

Women and Revolution



Journal of the Women's Commission of the Spartacist League

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Life in Reagan's America: Moral Majority Madness

According to Reagan, we're all supposed to live in small-town America now, where mom, dad and the kids go to church every Sunday and eke out a modest but self-sufficient existence the rest of the week. It's a Norman Rockwell pastoral ringed by MX missiles—from which blacks, big cities, "premarital" sex, Jews, "foreigners," homosexuals, even the industrial working class and trade unions have disappeared. It's a country both sentimental and terrifying, and one Reagan's Moral Majorityite crew is determined to create, by any means necessary, out of this complex, simultaneously advanced and decaying capitalist society. Those 1950's "The Family That Prays Together Stays Together" billboards are reappearing now, along with scare stories about the "Russian menace." The American ruling class wants to recreate the '50s, the first and last decade of the "American Century," a period pre-Vietnam, pre-"sexual liberation," pre-civil rights movement, and above all pre-American capitalism's loss of unquestioned world economic and military hegemony.

Reagan and Haig's war drive against the Soviet Union and America's economic crisis require a domestic

crackdown on dissent and increasing regimentation of all aspects of social life. Thus the conservative Republican regime, which promised to "get government off our backs," has launched a massive campaign: to unleash the CIA-FBI spy apparatus against American citizens, to poke into the nation's bedrooms with ever more repressive laws against sexual activity, to ration down to the last french fry how much schoolchildren will eat. It has even taken on an intimate analysis of human sperm and egg in order to decree just when human life begins!

The Moral Majority's "Human Life Amendment," if passed, would make abortion—and birth control like the IUD—murder. The proposed "Family Protection Act" would encourage job discrimination against homosexuals, subsidize church schools while denying federal funds to schools using materials that "deny the role differences between sexes" as they are "traditionally understood," stop funding of shelters for battered women and day care centers and virtually abolish the rights of minors. There is one group Reagan's strictly ignoring, though: blacks, who are given the "freedom" to continue to starve or rot in ghetto rubble, thanks to slashing cuts in welfare and other social programs, and soaring unemployment.

Despite nearly a decade's storm warnings of conservative backlash in American society, Reagan's election came as a cataclysmic shock to New Leftist "personal liberation" groups and liberals. Gay activists worried "will we have to go back in the closets?" and speculated about imminent fascism, while even the patriotic, professional women's organization NOW had to face the fact that their main campaign, to pass the Equal Rights Amendment to the Constitution, looks deadlier than a doornail.

Of course Reagan's no fascist (although Moral Majority America shares quite a bit of National Socialism's "hearty yeoman" peasant/small businessman reactionary social outlook)—but he is the most right-wing politician to rule America in 50 years. Nonetheless, under Democratic president and born-again Baptist Jimmy Carter, the groundwork was being laid for the triumphant resurrection of the Cold War, social reaction and repression. No one should have any illusions that things would be better today if that anti-Soviet militarist in pious creep's clothing had been reelected. Sure, some members of the worldly upper classes—who want their wives, daughters and mistresses to be able to get abortions and want their sons taught real science instead of Bible stories (and themselves read a dirty book now and again)—don't find the rantings of the Moral Majority's backwoods ayatollahs to their personal tastes. But social bigotry, racism, religion are the ideological concomitants of the bourgeoisie's war drive against "godless communism" abroad and blacks and unions at home, and these



School book burning in Warsaw, Indiana, June 1981—Moral Majority censorship is spreading across the country.

policies are embraced by the bourgeois political establishment in its entirety.

The Family and Capitalism

At the heart of the Reaganite/Moral Majority domestic campaign to regiment society is defense of the "sacred" monogamous family—the central social institution oppressing women. The family of today is not a natural expression of eternal "human nature" ordained by god, but originated in the development of private property (Frederick Engels' *The Origins of the Family, Private Property and the State* is the classic Marxist exposition of this process).

