

WOMEN IN THE REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENT



Lenin observed that: "There can be no socialist revolution without the participation of large numbers of women workers." Women constitute more than half of the population, many of whom are incorporated into the labor force and subject to the most brutal exploitation and oppression. Due to this material condition they possess an immense revolutionary potential to develop a truly proletarian consciousness.

This potential has fully developed, repeatedly showing itself in revolutionary action throughout history. Women have demonstrated their strength, capacity, commitment and desire to struggle. Examples of this exist in the processes which have taken place in Vietnam, China, Africa, etc. But we do not have to go so far. Latin and North America provide us with living examples of the feminine combativeness.

In Latin America the participation of women is apparent in the popular movements and struggles for national independence. Among the most recent examples we find: Tamara Bunke, Monica Ertl and Rita Valdivia in Bolivia; Nora Paiz Carcamo in Guatemala; Livia Gourverner in Venezuela; Blanca Luz Brum in Peru; Maria Luisa Vera in Mexico; Vilma Espin and Haydee Santamaria in Cuba; Lolita Lebron in Puerto Rico. They are examples of the thousands of fighting women within the Latin American process. Many others have participated and participate from the trenches of anonymity; still others suffer the jailings and tortures of the dictatorial regimes.

In North America we are witnesses to the combative strength of the women through their participation in the garment and textile industry strikes and in the hospital and public sector struggles. We have also seen their fights for the right to a better education, public assistance and equality. In fact, the commemoration of International Working Women's Day has its roots in the struggles of the women in the United States.

It is important to mention that this combativeness has not always been cultivated by the movements of the left. At the same time the right and the dominant classes have recognized this strength and on occasion have known how to utilize it to protect their own class interests. An example of this can be seen in Chile where the women's movement

was organized under the direction of the bourgeoisie. Commenting on this process a Brazilian engineer explains: "Once we saw the Chilean women protesting we knew that Allende's days were numbered... We taught the Chileans to use the women against the Marxists." Chile, following the pattern of Brazil, presents a model of reactionary utilization of the women in the ideological and political structures which can be applied in other countries. Today this model can be seen in the Dominican Republic where the Balaguer government leads the women's movement, and here in the United States where the dominant class exercises, or tries to maintain its ideological control over a large part of that movement.

The left and women-failures and tasks

In these times the integration of women into the revolutionary process cannot wait. For this reason we must begin the process of disengaging women from the bourgeois influence, of politically educating and organizing her under the proletariat banner. As we well know: victory depends on the consolidation of our forces.

It is not hard to find some of the reasons for which the total integration of women into the movement of the left has not been achieved. It can be said that here, in the United States, and definitely in Puerto Rico, the left has characterized itself by its incapacity to recognize the revolutionary potential of women. In fact the question has been delegated to a secondary level where commissions and "phantom" federations are created to appease certain preoccupations or to create a new front for the parties or organizations.

But even within the internal functioning of the organizations we find that women are delegated to the secretarial, mechanical and clerical tasks and in the mass activities they are assigned to daycare and kitchen work. In this manner the development of women in the revolutionary process is stifled because she is not permitted to enter the terrain from which she has always been excluded.

We in the revolutionary organizations have also remained ignorant of those conditions which women face that form barriers to their active incorporation and participation in the struggle. Family and morals, raising children, and the biological responsibility of procreation are all areas which must be examined more deeply in their practical implications for the revolutionary participation of women.

The Family: Questions of Bourgeois Morality vs. Proletarian Morality

Engels demonstrated that the family, as we know it today, is an historically determined formation that corresponds to the capitalist society. Engels could not state how the socialist family could or should be because it could only be defined within a socialist society. However, he did point out that the monogamous couple constituted a superior form of family relations over those which preceded it (polygamy, polyandry, group marriage, promiscuity). This superiority has been proven in practice in those countries that are building socialism where it has been shown that the monogamous couple is superior over any other form for the construction of the socialist family.

