

# Women and Revolution



Journal of the Women's Commission of the Spartacist League

50¢

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Workers Vanguard

## November 27: Labor/Black Mobilization Shakes Washington “We Stopped the Klan!”

More than 5,000 protesters—mostly black people and many of them unionists—chased the KKK out of Washington, D.C. on November 27. The race-terrorists had said they would rally at the Capitol and march past the White House in their white sheets, for the first time since 1925. The Reagan government had shown itself determined to force this provocation down the throats of the mainly black D.C. population. But the Klan did not march, did not rally, did not even put on their robes! Instead, thousands of anti-Klan militants at the Labor/Black Mobilization rally blocked off the Klan’s starting point and the cops had to sneak the Klansmen away in defeat.

The Labor/Black Mobilization to Stop the Klan was initiated by the Spartacist League (SL) after discussions with area unionists showed a shared determination to militantly stop the cross-burners from marching in the nation’s capital. The leaflet (250,000 copies were distributed) said:

“... if we don’t stop them [the Klan] here and now,

decent people will continue to pay with their lives. We want a massive counterdemonstration against these terrorists, *right where they say they’re going to start their march.*...

“The KKK is the naked expression of what the racists in the White House, the Congress, and city halls think and feel. The Klan carries it out in ugly word and bloody deed....

“But the KKK better know that Washington is not Klantown. This city is filled with black residents who know exactly what the Klan is. Many families here have experienced firsthand the terror of the Southern nightriders.... Within reach of Washington are powerful integrated unions whose members—hit hard with givebacks, union-busting, mass unemployment—know that the hooded labor-hating racists want to finish them off....

“We don’t need an impotent protest that amounts to a hat-in-hand appeal to Democratic politicians to fight Reagan reaction. We need to mobilize above all the

**“1,2,3,4, Time to Finish the Civil War!  
—5,6,7,8, Forward to a Workers State!”**



Workers Vanguard Photos

**Chanting "We Stopped the Klan!," protesters surge toward starting point of aborted KKK rally on Capitol Hill.**

power of labor and blacks, independently and fighting in their own interests....

"America must complete the Civil War.... The Klan arose to eliminate black political rights and bury Reconstruction. It was the violent arm of the reaction which robbed newly freed blacks and a young working class of most of their gains. Now the U.S. has grown into the imperialist world power opposing social revolution from El Salvador to Southern Africa. The KKK wants to nail America to a cross with the nails driven through black flesh! The KKK's protectors in the White House want to extend this crucifixion throughout the world and above all to Russia, for its original sin of revolution.

"The Klan is the symbol and cutting edge of racist reaction in America. If they can get away with it here in Washington, it will whet their appetite for more racist violence. It is not a matter of free speech.... Where the KKK thinks they've got the edge, they're killers. Remember Greensboro....

"It's labor's job to lead the fight to smash Klan/Nazi race-terror...."

Participation of organized labor was key. The first support came from Norfolk, Virginia and the predominantly black waterfront unions in the tri-city Tidewater area, the largest working-class concentration in the Southeast. In little more than a week some 70 union leaders, exec boards and union locals nationwide endorsed the Labor/Black Mobilization. The participation of tough, responsible union guys in the demonstration's monitors squad was key to the safety of the

disciplined, militant protest.

The thousands of black working people and unemployed who turned out to stop the Klan got a little taste of power on November 27. The Klan was stopped and when the cops pulled out, the anti-Klan protesters poured into the streets and surged up Capitol Hill. They took over the route the Klan was to have taken, stopping traffic as they marched past the White House and streamed into Lafayette Park, claiming for their own the spot where the Klan had intended to rally for genocide. "There are no white sheets here—only the red banner of the working class," declared SL spokes-

*continued on next page*

## Women and Revolution

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

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Determined protesters chant "KKK—Hit the Road!" November 27 was a historic victory for labor, blacks, for every decent American.

man Al Nelson as the cops' tear gas cannisters were popping at the outskirts of the park.

At another, much smaller rally earlier that day in McPherson Square, miles away from the mobilization that stopped the Klan, the All-Peoples Congress (a front for Sam Marcy's Workers World Party) held a tepid rally aimed at channeling anti-Klan outrage into votes for Democrats. The Marcyites had promised anti-Klan action but delivered only windy reformist speeches, and finally had to *link arms* against the people they had mobilized to try and keep them there. Some of the frustrated youth broke out and set off on their own, a setup for the cops who clubbed and tear-gassed them.

In the aftermath the bourgeois press naturally focused on "violence." But what happened was *the Klan was stopped!* Elsewhere, police rioted against frustrated anti-Klan protesters and the media screamed

"looting" after the cops had clubbed black youth right through plate glass store windows.

A successful Klan march in Washington would have given the green light to stepped-up KKK terror against blacks, immigrants, Jews, leftists, strikers. It was the intersection between the communist program of the Spartacist League and the bitter determination of the black masses of Washington that stopped the Klan's provocation on November 27. That's why we need a Marxist vanguard party, like the Bolsheviks of Lenin and Trotsky: to act as the collective memory of the revolutionary working class and as a "tribune of the people" fighting on behalf of all the oppressed. There's plenty of will to fight back among the oppressed and exploited of capitalism; what's needed is the leadership with the program for victory. Black Liberation Through Socialist Revolution! ■

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# Spartacists Fight for Women's Liberation

## Ms. Rad-Lib Meets Mrs. Reaction

SAN FRANCISCO—Over 2,000 people jammed the gym here at San Francisco State November 17 expecting a debate, titled "Two Views on Women," between right-wing conservative Phyllis "Stop ERA" Schlafly and Deirdre English, rad-lib editor of *Mother Jones*. What they got instead from the two speakers was more of a joint testimonial to true love and the "American way." As one disappointed spectator, quoted in the *Phoenix* (18 November), summed up, "Both sides were red, white and blue all the way... people felt Deirdre, although she made some feminist points, was no opposition. It was another slice of apple pie." It really wasn't surprising, though, that English spent half her time cracking sarcastic jokes about Schlafly's privileged personal life, and the other half asserting feminism will usher in "true equality" and a "new era of love." At bottom English and Schlafly are squabbling sisters of the capitalist system, which both uphold against revolutionary socialism.

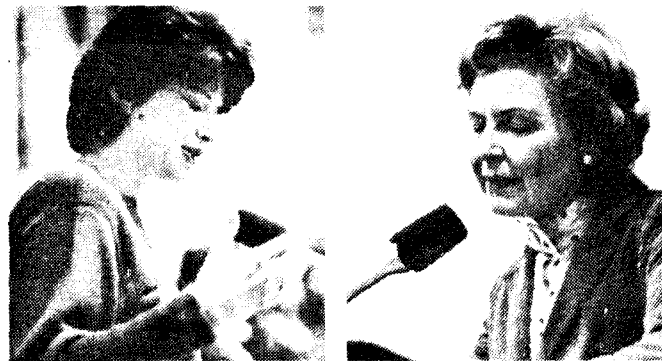
The Spartacist League/Spartacus Youth League (SL/SYL) was the real opposition that night to Schlafly and the Reagan reaction she represents. Almost everyone at the event received the SYL leaflet titled "Neither Schlafly nor English but—Women's Liberation Through Socialist Revolution!" (reprinted below). SL and SYL speakers argued that it's not legalistic liberal gimmicks, like those pushed by *Mother Jones*, that can defeat reaction and liberate women, but socialist revolution. Diana Coleman, Spartacist candidate for SF Board of Supervisors this past fall, concentrated her fire on English:

"I think I'd have a lot of trouble thinking of a question for Schlafly because what I want to see is a working-class movement in this country that can stop that kind of crap [audience applause]. So here's a question for Deirdre English: Isn't it true, from what I read in *Mother Jones*, that what you want is that working-class people, blacks, women be herded back into the Democratic Party?... I ran as a socialist-union militant, and I found that many people in this city wanted a hell of a lot more than equality—they want a socialist revolution."

As for Schlafly, another SL speaker had but one point:

"I would like to know, Mrs. Schlafly, if you recognize this quote—it sounds particularly like you: 'Equal rights for women actually means the deprivation of rights, since it involves women in areas where they would necessarily be inferior.' How do you explain the parallel between your position on the woman question and Adolf Hitler's?"

There were yells of approval from the audience at the SL's exposure of Schlafly's striking similarity to Hitler's *Mein Kampf*. But the largely liberal petty-bourgeois audience and debate organizers did their best to smother our sharp criticisms of "socialist feminist" Deirdre English. But attempts to suppress the SL/SYL backfired. Claire Gulick, current director of the S.F. State Women's Center, took the microphone to defend



W&R Photos

**Deirdre English (left) meets Phyllis Schlafly (right): squabbling sisters of the capitalist system.**

our right to speak, while last year's Women's Center Director, Regina Gabrielle, was so incensed by the censorship attempts she fired off a letter to the campus *Golden Gater* the next day.

Despite harassment (including turning off the mike at one point), our comrades continued to expose English's fundamental loyalty to capitalism. An SYL member pointed out *Mother Jones'* advocacy of chauvinist economic "protectionism," a reactionary panacea strongly favored by Democratic Party presidential hopeful Walter Mondale. Another SYLer asked, "All feminists such as yourself say they are fighting for women's rights. If this is so why has there been no outcry by feminists against the oppression of Afghani women by Islamic reaction? Could it be for you that is more important to be anti-Soviet than for women's rights?" "It is well known that Polish Solidarność is notoriously anti-woman," another comrade addressed English, "I would like to know what your position is on Solidarność and its reactionary position on the woman question."

Stung at one point by an SLer's question, "What could you have in common with a communist union organizer like *Mother Jones*, whose name you use on the masthead of your liberal publication?", English could only defensively note, "Mother Jones would have changed if she were here today." Ms. English ducked the other questions, repeatedly pleading "I'm not here to debate socialism and capitalism." Indeed not—on the fundamental issues Ms. Rad-Lib and Mrs. Reaction have a lot in common.

\* \* \* \* \*

### S.F. Spartacist Leaflet, 17 November 1982

Lenin said, "The first dictatorship of the proletariat will be the pioneer in full social equality for women. It will radically destroy more prejudices than volumes of women's rights." And it did. In the very first months of

*continued on next page*

Soviet rule marriage became a contract in law between free and equal citizens, divorce was granted at the request of either partner, illegitimacy was abolished in law and all children were protected and provided for. Legal abortion was established and there was an end in law to the persecution of homosexuals. Education and participation in government and the labor force were opened equally to men and women for the first time.

Tonight we have a debate between an utter reactionary, a defender of women's oppression, and a bourgeois feminist whose highest hope is to attempt to resurrect and pass the ERA, a simple democratic statement of formal equality of men and women under the law. But despite massive efforts the ERA recently went down to defeat in the wealthiest capitalist country in the world. The contrast between the Soviet Union in 1917 and the U.S. in 1982 is a graphic illustration of the bankruptcy of bourgeois feminism, and a compelling argument for proletarian revolution.

Phyllis Schlafly, the utter reactionary, is probably the most notorious advocate of the Reaganite program for women—"kinder, küche, kirche" (children, kitchen, church). Tonight she will spew forth the American ruling class vision of imperialism's "Paradise Lost": small town America, the 1950s, a Norman Rockwell pastoral ringed with MX missiles. No blacks, Jews or "foreigners." No gays, lesbians, no "premarital" sex or any kind of "pornographic, sinful smut." No ERA, birth control or abortions. No big cities, trade unions—even the industrial working class has been disappeared from the scene. In Reagan/Schlafly's America it's just dad, mom and the kids—god-fearing, hardworking and, not least, ever vigilant against the "Russian Menace."

The role of Schlafly and groups like the "Moral Majority" ad nauseum is that of ideological shock troops. The bipartisan campaigns to make motherhood mandatory by outlawing birth control and abortion, as well as outlawing homosexuals, pornography or any kind of sexual behavior other than monogamous married life are designed to legally enforce the bourgeoisie's "sacred" nuclear family—the central institution oppressing women in this society. The Jim Crow racism and the general social and religious bigotry are all part of the U.S. capitalists' hoped-for return to the 1950s—the first (and last) decade of the "American Century." They long for the happy days before Vietnam, before "sexual liberation," before the civil rights movement and, above all, before U.S. imperialism's loss of unquestioned economic and military hegemony.

And if Schlafly and her ilk aren't enough to whip us all into line for war against "godless communism" there stand behind them the various fascist groups, impatiently awaiting their turn. Especially the authentically American Ku Klux Klan, whose murderous terrorism has risen sharply under both Carter and Reagan.

Squaring off against Schlafly in tonight's "debate" is Deirdre English, Executive Editor of the rad-lib, muckraking *Mother Jones* magazine. The Spartacist League/Spartacus Youth League (SL/SYL) believes that, while Ms. English may recoil in mock horror from the crusading "New Right" and Reagan, she has no solutions. The best she can come up with is to organize

women to vote "to turn American politics around, to deliver us all from the dominion of the American right wing and to elect feminists and progressives to public office...." Furthermore, she claims "when that has been achieved, the ERA will be acted on again, in Congress and at the state level, and it will pass overwhelmingly and easily" ("The Future of Feminism" in *Mother Jones*, November 1982).

The politics of Deirdre English/MJ are plain old social democracy—petty-bourgeois reformism. Her basic premise—that the working class and oppressed can reform capitalism and even "use" the capitalist state—is a lie. The very purpose of bourgeois government is to guarantee the capitalists' "right" to exploit labor and oppress minorities and women through the bourgeoisie's system of laws, courts, cops and the army. Rather than voting in "progressives" to bestow social reforms, the historic task of the working class lies in taking full power into its hands to sweep away the capitalist state! And that power would be defended by depriving of political power all who would bring back the capitalist social order of racism, unemployment and war! The Trotskyist SL/SYL seeks to forge the party that will lead the working class in this struggle for workers revolution.

