

Women and Revolution



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V. Tatlin's Monument to the Third International (1920)

On "Gay Liberation": A Marxist Analysis

Since the ultimate goal of Marxism is the liberation of human potential in all areas of life and the fullest possible development of the individual, it would be a corruption of our most deeply held principles to remain indifferent to the misery, degradation and deformations to which every human being is subject in class society. But to what sorts of oppression may any political program realistically address itself? And how is "liberation" to be achieved? Here is the heart of the dispute between Marxists and libertarians, including the various contemporary exponents of "sexual liberation" or one or another "liberated lifestyle."

Marxists focus their attack on the *material* bases of oppression. As Trotsky's biographer Isaac Deutscher pointed out to the Socialist Scholars Conference in 1966 at the height of New Leftism:

"We do not maintain that socialism is going to solve all predicaments of the human race. We are struggling in the first instance with the predicaments that are of man's making and that man can resolve. May I remind you that Trotsky, for instance, speaks of three basic tragedies—hunger, sex, and death—besetting man. Hunger is the enemy that Marxism and the modern labor movement have taken on.

"...Yes, socialist man will still be pursued by sex and death, but we are convinced that he will be better equipped than we are to cope even with these.... We do not see in socialist man evolution's last and perfect product, or the end of history, but in a sense only the beginning of history."

It is precisely the rejection of Marxist materialism which characterized and ultimately destroyed the New Left. Abandoning this foundation, it floundered and splintered into a pack of mutually hostile, self-delimited "primary oppression" groups. The belief that only the oppressed can understand, and therefore combat, their own oppression led to the creation of exclusionist tendencies—first along racial lines and then along sexual lines, and ultimately, in an absurdly logical extension, to exclusively lesbian organizations, all-male gay groups, Jewish feminists, Jewish lesbian feminists, fat feminists, etc. Meanwhile, those who preferred to directly take on the ultimate oppression—death—opted for the mystical road to liberation.

Many of those who sought to storm the barricades of sexual oppression launched an all-out attack not on class society but on "straight" society, raising personal predilections to the level of political principles. For feminists who marched under the "Gay is Good" banner, lesbianism became the road to revolution. Literally hundreds of bulletins and newspapers sprang up around the issue of sexual liberation, and gay caucuses became a standard fixture at New Left gatherings.

Marxists were met with open hostility and bitter taunts by the more extreme proponents of "the personal is political." A poem celebrating "Christopher

Street Liberation Day" lashed out at revolutionaries who maintain that personal fulfillment cannot substitute for political struggle:

"when we demand our total lives
they wonder
what we are demanding
cant you lie
cant you lie
they whisper they hiss
like fire in grass
cant you lie
and get on with the real work"

—Fran Winant, "Christopher Street Liberation Day, June 28, 1970" in Karla Jay and Allen Young (eds.), *Out of the Closets*

The implication that the demand for "total lives" is the "real work" at hand reveals a world view which is fundamentally counterposed to Marxism: the idealism of an individualistic, petty-bourgeois struggle not for *human* liberation but for *self*-liberation. The "real" revolution is viewed not as class struggle but as the struggle for self-expression.

But what "real work" did the New Left and the "sexual liberation movement" actually accomplish? In the year 1976 the "right on" rhetoric of the sixties is only a fading memory, and state persecution of homosexuals and other social "deviants" (e.g., couples engaging in oral sex, publishers of "obscene" literature and women seeking abortions) is again on the rise. A demoralized and apolitical atmosphere hangs heavily over the campuses, once the hotbeds of radical activism; and while gay organizations continue to exist,

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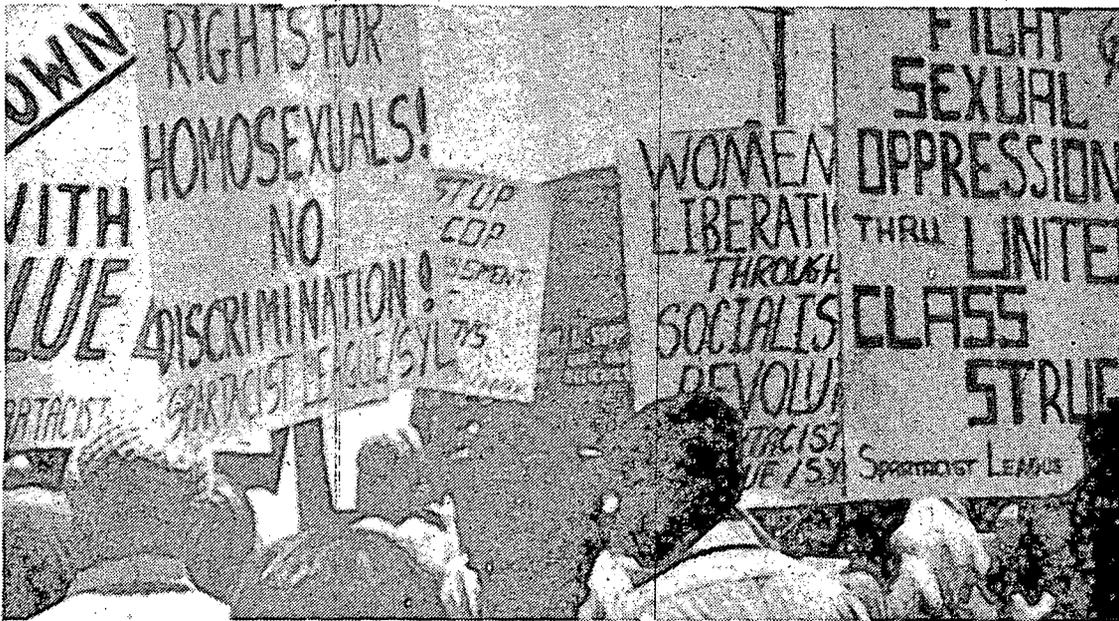
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Spartacist contingent in Los Angeles demonstration against oppression of homosexuals, 1976. Poster reads: "Full Democratic Rights for Homosexuals! No Discrimination!"

Lavendar and Red Union

they appear to be concerned mainly with sponsoring dances and other social events.

Communist Struggle Against Persecution of Homosexuals

Lenin's statement to Clara Zetkin of the German Social Democratic Party (SPD) that it was a mistake to concentrate on questions of sexual "free love," marriage problems and so forth in political classes for working-class women has been held up by some petty-bourgeois opponents of Marxism as *proof* that Marxism is at best insensitive and at worst positively hostile to problems of personal existence, particularly those involving sexuality. But, in fact, the Marxist movement has from its very inception championed the rights of homosexuals.

The German Social Democratic Party of the late 19th century represented the most organized expression of Marxism up to that time. We have described at length in earlier articles the development of the SPD's work among women (see "Foundations of Communist Work Among Women: The German Social Democracy," *Women and Revolution* Nos. 8 and 9, Spring 1975 and Summer 1975). Less well known is its resolute fight against the persecution of homosexuals.

The Universal German Workingmen's Association led by Ferdinand Lassalle, one of the organizations which merged to form the SPD, took an early stand on this question when J. B. von Schweitzer, a lawyer, was brought to trial and disbarred from the legal profession for homosexual activity. Lassalle not only vigorously defended von Schweitzer but encouraged him to join the Association (which he did in 1863), becoming its leader after Lassalle's death; he was subsequently elected a member of the Reichstag.

Author Oscar Wilde was defended against persecution for homosexuality by the most authoritative journal of the Second International, *Die Neue Zeit*. In a lengthy two-part article, Eduard Bernstein presented a materialist critique of the hypocrisy of contempo-

rary sexual morality, insisted that "moral attitudes are historical phenomena," gave numerous examples of societies in which homosexuality was a widely accepted practice and refuted the theories of Krafft-Ebing and other psychiatrists which maintained that homosexuals were "sick."

The SPD also waged a long and arduous struggle against Paragraph 175 of the German penal code, which made homosexual acts (for males) a crime. August Bebel and other Social-Democratic representatives in the Reichstag made speeches attacking Paragraph 175, and the party's paper *Vorwärts* carried news of the struggle against the state persecution of homosexuals.

Whereas the SPD could only wage a defensive struggle against the oppression of homosexuals, the Bolshevik party, which succeeded in seizing power in Russia, was able to take positive action to end this oppression.

Immediately upon its accession to power, the Bolshevik party swept away the entire legal basis for the persecution of homosexuals. A pamphlet by Dr. Grigorii Batkis, director of the Moscow Institute of Social Hygiene, entitled *The Sexual Revolution in Russia*, reflected the official Bolshevik view:

"It [the new Soviet legislation] declares the absolute non-interference of the state and society into sexual matters, so long as nobody is injured and no one's interests are encroached upon.

"...Concerning homosexuality, sodomy, and various other forms of sexual gratification, which are set down in European legislation as offenses against public morality—Soviet legislation treats these exactly the same as so-called 'natural' intercourse. All forms of sexual intercourse are private matters."

—Grigorii Batkis, quoted in John Lauritsen and David Thorstad, *The Early Homosexual Rights Movement*

Stalinist Degeneration

The young Soviet republic provided new opportunities for the exploration, development and expression of

continued on next page

“Gay Liberation”...

human potential in many areas of life, but much of the exhilarating freedom of the early years was snuffed out in the process of bureaucratic Stalinist degeneration to which the workers state succumbed. By 1924 the revolution was going down to defeat before a political (although not a social) counterrevolution stemming from the *material* conditions of backwardness, isolation and poverty in post-revolutionary Russia and from the failure of proletarian revolutions in the technologically advanced countries of Western Europe.

In order to consolidate its power and ensure social passivity, the Soviet bureaucracy found it necessary to rehabilitate many of the old bourgeois prejudices and social institutions responsible for the oppression of both women and homosexuals—notably the family structure. In March 1934 a law punishing homosexual acts, with imprisonment of up to eight years, was introduced. Mass arrests of homosexuals took place in that year, and many of them were imprisoned or exiled to Siberia.

