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DRAFT THESES:

THE WOMAN QUESTION

"The emancipation of women is a question of great importance. Women make up half of the world population and no great social change can be completed without their participation. To win emancipation, the oppressed women of the world, together with the rest of the oppressed people, have fought long and heroically, advancing wave upon wave in countless moving deeds that propelled the continued advance of society. Today the struggle against imperialism, colonialism and hegemonism, waged by the people of the world, particularly those of the third world countries, is developing vigorously. Countries want independence, nations want liberation and the people want revolution - this has become an irresistible historical trend. In this great struggle, the broad masses of women are becoming increasingly awakened, the women's movement is developing in depth and women have become a great dynamic revolutionary force... In every country women form a part of the whole nation and people. Their fate is invariably linked with that of the whole nation and people. Their emancipation, therefore, is an inseparable part of the struggle of the whole nation and people. Right now imperialism, colonialism and neo-colonialism are still carrying out aggression and plunder; particularly the two superpowers are practising hegemonism and power politics everywhere, and are contending for spheres of influence, seriously encroaching upon and menacing the sovereignty, independence and basic rights of the people of many countries. All this also endangers the existence and security of the broad masses of women

CONTENTS

I. INITIAL PRINCIPLES	PAGE 1
IA. Party Building and the Woman Question	
IB. Features of the Woman Question	
IC. The Presentation of the Question	
II. BASIC THEORETICAL AND HISTORICAL POINTS	PAGE 2
IIA1. Two Forms of Social Production	
IIA2. The Family and Capitalist Production	
IIA3. Women, Capitalist Production and Domestic Slavery	
IIB. Women of Oppressed Nations and National Minorities	
IIC. Male Supremacy: Its Origins and Economic Basis	
IID. Fascism and the Woman Question	
III. WOMEN AND THE REVOLUTION	PAGE 3
IIIA. The Women's Movement	
1. Women and Proletarian Revolution	
2. Brief History of International Women's Organizations	
3. Opportunism and the Woman Question	
IIIB. The Woman Question in Practice	
IIIC. Democratic Rights	
IIID. Political Education, the Party, and Women's Organizations	
1. Political Education and Women in the Party	
2. Women's Organizations	
SEXUAL OPPRESSION OF WOMEN	PAGE 7
SLOGANS AND DEMANDS	PAGE 8

and children in these countries. Under these circumstances, women cannot win emancipation without taking part in the main struggle against imperialism, colonialism and neo-colonialism, particularly against hegemonism of the two superpowers... Clearly, the primary task at present in the struggle for women's emancipation is to fight imperialism, colonialism and particularly hegemonism of the two superpowers. Only when this struggle is carried out successfully, while giving due attention to and solving the special demands and problems of women, can the cause for women's emancipation be pushed ahead steadily." (from Speech by Head of Chinese Delegation Li Su-wen at International Women's Year World Conference in Peking Review, July 4, 1975).

As Li Su-wen pointed out at the International Women's Year World Conference of the United Nations, the struggle of the world's women against their oppression, imperialism, colonialism and neo-colonialism and especially against superpower hegemonism has become a dynamic revolutionary force. In the Third World, women are playing heroic roles in the revolutionary struggle. Women of socialist countries have taken giant strides toward transforming the centuries of oppression and exploitation.

The rise of the women's movement is part of the overall spontaneous struggle against monopoly capital. In the U.S. the limitations of the women's movement are those of the spontaneous movement in general. What is needed is to transform the spontaneous resistance to imperialism into a class conscious movement with a Marxist-Leninist party at its head.

I. INITIAL PRINCIPLES

IA. PARTY BUILDING AND THE WOMAN QUESTION

Forging the vanguard communist party is the central task - the key link in the revolution in the U.S. at this time. In the present period, political line is key and theory is decisive for moving this task forward. The reconstitution of a genuine Marxist-Leninist party to guide the masses in proletarian revolution demands the mobilization of women in practice, through the development of a correct political line on the Woman Question.

In opposition to Marxism-Leninism, the revisionist leadership of the CPUSA, in the 1940s, advanced the line that women had been integrated into industrial life and the general working class movement; that there was no need for separate women's organizations since the economic basis for this had been eliminated; and that there were no problems of women that weren't those of the proletariat in general. In short, they liquidated the Woman Question.

While in the past few years there has been a revival in the United States of the celebration of International

Women's Day, opportunism has remained the commanding factor on this question. Unfortunately, International Women's Day has been left as a day to merely "celebrate women's role in the struggle" or "to bring women into the system" or to express the "right to freely define family and community as we choose."

International Women's Day should be an occasion to advance a Marxist-Leninist position on the Woman Question and to develop a powerful women's movement, based on a clear and precise theoretical basis, to attract the

masses of women to fight against imperialism, for peace and socialism.

The women's movement in the U.S. has developed spontaneously without conscious communist leadership. For this reason, it remains dominated by bourgeois ideology. The main responsibility for the present bourgeois character of the women's movement lies not with its spontaneous development, but with the lack of initiative by communists to advance clear proletarian leadership. Marxist-Leninists have failed to crush bourgeois ideology in the women's movement for two main reasons:

- 1) many communist groups are, themselves, permeated with bourgeois ideology on the Woman Question; and
- 2) as a result, these same groups have failed to apply Marxism-Leninism to the concrete conditions of the masses of women.

The present vacillation on the Woman Question, of failing to take up this struggle, develop theoretical clarity and political line adequate to the needs of the revolution, amounts to an opportunist stand.

It is impossible to crush all forms of opportunism on the Woman Question without putting forward a proletarian line. The main responsibility for this lies with the most advanced elements of the revolution - the existing communist organizations. It will not arise spontaneously from the women's movement itself. There must be a scientific analysis of women under imperialism based on the objective conditions of women's position in society, the experience of the international women's movement and the international experience of the proletariat.

The basis of women's oppression in class society gives the women's movement an inherently revolutionary character.

These DRAFT THESES ON THE WOMAN QUESTION are offered as an initial step forward by the MLOC in helping to develop ideological, political and organizational clarity on the Woman Question. It is the objective of the MLOC to promote discussion and struggle toward clarity on the Woman Question through the publication of these DRAFT THESES. Through such discussion and struggle a granite theoretical foundation for a correct political line on the Woman Question will be laid, and a step taken toward the development of a party program. As the

MLOC struggles to develop a correct ideological, political and organizational line on the Woman Question, we welcome all comments, additions and criticism to these DRAFT THESES.

