fraud for what it is—an excuse for reformists to capitulate to backward social consciousness.

The Fork in the Road

Dr. Pankhurst had often said to his children, Christabel, Sylvia, Adela and Harry: "My children are

the four pillars of my house!" Harry, frail from birth, died in 1910 at the age of 20, leaving only three, but it was not until 1914 that it became clear that the house could not stand at all.

The younger daughters, Sylvia and Adela (Adela emigrated to Australia in 1912), had always found it difficult to separate the fight for women's emancipation from the broader radical struggle of which their parents had been a part.

In 1912, despite the disapproval of her mother and her older sister Christabel, who were at the height of their power and notoriety as leaders of the militant suffrage movement, Sylvia took the struggle for women's liberation to the poor East End section of London.

Although her East London Federation was still formally affiliated with the WSPU, it displayed an increasing sympathy toward the working-class movement, a sympathy which was openly confirmed when Sylvia appeared on a speakers' platform with ILP representative George Lansbury and Irish Marxist James Connolly, demanding the release from prison of Irish labor leader James Larkin. The *Daily Herald* commented:

"One great result of the militant Suffrage Movement has been to convince many people that the vote is not the best way of getting what one wants...every day the industrial rebels and the Suffrage rebels march nearer together."

The *Daily Herald* was wrong. Far from indicating closer collaboration between worker militants and feminists, Sylvia's Albert Hall appearance was the last straw which severed forever the links between the East London Federation and the WSPU.

Summoned to WSPU headquarters-in-exile in Paris, Sylvia was informed that the East London Federation must become a separate organization at once. The WSPU, Christabel explained, did not want to be mixed up with Lansbury, who was campaigning to extend suffrage not only to female "householders," as the WSPU was, but to all men and women. Furthermore, she said, "You have a democratic constitution for your Federation; we do not agree with that." (The WSPU was administered autocratically by Mrs. Pankhurst and her elder daughter, the members having no vote.) And finally, she said, campaigning among working women was a waste of time, since they were the least powerful of their sex. The WSPU had adopted a conscious policy since 1907 of recruiting upper-class women.

Although all parties to the split declared publicly that the new development was an "extension" of the



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The "Bow Militants": Sylvia Pankhurst (l.), George Lansbury, Daisy Lansbury.

women's movement, the *Daily Sketch* (7 February 1914) raised the question:

"What are the views of Miss Sylvia Pankhurst which are 'not those of Miss Christabel Pankhurst'?"

and observed:

"It is said that Miss Sylvia Pankhurst has for a long time adopted a militant policy of her own without consulting headquarters. One point of difference is that Miss Christabel Pankhurst has issued instructions that the W.S.P.U. was to be kept independent of all political parties, while the movement led by her sister has assumed strongly Socialist sympathies. Most of Miss Sylvia Pankhurst's supporters are avowed Socialists, and Miss Pankhurst has been working in close alliance with Mr. George Lansbury and other leaders of Labour in Bow and Bromley and adjoining constituencies.

"Miss Sylvia Pankhurst also established her 'People's Army' for repelling police brutality, a departure from the Union policy. A third point is that the 'Army' is open to both men and women, while the W.S.P.U. excludes men."

—quoted in Midge Mackenzie (ed.), *Shoulder to Shoulder*

War

Upon the outbreak of World War I, Mrs. Pankhurst immediately suspended all activities of the WSPU and called upon its members to serve "their" country in any

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Emmeline Pankhurst reviews the Women's Battalion of Death in Petrograd, 1917.

The Pankhursts...

capacity they could. (Their "sister" feminists in other belligerent countries were receiving the same advice.) Despite its well-known history of militancy and anti-government terrorism, the WSPU, like all reformist organizations, was interested not in destroying the existing order but only in achieving a more privileged position within it. There was no sense in continuing to fight for the vote, said Mrs. Pankhurst, when there might no longer be a country to vote in.

In 1915, at the request of Lloyd George, then minister of munitions, and with a government grant of £3,000, the WSPU organized a huge and highly successful "Women's Right to Serve" demonstration in London for the purpose of overcoming the resistance of trade-union leaders to the mass influx of women into industry at lower wages than men. Throughout the war the feminist leaders continued to serve their government by carrying on a vigorous, often racist, pro-war campaign. Hun-hatred was whipped up in the pages of *Britannia*—now bearing the dedication "For King, For Country, For Freedom"—which ran detailed atrocity stories and scurrilous attacks on anyone in favor of peace and on the Foreign Office, which, according to Christabel, was riddled with pro-Germans. Suffragettes took to the streets not to fight for the vote but to bestow "white feathers of cowardice" on able-bodied men who were not in uniform.

In 1915, with the financial backing of several prominent industrialists, the WSPU initiated an "industrial peace" campaign. With the blessings of the government, veterans of the suffrage movement, including Mrs. Pankhurst, Christabel and other feminist

luminaries such as Flora Drummond and Annie Kenney, toured the areas of the greatest industrial unrest—the north of England and the mining districts of south Wales, in particular—denouncing "Bolshevik" shop stewards for fomenting class war. They appealed to women workers and to the wives of workers, on the grounds that they were more practical and less vulnerable to foreign ideas than men were, to see to it that the men were not led astray by the dangerous ideas of socialists.

Sylvia, meanwhile, was becoming more radical. She had continued, although with waning enthusiasm, to agitate for universal adult suffrage. In fact, many ex-WSPUers who were disappointed with the WSPU's abandonment of the struggle for suffrage, as well as those with socialist or pacifist sympathies, switched their allegiance to the East London Federation at this time. But as Sylvia's political consciousness developed, the suffrage issue seemed less all-consuming than it once had, and *The Workers' Dreadnought* began to concern itself with a much wider range of social problems—the inadequacy of government allowances to servicemen's wives, the plight of old-age pensioners, the wages and conditions of women workers, the starvation of the poor.

Sylvia not only denounced these evils and led deputations to government ministries to protest them, but, with the help of a handful of volunteers, pioneered a number of neighborhood social services—maternity and infant clinics which provided free medical care and free milk, a day care center for working mothers, a toy factory to provide jobs for those who objected to manufacturing weaponry and a Cost Price restaurant which provided cheap meals to the poor and free meals to the destitute.

At the same time, in the press and on the street, she relentlessly attacked the inter-imperialist war, demanded peace and openly denounced her mother's "bloodthirstiness." After one such anti-war demonstration on 8 April 1916, Mrs. Pankhurst, then touring the United States on behalf of the war effort, sent the WSPU a terse cable saying: "Strongly repudiate and condemn Sylvia's foolish and unpatriotic conduct. Regret I cannot prevent use of name. Make this public."

Revolution in Russia

The February revolution in Russia aroused deep concern in England that Russia might withdraw her troops from the war. On June 1, Mrs. Pankhurst requested the permission of Lloyd George, now prime minister, to visit Russia "to explain to the Russian people the opinions as to the war and the conditions of peace held by us as patriotic British women, loyal to the national and Allied cause." Permission was granted.

She met with Kerensky, the head of the Provisional Government, and advised him to take a firm line with the Bolsheviks. She reviewed the Women's Battalion of Death and pronounced it "the greatest thing in history since Joan of Arc." Created by Kerensky in a final, desperate attempt to provoke an outburst of patriotism and shame men into fighting, the battalion was to be the last defender of the Winter Palace, against the Bolsheviks in October. She also intended to hold a series of mass outdoor meetings to inspire women and persuade them to fight to keep their wavering men in the war, but the government permitted her only to address small gatherings of upper-class women in private homes and to give press interviews. To one journalist from the newspaper *Novoe Vremia* she complained:

... From the very beginning of my public life I was in the ranks of Socialists, together with my husband. But I soon found how narrow were the interests with which I was concerned. I thus devoted myself to the cause of women. I consider that as a revolutionist, who has been sixteen times in prison, I deserve the sympathy of those people who have been at the head of the revolution in Russia."
—quoted, *Ibid.*

She did, in fact, have the sympathy of many government officials. Statesmen and ambassadors called on her, prominent families welcomed her and the bourgeois press devoted considerable space to her visit. "Her patriotism," rhapsodized one journalist, "is impersonal and nationalistic, able to lift the soul to the highest summits of morality. She is a new woman."

