WORKERS' TRIBUNE

FREE WORKERS OF ALL COUNTRIES, UNITE! March, 1981

The Road to Working Women's Emancipation

Statement in Commemoration of International Working Women's Day

by the Bolshevik League of the U.S.

"Not a single great movement of the oppressed in the history of mankind has been able to do without the participation of working women. Working women, the most oppressed among the oppressed, never have or could stand aside from the broad path of the liberation movement . . . . . International Women's Day is a token of invincibility and an augery of the great future which lies before the liberation movement of the working class."[1]

J.V. Stalin

March 8, was proclaimed International Women's Day in 1910 at a socialist conference in Copenhagen. Clara Zetkin, a German Bolshevik and friend of V.I. Lenin, was instrumental in making this a day to commemorate and celebrate the heroic struggles of American women garment and textile workers who bravely resisted their miserable working conditions, starvation wages and 12 hour working days. Despite brutal attacks by the police, these women went on to form some of the first unions in the United States. The reforms they gained have been undermined; their struggles sold out by the labor aristocrats who run the unions. Nevertheless, the struggles of working women will not cease until the system that gives rise to their oppression has been overthrown and replaced by socialism.

On March 8th, International Women's Day, we will undoubtedly hear, as we have in years past, great mention of the strides women have made towards equal rights in the United States. We will hear about the increases in the number of women doctors, lawyers and bank executives; the return of women to the workforce in even greater numbers; women's increasing "freedom" to choose different lifestyles, be it single, married, heterosexual or homosexual.

These supposed great strides for women both camoflage an increase in the oppression of women and are a reflection of the aspirations and achievements of the petty bourgeoisie. What will scarcely be addressed is the real condition of working class women today. There will be little mention of the double oppression faced by the great masses of women or of the triple oppression faced by nationally oppressed women. Has anything been done to free women from exploitation by the bourgeoisie? Have women been freed from the burden of domestic slavery at home? Are nationally oppressed women no longer subject to imperialist genocide and superexploitation? Obviously, the answer to all these questions is—"No."

The double oppression of women in imperialist countries and the triple oppression of women in oppressed nations is an essential part of imperialism. The reason you will hear so little about this from the feminists is because they uphold imperialism and are attempting reforms to make it more palatable to a certain strata of petty bourgeois women. To oppose the double and triple oppression of women it is necessary to oppose imperialism and the system of class oppression.

Capitalism had two contradictory affects on women. On the

one hand, it pulled women into social production, creating the conditions that could mature, under socialism, into women's real liberation. On the other hand, it intensified women's oppression. Women's labor was considered so cheap by the capitalistas that, writing in *Capital,* Karl Marx could report: **"In England women are still occasionally used instead of horses for hauling canal boats, because the labor required to produce horses and machines is an accurately known quantity, while that required to maintain the women of the surplus population is below all calculation".**[2]

Women were pulled into the factories as machinery made men's physical strenth unnecessary. Engels explained the reasoning behind this phenomenon clearly:

"Let us examine somewhat more closely the fact that machinery more and more supercedes the work of men. The human labor involved in both spinning and weaving consists chiefly in piecing broken threads, as the machine does all the rest. This work requires no muscular strength, but only flexibility of fingers. Men are, therefore, not only not needed for it, but actually, by reason of the greater muscular development of the hands, less fit for it than women and children, and are therefore naturally almost superceded by them. Hence, the more the use of the arms, the expenditure of strength, can be transferred to steam of water power, the fewer men need be employed; and as women and children work more cheaply, and in these branches better than men, they take their place."[3]

It was women's dependent and vulnerable position in the home that made her labor cheaper. The Bolshevik Union of Canada states "women could be hired at a far lower price (than men); and because their economic situation was more desperate, since women even more so than men felt responsible for the survival and support of their children, they were considered to be more malleable."

Capitalism pushed the exploitation of women to the utmost. Their long hours and unhealthy conditions of labor began to raise contradictions for the bourgeoisie. With women working such long hours, the family became an unstable unit. Without parental care, children were raised in the streets and were growing up sickly. The bourgeoisie feared that the working class itself might die out. The bourgeoisie was also faced with a large number of unemployed workers. They had come to the cities from the countryside to look for work. This mass of unemployed workers had the potential for a revolutionary upsurge. Putting married women into the home became a partial solution for the bourgeoisie.