Before the triumph of modern industrial capitalism, with its gigantic factories, advanced technology and automation and voracious appetite to ever conquer new markets, the individual family—tied to the land or engaged in small household production—was the main economic unit to which most people, out of iron necessity, were bound for life. Men might of course become soldier-mercenaries, but for women there was literally no alternative—except the nunnery or whorehouse. Today this is not true, at least in advanced countries like the U.S., as technology has opened up a world of potential material plenty for all and women have been drawn into all aspects of capitalist production. Yet the family is still promoted as the eternal way of life and woman's "true sphere," while barbaric poverty and starvation coexist with fabulous wealth.

One of the articles in our first issue of *Women and Revolution* ten years ago was called "Does Your Family Drive You Crazy?" It seems appropriate today, with this "Family Protection Act" and a new generation of readers who didn't go through the '60s women's movement, to recall our basic point:

"The family continues to exist because it is functional for capitalism—by keeping women out of the labor market, by forcing several people to exist on the wages of one.... The family seeks to insure the survival of its members through the adaptation of each of them to the larger society, but what this means in practice is an adaptation to capitalism, to 'a world gone mad'.... To fulfill this function, the family must concern itself largely with destroying most of each individual's potential and with instilling respect, conformity, obedience, fear of failure, respect for work, and respect for 'respectability'."

Whether or not our upper classes, with all the "sexual



Triple Jeopardy

Reagan's America: savage indifference to blacks.

liberation" money can buy at their fingertips, really like the monogamous family is irrelevant—they are stuck with it. Precisely because capitalism cannot directly defend the enforced inequality and exploitation its profit system requires, it needs other, more ancient social justifications, and the powerful mystique of the family, propped up by religion's "eternal verities" (that is, childish superstitions) is called into service to ensure social passivity, especially in periods of crisis. And in order to make it work, the state will step in to make laws against anybody stepping out of line. Outlawing any kind of sexual behavior other than monogamous married life, imprisoning homosexuals, taking children away from "sinful" mothers on the one hand, while making motherhood mandatory by outlawing abortion on the other—all these and more are on Reagan's agenda for America.

The Fight for Women's Liberation

The women's movement of the late '60s—both its radical lifestylist and respectable reformist wings—believed it had the key to women's liberation. Obviously something has gone very wrong somewhere, though. Betty Friedan, author of *The Feminine Mystique*, believes the present conservative onslaught is in part the fault of the women's movement, which was maybe too radical: "The sexual politics that
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Women and Revolution

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Workers Vanguard

Labor Day, NYC: It'll take more than parades to win workers' rights. Support PATCO—Shut Down the Airports!

distorted the sense of priorities of the women's movement during the 1970s made it easy for the so-called Moral Majority to lump E.R.A. with homosexual rights and abortion into one explosive package of licentious, family-threatening sex" (*New York Times Magazine*, 5 July 1981). "Maybe there was something slightly off in the way we handled abortion. Such slogans as 'free abortion on demand' had connotations of sexual permissiveness, affronting not only the moral values of conservatives but implying a certain lack of reverence for life and the mysteries of conception and birth," she broods. Since when did the "facts of life" get promoted to holy mysteries? Apparently it's not just the conservatives whose "moral values" are affronted by gay rights and abortion!

Meanwhile, the more radical lifestyle groups, who thought they could escape oppression simply by creating female communes, eating natural food and not oppressing anybody else, are discovering there is no escape from the cruel capitalist world, which is out to get them. "We must unite," these separatists now proclaim. But for what? With whom? With those feminists running the reactionary anti-pornography campaign? With Reagan's first female appointee to the Supreme Court, Sandra Day O'Connor? With the "physically challenged" and other admittedly oppressed but powerless groups?

It's certainly true that Reagan has killed sectoralism—he's out to get everybody! And opposition to Reagan is growing among almost all sectors of American society, from the socially diverse—PTA committees furious about the "let 'em eat ketchup" school lunches, elderly retirees worried about Social Security cuts, ecologists upset about strip mining Yellowstone Park, homosexuals trapped in cop raids, blacks menaced by Klan/Nazi terrorism, women again forced into back-alley abortions, pacifists scared about a new draft—to the unionized working class, many of whom had actually

voted for Reagan out of sheer disgust with Carter.