At the series of meetings arranged for her, she spoke to the ladies of Petrograd about the Women's Battalion of Death. If these women were willing to risk their lives on the battlefield, she said, then the women remaining at home should be willing to risk their lives on the streets. Whenever a Bolshevik orator called for a separate peace or the cessation of fighting, an educated woman ought to oppose such sentiments. Furthermore, women ought to storm the soviets all over Russia and force the men to support Kerensky and the Provisional Government in rallying the army to defeat the Germans (this despite her privately expressed opinion that Kerensky was a weakling and that only General Kornilov could save the situation).

She was in Moscow when the Bolsheviks took power, an event which she characterized as the disastrous madness of the illiterate masses deluded by the "machinations of German agents." Realizing that there was no further hope of Russia's assistance in the war, she returned to England where she demanded armed intervention into Russia to help "loyal" (to capitalism) elements there to restore order and resurrect the war effort. In 1918 and 1919, again with the backing of the British government, she toured the United States and Canada, then at the height of a hysterical red scare, lecturing on the evils of Bolshevism, which, she argued, was closely related to venereal disease, both being the results of a mistaken and promiscuous flouting of traditional decencies.

If Mrs. Pankhurst viewed Bolshevism as a debilitating disease, Sylvia saw it now as a "pure white flame," burning the old regime to the ground and clearing the way for a new society.

Since 1917, Sylvia had been admonishing the East End poor to follow the example of their Russian brothers—to rise up and smash the government, form themselves into soviets and prepare for the real struggle which was just beginning. Invited to address the Irish Women's Franchise League in London, she startled her audience by advising them to forget about tinkering with parliamentary reforms and to propagandize instead for the seizure of farms and factories and for the establishment of workers' soviets. Although Irish nationalism like the suffrage movement might appear revolutionary, she warned, it was, in fact, riddled with reaction.

The stated aim of her East London Federation of Suffragettes—now renamed the Workers' Socialist Federation (WSF)—was international working-class revolution. "I am proud," she declared, "to call myself a Bolshevik."

Although sometimes pelted with garbage by hostile East Enders, she found a ready audience among the miners in south Wales, the midlands and the north of England and among the dockers and factory workers of "red" Clydeside.

In July 1919 Sylvia set out her political views in a long letter to Lenin: The Labour Party, which was full of Christian Socialists like Lansbury and pathetic office-seekers like Ramsey McDonald, had proven itself untrustworthy. There was no point in looking to Parliament even for significant reforms; the working class must form its own instruments of government. Only her own Workers' Socialist Federation, the Shop Stewards' Movement and the South Wales Socialist Society, she wrote, could be counted on not to compromise.

Lenin's reply, although tactfully phrased, was critical. While the Shop Stewards' Movement, which had direct contact with the workers and could stimulate and exploit strike actions, seemed promising, he was afraid that the other groups, including the WSF, were too small, too intellectual and too bourgeois. To undermine socialist solidarity and obstruct the formation of a unified Communist Party over the issue of whether or not to affiliate with the Labour Party and participate in

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Parliament would be a mistake and a sign of political immaturity. "We Russians," he concluded, "who have lived through two great revolutions, know the importance of carrying on Soviet propaganda from inside the bourgeois parliaments."

Sylvia was not persuaded. She not only refused to take part in a communist unity conference scheduled for July 1920 but announced in *The Workers Dreadnought* one month beforehand that the WSF had changed its name to The Communist Party (British Section of the Third International), an act which was openly rebuked by Lenin.

Left Wing Communism: An Infantile Disorder, which appeared shortly thereafter, was an extension of Lenin's argument with Sylvia, although the "parliamentarian controversy" to which it addressed itself had important implications for the future of communism in Germany and Italy as well as Britain. Good intentions, he asserted, were not sufficient; politics was an art that had to be learned. British communists, he maintained, should apply for affiliation with the Labour Party. "Comrades Sylvia Pankhurst and William Gallacher [a Scottish shop steward] are mistaken if they think that this is the betrayal of communism, the abandonment of the struggle against social traitors. On the contrary, the communist revolution stands to gain a great deal by it."

Knowing that Lenin's position was certain to be discussed at the Second Congress of the Third International scheduled to begin in Moscow on July 15, Sylvia was determined to attend and argue her case. Denied visas by the embassies of the countries through which she had to travel, she crossed the Arctic Sea in a small fishing boat and arrived in Moscow only a few days before the conference was to end. Sylvia's biographer David Mitchell describes the confrontation:

"Lenin sent for her almost immediately to take part in the Commission on English Affairs then sitting in the Kremlin.... Lenin's charm worked powerfully upon her. He greeted her eagerly, and seemed 'more vividly vital and energetic, more wholly alive, than other people.'... The picture of an arrogant, bureaucratic bully which she had formed vanished in the presence of the original. The pathos and courage of the revolution, too, was pressing upon her, changing her perspective. Trotsky had just returned from the still active Polish front. The White invaders were still on Russian soil. Sylvia understood the need for discipline.... The great clash did not take place. For the moment, Sylvia was utterly disarmed."

"Lenin gave her the place of honour on his right at the committee table. She and Gallacher restated their objections to his thesis. Lenin bantered them. Why so heated? It was only a question of tactics, of the most expedient way to put principles into practice.... If the decision to affiliate to the Labour Party and infiltrate Parliament proved wrong, it could always be changed. Left wingers like Sylvia would be needed to keep a close watch on the 'tacticians' and see that first principles were not swamped in a sea of expediency."

"Sylvia could not quarrel with this. Lenin was able to announce to the conference, assembled in the Throne Room, that agreement was now complete: even the British, even Sylvia, had seen reason. Delegates sprang to

their feet singing the Internationale, seized Lenin and hoisted him on their shoulders. 'He looked,' wrote Sylvia, 'like a happy father among his sons.'"

—David Mitchell, *The Fighting Pankhursts*

But unity did not last. In a *Dreadnought* editorial in August 1921 Sylvia again attacked the Communist Party of Great Britain for reformism and opportunism and ridiculed Zinoviev's optimistic estimate of the effectiveness of communist nuclei in the trade unions. "Let us hear from you, O communist nuclei," she taunted. Shortly afterward she received a letter from the party executive committee demanding that she cease using the *Dreadnought* to subvert party unity. She responded that controversies within the international communist movement were signs of healthy development and that by studying and participating in them members would grow in knowledge and political experience. But the *Workers Dreadnought* was not an internal bulletin, and the public airing of all controversies taking place within the fledgling Third International served only to increase its vulnerability.

Unable to come to terms with this elementary requirement of democratic centralism, Sylvia was expelled. Her failure to grasp the necessity for party discipline was, in reality, part of a larger failure to understand the essential role of the vanguard party, stemming from a deep-seated social-workerist fantasy that with sufficient energy, courage and sacrifice she could substitute herself for the party. "I do not regret my expulsion," she wrote. "... I desire freedom to work for communism with the best that is in me. The party could not chain me."

King, Christ or Communism?

The *Dreadnought* ceased publication in 1924, and Sylvia and her companion, Silvio Corio, retired for a time to suburban Woodford Green where she wrote books and articles while earning her living as proprietor of a small cafe. But three years later, after Christabel had abandoned politics entirely to await the second coming of Christ and Mrs. Pankhurst, following a successful career as a paid anti-communist agitator, announced

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Women and Revolution



Poor East End families are fed at Sylvia Pankhurst's Cost Price Restaurant.

Alfred A. Knopf

her intention to run for Parliament as a *Tory*, Sylvia was still able to say (in a letter to the editor of the socialist periodical *Forward*, January 1927):

"...For my part I rejoice in having enlisted for life in the socialist movement, in which the work of Owen, Marx, Kropotkin, William Morris and Keir Hardie, and such pioneering efforts as those of my father, Richard Marsden Pankhurst, ... are an enduring memory.... I feel it is incumbent upon me, in view of this defection, to reaffirm my faith in the cause of social and international fraternity...."

Mrs. Pankhurst's "conversion" to Toryism was the subject of much controversy, but she saw no inconsistency whatever between conservatism and feminism. The general strike of 1926, she told reporters, had convinced her that anyone who had the true interests of women at heart must stand firmly behind Stanley Baldwin's Conservative government. The class war, "that foreign importation," must be replaced, she said, by unity and cooperation between labor and management; and women, in defense of the institutions in which they were now included and in defense of their families, would see to it that the Labour Party was never allowed to form another government. Speaking at the Ladies' Carlton Club, she proclaimed:

"I joined the Conservative Party because I believe that today there are only two parties—the Constitutional Party, represented by Mr. Baldwin and the Conservatives, and the Revolutionary Party. If you can only convince the ordinary woman that her home is threatened, her religion is threatened, and even her security in marriage is threatened, then we shall have her support...."