The so-called “socialist morality” of the degenerated and deformed workers states is in reality nothing more than a glorification of the stultifying and reactionary ideology of bourgeois society. Those ostensibly revolutionary organizations in the U.S. today (e.g., the October League and the Revolutionary Communist Party) which consider homosexuals sick and incapable of being revolutionaries are simply adapting to this bourgeois ideology.

Although the Soviet state remains based to this day on the historic gains of the Bolshevik Revolution (socialized property relations) and must therefore be defended militarily from imperialist attack, the Spartacist League raises the call for *political* revolution by the Soviet masses to overthrow the ruling bureaucratic caste and to reinstitute workers democracy.

The bitter experience of homosexuals in the “Venceremos Brigades” who eagerly demonstrated support for Castro’s Cuba until they ran up against the anti-homosexual biases of Cuban “socialism” (i.e., Stalinism) illustrates both the Stalinist perversion of Bolshevism and the inability of petty-bourgeois radicalism to confront this historical fact politically. The homosexual members of the Brigade recoiled from Cuba’s despicable persecution of homosexuals. But instead of thoughtfully re-evaluating the political nature of Castroite Cuba, most of them simply rejected politics and reaffirmed self-fulfillment. Thus, Allen Young writes:

“I and other gays are frankly afraid that one day these straight revolutionaries may decide to eliminate us!... If you want to bring joy to the suffering masses, you must be engaged in the process of bringing joy to yourself. Otherwise the whole thing is an abstract game....”

—Allen Young, “The Cuban Revolution and Gay Liberation,” in *Out of the Closets*

Not surprisingly, those radical homosexual organizations which continue to identify themselves as Marxist tend to be strongly anti-Stalinist. But although revulsion to Stalinist atrocities is understandable, it is hardly a test of correct political analysis. More to the point is

whether these groups would call for the military defense of the deformed workers states *despite* their deformations (including the persecution of homosexuals).

Marxism vs. “Life-Stylism”

The Spartacist League has consistently called for the abolition of all laws against homosexuality and has published numerous articles defending homosexuals against the state (see, for example, “Lesbianism on Trial in Texas: Defend Mary Jo Risher!” *Women and Revolution* No. 11, Spring 1976) and exposing the positions of those so-called leftists who glorify some of the worst aspects of bourgeois society, such as the nuclear family and puritanical sexual prejudices. But while we reject the notion that homosexuality is a sickness, as the reactionary ideology of the bourgeoisie and its churches would have it, we also reject the premise that “gay liberation” is inherently revolutionary.

The battle against petty-bourgeois radicalism is not a new one for communists, particularly in America, where this has been a more influential current on the left than in virtually any other country, reflecting the relative political backwardness of the working class and the greater relative weight of the liberal middle class in political life.

The American section of the First International, led by Victor Sorge, carried out a faction fight in the 1870’s against Victoria Woodhull, the most notorious advocate of “free love” of her day. The struggle paralleled in many ways the SL’s struggles against the “life-stylists” of the New Left, i.e., those who elevate a particular life-style to a “revolutionary” strategy.

The dispute with Woodhull arose over the priority of women’s rights, notably suffrage, vis-à-vis class struggle. The Woodhullites’ position was not simply a matter of programmatic emphasis but a counterposition to proletarian socialism. Marx finally expelled the Woodhullites from the First International, concluding his polemic against them by reasserting the central difference between democratic egalitarianism and proletarian socialism—i.e., that liberation from all forms of social oppression can be achieved *only* through the victory of the working class over capitalism.

The dauntless 19th-century radical Auguste Blanqui wrote in his *Critique Sociale*:

“One of our most grotesque presumptions is that we barbarians, we ignoramuses, pose as legislators for future generations. Those generations, for which we take the trouble to feel concern and prepare the foundations, will render us a hundred times more pity than the caveman inspires in us, and their compassion will be a great deal more reasonable than ours.”

The Spartacist League does not presume to legislate the practices of future generations. We do look forward to the day when socialist humanity will have the freedom to explore fully all of the complex questions regarding human sexuality, but the road to that freedom lies not through the proliferation of “liberated life-styles” but through a successful proletarian revolution. ■

No More Trials—Free Her Now!

Hung Jury in Susan Saxe Trial

BOSTON, October 13—After a three-week trial in Suffolk Superior Court, yesterday a jury declared itself hopelessly deadlocked in the case of lesbian-feminist Susan Saxe. Saxe is charged with felony murder for her participation in a Boston bank robbery committed in September 1970 during which a policeman, Walter A. Schroeder, was killed. When the jury failed to reach a verdict after five days of deliberation, a mistrial was declared. However, Saxe remains in custody pending a decision concerning a new trial.

In a surprise move the defense called no witnesses and simply declared at the termination of the state's presentation that "we decided the government had proved our case." The prosecution had called numerous witnesses, none of whom were able to corroborate the state's charge that Saxe played a substantial role in the robbery or even positively identify her. One remembered only that one of the robbery participants had "thick lips," another that "she was a little on the hefty side." The two star witnesses for the prosecution were those who had already received reduced sentences for their cooperation with the state!

Although the state does not contend that Saxe actually shot the policeman, a Massachusetts statute decrees that all persons involved in a felony which results in a death must be charged with felony murder. William Gilday has already been convicted for the murder of Schroeder and has been serving a life sentence since 1972. Another convicted accomplice, Robert J. Valeri, turned state's evidence, naming four others as participants in the robbery, for which the state rewarded him with a reduced charge of manslaughter and a reduced sentence of 15 years with the possibility of parole. A third suspect in the murky case, Stanley Bond, was found dead in his cell at Walpole State Prison in 1972 just prior to being called on to testify. If convicted on this charge, Saxe faces a mandatory sentence of life imprisonment.

Unlike Valeri, who incriminated Saxe within 24 hours of his capture in order to save his own hide, Saxe has courageously refused to cooperate with the government, stating, "...the United States government realizes that I am not and never will be a collaborator. I have made it clear to them that if I am called as a witness in any government proceeding, I will refuse to testify...." In exchange for pleading guilty to the theft of classified government documents from the Newburyport Arsenal and to a Philadelphia bank robbery (for which she received

a two-year sentence and a ten-year sentence to run concurrently), it was agreed that she would not be ordered to disclose information about the "underground" movement from 1969 to the present.

Saxe also made it clear that she would not testify against Katherine Power, another alleged accom-



Susan Saxe

Wide World

plice in the Boston robbery, who is still at large. Her declaration was all the more valiant in the face of the statement made by another feminist under similar circumstances—Jane Alpert. Alpert turned state's evidence against the Weather Underground and other supporters of the so-called "male left" in return for a lighter sentence.

The state's search for Saxe over a period of four and a half years was used as an excuse for the surveillance, infiltration and harassment of a number of feminist organizations. Because she had claimed that she intended "to fight as a lesbian, a feminist, an Amazon," many gay groups were also witchhunted by the government. And it is because she has refused to inform on associates that she is still being persecuted by the authorities.

Susan Saxe deserves the support of all labor militants and socialists for her bold resistance to the naked tyranny of the bourgeois state. The continued trials thrown against her are simply victimization for her courageous stand. We demand: **NO MORE TRIALS! FREE SUSAN SAXE NOW!**

—reprinted from *Workers Vanguard* No. 130,
22 October 1976

Art and Revolution

Before "Socialist Realism" in the Soviet Union

Soviet art is linked in the minds of many with an endless and repetitive panorama of heroic factory workers and healthy-looking peasants, basking in the reflected glory of Stalin's fatherland. But the sterile,

By Janis Gerrard

servile, cynical and unimaginative "art" associated with Stalinist totalitarianism is the product of the suppression of a virtual creative explosion which accompanied the revolutionary struggle. During the brief period of democratic proletarian dictatorship, between the overthrow of tsarism and its reactionary censorship policies and the institutionalization of "socialist realism" under Stalin, the optimism and unlimited expectations unleashed by the Russian Revolution supported a heady atmosphere of artistic experimentation.

Under capitalism the arts rely for survival on the monied patronage of the leisure class. But although the Soviet state was born in conditions of desperate poverty, its commitment to making art accessible to the masses intersected a profound cultural upheaval which had begun in the 1890's, to produce a surge of creative activity that swept through every area of artistic endeavor.

As the Soviet government was bringing new sources of light and energy to the population through a campaign to spread the use of electricity—leading to a popular definition of communism as "soviet power plus electrification"—it was taken for granted that the revolution would bring light and energy to the intellect as well.

A look at the effects on the arts of the October Revolution illustrates the commitment of the young Bolshevik regime, despite immense material obstacles, to culture. The complex and shifting relationship between artists and the regime also illuminates the high ideals of the best elements of this idiosyncratic petty-bourgeois layer, which sought to associate its creativity with the great liberating revolution.

The Winds of Change

Although there is no direct relationship between political struggle and aesthetic innovation, historically periods of great artistic and cultural ferment have often preceded violent political struggle, as the changing class relations are mirrored in artistic expression. In Russia, dramatic transformations were evident in the arts several decades before the revolution.

At the beginning of the 20th century, after 300 years of existence, the ballet was still regarded as



Hill and Wang

Anatoly V. Lunacharsky, Bolshevik leader, literary critic and Soviet commissar of education.

frivolous entertainment for young aristocrats. The audience regarded the performance as a form of burlesque—where else could one see women so scantily clad? When the young Mikhail Fokin, who was later to introduce innovations which would save ballet from oblivion, questioned a leading dancer on the possibility of artistic renewal of the dance, he was told, "Ballet is pornography, plain and simple."

Young noblemen would sit in the smoking room playing cards and exchanging stories of romantic conquests until an usher announced that one or another "favorite" was due to appear, at which they would rush into the nearly empty theater to cheer loudly for an encore. One went to the theater to hear the soliloquy of a famous actor, to see the *tour de force* of a renowned ballerina, to hear the high C of a visiting soprano.