The key to women's liberation is replacing the monogamous family unit with social alternatives to its stifling restrictions. But so long as capitalism exists, it will enforce those restrictions with a vengeance. To open the road to the full development of every individual, the working class must break the chains of poverty, racism, exploitation and the hideous sexual straitjacket of "conventional morality" through socialist revolution. Reagan's inhuman budget cuts are part of the necessary strategy of American imperialism, as is the war drive against the USSR. Betty Friedman's cowardly prostration before the "mysteries" of reactionary Moral Majorityite Bible-thumping, New Left circuses like the Detroit "All Peoples Congress" in October (which heard every complaint ever made about how life is not fair and decided to pressure the Democrats to do something about it)—such tactics only prolong the agony of capitalist decay because they pretend you can reform this system, make it nicer, fairer, more "peace-loving." You can't. There have been two world wars already, and a third is on the way—unless we stop it.

The Working Class and Socialist Revolution

The working class alone has the weight, the strategic position as producer of society's wealth, and above all the self-interest, because it is directly exploited by the profit system, to smash capitalism and build a socialist society. Of course the American working class today doesn't have that consciousness—decades of being told to hate Russia, to vote Democratic and love "God,"

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Is There Sex After Reagan?

Reprinted from *Young Spartacus* No. 94
October 1981

There is actually *one* social program Ronald Reagan isn't trying to eliminate. Twenty-seven centers which *previously* provided birth control and abortion information to adolescent women will still be funded, but with a Reaganesque switch. The Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee allocated \$30 million a year through 1984 to promote "self-discipline and chastity and other positive family-centered approaches" among teenagers. The bill's sponsor, Jeremiah Denton, the senator from the Moral Majority, wants to prohibit the centers from referring pregnant teenagers to abortion clinics and require parental permission before teenage girls could receive birth control information or devices. Denton questions "such relatively new developments as the sexual revolution." "You can have a great time with these bills," he said. "You can say we are going back to 1450."

This ayatollah from Alabama isn't kidding. Reagan and the Moral Majority offer little more than what a peasant in 1450 heard from his parish priest: live on prayer and for the hereafter. Certainly their ideas for the here and now aren't too appealing—especially if you are young, black and/or working class. Social services are being slashed, inflation and unemployment are soaring—and ketchup has been declared a vegetable in federally sponsored school "lunches"! Maybe the "right-to-life" crowd—which supports the death penalty!—figures kids will be too hungry to think about sex.

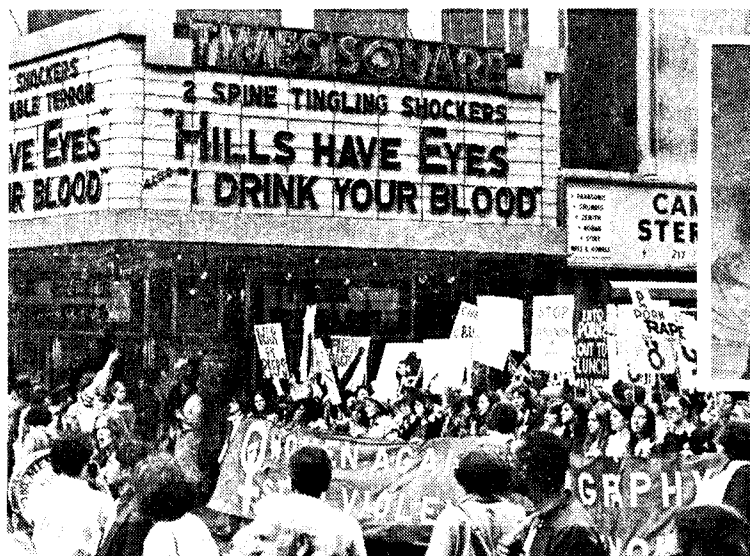
At an administration-sponsored conference, one participant addressed the soaring teenage pregnancy rate: "Why don't we teach the boys not to ask as well as the girls to say no?" Even Barry Goldwater was skeptical of the Moral Majority's attempt to suppress sex: "Oh, God. There's no way. How the hell could you regulate that?" Good question, but that won't stop the latter-day guardians of virtue. New Jersey "aborted" a nine-month-old (!) bill funding sex education in the schools and a January 1981 California law requires doctors to report to the state any "underage" girls "suspected" of having sex. A congressional bill would not only outlaw abortion but make doctors liable for prosecution for *murder*, since it decrees that human life starts at conception, with full constitutional rights!