—Mitchell, *op. cit.*

Indeed, in the absence of a revolutionary leadership struggling for women's freedom through proletarian

revolution, women's atomization in the home and isolation from the productive process make women a backward section of the working masses. History offers numerous examples of the mobilization of women by the forces of reaction through the manipulation of their fears concerning the welfare of their homes and families. Mrs. Pankhurst's own "industrial peace" campaign had been a case in point.

Pillars of the British Empire

Fabian socialist George Bernard Shaw, annoyed by Sylvia's incessant attacks on the Labour Party, had once advised her to stick to her welfare projects and forget politics, since she "could not even convert her mother and Christabel." Now these notorious "militants" (Mrs. Pankhurst had been fond of introducing herself to American audiences as "what you would call a 'hooligan'") had been "converted" into pillars of the British Empire.

Sylvia, it is true, went through a number of political transformations, as well, and ended her days as an esteemed supporter of the "Lion of Judah," Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia, but these changes necessitated her breaking with Lenin, with the Communist International and with the ideology of international proletarian revolution, whereas her mother and elder sister were able to embrace king and Christ, respectively, *without breaking from a single feminist position!*

Feminism leads at best to some broader variant of reformism. In the case of the two best known feminists in British history, Emmeline Pankhurst and her daughter Christabel, it led in a logical and traceable line directly to right-wing imperialism and the church. ■

Early Bolshevik Work Among Women of the Soviet East

The triumph of the October Revolution in 1917, which dramatically transformed the lives of Russian women, wrought even greater transformations in the lives of the women inhabiting the Central Asian regions which had been colonized by tsarist Russia. But in these feudal or pre-feudal generally Islamic cultures, where the lot of women was frequently inferior to that of the livestock, change came more slowly.

The status of women varied, of course, from culture to culture and within cultures, depending on social class and the nature of the productive process. But from the mouth of the Volga through the Caucasus and Turkestan, from Iran and Afghanistan to Mongolia and northward to Siberia virtual enslavement was the rule, although restrictions were of necessity less strictly applied to women of the poorer classes—nomads and peasant women—whose labor was essential. A certain level of trade and industry and a settled way of life in the cities was a prerequisite for the luxury of strict enforcement of Islamic law.

It was not only the formal prescriptions of the Koran, but also local customs codified in the religious common law (the *Shariat*) and the civil law (the *Adats*), which determined the situation of Islamic women. The few partial reforms expressed in the Koran—the forbidding of female infanticide, the restriction of polygamy, the recognition of limited property and inheritance rights for women—were generally nullified by local *Shariats* and *Adats*.

The practically universal institution of *kalym* or bride price in itself illustrates the Muslim conception of marriage as a purely commercial contract having nothing to do with emotional bonds or personal commitments. In some areas the bride's presence was not even required at the wedding. The purchase price of the female commodity had already been negotiated between the families of the bride and groom, and the wedding was merely a ceremony at which the transaction was notarized. The marriage contract was subject to dissolution by the husband at any time, and polygamy and child marriage were quite common. Children too physically immature for marital relations were subjected to the "horrible operation"—they were ripped open by a midwife to make consummation possible.

Kalym bound a woman, often from childhood, to the husband who satisfied her father's price. If she ran away, she could be pursued as a criminal and punished by her husband or his clan. A runaway wife might be punished by having her legs broken or by other barbaric tortures. For a woman so much as suspected of infidelity, the appropriate punishment was branding on the genitals with a hot iron.

For the poor, marriage by capture often replaced payment of *kalym*. Once she was seized, carried off and

raped, the woman had no choice but to remain with her abductor, since she had been disgraced and no other man would have her. Even widowhood brought no freedom, because a wife for whom *kalym* had been paid was the property of the husband's family or clan and was bequeathed to his brother. Suicide by fire was the only alternative according to the laws of Islam. However, access to heaven was dependent on the will of the husband, and if cheated out of *kalym* by a wife's suicide, he was unlikely to invite her to enter into paradise.

Rules demanding the veiling and seclusion of women had been introduced into Islamic law with the conversion of the Persian aristocracy in 641 A.D. In many parts of Central Asia the veil required was not simply the *yashmuk*, covering the mouth, but the *paranja*, which covers the whole face and body without openings for sight or breath. For centuries many women have lived thus shrouded and imprisoned in their *ichkaris* (segregated living quarters). A Yakutsk legend depicts a model daughter of Islam. Her living body is set before guests who proceed to cut off pieces to eat. The girl not only bears this torment in silence but tries to smile pleasingly.

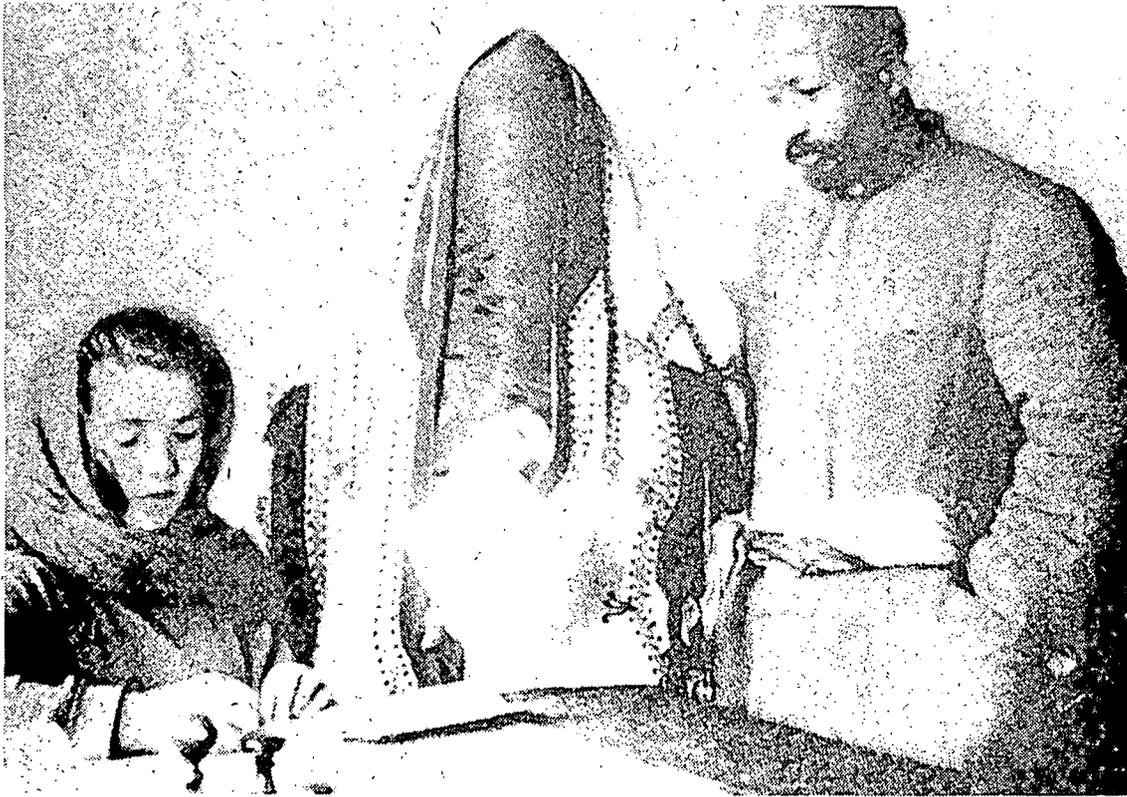
The triumph of Russian imperialism in the 1880's brought few advances in social organization or technology in the Muslim East. The wretched Russian peasantry lived like royalty in comparison with the primitive peoples of this area.

The tsarist government forced the agricultural villages to switch at this time from food crops to cotton, and railroads were built to transport this product to Russian textile plants. Following the railroad workers were women who did not wear veils—Russian prostitutes. For a long time they were the only models available to the Muslim nomads and peasants of the "liberation" which Russian capitalism had bestowed upon women.