The novel concept of ballet as art can be credited to a handful of theatrical geniuses who qualitatively transformed the dance in the first years of the 20th century. They included: C. Stanislavsky of the Moscow Art



New York Public Library

The Isadora Duncan Dancers in "Workman's Song" (Moscow).

Theater; Mikhail Fokin, choreographer of the Imperial Ballet; S. Diaghilev, grand impresario of the Ballets Russes; A. Benois, artist, designer of scenery and costumes and close collaborator of Diaghilev; George Balanchine, choreographer for Diaghilev and pioneer of modern ballet in the West; and Isadora Duncan.

Stanislavsky's role in ending the isolation of the Imperial Ballet cannot be underestimated. He strove to cast away all the artificial and unnatural theatrical conventions which served only to advance the career of individual performers while stifling the art of dance and theater. His ideas focused on the desire to create in art the concept of "truth of life." His costumes and sets were defined to reflect the period of the play and to contribute to the artistic whole. He allowed no interruptions in the mood of the drama and fostered collaboration between different branches of the performing arts to achieve an artistic whole.

Isadora Duncan's first Russian tour in 1905 occurred just as these leaders of the "left" reform current were formulating their criticisms of the ballet and searching for new artistic models. For Fokin, who had dreamed of staging a ballet in the Greek style, Duncan's powerful yet simple performance, in which she was clad simply in a Greek tunic and danced on a green, grass-like rug

with simple, graceful movements to the music of Chopin and Schumann, had an overwhelming impact. Her dancing, unfettered by the confines of classical ballet technique, challenged all serious ballet dancers to examine their own concepts of art and aesthetic movement.

Duncan's influence was profound but, as Stanislavsky discovered when he met her in 1908, she was incapable of articulating her methods. She could speak only in mystical and idealistic terms of her concept of the interpenetration of art and life. Moreover, out of a false standard of artistic purity she refused to allow her dancing to be filmed.

The 1905 Revolution, which shook Russian society to its foundations, also jarred the complacency of the Russian ballet. Both Fokin and Anna Pavlova, the world-renowned prima ballerina, were involved in organizing a strike by dancers under the slogan "Freedom of Art," with a program of relatively minor economic and organizational reforms.

Other fields of art demonstrated an equally accelerated rate and heightened exuberance of creative expression. In poetry, new currents sprang up faster than they could be labeled. Symbolism gave way

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to futurism, then to acmeism, imagism and a multitude of unclassifiable styles. On the stage, the ensemble work of Stanislavsky's Moscow Art Theater and the expressionism in Meierhold's theater wrought profound changes in dramatic production.

But of all the art media, music seemed to be the central and determining one. Aleksandr Bloc, one of the greatest poets of the period, spoke of escaping from



New York Public Library

Isadora Duncan with her husband Serge Esenin in Paris, 1922.

calendar time to "musical time." The pioneering abstract painter, Vasily Kandinsky, said he considered music the most comprehensive of the arts and the model for all others, while his colleague Chiurlionis called his paintings "sonatas" and his exhibitions "auditions."

In writing, too, a new musical style evolved, and a new form of lyrical narrative called "the symphony" was developed by Andrei Bely. In the theater, Meierhold's emphasis on gesture underscored his belief that "the body, its lines, its harmonic movements, sings as much as do sounds themselves."

Even Lenin, removed as he was from the world of art, confessed to a strong and disturbing attraction to music during this period. In his *Days With Lenin*, author Maxim Gorky quoted him as saying:

"I know nothing more beautiful than the 'Appassionata,' I could hear it every day. It is marvellous, unearthly music. Every time I hear these notes, I think with pride

and perhaps childlike naiveté, that it is wonderful what man can accomplish. But I cannot listen to music often, it affects my nerves. I want to say amiable stupidities and stroke the heads of the people who can create such beauty in a filthy hell. But today is not the time to stroke people's heads; today hands descend to split skulls open, split them open ruthlessly, although opposition to all violence is our ultimate ideal—it is a hellishly hard task...."

Particularly after the Revolution of 1905, when many artists fled to the West, Russian art developed in a direction that was both more international and more interdisciplinary. One artistic medium seemed to flow into another. Thus futurism, the most radical of the new artistic currents, began in painting and then moved into poetry. The painter M. Vrubel drew much of his inspiration from poetry, while his use of color inspired poetry. The Ballets Russes epitomized this harmonious fusion of the arts, combining the scenic designs of Benois, L. Bakst and N. Roerich, the music of Igor Stravinsky, the dancing of the great Nizhinsky, the choreography of Fokin and the guiding genius of Diaghilev.

This development was sharply checked by the outbreak of war in 1914, which forced Russian art into isolation. During the war even the most avant-garde artists became superpatriots. The futurists, including Maiakovsky, led a patriotic-nationalist movement which elevated Russian primitivism and religious icons to the basis of a great Russian art of the future. Diaghilev and his group, cut off from Russia, toured Europe and the United States with a continually degenerating Ballets Russes. Isadora Duncan became a French patriot on the grounds that France was the preserver of what was best in modern European culture, although she said:

"France is the only country that really understands.... But I have great hopes for Russia. At this moment she is passing through the growing pains of childhood, but I believe that she is the future for Artists and the Spirit...."

The Russian Revolution

The Russian Revolution sent shock waves of wild hope and exhilaration through the artistic intelligentsia. In his famous poem, "Twelve," written just after the October uprising, Aleksandr Bloc introduces a popular revolutionary song traditionally sung to the accompaniment of balalaikas:

"No sound is heard from the city,
There is silence in the Nevsky tower,
And on the bayonet of the sentry
Glistens the midnight moon."

—A. Bloc, quoted in James H. Billington, *The Icon and the Axe*

Only Bloc changes the last two lines to an exultant:

"And there are no more policemen—
Rejoice, lads, without need of wine!"

For Fokin and Stanislavsky, the opening of the theaters to audiences composed of factory workers who had last year been peasants and to soldiers who had only yesterday been peasants was the realization of a lifelong aspiration. Batches of tickets were distributed free to the heretofore artistically disfranchised plebeian classes through the soviets and other workers' organizations.

The new audiences were difficult—to say the least—composed as they were of people unfamiliar with urban culture in general, not to mention the subtleties of literary and dramatic traditions. As commissar of war, Trotsky had to teach many of these former peasants to use soap and to clean their weapons. Similarly, Stanislavsky viewed his task as educating them in the conventions of the theater: "...to sit quietly, not to talk, to come to the theater on time, not to smoke, not to eat nuts in public, not to bring food into the theater and eat it there, to dress in [their] best so as to fit more into the atmosphere of beauty that was worshipped in the theater."

In 1921, Anatoly V. Lunacharsky, Soviet minister for education, telegraphed Isadora Duncan: "Come to Moscow, we will give you your school and 1,000 children. You may carry out your ideas on a grand scale." The offer was irresistible, despite the warnings of her friends that cannibalism was rampant and that "four year old children hung by their heels in the butcher shops."

Duncan entered the Soviet Union at a time when many artists were leaving, both for political reasons and to escape the misery and privations of a country ripped apart by civil war. She and her protégé Irma Duncan were the first foreign artists to enter the Soviet Union and the last for some time.

Bolshevik Ideals and Harsh Realities

The Bolshevik Ministry of Education and Art—*Narkompros*—faced enormous difficulties. Lunacharsky was caught in the middle of warring artistic tendencies, all clamoring for official approval. Furthermore, he was crippled, as were all government administrators, by the gap between the ideals and program of the Bolshevik party and the material inability to realize this program under conditions of war, extreme scarcity and national isolation.

The Bolshevik program called for artistic freedom, no state intervention into artistic affairs and no preferential state support for any particular artistic tendency, on the grounds that this would inhibit the development of other tendencies.

Lunacharsky was well aware of the need for political support and material aid from the artistic intelligentsia, realizing how few active artistic sympathizers there were. He was forced again and again to prove his artistic



Constable and Co.



Dance News Collection

Left: Vaslav Nizhinsky; right: prima ballerina Anna Pavlova in classical ballet, "The Dying Swan."

neutrality both to the artists themselves and to the party.

Despite the extremely difficult conditions under which it was forced to function, *Narkompros* did manage to keep open the universities and to preserve the public libraries, art collections and museums. It also instituted a network of kindergartens, children's colonies and experimental schools and administered state subsidies to support the arts.

Nevertheless, it seemed that *Narkompros* could satisfy no one. To give precious resources to the ballet while workers were starving was highly controversial. The exigencies of war communism left little extra for the fundamental restructuring necessary to lift the Russian masses out of centuries of backwardness and cultural poverty.

Narkompros vs. Proletkult

Freed from tsarist persecution, a multitude of artistic tendencies—futurists, confuturists, constructivists, supremacists, primitivists, imagists—surfaced; each with its own manifestoes, journals and organizational animosities. While hailing their new freedom from autocracy, many of these tendencies were suspicious of the Bolsheviks. The Artists' Union, formed in May 1917, held up the banner of artistic freedom like a cross to fend off the suspected Bolshevik threat.

The "left" wing of this Union was dominated by the futurists—self-proclaimed architects of the future "proletarian culture," who argued for a complete break with the past, insisted on a fundamental link between art and technology, introduced technical-

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industrial terms into their poetry and identified themselves with Bolshevism and internationalism. But futurist leader Maiakovsky, despite his sympathies for the revolutionary proletariat, stood in principle against joining any state body dealing with art. The Artists' Union refused to cooperate with *Narkompros* even in its campaign to save art treasures from war damage.

Lenin, whose aesthetic tastes were relatively conservative, personally disliked the flamboyant public spectacles, bright yellow shirts and painted faces in which the futurists delighted and was infuriated when they painted the trees in front of the Kremlin bright colors for a May Day celebration.