The mobilization of the masses of women is of decisive necessity in moving forward the revolution.

IB. FEATURES OF THE WOMAN QUESTION

1) The complete emancipation of women is an integral part of the struggle of the working class, and is part of the immediate and long term tasks of the proletariat. The great struggle for the emancipation of women is an integral part of the revolution and of the building of socialism.

2) The emancipation of women is a condition without which there will be no thorough development and advancement toward real freedom and democracy. The socialist revolution creates the economic, political and social basis for the liberation of women which will require the continuation of the ideological campaign against erroneous ideas inherited from the past. A deepening of the ideological revolution, the struggle to uproot any kind of remnants, any customs and practices which violate the rights and position of all working women will be carried out in order to ensure the development of socialism.

New socialist relations will bring about great transformations in society as a whole and in the inner feelings and ideas of all people. The process of changing social relations and ideas to fully conform to the new socialist material base will be a deep going and bitter battle against the vestiges of bourgeois ideology. The struggle for women's complete emancipation has its particular aspects which are an integral part of this struggle against bourgeois interest. *As half of the population, the specific content of women's emancipation cannot be separated from the general tasks of socialist transformation.*

3) The emancipation of women contributes to the solution of the particular economic, political and social problems of socialist revolution. *The complete emancipation of women, as an important problem of the party and of the masses, is a necessity for socialism and communism.*

IC. THE PRESENTATION OF THE QUESTION

1) The correct Marxist-Leninist analysis of the Woman Question must begin with a revolutionary class stand, the stand of the working class, and must follow the line of the masses, the proletarian revolution, and the interests of working women.

2) The viewpoint of a Marxist-Leninist analysis of the Woman Question is materialist. We must begin with a profound, all-round analysis of the situation on the basis of the lessons of Marxism-Leninism. This analysis must take in the concrete economic, political and social conditions of women in the U.S. *As proletarians, women are exploited and oppressed by the capitalist mode of production. In addition, most women are exploited and oppressed as domestic slaves. Women of oppressed nations and national minorities are subject to a third exploitation and oppression, due to the vicious laws of imperialism.*

3) Our method of investigation is dialectical and historical materialism, requiring that all things be considered in their rise, growth and development. This means studying a question historically, in its connection with other questions, and with concrete historical experience which will present the question as a whole. Dialectics, in essence, is the unity of opposites in their interconnection and their existence as a whole. The contradictions of any unity of opposites are only resolved through struggle. As a deep-going social problem, the contradictions of women's oppression will only be resolved through class struggle.

Communist leadership unites the class struggle on all fronts, theoretical, political and economic, to transform questions of reform into questions of revolution by linking them with the ultimate goal of socialist revolution.

Throughout this historical process, the struggle for the emancipation of women will play a decisive role. On all fronts, theoretical, political and economic, this struggle must be carried out in a total way, eliminating the remnants of slave, feudal and capitalist ideology and practice. Anything short of this will allow for the continued existence of bourgeois interest and would mean a setback for the revolution.

II. BASIC THEORETICAL & HISTORICAL POINTS

IIA. TWO FORMS OF SOCIAL PRODUCTION

We start with the Marxist theory that there are two forms of social production basic to life: The production of life and the production of life's material requirements. (Engels, ORIGIN OF THE FAMILY, PRIVATE PROPERTY AND THE STATE, Preface, p. 6). The importance of this in taking up the Woman Question is with regard to women's specific role. In addition to commodity production outside the home for the capitalist, there is the production of the commodity labor-power, inside the home, also for the capitalist. This responsibility falls solely on the woman in the bearing of children, and usually on the woman in the maintenance of the laborer and laborers to be. It is socially necessary production in the sense that every working class child born and raised, every meal bought and prepared, every article of clothing washed and mended, is only possible by the effort of the working class in total, even while these particular acts take place within an individual family unit. No human

being is a self-made, self-maintaining individual; each one's existence is dependent on the products of the labor of others. "The price of labor-power will be determined by the cost of production, by the labor-time necessary for production of this commodity, labor-power." (Engels, INTRODUCTION TO WAGE-LABOR AND-CAPITAL, p. 6) *The labor of the woman in the home to maintain and reproduce the laborer and future laborers is a service to the capitalist, unless we say that this particular form of labor is exempt from the laws of Marxist political economy. It is only by revising Marxism-Leninism that it is possible to say that women's labor in the home is unpaid. The fact is that the wages of the laborer include the cost of his maintenance and reproduction which necessarily includes that person who maintains and reproduces the commodity labor-power itself.*

Marx equates pay with subsistence, demonstrating how both the wage form under capitalism and the doling out of subsistence under the various forms of slavery, directly conceals important aspects of the worker's exploitation. With the rise of capitalism, the supremacy of the male based on private property was transformed to meet the needs of bour-

geois society. The woman's subsistence, for her domestic slavery in the home, is included in the wages of the man under capitalism, and is doled out to meet the needs of the production and maintenance of labor-power.

This holds true *only* for women of the proletariat, as proletarians are the only class which exists primarily for the production of the commodity labor-power, which is consumed in the capitalist production of other commodities. Bourgeois families do not produce children destined to work as proletarians, and the petty-bourgeoisie only exists in this way in so far as they are pushed into the working class.

We must reject the backward and petty-bourgeois notion that women's work in the home is *unpaid* labor. This is to say that this work is divorced from production and that women are therefore, not exploited by capitalism. The extension of this is the demand for individual wages for women working in the home. This is not only impossible under capitalism, but undesirable under socialism. Our emphasis must be on drawing out as revolutionary demands the creation of public child-care, laundries, dining facilities, the socialization of household labor, all of which must be tied to

the question of state power. As Lenin pointed out, "These means are not new, they (like all the material prerequisites for socialism) were created by large-scale capitalism; but under capitalism they remained, first, a rarity, and second, and which is particularly important, either *profit-making* enterprises, with all the worst features of speculation, profiteering, cheating, and fraud..." Lenin, "A Great Beginning", CW, Vol. 29, p. 429. We must expose demands that objectively perpetuate the enslavement of women and prevent them from entering socialized production, recognizing that this will only be fully possible under socialism.