The October Revolution Transforms Central Asia

With the victory of the October Revolution the Bolsheviks turned toward Central Asia in the hope of developing its vast and desperately needed natural resources. The flow of these resources to the West was threatened, however, by the fact that Central Asia was from the beginning a haven for every sort of counter-revolutionary tendency and for the retreating White armies. Bourgeois consolidation anywhere in this area would have provided a base for the imperialist powers to launch an anti-Soviet attack.

The extension of the proletarian revolution to Central Asia, moreover, could become the example of socialist development in an economically backward area which would undermine the resistance of



Registration of an Uzbek marriage in Tashkent. The bride is wearing a paranja.

E. P. Dutton

burgeoning nationalism in the East and inspire the toilers of other underdeveloped regions the world over.

But immense economic and cultural leaps were required to integrate Soviet Central Asia into a society revolutionized by the Bolsheviks in power. Trotsky called the area "the most backward of the backward," still living a "prehistoric existence." Indeed, the journey eastward from Moscow across Central Asia was a trip backward through the centuries of human development.

The Bolsheviks viewed the extreme oppression of women as an indicator of the primitive level of the whole society, but their approach was based on materialism, not moralism. They understood that the fact that women were veiled and caged, bought and sold, was but the surface of the problem. *Kalym* was not some sinister plot against womankind, but an institution which was central to the organization of production, integrally connected to land and water rights. Payment of *kalym*, often by the whole clan over a long period of time, committed those involved to an elaborate system of debts, duties and loyalties which ultimately led to participation in the private army of the local *beys* (landowners and wholesale merchants). All commitments were thus backed up with the threat of feuds and blood-vengeance.

These kinship and tribal loyalties were obstacles to social progress because they obscured class relations and held back the expropriation and redistribution of land and other property. Poor peasants, who stood to gain by the equalization of wealth, hid the property of their rich relatives threatened with expropriation. Blood vengeance enforced vows of silence, and Soviet

authority was undermined by conspiracies that served only the old oppressors.

Civil War

The Bolsheviks hoped that women, having the most to gain, would be the link that broke the feudal chain, but this necessitated a great deal of preparation, for the Muslim institutions, oppressive as they were, served real social functions and could not be simply abolished. Like the bourgeois family, they had to be replaced.

Lenin warned against prematurely confronting respected native institutions, even when these clearly violated communist principle and Soviet law. Instead, he proposed to use Soviet state power to carefully and systematically undermine them while simultaneously demonstrating the superiority of Soviet institutions, a policy which had worked well against the powerful Russian Orthodox Church.

Extending this practice to Central Asia, the Soviet government waged a campaign to build the authority of the Soviet legal system and civil courts as an alternative to the traditional Muslim *kadi* courts and legal codes. Although the *kadi* courts were permitted to function, their powers were circumscribed in that they were forbidden to handle political cases or any cases in which both parties to the dispute had not agreed to use the *kadi* rather than the parallel Soviet court system. As the Soviet courts became more accepted, criminal cases were eliminated from the *kadis'* sphere. Next, the government invited dissatisfied parties to appeal the *kadis'* decisions to a Soviet court. In this manner the Soviets earned the reputation of

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Soviet East...

being partisans of the oppressed, while the *kadis* were exposed as defenders of the status quo. Eventually the *kadis* were forbidden to enforce any Muslim law which contradicted Soviet law. Two Soviet representatives, including one member of Zhenotdel—the Department of Working Women and Peasant Women—were assigned to witness all *kadi* proceedings and to approve their decisions. Finally, when the *wafks* (endowment



A woman organizer of the Soviet East

E.P. Dutton

properties), which had supported the *kadis*, were expropriated and redistributed among the peasantry, the *kadis* disappeared completely.

This non-confrontationist policy in no way implied capitulation to backward, repressive institutions. It was made clear that there could be no reconciliation between communism and the Koran. Although "Red Mullahs," attracted by the Bolshevik program of self-determination and land to the tiller, suggested to their followers that Islam was socialism and vice versa, the Bolsheviks insisted that Soviet and Muslim law could never be reconciled precisely on the grounds that the most basic rights of women would be sacrificed.

The bloody civil war that pitted the Bolshevik state against imperialist-supported counterrevolutionary

forces devastated the young workers state and threatened its very survival. During this period, when the Bolsheviks' capacity to intervene in Central Asia was crippled, the crude tactics employed by their ostensibly socialist opponents fueled anti-Soviet sentiment.

In Tashkent, the railroad center of Central Asia, the governing Soviet was made up of Russian émigrés, many of them railroad workers, led by Social Revolutionaries and Mensheviks. In an orgy of Russian chauvinism and self-indulgence foreshadowing the policies of Stalinism to come, they expropriated the holdings of the most respected Islamic institutions and stood the slogan "self-determination of the toiling masses" on its head to justify the exclusion from the Soviet of native intellectuals and sympathetic mullahs, whom they labeled "non-proletarian elements." At the same time, they collaborated with former White officers. When the Tashkent Soviet began arbitrarily requisitioning food from the peasants during the worst grain shortages of the civil war, Lenin intervened to stop this. But the seeds of anti-Soviet rebellion had been sown.

The Basmachis, tribal and traditionalist elements (mainly Uzbek and Tadzhik), who were avowed enemies of the Bolsheviks, served as a pole of attraction for the most sordid conglomeration of forces dedicated to the preservation of the status quo. When Enver Pasha of Turkey, who came to the region as an emissary from Moscow, deserted to the Basmachis, supplying the leadership and authority necessary to unify the warring beys into a viable army of fanatical Muslim terrorists, civil war in Central Asia began in earnest. Soon thousands of Muslims joined these forces in the hills.

Few Central Asian women took the side of the Bolsheviks during the civil war and few of these survived. The heroism of those few who dared defy family, law and the word of the prophet was unsurpassed. One such woman was Tsainet Khesmitova, who ran away from her aged husband while still a child and served as a spy for the Red Army. Her husband's hired assassins eventually caught her, cut out her tongue and left her beaten body buried neck deep in the desert to die. She was rescued by a Red Army unit but was so mutilated that she was forced to live out her life in a Moscow institution for Bolsheviks incapable of work.

Another was Umú Kussum Amerkhanova, the first woman activist of Daghestan, who repeatedly escaped from the death sentences which the White Army and her own countrymen sought to impose on her. Wearing men's clothes, she led Red troops at the Daghestan front until the end of the war and survived to continue the work of transforming the role of women in Central Asia.

Lifting the Veil of Oppression

Bolshevik ability to intervene effectively in Central Asia began with the end of the civil war and the transition from the emergency policies of war communism to the stabilization carried out with the institution of the NEP (New Economic Policy). The Turkestan Commission was set up under the leadership of M. Frunze, a talented military commander, and G. Safarov, a leading Bolshevik of Central Asian origins.

The detested emigrés were recalled to Russia, and the land they had confiscated was distributed to the Muslim toilers. With food requisitions replaced by the tax-in-kind, and government allocations of seed and food reserves, the Basmachi revolt came to an end. But the peasants' experience with chauvinist Menshevik policies was not forgotten. Resistance would continue to flare up in the future when agricultural tensions were again exacerbated.

The end of the war signaled the initiation of systematic Bolshevik work among Muslim women. In the absence of native activists, it was the most dedicated and courageous members of Zhenotdel who donned the *paranja* in order to meet with Muslim women and explain the new Soviet laws and programs which were to change their lives. This was an extremely dangerous assignment, as any violation of a local taboo enraged husbands, fathers and brothers to murder. In fact, the discovery of numerous dismembered bodies of Zhenotdel organizers finally compelled the Soviet government to reinstate the death penalty for explicitly "anti-feminist" murder as a counterrevolutionary crime, although non-political murder (even murder committed in vengeance against wives) received a standard sentence of five to ten years' imprisonment.

Zhenotdel activists organized "Red Yertas" (tents),

"Red Boats" and "Red Corners," depending on the terrain. They attracted local women by offering instruction in hygiene and crafts, by providing entertainment and a place to socialize and by distributing scarce consumer goods. Although the clubs were at first concerned primarily with publicizing and explaining the new laws, they later became centers for culture and education and waged a remarkably successful campaign to liquidate illiteracy.