Renouncing any independent class struggle, all reformists continually stump for alliances—a "grand coalition"—with some supposedly progressive wing of the ruling class. That means the Democratic Party. But Ms. English, like the glossy pages of *Mother Jones*, is slick. Her essays warn against the "lame liberalism" of the Jimmy Carter types and point out that the fight to pass the ERA was "denied and done in, as often by Democrats like John Kennedy, Sam Ervin and Emmanuel Celler" as it was by Republicans. Her alternative, seen in every issue of *Mother Jones* is the same one touted by virtually every other fake-left group. From Angela Davis and the Communist Party to the rabidly pro-U.S. *Unity* newspaper to the Big Brother of American reformism, Michael Harrington's Democratic Socialist Alliance—they all push "progressives" or "neoliberals" such as Massachusetts State Senator Paul Tsongas and California Congressman Ron Dellums. Or they support "alternative" "grass-roots" organizations like National Organization for Women or Tom Hayden's jingoistic Campaign for Economic Democracy (while perhaps taking a critical or neutral stance toward the grossly opportunist, pro-Zionist Hayden himself). What Deirdre English and *Mother Jones* fail to report, of course, is that these "progressives" are not alternatives to the "lame liberal" Democrats at all. Rather, the role of Dellums, Tsongas, et al. is to act as "progressive" Democratic Party sheep dogs for the capitalists: rounding up the working class to stay together; don't get out of line and VOTE DEMOCRAT. The progressive Democrats work overtime to keep or bring the economic and political struggles of blacks, women and workers within the bounds of the capitalist "democratic process."

The Spartacist League/SYL points out that there can be no effective opposition to Reaganism which does not recognize and militantly oppose U.S. imperialism's bipartisan anti-Soviet war drive in all its aspects.

Reagan's all-out domestic war on the working class, blacks—on virtually everyone who isn't wealthy and white—is necessary to pay for the most monstrous military buildup in history. That military buildup is targeted against the gains of the Bolshevik October Revolution—collectivized property, planned economy and state monopoly of foreign trade. But it is precisely on the question of anti-Sovietism that we find a deep and fundamental unity running from the KKK to Reagan to Teddy Kennedy to Dellums to Schlafly to Deirdre English.

In response to the Soviet intervention two years ago the international Spartacist tendency said, "Hail Red Army in Afghanistan!" Carter, Reagan, the CIA and the social-democratic sheep dogs all howled about "Red imperialism" but if their side wins Afghani women will continue to be bought and sold like cattle, imprisoned by the Muslim veil and enforced illiteracy.

The reformist left is less concerned about the feudal enslavement of women than possible destruction of the Afghani "culture." Well, the American Civil War, too, attacked an "indigenous culture" 120 years ago—that of the Southern slave-owners—and we are damn glad of it. What's posed today is the necessity to finish the Civil War. The liberation of blacks, of Hispanics, of women requires a third American revolution, a workers revolution.

Not surprisingly, Deirdre English and Ronald Reagan both actively promote Solidarność as the liberators of Poland. But what about Polish women? It's well known that the only woman with any power or influence in Solidarność is the Black Madonna of Czestochowa! Solidarność, a "movement" which embraces virulent anti-Semites and ultra-reactionaries, certainly disdains the greatest working-class revolutionist in Polish history, Rosa Luxemburg... precisely because she was a woman, a Jew and a communist.

If the well-documented links between western bankers, the CIA and Solidarność aren't bad enough, its ties to the reactionary Catholic Church speak volumes for Solidarność's attitudes towards women. Given the historic role of the Church in keeping women tied to the family hearth; the Polish pope's aggressive campaign against birth control and education; the strong pro-family statements by Solidarność—can these be the liberators of Polish women? Never!

Unlike this counterrevolutionary outfit, the crystallization of a genuine communist vanguard in Poland will bring forth women workers to help lead their class in defense of the collectivized economy against the clerical-nationalists' domestic counterrevolution and imperialist attack from abroad. A political revolution to overthrow the corrupt and backward Stalinist bureaucracy and to deepen the gains of the working class will be led by a revolutionary, internationalist Trotskyist party standing in the tradition of Rosa Luxemburg. And standing firmly against the traditions of Deirdre English and pro-imperialist, anti-Soviet social democracy.

So the real issue is not Schlafly versus English, but reform versus revolution. The idea that "progressive" capitalists might liberate workers and the oppressed is a deadly illusion. Reforms can be granted and taken away



W&amp;R Photo

**BERKELEY**—Spartacists call for "Free Abortion on Demand!" September 17 at Herrick Hospital, focus of a reactionary "Right to Life" campaign to stop second trimester abortions. Reformist "pro-choice" slogans are no choice for the most oppressed women—foreign workers, ghetto blacks—in this society: our fight for abortion and contraception rights for all is linked to our fight for women's liberation through socialist revolution.

depending on which way the political winds are blowing. That is the meaning of the death of the ERA. This doesn't mean that reforms such as the ERA or abortion rights shouldn't be fought for. But that struggle must be linked to the fight for a workers revolution.

Today, it is desperately necessary to fight. But you can't fight Reagan with Democrats. This poses the urgent task of wresting the leadership of the American workers away from the reactionary and conservative bureaucracy of the AFL-CIO. In the recent elections, the SL/SYL ran Diana Coleman and Ritchie Bradley as revolutionary socialist candidates for San Francisco Board of Supervisors. As part of our full socialist program, our candidates called for free abortion and birth control on demand, free quality health care for all and free 24-hour childcare at the workplace. Obviously, these basic necessities, like any of the basic demands of the working class, cannot be gained simply through elections. That is why our campaign stressed the need for mass strike action to bring down Reagan and those overseeing his massive economic cutbacks—the big-city Democratic Party mayors like Dianne Feinstein and Jane Byrne of Chicago.

It is uniquely the Spartacist League/SYL which points the way: Break with the twin parties of capitalism—build a workers party to throw out the capitalists, establish a new type of government, a workers government which will expropriate major industry and establish a planned economy run in the interests of all working people!

**FOR WOMEN'S LIBERATION THROUGH  
SOCIALIST REVOLUTION!  
JOIN THE SPARTACIST LEAGUE/  
SPARTACUS YOUTH LEAGUE! ■**

## 3,000 Stop Nazis in Chicago, June 27: “Labor Must Defend the Rights of Gays!”

The Nazis thought they'd get away with terrorizing Gay Pride Day in Chicago's Lincoln Park on June 27—and if it weren't for the Spartacist League, they would have. The “white power” terrorists announced a “death to queers” hatefest, figuring homosexuals were an isolated minority nobody would dare come out to defend. But they found the spot where they'd intended to rally filled by over 3,000 angry anti-fascists, mobilized by the SL-initiated June 27 Committee to Stop the Nazis. For over an hour militant anti-fascist chants drowned out the Chicago “American Nazi Party” and “Detroit SS Action Group,” who were kept pinned down behind a chain-link fence in the parking lot. Only the massive police presence, including a line of mounted cops protecting the Nazis, kept the militant crowd from overrunning the fascist creeps.

June 27 was a victory for all opponents of fascist terror. It showed that the SL's strategy of massive labor/black mobilizations to stop racist provocation can bring out thousands in action. The anti-Nazi rally also struck a blow against sectoralist illusions, by smashing through the fascists' sucker-bait “divide and conquer” tactic. We've always said “labor must defend the rights of gays,” and on June 27 labor—unionists from East Chicago steel mills, auto plants, city workers—along with blacks from the South Side, Jews, Latinos, gays from New Town, socialists came to Lincoln Park to defend gays' rights, because they knew they were all targeted by the would-be stormtroopers. In this most segregated of big northern cities, black participation was key: it took guts for blacks to come out for an action like this in Lincoln Park, but they came because they knew they would be first on the Nazis' hit list.

June 27 was not the first time the Spartacist League has organized labor/black mobilizations against fascist terror. In late 1979 in the wake of the “Greensboro massacre”—when the Klan and Nazis, with cop connivance, shot down left-wing anti-racist activists, killing five—the SL brought out hundreds of mainly black auto workers and leftists to keep the Klan from rallying in downtown Detroit. Since then the SL has initiated successful labor-based united-front anti-fascist mobilizations in San Francisco and Ann Arbor and, most recently, the November 27 Labor/Black Mobilization that stopped the KKK in Washington, D.C. But the Chicago mobilization was of particular interest to the readers of *W&R* because it cast a spotlight on the response of Chicago's gay “community” and more generally on the SL's labor/black strategy vs. “gay movement” sectoralism.

### Who Do These Nazis Want to Kill?

The hundreds of militant gays who turned out under the June 27 Committee banners to “Stop the Nazis” did so in spite of the line of the gay leadership, which viewed the June 27 Committee as an interloper in their



Workers Vanguard

**Myra Owens, Spartacus Youth League, at June 27 rally: “We must continue to fight—We have the world to win!”**

“constituency.” Over the last several years the annual “Gay Pride Day” marches have become simply communal festivals, the last radical New Left impulses that animated protests like the anti-Anita Bryant demonstrations in 1977 having dissipated into either demoralized and passive “gay ghetto” lifestyle or simply Democratic Party constituency politics. Naturally, then, Jane Byrne, Chicago's Democratic-machine mayor, found it politic to endorse the Gay Pride march. The official Pride Day committee took the standard liberal position of “ignore the Nazis,” as did Chicago's main gay paper, *GayLife* (which however also reported at some length on the “Stop the Nazis” organizing). Reformist left groups, like the Communist Party and Social Democrats (DSA), too, either say “ignore the Nazis” or call on the bourgeois state to “ban the Klan”—as if the state ever does anything except ban the anti-fascists and protect the fascists. The media chimed in with a campaign of violence-baiting against the June 27 Committee.

The June 27 mobilization was built by mass leafletting at factories and unions and in minority and gay neighborhoods. Nearly 250,000 copies of the leaflet entitled, “Who Are These Nazis? What Do They Want to Destroy? Who Do They Want to Kill?” were distributed by June 27 Committee supporters. “The Nazis have targeted Gay Pride Day,” said the leaflet, “because they know that homosexuals are the weakest link in their chain of terror. But in the factories, union



halls and neighborhoods, Chicagoans know that this attack on gays is only a *beginning*." The Nazis aren't just a bunch of crazies—the Nazis and Klan have already gotten sizable electoral support here and there and are growing among desperate, backward layers in this period of crushing economic misery. Emboldened by the strident anti-Soviet war drive and the continuing "rollback" of black rights at home, the race-terrorists firebomb black families in their homes and shoot down leftists—remember Greensboro! Their intended victims better get together and smash them now! The leaflet recalled:

"In addition to the brutal genocide of 6 million Jews, the Nazis leveled Warsaw and massacred millions of Poles, Russians, Czechs, Serbs, Croats, Greeks, Ukrainians, anti-Nazi Germans, Gypsies, pacifists, conservatives, trade unionists, socialists and communists, homosexuals, Catholics, Protestants and dissenters of every kind."

The ugly core of native American fascism, once the cultist pro-German SS trappings are stripped away, is "white power," the call for genocide against black people. Fascists want to smash anything that looks like a trade union and turn factories into hellholes of slave labor. The leaflet concluded: "The Nazis don't ignore us. We can't afford to ignore them. . . . STOP THE NAZIS NOW!"

We were able to organize the June 27 demonstration because we have the *program* that can smash fascism. It wasn't just our energy, organizing ability or "thousands of dollars" (as spiteful opponents afterwards claimed) that was fundamental. We could do it because we are Leninists, because we know that the working class is the decisive force for revolutionary struggle and that revolutionary leadership is decisive in mobilizing the working class. Only that revolutionary vanguard can act as the "tribune of the people," linking the defense of specially oppressed groups—like gays—to the social power of the working class. That's what happened on June 27.

The June 27 action also struck a blow against the notion that "only gays can liberate gays," "only women can liberate women," and so on—the sectoralist ideology which facilitated the splintering of the New Left into a host of separate, often mutually hostile "oppressed sectors." Fundamentally, sectoralism is an expression of despair because it accepts, at bottom, that the racist, oppressive social system is unchangeable, and therefore what is to be expected from the elements of the oppressed and exploited is not common struggle but competition for a bigger slice of the capitalist pie. This policy of despair was carried in Chicago by an otherwise not very significant group called the Revolutionary Socialist League (RSL), which organized a "Stonewall Committee" to confront the Nazis based on trying to get the "gay community" to go up against the fascists alone. This strategy was a miserable failure.

Although we approached the Stonewall Committee for coordination, they refused to respond, resorting instead to petty sabotage. The RSL's maneuvering in the gay milieu blew up in a fiasco a week before the protest. As Chicago's *GayLife* (25 June) reported: "At a meeting June 22 at the YWCA, the Stonewall Committee lost 12 members who formally criticized the committee for lacking 'feminist' and 'democratic' coalition tactics and for being 'self-isolating.' The departing members, who called themselves the 'gang of 12' also criticized the Revolutionary Socialist League... for having an 'undeclared agenda' and 'masculinist' tactics." Finally, unable to organize much themselves (a "Stonewall march" intended to build for June 27 drew *six* people), the RSL showed up at the June 27 Committee demonstration, where they resorted to downright provocation. In a protest confronted by mounted police and shot through with over a hundred clearly marked plain-clothes cops, they tried to get young militants to throw eggs and such. Luckily Committee marshals were able

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Dean Paul/NFI

**Anti-Nazi demonstrators press against police barricades, drowning out fascist filth with militant chants. The Spartacist League brought out thousands June 27, linking the defense of specially oppressed groups, like gays, to the social power of the working class.**

to prevent most of this idiotic adventurism, although 13 protesters were arrested.

June 27 was a taste of what's needed: labor-based mobilizations of tens of thousands to sweep the Nazis off the streets. The RSL did its best to turn June 27 into a Nazi victory. It was a deadly dangerous stunt the RSL pulled, which could have led to a bloody cop charge: the notorious Chicago police hardly need excuses to attack blacks, socialists, gays. Stupid kamikaze adventurism is the RSL's idea of "anti-fascist actions": a New Left street-fighting bash where, typically, rocks get thrown, the cops move in and bust protesters, and the Nazis parade undisturbed. It's a recipe for defeat.

It wasn't the RSL, with its "go it alone" macho, that defended gay rights on June 27. It was the Spartacist League's program that brought out those thousands of unionists, blacks, Jews—and hundreds of gays too, many of whom understood for the first time, in action, the perspective that the working class will defend gays against right-wing terror.

### Slander Campaign Flops

The RSL's strategy and organization thoroughly discredited by the events, they struck back with a series of slanders, most importantly in *Gay Community News*, a Boston-based gay/lesbian weekly with a far larger circulation than the RSL's *Torch* will ever have. Phase one of the RSL's attack appeared in a Gay Pride Day wrap-up by David Morris in *GCN's* 10 July issue. We don't know whose ax *GCN* was grinding, but here's what they chose to report on the Chicago anti-Nazi action:

"The counter-demonstration was further complicated by the presence of the Spartacist League, whose members used a large sound system to 'try to steal the whole show,' in the words of Stonewall member Richard Wilson.