As imperialism developed, the superprofits from the colonies and semi-colonies became great enough to pay a male worker in the imperialist countries enough to support himself and his family. The bourgeoisie wholeheartedly took up the propaganda that a "woman's place is in the home" and used the model of the ruling-class family to hold before the eyes of proletarian women as the always unattainable but desirable goal. For the working class women, this model only increased her oppression as a domestic slave. Lenin states that a **"woman continues to be a domestic slave, because petty housework crushes, strangles, stultifies and degrades her, chains her to the kitchen and to the nursery, and wastes her labor on barbarously unproductive, petty, nerveracking, stultifying and crushing drudgery."** [5]

The many working class women who were forced to work even in the best of times were made to feel guilty for not fulfilling the bourgeois model of a good wife and mother.

The bourgeoisie is not alone in its campaign to intensify the double and triple oppression of women. The labor aristocracy is a stalwart ally. The labor aristocracy is that strata of the working class that is bribed with crumbs derived from the super-profits of imperialism. They love the bourgeoisie and covet all it has. One of the things they covet the most is a full-time servant at home, just like the bourgeoisie. For them, this means their wives and mothers. The labor aristocrats fight against married women working, saying it will take jobs away from men who have to support families (as if women don't). They argue for women to not shirk their duties as wives and mothers. And they make sure to restrict the entrance of women into the higher paying skilled jobs. When the working class takes up the struggle against the bourgeoisie, the role of the labor aristocrats in the oppression of women will not be forgotten.

Capitalism has done terrible things to women. Imperialism has made it much worse. Today imperialism is moving towards a world war for redivision of the colonies and semi-colonies. There, the proletariat and oppressed masses are already being used as cannon-fodder in the skirmishes and local wars that are part of the preparation for imperialist war. In the imperialist countries, the militarization of the proletariat is proceeding rapidly. Internationally the working class is suffering greater and greater privations and hardships. Interestingly, as war preparations accelerate, the same labor aristocrats and union hacks who once called for women to stay at home are now preaching in favor of women's return to the work force. This stems from their consistent support of imperialism. Women are now needed to replace men in industry in order to free them up for military duty. The number of men who sign up for the military for lack of a better job increases.

The bourgeoisie, the labor aristocrats, and their mouthpiece –the feminists, pretend the return of women to the job market is some sort of victory over the equality between men and women. The U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics cites the fact that nearly 12 million more women were in the labor force in 1979 than in 1970. Women account for 60 percent of the total gain in the labor force in that period. In 1950, when women were returning to the home after participating fully in the labor force during World War II, women made up only 29.6 percent of the labor force. By 1980, they made up 42.5 percent of the labor force. In addition in 1980, 64 percent of the women in the prime child-bearing age of 25-34 worked, as opposed to only 34 percent in 1950. By looking around we know this tremendous increase is not due to an increase in the availability of inexpensive child care. Let us see how the agents of the bourgeoisie explain this.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics suggest that "The pattern of a more continuous work history for women in these ages (25-34) may widen their career and advancement opportunities in the 1980's." They go on to say that by 1980 "a substantial number (of women) had made inroads into professional-technical jobs with higher status and earnings, e.g. doctors, lawyers and accountants."[6] In other words they imply that women's great return to the work force may have to do with greater opportunities that have opened up. A look at what the real opportunities for women are will make it clear that this is not the case.

Let's look at the increases in the number of women doctors, lawyers, and accountants from 1950 to 1979.

Women as Percent of all Workers in Occupation [7]

	1950	1960	1970	1979
Physicians – osteopaths	6.5	6.8	8.9	10.7
lawyers-judges	4.1	3.3	4.7	12.4
accountants	14.9	16.4	25.3	32.9

Yes, the Bureau of Labor Statistics is correct, there are more women doctors, lawyers, and accountants today than there were in 1950. But let's compare the total number of workers employed in these fields with the number employed as secretaries or bookkeepers, more common through less prestigious jobs for women.