IIA2 THE FAMILY AND CAPITALIST PRODUCTION

"According to the materialistic conception, the determining factor in history is, in the last resort, the production and reproduction of immediate life. But this itself is of a twofold character. On the one hand, the production of the means of subsistence, of food, clothing, and shelter and the tools requisite therefore; on the other, the production of human beings themselves, the propagation of the species. The social institutions under which men of a definite historical epoch and of a definite country live are conditioned by both kinds of production: By the stage of development of labour, on the one hand, and of the family, on the other." Engels, ORIGIN OF THE FAMILY, PRIVATE PROPERTY, AND THE STATE, pp. 5-6, (Moscow, 1972).

With the rise of class society the family became greatly changed. Engels sums up the growth of the contradictions in the family up to and including the capitalist mode of production.

"The administration of the household lost its public character. It was no longer the concern of society. It became a private service. The wife became the first domestic servant, pushed out of participation in social production. Only modern large-scale industry again threw open to her - and only to the proletarian woman at that - the avenue to social production; but in such a way that, when she fulfils her duties in the private service of her family, she remains excluded from public production and cannot earn anything; and when she wishes to take part in public industry and earn her living independently, she is not in a position to fulfil her family duties. What applies to the woman in the factory applies to her in all the professions, right up to medicine and law. The modern individual family is based on the open or disguised domestic enslavement of the woman; and modern society is a mass composed solely of individual families as its molecules. ...In the industrial world, however, the specific character of the economic oppression that weighs down the proletariat stands out in all its sharpness only after all the special legal privileges of the capitalist class have been set aside and the complete juridical equality of both classes is established. The democratic republic does not abolish the antagonism between the two classes; on the contrary, it provides the field on which it is fought out. And, similarly, the peculiar character of man's domination over woman in the modern family, and the necessity, as well as the manner, of establishing real social equality between the two, will be brought out into full relief only when both are completely equal before the law. It will then become evident that the first premise for the emancipation of women is the re-introduction of the entire female sex into public industry; and that this again demands that the quality possessed by the individual family of being the economic unit of society be abolished." (Engels, op. cit., pp. 73-74).

The emancipation of women requires the abolition of the family as an economic unit. Equality for women remains an impossibility as long as they

are restricted to private, domestic labor. But their full participation in social production is, in turn, dependent upon the abolition of private property, the basis for the individual family. This is because the individual family unit, under class society, is responsible for the reproduction and maintenance of its members, rather than this being the genuine responsibility of society as a whole.

The importance of the family, throughout the rise of modern society, and the fundamental role it plays in social production as a whole is generally not understood from a Marxist position, and even less appreciated in terms of an analysis of the goals of socialist revolution based on a concrete study of the current conditions.

In the earlier stages of capitalism, it would not be unusual for all family members to work for the same capitalist, in the same factory. This represented an increased exploitation of the working class as a whole, if compared with earlier stages. For although the capitalist paid more wages to a family in absolute terms, his profit had increased several-fold by the decrease in wage per worker. From this, not only is the husband's wage reduced, but with the introduction of machinery it is possible for women and children to perform the same amount of labor as previously performed by men at higher wages. This is another blatant example of how the introduction of machinery serves not to lighten the burden of the working class but is a tremendous lever for its further exploitation under capitalism.

The capitalist depressed the wages of the entire working class by the introduction of women and children into the labor force paying wages that were a fraction of those paid to men workers.

Today it would be uncommon to find husband and wife working in the same work-place, but the same rule applies in the total picture of capitalist exploitation of the working class. It is an expression of the increasing impoverishment of the working class that both the husband and wife must work to obtain the means of subsistence of their family.

However, work outside the home does not exempt the woman from her responsibilities inside the home where, most typically, she must continue to care for the children, prepare meals, and maintain the house. These conditions make it impossible for the woman to produce many of the necessities such as clothing and more extensive food preparations in the home, and forces the family to consume more and more manufactured products. In this way, the increased income of the family is already back in the pocket of the capitalist.

IIA3. WOMEN, CAPITALIST PRODUCTION AND DOMESTIC SLAVERY

Women have been oppressed for as long as there has been class society, but the general, social problem of women has only been raised under capitalism. Capitalism, for the first time, forced women to leave the home on a large scale, and enter into production. Women became wage slaves in addition to being domestic slaves, or, women, being twice exploited, became doubly oppressed under capitalism. Women today are not only the slaves of the bourgeoisie as part of the labor force, but also in their specific role in the family.

There is a real material difference in the exploitation and oppression of women and the proletariat as a whole. For, in addition to their status as proletarians, working women are also enslaved to household functions. The result of this is that women are held back in their cultural, political and economic development not by the force of bourgeois ideology alone. There are also the material bonds of household and child-care responsibilities

preventing women from participating in these areas, regardless of their subjective wishes.

"...the emancipation of women and their equality with men are impossible and must remain so as long as women are excluded from socially productive work and restricted to housework, which is private. The emancipation of women becomes possible only when women are enabled to take part in production on a large, social scale, and when domestic duties require their attention only to a minor degree. And this has become possible only as a result of modern large-scale industry, which not only permits of the participation of women in production in large numbers, but actually calls for it and, moreover, strives to convert private domestic work also into a public industry." (Engels, op. cit., p. 158).

Women suffer special exploitation and oppression in addition to the general exploitation of all workers under capitalism. Women, historically, have had an inconsistent relationship to the means of production, determined by their restriction to private, domestic labor which makes them a component part of the reserve army of labor. The reserve army of labor serves to depress the overall living standard of the proletariat by pitting worker against worker in the struggle for jobs. Along with this, the mass of unemployed workers are also available to step into expanding areas of capitalist production without taking workers away from existing sectors of industry. Jobs have only been opened up to women when it served the needs of the capitalist class. For example, many women were able to work, and in many branches of industry, during the Civil and World Wars. During these times, the employment of women was important enough to capitalism, that fully equipped child-care centers were set up across the country to serve working women. Even then, the number of child-care centers fell short of the actual needs. Immediately following war, however, the centers shrunk in numbers, became less and less funded by the state, and existed to serve bourgeois and petty bourgeois women primarily. *Capitalism has used the reserve army of labor, the employment of women, national minorities, and at times, even children, to depress the wages and conditions of the working class overall.*

Women today suffer job discrimination in many forms: 1. Inadequate numbers of child-care facilities at costs working mothers can afford, which also prevents women from initially seeking work away from the home; 2. Inadequate training, or training determined on the basis of sex role classifications, which channels women into low-



paying, unskilled positions, of little responsibility and with little opportunity of advancement; 3. A wage differential between women and men workers performing the same or comparable work, etc. Intensifying all of these is the ideology of male supremacy, expressing the dominance of men over women throughout class society and compounded under capitalism. Herein is the double oppression of women.