Workers Vanguard

**June 27: RSL's "Stonewall Committee" in splendid isolation. Later, RSL tried to claim credit for organizing the mobilization.**

Wilson said the Spartacists refused to address the specific question of lesbian and gay pride. He told *GCN* that in several cases Spartacists aided the police by pointing out to them persons who had thrown objects at the Nazis."

The SL immediately protested in a letter (dated 6 July) to *GCN*, pointing out that the paper's solidarizing with and spreading these malicious lies would certainly destroy its credibility among the Chicago-area gays who had turned out in support of the June 27 Committee's call. *GCN* published our letter and letters from other supporters of the June 27 Committee (reprinted in this issue—see pages 12-14), as well as a follow-up slander from the RSL.

David Thorstad, an early endorser of the June 27 Committee from New York, pointed out to *GCN*:

"I believe this may have been the first time that a left-wing group has campaigned to mobilize labor and Black and other non-gay support for an action to defend homosexuals (among others!) against the Nazi scum. I am glad to have been associated, however peripherally, with this successful anti-Nazi mobilization. But David Morris' account of the event was clearly off the wall, based as it apparently was on the highly tendentious views of a factional opponent of the organizers.... You owe an apology to the Spartacists and the June 27 Committee to Stop the Nazis."

Gay activist Kurt Hill's letter took up the cop-baiting smear:

"Wilson makes a very serious charge—that the SLers were consciously working hand-in-glove with the repressive apparatus of the capitalist state to victimize anti-fascist militants.... Unless Wilson is willing to come forward with concrete facts, his charge must be dismissed as irresponsible; slander is never an acceptable method of political combat."

"Concrete facts?" It now appears *GCN* is stuck in the unhappy position of being the only paper to retail this smear; even the RSL's *Torch* (15 July-14 August) dropped that particular piece of mud-slinging.

A Stonewall Committee supporter who also endorsed the June 27 Committee, Jay Goldberg, treated the SL's labor/black-centered united-front policy and the RSL's gay sectoralism as if these counterposed strategies were some kind of division of labor. On purely pragmatic grounds, he had to defend the June 27 Committee:

The Stonewall Committee's efforts were aimed mostly at mobilizing the gay and lesbian community. The June 27 Committee's efforts were more broadly based, aimed predominantly at the labor movement, including the black, Hispanic, lesbian/gay and Jewish communities. In retrospect, it was the Spartacist League's efforts which proved to be the most successful. Their rally definitely strengthened rather than "further complicated" the counter-demonstration, as your article states. Your source was either misinformed or extremely biased."

### Working-Class Power vs. Petty-Bourgeois Despair

Goldberg also rightly takes exception to the Stonewall Committee charge that "The Spartacists refused to address the specific question of lesbian and gay pride." He replies: "It is quite obvious in the Spartacist League's publications and in their actions on June 27 that they are supporters of gay and lesbian rights." Perfectly true, but we can't resist pointing out the cynical sophistry of Stonewall's formulation. The SL,



Washington, D.C. November 27: Labor/Black Mobilization takes the streets of Washington. Spartacist-initiated mobilizations against fascist terror give a taste of proletarian power.

a staunch defender of gays' rights, does indeed refuse to endorse any "lifestyle" in the manner of "gay pride" (which for many of its advocates is synonymous with "coming out of the closet"), "gay is good," etc. We oppose every attempt to impose and enforce the oppressive codes of bourgeois sexual morality and were known for our active championing of the rights of homosexuals before the "gay movement" even existed. Thus we of course defend gay people's right to "come out" without suffering repression and discrimination; equally, we defend the right to privacy for the millions of gay people who don't consider their sexuality a "political" matter. The RSL, with its idiotic "gay rage" line, invests in "gay pride" a "revolutionary" significance which is almost a parody of the petty-bourgeois "revolutionary lifestyle" illusions of the old New Left. To the RSL and its Stonewall friends, a group like the SL which does not make a point of advocating "gay pride" really ought not, by the RSL's logic, to defend gays' rights; since we manifestly and militantly do, they resort to a formulation which suggests we capitulated to anti-homosexual backwardness, without actually saying so.

A subsequent RSL letter to GCN (14 August) abandons the attempt at subtlety. RSLer Ian Daniels claims: "What they [the SL] have done is trivialize the fact that lesbians and gay males are under attack." He continues: "The leaflet the SL used to build for the anti-Nazi protest carefully left out the fact that the Nazi rally was directed against gay people, thus ensuring that they would not have to confront the issue of anti-gay prejudice that unfortunately exists among Black people, Jewish people, and straight workers." Unfortunately for the RSL, our leaflet's *third sentence* said: "The Nazis have targeted Gay Pride Day, because they know that homosexuals are the weakest link in their chain of terror."

Who confronted anti-gay prejudice? The SL, which distributed a quarter of a million copies of that leaflet at steel mills, auto plants, in black communities, in Evanston and Skokie? Or the RSL, which refused to appeal for support outside the "gay community"? If it had been up to the RSL, the Nazis' tactic would have worked. Fortunately, thousands of people understood: a Nazi provocation against *anybody* is a deadly threat to blacks, Jews, unionists and much more. The RSL internalizes the logical extension of "only gays can liberate gays," which is "... and screw everybody else."

The RSL shares with the Stalinist Progressive Labor Party (PL) a view of the working class as nothing but a bunch of Archie Bunker-type backward, patriotic, nickle-and-dime-oriented, socially conservative little householders. PL glories in this image, tries to imitate it; the RSL, at least in its maneuvers in the gay milieu, is the flip side. But PL's vicious gay-baiting is not some organic reflection of "proletarian" instincts: it is the poisonous legacy of Stalinism, betrayer of the liberating goals of working-class socialism.

The Spartacist League's program, tested by social struggles, points the way forward for the oppressed and exploited. June 27 was the fourth time in this country that we've initiated successful labor/black-based mobilizations against fascist terror. June 27 and the historic victory of the Labor/Black Mobilization against the Klan in Washington November 27 gave a taste of what real proletarian power in America would look like. The thousands that responded to our call to "Stop the Nazis" showed the power of a revolutionary leadership to undercut backwardness and sectoralism and unite workers and oppressed in our common interests against our common enemies. ■

Letters on June 27 begin on following page.

# Big Lie: They Can't Sell It in Chicago!

6 July 1982

Gay Community News  
Boston

To the Editor:

We are writing to object to your false and misleading report on the important anti-Nazi demonstration in Chicago on June 27 which appeared in *Gay Community News*, 10 July. Noting that the fascist American Nazi Party had scheduled a "Death to Queers" rally on Gay Pride Day in Chicago, your article in gross disregard for the facts attributed to something called the "Stonewall Committee" the sizable anti-Nazi mobilization which shouted down the fascist provocation. Your article then slanders the organizers of the anti-Nazi demonstration:

"The counter-demonstration was further complicated by the presence of the Spartacist League, whose members used a large sound system to 'try to steal the whole show,' in the words of Stonewall member Richard Wilson. Wilson said the Spartacists refused to address the specific question of lesbian and gay pride. He told GCN that in several cases Spartacists aided the police by pointing out to them persons who had thrown objects at the Nazis."

This is a lie from start to finish! Everyone who was there in Lincoln Park on June 27 knows that the anti-Nazi mobilization was organized by the June 27 Committee Against the Nazis, initiated by the Spartacist League working with Chicago-area unionists and neighborhood groups. The crowd of 3,000 which turned out to "greet" the Nazis with chants of "Chicago is a labor town, Chicago is a gay town, Chicago is a Jewish town, Chicago is a black town—No room for Nazis!" were mobilized by the work of June 27 Committee volunteers who distributed 260,000 leaflets and soapboxed at union halls and plant gates, at schools and in working-class, black, Jewish and gay neighborhoods.

The "Stonewall Committee" was from the beginning a parasitic and contradictory venture which split under the impact of June 27 Committee organizing efforts. Though the Stonewallers differed with the official Gay Pride organizers' plans to avoid confronting the Nazis directly, they also opposed the June 27 Committee's broad-based, labor/black-led strategy of anti-fascist work. The Stonewallers' own "strategy" was premised on the old New Left sectoralist notion that nobody but gays will defend gay rights; they confined their "organizing" to empty gestures like a Stonewall march through the gay community consisting of six people! These are the people who are now spreading, with your assistance, slanders against the organizers of the anti-Nazi mobilization.

Most of your readers, unfortunately, will have no way of knowing what really happened. But all over Chicago are plenty who do. Prior to the demonstration, Chicago's gay weekly (*GayLife*, 25 June) provided serious reporting of our organizing efforts. While making clear the Pride Week Planning Committee's

**Stop Them in Chicago, June 27!**

**Who Are These Nazis?  
What Do They Want to Destroy?  
Who Do They Want to Kill?**

**The Nazis Want to Destroy Us and Ours!**

**STOP THEM!**

**Nazis SAY they'll show up here—  
BE THERE!  
Sunday, 1:30  
Lincoln Park  
(South and near North Avenue)**

**June 27 Committee Against the Nazis**

For more information call (312) 627-0003 Box 5481 Main P.O. Chicago, IL 60682

**From Evanston and New Town to the South Side and Gary steel mills, posters for our anti-Nazi mobilization reached thousands.**

"decision not to facilitate a confrontation with the Nazis," *GayLife* also reported on the June 27 Committee press conference where a former leader of the Los Angeles-based Lavender and Red Union, Gene Shofner of the Spartacist League, called for a "mass mobilization of labor, blacks, minorities and gays to stop the Nazis" and explained the June 27 Committee's determination not to engage in futile (not to say suicidal) confrontations with the Chicago police. *GayLife* noted as well the formation of a separate Stonewall Committee and the split from it of a dozen members who were critical of the manipulations of the Revolutionary Socialist League.

The subsequent 2 July issue of *GayLife*, in an article headlined "No Room for Nazis!" accurately reported on the demonstration:

"The largest contingent of counterdemonstrators Sunday appeared to be members of the June 27 Committee Against the Nazis, which was initiated by the Spartacist League.... The committee received a permit June 24 to bring sound equipment to the site and set up a platform Sunday from which black and labor representatives and [Spartacist] league members spoke...."

We do not claim to understand why the *Gay Community News* has solidarized with and given currency to a dirty, factionally motivated smear job. By so doing you have misinformed and disoriented your readers. You have also destroyed your credibility

among the hundreds of Chicago gay militants who turned out against the Nazis under the banners of the June 27 Committee.

Gene Shofner  
Alison Spencer  
for the Spartacist League

New York  
July 19, 1982

Editor  
Gay Community News

Dear GCN:

I was an endorser of the June 27 Committee to Stop the Nazis, a group initiated by the Spartacist League to mobilize working people against the Nazis, who were planning a protest of the Chicago gay pride march. I believe this may have been the first time that a left-wing group has campaigned to mobilize labor and Black and other non-gay support for an action to defend homosexuals (among others!) against the Nazi scum. I am glad to have been associated, however peripherally, with this successful anti-Nazi mobilization.

But David Morris' account of the event (GCN, July 10, 1982) was clearly off the wall, based as it apparently was on the highly tendentious views of a factional opponent of the organizers. David's a nice guy, so why did he throw reporting integrity to the wind? GCN really goofed on this one. You owe an apology to the Spartacists and the June 27 Committee to Stop the Nazis.

Yours in struggle for freedom,  
David Thorstad

cc: Spartacist League

July 23, 1982

Dear Gay Community News,

As one who was actively involved in planning Chicago's anti-Nazi demonstration, I feel that I must write to you in an effort to correct your misleading coverage of the events that transpired in Chicago on Gay and Lesbian Pride Day.

While not a member of either the Spartacist League or the Revolutionary Socialist League, I found myself involved for the first time with these two leftist organizations. I was an active member of the RSL-initiated Stonewall Committee, and I also endorsed the efforts of the Spartacist League-initiated June 27 Committee Against the Nazis. (I personally did not, and still do not, see these as contradictory actions.) The Stonewall Committee's efforts were aimed mostly at mobilizing the gay and lesbian community. The June 27 Committee's efforts were more broadly based, aimed predominantly at the labor movement, including the black, Hispanic, lesbian/gay and Jewish communities. In retrospect, it was the Spartacist League's efforts which proved to be the most successful. Their rally definitely strengthened rather than "further complicat-



Dean Paul/NFI

**Nazi creeps, protected by cops, called for death to homosexuals.**

ed" the counterdemonstration, as your article states. Your source was either misinformed or extremely biased.

You also quote a member of the Stonewall Committee as saying that "The Spartacists refused to address the specific question of lesbian and gay pride." This is false. It is quite obvious in the Spartacist League's publications and in their actions on June 27 that they are supporters of gay and lesbian rights.

Although the Nazis were unable to gather a serious coalition to demand our downfall, others may be more successful. We can no longer sit back or party-hearty and pretend that our liberties are guaranteed forever. Now is the time to organize and network with others in order to protect our rights.

Yours truly,  
Jay Goldberg  
Chicago, IL

August 1, 1982

GCN "Community Voices" column

Dear GCN:

One paragraph in David Morris' round-up of lesbian/gay pride actions in the July 10 issue of GCN disturbs me. In this paragraph Richard Wilson, a supporter of the Chicago Stonewall Committee, makes several accusations against the June 27 Committee Against the Nazis. The latter committee was initiated by the Spartacist League, a Trotskyist communist organization.

Wilson charges that the SL-initiated committee "tried to steal the whole show" at the June 27 mobilization in Chicago of over 3,000 anti-Nazi protesters. (The

*continued on next page*

counterdemonstration preceded the annual Chicago Gay Pride march.)

Because GCN readers favor balanced coverage, they will be interested to learn that the Committee Against the Nazis gathered broad support for the anti-fascist rally. Endorsers ranged from the Gay Academic Union of the University of Toronto, to Robert Allen; from the Organization of Nigerian Students, to David Thorstad; from the USWA's Cliff Mezo, to the Stonewall Committee's own Jay Goldberg. Further, the Committee Against the Nazis has the red ink to prove a major building effort. More than a quarter of a million leaflets and over 5,000 posters were distributed; an expensive sound system was rented for the rally.

These efforts were not ignored by local Chicago publications such as *Gay Life*, and *Metro News* (a Black weekly). Channel 7 Eyewitness News credited the June 27 Committee Against the Nazis with being the principal organizers of the action. If Richard Wilson feels that the efforts of the Stonewall Committee have been slighted, he should not be shy in stating the facts. A disagreement over *who* should get *what* credit is easy to resolve.