Lunacharsky and Trotsky were more sympathetic to avant-garde and experimental trends but also felt a commitment to the preservation of artistic tradition. It was disgraceful, said Trotsky, to approach the "cultural heritage" of the past with nihilistic contempt. The working class had to take possession of that heritage and guard it. Above all, they strove to maintain an even-handed policy of official toleration and even encouragement with regard to all artistic tendencies. Nonetheless, the government was always suspected by the traditionalists of favoritism toward the futurists, especially when the futurists, after splitting from the Artists' Union, had obtained a position within the graphic arts department of *Narkompros* by offering their services for the production of propaganda posters.

The most organized expression of radicalism in the arts was the *Proletkult* (Proletarian Culture) organization, whose founder was Aleksandr Malinovsky, known as Bogdanov. Bogdanov means "god-gifted" and accurately reflects the image which this individual had of his own importance.

Although Bogdanov had been a member of the Bolshevik party until his expulsion in 1909, he believed that the key to the future lay not in the transformation of economic relationships through class struggle and socialist revolution but in the technology and ideology which was already being created by the proletariat. He also argued that the destructive conflicts of the past would never be resolved without the creation of a new, socially oriented religion, which he called "empirio-monism." Bogdanov's idealism was attacked by Lenin in *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*.

The theoretical basis of Bogdanov's *Proletkult* was the belief (originally supported by Lunacharsky) that

artists, under the direction of an organization similar to a trade union, which was to protect the interests of the proletariat in the cultural sphere, should create a "proletarian culture" which would substitute for the decadent, class-biased and therefore dangerous bourgeois culture. "Proletarian culture" would become a weapon of the oppressed in the class struggle. *Proletkult* saw nothing of value in the old bourgeois culture, which, its adherents argued, must be immediately destroyed. The refutation of this idea of "proletar-



Russian author
Vladimir
Maiakovsky

Alexander Rodchenko

ian culture" was succinctly summarized by Trotsky in the preface of *Literature and Revolution*:

"It is fundamentally wrong to oppose proletarian to bourgeois culture and art. Proletarian culture and art will never exist. The proletarian regime is temporary and transitory. Our revolution derives its historic significance and moral greatness from the fact that it lays the foundations for a classless society and for the first truly universal culture."

What is more, argued Trotsky, the historic destiny of the proletariat does not leave it enough time to develop a new culture. Whereas the bourgeois way of life developed organically over several centuries, the proletarian dictatorship will be measured in years or decades, and its duration will be filled with savage class struggles. "We are still soldiers on the march," he said. "Our epoch is not the epoch of a new culture. We can only force open the gate to it."

Although Lenin believed the concepts of *Proletkult* to be un-Marxist and unmaterialist, he refrained initially from intervening against it on the grounds that it was not the rôle of the party to take positions on questions of art and culture. But *Proletkult*'s attempts to create a new culture under the conditions of war communism proved dangerous. The discovery that *Narkompros*' budget for the arts was larger than its budget for education and that the special rations which had been granted technical specialists had been

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extended to artists prompted Lenin late in 1920 to support Lunacharsky's demand that the hitherto freewheeling *Proletkult* be subordinated to *Narkompros*.

The immediate cultural necessity, he argued, was to raise the level of the Russian masses—to help them acquire the level of competency that the petty-bourgeoisie had taken for granted: literacy, simple arithmetic, hygiene. But the avant-garde artists of *Proletkult* disdained such mundane tasks. Lenin characterized them as “parasites... escapees from the bourgeois intelligentsia” who were looking for a playground in the institutions desperately needed by the workers.

Lenin was supported in his struggle against *Proletkult* by both Lunacharsky, who believed that proletarian culture was possible but not imminent, and Trotsky. Trotsky agreed with Lenin on the philosophical aspects of proletarian culture as well as the immediate priorities of raising the level of culture for the masses but disagreed with Lenin's evaluation of avant-garde experimentation and was particularly sympathetic to the futurists.

The real strength of *Proletkult* is demonstrated by the fact that after deciding in 1919 that the organization represented a danger, it took the Bolsheviks two years to achieve its subordination to *Narkompros*. *Proletkult* was also censured for its claim to have brought about “immediate socialism” in the cultural sphere, a “proletarian culture” totally emancipated from the bourgeois past. It is instructive that throughout this fight Lenin never resorted to censorship. Freedom of expression for all except active counterrevolutionaries was a fiercely guarded principle during Lenin's lifetime.

Degeneration, Defection, Death.

The New Economic Policy (NEP) initiated in 1921 meant a loosening up in most areas, but coinciding as it did with the end of the *Proletkult* fight and the reorganization and trimming down of *Narkompros*, it hit the arts like an austerity program. It was all Lunacharsky could do to salvage subsidies for the Bolshoi and Mariinsky Ballets, the Academic Theater and the Moscow Art Theater. He almost lost on the ballet, which Lenin ordered closed because of its “negligible artistic value” and high cost of maintenance. He managed to keep the Bolshoi open, after the Council of Trade Unions ordered it closed, only by arguing that the theater was needed for congresses and state functions. Other theaters maintained themselves by selling tickets to those who could afford them and distributing a small number to trade unions and schools at half price. The *Proletkult* Theater and the Isadora Duncan School maintained their premises but were told to support themselves through performances. Duncan, with 40 students and a staff to support, went on a pan-Soviet tour, which was artistically successful, but after the expenses of the orchestra and transportation were settled, she had little left with which to maintain her school. Her next tour to Central Asia was so financially disastrous that she decided that if she must go back to dancing for money she should go to a

country that had some—the United States. But although her concerts in the U.S. were sold out, she was banned in Boston and other cities for “inflammatory Communist dancing” and oratory.

The degeneration of the revolution after 1924 and the insidious entrenchment of the Stalinist bureaucracy was reflected in the arts. In the ballet, experimentation with themes of class struggle began to be booed off the stage. George Balanchine was publicly criticized for his experiments with pantomime, which were characterized as a break with “artistic tradition.” In 1924 he and his whole company defected and joined Diaghilev in Paris—the first in a long line of Soviet ballet dancers to defect.

In 1925 the poet Esenin, Isadora Duncan's estranged husband, committed suicide. Although ostensibly an apolitical act, this suicide, like Balanchine's defection, started a trend among artists. In fact, the self-destruction of poets associated with “drunkenness and bohemian influences” created a new Russian word—“Esenism.” These suicides represented the inability of a certain layer of artists either to submit to the growing bureaucracy or to fight it.

In 1929 Lunacharsky resigned his post as commissar of education. In the same year, Maiakovsky wrote “The Bedbug” and “The Washhouse,” skillful, satirical plays exposing the bureaucracy. The public criticism of these works was brutal. He was allowed no reply and was hounded until he finally recanted. But although in a poem of capitulation he promised to write one hundred party books and publish them in the official party press, he was never to write anything again. In 1930 he shot himself.

In 1935 Maiakovsky was proclaimed a national hero by Stalin. Russian school children were compelled to memorize his poems; posthumous awards were bestowed; a subway station was named in his honor. One understands that when a subway station is dedicated to a martyred poet by his persecutors the time for debating questions of aesthetics, style and freedom is past. ■

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Women and Revolution

Seattle Radical Women

“Socialist-Feminism” Equals Reformism

Radical Women (RW), a small Seattle-based organization of aggressive, militant and articulate “socialist-feminists,” held its annual conference over the weekend of October 9 and 10. The importance of the conference, entitled “A New Era for Women Workers, Minority Women and Lesbians,” resides not in the political content of the presentations but in the role that this organization may well play in the emergence of a U. S. supporter group of the fake-Trotskyist United Secretariat (International Majority Tendency).

The prospective regroupment has been signaled from many quarters; in particular, by RW’s fraternal organization, the Freedom Socialist Party (FSP), and the New York-based Marxist Education Collective (MEC). This summer Murray Weiss and Myra Tanner Weiss, leaders of the MEC, made a national tour, probably with the intention of pulling together the variegated threads of the new “revolutionary” party. On August 9, when the Weisses spoke in Seattle under the auspices of RW and the FSP, Murray Weiss was asked by a Spartacist League supporter if the MEC were drifting toward the International Majority Tendency (IMT). “We’re not drifting,” he answered, “we’re there.”

Is Radical Women also “there”? And just where is “there”? On what programmatic basis are Radical Women and the Freedom Socialist Party moving toward the IMT? The October RW conference gave no answers to these critical questions.

Much of the conference (to which men were invited as observers only) was devoted to personal accounts of racial and sexual oppression and a recounting of RW activities over the past two years. Given RW’s erroneous position that the most oppressed are necessarily the most revolutionary, the apolitical accounts of individual oppression were no doubt intended to establish the speakers’ credentials for revolutionary leadership. But despite the best efforts of the conference organizers, some politics were injected into the discussion, mostly through the intervention of Spartacist League supporters. Particularly heated debates arose over Radical Women’s support to “affirmative action” and independent unionism. RW’s advocacy of these two tactics rests on its theoretical premise that “we have entered an entirely new historical epoch—the epoch of revolutionary socialist feminism.”

By what alchemy does Radical Women, which aspires to become a “socialist-feminist, Trotskyist vanguard party,” hope to effect the unity of two counterposed world views—socialism and feminism? By transmuting the most oppressed into the most revolutionary:

“In the subjugation sweepstakes, we win; we are the oldest, the largest, the most international, and the most

oppressed group of human beings in history.

“The raw battle for sheer survival in the everyday world of imperialist America has equipped minority women, women workers, and lesbians with a talent for discipline and respect for theory because the life of the ghetto woman, the working mother, and the independent woman depends upon clear-headedness, self-control, and organization.

“...the female experience itself is profoundly radicalizing.”

—“Radical Women Manifesto”

But revolutionary consciousness does not proceed automatically from the daily, pervasive pounding of poverty, racism and male chauvinism—which have a corrosive and debilitating effect on the individual and her ability to struggle. Only the intervention of the revolutionary party, which offers a world-view counterposing Marxist class consciousness to the parochialism and defeatism of “the most oppressed,” can weld broad sections of the specially oppressed to the class struggle of the proletariat for socialist revolution.