IIB. WOMEN OF OPPRESSED NATIONS AND NATIONAL MINORITIES

In addition to the special exploitation and oppression of women, there are the particular forms for women of oppressed nations and national minorities. The oppression of nations under imperialism, and the inability of those nations to develop normally, gives rise to qualitatively different conditions for the people of those nations. Black women of the oppressed Black Nation in the Black Belt South, and women of national minorities suffer the grossest degradation of all.

In this context, *the demands of bourgeois feminists come into the most acute contradiction with the actual needs of the masses of women. The needs of women of oppressed nations and national minorities are starkly different from those put forward by petty-bourgeois women of the oppressor nation.* As one welfare mother puts it,

"You murder me, women's liberationist, every demand you make; not because what you ask for is wrong, but because of what you leave out. Where is free child-birth in your platform, where is decent pre-natal care? Where is nourishing food for me, so my child isn't born premature and retarded? So he doesn't die in infancy? Where is a decent place to live, enough clothes, freedom from disease and filth?..."

How dare you mention freedom and talk about 24-hour child-care centers and free abortion on demand when we're worrying whether our children will live? Talking about control over our own bodies when we don't have the right to even keep our bodies from being hungry. I want my children to be free to live. I don't want to turn them over to the Man's schools so they can be brainwashed, shamed, filled with self-hatred and disgust... You debate the meaning of sexuality and the merits of choosing celibacy. I'm supposed to live in forced celibacy. Catch a man staying in my house and the kids get less money to eat on. Catch me at home with a man, a series of men, several men, and they'll take the kids from me. (I don't have to be doing anything--they assume I'm immoral, I have to be checked on and watched...)

Why do you ignore us? Where are our needs in your demands? Your movement is a farce and a travesty to us, because you uphold the forces that make us beg for our existence...". From, "A Letter From a Welfare Mother", *WOMEN*, Vol. 2, #3, pp. 50-51.

The differential in wages, job opportunities, hiring practices, training programs, etc. are again compounded for women of oppressed nations and national minorities.

Non-white women workers are concentrated in certain major occupation groups. In 1973, 12.9% of non-white women were employed as domestic workers in private households, as compared with 2.9% of white women. 24.4% of non-white women were employed as clerical workers and 25.2% as service workers, exclusive of work in private households.

One aspect of the extent of the exploitation of Black women can be seen by looking at wages. Statistics from 1972 show that the annual median wage or salary income for non-white women was \$5,320.00, compared with \$6,131.00 for white women, \$7,548.00 for non-white men, and \$10,786.00 for white men. In 1973, all women earned 57% of what all men earned. *The oppression of the Black Nation in the Black Belt South and the resulting denial of democratic rights throughout the U.S. is reflected in every aspect of life.*

Imperialism's brutal suppression of the development of productive forces is most glaringly shown in the forced ster-

ilizations of working women, particularly of oppressed nations and national minorities. It is estimated that as high as one-third of all women in Puerto Rico have been forcibly sterilized as part of the bourgeoisie's genocidal attack on this colony. The way in which women's capacity for reproduction is controlled and used against them under capitalism is a product of the exploitation of the working class as a whole. The role of working class women is to supply the commodity labor-power to capitalist production.

Every reform relating to women's right to control of reproduction has a limited and insecure existence under capitalism. The move to make abortion illegal again in many states, after having only been recently won, is an example. The fact that abortion is not free means that it remains a partial reform, in that access to this "legal right" is denied to those who cannot afford to exercise it. At the same time, birth control devices are a tremendous source of profits, yet scant research has been done concerning their safety and long-term effects. Even if these items were "free" and safe, they would still remain partial democratic rights, as their distribution would continue to be unequal due to other forms of imperialist oppression and because genuine democracy can only come about under the dictatorship of the proletariat, when the majority of society controls state power.

Under socialism, all of these can be turned into their opposite. Birth control, for example, could be very effective in allowing women to determine whether and when to have children, thereby allowing them to make other conscious decisions about their family, education, and work. But women do not have the ability to implement these techniques to their advantage under capitalism.

The triple exploitation and oppression, class, national, and sexual, is perpetuated by the bourgeois state and in the denial of democratic rights, ranging from the denial of decent pre-natal care to the right of self-determination for oppressed nations. Communists recognize the material differences among proletarian women of oppressor and oppressed nations, and that Marxism-Leninism is the guide to writing them in struggle for the dictatorship of the proletariat. There is no room for petty-bourgeois feminism in the struggle for complete emancipation.

IIC. MALE SUPREMACY

In order to understand male supremacy there must be a brief history of its historical origins. At first the

"Division of labor was a pure and simple outgrowth of nature; it existed only between the two sexes. The men went to war, hunted, fished, provided the raw material for food and the tools necessary for these pursuits. The women cared for the house, and prepared food and clothing; they cooked, weaved, and sewed. Each was master in his or her own field of activity; the men in the forest, the women in the house. Each owned the tools he or she made and used: The men, the weapons and the hunting and fishing tackle, the women, the household goods and utensils. The household was communistic, comprising several, and often many, families. Whatever was produced and used in common was common property: The house, the garden, the long boat..." (p. 155). "But man did not everywhere remain in this stage". With the domestication of animals "pastoral tribes separated themselves from the general mass of the barbarians: The first great social division of labor...When...herds began to... be converted into separate property, exchange between individuals predom-