Unfortunately, Wilson appears more than simply miffed that he or his group did not get enough credit. "He told GCN that in several cases Spartacists aided the police by pointing out to them persons who had thrown objects at the Nazis."

Wilson makes a very serious charge—that the SLers were consciously working hand-in-glove with the repressive apparatus of the capitalist state to victimize anti-fascist militants.

The place to air such a charge is not GCN. (What is the SL's response to the accusation? The article is *mute*.)

The proper tribunal for presenting such a serious charge is never the press, but rather an *impartial commission of inquiry*. Unless Wilson is willing to come forward with concrete facts, his charge must be dismissed as irresponsible; slander is never an acceptable method of political combat.

As an independent gay Marxist, I believe credit should always be given where credit is due. I applaud *all* concrete efforts made by Marxist groups in support of lesbians/gays. I respect the records of groups such as Workers World Party, Revolutionary Socialist League, Revolutionary Workers League—and the Spartacist League.

Richard Wilson should learn to respect these records too.

For gay liberation through socialist revolution,  
Kurt Hill  
Brooklyn, NY

August 22, 1982

Editor  
*Gay Community News*

Dear GCN:

As members of the June 27 Committee to Stop the Nazis, Red Rose Collective feels compelled to take exception with the coverage which appeared in *Gay*

*Community News'* July 10th issue. Although, in the past, we have been critical of the Spartacist League, having participated in the Spartacist League initiated coalition from the outset, we can attest to the open and democratic nature of the Committee. Yet, readers of GCN would logically conclude from your article that the June 27th Committee was little more than a cover for a sectarian power play. Nothing could be further from the truth.

For too long, the intended victims of Nazi oppression have allowed their differences to obscure the need for principled unity in the face of fascist provocation. What the Spartacist League did was to organize a broad, non-sectarian, anti-Nazi mobilization to defend Gays from the fascist vultures. Although in other areas we have disagreements with the Spartacist League, their dedicated organizing efforts in the anti-Nazi struggle—which drew not only Gays and radicals, but Blacks and workers in defense of Gay Rights—must be applauded. Thus, we request GCN reconsider its position on this issue and give credit where credit is due.

In Struggle,  
Red Rose Collective

cc: Spartacist League

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# French Trotskyists Fight for Women's Rights Against Popular Front

ROUEN, France—"Mitterrand: anti-abortion, anti-working class, anti-Soviet!" chanted the 35-strong contingent of the Ligue Trotskyiste de France (LTF, French section of the international Spartacist tendency) at the 14 October demonstration in Rouen for the right to abortion. The protest demonstration, which drew 250 people, was sparked by the Mitterrand government's announcement that, despite his campaign promise, the National Health Program would not reimburse the cost of abortions. "Solidarity Minister" Bérégovoy provocatively noted that this decision was not a question of budget restrictions, but of "ethics."

With the working class muzzled by its trade-union misleadership, whose Communist Party and social-democratic components are both totally loyal to the popular front, the deepening economic crisis is now provoking signs of growth in the far right wing. In the early fall a torchlight procession of small businessmen and shopkeepers, led by the fascist politician, Le Pen, paraded through the streets of Paris to the strains of Wagner, chanting anti-government slogans. This is the vermin to whom the popular front kow-towed in the abortion controversy. The LTF's propaganda pointed out that a real mobilization of the working class to defend women's right to abortion could have dealt a strong blow to the ominous right-wing menace. Not a mobilization at the voting booths to support the austerity and Cold War policies of Mitterrand, whose class collaboration is precisely what opens the road to reaction, but a mobilization in the streets and the factories. The LTF insisted that the issue of abortion was of concern to the entire working class; behind women and immigrants, the reactionaries have targeted the entire working-class movement!

The LTF contingent's sharp opposition to the Mitterrand popular front was too much for the fake-Trotskyists of the Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire (LCR, the central component of Ernest Mandel's "United Secretariat"), which was anxious to keep the demonstration within the bounds of loyal "pressure" on Mitterrand. Trying to imitate the traditional sectarian Stalinist goon tactic, the LCR set up a "cordon sanitaire," locking arms and walking just in front of the LTF contingent to maintain a dozen yards between it and the rest of the demonstration. But given the relative sizes of the various contingents, the LCR, who made it clear they were willing to disrupt the demonstration with violence to back up their exclusion attempt, actually only managed to highlight the spirited LTF contingent, underlining the sharp distinction between



Le Bolchévik

**LTF banner: "Free Abortion on Demand for All Women, including Minors and Immigrants! Down with the 'loi Veil'! Break with Mitterrand!"**

those who want to plead with and pressure the capitalist government and those who offer a strategy for real victory. As our contingent pressed forward, LTF comrades—many of them won over from the LCR—engaged the LCR "goon squad" in heated debate, pressing home the point that one cannot fight fully for democratic rights, like the right to abortion, while sharing, as does the LCR, Reagan/Mitterrand's Cold War program of support to all reactionary, anti-Soviet forces, from the Afghan mullahs to Polish Solidarność.

The LCR was particularly stung by our aggressive exposure of how they sold out on women's rights in preparing the demonstration. At a planning meeting, the various Mitterrand loyalists drafted a petition which they intended to deliver to the local parliamentary deputy (Bérégovoy's brother!). But a bureaucrat from the social-democratic trade-union federation, the CFTD, demanded that it be censored to eliminate the demand of the right to abortion for minors and immigrants—and the LCR *et al.* went along!

Abortions are formally legalized in France (by the so-called "loi Veil," passed in 1979 under Giscard d'Estaing; the name refers to Simone Veil, his Minister of Health). But there are so many restrictions that an estimated 100,000 women per year must seek clandestine abortion (minors must have parental approval, foreigners are excluded, and so on). This whole hypocritical system of restrictions has to be done away with! The government's last-minute concession—a "special" budget to reimburse abortions which meet rigid criteria—is guaranteed to reduce reimbursements to a strict minimum. The LTF contingent in Rouen marched behind the only program which opens the way for a real fight for the democratic rights of women: "Free Abortion on Demand for All Women, including Minors and Immigrants! Down with the 'loi Veil'! Break with Mitterrand!" ■

# Women and Permanent Revolution in China

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## PART ONE OF TWO

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“The revolt of women has shaken China to its very depths.... In the women of China, the Communists possessed, almost ready made, one of the greatest masses of disinherited human beings the world has ever seen. And because they found the keys to the heart of these women, they also found one of the keys to victory over Chiang Kai-shek.”

—Jack Belden, *China Shakes the World* (1951)

The French utopian socialist Charles Fourier maintained that the liberty of women stands as a decisive index of social progress in general. Fourier was surely right. Compare the advanced capitalist societies formed by the bourgeois-democratic revolution with the backward capitalist societies of Asia and Africa. The elementary rights Western women take for granted—to choose one's marriage partner, contraception and divorce, access to education, not to speak of political rights—do not exist for women in the tradition-bound and priest-ridden countries of the East. And efforts to achieve such rights are invariably met with murderous reaction. By all accounts the feudalist insurgency in Afghanistan (against which the Soviet army fortunately intervened) was fueled, above all, by attempts of the left-nationalist government to reduce the bride price and to teach young girls to read.

In the twentieth century the backward countries can no longer be transformed through a bourgeois-democratic revolution. Indeed, the “democratic” imperialist powers, centrally the U.S., prop up the most reactionary, obscurantist regimes in the world from Chiang Kai-shek's China to Emperor Bao Dai's Vietnam to the Saudi monarchy. Only in those countries of the East where capitalism has been overthrown, in however bureaucratically limited or deformed a manner, do women enjoy elementary democratic rights. To cross the border from old Afghanistan, for example, into Soviet Uzbekistan is to traverse centuries of the oppression of women.

That women cannot be freed in the countries of the East without overthrowing capitalism was perhaps nowhere more clearly demonstrated than in the case of China. The democratic reforms Western feminists organized and agitated around—equal access to education, suffrage, access to contraception—were

inconceivable in a country like China without a profound social revolution. Chinese women activists, including those initially influenced by Western feminism, were inexorably drawn into the broader currents of revolutionary radicalism, first that of modernizing nationalism and later that of Communism. The history of revolution in twentieth-century China is in no small measure the history of its women struggling for their liberation.

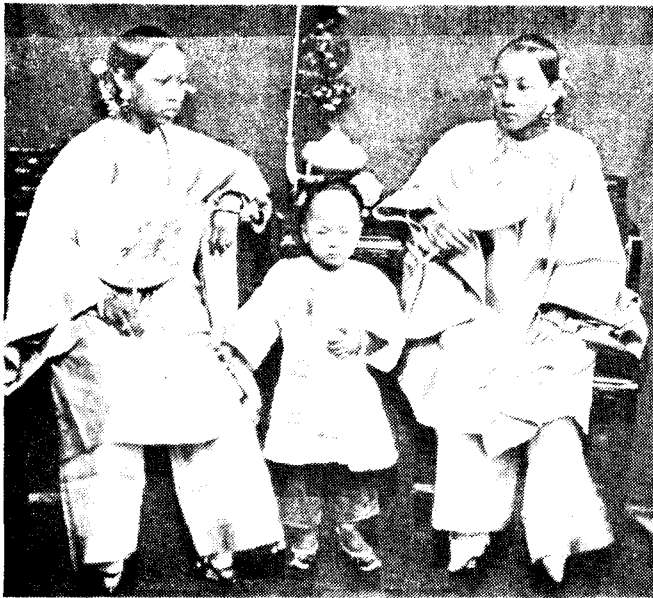
### Modernizing Nationalism and the 1911 Revolution

The complete subjugation of woman in traditional Confucian China was proverbial. The Confucian *Book of Rites* prescribed that “to be a woman means to submit.” A woman was totally subject to her father and later her (arranged) husband or, by convention, mother-in-law. Women were socialized to be not merely submissive but invisible. If someone came to her home when her husband wasn't there, a woman traditionally responded, “No one is at home.” Women had no protection against flagrant physical abuse save community disapproval of an especially cruel husband. For many a Chinese woman the only escape from an intolerable family situation was suicide.

The oppression and social segregation of Chinese women was intensified by the hideous practice of foot-binding introduced in the tenth century A.D. The purpose of this painful and crippling process was to further restrict women to bedroom and kitchen. As a folk ditty put it, “Bound feet, bound feet, past the gate can't retreat.” Contrary to a common misconception in the West, the custom was *not* limited to women of the upper classes. All Chinese women had their feet bound except those of the poorest families and of the non-Han ethnic minorities (e.g., Manchus, Hakka) among whom women generally had greater freedom.

The liberation of women from their total bondage was a fundamental aspect of the modernizing nationalist current which developed among China's intellectuals and officials at the end of the nineteenth century. A key target for these reformers and radicals was, understandably, foot-binding, which enlightened Westerners condemned (and rightly so) as barbaric. More important for nationalistic Chinese, it was commonly believed (without any genetic basis) that the male children of foot-bound women were physically weaker than Westerners. The movement against foot-binding was therefore largely motivated by the desire





Museum of American China Trade



**Imperialist China: "To be a woman means to submit." Foot-binding extended from upper-class Chinese families (above) to all but the poorest peasants, with hideously crippling results (below: bound feet at right).**

to produce a new generation of fighters against imperialist domination. In the 1890s Unbound Feet and Natural Feet Societies mushroomed throughout China. The membership of these societies, it should be pointed out, were almost entirely men. And where the reforming intelligentsia/officialdom were influential, the proportion of girl children with bound feet did diminish.

The same reformers and radicals who agitated against foot-binding also advocated education for women. Here again most were not concerned with sexual

equality *per se*, but rather with overcoming China's backwardness vis-à-vis Western imperialism. They recognized that women who could read, write and do sums were a valuable national resource, even in their traditional role as mothers of male children. As one reforming official argued, "If the mothers have not been trained from childhood where are we to find the strong men of our nation" (quoted in Elisabeth Croll, *Feminism and Socialism in China* [1978]).

Whatever their personal outlook and motivations, these Westernizing intellectuals/officials set up the first schools for girls, often their own daughters, which produced a new Chinese woman who would play an important role in the subsequent revolutionary upheavals of her country. The new girls' schools were naturally hotbeds of anti-Manchu and anti-traditionalist nationalism. In Shanghai, Peking, Canton and elsewhere disciplined contingents of schoolgirls regularly participated in the mass protests against foreign privilege. In one such school a secret girls' militia was formed under the guise of physical education classes.

The outstanding woman revolutionary of the pre-1911 period was Chiu Chin (Jiu Jin). The oldest daughter of a scholarly family, she was allowed to study the classics with her brothers (not that uncommon a practice). In addition she was proud of her ability to ride a horse, use a sword and consume large quantities of wine. Despite this liberal upbringing, Chiu, like all Chinese women, was subject to an arranged marriage, which was not a happy one.

Influenced by the Western ideas sweeping the Chinese intellectual classes, at the age of 30 Chiu left her family and in 1904 went to Japan, then the main organizing center for Chinese revolutionary nationalists. Overcoming chauvinist objections that a cultured woman should not associate with men of the common classes, she became the first woman member of Sun Yat-sen's Restoration Society, the principal anti-Manchu organization. In 1906 Chiu returned to China where she divided her energies between putting out the *Chinese Women's Journal*, manufacturing explosives and organizing secret militias. Chiu saw in the women of China—so deeply oppressed under the old order—a kind of elemental vanguard force for national regeneration. Her outlook was encapsulated in a 1907 poem, "Women's Rights":

"We want our emancipation!  
For our liberty we'll drink a cup,  
Men and women are born equal,  
Why should we let men hold sway?  
We will rise and save ourselves,  
Ridding the nation of all her shame.  
In the steps of Joan of Arc,  
With our own hands will we regain our land."

—quoted in Wei Chin-chih, "An Early Woman Revolutionary," *China Reconstructs*, June 1962

One Western student of her political activities concluded:

"When Ch'iu Chin turned to revolution she anticipated ways in which women were eventually liberated in China. She implicitly recognized that sexual equality was not likely to be achieved without some major structural

*continued on next page*

changes, and saw the liberation of women as one result of the revolution to which she chose to devote her greatest energy."