Recognizing that even the most oppressed must have some relationship to production in order to effect social change, Radical Women advocates—as its maximum program—“affirmative action” for women. This approach, guaranteed to perpetuate the division of the workers along sex lines, reveals the feminist, anti-Marxist core of RW politics:

“Sexism is not simply a cancerous growth within the capitalist body. It is the body: it defines and motivates and energizes the body. The roots of sexism, the arena for sexism, and the continuous needs for sexism—all, lie in the confines of capitalism. The mandate for revolutionary feminists is to transform the birthplace of sexism, the private property system into its opposite and only enemy, socialism, the graveyard of sexism. The bourgeois father of male supremacy must be overthrown and replaced by the matriarchal democracy of socialist economics and a human culture.”

—*Ibid.*

Class struggle, the central axis of Marxism, is here replaced by a battle between the sexes. Historically this tendency is known as feminism, pure and simple.

RW’s “socialist-feminist” strategy for revolution rests upon the premise that the white male working class is hopelessly reactionary. As FSP organizer Gloria Martin put it: “Women are taking over the leadership because of the bankruptcy of male leadership.” According to the RW schema, women and the woman question (both of which are to be introduced to the working class through “affirmative action” programs) will ignite a “new mass upsurge” which will in all likelihood be independent of the trade-union movement as it is presently organized. The justification for dual



Clara (Kaye) Fraser and Radical Women in "Bread and Roses" chorus line.

The Freedom Socialist

unionism—a policy which makes a virtue out of the isolation of militant unionists—is that the trade-union bureaucrats have become “indistinguishable from the capitalists.” Unable to draw a distinction between the ruling class and its lackeys within the labor movement, Radical Women is willing to use the capitalist courts against the unions. Since women, minorities and homosexuals represent not only the majority of the population but its most oppressed sectors, it is their mobilization which, according to RW, will be decisive for the entire working class.

Like most feminist organizations, RW does not extend its political analysis to the logical conclusion—sex war. Its program leads instead to reformism. In fact, the Radical Women program is so narrow and so single-mindedly geared to women as to be sub-reformist. Its demands for legal, health, educational and welfare reforms are made on behalf of women only! It calls, for example, for an end to the persecution of lesbians, but says nothing about the persecution of male homosexuals. And its demand “of women legislators that they act responsibly in the interests of their sex” is a class-collaborationist betrayal of the working class which clearly exposes RW’s confidence in the bourgeois state. This is further confirmed by its demand for police protection for prostitutes and its endorsement of “community control” of the police.

No Class-Struggle Program for the Trade Unions

Radical Women takes particular pride in its trade-union activities. Laura Teague told the conference:

“Our socialist feminist strategy is based on the principles of union democracy and mutual respect and support for all of the sectors of the workforce. We work to build the class consciousness of our co-workers, fight for democracy and force union leaders through the pressure of our membership to lead, instead of acquiescing to management.”

SL interventions often met with the reply, “As a working woman, I resent...” And one RW spokesman sneered at an SLer, “We are the working class; where are you?” But despite its smug, workerist facade, RW has not the faintest conception of a class-struggle program for the trade unions and is abysmally ignorant of the SL’s Trotskyist trade-union work for over a decade.

Pressure on union leaders to lead and to be “democratic” does not constitute a class-struggle program. Class consciousness is built through united struggles which demonstrate, in the final analysis, the necessity for the overthrow of capitalism while simultaneously speaking to immediate problems. The task of the vanguard party is to lead such battles and to generalize them into an assault on capitalism.

An example of genuine class-struggle militancy is the work of the SL-supported Committee for a Militant UAW (CMUAW) at the Fremont, California General Motors plant. In the face of massive layoffs, the CMUAW fought against a law suit advocating preferential layoffs on the basis of sex which was brought against the company by eight women. (The union was subsequently named a co-defendant in the suit, since it

continued on next page

Seattle Radical Women ...

would have affected seniority provisions.) Hundreds of workers at Fremont signed the CMUAW petition against this suit. The petition called for a union-wide campaign "to end all layoffs, not just for women, but for all workers." At the same time, the CMUAW campaigned vigorously for sit-down strikes against the threatened layoffs. Through its activities, which have earned the solid respect of workers in the plant, the CMUAW has been able to advance its class-struggle program, which includes demands for: union control of all hiring through a union hiring hall on the basis of "first come, first served" and with no preferential treatment for anyone (with special training and recruitment programs for those traditionally excluded from certain job skills); all hiring into skilled trades apprenticeship programs to be done on the basis of plant-wide seniority; new skilled jobs to be opened up through abolishing forced overtime; early retirement at full pay; and a shorter workweek with no cut in pay. The program also demands free 24-hour child care controlled by the workers; the indefinite maintenance

of recall rights by workers who are laid off, to ensure that more-recently hired workers, such as women, will eventually regain their jobs, and unlimited unemployment benefits while they are laid off. And instead of fighting over who will be laid off *first*, the CMUAW calls for a united struggle against *all* layoffs through plant occupations and sit-down strikes.

Radical Women Not "Born Yesterday"

Radical Women's "just folks" posture is a sham. While its membership is recruited on the basis of the most simple-minded glorification of oppression, its leadership—personified in its undisputed leader, Clara (Kaye) Fraser—has a 40-year history in the Trotskyist movement.

Clara Kaye, whose portrait adorns the cover of the RW pamphlet, "A Victory for Socialist Feminism," the lobby of RW headquarters and an RW International Woman's Day poster, joined the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) in 1945. In 1957 she became co-leader of a left-wing faction known as the Kirk-Kaye tendency, which coalesced principally around differences on the black question.

Early on, the tendency rejected the SWP's adaptation to the reformist and pacifist leadership of the civil rights movement and later fought the party's turn toward the Black Muslims which culminated in naked capitulation to black nationalism. To the SWP's rightward, abstentionist drift the oppositionists counterposed the theory of "Revolutionary Integrationism," which urged the involvement of Trotskyist cadre in the black struggle. By 1965 their opposition had broadened to a critique of

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the SWP's petty-bourgeois, pacifist single-issueism in the anti-war movement.

The Kirk-Kaye tendency was decisively flawed by a failure to generalize its criticisms of the SWP's rightward motion which led the SWP to embrace the revisionist methodology known as Pabloism. The Revolutionary Tendency (RT) of the SWP, which was to become the nucleus of the Spartacist League after its expulsion from the SWP, in 1962 pointed to the symptoms of Pabloist degeneration in the SWP and described the phenomenon:

"Pabloism is essentially a revisionist current within the Trotskyist movement internationally which has lost a revolutionary world perspective during the post-war period of capitalist boom and the subsequent relative inactivity of the working class in the advanced countries. The Pabloites tend to replace the role of the working class and its organized vanguard—that is, the world Trotskyist movement—with other forces which seem to offer greater chances of success."

—"In Defense of a Revolutionary Perspective"

The Kirk-Kaye tendency was attracted to the black movement because it appeared to "offer greater chances of success." Despite the tendency's posture of left critic, it, like the SWP, had adopted a polyvanguardist approach:

"The development of all-black organizations expresses and cultivates the pride, and self-reliance of the most oppressed, and opens new avenues in the struggle for freedom...."

"The Negro movement must be encouraged to develop a Marxist program and cadre that can unite the ghetto masses with the southern struggle into a powerful revolutionary force, and there can then be forged a working alliance among the Negro vanguard, socialist revolutionaries and the militants in the white working class."

"The Negro struggle is the central question of the American Revolution and the Negro movement is the vanguard sector of the entire working class."

—"Why We Left the Socialist Workers Party"

Nowhere in the documents of the Kirk-Kaye tendency is a program put forward for the labor movement. In fact, the assertion is made that "the road to the American Revolution did not lie directly through the trade union movement...."

In 1966 the Kirk-Kaye tendency emerged from the SWP to form the Freedom Socialist Party, but only a year later the FSP split—almost exactly along sex lines. (The three men who initially took Kaye's side left the organization soon thereafter.) The central issue in the split was the divorce of Clara (Kaye) Fraser and Richard (Kirk) Fraser. In fact, a good part of the 1969 organizer's report, entitled "A Victory for Socialist Feminism," is devoted to a detailed account of this divorce as it developed into a division within the party. The introduction compares this divorce/split to the 1903 Bolshevik-Menshevik split and hails the expulsion of Richard Fraser from the FSP:

"Here, in Seattle, in 1967, around the issues of divorce and child custody, on the battle ground of the monogamous, nuclear family, socialist women, armed with the weapons of Marxist theory and Leninist organizational practice, fought and won the first significant victory for modern socialist-feminism."

With its left Pabloist methodology, the FSP soon "discovered" that women "offer greater chances of success." Thus, "socialist-feminism" became the strategy for the American revolution. Radical Women, which is FSP politics for women only, was formed in 1967.

For 20 years this tendency has existed, virtually isolated, in Seattle, pervaded with odd Seattle parochialism. Upon leaving the SWP in 1966, for example, the tendency considered as one of its immediate objectives, "To join with other independent socialists in the Pacific Northwest in the creation of a new revolutionary socialist party here." But now the FSP is saying: "Radical regroupment around a unified and concrete program for basic social change in the U.S. is objectively necessary if capitalism and imperialism are to be tackled at their source—Wall Street, the Pentagon and the White House." The logic of RW politics leads straight to the waiting arms of the United Secretariat. It seems reasonable to speculate that behind RW's renewed enthusiasm for regroupment is the recognition of a tendency toward which it feels a certain political affinity.