inated more and more, until eventually it became the sole form. The principal article which the pastoral tribes offered their neighbors for exchange was cattle; cattle became the commodity by which all other commodities were appraised...in short, cattle assumed the function of money...The increase of production in all branches- cattle breeding, agriculture, domestic handicrafts- enabled human labour-power to produce more than was necessary for its maintenance. At the same time, it increased the amount of work that daily fell to the lot of every member of the...household community or single family. The addition of more labour-power became desirable. This was furnished by war; captives were made slaves. Under the given general historical conditions, the first great social division of labour, by increasing the productivity of labour, that is, wealth, and enlarging the field of production, necessarily carried slavery in its wake. Out of the first great social division of labour arose the first great division of society into two classes: Masters and slaves, exploiters and exploited..." (pp. 156-157)"...the herds and the other new objects of wealth brought about a revolution in the family...The herds were the new means of gaining a livelihood and their original domestication and subsequent tending was (the man's) work. Hence, he owned the cattle, and the commodities and slaves obtained in exchange for them. All the surplus now resulting from production fell to the man; the woman shared in consuming it, but she had no share in owning it...Presuming upon his wealth (the man) pushed forward to first place and forced the woman into second place...Division of labour in the family had regulated the distribution of property between man and wife. This division of labour remained unchanged, and yet it now put the former domestic relationship topsy-turvy simply because the division of labour outside the family had changed. The very cause that had formerly made the woman supreme in the house, now assured supremacy in the house for the man; the woman's housework lost its significance compared with the man's work in obtaining a livelihood; the latter was everything, the former, an insignificant contribution..." (p. 158)." His achievement of actual supremacy in the house threw down the last barrier to man's autocracy. This autocracy was confirmed and perpetuated by the overthrow of mother-right (tracing lineage of children through the mother-ed.), and the introduction of father-right (tracing inheritance through the father-ed.) and the gradual transition...to monogamy...the monogamous family became a power in society..." (p. 159). "The continued increase in production and with it the increased productivity of labour enhanced the value of human labour-power. Slavery, which had been a nascent and sporadic factor in the preceding stage, now became an essential part of the social system. The slaves ceased to be simply assistants, but they were driven in scores to work in the fields and workshops. The division of production into two great branches, agriculture and handicrafts, gave rise to production for exchange, the production of commodities; and with it came trade, not only in the interior and on the tribal boundaries but also overseas." (pp. 159-160) "This brings us to the threshold of civilization. This stage is inaugurated by further progress in division of labour..." (p. 161). "Besides wealth in commodities and slaves, besides money wealth, wealth in the form of land came into being" (163)... Now a society had come into being that by the force of all its economic conditions of existence had to split up into free-man and slaves, into exploiting rich and exploited poor; a society that was not only incapable of reconciling these antagonisms, but had to drive them more and more to a

head (p. 165)...The form of the family corresponding to civilisation and under it becoming the definitely prevailing form is monogamy, the supremacy of the man over the woman, and the individual family as the economic unit of society." Engels, *ORIGIN OF THE FAMILY, PRIVATE PROPERTY AND THE STATE*, p. 155-173 (Moscow, 1972)

Male supremacy is based on private property. This economic condition gave rise to monogamous marriage guaranteeing that the children were of only one man. "Thus monogamy does not by any means make its appearance in history as the reconciliation of man and woman, still less as the highest form of such a reconciliation. On the contrary, it appears as the subjection of one sex by the other...it is the cellular form of civilized society, in which we can already study the nature of the antagonisms and contradictions which develop fully in the latter." (Ibid., p. 65-66) Throughout all class society male supremacy, and its institutional expression in monogamous marriage, have existed. "The first class antagonism which appears in history coincides with the development of the antagonism between man and woman in monogamous marriage, and the first class oppression with that of the female sex by the male." (Ibid., p. 66)

One of the most pervasive and flagrant examples of male supremacy is the inequality in the family, the division of house-keeping work, or to be more precise, its non-division, with the burden of the household work going mainly to the woman. Back from her work where she has had to work and sweat as much as her husband, the woman has to tidy the house, clean, cook for the family, etc. etc. By maintaining the inequality in the home the husband establishes himself as a bourgeois and converts his wife into his proletarian. Marxism-Leninism establishes the abolition of household labor (domestic slavery) with the setting up of an all-round social service system which will supply the needs of the family on a general social basis rather than as a private individual concern. This is a

necessary condition for truly bringing women into socialized production and political life. *Male supremacy will only be defeated by the removal of its base, that is, private property.* This can only come about through the overthrow of private property's highest expression, monopoly capitalism, and the establishment of socialism through the dictatorship of the proletariat. *The freeing of women from capitalist exploitation and domestic slavery will be accomplished through socialist revolution, in which the liberation of women is a basic requirement for the success, and a precondition for the victory of the proletariat in its battle with the bourgeoisie.*

In the course of the transformation of society from capitalism to communism a deep-going struggle, against all forms of ideology from past class society will be carried out in order to insure the success of the revolution. New social relationships will be developed, characterized by comradely mutual help and cooperation, in which the break with outdated traditional ideas and the transformation of the outlook of every member of society will take place.



IID FASCISM AND THE WOMAN QUESTION

Fascism enslaves women in order to hold down and stifle the revolutionary discontent of the masses. It removes women from production and turns them back into purely domestic slaves in their own homes and in the homes of the ruling class. By the force of fascist enslavement, and the removal from industry, women, in large numbers are driven into prostitution for their only economic alternative. This is the case in the U.S.S.R. today,

Fascism promises a happy home life, but institutes brutal slavery of all members of the toiling classes. Clara Zetkin pointed out,

"Working women, remember that fascism deprives you of the rights you have won in bitter struggle and denies you the right to independent work... (and) wants to turn you into your husband's servants and child-bearing machines." Zetkin, *Communist International*, March, 1938, p. 239.

Today the social-democratic ideas of the modern revisionists are paving the way for fascism. First, the revisionists deny the inclusion of women in productive work by the fact that in the present period, society cannot fully socialize household chores. Secondly, they advance the notion of household work meriting the same reward as work in production, with the intent of further removing women from the life of society at large. Thirdly, the revisionists claim that the main tasks of women are to rear children and to take care of themselves, as they are delicate creatures to be nurtured as beauty objects. All of these ideas are bourgeois views, and are only the theory on paper which fascism will put into practice.

Fascism is the internal form of imperialist aggression which will rise as the ruling class prepares for a new imperialist war. As men are taken out of production to serve in imperialist armies, women will then be driven into production in industry for the expansion and maintenance of the fascist war machine. The bourgeoisie will drop the mask of democracy in order to clench the iron fist of fascism, and bring about ruthless imperialist war. The primary task for women's emancipation is to link up the women's movement with the struggle against the two superpowers, to fight imperialism and the rise of fascism. Historical experience proves that only when women take part in the liberation struggle of the oppressed nations and people, in proletarian revolution, can they create the socialist society which will bring about their participation in social productive labor and their emancipation.

III. Women and Revolution

A. Women's Movement

1. The basis of women's oppression and exploitation is in class society. This basis is in societies where the private ownership of the means of production by one class commands the oppression and exploitation of the other classes for its existence. This basis gives the women's movement an inherently revolutionary character, since it is a product of the objective conditions under capitalism. As are all contradictions, these conditions are even further aggravated under imperialism.