Living in a capitalist society we find ourselves in an

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"...a new family and sexual moral must be constructed upon a base diametrically oppose to the previous..."

epoch of transition and therefore we should put forth in the ranks of the revolutionary organizations, a morality in transition to socialism within the family. We must recognize that the bourgeois monogamous family has as its base, private property, sexism and the domestic slavery of women, in direct contradiction to the proletarian family which does not have the same base since they possess nothing. But it does exist under the ideological influence of the dominant class. Therefore, the proletarian family is built upon the image of the bourgeois family. Under this form, women, shackled in the home throughout history, is conditioned to taking no interest in politics or any of that part of the social process which takes place outside the home. Domestic chores are restricted to the woman. In order to change this situation it is necessary to combat the false male supremacy, to share the domestic tasks and to fight for the total and equal participation of the women in social production.

Marriage

The bourgeoisie, the dominant class, proclaims that marriage is based on individual sexual love, free consent and on mutual affection—love. This is true in words only for such an existence is not possible as long as private property exists. Private property not only guarantees the constant preoccupation for the private welfare, but also makes the woman the private property of the man. In the last few years the dominant class has tried to change or radicalize their own order under a false "sexual revolution".

Let us examine this. Bourgeois matrimonial relations are characterized by the impersonalization between the couple and by the subjection of the woman to the man. As a result of this the development of the woman is impeded and the taboos of virginity, fidelity, etc., which only apply to the woman, are maintained. Through the so-called sexual revolution, the bourgeoisie pretends to impose another order—the reverse—free love with the purpose of liberating marriage and in particular the woman, from its restrictions. What the bourgeoisie does in reality is



maintain the same order under a different form—it is the impersonalization of the relationship between the man and woman, having the same result—the subjection of the woman to the man under a new disguise. It reduces and depersonalizes love to one aspect, the sexual, degrading it to its animalistic level. At the same time it allows for the utilization of the woman in a way greatly beneficial to the capitalist system—the expansion of the market, cosmetics, mod styles, publicity, etc.

Revolutionaries and the Sexual Revolution

The sexual revolution and "free love"—has not only caused problems in the heart of the masses but in the revolutionary ranks as well. On the one hand, the low level of consciousness of the comrades at times leads to the separation of the personal from political lives and from the historical development of societies as well. In this sense there are those who incorrectly see in "free love" the solution to the narrow boundaries of the sexual relation as it is determined by the capitalist society. On the other hand, some men comrades are not victims or products of a low level of consciousness. They utilize their positions in the political organizations and the lack of development of some women comrades in order to give free reign to their own immorality. These men abuse the naivete and honest desires to contribute to the revolutionary process on the part of some women, using their so-called "political knowhow" not to benefit the struggle or the organization but to satisfy their sexual sickness. To this we must add those women comrades who, with a low level of class consciousness or a false consciousness, form part of this alienating process within the revolutionary ranks when they flirt with an unconscious or opportunist man and in the process "forget" his companion or wife. As a result these particular women contribute to the oppression of other women.

This behavior on the part of some elements within the revolutionary ranks presents serious problems for the movement in general. On the one hand the dominant class utilizes these "weaknesses" in order to discredit, in the eyes of the masses, not only the people involved, but the revolutionary movement as a whole. Besides, this is a demoralizing process for those serious members of the organizations and for those who approach the revolutionary ranks in search of an alternative to the oppressive and decadent society. But further still, this behavior perpetuates a practice and models to follow which are precisely those that characterize the capitalist society where the infamous minority oppresses and exploits the great majority, and where immorality is law.

Towards a New Moral

A new family and sexual moral must indeed be constructed upon a base diametrically opposed to that described above. From the beginning the relation between the couple and the family must be rid of the impersonalization the capitalist society imposes upon it. All members of the family must be seen as human beings composed of multiple aspects, not purely the sexual.

From this arises another question—what is fundamental in a couple's relationship, the sexual or the social? It has

P.R.S.C. Conference Cont.



representatives of the liberation forces.

Although having profound differences with the PRSC during the course of its existence, the representatives of the Comité-MINP, nevertheless, understood that the situation could not be allowed to continue to deteriorate in detriment to the Puerto Rican people and the PRSC itself. Therefore, we requested special privilege to address the assembly. This was granted. During our intervention—which was recently misrepresented by the comrades of the guardian of whom we have asked rectifications—we attempted, among other things, to point out not only the errors reflected in the proposed alternative drafts but also expressed clear opposition to the eclecticism and disguised attempt by forces within the PRSC to impose their own ideological conceptions not only upon the PRSC but also the national liberation forces. In essence this tendency denies the centrality of armed struggle, projects an incoherent and simplistic view of imperialism ("it oppresses all people"—in the colony), and denies the struggle for socialism (first independence, then socialism).