Inasmuch as it takes positions on international issues, the FSP (which after its departure from the SWP consolidated around a "soft Maoist" line) is generally in agreement with the United Secretariat's International Majority Tendency. In Portugal the FSP supports the Communist Party "conditionally," while "hoping that a leadership will arise." It places full political confidence in the Cuban regime and opposes political revolution in China, while admitting the existence of "some Stalinist tendencies" there. In short, the FSP is a perfect candidate for membership in the coagulating USec Majority swamp. The Seattle group will have about as much in common with its bloc partners as the rest of the IMT sections have with each other; that is to say, enough to maintain the pretense of unity for a while.

We urge all FSP and RW supporters to examine carefully their history and the history of the Trotskyist movement before reuniting with that tendency which represents the degeneration of Trotskyism. In particular, we urge them to examine the 12-year history of principled struggle against Pabloism waged by the Spartacist League/U.S. and its co-thinkers around the world. ■

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Muñoz Family Free

International Defense Campaign Victory

An international defense campaign which won active support on five continents has successfully saved Mario Muñoz and his family from right-wing repression in Argentina. Muñoz, a Chilean miners union leader who was the target of a four-month manhunt in Argentina, arrived safely in Europe in early August. Just recently, Olga Meneses Ibaseta—*compañera* of Muñoz—and their five children and four young relatives arrived in Paris after leaving Argentina unhindered.

Mario Muñoz had awaited his family's arrival for nearly two months. On hand as well to greet the family at the Charles de Gaulle Airport were representatives of the Partisan Defense Committee (PDC), the Trotskyist League of France, the international Spartacist tendency and the Committee to Defend the Worker and Sailor Prisoners in Chile.

A spokesman for the Committee to Defend the Worker and Sailor Prisoners in Chile—which had co-sponsored the Committee to Save Mario Muñoz with the Partisan Defense Committee—said that "the campaign had a great importance, not only because it saved Mario Muñoz and his family, but also because at one point it succeeded in breaking through the criminal silence of the European governments on the tragic events in Argentina."

The PDC hailed the news that the family had safely arrived, thus concluding the work of the Committee to Save Mario Muñoz: "The saving of this valiant, class-struggle unionist and his family from the murderous Videla junta is a victory for the international working class and a beacon of hope for the tens of thousands of refugees from right-wing terror still trapped in Argentina." This victory enhances the struggle for freedom for all victims of right-wing repression. The campaign's sponsors noted that two days after the arrival of Muñoz in Europe, the UN High Commission for Refugees announced that Austria, Britain, Canada, France, Norway and Switzerland had agreed to receive almost 2,000 Latin American refugees from Argentina.

When questioned about the unexpected and long



WV Photo

Mario Muñoz and Olga Meneses in Paris.

delay of her arrival, Olga Meneses explained that she had had to wait 25 days for the reconfirmation of the French visas. The Argentine officials had also balked at allowing her to leave with the youngest child—an infant born in Argentina—but had finally granted her permission to leave with all nine children.

She reported that shortly before her departure, four men were seen on the terrace on top of the hotel where she was staying. Although the men had arrived in a black car such as those used by the Argentine Anti-Communist Alliance (AAA) intelligence service, the police who were supposed to be guarding the hotel claimed that they had no idea who the men were. This story chillingly recalls the June 11 raid on a refugee hotel in Buenos Aires only a block from a police station, when 24 Latin Americans were abducted and tortured by men using the AAA cars.

In detailing the perilous condition of refugees in Argentina, Meneses recalled the case of Ricardo Moroni, a former Socialist Party leader of the miners federation in Chile, last seen when he went to the Chilean embassy to obtain a duplicate birth certificate in order to apply for a Canadian visa (his only certificate had been taken from him when he was arrested by Argentine authorities). Moroni was reported to be among the victims of a mass slaying in August.

Meneses reported that the Argentine government in August announced a new decree which gives foreigners present in the country until October 30 to register with the immigration department or else face deportation. For the tens of thousands of refugees seeking safety in Argentina from other right-wing dictatorships in Latin America, this decree creates a "Catch-22" situation. Completing the required 21-question statement is an admission that the refugee is illegally in the country, opening up the possibility of immediate deportation.

Moreover, many refugees, said Meneses, "are afraid to give information because the list can be obtained by anyone and at any moment. After you fill out the forms

they send a copy to Chile so the Chilean police can verify that you said the truth. They don't let you leave the refugee hotel until they have received back information." The close cooperation between the Chilean secret police—the DINA—and the Argentine intelligence service is well documented. A recent victim of their rightist vendetta against political refugees was Orlando Letelier, who was assassinated on Embassy Row in Washington, D.C.

Meneses explained that in Argentina today the very attempt to visit the consulates in order to obtain the necessary papers to avoid arrest can now end in arrest, deportation or death. And for the thousands of refugees who, like Mario Muñoz and many of his *compañeros*, crossed the Andes to escape Pinochet's bloody rightist repression, there are no "documents."

Without international protest and solidarity, the lives of Mario Muñoz, Olga Meneses and their children would not have been saved. This solidarity must continue—free all the victims of right-wing repression in Argentina and Chile! The spokesman for the Committee to Defend the Worker and Sailor Prisoners in Chile said at the airport: "This campaign has been the most important one carried out since the Pinochet and Videla coups. Above all because of the class line which we maintained from the very beginning; we carried out a campaign without capitulating, but at the same time were able to achieve the support of many organizations which made our success possible."

To all individuals and organizations whose endorsement, thoughtful advice, energy and financial support made it possible to wrench the Muñoz family from the grip of the Videla junta, the co-sponsors of the Committee to Save Mario Muñoz extend their deepest gratitude. Readers of *Women and Revolution* desiring literature on the campaign or further information on the legal defense work of the PDC should contact: Partisan Defense Committee, Box 633, Canal Street Station, New York, New York 10013. ■

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Partisan Defense Committee

The Partisan Defense Committee is a class-struggle, anti-sectarian defense organization, which is in accordance with the political views of the Spartacist League. The PDC is *partisan* on the side of working people and the oppressed in their struggle against their exploiters and oppressors. In its partisanship the PDC is *anti-sectarian* and stands in defense of the whole of the working people without sectarian or factional regard. Our policies are those of the class struggle. While using all available legal proceedings, we place no confidence in the justice of the courts and *all* our confidence in the power of mass protest. We oppose all anti-labor legislation and all government and court intervention into the left and labor movements, not least when such interventions falsely claim to be in the interest of the oppressed. We do not defend groups like the Symbionese Liberation Army (SLA) which engage in indiscriminate terror and whose random victims are not enemies of the oppressed. We do not defend democratic rights for fascistic *action* groups like the Klan, Nazis, or AAA, whose sole purpose is the destruction of democratic rights, workers organizations and genocide against national, racial and religious minorities. On the contrary, democratic rights, workers organizations and the oppressed can only be defended by mass mobilization against such groups.

The PDC stands unconditionally opposed to violence within the left and labor movements because it poisons the possibility for common action, weakens our forces and opens us up for government attack. Likewise, the PDC opposes narrow factionalism which often mars defense campaigns. We seek to create an international workers' defense organization which all workers and the oppressed will look to as their own, in the tradition of the International Labor Defense under its founder and first Secretary, James P. Cannon (1925-1928).

Recent cases supported by the PDC: Philip Allen, Delbert Tibbs, Gary Tyler, Rubin Carter and John Artis, Desmond Trotter, Hugo Blanco, the Wilmington Ten, Mario Muñoz, persecuted leaders of the American Indian Movement, Washington Post pressmen, Dr. Henry Morgenthauer.

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Phone Worker Fired for Standing Up

Living up to the Bell Telephone System's reputation, even among the bourgeoisie, as the "largest oppressor of women in the United States" (EEOC report, 1971); the Pacific Telephone Company on September 7 fired directory assistance operator Margaret Martinson for standing up at her job. Martinson, a member of the Militant Action Caucus (MAC) of Local 9410 Communications Workers of America (CWA), was charged with "insubordination." Although the company's case was so flimsy that it was subsequently compelled to back down and rehire her, the incident is significant in that it focuses attention on the deplorable conditions under which the mostly female traffic department (operator services) is forced to work.

It is no accident that the traffic department was, until five years ago, composed entirely of women nor that these employees receive the worst treatment in the company. Almost a hundred years ago Bell Telephone made a decision to employ women as operators because, according to its typically sexist reasoning, women are "naturally" more accustomed to taking abuse. Helping "nature" along is Bell's policy of harassment and intimidation applied to enforce an intense labor discipline. One measure of the discriminatory treatment reserved for operators is the enormous volume of grievances filed in the traffic department (not to mention the number which are never filed) over a host of petty, pointless rules and "tone of service" violations which the company obtains through constant secret monitoring.

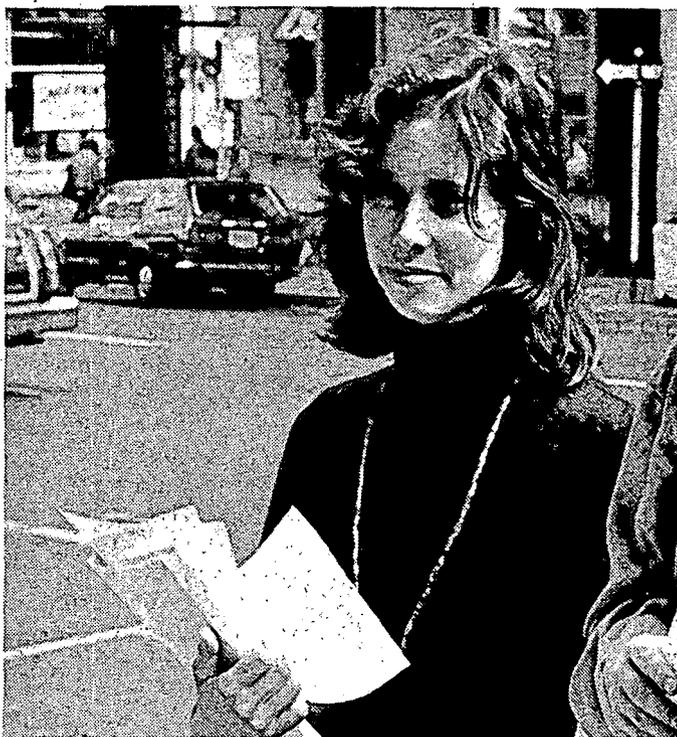
Standing Up Has Been Outlawed

Going to work as an operator is like stepping into a time capsule and being projected back inside a Charles Dickens novel to a world where an employee's every move was dictated by the whim of the boss. One gets a taste of this atmosphere through a description of the events leading to Margaret Martinson's firing.