Those who have been most exploited and oppressed, and subjected to the greatest suffering, are the most revolutionary and progressive elements of society. On the one hand, there is the cruel political oppression and merciless economic exploitation of the proletariat, while on the other hand, there is its position in society (organized at the point of production; practicing proletarian discipline as a result of the socialization of production; selling its labor power and producing surplus value) which makes the proletariat the most progressive and revolutionary force in the world.

The double and triple oppression and exploitation under imperialism, make women a great revolutionary force.

2. Capitalism produces in the proletariat its own gravedigger; the only class that by freeing itself, frees all the

oppressed, and abolishes all forms of exploitation. The emancipation of women being an integral part of general social emancipation, gave rise to organized forms of struggle. Women's organizations were formed as part of the revolutionary movement of the working class.

The first Socialist Women's Conference was held in Stuttgart in 1907, marking the founding of the International Women's Socialist Movement. This organization represented the unity of proletarian women of many nations. Although it was weakened with the breaking up of the Second International, it was reorganized after the Great October Revolution and the founding of the Third International. This organization was based on Lenin's work with Clara Zetkin, then head of the women's section of the Third International, to mobilize "a powerful international women's movement, based on a clear and precise theoretical basis, wherein to attract the masses of women and mothers of the world to fight against imperialism, for peace and socialism". (Tashko, Liri, "The Struggle Against Revisionist Tendencies in the International Women's Movement", p.270, *PROBLEMS OF THE STRUGGLE FOR THE COMPLETE EMANCIPATION OF WOMEN*, Tirana, 1973.)

As a result of this, special sections for work among women were set up in the communist parties of many countries, as well as separate organizations including communist and non-party members.

With World War II, the international women's movement progressed to a higher

stage. The necessity of uniting in the fight against fascism led to the forming of the organization, Women's International Democratic Federation, on December 1, 1945.

The WIDF at its founding was based on a militant position. However, with the rise of modern revisionism, today it has been transformed into a tool of Soviet-U.S. collaboration for world hegemony. At the Moscow Conference of Women in 1963, the revisionist leaders of the WIDF put forward a program calling for the end to war through peaceful coexistence and disarmament. Although delegates opposed this view, among them the delegates from the People's Republic of China and from the Albanian Women's Union, the program was nonetheless adopted.

It is clear that the WIDF has betrayed the interests of the masses of women throughout the world. But the just struggle for the emancipation of women continues in many nations. The women of Cambodia, Vietnam and of the national liberation movements in Africa and Palestine, have become a great revolutionary force. All women of the world should consider as shining examples these comrades who have united with the masses in their countries for national liberation and revolution.

3. The rise of the women's movements did not only produce revolutionary organizations. "The birth of genuine revolutionary movements is always accom-

panied by the appearance of bourgeois lackeys of every hue who cling to the movement to falsify and put it on the wrong path". (Ibid., p.269).

Simultaneously, women's movements of all sorts sprung up along side, guided by bourgeois ideology, to divert the masses of women from their real goal of complete emancipation and equality in all aspects of social life. *The present character of the women's movement is its domination by opportunism.*

The main responsibility for this is the lack of proletarian initiative on the part of Marxist-Leninists to involve themselves in the women's movement and provide a clearly differentiated alternative to the existing non-proletarian leadership. It is impossible to effectively crush bourgeois ideology without putting forward a proletarian line on the question.

There are two main reasons for the failure of Marxist-Leninists to take up this struggle: (1) the permeation of bourgeois ideology--male supremacy--which constitutes an incorrect class stand on the Woman Question; (2) the failure to present the theoretical foundations of the Woman Question, which are to be found throughout the history of Marxism-Leninism, and apply them to the concrete conditions of women's position in society.

It is the responsibility of Marxist-Leninists to thoroughly develop a correct line on the Woman Question, to defeat opportunism by exposing it and offering a proletarian alternative. We must make a concrete, scientific analysis of the objective development of women's position in society, based on the international experience of the proletariat, and the international experience of the women's movement. This must encompass all aspects of women's oppression, which in the highest stage of capitalism, in its dying, decaying and decadent state, takes on the most degenerate forms. We must understand the specific social role of women in its historical development, from the beginnings of class society to the present, in order to change it.

IIIB. THE WOMAN QUESTION IN PRACTICE

Women are a great revolutionary force who must work for their liberation from capitalist exploitation and for the participation of women in productive social labor. These are the two basic conditions for the political, economic and ideological emancipation of women. The first will free all exploited and oppressed members of society from the fetters of capitalist production where their existence is entirely determined by the wishes and needs of the ruling class. As the inaugural congress of the Communist International stated in March, 1919,

"This congress of the Communist International maintains that the success of all the tasks which it has set itself, the final victory of the world proletariat and the complete abolition of the capitalist order of society can only be assured by the united struggles of the men and women of the working class. The dictatorship of the proletariat can only be realized and maintained with the active and willing assistance of working women."

The second point is, as Lenin stated, the chief task.

"The chief task of the women's movement is to fight for economic and social equality, and not only formal equality, for women. The chief thing is to get women to take part in socially productive labor, to liberate them from 'domestic slavery', to free them from their stultifying and humiliating subjugation to the eternal drudgery of the kitchen and the nursery". (Lenin, "On International Working Women's Day", LCW, Vol. 20, p.409, or Lenin, THE EMANCIPATION OF WOMEN, p. 80.)

IIIC. DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS

1. The struggle of working women against monopoly capital is a basic struggle for democratic rights, which are won in the course of the class struggle against the bourgeoisie.

2. The fight for democratic rights becomes part of the revolutionary struggle of the proletariat when each particular demand, whether it be child care or equal wages, is tied to the general struggle for the seizure of state power and socialism. Such demands which are not tied to the question of state power and socialism, turn out to be reformist. By pointing to the final aim of the movement, we point out that there can be no complete democracy under the rule of the bourgeoisie, and that all democratic rights can only be achieved in a partial, conditional form. Only socialism can offer genuine and complete democratic rights, because it is socialism which constitutes the rule of the majority.

3. *The struggle for democratic rights of women is a struggle for special demands for special oppression.* Genuine equality requires that special attention be paid to special demands in order to move toward the rectification of the long history of inequality resulting from class society. Such special demands must not constitute special compensation which results in special privileges for one section of the class over the other. Instead, programs must be initiated that seek to place women in full equality to men in economic and political life, transforming the basic relationships of women to production.