Total Number of Women Employed in Occupation[8]

Physicians - osteopaths	46,000
Lawyers, judges	62,000
Accountants	344,000
Secretaries - typists	44 ,681,000
Book-keepers	1,740,000

There are 100 times more women secretaries than there are women doctors.

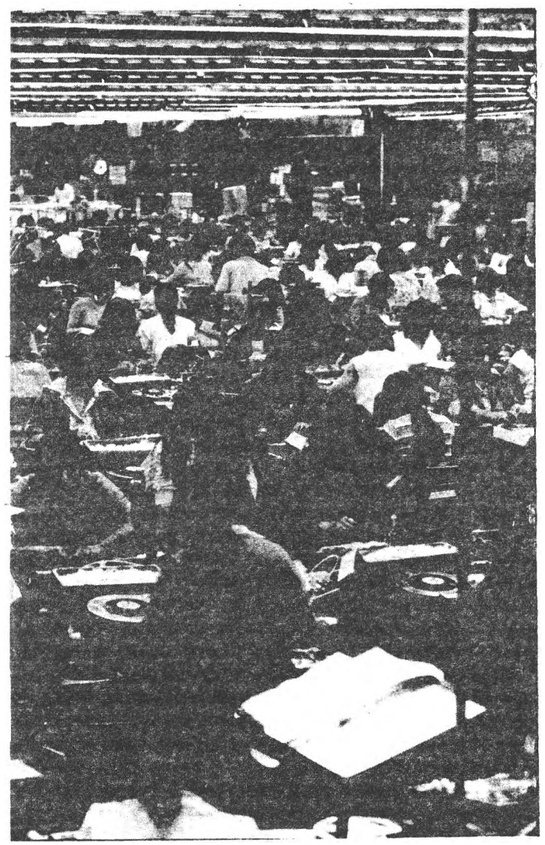
The opening of doors to women in the technical and professional fields has benefitted so small a proportion of the total work force as to make it almost laughable. And of course these jobs did not go to working class women. They went primarily to the daughters of the bourgeoisie, petty bourgeoisie and the labor aristocracy. In the area of professional – technical jobs, the highest number and percentage of women are employed as registered nurses and as elementary and high-school teachers. These professions are considered to be "woman's work" and are extensions of Woman's role as nurturer and child rearer in the home; they have a correspondingly low status among professionals. Women make up 96.8 percent of the total number of nurses and 70.8 percent of the teachers of elementary and high schools. This is a good example of the sexual segregation that exists throughout the work force. Sexual segregation serves the bourgeoisie well by interfering with the solidarity between men and women workers. It also allows the bourgeoisie to pay women less than men by making sure they have different job descriptions.

In what sectors of the economy do most women work? And what kind of oppotunities do they have? The occupations where women comprise more than 75 percent of the workforce include private household service (domestic work) 97.6 percent, sewers and stichers (garment workers) 95.3 percent, dressmakers 95.4 percent, clothing ironers and pressers 76.7 percent, secretary-typists 98.6 percent, bookkeepers 91.1 percent, bank tellers 92.9 percent.[9] These are hardly high paying glamour jobs with possibilities for "career and advancement opportunities". These are oppressive, stultifying, dead-end jobs that women take because of the erosion of the standard of living of the working class. The crisis of imperialism means the bourgeoisie can no longer afford to pay one worker enough to support a family. Most working class families in the imperialist countries require two incomes just to make ends meet. Women who are heads of households suffer terribly under these conditions.