—Mary Backus Rankin, "The Emergence of Women at the End of the Ch'ing: The Case of Ch'iu Chin" in Margery Wolf and Roxane Witke, eds., *Women in Chinese Society* (1975)

In 1907 Chiu was deeply involved in an abortive anti-Manchu uprising. Though warned that she was about to be arrested, she refused to flee. She was captured, questioned under torture (but did not reveal her colleagues) and was beheaded without trial. Her execution provoked large-scale demonstrations throughout China. Popular outrage over the martyrdom of Chiu Chin helped forge the spike that was driven into the heart of the hated Manchu dynasty four years later. And Chiu would have been pleased to see women's battalions too fighting the imperial forces as they went down to defeat.

It is common for contemporary Western feminist academics to label Chinese women activists of Chiu Chin's generation as "feminists," as does, for example, Elisabeth Croll in her valuable study, *Feminism and Socialism in China*. This is a case of ideological obfuscation. While there were women's journals in the pre-1911 period, there was no women's movement separate and distinct from the broader current of modernizing nationalism. Nor was women's equality seen as separable from the overall transformation of China into a modern society. Croll herself recognizes that the women activists of this period were first and foremost radical nationalists, an ordering of ideological priorities of which she is somewhat critical:

"Rather, the early feminists, who wrote the first magazines, thought that no question was so urgent as the threatened autonomy of China and the overthrow of the Manchu dynasty and the foreign yoke of tyranny. . . . It is particularly apparent from the early women's magazines and newspapers that the women contributors felt very deeply for their country, and the issue around which women first met, demonstrated and organized was that of 'national salvation'."

With the overthrow of the Manchu dynasty in 1911, China appeared to have become a Western-type parliamentary democracy. This was, however, a soon-to-be-discarded facade behind which rival militarists sought to fill the vacuum left by the disintegration of the imperial bureaucracy. Bourgeois-democratic politicians like Sun Yat-sen became mere playthings in the hands of one or another of the warring warlord cliques.

The immediate aftermath of the revolution witnessed the emergence of a genuine feminist movement consciously modeled on the British suffragettes. When the National Assembly refused to write women's equality into the new constitution, members of Women's Suffrage Association stormed the Assembly hall, smashed windows and floored some constables. These militant Chinese feminists also aggressively displayed Western social mores, which affronted the old China perhaps even more than their demand for equality under the law. The Chinese suffragettes were soon to discover that they were *not* living in a restricted bourgeois democracy like Edwardian Britain.

The now-republican militarists, and their landlord



Chiu Chin.

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and usurer backers, were as ruthlessly committed to defending the old order, including the subjugation of women, as had been the imperial bureaucracy. In 1912 a girl about to elope with a militiaman was arrested and publicly executed as a lesson to all women that the new republic did not mean "personal freedom to do what they like." With the consolidation of Yuan Shih-kai's military dictatorship the following year, *all* suffragette organizations were banned and a number of women activists found with arms were publicly beheaded. A new movement for women's liberation had to await a new wave of revolutionary nationalism set into motion by the world war and the red dawn arising out of Bolshevik Russia.

### From the May Fourth Movement to Communism

On May 4, 1919 huge student protests erupted in Peking against Japan's 21 demands, which would have totally reduced China to a Japanese colony. The homes of pro-Japanese ministers were ransacked. The movement rapidly spread throughout the country, and a new note was sounded when factory workers struck in support of the student demands for a new government.

The May Fourth Movement went far beyond protest against the immediate Japanese threat or even the predations of the imperialist powers in general. It marked the beginning of a new wave of radical activism directed no less at the existing Chinese order than against foreign domination:

"Traditional ideas and modes of conduct were crumbling and the echo of their fall sounded from one end of the country to the other. Young men and women in towns and villages began to break with the old authority of the

family and the village elders. A fissure opened between the generations that was never again closed."

—Harold R. Isaacs, *The Tragedy of the Chinese Revolution* (1961)

High up among the traditional ideas and modes of conduct which came under attack was the subjugation of women. A manifesto issued by the most influential journal of the movement, Chen Tu-hsiu's *New Youth*, declared:

"We believe that to respect women's personality and rights is a practical need for the social progress at present, and we hope that they themselves will be completely aware of their duty to society."

—quoted in Croll, *op cit*.

And women responded to these ideas. The May Fourth ferment gave rise to the so-called "five proposals" movement: equal access to education and employment, suffrage and the right to hold office, the right of inheritance and the right to choose one's marriage partner. It should be emphasized that the struggle for the equality of women was in no sense regarded as women's work. When the Peking Alliance for Women's Rights Movement was established among university students in 1919, two-thirds of its members were men!

For China's educated youth, the May Fourth Movement was a veritable political/cultural renaissance with which all could identify from the mildest liberal reformers to the most wild-eyed anarchists. However, the naive unity among China's New Youth could not last long. And it did not. Two of the movement's leading figures, Chen Tu-hsiu and Li Ta-chao, through contact with Soviet envoys, were soon won to Marxism and set out to organize a Chinese Communist party, which was formally founded in July 1921. The issue of Communism split the loose, heterogeneous organizations which made up the May Fourth Movement into hostile camps. The left wing

became the core of the newly formed Communist Party (CCP); the right-wingers joined the bourgeois-nationalist Kuomintang or other national-liberal formations like the Chinese Youth Party. One such right-winger recalled that after a stormy argument a friend who had just become a Communist left saying half jokingly, "Well, Shun-sheng, we'll see each other again on the battlefield" (quoted in Chow Tse-tsung, *The May Fourth Movement*[1960]). These words proved to be prophetic.

The left-right polarization of the May Fourth Movement likewise extended to the women's movement. The more conservative women's groups stressed social work and legalistic reforms. Christian women activists, who had earlier vigorously opposed Confucian traditionalism, now increasingly defended the status quo against "red revolution." During the 1920s the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) became a kind of conservative, pro-imperialist antipode to the Women's Department of the Communist Party. One of the leading lights of the Chinese YWCA was a young heiress recently returned from Wellesley, Soong Mei-ling, later better known to the world as Mme. Chiang Kai-shek.

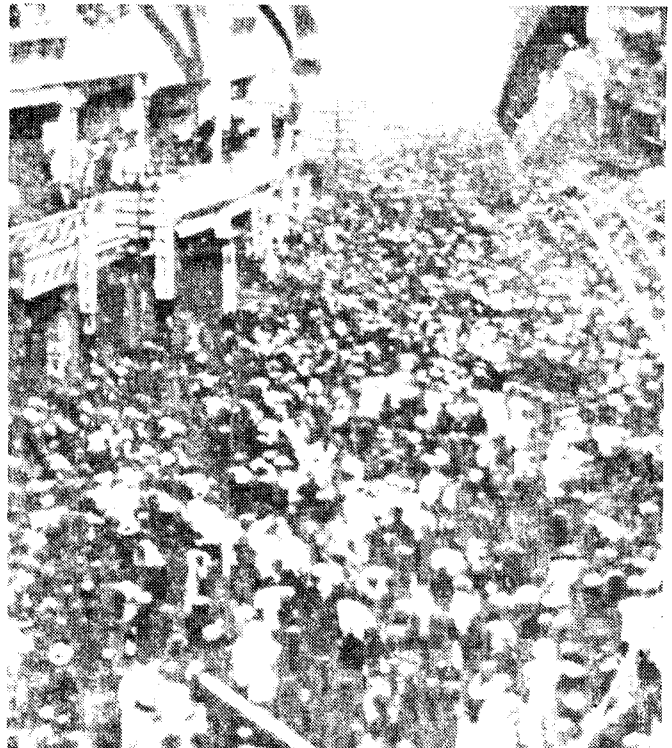
The outstanding woman revolutionary of this period—who embodied the transition of May Fourth radicalism to Communism—was Hsiang Ching-yu (Xiang Jingyu). In 1915 at the age of 20 she opened the first coeducational primary school in Changsha, capital of Hunan province, and also organized an anti-foot-binding society. She was naturally caught up in the May Fourth Movement (as was a fellow Hunanese student activist named Mao Tse-tung). In 1919 Hsiang, along with some friends, went to France to continue her studies. To pay her way she worked in a rubber plant

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**Peking, 1919 (left): May 4 student movement opened new era of revolutionary turmoil. 1922 Communist-led seamen's strike in Hong Kong (right) showed power of China's emerging proletariat.**





**Hsiang Ching-yu, first leader of the women's section of the Chinese Communist Party, played a central role in the revolutions of 1925-27.**

Jinian Xiang Jingyu Tongzhi

and then a textile mill, thus acquiring first-hand knowledge of a highly class-conscious proletariat. In France she (along with Chou En-lai) organized a Marxist study group which later developed into an organization of Chinese Communist student youth abroad.

Expelled from France for political agitation, Hsiang returned to China in early 1922 and immediately joined the Communist Party. She was elected to the party's central committee at its second congress in 1922 and a year later became the head of its newly formed Women's Department. The Communists thus became the first Chinese party to organize women as a distinct oppressed group.

Like most other newly formed Communist parties in the colonial world, the CCP's original cadre were recruited from the radical intelligentsia. To win over the best women activists, Hsiang polemicized against Western-style feminism which had gained a certain currency in Chinese intellectual circles at the time. (Margaret Sanger, for example, visited China in 1922 and lectured at Peking University.) Hsiang insisted that "the new-emerging labouring women are the strongest and most revolutionary," and she charged the feminists that they "have not the courage to take part in the real political movement—the national revolutionary movement—the prerequisite to the movement for women's rights and suffrage" (quoted in Wang Yi-chih,

"A Great Woman Revolutionary," *China Reconstructs*, March 1965).

China's newly emerging laboring women would certainly demonstrate their revolutionary force in the next few years. However, the program of a "national revolutionary movement," implying as it did collaboration with a supposedly "progressive" wing of the Chinese bourgeoisie, would lead the youthful Communist movement into an historic defeat in which Hsiang among countless others would lose their lives.

### Revolution and Counterrevolution, 1925-27

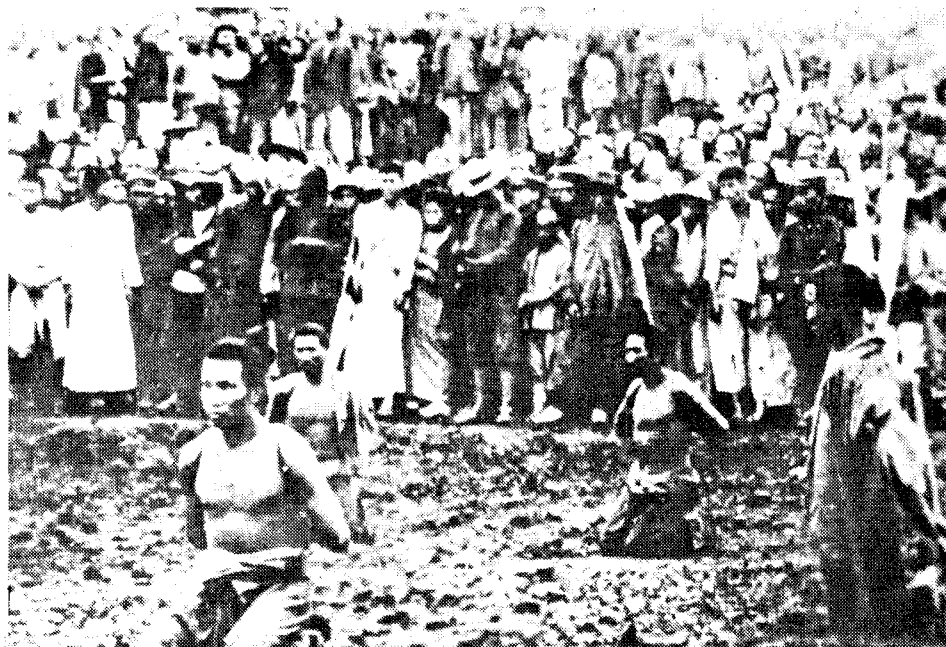
The fate of the women's movement and revolutionary mass movement in general was to a large extent determined by the bloc between the inexperienced Communist Party and the bourgeois-nationalist Kuomintang. At the prodding of the Comintern (Communist International) representative, Maring (Hendrik Sneevliet), in 1923 the Communists entered Sun Yat-sen's party as individuals, originally intending to take short-term advantage of the Kuomintang's loose structure. (Significantly, Trotsky voted against this policy in the Russian party leadership.) At first the entry tactic appeared highly successful as Communist influence grew by leaps and bounds.

The Canton general strike/boycott directed against the British in the summer of 1925 marked the beginning of the second Chinese revolution and consequently the beginning of the decisive conflict between the Kuomintang leaders and the Communists. The nationalist bourgeoisie suddenly became frightened of the powerful Communist-influenced labor movement it had helped to mobilize in extracting concessions from the imperialists. In March 1926 the commander of the Kuomintang armed forces, Chiang Kai-shek, staged a coup in Canton. Chiang's coup was a clear signal that the bourgeois nationalists were about to behead the workers movement. Despite this (and the strident warnings of the Trotskyist opposition in Russia) the Stalin/Bukharin leadership of the Comintern ordered the Chinese Communists to preserve the bloc with the "patriotic" bourgeoisie at all costs. The cost was the Chinese revolution which over the next year and a half was drowned in blood, first by Chiang and then by the "left" Kuomintang leaders.

Far more centrally than the anti-Manchu revolution of 1911, the betrayed and defeated Chinese revolution of the 1920s posed the issue of women's liberation. No area of Communist activity was more spectacularly successful than its work among women. Within two years of its founding the Women's Department of the CCP had 100,000 members; by 1927 it had 300,000 members. In 1924 International Women's Day in Canton—the Communist/nationalist stronghold—drew less than a thousand. Two years later 10,000 women marched through the city under the slogans "Down with imperialism," "Down with warlords" and "Same work, same pay." The Communist organization of women simply swamped the small bourgeois feminist groups, like the Women's Rights League, and in doing so won over their most committed activists. An



National Archives



**Chiang Kai-shek, hailed as “patriotic bourgeois” by Stalinists, crushed Chinese Revolution of 1927. Chiang weds heiress Soong Mei-ling (left) same year his Kuomintang beheads revolutionaries in Shanghai, 1927 (right).**

American feminist academic, not sympathetic to Marxism, acknowledges that by the mid-1920s, “More and more women activists were moving toward the position held by Hsiang Ching-yu in 1922: feminist rebellion was meaningless without general political revolution” (Suzette Leith, “Chinese Women in the Early Communist Movement” in Marilyn B. Young, ed., *Women in China* [1973]).