On September 1, the date of her "crime," Jon Johnson, Martinson's Service Assistant (S.A.—a non-management, *union* job) was routinely crawling under the directory assistance desks on the prowl for operators who had their feet up on the garbage cans. Johnson would find a culprit, pull the can out from under her feet and deliver the reprimand that feet would no longer be permitted to rest on the cans. When Johnson emerged from one of these forays he "caught" Martinson standing up at her position while she was working on a call. Johnson approached her and said, "standing up has been outlawed." Thinking that he was joking, Martinson jokingly replied, "I don't give a damn." Johnson went off and reported her to management, and within 30 minutes she was suspended, pending investigation for dismissal on the

grounds of "insubordination." A week later she was fired.

The company's action ignored years of precedent concerning operators' conduct at the switchboard. Even the phone company has long had to grudgingly concede that sitting down for eight hours at a time is unbearable; operators have always stood up for short periods. Moreover, standing had been explicitly permitted in Martinson's office—Sloat II—and even



Margaret Martinson

WV photo

students in training there were told so. The new office rules, issued a week after the firing, permit "standing to stretch."

Union support for the case was coupled with outrage that Johnson—a union member—had finked to management to get Martinson fired. Phil Otterbeck, the steward who initiated the grievance for Martinson, announced at the September San Francisco local union meeting that he planned to file charges within the union against Johnson, the first time in memory that an S.A. in this local had been brought up on charges by the union for his role in assisting the management in disciplining fellow union members. "Jon Johnson," said Otterbeck, "violated the spirit and letter of unionism."

The company expects S.A.s to be finks, and there are many who cooperate. But S.A.s are in a contradictory position. Contractually they are supposed to "report to

the management supervisor any condition or activity detrimental to good service," but at the same time they are members of the union. The ambiguity of their position, which has been permitted to exist through the passivity and class collaboration of the CWA leadership, allows pro-management S.A.s, despite their union membership, to function as open agents of the company. The S.A. clause in the contract must be entirely rewritten to limit S.A. duties to the training and assistance of operators—period.

Bell has recently indicated a desire to cut back the number of S.A. positions or to eliminate them altogether and move toward the direct supervision of operators. Linked to the demands limiting the duties of S.A.s to training and assistance, therefore, must be the demand for management off the shop floor in traffic and all other departments.

CWA Bureaucrats Refuse to Fight Discrimination

Thirty years ago phone workers in many areas engaged in militant actions to win union recognition. In San Francisco, the all-female Telephone Traffic Union (TTU) faced down charging columns of mounted police; the National Federation of Telephone Workers (NFTW—90 percent women) built mass picket lines in many cities; in Detroit, pickets fought off police by pouring boiling soup on their heads. But Joseph Beirne, founder and president of the CWA until his death two years ago, offered the Bell System a deal: if the company would recognize the CWA as the national bargaining agent for phone workers, he would put an end to these militant picket lines and wildcat strikes. A veteran anti-communist, Beirne black-listed militants and Communist Party supporters in the TTU and NFTW.

Although there were occasional periods of struggle in the forties and bitter strikes against Southern Bell in the fifties, the CWA as a whole has not had a formative history of class struggle and has never decisively beaten the company in a nationwide strike. Whereas the United Auto Workers won the right early in its existence to control line speed, the CWA contract has always been a compilation of company rules with some wages' and hours' clauses tacked on. The union accepted not only the company's contract but its barbaric, reform-school discipline in the traffic offices and the isolation of women in the lowest-paid categories. The gap between men's and women's wages has increased over the years.

The phone company has a notorious and sordid history of racist, sexist and anti-Semitic hiring practices. Yet despite this, the CWA leadership both under Beirne and now under Glen Watts has historically refused to fight the company's flagrant discrimination. Instead the leadership treated the union like its personal job trust, keeping the high-paying craft jobs out of the reach of women and most minority-group males as well.

Today the whole union pays the price, as operators misguidedly look, not to the union which has never fought for them, but to the bosses' government for protection against company discrimination. Thus under the guise of "fighting discrimination," the courts

have been able to step in with their union-busting "affirmative action" programs, forcing Bell to upgrade a token number of women and minority-group workers while violating hard-won seniority provisions in the union contract.

In addition, the union's failure to fight for the operators has historically left them vulnerable to management, a situation which increases sex divisions among the workers by reinforcing backward male-chauvinist consciousness among male craftsmen about the "timidity" of women workers. These departmental sex divisions have produced a bitter harvest of mutual scabbing of department against department which has seriously undermined the strength of the union.

Automation Threatens Workforce

Time is running out for the CWA. If a determined fight is not waged to protect jobs through a shorter workweek at no loss in pay, the CWA may find itself in the position of the National Maritime Union and other shriveling unions. The Bell System is becoming increasingly automated, and its 1976 stockholders' report documented that the company eliminated 61,000 jobs in 1975. The CWA lost 25,000 members last year and projects losing at least 33,000 more this year. Yet what has been the reponse of the CWA International to this threat? Instead of fighting against layoffs, the bureaucracy fights for dues increases to protect its shrinking dues base!

The Militant Action Caucus, of which Martinson is a member, has been fighting to oust this capitulationist, self-serving bureaucracy from CWA leadership and replace it with a class-struggle leadership. MAC has a six-year history in the union, and its program includes demands for a shorter workweek with no pay cuts and for paid sick leave with no penalties for being sick. In contrast to some opposition groups within the CWA which support "affirmative action" plans that undermine union seniority, thus demonstrating misplaced reliance on the capitalist state to combat discrimination, MAC calls for *union action* to aid specially oppressed sectors of the workforce. MAC calls for first-come, first-served hiring controlled by a union hiring hall, equal access to all job categories, special training programs and narrowing the gap between plant and traffic wage scales. These programs, directed against oppression of women and minorities, are necessarily linked to demands to nationalize the phone company and all industry without compensation and to form a workers party to fight for a workers government.

"For the CWA to become a class-struggle union capable of defending its members," says MAC, "it is necessary to educate the members and show them that a leadership that accepts capitalism, accepts AT&T's 'right' to make a profit, enters the fight with its hands tied behind its back and a leash around its neck. But with a class-struggle leadership we can win."

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Black Youth Framed on Rape Charge

Free Johnny Ross Now!

In July 1974, two black men kidnapped a 25-year-old white woman in Louisiana, drove her to a deserted warehouse district and raped her at gunpoint. A witness to the woman's abduction notified the police, and when the two men drove the woman back to the place from which they had taken her, the cops were waiting for them. A gunfight ensued but the men escaped. Newspaper accounts described one of them as 19 or 20



Johnny Ross (left front) in punishment cell awaits appeal of his sentence.

years old, 5'7" tall and weighing 145 pounds and the other as 20 or 21 years old, 5'9" tall and 160 pounds.

A little over a week after the brutal crime, the New Orleans police descended on the home of Johnny Ross, a black youth of 15 years who weighs about 130 pounds and stands 5'4" tall. He was put in a police line-up and observed under bright lights by the victimized woman, who is a federal law enforcement officer. But despite her statement that no one in the line-up had committed the crime, Ross was handed a typed confession and told to sign it. When he refused, he was severely beaten by the cops. Eventually he complied, was tried for rape, found guilty (after 90 minutes' deliberation) and condemned to die in the electric chair.

The Spartacist League and the Partisan Defense

Committee protest this outrageous frame-up which carries on a long and well-established tradition of racist, lynch-law justice in the United States. Since 1930, 455 men have been executed for rape; 405 of them were black and 398 were executed in the South. Furthermore, a black man convicted of raping a white woman is 18 times more likely to be executed than is a man convicted of black-against-black, white-against-white or white-against-black rape.

Given the widespread use of rape laws to victimize black people, it is not coincidental that feminists fighting to reform, i.e., strengthen these laws have found their staunchest allies to be police officials, district attorneys, state legislators and others concerned with preserving "law and order" (read capitalist class domination). As pointed out in an earlier article (Matt Thompson and Sarah Arnold, "Rape and Bourgeois Justice," *Young Spartacus*, February 1975):

"Within the confines of capitalist society and through the 'justice' of the bourgeois state, the search for an equitable administration of justice for the crime of rape is caught in a maze with no exit. Each proposed solution, from legal reform to direct vigilante retribution, runs into flat contradictions arising out of the intersection of sex, race and class in this capitalist society."

Only in a workers state will men and women stand in full equality before a justice which is unhindered by racism and poverty.

The Southern Poverty Law Center is attempting to win a new trial for Johnny Ross. Contributions earmarked for his defense may be sent to: The Southern Poverty Law Center, 1001 South Hall Street, Montgomery, Alabama 36101. ■

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Rising Unemployment...

women's demands for increased employment opportunities in a period of economic crisis:

"More Americans than ever now have jobs—almost 88 million. But the fact that more and more people—particularly women, but also teen-agers—are seeking jobs means that the politically significant unemployment rate can't be lowered proportionately."