As the crisis deepens, the bourgeoisie seeks to increase its profits through the intensification of labor. This means they try to get each worker to produce greater and greater surplus value or profit. They do this through speedups, piece work, forced overtime, etc. For many capitalists, this means an even larger export of capital to the colonies and semi-colonies where the extremely oppressed conditions of labor are more favorable to intensive labor and where the productivity per worker is greater. Some members of the bourgeoisie are also opting to duplicate the superexploitation of workers in the colonies and semi-colonies right there in the U.S. In sweatshops the owners employ mostly immigrant workers, many without green cards who are desperate for work. The fear of deportation makes this an easily exploited and manipulated group of workers. These are the sweatshops conditions described by the New York Times, in 1981. "While sweatshops conditions vary, there is a grim sameness to the basic appearance: rows of women bent over sewing machines, separated by narrow aisles often made impassable by dress racks and piles of piece goods. Fire exists and windows, too, are often blocked or even padlocked, reducing emergency escapes to a rickety freight elevator and un lit stairs." [10]

It is estimated that 50,000 workers work in possibly 3,000 sweatshops in the garment industry alone.

The conditions described by the *New York Times* are precisely conditions faced by the garment and textile workers in the 19th and early 20th century. They are the same conditions that the workers we remember on International Women's Day fought against so long ago. So much for the great advancement of working class women!



The Militarization of Women

Increasingly the military is being offered as an option to women who cannot find a job. Today 8 percent of army personnel are women. By 1985, the Army projects it will be 12.5 percent. Why this growing interest in recruiting women? An article on women in the military in the magazine *Geo,* states, "the Army is going to remain dependent on its women as long as there is no draft. Without women, the All-Volunteer Army would not have enough volunteers to function." [11] In the army, women primarily fill the desk jobs and food service jobs, jobs that women traditionally fill in civilian life. This frees men who would otherwise have to fill these jobs for combat duty. Women also serve as a lure for men who find distasteful the sexual segregation usually asso-

ciated with the army. Here, as in civilian life, women's sexuality is exploited. Needless to say there is plenty of sexual harassment in the Army.

Due to high unemployment and lack of job opportunities, many young working class women, especially from oppressed nationalities, join the Army.

As if it were not bad enough that some women are exploited in the imperialist volunteer army, some feminists and the American Civil Liberties Union are urging that when the draft is reinstituted, women be drafted as well. Even the draft for women is not enough; some want women to play a combat role as well. One feminist said "We are against the draft for men and women. But if men are to be drafted, then women should not be denied the privileges of combat."[12] The ACLU and the feminists are insidious enemies of women and the working class in general. In the name of equal rights they call for women to be used to kill the working class of other countries. These enemies are not far behind the military brass. Already the mechanization of the Army has made it more possible for women to take on active combat duty. Women in the military are being trained as military police and in signal, transport, and weapon repair. These are known as combat support roles. During the war in Vietnam, women served on assault, lift and evacuation helicopters in combat areas. There is no doubt that womens' combat role would increase in the next war. The ACLU and the feminists have no qualms about sending the sons and daughters of the working class to die as cannon fodder in the next imperialist war. The bourgeois and petty bourgeois classes to which they belong have always for the most part managed to have their children avoid the draft.

The working class must fight against all those who would send it off to fight in an imperialist war. Women and men in the military must take advantage of their training to prepare to turn imperialist war into a civil war against the bourgeoisie and for the institution of socialism.

There are also feminists who do not openly promote the recruitment of women into the armed forces. But they too have a plan to divert the working class from turning the imperialist war into a civil war against the bourgeoisie. These feminists have organized a "peace" movment. Pacifism disarms the working class and promotes a doctrine of peace between the classes, in other words, class collaboration. The pacifists build on the natural abhorence of the working class for war and particularly on the maternal feelings of women for their children in order to prevent the development of a revolutionary movement among the working class. Some prime examples of this feminist "peace" movement are Women Strike for Peace and the Womens' International League for Peace and Freedom.

The feminists and opportunits and the bougeoisie all seek to make the proletarian family unit passive, reformists and subservient to capitalism. The Bolshevik view however differs qualitatively from the opportunist and bourgeois view on the family. The proletarian family unit must be transformed into a fighting unit for socialism. Whereas the opportunists and bourgeois seek to destroy the family unit, the Bolsheviks call on the married couples and children to take on the fight against imperialism and for socialism, and not be duped by the pacifists, economists, and splittest activy of the opportunist swindlers.

The Triple Oppression of Women in Colonies and Semi-Colonies

So far we have addressed ourselves to the plight of women in the imperialist countries. The situation of women in the colonies and semi-colonies are among the spoils of war the imperialists are seeking to redivide.