At the height of the revolutionary upsurge in 1926-27 an estimated million and a half women were members of women’s organizations generally led by Communists. These organizations were tribunes of the oppressed in the truest sense. Runaway slave girls, prostitutes wanting to leave their degrading profession, peasant women abused by their husbands, as well as women factory workers, flocked to these organizations with their grievances. For some observers, aware of the traditional total submissiveness of Chinese women, the eruption of an aggressive women’s movement was the clearest proof that age-old China was undergoing a revolution. A sympathetic Westerner wrote at the time:

“Whatever the fate in store for the Nationalist government, it may be that historians of the future will find that the greatest and most permanent achievement to its credit has been the promotion of the women’s movement.”

—H.O. Chapman, *The Chinese Revolution, 1926-27* (1928)

The demands made upon the Communist-led women’s organizations far exceeded their material capacities. Even a relatively straightforward task like finding alternative livelihood for tens of thousands of prostitutes and concubines required the economic resources of a government department. And, in fact, many Chinese women looked upon the Women’s Department of the Communist Party as if it were the women’s department of a soviet government. (In some

areas women’s groups set up their own divorce courts.) Yet the fatal policy of limiting the revolution to bourgeois-democratic tasks prevented the establishment of a Chinese soviet government. And it likewise condemned the women’s movement, despite the radicalism of its participants, to acting as a pressure group upon “anti-imperialist” militarists, landlords and factory owners whose idea of the role of women was shaped by the Confucian *Book of Rites* and the requirements of hoped-for capitalist stability.

The emergence of a militant women’s movement in a society like China was bound to produce a conservative backlash. And so it did. This was aggravated by the overzealousness of some women activists. Older, conventionally minded women had their hair bobbed or feet unbound often under considerable pressure, if not by actual force. Over and above such excesses, however, many a peasant husband deeply resented his wife taking their family problems to the local women’s group. And even some Communist fathers still insisted on arranging marriages for their daughters. These backward prejudices against women’s equality served as an important point of support for the gathering white terror. Horror stories about “the wild, wild women” (that they organized women to march naked in the streets) became a major theme—if not the major theme—of anti-red propaganda.

And when the ax fell, it fell with especial force on the women’s movement. Women’s movement activists were, if anything, treated more savagely under the Kuomintang terror than even labor organizers or agrarian agitators. China’s militarists, gentry and bourgeoisie could understand why peasants would want to stop paying rent or factory workers strike for higher pay and shorter hours. But the demand of

*continued on next page*



Women guerrillas in Kwangtung, part of Mao's Red Army.

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women for independence and equality was radically new and appeared to them as a truly sinister attack on their entire social universe. So they reacted accordingly.

For a woman to have short hair now became a crime punishable by a painful death. Women wearing men's clothing were stripped to the waist in public so that "every man in town may see she is in reality a woman" before being killed. Girl Communists in Canton were wrapped in cotton blankets soaked in gasoline and then burned alive. A particularly audacious young women's leader in a small Hunan village was hacked to death by enraged soldiery. Between 1927 and 1930 tens of thousands of Communist women were killed, among them Hsiang Ching-yu. She was arrested in the French concession of Hankow and turned over to the

Kuomintang to be executed.

Yet the spirit of rebellion of those young Chinese women who had rallied to the Communist banner was not broken. One of them wrote in a poem on the eve of her execution: "Red and White will ever be divided and we shall see who has victory, who defeat."

\* \* \* \* \*

Part Two will contrast the role of women under Kuomintang reaction and in the rural areas liberated by the Communist-led Red Army. It will recount the struggle for women's liberation as a motor force in the civil war which culminated in the victory of Mao's Red Army in 1949. And it will discuss the effect of this deformed social revolution on the traditional Chinese family and the place of women in society. ■

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## Sex, Stalinist Style: Two Years in a Labor Camp

In July of 1981, a 24-year-old Chinese artist named Li Shuang moved into a diplomatic compound with her fiancé, Emmanuel Bellefroid, who was attached to the French embassy in Peking. The two were awaiting approval of their application to marry, when on September 9 Li Shuang was surrounded by a dozen security police, forced from the compound into a truck and driven away. Two months later, Chinese authorities announced that Li Shuang had been sentenced to two years "re-education" in a labor camp for "incitement to debauchery."

The case created an outrage in France. When the sentence was announced, French foreign trade minister Michel Jobert personally appealed to Zhao Ziyang and Deng Hsiao-ping, then cancelled his trade meetings in China. Government ministers, actors, writers petitioned the Chinese embassy in Paris, while speculations of a break in Sino-French relations were rife. The Chinese retaliated by accusing Bellefroid of using diplomatic status to "aid, abet and finance" opponents of the regime. They labeled Li Shuang a criminal who had "sold her soul to a foreigner." Bellefroid apparently did collect "unofficial" publications and was friendly with a number of Chinese dissidents. Although a member of the Star group of avant-garde artists, whose defiance of Chinese Stalinist "revolutionary romantic" cultural norms led to state disapproval, Li Shuang's only "crime" was her violation of repressive Maoist sexual mores. We support Li Shuang's right to marry whom she chooses, and demand her release from prison!

However, it is more than a little chilling to hear propaganda about "the right to be in love" from the French bourgeoisie. France is a capitalist state (despite its present "socialist" coloring) whose present professed concern for "human rights" was, to put it mildly, noticeably absent during its decades of bloody colonial repression in Vietnam and Algeria. China, where capitalism was overthrown and socialized property instituted, must be defended from imperialist attack or internal counterrevolution. Despite hideous bureaucratic deformations, the social revolution of 1949 represents an enormously progressive historical development. Chinese women are no longer the degraded slaves, subject to foot-binding and arranged marriages, that they were under the rule of the warlords.

At the same time, the pervasive Stalinist police-state control over social life has dragged the liberating goals of Marxism through the mud. We oppose the repressive measures taken by the bureaucracy to defend its political rule over the working masses, and fight for political revolution by the Chinese working class to



Free  
Li Shuang!

Libération

oust the deeply conservative, xenophobic, repressive Maoist bureaucracy.

### China: Imperialism's Anti-Soviet Ally

Ever since Nixon embraced Mao in 1972, Communist China has gotten quite a good press in the U.S.—dozens of documentaries about healthy, friendly, industrious Chinese; innumerable articles on exquisite and inexpensive delights of dining out in Peking. The Western bourgeois media have been busy painting what used to be called the "Bamboo curtain" with rose-colored lacquer, while attacks on "Communist totalitarianism" are restricted to the Soviet bloc. Thus the U.S. ruling class has eagerly taken up the cause of every Soviet dissident, including arch-reactionary, anti-Semitic Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, but not a word has been printed about the plight of Li Shuang.

If anything like the Li Shuang case happened to a Russian or Polish woman, she would have become an instant *cause célèbre* for Western "human rights" hypocrisy. Every feminist journal in the U.S. and West Europe would have protested on behalf of this victim of the gulags. But in the interests of U.S. imperialism's war drive against the Soviet Union, the last four American presidents have assiduously courted China as an ally, and they have not been unrequited. The United States has been more than willing to ignore what is easily the largest "human rights" atrocity in the world—the Maoists themselves have admitted that some five percent of China's population was in labor camps: *forty million people!*

It was therefore something of a surprise to see an article, "How the Chinese Police Themselves," in the *New York Times Magazine* (18 April), by the paper's former China correspondent Fox Butterfield (although it is likely not a coincidence that this rare exposure of bureaucratic repression came at a time of Washington-Peking tension over Reagan's arms sales to Taiwan). Butterfield describes the daily domination imposed by the *danwei* (work units) or street committees to which

*continued on page 25*

# Letter

## More on Gays and the SWP

June 27, 1982

Dear Editor:

Readers of *Women and Revolution* might like to know that David Thorstad's book, *Gay Liberation and Socialism*, and *No Apologies*, the anthology which Steve Forgione—not "Scott" Forgione—and I edited can be obtained for \$9 and \$6 respectively from the Lesbian/Gay Rights Monitoring Group, 415 W. 23rd St., Box 11F, NYC 10011.

The W&R reviewer of our anthologies did a good job of outlining the history of the struggle waged by self-respecting homosexual Marxists inside the U.S. Socialist Workers Party. The reviewer's observations on "the grotesque zig-zags and utter cynicism of the reformist SWP" are true enough. Since your journal is circulated internationally, additional revolutionaries abroad, both straight and gay, may be motivated by the review to read for themselves the record of betrayal which we document.

I respect the W&R reviewer's right to disagree with the political positions formulated, or defended, by those of us who participated in the SWP debates.

Discussion and criticism are essential in revolutionary politics. Ultimately, of course, competing theories are proven or disproven by the test of concrete events.

However, in addition to rejecting our politics, the reviewer also advances the opinion that "The value of the SWP documents is not, as Thorstad maintains, that they are 'the most important such debates ever to occur inside any left wing group' or that they will prove 'essential' to resolving the question of the relationship between the fight against homosexual oppression and the fight for socialism."

The two anthologies contain the main documents of nearly a decade-long debate on homosexuality within the largest ostensible revolutionary organization in the heartland of world imperialism. Hundreds upon hundreds of pages were written on this subject covering a whole range of theoretical, scientific, and practical questions. The sheer scope and duration of the SWP debates makes our collections natural reference points for the growing number of activists, writers, and scholars who are interested in the subject of gays and the left. If the W&R reviewer knows of a more extensive debate on the Gay Question by Lenin's Bolshevik Party (or, even by Fidel's CP) I would be overjoyed to learn of it. Until then, W&R readers should consider what another American reviewer has concluded: "*Gay Liberation and Socialism* and *No Apologies* are not for the frivolous or for those who bite their nails at the redundancies of sincere Marxist rhetoric. However, the courage and the dedication of the publishers must be applauded, and these volumes will be of great interest to members and historians of the

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gay left." (*The Advocate*, 6 August 1981).

Finally, I am surprised that a supporter of the iSt—an international current known for its Buckleysque jabs at opponents—appears to lack a sense of humor. The reviewer accuses Steve F. of "littering" our book, *No Apologies*, with "cutesy-poo illustrations." Given the so-called "Trotskyist" SWP's record on lesbian/gay liberation, isn't it better to laugh than to cry?

Fraternally yours,

Kurt Hill

L/GRMG

**W&R replies:** The internal discussions in the SWP on the gay question generated more heat than light. Both sides ended up only hardened in their respective positions: for the SWP leadership, cynical manipulation and reformist gimmicks; for the gay activists, a retreat back to "only gays can liberate gays" New Leftism and rejection of proletarian socialism. Certainly a depressing and bitter experience for those who left the SWP convinced that Marxism has nothing to offer homosexuals; but as we pointed out in our review, the SWP has had nothing to do with authentic Marxism for a long time. Nor is the SWP the "largest ostensible revolutionary organization" in the U.S. The Communist Party is still far larger (and undoubtedly more stable) than the SWP of today; both are, of course, thoroughly bureaucratized, reformist organizations in fact. The reason Thorstad, Hill et al. think these documents are so "important" is because they take the SWP's claims to be "Marxist" as essentially valid, thus the SWP's sordid record can be used to bolster their own sectoralist conclusions. Jack Barnes' SWP is every day in every way becoming more bizarre, a seething mess of internal

purges and peculiar impulses; their recent formal rejection of Trotskyism (permanent revolution) is only the final, almost offhand, touch to a very long process of degeneration.

Those who want to find the relationship between fighting homosexual oppression and Marxism are going to have to confront the record of the Spartacist League, which has been proven by "the test of concrete events": our defense of rights for homosexuals even before the "gay liberation movement" appeared; our successful fusion in 1977 with the Red Flag Union of Los Angeles (which included quite lengthy discussions of not only "lifestylism" and the gay movement, but the Russian question as well); and most recently our mobilization of over 3,000 people, centrally trade unionists and blacks, to stop a fascist provocation against Gay Pride Day in Chicago.

The "gay left," like "socialist feminism," is an inherently unstable halfway house. Thus the "cutesy-poo" cartoons and slogans, like "For an understanding of Michael Mouse-Lennonism too!" and "In defense of campy socialists as well as the socialist camp!" in the Hill/Forgiore documents, aren't just light touches, but attempts to bridge, through humorous deprecation, the vast gulf separating proletarian socialism from the strategy of gay/feminist "autonomous movements." Hill's narrow focus on endlessly whacking through the increasingly murky underbrush of the SWP's internal bulletins is at bottom an evasion, too, of confronting the hard truth: Only the working class has the social power to overthrow capitalism; and only a Leninist vanguard party can successfully fight the special oppression of women, of homosexuals, through linking their struggles to those of the working class in the fight for socialist revolution. ■

## Sex, Stalinist Style...

(continued from page 23)

all Chinese must belong. A typical committee head is described as a combination of "building superintendent, police informer, social worker and union-hall hiring boss." Street committee heads have the power to barge into anyone's home day or night without knocking, must approve in advance all marriages and divorces, and can even decide which couples may and may not have babies.

Chinese are now permitted to marry foreigners, but the couples are subject to hostility and constant harassment. (Mixed marriages were tolerated following the 1949 revolution, but the Cultural Revolution engendered such intense xenophobia that there were virtually no such marriages until 1976.) Moreover, premarital sex is *illegal*, and these anti-sex laws are made to order for political victimization. Butterfield tells of a young woman deemed politically unreliable who spent one night with a soldier, the son of a general. For this she was sentenced to a year in prison for "seducing a soldier"! (This was, incidentally, no casual relationship; the man married her upon her release.) Young girls are

routinely sent to reform school for "having affairs" with boys.

China's proscriptions on sex are a product of the character of the state, one that is qualitatively similar to the Soviet Union after Stalinist degeneration. Unlike the Russian Revolution of 1917, in which a Leninist party took power at the head of the working class, the Chinese Revolution, led by a Stalinist petty-bourgeois party backed by a peasant-based army, was deformed from the outset. While the bourgeoisie was expropriated, political power resided not in the hands of the working class but in those of a bureaucratic caste. The formal equality of women was established; but as part of maintaining its undemocratic rule, the Maoist bureaucracy relied on and encouraged the nuclear family, with all its reactionary social facets, both to appease the peasantry and to reinforce respect for authority.