At the 13th Party Congress in 1924 an offensive was launched in Central Asia which was designed to bring women into production and political life. Funds were allocated from central and local budgets for assemblies of women's delegates and for associations to combat *kalym* and polygamy. Plans were also made to form producers' and consumers' cooperatives and to establish literary and hygiene circles and medical dispensaries.

The implementation of these measures continued to depend on the initiative of a handful of Zhenotdel activists; for so deeply ingrained were the old values that often even Central Asian Communists could not conceive of substantial changes in the status of women, and the women themselves often failed to report

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Muslim Women Today: Veiled Oppression

Recent reports on the status of Arab women cited in the *Manchester Guardian* (16 May 1976), demonstrate that far from being merely horrors of the past, the customary subjugation and degradation of Muslim women is *on the rise* in many areas of the world today. This is due in large part to the growth of Arab nationalism, which has often sought to enshrine the perpetual enslavement of women as a hallowed tradition of Arab "culture" and as a focus for modern political unity.

Thus urban women in Saudi Arabia are still kept prisoners in upstairs rooms and forbidden the freedom even of their own houses. In the United Arab Emirates they are forced to put on a purple canvas mask at puberty which they can remove only while praying, even though they are confined to the house. In many places it is still common for women to be murdered by their male relatives for dishonoring the family. In North Yemen women are publicly stoned for adultery, and in some areas of the Sudan they are circumcised to keep them "virtuous."

Following the strong wave of national chauvinism which engulfed Arab countries (as well as Israel) at the time of the 1967 war, even educated Egyptian and Palestinian women who had been

long liberated from the veil put it on again.

Libya is now utilizing its considerable oil profits to revive the traditional Arab disgrace involved in women working or in remaining unmarried beyond adolescence by giving pensions to all girls over 18 who have not managed to "trap a husband."

In Morocco, only eight percent of the girls go even to primary school and respectable townswomen (rural women enjoy considerably more freedom) never leave their homes except for a weekly purifying bath and a male-escorted visit, once a month or so, to relatives.

Not only are Moroccan women cut off from all contact with public life, and sometimes even from contact with other women, but they rarely speak even to their husbands, as men who spend too much time with their families are subject to ridicule. Men are expected to spend their time with male companions at their places of business, clubs or cafes, where women are forbidden. Even educated Moroccan males told British anthropologist Vanessa Maher: "Books and outside work are for men—women are made for love. Women's sphere extends to the threshold—men's is beyond."



Bolshevik leader Alexandra Kollontai with Central Asia women, drinking wine in defiance of teachings of Koran.

Robert B. Luce, Inc.

Soviet East...

crimes against them to the courts. The response of local party branches to the new measures ranged from open hostility and sabotage to passive incomprehension.

The party locals in Daghestan, for instance, interpreted the law abolishing *kalym* as an instruction to lower bride prices. In some areas the party instituted fair price regulations: a young, pretty girl from a well-to-do family might cost 300 rubles while a pockmarked widow was to be priced the same as a hornless cow.

By 1924 Zhenotdel organizations had entrenched themselves in many areas, and because of their influence and the changes in material conditions, Central Asian women began for the first time to vote. This advance was facilitated by the fact that the official summons each of them received from the party to appear at the polls was regarded as a valid reason for them to go out in public, thereby saving their husbands from ridicule.

Once at meetings, women were persuaded to run for office on the party platform. At the same time, legal reforms and land redistribution gave them rights under the law, and through producers' and consumers' cooperatives they were able to acquire seed, tools and training, making it possible for them to support themselves. These alternatives to economic dependency in marriage in conjunction with the publicizing of divorce laws resulted in a marked increase in divorce, initiated especially by child brides and second and third wives.

Stalinization

Had a balanced approach of training and education complemented this liberalizing agitation, these new

divorcees could well have become enthusiastic pioneers of agricultural collectives and proletarian reinforcements for industrialization. Their example would have been followed by married women as well, with the incentive of increased family income working to neutralize the hostility of their husbands. But at the January 1924 Party Conference, which preceded the 13th Party Congress, the leadership, program, and methods of the party changed decisively.

The degeneration of the revolution after 1923, expressed through the theory of "socialism in one country" and implemented through the strangling of workers democracy in the Soviet Union, permeated and deformed all sectors of the government.

In an ominous prelude to the policies of the "third period," such as the forced collectivization of agriculture, the legal offensive against traditional practices in Central Asia was stepped up until the divorce rate assumed epidemic proportions. Although local party branches protested the pace of the offensive and warned that it had become "demoralizing to all concerned" and a threat to continued Soviet rule," Zhenotdel continued its one-sided agitation for women to initiate divorce, until the Red Yertas, clubs and hospitals were filled with far more divorcees than they could possibly handle. Under the impact of masses of women whom they could not support, these organizations in desperation simply dissolved. In some cases, they were transformed into brothels.

In 1927 the offensive was narrowed still further to a single-issue campaign against seclusion and the veil known as *Khudshum*. First, party meetings were held at which husbands unveiled their wives. Then on 8 March 1927, in celebration of International Woman's Day,

SWP and NOW...

(continued from page 24)

class, where there are not enough jobs to go around, this approach can only lead to support for union-busting affirmative action programs for women, blacks and a hundred other autonomously organized special interest groups—all of them at each other's throats.

Furthermore, the women who organize themselves to campaign for the ERA will disperse when the campaign is over just as surely as did those "masses" who organized to "bring our boys home" or for a "woman's right to choose." Meanwhile, the lack of a *class-struggle* leadership within the working class remains the major obstacle to the victory of socialist revolution in a society which has been ripe for it for generations! Such a leadership will never be built by the SWP, which objectively assists the bourgeoisie by insuring that protest movements confine themselves to peaceful demonstrations and humble petitions and never boil over into class struggle.

mass meetings were held at which thousands of frenzied participants, chanting "Down with the paran-ja!" tore off their veils, which were drenched in paraffin and burned. Poems were recited and plays with names such as "Away with the Veil," and "Never Again Kalym" were performed. Zhenotdel agitators led marches of unveiled women through the streets, instigating the forced desegregation of public quarters and sanctified religious sites. Protected by soldiers, bands of poor women roamed the streets, tearing veils off wealthier women, hunting for hidden food and pointing out those who still clung to traditional practices which had now been declared crimes (such as conspiring to arrange a marriage for exchange of *kalym*).

The *Khudshum* appeared to be a success on March 8, but on March 9 hundreds of unveiled women were massacred by their kinsmen, and this reaction, fanned by Muslim clergy, who interpreted recent earthquakes as Allah's punishment for the unveilings, grew in strength. Remnants of the Basmachi-rebels reorganized themselves into *Tash Kuran* (secret, counterrevolutionary organizations) which flourished as a result of their pledge to preserve *Narkh* (local customs and values).

Women suing for divorce became the targets of murderous vigilante squads, and lynchings of party cadre annihilated the ranks of the Zhenotdel. The massive terror unleashed against the recently unveiled women—which ranged from spitting and laughing at them to gang rape and murder—forced most of them to take up the veil again soon after repudiating it.

The party was forced to mobilize the militia, then the Komsomols and finally the general party membership and the Red Army to protect the women, but it refused to alter its suicidal policies. The debacle of International

It is altogether fitting that the SWP and NOW should have found one another. In methodology and in practice they have long been in accord, and now that NOW has officially adopted the word "revolution" into its rhetoric, the union must be nearly perfect. True, the SWP's invocation of the name of Leon Trotsky on certain holidays and formal occasions may give rise to an awkward moment or two, but the important thing is that for over a decade the SWP has proven that despite its revolutionary origins it is now entirely "respectable." ■

CORRECTION

In *Women and Revolution* No. 11 (Spring 1976) an unfortunate error appeared in the article "Union WAGE: Labor-Reformist Junkyard." The International Brotherhood of Teamsters was mistakenly called the UBT throughout the article. Obviously, this should have read IBT.

Woman's Day was repeated in 1928 and 1929 with the same disastrous consequences, exacting an extremely high toll on party cadre. Lacking Zhenotdel leadership those clubs which had survived the legal offensive now disappeared.

By 1929 Central Asia was caught up in the general resistance of peasant peoples throughout the Soviet Union to the forced collectivization of agriculture dictated by Moscow. Significant social advancement for most Muslim women in Central Asia was deferred. Not for another decade, when the productive capacity of the planned economy had developed sufficiently to provide jobs, education, medical care and social services on a scale wide enough to undercut primitive Islamic traditions, did they begin to make substantial gains.