Though women in the U.S. are paid less than men, they are paid considerably more than women in the colonies and semi-colonies. In the imperialist countries the standard of living is higher. That means that the socially necessary wage for the reproduction of labor power is greater. The imperialists are constantly on the look out to pay less in order to increase their profits. Although there is a tendency to do this in all capitalist countries, the imperialist bourgeoisie is somewhat restricted at home by the need to buy social peace and a greater organization of the workers. It is far more profitable to export surplus capital to the colonies and semi-colonies where superprofits can be made from the sweat of low-paid super-exploited workers.

Surely we have all heard the argument from bourgeois sources as well as the opportunist "left", that the export of capital to the colonies and semi-colonies is a good thing because it develops the economy and brings jobs to the masses. On the contrary, the truth is that imperialism creates underdevelopment. The labor force of the oppressed nation creates superprofits for the imperialist which are then removed, leaving the country ever more impovershied. Peasants are forced off their land and become a large, hungry army of unskilled labor. The mineral wealth of the colonies and semi-colonies is exploited and removed. Plantations of cash crops replace the produciton of foodstuffs and the population grows ever hungrier and dependent on imperialist "food aid". Women and children are put to work under horrendous conditions in the factories. Imperialism sucks the economy of the colonies and semi-colonies dry and leaves them in a constant state of underdevelopment. The Communist International spoke to this question:

"This is the essence of its function of colonial enslavement. The colonial country is compelled to sacrifice the interests of its independent development and to play the part of an economic (agrarian-raw material) appendange to foreign capitalism, which, at the expense of the laboring classes of the colonial country, strengthens the economy and political power of the imperialist bourgeoisie in order to perpetuate the monopoly of the latter in the colonies and to increase its expansion as compared with the rest of the world .... the Endeavor of the great imperialist powers to adapt to an ever-increasing degree their monopolized colonies to the needs of the capitalist economy of the metropolis not only evoke the destruction of the traditional economic structure of the indigenous colonial population, but, side by side with this, leads to the destruction of the equilibrium between separate branches of production, and in the final analysis, leads to an artificial retardation of the development of the productive forces in the colonies."[13]

An examination of women's conditions of labor in the colonies and semi-colonies is a good illustration of the veracity of the Comintern's statement. For example, in the U.S. an assembly line workers usually earns between $3.10 and $5.00 an hour. In many of the colonies and semi-colonies, a woman doing the same work will earn from 3-5 dollars a day. In 1976, the average per hour in Hong Kong was 55 cents, in South Korea 52 cents, in the Phillipines 32 cents, in Indonesia 17 cents. So why pay more in the U.S. when you can pay less in a semi-colony? And why pay a man when you can pay a woman less? The appeal of women's labor is so great that 80-90 percent of the low skilled assembly line jobs in the colonies and semi-colonies go to women.[14]

Not only are women a cheaper source of labor but they are also considered desireable workers due to their supposed docility and subservience. A recruiter of industry for an industrial park in Mexico said, "A man just won't stay in this tedious kind of work. He'd walk out in a couple of hours."[15] A Taiwanese personnel manager said, "Young male workers are too restless and impatient to do monotonous work with no career value. If displeased they sabotage the machines and even threaten the forman. But girls? At most, they cry a little."[16]

The women of the colonies and semi-colonies are used by the national bourgeoisie as an enticement to investment. An investment brochure issued by the Malaysian government sells Malaysian women to the imperialist bloodsuckers on the basis that "The manual dexterity of the Oriental female is famous the world over. Her hands are small, and she works fast with extreme care. . . . Who, therefore, could be better qualified by nature and inheritance, to contribute to the efficiency of a bench-assembly production line than the Oriental girl."[17] The Thai government tells American businessmen "the relationship between the employer and employee is like that of a guardian and ward. It is easy to win and maintain the loyalty of workers as long as they are treated with kindness and courtesy." The brochure which includes these pearls of wisdom also shows pictures of giggling, shy Thai women.[18]

Conditions of employment for women in the colonies and semi-colonies are abominable. The hardest, most backbreaking jobs are among those exported to the colonies and semi-colonies. Electronics assembly work is one example. In many plants, toxic chemicals lie in open vats. Some women lose fingers. More common is the loss of eyesight from having to spend 7-9 hours a day peering through a microscope. Due to deteriorated health and disability, many women are forced to "retire" early. Since oftentimes young women are the sole support of an entire extended family, this early "retirement" leaves a whole family destitute.