So today abortion becomes murder one, sex education is reduced to a two-letter word (no!) and "biological creationism" is back in the schools of

several states. One hundred years after Darwin and half a century after the Scopes Monkey Trial these yahoos want to go back to Genesis.

But over and above the gross interference in people's private lives, all of this means a terrible increase in human misery. No birth control, no education in basic biology means more unwanted pregnancies, more venereal disease and more back-alley abortions. It is literally a sentence of death or maiming for thousands of young women.

There's a lot of hypocrisy here too. Some Congressional Moral Majorityites don't practice what they preach for everybody else. In *My Capitol Secrets*, Rita Jenrette, ex-wife of an Abscam Democrat, mentions Bob Bauman, who would "stride on to the floor of the House and pound the desk and carry on an anti-gay tirade in the manner of Anita Bryant. Then he'd go out at night carousing in gay bars." Cops who'd been following him caught him "molesting an



Workers Vanguard



Susan D. Fleischman

Anti-porn feminist Andrea Dworkin (above), "Women Against Pornography" join reactionary crusade.

underage boy."

This poisonous climate of "decency" has led to an increase in censorship and outright persecution of so-called "deviants," particularly homosexuals. On July 11, two members of the North American Man/Boy Love Association (NAMBLA) were arrested in Long Island, charged with sodomy and sexual abuse. Others have been arrested in New York, New Jersey and New Hampshire—more have been "questioned." NAMBLA supports the sexual rights of gays and children but in Reagan's America that's a crime: in a vicious state witchhunt, the cops accuse NAMBLA of operating a "sex ring." Government out of the bedroom! Drop the charges against NAMBLA!

We say people have the right to write, paint and film what they want, read and watch what they want, and sleep with whomever and whatever they want, provided the other one(s) agree. Free abortion and birth control on demand! No censorship or pornography laws! Abolish all age-of-consent laws! ■

Women and the USSR: An Exchange

Russian "Feminist Dissidents" vs. Women and Revolution

Our article, "Fake Left Hails Holy Mother Russia's Daughters" (W&R No. 21, Winter 1980-81), on four "feminist dissidents" expelled from the USSR, has stirred up quite a storm. Virtually the entire Western left had saluted these "first real feminists in Russia"—except us. We said their call on Red Army soldiers in Afghanistan to desert, their glorification of traditional wife-and-motherhood, their religious-mystical streak, their opposition to Soviet women's participation in industrial production, their all-sided hostility to the USSR made them a godsend to Western imperialism—and indeed the Ford Foundation sponsored a U.S. speaking tour for Tatyana Mamonova. We characterized the four—Mamonova, Yuliya Voznesenskaya, Tatyana Goricheva and Natalia Malakhovskaya—as "man-hating mystics, Virgin Mary worshipers, petty-bourgeois poetesses" and concluded "Soviet women can expect nothing from such a feminist movement, allied to one of women's worst enemies domestically, the Church, and to imperialism internationally—except maybe counterrevolution."