The Russian Revolution created the objective preconditions for the liberation of women. But the consolidation of the Stalinist bureaucracy was accompanied by a general reversal of significant gains for women throughout Soviet society. Thus the oppressive family structure which the Bolsheviks under Lenin had struggled to replace with the socialization of household labor was now renovated as an economic institution by the increasingly isolated regime which realized that the family provided services which the degenerated workers state could not. In defense of the family, abortions were illegalized, divorces were made much less accessible and women were encouraged through government subsidies and "Mother Heroine" medals to bear as many children as possible. In 1934, as if to sanction its physical liquidation in Central Asia at the hands of *Tash Kuran* terror, the Soviet government liquidated Zhenotdel organizationally, as well. ■

After 14 Years

Thalidomide Cover-up Exposed

More than 15 years after the infamous drug thalidomide first reached the markets of Europe, five full pages of the *British Sunday Times* (27 June 1976) were reserved for a devastating attack on nearly everyone involved in its production, inspection and distribution, from the drug companies that "researched" and sold the drug to the bewigged representatives of the British judicial system.

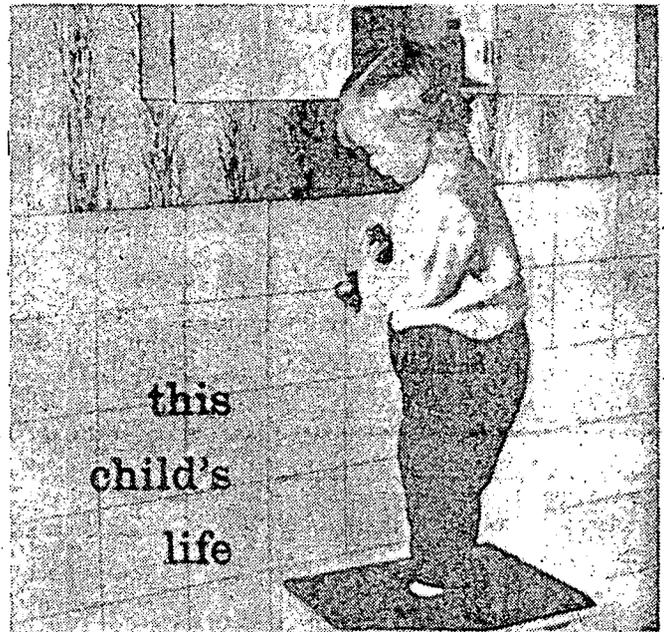
Thalidomide, widely heralded in the late 1950's and 1960's as a totally safe tranquilizer and sleeping pill, was five years later implicated as the cause of phocomelia, a mutilating birth defect, in more than 8,000 children. These hideously deformed children (some without arms, some without legs, some without any extremities) are casualties of the "profit motive."

The *Sunday Times* was gagged for nearly four years by an injunction from the Queen's Bench Division of the High Court, which prevented it from publishing its expose, while the courts protected the manufacturers of thalidomide against compensation claims on behalf of the affected children. Many documents considered damaging to the companies remain under judicial protection and will probably never be released for publication.

Thalidomide was first marketed by a small German soap and cosmetics company named Chemie Gruenthal. Here a staff of 12 "scientists," none of them trained in pharmacology, conducted a series of hasty, uncontrolled, unreproducible and extremely limited experiments on mice only. The subsequent claim of the company, flying in the face of existing scientific knowledge, that this extremely powerful central nervous system depressant was without effects on the circulatory and respiratory systems and that it was impossible to overdose, resulted in sales exceeding one million daily doses. When a Finnish doctor asked if thalidomide had untoward effects on the fetus, Gruenthal had answered "unlikely." In fact, it had never attempted to discover such effects.

Gruenthal later claimed in court that since it had followed the standard investigative practices of the time, it could not be held liable for damages to the victims of its rapacious greed. The company also stated that investigations into possible damage to fetuses had not been possible in the fifties, but such tests had been carried out since 1954.

Within a few years of its being marketed, 1,600 cases of serious side effects (including 400 cases of nerve damage or total paralysis of the extremities) from the "wonder drug" had reached Gruenthal. Its response was to suppress incriminating letters and reports on the drug to scientific journals and to use bribery and pressure to produce favorable ones. Meanwhile it mounted a campaign to prevent the drug's removal as an over-the-counter item.



may depend on the safety of 'Distaval'

The Sunday Times

Ad from 1960 for "Distaval"—one of DCBL's trade names for thalidomide—states: "... there is no case on record in which even gross overdose with 'Distaval' has had harmful results. Put your mind at rest. Depend on the safety of 'Distaval.'"

Gruenthal's success soon caught the attention of the British Distillers Company (biochemicals) Limited (DCBL), a producer of gin, vodka and whiskey. DCBL purchased the British rights to thalidomide in 1956 and began preparations for its distribution even before the company had one pharmacologist on its payroll. DCBL outdid Gruenthal in claims regarding the safety of the drug, even for pregnant women.

In June, 1961, DCBL received a report from Dr. William McBride, one of Australia's leading obstetricians, of three malformed babies whose mothers had in common only the fact that they had taken thalidomide during pregnancy. With murderous cynicism, DCBL assured McBride that the drug was perfectly safe and buried the report. When, three months later, this same doctor delivered two other phocomelic babies, the drug was taken off the hospital's formulary. At the behest of DCBL, however, McBride waited several weeks before publicizing the indisputable facts—to give the company time to look into the matter!

Simultaneously, a German doctor reported 16 similar tragedies to DCBL, which again attempted to suppress this information. Only the publication of the story in a West German newspaper, five full months after the initial report, finally succeeded in forcing the capitalist killers to pull thalidomide off the market.

FBI Infiltrates Feminist Groups

Documents recently handed over by the FBI to the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence reveal that the women's liberation movement has been monitored since 1968. Women involved in the movement have been followed, their telephones tapped, their mail opened, their homes watched and their organizations infiltrated by the secret police of the bourgeois state.

The Spartacist League protests in the strongest terms possible this outrageous governmental interference, which violates even bourgeois law, and demands that the FBI/CIA be immediately dismantled, that all of its "classified" information be made public and that those responsible for these criminal activities be prosecuted.

The feminist journal *Majority Report* (MR), which reprinted some of the FBI documents in its May 1-14 issue, was incensed not only that the FBI had investigated the women's liberation movement, but that the Senate Select Committee considered the investigation to be a waste of time. "We are disgusted," fumed MR, "by the contempt for feminism shown by members of the oversight committee, who cited the surveillance of the women's movement as an example of the irrelevance of some of the FBI's investigations" (*Majority Report*, May 1-14).

Clearly these feminists share with the "sister" FBI agents who infiltrated their organizations the belief that feminist consciousness-raising groups pose a significant threat to international imperialism. *Majority Report* asserts: "In theory the F.B.I. is right. The Women's Liberation Movement is subversive. It is probably generating more dramatic change in America than any other movement infiltrated by plants and provocateurs." MR also quotes with

approval Dr. Eli Ginzburg, chairman of the National Commission for Manpower, who says, "The trend [the women's movement] represents the single biggest revolution of the 20th century, bigger than communism."

In the same vein, the editor of the feminist *Women: A Journal of Liberation*, which was cited in the FBI documents, told a W&R interviewer: "The FBI realized early on that women doing this on their own was a threat and they [the FBI] were really scared. Women were trying to make revolutionary changes on their own."

But the robber barons of the bourgeoisie actually have little to fear from the feminists—a fact which was appreciated and explicitly acknowledged by the review committee which laughed the FBI's "evidence" out of the Senate chambers.

While it is true that some women do come to revolutionary class consciousness through an initial awareness of their own special oppression as women, feminism—the ideology which teaches that sisterhood is more powerful than class solidarity—blurs class distinctions and undermines working-class unity, thereby serving the interests of the capitalists and delaying socialist revolution.

Only those feminists who are able to transcend the "personal-is-political" dead end of consciousness-raising groups and grasp the significance of class consciousness and the primacy of class struggle will play an effective role in the historic battle for the full emancipation of women through international proletarian revolution. ■

Protesting that "publicity has removed the basis of scientific discussion," DCBL continued its attempts to slander McBride and to buy off other physicians. With the help of the then Minister of Health, Enoch Powell, DCBL managed to discourage and intimidate hundreds of families of thalidomide babies from receiving any compensation for the years of tragedy they were forced to endure.