In the view of a number of delegates at the conference the intervention by our representative—our First Secretary Federico Lora—was a factor in bringing back the conference to its stated objectives. Soon after a series of amendments were made to the original draft by delegates who, not satisfied with its content, understood it was more constructive and beneficial to the conference if efforts were made to improve the original document. A number of

these amendments reflect the concern of the SFC documents as well as aspects of the March 1 Bloc and of the observers present at the conference. Among these amendments were: a recognition of armed struggle as the determinant factor in the liberation struggle, and socialism as its objective; recognition of the strategic role of the national minorities in the US; a more precise definition of imperialism and a clearer presentation on the oppression of women.

The National Board and the tasks of the PRSC

On the last day of the conference the PRSC delegates selected its new leadership—the National Board. The election of the new board represents a qualitative change within the PRSC as emphasis was given toward expanding the social composition of the PRSC reaching toward the oppressed national minorities and those actively engaged in the struggles of the working class and oppressed sectors in North American society. Moreover, the election of members of El Comité-MINP, the Nationalist Party and the PSP can set the basis for bringing into the PRSC all those forces that can build an effective solidarity movement around the Puerto Rican National Liberation struggle—both in this country and among the liberation forces in Puerto Rico. Despite this meaningful progress, we have no illusions about the political differences that exist within the PRSC. We hope these differences are struggled through principle, free of manipulation and organizational sectarianism, and always taking into consideration the objective that gives the PRSC its reason for being—Solidarity with the people of Puerto Rico.

been found and we have seen that the relationships which are based fundamentally on sex end in failure in all aspects, including the sexual

The couple or matrimony within the revolutionary ranks (whether it be "legal" or consensual) must be based on mutual agreement, by a conscious consent and on a sincere love. All of this must be developed on the material base of the social activity, the revolutionary activity.

There are many aspects which unite the couple—relationships, common tastes, interests, etc. But we must understand that the couple is not an entity apart or separate from their political relationships and activities. Within the revolutionary ranks the couple should become a basic nucleus of political activity, where dialogue and interchange of experiences predominates, where criticism

and self criticism is practiced in order to develop each other in the process of implementing their political tasks. This means that the couple is not, nor could it be, a nucleus apart from the organization or the masses.

The revolutionary couple should not only share organizational tasks, but all the elements of life; sharing economic resources, domestic tasks, diversions, study, etc. Besides this these experiences should take place within the context of the reality in which we live, that is, the experiences should be shared with the masses in order to learn from them and to educate them. These are essential steps if, in this period of transition, we are going to forge a socialist style of life.

TO BE CONTINUED

WOMEN PART 2

THE CHILDREN, AND WOMEN AS CADRE

In the previous edition, the article "Women in the Revolutionary Process" discussed the fact that the incorporation of women in the revolutionary process is fundamental for the victory of the working class in its struggle against the exploitative capitalist system. Although no one denies the importance of this, the left in this country and in Puerto Rico has ignored or has been relatively incapable of incorporating women and their revolutionary potential into our ranks. In general the left has been characterized by its not recognizing the particular conditions of women and especially those which isolate them from active participation within the movement. In this context we discussed some of these conditions: relations between men and women and the question of morals. In this segment we will proceed to discuss other aspects of the particular conditions of women: children and maternity. Moreover, we present aspects of women as revolutionary cadre.

The Children

The attitude assumed by militants and organizations toward children has been varied and marked by incorrect conceptions. One of these is found among those who define children as limitations on their political involvement. This in itself is a variation of the idea which is predominant among many petty bourgeois couples who decide to not have children in order to satisfy their materialistic desires and pleasures. In examining this attitude more closely, we find the negation of procreation as part of human development. This is not to deny the need and importance of deciding the best time to have a child, taking into consideration one's political tasks during a given period of time. This decision making process is facilitated by the development of science providing means for birth control. The error lies in defining our children as **absolute limitations** on the revolutionary process. These limitations develop only among those who, in assuming individualistic positions, have children and then disregard their other tasks. After having children these comrades are of the opinion that their responsibilities as father/mother are above their other responsibilities. Instead of looking at and utilizing collective ways to share and alleviate the parental responsibilities they withdraw into an individualistic shell making the children their own possession, their private property—these are "our" children and they should be with "their" parents, as it is supposed to be. The question is, why is it supposed to be this way?