Four California leftists sent us a six-page rebuke for our harsh tone, expressing concern that "if these women even chance to hear your views" they would think we were Stalinists. One of the Russian "feminists," N. Malakhovskaya, then sent us a lengthy reply, in mimeographed form, to our article. We publish this below along with a response by W&R. It should be quite clear from this exchange that if Malakhovskaya thinks we are Stalinists it is not because of our tone but because there is indeed no common ground between the critique of Stalinism offered by these anti-communist "dissidents" and our Trotskyist program for proletarian ouster of the Stalinist usurpers. Malakhovskaya's "Open Letter" to W&R stands with our capitalist class enemy; indeed the glorification of religious obscurantism by her "Club Maria" places these "dissidents" well to the ideological right of the Enlightenment bourgeoisie. Malakhovskaya wants Russia to go backwards to the decadent irrationality of capitalist exploitation and medievalist mysticism. We want to organize the international working class in defense of the historically progressive proletarian property forms established by the October Revolution, a defense which requires not only the extension of the revolution to the capitalist nations but also the revolutionary overthrow of Stalinism, the parasitic bureaucratic rule which was established by a political counterrevolution against workers power, reflecting the pressure of world imperialism on the isolated workers state. To put it most simply, Malakhovskaya



Soviet woman auto worker, Moscow.

looks to the capitalist (and pre-capitalist!) past, we look to the socialist future.

Therefore there is nothing "sisterly" in this exchange. "I wish you just one hour in a torture cell, comrades Trotskyists," says Malakhovskaya. So why are we responding here to the openly reactionary "Club Maria"? Our target is the self-styled Marxists who, out of confusion, cowardice or social-democratic "anti-Stalinist" conviction have hailed these foes of socialism as "feminist dissidents." Those fake-leftists who make common cause with imperialism and its apologists have no role to play in the future mobilization of the Soviet working class and its allies against the Stalinist traitors and for authentic proletarian socialism.

Open Letter to the Editors of Women and Revolution by Natalia Malakhovskaya

27 February 1981

Thank you very much for sending me a copy of your journal containing the article "Holy Mother Russia's Daughters" on the subject of the first free women's

journals in the USSR and the free women's club "Maria." I received the journal yesterday, and immediately sat down to read it with great interest.

Finally, we have encountered polemics! Until now, people have listened to us, asked us questions, expressed admiration. One could not really qualify as "polemics" the cautious and extremely tactfully-expressed dismay about our religious beliefs which surfaced from time to time in our invariably sincere discussions with Western feminists. They did not argue, they asked us questions. However, we have finally found opponents! Opponents who do not search our homes, arrest us, follow us in cars, threaten us, interrogate us, assume the guise of sex-maniacs or chase us down dark streets hiding their faces and exposing that, which is usually covered. Opponents, who express their views in print.

Who are you, then, our newly-discovered opponents? The title page of your journal bears the words "Journal of the Women's Commission of the Spartacist League." This immediately reminded me of a song once very popular among children in the Soviet Union; "Divisions of brave spartacist warriors moved forward." This is the total of my knowledge about "spartacists," and I am certain that none of my friends know any more about them, either. Having gone through your journal I realized that you are leftists, Marxists and Trotskyists. As Trotsky's name has long been excised from school history books in the Soviet Union, and in university textbooks he warrants no more than a passing reference, I must admit that I (along with "the entire Soviet people") know hardly anything about him, and nothing at all about his doctrine. While I would not stake my head that there is not one single admirer of Trotsky in the Soviet Union, I must say that I



Ms., Western left and feminists hailed reactionary daughters of Holy Mother Russia.

have certainly never heard of any such person. Marxists are a different matter: most of them are confined in prisons and psychiatric hospitals. It would be interesting to hear in what other countries adherents of the official ideology are subjected to similar treatment? Their groups are small and weak, and any hopes of their receiving broad popular support could be based only on sheer ignorance, for everyone, including the workers, has nothing but deep loathing for the ubiquitous posters of Marx plastered up all over the place. The only reaction produced by his name is one of acute nausea. As a rule, Marxist groups are made up of teenagers who have read the official textbooks on history and sociology and then, taking a look around themselves have wondered: "How can this be? Nothing is the way the books say it ought to be! This doesn't follow Lenin! This doesn't follow Marx!" So they dig deeper into their books, whisper among themselves and hold secret meetings and discussions until such time as they are all caught. Incidentally, the authorities have no qualms about imprisoning them for there is no reason to fear any serious support from Western Marxists for these youngsters. The Soviet authorities adhere strictly to the rule that "he who is not with us, is against us." This is why we did not consider Marxists as ideological foes (we had more important matters to occupy us) but rather as allies in the general struggle against our common foe.