A women in Tijuana, Mexico spoke of a relative who worked in an electronics factory. Her story is typical of those who are forced to work in labor intensive industry. "Her job was to wind copper wire onto a spindle by hand. It was very small and there couldn't be any overlap, so she would get these terrible headaches. After a year some of the companies gave a bonus, but most of the girls didn't last that long, and those that did had to get glasses to help their failing eyes. It's so bad that there is constant turnover."[19]

Illness is not the only factor causing premature "retirement." Many factory owners prefer to hire young women rather than pay higher wages for older more experienced women. Very often the "older woman" is only 23 or 24.

This superexploitation of women is tremendously disruptive to the social fabric of society. In order to work, many women have to move away from home and closer to the factory. Often they live in overcrowded dormitories, sleeping in shifts, sometimes 20 to a room. In many of these societies women living outside the protection of the family are seen as loose women. Being a "factory girl" can mean an automatic bad reputation. Women are placed in a tremendous bind. On one hand they must work to support themselves and their families. This is especially true as the cheaper value of female labor drove many men out of the job market into permanent unemployment. On the other hand, her potentially liberating move out of the restrictive confines of the home makes her vulnerable to both capitalist super-exploitation and the social stigma of a loose woman. The bourgeoisie takes advantage of this contradiction and uses it to tighten their control on triply oppressed women. Cosmetics classes are offered in some factories as well as bathing suit beauty contests. The sexual objectification of women by the bourgeoisie drives a wedge between oppressed men and women in the colonies and semi-colonies and serves to keep the oppressed classes from uniting against their oppressors.

The stigma of factory work plus men's inability to get enough work to support a family make it difficult for many women to find a husband. Combined with early forced retirement, prostitution becomes the only way many women can support themselves and their families. Lenin describes this situation precisely.

"No 'moral indignation' (hypocritical in 99 cases out of a hundred) about prostitution can do anything to prevent this commerce in women's bodies; as long as wage slavery exists, prostitution must inevitably continue. Throughout the history of society all the oppressed and exploited classes have always been compelled (their exploitation consists in this) to hand over to the oppressors, first, their unpaid labour and, secondly, their women to be the concubines of the 'masters'."[20]

Despite incredible hardships and repression in the colonies and semi-colonies, women have fought back.

In Guatemala in 1975 women workers in a North American owned factory defied their bosses by getting together to write up a list of complaints about their workplace. The local authorities sent in military police to protect the American boss from the so-called communist instigators.

In Nuevo Laredo, Mexico, in 1973, 2,000 workers, mostly women, walked out in solidarity with workers who had been unjustly fired. A few days later, 8,000 workers met to elect a new union leadership to replace the one they felt had sold out.

In Mexicali, Mexico, 3,000 workers, again mostly women, who had been locked out of the factory in which they worked, set up a guard to keep their employer from moving away. Though the factory finally moved, the workers were able to hold it off for 2 months.

In South Korea, 3,000 women workers at an American-owned plant, staged a hunger strike and sit-in in the company cafeteria to protest their 39¢ an hour wages. They chose this tactic because strikes are illegal in South Korea. They won a small increase in wages.[21]

Though spontaneous struggles such as these cannot end the oppression of working women, they are a testament to the unquenchable spirit of resistance of women workers the world over.

The bourgeoisie tries to channel this spirit of resistance by bringing in their own unions with strong bourgeois ties. In Puerto Rico for example, many U.S. firms brought in their own labor organizers. It is no surprise that 2 Americans who were recently murdered in El Salvador happened to be U.S. government agents who represented both the AFL-CIO and the CIA. Perhaps a better name would be the AFL-CIA. In another example, a black union leader (a token rarity in the U.S.), who is generally considered even in union circles to work for the CIA, was sent to Africa to help set up "American-style" labor unions in the semi-colonies of Africa.