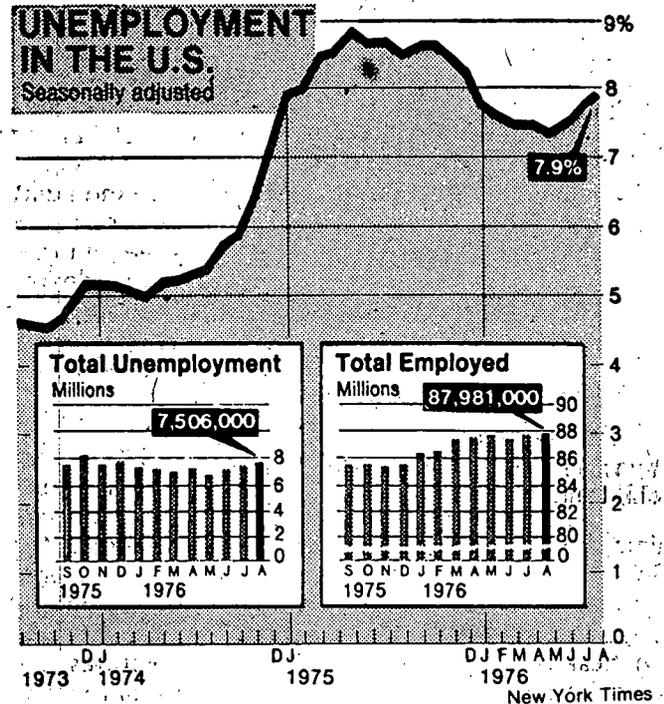
The article traces the roots of the expanding female work force, now 40.7 percent of the total, to "the 1960's with the economic liberation of young wives, which was aided by effective birth control methods and spurred by inflation." Other significant factors include: "a rising divorce rate; an increasing number of female college graduates who want careers; the psychological climate induced by publicity over the women's movement that makes it more socially acceptable for young mothers to work, encourages more older women to work and has reduced housewives' self-esteem; Federal laws that have increased hiring opportunities for women and an increasing number of counseling centers that help prepare women for jobs."

Despite its treatment of the phenomenon as akin to a natural disaster and its down-playing of economic necessity as a major motivation for increased female employment, the article correctly establishes the connection between the rapid increase of women in the labor force and some of the democratic reforms of the past two decades. Coupled with the economic pressures grinding down the entire working class, reforms in the field of birth control and divorce proceedings, for example, have enabled greater numbers of women to carve out broader social roles outside the home and to demand equal job opportunities. And it is precisely at this point that the bourgeoisie wants to draw the line.

The reactionary clerics who pound the pulpit against abortion, "immorality" and weakening the family are but one step removed from the Greenspans and the *New York Times* economists who explain that "women of child-bearing age" and not the capitalist system are responsible for high unemployment statistics. Both perceive a threat to social stability in the heightened

expectations of women. Campaigns against abortion rights, the Equal Rights Amendment and sex education are but the tip of an iceberg of reaction that threatens to freeze women back into traditional roles.

Housewives and semi-lumpenized ghetto dwellers in the U.S. are the main components of what Marx called capitalism's "industrial reserve army," that section of the population that can be easily tapped during periods



of economic expansion and dispensed with as production shrinks. Thus, masses of women entered basic industry during World War II only to be ejected when the soldiers returned. At least three million women lost their jobs between April 1945 and April 1947 amid a propaganda barrage warning of the threat to the family posed by the prolonged absence of the mother from the home. But systematic discrimination and the ideologies of racism and male chauvinism are required to keep this "army" regimented and without a permanent niche in the economy.

The rapid expansion of the female labor force in the present is rather different from the conjunctural "Rosie the riveter" phenomenon. Although working women have made marginal gains in key industries (auto, trucking, oil and chemicals, etc.), the jump in female employment has primarily been the result of the expansion in the number of low-paying clerical and service categories that are marked off as "women's jobs." A recently released study by The Conference Board, a business research outfit, demonstrates that despite the growth of female employment, the pattern of job distribution ensures that "the earnings differentials between men and women will remain and in some instances widen" in the coming years. The study reports that while the median income of working women was

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Drop the Charges Against Yvonne Wanrow!



Yvonne Wanrow with her children.

In 1973 Yvonne Wanrow, a Colville Indian woman from Spokane who shot and killed a man who was threatening to attack her and her children, was found guilty of second-degree murder and first-degree assault and sentenced to two concurrent 22-year prison sentences. In February 1976 the case was re-tried, but at the present

time the judges still have not returned a verdict. The Spartacist League and the Partisan Defense Committee—an anti-sectarian, class struggle defense organization which stands in accordance with the political views of the Spartacist League—protest the persecution and victimization of Yvonne Wanrow and demand that all charges against her be dropped—immediately!

Wanrow's attacker, William Wesler, had a history of sexual offenses and had previously attacked her

children and raped the seven-year-old daughter of her friend, Shirley Hooper. But despite positive identification of Wesler by Hooper and the three children, the police had refused to arrest him.

After Wesler's attack on two of the Hooper children on 11 August 1972, Shirley Hooper, afraid that he would return, asked Yvonne Wanrow to spend the night with her. The two women and their five children were later joined by Wanrow's brother-in-law and sister and their three children.

At five a.m. a drunken and incoherent Wesler barged through the front door of the Hooper home, lurched toward a three-year-old asleep on a couch, then turned toward Wanrow, who was at that time in a cast and on crutches. Reacting instinctively, Wanrow shot her attacker and wounded his companion, David Kelly, who fled.

After four years, Wanrow is still fighting for her freedom. Her courageous defense of her own life and the lives of her children in the face of indifference and racial bias is no crime. **DROP THE CHARGES NOW!**

Contributions to aid in Yvonne Wanrow's defense may be sent to: Yvonne's Indian Legal Defense Fund, Account Number 821-72115 North Spokane Branch/Seattle First National Bank, East 30 Wellesley Avenue, Spokane, Washington 99207.

Letters of support and protest may be addressed to: Yvonne's Indian Legal Defense Committee, P.O. Box 49, Inchelium, Washington 99138.

On the East Coast the case has been taken on by the Center for Constitutional Rights. Information about recent developments is available at (212) 674-3303.

64 percent of the median income of men in 1955, by 1975 it had dropped to 57 percent.

Furthermore, much of the expansion in female unemployment has been in government. The Department of Labor reported in its 1969 *Handbook on Women Workers* that:

"The most rapid expansion in women's employment since April 1964 has occurred in local and State government (43 and 41 percent, respectively). Large increases have also taken place in the number of women employed in Federal Government (33 percent) and in services (26 percent)."

It is this government employment which both "budget-balancing" Ford and "anti-bureaucracy" Carter have promised to continue cutting back.

Both the bourgeoisie's presidential candidates are running hot and heavy after the "family" issue. Ford calls it the "foundation of our nation" and extols "the family home, the family farm and the family business." Carter pledges that "there can be no more urgent priority for the next administration than to see that every decision our government makes is designed to

honor and support and strengthen the American family."

The twin parties of big business with their seamy propaganda and bought-and-paid-for social scientists seek to foist the blame for the current social crisis onto the backs of working people and specially oppressed social strata. Reformists of various stripes (including feminists) want to secure jobs for women through "consciousness raising" or political "pressure" or affirmative action schemes which pit women against men for the inadequate number of jobs available. The fact is, however, that capitalism is not only *unwilling* but actually *unable* to provide full employment.

Against both the political reaction of the bourgeoisie and the ineffective misleadership of the reformists, revolutionary Marxists counterpose a program of genuine social emancipation: jobs for all through a sliding scale of wages and hours, an end to all forms of racial and sexual discrimination, expropriation without compensation of industry and finance, a workers party to fight for a planned economy administered by a workers government. ■

Women Scapegoated for Rising Unemployment

The phony ideological division of labor which the American bourgeois parties have traditionally touted assigns the task of "budget balancing" to the Republicans and the procurement of "jobs for all" to the Democrats. Thus the Ford administration and its kept economists prattle on about the lowered inflation rate, which has been achieved, in large part, by massive layoffs of government employees, while Democrats rally round the illusory Humphrey-Hawkins "full employment" bill.

But in this election year, occurring during the worst economic crisis of the post-war period, the unemployment rate is a politically loaded issue for both parties, and the Republicans are choking on assessments by Ford's economic advisors that despite all the glowing reports of "recovery," the unemployment rate continues to exceed 7 percent (by *their* estimate!).

So early in September, the president's leading economic wizard, Alan Greenspan, offered a new bit of hocus pocus to explain away a three-month rise in the unemployment rate. The climbing jobless rate, he pronounced, is *not* the result of a deteriorating economy, as the uninitiated might foolishly conclude, but rather of an "extremely abnormal growth in the number of people seeking work."

Particularly culpable in his eyes are "women of child-bearing age in the work force," whose ranks have shown "an increase of more than one million so far this year." As to the reasons why ever-growing numbers of 25- to 44-year-old women are looking for nonexistent jobs, Greenspan "rejected the suggestion that their decisions reflected simply a greater inability of the American household to cope with inflation" (*New York Times*, 4 September). The implication is obviously that hordes of job-seeking females are willfully sabotaging the national economy and the administration's rosy predictions rather than bearing children and staying at home where they belong.

Such neanderthal claptrap, cloaked as economic science, could perhaps be dismissed as the partisan mendacity that is the stuff of bourgeois electoral campaigns. Democrat Jimmy Carter, after all, says that the economy is a shambles and "Production is not strong enough to put our people back to work." But a few days after they appeared, Greenspan's remarks were echoed in the liberal, pro-Democratic *New York Times* (12 September). Under a graph entitled "Women in the U.S. Labor Force," which showed a black line snaking ominously up page one of the Sunday edition, the headline (quoting Greenspan) read: "Women Entering Job Market at an 'Extraordinary' Pace." With typical *New York Times* "objectivity," the article explained that:

"In taking a job, Mrs. Shadduck joined an avalanche of women pouring into the nation's work force this year



Daily World

Jobless line up at Employment Security Office, Brockton, Mass.

that is...shaping up as a tide of enormous proportions. "...their decisions to return to work have torpedoed his [Ford's] Administration's forecasts of a leveling off of the nation's unemployment rate at 7 percent by the end of this year...."

The author's lurid mixed metaphors indicate the growing alarm with which the U.S. ruling class views
continued on page 22