It must be noted that all the underground groups in Leningrad, no matter what their leanings, maintain very close contact with each other. They are united, first of all, by their courage, their uncompromising commitment and firm refusal to swell their ranks by unselective admission of new members. This is why members of the most diverse groups quickly become fast friends, why we always helped one another: we hid each other's materials during house searches and gave shelter to each other's members when necessary. For this same reason my friends attended and recorded trials of neo-Marxists, even though they did not share their views. Is it not true Christianity to see the suffering and the driven as people, and not cyphers in an inanimate logical scheme? And it was for this reason that I expected the "brave spartacist warriors" not to limit themselves to polemicizing with us, but also to express support for the first women's journals and clubs to campaign for women's rights in the Soviet Union since the times of the Stalinist terror. But no such support was forthcoming. Not a word of solidarity—despite the fact that the Soviet authorities are escalating their efforts to wipe out the newly-emerged feminist movement in the USSR, despite the fact that two of its members are already under arrest and the others are under threat of physical reprisals! Although the face of Marxism in the Soviet Union—that most free of all nations—is repulsive enough, it is here in the "accursed West," the birthplace of the "world's most progressive teaching" that we find ourselves shedding the last lingering traces of the illusion that there is something romantic and beautiful in Marxism.

The only thing you have omitted in your article is to refer to us as "the gang of four," although I suspect you would have dearly loved to do so. You confined

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V.I. Surikov

In the name of the Russian Orthodox Church, Black Hundreds, Cossack rampages, pogroms of Jews made old Russia's village streets run red with blood. (Left: "A Tsarevna Visiting a Convent"; right: aftermath of pogrom in Odessa, early 1900s.)

yourself to a mere hint, referring to us as a "bunch." For this, at least, much thanks! So, just what are the accusations you level at us in your lengthy article, which takes up almost one quarter of the entire issue?

I shall try to answer your objections one by one, although it is patently obvious that the opening phrase is the best possible rebuttal of any accusation: "Russian women don't talk—they howl." It is true that he who talks may be wrong, an orator can be mistaken, preachers and teachers can err: but can one *howl with pain* by mistake?

Can one really "howl," as you claim, in order to realize "glamour and fame in the 'free' West"? The sincerity and accuracy of words can always be questioned, but the sincerity of an agonised howl—hardly. If somebody howls, then it can be safely assumed that they have reached the end of their endurance.

Then you set about abusing us: we are not "progressive," we "exaggerate" everything, we do not howl the way we should. By quoting extracts of our articles out of context you strive to tell your readers: look at that! How can this possibly be true? You apply the infamous thesis of all dogmatics: this is not true, because such things cannot be. Do you think it is impossible for women to bear children without the availability of analgesics, without necessary medical assistance and with the added burden of the cynical and indifferent attitude of medics? I would advise any and all of you to travel to the Soviet Union in the 9th month of pregnancy (if you can get an entry visa!) and to try having your babies there, in the same conditions in which we had to bear ours. The same can be said with regard to all your other accusations of "exaggeration": go and live there for a while, but not in a tourist hotel: stay for a while with someone who lives in a communal flat. When you return, we will really have something to talk about, and

we shall lend an ear to your "exaggerations."