Women Under A Genuine Socialist Soviet Society

The contrast between women under imperialism and women under socialism is like night and day. (To make this comparison we must look at the Soviet Union pre-1953, that is, before capitalism was reinstituted.) In the future we will deal with this subject in more detail, but a few examples should suffice to give an idea of the difference in the development of women's role in socialist society.

As socialism was built in the U.S.S.R., the masses of women were pulled into the workforce. Millions of working class and peasant women joined the ranks of those who constructed socialism for the first time in history. Under capitalism, women's oppression increased with their entry into social production. Not so in the Soviet Union. There, entering the workforce became a means to a woman's liberation.

Legal equality between men and women was immediately instituted in the Soviet Union. But recognizing that mere legal equality could not achieve the liberation of the working class woman, the Soviet Union began the socialization of housework to end what Lenin described as "barbarously unproductive, petty, nerve-racking, stultifying and crushing drudgery."[22] As socialism developed, the care of women and children (the future) became a priority. Day care for working mothers became the norm. The concept of illegitimacy was abolished. Every mother and child was entitled to the same benefits from the state. Unmarried mothers were accorded greater assistance because of greater need. The conditions of labor were tremendously improved. As Soviet society became more and more productive, workers' hours became shorter and shorter enabling workers to develop themselves in other ways. In the most hazardous jobs workers often worked only 4 hours a day. The Soviet Union introduced tremendous concrete programs towards the aim of ending the oppression of women. Clara Zetkin quotes Lenin on this subject.

"In law there is naturally complete equality of rights for men and women. And everywhere there is evidence of a sincere wish to put this equality into practice. We are bringing the women into the social economy, into legislation and government. All educational institutions are open to them, so that they can increase their professional and social capacities. We are establishing communal kitchens and public eating-houses, laundries and repair shops, infant asylums, kindergartens, children's homes, educational institutes of all kinds. In short, we are seriously carrying out the demand in our program for the transference of the economic and educational functions of the separate household to society. That will mean freedom for the women from the old household drudgery and dependence on man. That enables her to exercise to the full her talents and her inclinations. The children are brought up under more favorable conditions than at home. We have the most advanced protective laws for women workers in the world, and the officials of the organized workers carry them out. We are establishing maternity hospitals, homes for mothers and children, mothercraft clinics, organizing lecture courses on child care, exhibitions teaching mothers how to look after themselves and their children, and similar things. We are making the most serious efforts to maintain women who are unemployed and unprovided for."[23]

All this was possible in a country where the interests of the working class as a whole were put foremost.

A German writer, Fannina Hall, visiting the Soviet Union in 1932, was impressed by the development of Soviet women. She stated they "are paid exactly the same as men . . . they are given every opportunity to improve their qualifications and receive a systematic training in the countless technical schools . . . and colleges for the utmost variety of positions in the factories . . . (and) every woman worker in a factory, however unskilled, is enabled to rise to all managerial positions in industry, even that of an expert and scientifically trained factory woman."[24] Under capitalism, despite rhetoric to the contrary, it is a rare working woman who has the opportunity to advance no less get equal pay for equal work.

In the formerly oppressed nations of the Soviet East, the change was even more dramatic. Many women took off their veils for the first time. Ignorant and backward women were taught to read and write. Fannina Hall discusses this as well. "Of course, factory life in the East does far more than elsewhere to train women to take their place in the new life. For in the factories they attain a degree of economic independence of which in the past they never dreamed; for the first time in their lives they receive money and contribute to the maintenance of the family; Eastern women very often earn more than men nowadays. Their self-confidence, their sense of belonging to a great community, which were formerly stunted in the seclusion of the home now grow apace. And further, factory life contributes not only a little to understanding between women of once hostile nationalities. Thus emancipation comes as a natural consequence of factory labour and of the fellowship of the men and women workers, and cases are not infrequent in which the factory community intervenes, if a young woman comrade is to be married by her parents against her will or suffers any other injustice."[25]