Thalidomide became a national news item in the United States in 1962 when Mrs. Sherri Finkbine of Phoenix requested a therapeutic abortion on the ground that she had taken the drug during the course of her pregnancy and now faced the considerable likelihood of giving birth to a deformed child.

Thalidomide had been prohibited from sale in the U.S. by the Food and Drug Administration, which had been dissatisfied with the testing program conducted by its distributor. Nevertheless, some 1,200 American physicians had been sent samples of the drug for distribution to their patients.

In Arizona, where a 1901 statute permitted therapeutic abortion only in cases in which the health of the mother was threatened, a hospital review committee concluded that Mrs. Finkbine met this

requirement. The Phoenix City Attorney, however, stated publicly that he would prosecute any person involved in the proposed abortion.

Mrs. Finkbine was able to afford to travel to Sweden, where she aborted a deformed fetus. Seventeen less fortunate American women, who could not escape the barbarous anti-abortion laws of the U.S., gave birth to deformed babies. On the day following the Finkbine abortion the Vatican radio commented: "Crime is the only possible definition of what happened yesterday at Caroline Hospital in Stockholm, Sweden. Morally, objectively, it is a crime, and all the graver because it was committed legally."

Thus, from beginning to end, the blood-sucking leaders of capitalist industry and their henchmen in the courts and in the church have conspired to perpetuate, cover up and ultimately to defend the greatest drug tragedy of our time—a tragedy born solely of the lust for profit. It is these swine who are the criminals and their crime which is "all the graver because it was committed legally." The honorable guardians of bourgeois "justice" may turn a blind eye to the crimes of their masters, but in the revolutionary tribunals of the victorious workers state they will not be forgotten. ■

SAVE MARIO MUÑOZ!

The coup d'état carried out by the armed forces in Argentina has unleashed bloody repression against all revolutionaries, trade unionists and mass organizations. Thousands of refugees, in particular Chilean refugees, are being imprisoned, tortured, turned over to the Chilean military junta or shot on the spot without legal proceedings of any sort.

Among those condemned to death is Mario Muñoz Salas, Chilean revolutionary working-class leader and founder of the Aconcagua Union of Workers and Miners. Muñoz won the respect of his fellow workers, who made him a national leader of the Regional Miners Councils under the government of Salvador Allende. Muñoz met with Allende shortly before Pinochet's bloody coup and promised him the unconditional support of the miners in defense of the government in case such a coup should be attempted, but at the same time Muñoz asked the Chilean president how long he would continue to betray workers' interests by collaborating with the bourgeoisie. During his Argentine exile Muñoz has dedicated himself to organizing and defending the thousands of Chilean workers and peasants who were forced to flee Chile.

Just 48 hours after the military junta took power in Argentina, a patrol of 30 men raided the house of Muñoz and dragged out his *compañera*, Olga Meneses Ibaseta, their five children and some relatives who were present. During the interrogation of the children, one of the relatives was savagely beaten. The troops tried to snatch the youngest child, a two-month-old baby, out of the arms of its mother to use as a hostage, but she said that even if all her children were taken, she would never utter a word that would endanger the life of Mario Muñoz. Frustrated by the courage of this woman and the hostility of the crowd, the patrol was forced to retreat, but not before saying that Muñoz was a dangerous extremist and would be shot on sight.

Only international working-class solidarity can save the lives of Mario Muñoz and his family. The success of this campaign will be a victory not only for them but for thousands of victims of murderous right-wing repression in Argentina.

The Committee to Defend the Worker and Sailor Prisoners in Chile and the Partisan Defense Committee are co-sponsoring a Committee to Save Mario Muñoz. Among the endorsers of the international campaign are:

ASIA

Revolutionary Workers Party, Sri Lanka
Edmund Samarakkody, Revolutionary Workers Party, Sri Lanka

AUSTRALIA

Hon. Dr. Jim Cairns, House of Representatives, Australian Labor Party (ALP)*
Senator Arthur Gietzelt, ALP*
Bob Hawke, Federal President, ALP*, Pres. ACTU*
Seamens' Union of Australia
Waterside Workers Federation of Australia

CANADA

David Archer, President, Ontario Federation of Labour*
Andrew Brewin, Member of Parliament, New Democratic Party (NDP)*
Ed Broadbent, MP, Leader, NDP* (verbal)
Canadian Labour Congress
Florie Chacon, Inter-Church Committee on Chile*
Joe Davidson, Nat'l Pres., Canadian Union of Postal Workers*
Rosie Douglas
Group for Defense of Civil Rights in Argentina
Groupe Marxiste Revolutionnaire, Montreal
Groupe Socialiste des Travailleurs du Quebec
Stu Leggat, MP, NDP* (verbal)
Metropolitan Toronto Area Council, NDP*
Revolutionary Marxist Group
John Rodriguez, MP, NDP*
Sudbury and District Labour Council
Vancouver Area Council of the NDP
Vancouver Chilean Association

EUROPE

Louis Althusser, Paris
Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation, London
Ernst Bloch, philosopher
Pierre Broue, Organisation Communiste Internationaliste (OCI)* Grenoble
Carmen Castillo, Chilean MIR*
Comite International Contre la Repression, Paris
H. Dubedout, mayor of Grenoble
Mario Felmer, Chilean Young Socialists,* London
Martin Flannery, MP, British Labour Party*

Daniel Guerin, Paris
Alain Krivine, Ligue Communiste Revolutionnaire (LCR), France
Pierre Lambert, OCI*
North London Teachers Association, National Union of Teachers,* England
Paris Federation of the Socialist Party
Parti Socialiste Unifie (PSU)
Jiri Pelikan, editor, *Listy**
Maxime Rodinson, author
Jean-Paul Sartre, Paris
Alfred Stroer, V.P., European Fed. of Free Trade Unions,* Gen'l Sec'y, Austrian Union Federation,* Austria
Luis Vitale
Cristina Whitecross, London
Richard Whitecross, London

LATIN AMERICA

Pedro Pascal Allende, Socialist Party of Chile,* Mexico

NEAR EAST

Israel Shahak, Israeli League for Human and Civil Rights*
Joshua Sobel, writer and journalist

UNITED STATES

American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) Local 634, Madison, WI
Eqbal Ahmad
Robert L. Allen, editor, *The Black Scholar**
Joe Alvarez, Internat'l Rep., Northern Region 6, UAW*
Daniel Berrigan
Chicago Alliance Against Racist and Political Repression
Noam Chomsky
Clergy and Laity Concerned, Cleveland Chapter
Comite Pro Defensa de los Derechos Humanos en la Republica Dominicana, New York
Christopher R. Conybeare, The Ecumenical Justice Project*
Angela Davis
Dave Dellinger
Thomas I. Emerson, Prof. of Law, Yale U.*
Jane Fonda
Charles R. Garry, Atty.
Barbara Carson, author

Eugene Genovese, Prof. of History, Rochester U.*
William Goodman, Nat'l Pres. Nat'l Lawyers Guild*
Edward F. Gray, Asst. Director, Region 9 UAW*
Dick Gregory
Tom Hayden
Nat Hentoff
International Socialists, Chicago local
Dale Johnson, Prof. of Sociology, Rutgers U.*
Florynce Kennedy, Atty.
Lavender and Red Union, L.A.
Sidney Lens, author.
Denise Levertov
Longshore Militant, S.F.
Salvador Luria, Nobel Laureate
Madison Women's Union
Michael Meeropol
Robert Meeropol
Rev. Jack Mendelsohn, Sr. Minister, First Unitarian Church of Chicago*
Militant Action Caucus, Communication Workers of America (CWA), Local 9410*
Kate Millett, author
National Jury Project
Grace Paley, Sarah Lawrence College*
Partido Revolucionario Dominicano
James Peiras, Prof. of Soc., State U. of N.Y. at Binghamton*
Revolutionary Marxist Organizing Committee.
Richard Rubinstein, Prof. Pol. Sci., Roosevelt U.*
San Quentin Six Defense Committee
Seattle Radical Women
John Sharpe, Sec'y, international Spartacist-tendency
Carl Shier, International Representative, UAW*
Martin Sostre
I.F. Stone
Studs Terkel, author
Esteban E. Torres, assistant director, International Affairs Dept., United Auto. Workers*
George Wald, Nobel Laureate, Prof. of Biology, Harvard U.*
What She Wants
Women's Coffee House Collectors, Ltd.
Howard Zinn
*Organization listed for identification purposes only.
(partial listing)

COMMITTEE TO SAVE MARIO MUÑOZ

Individuals and organizations who wish to endorse the campaign to save Mario Muñoz, work with the Committee and/or contribute financially should fill out the blank to the right and send to: **PARTISAN DEFENSE COMMITTEE, Box 633, Canal Street Station, New York, NY 10013.**

God-Fearing Hypocrites Revile Sin and Smut

Harry Reems, "superstud" star of "Deep Throat" and "The Devil in Miss Jones" is a recent victim of the holy war against "smut" heating up across America. Al Goldstein, publisher of *Screw* magazine, has also just fallen prey to the forces of law, order and cleanliness, which are doubtless encouraged by the prospect of religious fundamentalist peanutboss Jimmy Carter as the next president.