We call for political revolution in China, as we do in the Soviet Union and other bureaucratically deformed workers states, so that the working class can wrest control from this parasitic stratum. It is then that the chains of Maoist-Stalinist repression will be broken and the liberating goals recovered which originally inspired the Chinese communism under the influence of the Bolshevik Revolution. ■



## Angela Davis...

(continued from page 32)

overthrowing capitalist property relations. Then what is *Women, Race and Class* about? It is basically an attempt to find historical antecedents for the CP's eternal search for the "anti-monopoly coalition": an alliance of workers, women, blacks, youth, etc. with right-thinking imperialists, Democrats of good will, progressive Republicans, anti-racist bankers and so on.

In the CP's view, the only obstacle to unity is... divisiveness. Never mind the brutal, racist, imperialist system that sets black against white, employed against jobless, skilled against unskilled, everywhere you look. For Davis, all that's needed is for the various sectors to be more receptive to each other. Thus, central to the book is the appeal to middle-class feminists to be more sensitive to race and class. "Today's feminists are repeating the failures of the women's movement of a hundred years ago.... Clearly, race and class can no longer be ignored [!] if the women's movement is to be resurrected" as the book's dust-jacket puts it. The solution? In the classic words of Alva Buxenbaum, reviewing Davis' book in the CP's own *Political Affairs* (March 1982), we must develop a "deeper understanding of and commitment to alliances based on unity." As opposed to disunity, we guess. Of course this inane language serves a purpose; it's CPese for support to the Democrats.

Davis leaves out of *Women, Race and Class* all mention of international communism and the Bolshevik Revolution, which on the woman question and especially the black question in America had a decisive impact on radicals. This would certainly offend those bourgeois liberals the CP chases after today, as all wings of the bourgeoisie are united in hostility to the USSR and the gains of the October Revolution which remain despite Stalinist bureaucratic deformation. The history



Black Panther

Davis seized by FBI in 1970. "Free Angela!" was the CP's worldwide campaign to save its glamorous young philosophy professor. But her co-defendant Ruchell Magee (right) was abandoned by these cynical reformists, left to rot in prison for life.

of American Marxism, its early counterposition to late 19th century feminism, even the aggressive work of the CP itself in the late '20s and '30s in winning blacks to a proletarian perspective, is all buried—and necessarily; it would expose too starkly the total bankruptcy and betrayals of the Communist Party today.

### The Myth of the "Progressive Black Family"

So what is in the book? Davis opens with a discussion of black women under slavery. She points out that black women were full-time workers in the fields and other heavy labor, thus excluded from the 19th century ideology of "femininity" which relegated "many white women," as she puts it, to positions of useless, sentimentalized inferiority inside the home. Davis neglects to mention in this section that early Northern industrialization relied heavily on the intense exploitation of "free" female labor, especially in textiles. Moreover, the large majority of white women in pre-Civil War America were the hard-working wives and daughters of farmers.

Her main point, however, is that the bitter experience of slavery created strong black women who "passed on to their nominally free female descendents a legacy of hard work... resistance and insistence on sexual equality—in short, a legacy spelling out standards for a new womanhood." Arguing against Daniel P. Moynihan's notorious 1965 "black matriarchy" thesis that the problem with blacks is that black women are running things too much, creating a "tangle of pathology," Davis contends that slavery, rather than destroying black families, actually promoted sexual equality within black family and community life, which has come down essentially unchanged to this day: "Black people—transformed that negative equality which emanated from the equal oppression they suffered as slaves into a positive quality: the equalitarianism characterizing their social relations." This cheery Stalinist vision of some progressive black family

emerging from slavery is absolutely grotesque!

In 1975 we pointed out that Moynihan's "The Negro Family: The Case for National Action," a U.S. labor department study, sought to "shift the blame for the social problems of blacks from the capitalist system to blacks themselves, particularly black women.... The so-called 'black matriarch' is, in fact, the most oppressed of all. She is paid the least and relegated to the lowest-paying jobs with no opportunity for advancement" ("Black Women Against Triple Oppression," *W&R* No. 9, Summer 1975). Where she even has a job, that is. "Equalitarian" black families? No way. Michelle Wallace, in her overall pretty despicable trashing of the "Black Power" era, the steamy *Cosmopolitan*-style confessional *Black Macho and the Myth of the Super-Female*, at least had the guts to cast a very cold eye on such liberal mythologizing:

"I remember once I was watching a news show with a black male friend of mine who had a Ph.D. in psychology.... We were looking at some footage of a black woman who seemed barely able to speak English, though at least six generations of her family before her had certainly claimed it as their first language. She was in bed wrapped in blankets, her numerous small, poorly clothed children huddled around her. Her apartment looked rat-infested, cramped, and dirty. She had not, she said, had heat and hot water for days. My friend, a solid member of the middle class now but surely no stranger to poverty in his childhood, felt obliged to comment—in order to assuage his guilt, I can think of no other reason—"That's a *strong* sister," as he bowed his head in reverence."

You literally would not know from reading Davis' book that such a thing as the miserable, rotting big city black ghetto even exists, with its poisonous, violent currents of humiliation and despair and hatred.

### **The Ghetto and the Factory: Disintegration and Power**

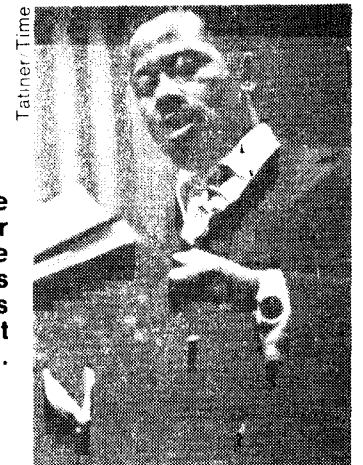
The huge migrations of blacks to industrial centers out of the rural South—peaking during World Wars I and II, periods of capitalist boom, as well as after the Second World War when mechanization of Southern agriculture forced more blacks into the cities of the North and South—resulted in the integration of blacks into the American capitalist economy, albeit at the bottom. That fact has been the key shaping factor in black experience in contemporary America—and that integration into the industrial proletariat is the key to black liberation today. At the same time, this wrenching integration into urban life took place under conditions of growing racist segregation socially. Blacks formed the central native component of that huge "surplus population" necessary to the capitalist "free labor" system. Thus the resulting crowded, desperately poor black ghettos with their inevitable "social disintegration"—a fancy phrase for broken homes, abandoned women and children, a permanent welfare population, illiteracy, crime and violence, drugs and squalor. Richard Wright's *Black Boy*, pioneering urban studies like St. Clair Drake and Horace Cayton's *Black Metropolis*, Malcolm X, James Baldwin—they spoke of this bitter reality. Today the statistics are overwhelming on the hideous condition of the black ghetto population, and especially of black women. Three-quarters of

all poor black families are headed by women alone, while 47 percent of all black families with children under 18 are headed by women, according to 1980 statistics (Department of Health and Human Services' National Center for Health Statistics). Almost 55 percent of births to black women are "illegitimate." The fashionable phrase "feminization of poverty" expresses a terrible reality.

But Davis doesn't even mention it exists, because she can't. A world so crushing is not going to be touched by electing a few more "progressive" black Democrats, the CP's line. It's going to take a massive social upheaval—revolution—to break out of the black ghettos. Davis, however, confines herself to a series of hollow, eclectic essays on various "social uplift" causes. One whole chapter on the black clubwomen's movement, for example! Does Davis really believe that the personal rivalries between Ida B. Wells and Mary Church Terrell in this cultured and ladylike milieu have anything significant to do with black or women's liberation? As for black labor, there is but one chapter: on black women's long history of work as domestic servants. It's easy for liberals to weep over this humiliating labor, but it's hardly a source of black proletarian power. Blacks integrated into the industrial working class at the point of production are the key to black leadership. And precisely because black workers may typically have a mother on welfare or a younger brother in prison, and are confronted in a thousand ways with evidence that the racist, capitalist "American dream" doesn't include blacks, they will be the most militant fighters for the entire working class, least tied to illusions that anything short of a fundamental social restructuring of this country through socialist revolution will liberate blacks.

### **Abolition and Suffrage: The Limits of Bourgeois Radical Idealism**

Almost half of *Women, Race and Class* is devoted to the relationships between the abolitionist movement of the 1830s and '40s, the fight for women's rights and the post-Civil War suffragette movement, which developed in often explicitly hostile counterposition to continued demands for black political and civil rights. These chapters are the most interesting in the book, *continued on next page*



Today Eldridge "I Love Imperialism" Cleaver (right) tours for Moonie cult; Huey Newton goes for Democrats: Davis touts CP sellout popular frontism.



F.H. Meserve Collection



Culver Pictures

**Suffragette  
Elizabeth Cady  
Stanton (above),  
Black  
abolitionist  
Frederick  
Douglass.**

although here too Davis' reformist CP ideology deforms the past.

She has a hard time explaining the early and active participation of many prominent upper- and middle-class women in the abolitionist movement. "In 1833 many of these middle-class women had probably begun to realize that something had gone terribly awry in their lives. As 'housewives' in the new era of industrial capitalism, they had lost their economic importance in the home," Davis guesses. She contends that these women's identification with the slaves was essentially the result of "unfulfilling domestic lives." This projection of a Betty Friedanesque "feminine mystique" back into history not only fails to explain the fact that far more Northern *men* (e.g., William Lloyd Garrison, founder of the fiery abolitionist journal *The Liberator*; Thaddeus Stevens, head of the radical Republicans in Congress) took up the abolitionist cause, but actually is rather insulting to such powerful orators and theoreticians as Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, utopian socialists like Frances Wright, or the transcendentalist Margaret Fuller, who went to Italy to participate in the revolutionary upsurge of 1848.

In fact, rather than the "alliance of oppressed housewives and slaves" Davis evokes, the abolitionist movement in America was ideologically influenced by

the radical petty-bourgeois currents sweeping Europe, which reached their highest expression (and defeat) in the revolutions of 1848. As Kenneth B. Stampp pointed out in *The Era of Reconstruction 1865-1877*, the abolitionists, women as well as men, represented the:

"...heirs of the Enlightenment.... As nineteenth-century liberals, they believed in the autonomous individual—his right to control his own destiny—and therefore regarded slavery as the ultimate abomination.... In fact, radical reconstruction ought to be viewed in part as the last great crusade of the nineteenth-century romantic reformers."

Both demands for the abolition of slavery and for women's rights were seen by their advocates as inseparable parts of the same progressive bourgeois struggle for "liberty, equality, fraternity." At the founding conference of the Women's Loyal League in 1861, organized by Stanton and Anthony to draw women into support for the North in the Civil War and press for the *immediate* enfranchisement of the slaves, Angela Grimke's "Address to the Soldiers of Our Second Revolution" expressed this radical spirit:

"The war is not, as the South falsely pretends, a war of races, nor of sections, nor of political parties, but a war of *Principles*, a war upon the working classes, whether white or black.... In this war, the black man was the first victim, the workingman of whatever color the next; and now *all* who contend for the rights of labor, for free speech, free schools, free suffrage, and a free government... are driven to do battle in defense of these or to fall with them.... The nation is in a death-struggle. It must become either one vast slaveocracy of petty tyrants, or wholly the land of the free."

Grimke undoubtedly represented the high point of this radical equalitarianism. Davis' ahistorical refusal to admit that this movement represented the *limits* of bourgeois radicalism is no accident. The CP today pretends that the American bourgeoisie from Reagan to Kennedy is potentially capable of fulfilling the same progressive role that the bourgeoisie of Abraham Lincoln, William Lloyd Garrison and Thaddeus Stevens played. But in pre-Civil War America, the industrial proletariat was not a class-conscious and decisive factor. Certainly the workers of the North were in no sense prepared to begin to wage a struggle for power in their own name: given this, and the fundamental block to the expansion of modern, industrial capitalism represented by the agrarian slave society of the South, it was left to the liberal Northern bourgeoisie, in alliance with the "free soil" petty-bourgeois farmers of the West, to fulfill one of the unfinished tasks of the American bourgeois revolution: the abolition of slavery.

Even so it took a bloody four-year Civil War to crush the slaveocracy, while the following attempt at "radical Reconstruction" in the South was sold out, revealing the ultimate incapacity of bourgeois radicalism to finally "liberate" any sector of the oppressed. Instead of the "land of the free," America became the land of the robber barons, unleashed capitalist expansion and exploitation, while Ku Klux Klan terror, lynchings and Jim Crow segregation became the blacks' lot in the South. By the end of the nineteenth century the U.S. emerged as a rapacious imperialist power. As happened after 1848 in Europe, following the Civil War in

America “the component elements of early nineteenth century radicalism (liberal democracy and socialism, trade unionism, women’s equality and national liberation) separated and began to compete and conflict with one another . . . it seemed that bourgeois society would continue for some time and that the interests of the oppressed, be they workers, women or nations [or the black population in the U.S.], would have to be realized within its framework. . . . It was Marx who cut the Gordian knot and provided a coherent, realistic analysis of the social basis for the socialist movement within bourgeois society” (“Feminism vs. Marxism: Origins of the Conflict,” W&R No. 5, Spring 1974).

Revolutionary Marxism insisted on the need for working-class revolution to open the way to further human progress. In America, the main historic obstacle to the creation of a revolutionary workers party has been the divided ethnic consciousness of the working class, built upon waves of immigration, with black-white polarization underlying that. The ability of the Democratic Party in the 20th century, expressed in Roosevelt’s “New Deal” coalition of labor, liberals and ethnic minorities, to successfully manipulate these divisions and absorb petty-bourgeois movements reflects the political backwardness of American labor—and the bitter fruit of decades of betrayal by so-called “socialists” like the CP and social-democrats. The New Left, too, with its sectoralist belief that every oppressed sector must “liberate itself” also accepted as unchangeable the racist, divided status quo. For the Communist Party, the Democrats are the only possible “coalition of the oppressed” within capitalist society. Thus in 1964 they greeted the election of Lyndon B. Johnson—mad bomber of Vietnam—as a “People’s Victory”!