IIID. POLITICAL EDUCATION, THE PARTY AND WOMEN'S ORGANIZATION

1. Political Education and Women in the Party.

The political education of women will develop the decisive role which they will play in bringing about revolutionary changes. Women's lack of political development and cultural and social participation are a product of their oppression and exploitation. Women must be brought into the full force of the revolution. The participation and leading role of women in all revolutionary political organizations, and especially in the party itself, will be an invigorating and strengthening factor in giving Marxist-Leninist leadership to the class struggle.

Within the party there will be no separate organizations, or units which are exclusively devoted to communist women or made up of communist women.

"We derive our organizational ideas from our ideological conceptions. We want no separate organizations of communist women! She who is a Communist belongs as a member to the Party, just as he who is a Communist. They have the same rights and duties.

There can be no difference of opinion on that score". (Lenin, ON THE EMANCIPATION OF WOMEN, Moscow, 1974, p.110)

At the same time communist women will step forward to give leadership to the mass struggle of women and their organizations.

Throughout the revolutionary organizations, and especially within the Party, women must be brought forward to fulfill positions of responsibility. It is the duty of the party to actively support these comrades in their development and in the carrying out of their tasks in order to guarantee the political development of these women and the strengthening of the work of the revolution as a whole. Leaving these comrades without direction, guidance, or assistance, which may lead to their failing at their tasks, will play into the hands of bourgeois ideology in general and male supremacy in particular. This would lead to a disunity in the ranks of the party and a weakening of the general staff of the proletariat.

2. Women's Organizations

a) *Given the special forms and content of women's oppression there must exist special women's organizations under the leadership of the Marxist-Leninist party.* These organizations must guarantee the political education of women so that they may acquire the necessary awareness and knowledge to organize the fight against all those who bear responsibility for their oppression and misery.

There must be particular and well organized work applied exclusively to women in order to obtain their complete emancipation. The need for separate and special work is based on the particular nature of the general problems of women's oppression and exploitation. This oppression has its own specific nature conditioned by many factors: by the level of economic, educational and cultural development; by religion and ruling class ideology of all kinds which exists in the consciousness of both men and women; and finally, it is conditioned by the very problem that is being tackled at the given moment.

b) The principles of women's organizations:

1) Of primary importance is the content of the work, its ideological, political and moral line. It must be a revolutionary political organization of the masses which has as its basic aim, the unity of the multinational proletariat in its struggle for proletarian revolution. The organization, its structure, and even its name, should reflect, correspond to, tackle and discuss;

a) the minimum and maximum aim that the party assigns to the organization;

b) the scope of the organization;

c) the moral and political situation of women;

d) the legal and clandestine position of the organization;

e) the existence of other organizations in the country;

f) the purpose of attracting the masses of women;

g) its mass character for unity around the party for making revolution building socialism and advancing to communism;

h) social problems that concern the masses;

i) revolutionary decisions of an international character;

j) the unmasking of capitalist and patriarchal oppression of the masses of women;

k) the interests of the women of the world against foreign and domestic aggressors!

l) the evil features of social customs, attacking these while encouraging and spreading the progressive features of social customs.

2) The organization must be based on a study of the actual situation, the objective possibilities in establishing the structure of the organization, forms of organization used in other classes, etc.

Without such a study, all these aspects and forms outlined above (that is, of organizations and work) may be left wanting, baseless, ineffective, and may not be a mobilizing force. As such, the women's organization could become sectarian, or lax in its militancy and thus would remain at the tail of the bourgeoisie, and eventually would be reduced to nothing.

c) It is imperative that a separate organization be built which is a massive political and revolutionary organization of women. This is so not only under the conditions of capitalism and imperialism, where women are doubly or triply exploited and oppressed, but in socialist society as well, where women will have all equal rights with men, formally, but where they must be established in practice. As Lenin said

"This struggle will be a long one, and it demands a radical reconstruction both of social technique and of morals. But it will end in the complete triumph of communism". (Ibid., p.409 & 80.)

THE SEXUAL OPPRESSION OF WOMEN

With the accumulation of private property, and a division of labor among primitive people, class society was born. This division of labor has become more intensive with the further development of class society. In primitive communism, women were the mainstay of life. *But under capitalism, the role of women has been made to appear insignificant, it has been distorted, belittled, and exploited.*

In capitalist society, there is a stark contrast between the role of working women, and women of the bourgeois class. While working women toil in the home and the factory, bourgeois women are educated to pursue the "finer things of life" and to be a "credit to the head of this or that corporation", first by having "his" children; second, by serving on the committee of this or that charity ball, and by making the best dressed list or society column of the newspapers. This role also applies to some of the upper strata of the petty bourgeoisie. But it is also true that many petty bourgeois women are, at this time, leading the fight for women's reforms.

The sexual oppression of women in capitalist society comes out most blatantly in the lives of working women and women of oppressed nations and national minorities. Women are used by the bourgeoisie as a reserve army of labor, to be called upon when needed by the bourgeoisie, such as during a war. When not needed in the workforce, women are bombarded by the bourgeoisie with fascist ideology regarding the glories of home life. Women are told that all would be fine if "our wash was soft and fluffy and smelled like Downey; that our children need Jiffy, Hostess Twinkies Ding Dongs and Ho-Hos." Women are still encouraged to believe that joy consists of coming home after a full days work and fixing "that man of yours a hearty meal". These are all aspects of a fascist form of bourgeois ideology which drives women out of industry and into the home in order to protect its economic interests and to suppress the growing revolutionary potential of the masses.

The bourgeoisie also pushes its fascist ideology upon women (and men) that the use of certain commodities such as cars, toothpaste, clothes, soaps, deodorants, etc., will increase the sexual attractiveness of the user. Only with capitalism has sex been raised to such a commodity, with more money spent on sex changes and implantations, on advertising and packaging, than for the most vital medical needs of the masses. Marx recognized clearly that with capitalism,

"(the worker) only feels himself freely active in his animal functions—eating, drinking, procreating, or at most in his dwelling and in dressing-up, etc.; and in his human functions he no longer feels himself to be anything but an animal. What is animal becomes human and what is human becomes animal.

Certainly eating, drinking, procreating, etc. are also genuinely human functions. But taken abstractly, separated from the sphere of other human activity and turned into sole and ultimate ends, they are animal functions." (Marx and Engels, COLLECTED WORKS, Vol.3, p.274-5.)

What is promoted by capitalism is not what is human, labor, but the simple animal functions which Marx described. There can be no more vicious indictment of capitalism than this.