Invoking god, who "hates sin," Memphis prosecutor Lawrence Parrish (who is also an elder in the First Evangelical Church of Christ) has gotten Reems convicted of "conspiracy" for his role in "Deep Throat." Reems faces up to five years in prison, up to \$10,000 in fines and \$125,000 in court fees. Goldstein, who was convicted in Wichita, Kansas, of sending obscene material through the mail, faces a possible sixty years in prison.

Women and Revolution denounces these outrageous convictions and demands that all charges be dropped! The blood-drenched bourgeois state, reeking with moral hypocrisy, has no business interfering in the private lives or the public entertainments of the citizenry! Whether "Deep Throat" or *Screw* have any "redeeming social value" is entirely irrelevant—we demand the abolition of all laws proscribing freedom of expression, sexual behavior, gambling, prostitution and other so-called "crimes without victims." (The current controversy over "snuff" films is a completely different matter. These movies are said to show the actual murder of women. If such atrocities are, in fact, in existence, the producers and actors involved in them are simply accessories to murder and should be treated accordingly.)

Many feminists will undoubtedly find defending Reems and Goldstein, symbols of machismo, objectionable. In fact, devotees of Susan Brownmiller, whose book *Against Our Will* advocated outlawing all "pornography" and strengthening the bourgeois police by the addition of more women cops, are doubtless cheering the convictions. But sheer self interest, as well as political principle, demands the defense of Reems' democratic rights against the



People/Julian Wasser.

Bible-thumping pickets parade outside Reems' trial in Memphis.

incursions of the bourgeois state. The recent case of Mary Jo Risher, denied custody of her child because of a lesbian relationship deemed "immoral" by the state, and the Supreme Court's decision to uphold archaic laws against sodomy, which are used to persecute and harass homosexuals, provoked justified outrage and protest among broad sections of both the socialist and feminist movements. The present obscenity convictions are part of the same reactionary offensive.

It is, of course, true that many films, magazines and books perpetuate the image of women as simply sexual objects and are genuinely offensive in this regard. But state censorship of sexual fantasies and of personal relationships between consenting adults is not the solution to women's oppression. Abolishing women's oppression requires uprooting the oppressive and deeply corrupt bourgeois state through socialist revolution. ■

SAVE MARIO MUÑOZ!

- I endorse*
 My organization endorses*

the international defense campaign to save Mario Muñoz, organized around the demands:

Hands off Mario Muñoz!

Chilean Working-Class Leader Must Not Die!!!

Free all victims of right-wing repression in Argentina and Chile!

Stop the Manhunt!

Name _____

Organization _____

Address _____

- I am willing to work with the Committee to Save Mario Muñoz.
 I pledge \$_____ to help save Mario Muñoz. (Make payable to Partisan Defense Committee. Earmark for Committee to Save Mario Muñoz.)

*Endorsement indicates willingness to permit your name or your organization's name to be used to internationally publicize the campaign of the Committee to Save Mario Muñoz.

The Socialist Workers Party and NOW: Together At Last

At the last convention of the liberal feminist National Organization of Women (NOW) held in Philadelphia in October 1975, the Majority Caucus emerged victorious after a slick campaign which made a rhetorical pitch for radicalism. Ten years behind the times, NOW is discovering New Leftist politics. The Majority Caucus pledged itself to give more attention to the oppressed, to recognize the relation of sexism to "classism, racism, and ageism as well as to lesbianism and to the poor," and to an all-out effort to win nation-wide ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA).

While the national convention had as its theme "It's Our Revolution, NOW," the Majority Caucus latched onto the more left sounding "Out of the Mainstream and into the Revolution." But although this appeared to some to be a leftward-moving current, it remained at bottom the same old pool of stagnant reformism. Thus the Majority Caucus continued to agitate for NOW to endorse Democratic and Republican political candidates, and it supported the impotent "Alice Doesn't Day," which advertised itself as a women's general strike against the system, although NOW's 1500-member New York Local did not bother to participate in it.

Majority Caucus candidate Karen de Crow was re-elected president of NOW. This "radical" was an ardent support of class-traitor Jane Alpert, despite numerous charges by leftists and feminists (including Pat Swinton) that she had informed on her former comrades in the Weather Underground and on other political refugees. Ms. de Crow has also rallied to the defense of Gloria Steinem, a CIA informant.

In Line With its Tradition of Anti-Communist Opportunism...

Despite a widely publicized "turn" toward the labor movement, the SWP has all but buried itself in such petty-bourgeois groupings as NOW and the NAACP. The fake-Trotskyist SWP, in search of a "mass" project to fill the void left by the sudden evaporation of the anti-war movement, found the campaign for the Equal Rights Amendment a perfect issue and NOW a ready-made platform.

In the tradition of its earlier single-issue campaigns for "peace" and legal abortions (for those women who can afford them), the SWP has once again attempted to substitute "mass actions" for revolutionary class struggle.

The entire history of the SWP in the women's movement has been marked by anti-communist opportunism. Eager for an entree into the women's movement it set up the Women's National Abortion Action Coalition (WONAAC) in 1971. In keeping with the SWP's polyvanguardism, which holds that each

oppressed sector of society must organize itself, WONAAC was male exclusionist from the outset. But while all men were kept out, along with women of the Spartacist League, who had the temerity to insist on drawing a class line, representatives of the bourgeoisie such as Bella Abzug were welcomed with sisterly affection, guaranteeing that a class line would never be drawn and that the abortion campaign would be safely confined within the limits of a democratic, single-issue reform movement.

Rejecting the Spartacist League's demand for free abortion on demand as part of a broader struggle for women's liberation through socialism, the SWP refused to raise any program which went beyond the democratic demands which were acceptable to liberals like Abzug. It was to such treacherous misleaders as the SWP that Lenin referred when he wrote:

"Let the liars and hypocrites, the obtuse and the blind, the bourgeois and their supporters, try to deceive the people with talk about freedom in general, about equality in general and about democracy in general.

"We say to the workers and peasants—tear the mask from these liars, open the eyes of the blind. Ask them:

"Is there equality of the two sexes?

"Which nation is the equal of which?

"Which class is the equal of which?

"Freedom from what yoke or from the yoke of which class? Freedom for which class?

"He who speaks about politics, democracy and freedom, about equality, about socialism, *without posing* these questions, without giving them priority, who does not fight against hushing them up, concealing and blunting them, is the worst enemy of the working people, a wolf in sheep's clothing, the rabid opponent of the workers...."

—V.I. Lenin, "Soviet Power and the Status of Women," *Collected Works*, Vol. 30

...The SWP Finds a Home

Unflagging in its dedication to unprincipled class-collaboration and opportunism, the SWP is presently devoting a considerable amount of its time and resources to an all-out effort to disappear completely into NOW, leaving hardly a trace of troublesome "socialism." Well known SWPers, such as Diane Feeley, for example, are currently the best organizers of NOW.

The SWP is determined to recapitulate the reformist policies it expressed through WONAAC and NPAC (National Peace Action Coalition). Its more recent "turn" to the working class obviously does not extend to program. Every oppressed sector, it seems, must still organize itself. Says Pat Wright, SWP candidate for Congress: "Since black women have an oppression different than black men and white women, black women must organize themselves." In the working

continued on page 19