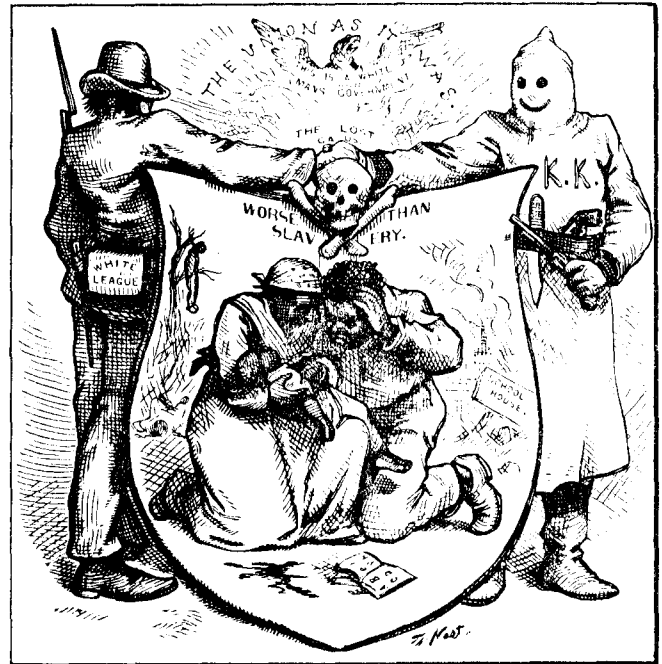
### Feminism and Racism

The remainder of Davis’ historical chapters are choppy and chock-full of “unfortunately’s”—the telltale reformist throat-clearing device employed preparatory to leaping over some gross betrayal or crushing defeat. Accepting the grim capitalist framework as immutable, Davis’ detailing of the split between the suffragettes and black civil rights fighters is full of passive hand-wringing. She quotes Stanton’s racist cry of alarm in 1865 when it appeared black men, but not women, would get the vote:

“The representative women of the nation have done their utmost for the last thirty years to secure freedom for the negro . . . but now, as the celestial gate to civil rights is slowly moving on its hinges, it becomes a serious question whether we had better stand aside and see ‘Sambo’ walk into the kingdom first. . . . Are we sure that he, once entrenched in all his inalienable rights, may not be an added power to hold us at bay? . . . In fact, it is better to be the slave of an educated white man, than of a degraded, ignorant black one.”

—New York Standard, 26 December 1865 letter.

Davis nails the women’s suffrage leaders for their racism and support to American imperialism. She quotes Susan B. Anthony’s admission, when preparing a Suffrage Association meeting in Atlanta, Georgia, that “knowing the feeling of the South with regard to Negro participation on equality with whites, I myself asked Mr. Douglass [Frederick Douglass, black abolitionist



Thomas Nast cartoon depicts blacks’ lot as capitalists sell out radical Reconstruction: KKK terror, lynchings, Jim Crow segregation.

leader and early supporter of women’s suffrage] not to come. I did not want to subject him to humiliation, and I did not want anything to get in the way of bringing the southern white women into our suffrage association.” Anthony and Stanton allied with notorious racist Southern Democrats who argued for the enfranchisement of white women on the grounds that it would maintain white supremacy in the South after blacks got the vote. Davis gives a thorough account of rising racism in the women’s suffrage movement, of the segregation of organizations and actions such as the 1913 suffrage parade, where an official attempt was made to exclude black activist Ida B. Wells from the Illinois contingent in favor of a segregated bloc. She quotes Stanton’s insistence that “the worst enemies of Woman Suffrage will ever be the laboring classes of men” and records that Anthony urged women printers to scab on male printers’ strikes.

Any serious reader must conclude that the pioneer feminist movement, preaching “unity of all women,” essentially sought to advance the interests of bourgeois and petty-bourgeois white women, as against those of blacks and the working class. The icons of today’s feminist movement are shown to be more than a little tarnished. Of course the opportunist Davis never challenges the ideology of “sisterhood,” necessarily a screen for the subordination of working-class interests to bourgeois interests. Feminism, which seeks the reactionary splitting of the working class along sex lines and the collaboration of women of all classes, is a barrier to women’s liberation, which can be won only through the revolutionary struggle of the working class—women and men, black and white—against their common exploiter, the capitalist class. The suffragettes’ “unfortunate” racism and “capitulation to

*continued on next page*



Culver Pictures



CP blocs with racism in World War II: It opposed "March on Washington" movement (above, Harlem organizing rally, 1942) against Jim Crow racism as disrupting "war effort." Below: CP's *Daily Worker* (August, 1945) hailed Truman's A-bombing of Hiroshima as part of "war against fascism."

imperialism" flowed from their conscious identification with the interests of *their* own class.

### American Communism

Davis' only chapter on the Communist Party, consisting solely of potted biographies of prominent CP women, opens with a gross omission. Davis asserts that when "Weydemeyer founded the Proletarian League in 1852, no women appear to have been associated with the group. If indeed there were any women involved, they have long since faded into historical anonymity... to all intents and purposes, they appear to have been absent from the ranks of the Marxist socialist movement." Sliding over the Workingmen's National Association and Communist Club as "utterly dominated by men," she manages neatly to avoid the major faction fight that took place in the

American section of the First International over the question of feminism. That flamboyant and notorious "free love" advocate, presidential candidate and early feminist Victoria Woodhull must be spinning in her grave. She was undoubtedly the most famous American to join the First International, organizing her own section (Section 12), which was a radical liberal faction, counterposing women's rights, "free love," and an electoralist strategy to proletarian socialism. Marx himself personally intervened to suspend Section 12, asserting the communist principle that the end to all kinds of oppression must run through the victory of the working class over capitalism.

Davis' omission of the tremendously important work of the early Communist Party among blacks is even more egregious. Her sole comment on that work as such is one bland statement, following a rather mysterious quote from William Z. Foster that the CP neglected Negro women factory workers in the 1920s, that "Over the next decade, however, Communists came to recognize the centrality of racism in U.S. society. They developed a serious theory of Black liberation and forged a consistent activist record...."

Obviously it's impossible to go into detail in a review of this scope, but a few fundamental points are vital. First, there was the decisive impact of *international* Communism. As James P. Cannon, an early CP leader and founder of American Trotskyism, put it:

"The influence of Lenin and the Russian Revolution, even debased and distorted as it later was by Stalin, and then filtered through the activities of the Communist Party in the United States, contributed *more than any other influence from any other source* to the recognition, and more or less general acceptance, of the Negro question as a *special* problem of American society—a problem which cannot be simply subsumed under the general heading of the conflict between capital and labor, as it was in the pre-communist radical movement."

—*The First Ten Years of American Communism*

The Russian Revolution also affected blacks' attitude toward the Communist Party well through the 1930s, as Drake and Cayton's *Black Metropolis* makes clear: "...widespread approval of 'the Reds' was not only associated with the fight of American Communists; it was also grounded upon admiration for the Soviet Union which, to thousands of Negroes, was the one 'white' nation that 'treated darker folks right'."

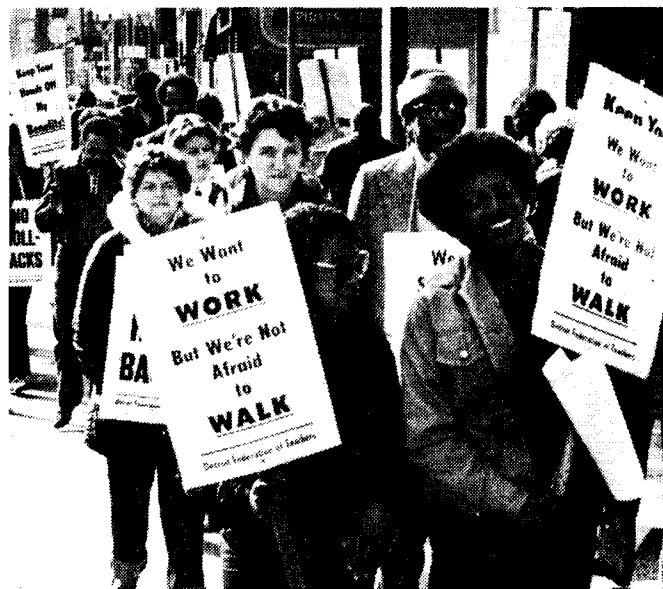
Despite the CP's sectarian "Third Period" excesses in the 1930s and its erroneous "Black Belt" theory (for Negro "self-determination" in the impoverished, segregated South, which was never actually raised agitationaly), the CP's early work among blacks combined a proletarian orientation with the recognition that it was strategically necessary to fight racial oppression throughout America, especially addressing the problems of poor and unemployed blacks.

The CP made the first serious efforts to organize black workers and to attack the American Federation of Labor's conservative Jim Crow trade unions since the days of the Wobblies (IWW). In the South, there were heroic CP attempts to organize poor black sharecroppers, including a series of hard-fought strikes for better wages. Their most famous Depression-era work was their defense of the "Scottsboro boys," nine black

youth framed up on charges of raping two white girls they were travelling with and sentenced to life imprisonment (this Davis does mention, but only in the context of appealing to the feminist "anti-rape" anti-porn movement—which she sees as essentially progressive—to avoid vigilante-type frameups of blacks). The CP won thousands of black members in this period, though few ultimately stayed.

By the mid-'30s the Communist Party had broken from the radicalism of the "Third Period" and was firmly wedded to the "Popular Front" line of open class collaboration in support of FDR. By 1941 the CP became Roosevelt's most slavish sycophant, instituting the no-strike pledge on behalf of U.S. capitalism's war to preserve and expand its empire. The CP made an open bloc with racism. When the "progressive" Earl Warren, acting on FDR's orders, interned the Japanese-Americans in concentration camps, stealing their property, the Stalinists not only refused to protest this racist atrocity, but told their own Japanese-American members to get lost. In 1945 the CP hailed the A-bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki! While the Jim Crow U.S. was fighting its "war for democracy" with a segregated army and navy, the CP opposed every struggle for black rights on the grounds that it would "disrupt the war effort."

The Trotskyists in the then-revolutionary Socialist Workers Party opposed the bosses' imperialist war, while defending the Soviet Union and fighting to continue the class struggle, including militant support to black rights. While black soldiers and sailors were segregated and assigned the most humiliating, dirty and dangerous tasks, their wives and sisters were among those who suffered at home from the pro-imperialist betrayals of the labor tops and Communist Party. Brought into heavy industry in large numbers during the war, at war's end they were unceremonious-



Workers Vanguard

**1982 Detroit teachers' strike against CP's darling, liberal Democrat Coleman Young.**

ly dumped back into low-paying service jobs or unemployment. Needless to say, the labor bureaucracy and the CP—which called for making the no-strike pledge permanent—took no effective action to save their jobs. The CP's "reward" for its class collaboration was the 1950s Cold War witchhunt, which shattered what was left of its mass influence.

**It'll Take a Socialist Revolution to Finish the Civil War**

Today the Spartacist League continues the fight for an American workers party, in opposition to those like the CP who tell workers and blacks to be passive and rely on "good" capitalist politicians. The CP cynically uses the history of the Civil War to cover its alliance with the liberal imperialist bourgeoisie today. We say it's going to take a socialist revolution to finish what the Civil War started! For the CP, women, blacks and the working class are simply three "constituencies" within capitalism, whom they tell to petition the racist, bourgeois state to ameliorate their oppressed condition. But exploitation of the working class is the motor force of capitalism. And capitalist society can never replace the family unit, the main social institution oppressing women. For blacks, the deeply embedded racism of American society, their forced segregation into miserable, rotting ghettos cannot be overcome short of ripping up this institutionalized oppression in socialist revolution. Our strategy is to build a women's section of a revolutionary vanguard party, to link the fight against the particular oppression of women to the power of the working class. A vital component of black leadership will be key to the second American revolution; we have fought since our inception for black Trotskyist cadre and leadership of an integrated mass workers party, like Lenin's Bolsheviks, that can lead all the oppressed against their common enemy, the capitalist class, in battle for the American socialist revolution. ■

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# Angela Davis Peddles Liberal Myths

## Women, Blacks and Class Struggle

The most striking thing about Angela Davis' book, *Women, Race and Class*, is what's not in it. Davis, a philosophy professor and member of the central committee of the reformist Communist Party (CP), achieved an international reputation as a black radical associated with the Black Panther Party. Framed up in 1970 as part of the massive cop/FBI vendetta against the Panthers, Davis spent over a year in prison before being acquitted. Her relationship with Panther martyr George

### A REVIEW

*Women, Race and Class*  
by Angela Y. Davis

Random House, Inc., New York 1981

Jackson was even featured in a slick Hollywood movie. To those not blinded by the celluloid, Davis remains a living symbol of the reconciliation of the militant, eclectic Panthers with the mainstream Stalinist reformism of the CP. Yet in this set of liberal-oriented essays, Davis doesn't even mention the Black Panther Party. The explosive '60s of militant black nationalism, the New Left women's movement, etc. is sunk without a trace.

Of course the Communist Party, then, was generally written off by the New Left and the best of the black radicals as rotten old reformist hacks irrelevant to the struggle. But the New Left's rejection of CP-style "coalitionism" with the Democrats was falsely equated with a rejection of working-class politics in general. The New Left's "answer" to CP sellouts was not revolutionary Marxist program, but eclectic Maoist/Third Worldist ideology and mindless militancy: "direct action," often physical confrontation with the state, passive enthusing over ghetto outbursts, "Off the Pig" rhetoric. When the inevitable capitalist reaction hit, the New Left either splintered or made its peace with the reformist status quo—and there was the CP, waiting with awful inertia to sell young militants its shopworn "strategy" of maneuvering within the capitalist system.



Workers Vanguard

**Angela Davis, hack for reformist Communist Party.**



CIO

**Women factory workers in World War II. Integrated proletarian struggle is key to black liberation.**

A watershed in the degeneration of the Panthers' militant impulse was the 1969 "United Front Against Fascism" conference in Oakland. Explicitly embracing the class-collaborationist formula of popular-front "theoretician" Dimitrov, the Panthers made a sharp right turn towards alliance with the liberal bourgeoisie, brokered by the CP. The CP had money and lawyers, which the Panthers, facing massive repression, desperately needed. The price was returning to the fold of Democratic Party "reform" politics (indeed Huey Newton became a Democratic politician a few years later). Groups to the left of the CP were kicked out of the conference, particularly Progressive Labor and the Spartacist League. The SL argued that the road to black liberation must lie through revolutionary alliance with the working class, through building an integrated vanguard party with black leadership to fight for socialist revolution. Women at the conference who objected to the Panthers' gross male chauvinism were also harassed.

Angela Davis, in the CP's orbit at least since her high school days, should have been delighted with the "rectification" of Panther politics in the direction of mainstream Stalinist reformism. But *Women, Race and Class* does not deal at all with the Panthers. In fact it makes no real attempt to come to grips with the searing reality of black America today—the explosive contradiction of ghetto misery and potential proletarian power. Nor can Davis suggest a solution to women's oppression, which is rooted in the institution of the monogamous family, linked inextricably to private property and thus insoluble without a revolution

*continued on page 26*