In the struggle against fascism in the 1930s, Dimitrov, leader of the Comintern, pointed out,

"Many comrades did not believe that so reactionary a brand of bourgeois ideology as the ideology of fascism, which in its stupidity frequently reaches the point of lunacy, was capable of gaining a mass influence at all. This was a great mistake...

Under no circumstance must we underestimate fascism's power of ideological infection". (Dimitrov, FOR THE UNITY OF THE WORKING CLASS AGAINST FASCISM, Sofia Press, p.69.)

It is this form of ideological infection which most clearly characterizes the nature of sexual exploitation and oppression of women under imperialism, especially for women of oppressed nations and national minorities, and working women in general.

To understand the depth and brutality of women's oppression, we must look at the reality of working women today. Women must work full time for less money than men; women must pay child care fees often as high as rent; women are doubly exploited both on the job and in the home. This is particularly true for women of oppressed nations and national minorities--for whom capitalist exploitation and oppression is savage.

One vicious example of the capitalist oppression of women is rape. The bourgeoisie, and bourgeois law, promote the view that women invite rape, that rape is just a way for men to let off steam, or express their love. In court, it is the woman who is made to be the guilty party, not the rapist.

The fact is that women do not want, nor like to be raped. Rape is a particularly brutal form of women's oppression.

It is no accident that in recent months several court cases of Black and Chicana women who were raped have come to the limelight. Black women of the oppressed Black nation in the Black Belt and all national minority women have consistently struggled to combat the racist, male and national chauvinist ideology of the oppressor white nation, and chauvinist ideas concerning their sexuality. *There must be no confusion about the fact that the ideology of sexual oppression is the ideology of capitalism.*

The cases of Joann Little and Inez Garcia are current examples. Joann Little while awaiting trial in a Raleigh, North Carolina jail, was raped like other women before her, by the white jailer, Alligood. Joann defended herself against the attack, and killed the jailer, in self defense. She was brought up on charges of murder, not simply because she defended herself, but because she was a Black woman who had gone against the will of her white oppressor in the Black Belt South. Alligood, the jailer, thought he could get away with raping Joann Little because he had succeeded in countless occasions before.

The case of Joann Little, like literally hundreds of thousands before her, reflects the triple oppression of Black women; as workers, as members of an oppressed nation, and as women. The history of Black women as members of an oppressed nation, from slavery through wage slavery, is a history of extremely severe brutality and heroic struggle against oppression and exploitation. For instance, at the present time, North Carolina has the highest percentage of Black prisoners on death row in the U.S.; many Black women rot in the jails of North Carolina, and face daily attacks similar to Alligood's rape of Joann Little. In this particular case, because of the massive popular movement that was built to support Joann Little, she was acquitted, but untold others never receive such support.

Inez Garcia is a young Chicana, who at gun point, was forced to submit to sex by two men. After gaining her freedom and hearing of further threats against her life by these two men, she returned home, armed herself, and went after her attackers. She was tried for murder and convicted. The case is now on appeal.

Inez Garcia did not submit to the bourgeois ideology of the passivity of women, especially Chicanas. She repre-

sents the growing tendency on the part of working women to link the question of class, national and sexual oppression, and for women to defend themselves against sexual abuse.

The cases of Joann Little and Inez Garcia are the exception, not the rule, in the sense that their cases rallied massive popular support. Rape victims are, more often than not, sure of being looked upon as the one who initiated the crime. The harsh and chauvinist treatment by the state apparatus (police, lawyers, courts) leads most women not to report the assault. Women are intimidated into feeling guilty unless they risked life and limb, got knocked cold, stabbed, or in some other way show scars to prove that they "did not invite the rape". *Rape is a violent crime against women, aimed at terrorizing half of society into submission to the rule of private property.*

The increasing rate of rape stems from the moribund, decaying and decadent nature of monopoly capitalism and is a reflection of a society in which "what is animal becomes human and what is human becomes animal", as Marx stated.

Raised in ghettos and barrios, Black and Chicana women for many generations accepted the conduct and comments of their brothers as part of the culture. Young women take as growing pains the antics of being popped with rubber bands, comments such as "say mama, what's yo' name...nsst, say mamasita", or the ever popular "say, sister". These expressions of sexual oppression are not simply "cultural differences", but part of the ideology promoted by the bourgeoisie to further oppress women of oppressed nations or minorities.

Sexual oppression does not end in the family or on the streets, but is widespread on the job. As the crisis of imperialism forces more and more women to seek employment in production, and women in turn take up the fight for their just democratic rights, the sexual harassment by men becomes pronounced.

Many male co-workers constantly throw sexual and racial slurs at women, try to pat and squeeze or pinch them, and to pick them up. This can be usually overcome by ignoring these degradations or with threats of bodily harm. However, with the supervisor, it is another kind of question. Because they can determine hiring and firing, work loads, and other details, many men supervisors actively seek sexual satisfaction from women in exchange for job security, light work loads, and other favors.

However, more and more women, particularly women of oppressed nations and minorities, are becoming increasingly involved in the fight against imperialism, for self-determination and for their just democratic rights.

In New York, petty bourgeois women have taken an active role in getting the Commission of Human Rights to pencil into affirmative action programs some protection against "unfair abuse of sexual privacy", but this is clearly a first step which has little effect on most working women.

Overall, the situation remains that most working women have not systematically taken up the fight against their exploitation and oppression, let alone the struggle against sexual harassment. This, however, is not surprising, for it reflects the limits of the spontaneous movement. It is only a genuine vanguard party which can transform the spontaneous women's movement into a conscious revolutionary movement against capital. It is the task of Marxist-Leninists to take the initiative to lead the existing women's movement, to transform its demands, and to link the women's movement to the general struggle of the working class for its emancipation.

- ★Support the Revolutionary Struggle of All Working Women Against Double and Triple Oppression: Class, National, and Sexual!
- ★Political Line is Key and Theory is Decisive on the Woman Question!
- ★Special Demands for Special Oppression-Fight for Genuine Democratic Rights for Women!
- ★End Job Discrimination Against Women:
 - (1) Provide Adequate Child Care, at Low or No Cost;
 - (2) Job Training for Women;
 - (3) Equal Wages for Comparable Work!
- ★End Forced Sterilization - Free Abortion On Demand!
- ★Build the Vanguard Communist Party!
- ★Build a Revolutionary Women's Organization!
- ★Build Communist Leadership of the Women's Movement!
- ★Mobilize the Masses of Women

for Proletarian Revolution!

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