Being a good father or mother does not contradict the revolutionary formation of the individual. On the contrary, it should compliment it. In order to develop this formation to its fullest, we must not only struggle against private property in the production process but also in the carried over view of children as private property. In this sense the organization is an essential part of this formative process, not only because it raises consciousness around child rearing not being solely a "woman's" task but more important it must provide the basis for viewing this process as a collective responsibility. We should all be concerned with providing the love, guidance and support that each child needs particularly when one or both



parents are assigned tasks away from home. At the same time this presupposes the moral integrity of all the members of the organization as we discussed previously.

On the other hand there are those who want to have children for the sake of them "taking over" their revolutionary tasks later on. This is an extension of the feudal thought—have children to continue the clan—where tasks are imposed upon the children without the proper/adequate consciousness raising or where tasks that the parents themselves would not do is arbitrarily assigned to the children. And thus they are assured that the revolution will be "made" by their children.

There are also those who have children without assuming the political/personal responsibility that accompanies such a decision. They are those who never have time for their children or who do not explain the circumstances to them in such a way that the children can understand. Very often these children grow up resenting and even hating the "movement" that, through their perception, has totally robbed them of their parents' attention and affection.

Intimately related to the above is the attitude that defines children as the woman's responsibility. Because they are not affected directly, men do not participate in child rearing, or people who do not have children take no conscious initiative or responsibility regarding the children. Traditionally this responsibility has fallen on the women's shoulders. In general one of the major consequences of this is the isolation of the woman within the home and her political inactivity. This naturally extends to the isolation and inactivity of the children as well.

It is in response to these incorrect practices and attitudes that interfere with the development of the revolution and/or the new human being, that alternatives and solutions which would channel rather than alienate the

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family, women and children into the revolutionary process, should be presented. What must be combated are the attitudes, not the fact that children exist.

To liberate the woman from her "blessed" obligation (blessed as long as she is not needed in the labor force or while it does not become a threat to the dominant class) it must be emphasized that child rearing is a responsibility that should be shared by the couple. It is not the only and absolute domain of the woman as is handed down by "sacred decree". It should also be shared by and with other comrades in the organization, particularly those who may live in the same house, building, community or who may share the tasks of a nucleus or section. In this process we will be breaking with the individualistic distinction, corresponding to private property, as reflected in: this is "my" child and that is "yours". At the same time we will be widening the child's family boundaries and providing him/her with even more attention and affection.

In ignoring the reality of women within the family and all the demands that this makes upon her, the left has been deprived of all those women who have been forced to choose between their family and political obligations. This is particularly evident among working class women since their economic situation makes it even harder. This difficult situation must be changed into a revolutionary force transforming the family into a nucleus or unit of struggle.

We must also begin to assume the revolutionary responsibility of educating children according to their age



and capacity for understanding the situation in which they find themselves. As it is, children understand and capture much of their reality. What we must do is insure a correct interpretation. This should be complemented with special activities for children where a similar political message is transmitted and where they can share their experiences in a collective. All the organization's activities should take the children into consideration to avoid whenever possible, the family fragmentation which occurs when parents attend an activity and children don't or when the father does and the mother remains at home.

It must be recognized that children require much attention, guidance and affection. This does not mean that the only ones who can provide this are the biological parents. In order to assure that children receive what they need we should base ourselves on collective life and on the resources of the organization and community.

In Puerto Rico and to some extent in this country, the progressive "alternative" schools that arose in the last few years were an attempt in the right direction. Although this solution appeared to be a good one, in practice it became an extension of the family, isolated from the masses. In practice these schools became exclusive for the children of the "elite", children of the activists, leaders and militants. Although the teaching in these schools is more advanced and new collective values are transmitted, it takes place in a social vacuum, isolated from the reality that surrounds them. Meanwhile the proletarian women send their children to daycare centers which arise spontaneously among family and neighbors or they send them to the scarce centers provided by the educational system, or to public schools. To avoid the rupture that occurs with the masses other solutions must be proposed. These could well be opening the more progressive schools to the whole community or sharing the spontaneously arising daycare centers within the proletarian community, or sending chil-



dren to the public centers and schools where a better education for all children should be fought for. Whichever the way may be it is necessary to fight for a better education for all children making this struggle a part of the participation of the militants within the everyday life of the other workers.