In the socialist Soviet Union, industrialization and proletarianization developed hand in hand with the economic, political and cultural development of a people. As we have shown, the process is quite different under imperialism. Imperialism depends on the oppression of women. The Bolshevik Union states "the very structure of the workplace in the imperialist countries has been shaped through the use of the oppressed position of the woman within the family, in the interests of maximum profit, and that it is through the specific oppression of women that the bourgeoisie has been able to manipulate women in and out of the labour market in accordance with its cyclical needs."[26] The woman of the colonies and semi-colonies faces additional national oppression which makes them the source of a great deal of imperialist superprofits. Only with the overthrow of imperialism, can women begin to truly liberate themselves from double and triple oppression.

Conclusion

The tasks of working class and oppressed women today are very clear and very pressing. Socialism creates the basis for women's liberation and consequently it is for socialism that women must strive. Socialism and the dictatorship of the proletariat is on the immediate agenda in all capitalist countries. In countries which still have a significant agrarian revolution to accomplish, workers must make sure not to be duped by the replacement of one bourgeoisie with another but to strive for the dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry as a stage towards the building of socialism. In every case, both imperialist and colonial, it is necessary to build a leading party of the proletariat to guide these struggles. Without a leading party, the working class will become bogged down in its spontaneous struggles and be unable to carry the socialist revolution on to completion.

In order to build this party it is necessary to stress internationalism. Concretely this means giving full support to the toiling women and men struggling against imperialism in the colonies and semi-colonies. To shirk this responsibility means in effect to support the plunder and rape of oppressed women. It is critical that workers all over the world refuse to shoot other workers in an imperialist war, rather resisting all chauvinism and calls to defend the fatherland, turn the imperialist war into a civil war against the bourgeoisie.

International Women's Day is not only a day for women. Let us use it as a day to remind working class men that as Lenin said, **"The proletariat cannot achieve complete freedom, unless it achieves complete freedom for women."**[27] Together, working class women and men have a great future ahead of them.

Let us take up the cause of oppressed women everywhere.

Let us take up the task of building a proletarian party.

Long live International Women's Day!

Notes

1. Stalin in *The Woman Question*, Selections from the Writings of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin, International Publishers, N.Y., 1951, p. 44.
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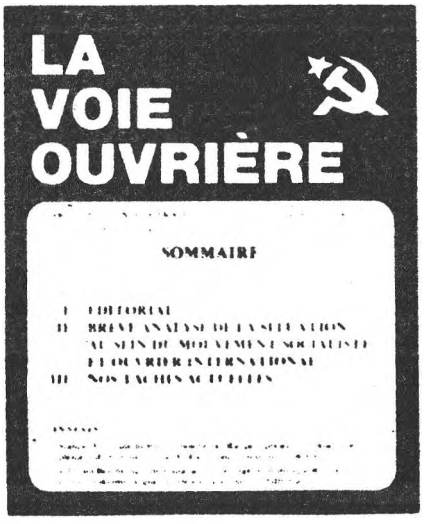

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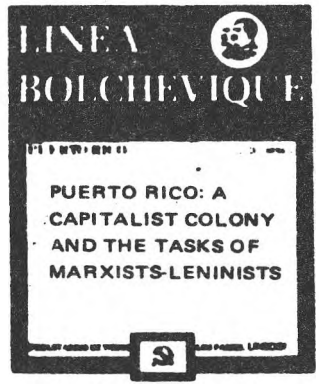

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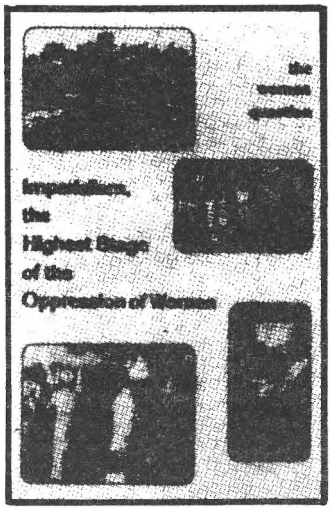

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