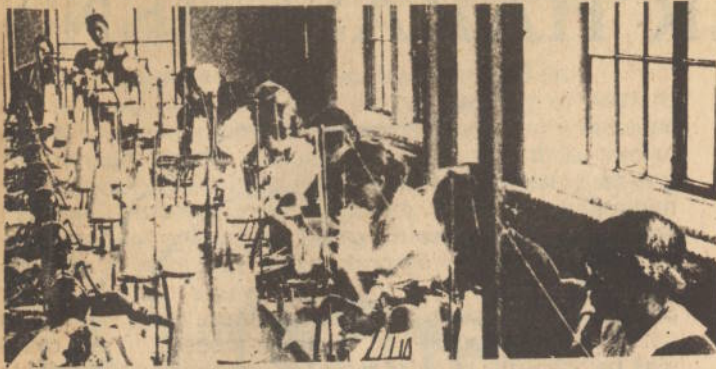
Women as Revolutionary Cadre

Women, in practice, have proven themselves capable of functioning as revolutionary cadre. This has been demonstrated throughout history. If we are going to fulfill our historical tasks—the destruction of the capitalist system and the construction of socialism—we in the left in the United States and Puerto Rico should emphasize women's development through their study and social practice and by developing a new revolutionary moral and promoting women to positions of responsibility when their development indicates it. In proposing this we do not mean to continue with the practice of tokenism, that is, including one or another woman in a false position of leadership to thereby placate the uneasiness of certain women or conscious cadre.

It is especially important to emphasize the development of proletarian women not only so that they may integrate themselves but so that they play leading roles in the struggle of the working class. It is also important to point out as an example of what we are stating, that in Puerto Rico women represent the major sector of the labor force and even so it can be asked how many are represented in the leadership of organized labor? Clearly not many. Here in the United States the situation is relatively similar.

The development of the revolutionary woman and leader of masses will not take place in a spontaneous form or as a result of our intentions alone. It must be a conscious act which takes into consideration the historical

oppression of women and therefore the particularities of that oppression. Upon considering the militance of women



in the revolutionary ranks we have to consider the complex conditions of women. Among them we must distinguish those which arise biologically from those which arise socially. Referring to the biological reality of women Fidel stated:

"Women have other functions as well in society. She is the natural workplace where life is forged... And I say this because far from being an object of discrimination and inequality, she merits special considerations of the society." This capitalist society cannot provide these special considerations. But the movement towards socialism, in this moment of transition, has the obligation to deal with the reality of women if it wants to obtain their active participation within its ranks.

It should remain clear that maternity brings with it certain responsibilities; the term of pregnancy and nursing impose special obligations. Therefore the woman comrade who is in this situation may not participate in the same form as in the past. The solution is to work in another form which should not be considered inferior. There will be limitations in some tasks but in others she can be incorporated totally as in educating the children with new values, elevating her theoretical level, research, etc. But once these stages are over the raising of children should not fall only on the woman as was discussed earlier.

There are other conditions of the woman which do not arise biologically but are developed and imposed by the capitalist social order. Double exploitation of the woman is reflected in inferior salaries to men and in worse working conditions. There also exists the double shift. This must be combated since it represents barriers for the working woman's participation who, among other things, gets home from the factory or work place already tired only to find any number of domestic chores awaiting her. This must be recognized in any organization that takes liberation of women as a demand, especially the proletariat woman. In the particular situation of housewives and unemployed women, inertia, alienation and passivity created in them by the capitalist system and the conditions which characterize it, must be combated. These conditions must be seen as a result of the material life and the development of the capitalist society, not as absolute and eternal characteristics of women.

Although it is the responsibility of every cadre to constantly evaluate their work regarding women, women as cadre and as recipients of constant discrimination should guarantee this task becomes an integral part of revolutionary work throughout the organization. In this daily work we must clearly establish a correct position combating the deviations which occur in the revolutionary movement: on the one hand, the feminist deviation which elevates the struggle for the emancipation of women to a level above that of class struggle; and on the other the tendency which negates the particular conditions of women and its consequences.



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