To us, born and bred in the Soviet Union, many of your arguments are simply comical because of their "class approach," which is strongly reminiscent of the era of our grandmothers. For instance, such expressions as "petty bourgeois poetesses"—where on earth is such terminology still seriously used? But the strangest accusation of all is that we are part of the intelligentsia: "Is this," you ask, "really the inchoate cry of the imprisoned female soul of Russia? By no means. Where the group comes from is clear from the hysterical Dostoevskian quality of their writing—in fact, they are part of the crackpot fringe of Leningrad's pro-Western dissident intelligentsia... alienated and arrogant artistes and other 'sensitive souls' who despise their grey and repressive homeland, contemptuously ignore its working people, and dream only of glamour and fame in the 'free' West outside."

By what right do you make such assertions about people whom you have never met? How can you have the gall to make sweeping judgments about the spiritual life of a country which bears not the slightest resemblance to your own? You consider that because you find our tone incomprehensible (obviously, none of you has ever had to howl with pain!) gives you the right to make such irresponsible generalizations. Ignorance is no excuse: the whole world knows that those who truly despise our homeland are not driven into exile in the West, and that those who are contemptuous of the needs of the working people are at the pinnacle of power and can enjoy the fruits of "glamour and fame" at home.

Yes, we are part of the intelligentsia, and see nothing in this of which to be ashamed. It is true that those of us who have been sent out of the Soviet Union were active in the sphere of unofficial culture in Leningrad: but this



Ringart

cannot be said of the remaining members of the "Maria" club, who have become engaged in social activity only since joining the club in 1980. However, although we were part of the intelligentsia this does not make us incapable of expressing the views of women from other social strata. Take a closer look at the contents of our journals. Are they confined to strictly "artistic" subjects? We write about maternity hospitals and abortions, about queues and shortages of basic foodstuffs, about prisons, about concentration and pioneer camps, about a great many things which are of concern to every woman in our country outside the privileged Party class. Being a member of the intelligentsia will not assure you of analgesics in the maternity hospital, nor will it help you to jump the queue for food: it will, however, assure that you will be admitted into prison without any delays. As for our alleged "contempt" of working people, the best proof to the contrary are, first and foremost, the journal "Woman and Russia" and its successor "Maria," in which we do not write about abstract notions, but about the most painful and burning problems facing all women in a direct and unambiguous way. This is why our publications had such an impact in Leningrad, Moscow and other Soviet cities, moreover in circles beyond those of the "second culture." You try to present yourselves as being knowledgeable about Russian reality, yet you have overlooked (or, more likely, simply did not know) that support for us was voiced not only in the West: it was voiced firstly by our compatriots. Our journal was a veritable bombshell in that we were the first to speak out about the hopeless horror of everyday life, about matters which are of concern to all women. The journal was literally snatched from hand to hand among friends, neighbours, strangers and colleagues at work. Do you know whom we, the intelligentsia, have as colleagues? Lift operators and cleaners, sanitary

workers and furnace stokers, truck loaders, doormen, postmen, workers—the list is endless. We did not "emerge from the people" like the bolsheviks, we are going *into* the people, not through conscious volition or ideology like the Populists, but because of necessity. Thus, by removing us from the sphere of "intelligent" work, the Soviet authorities have ensured that the people now have direct access to us. So you see, the social status of activists of the sphere of unofficial culture is not that of the intelligentsia, but of the working class. Moreover, I would remind you of the old saying: "Let not the pot call the kettle black."

Messrs Lenin and Trotsky did not emerge from the people: Lenin, in fact, did not even emerge from the intelligentsia but (shameful to say!) from the gentry. Therefore, how could he be said to be expressing the will of the people? The truth is, that he did not express it. If, as you note, we "howl with pain," it is because we experience it day after day, we suffer the same afflictions in the same measure as women "of proletarian origin." Whereas Lenin, who took it upon himself to speak for the workers, did not spend so much as a day in manual labour at a factory bench. Our working class women, most of whom are poorly educated, are as yet in no condition to translate their tears into words. That is all they can do at the moment—weep, curse their lot and howl in anguish.... "this cry we call a song," wrote the poet Nekrasov. Some turn to drink, some commit suicide.... And if the Lord has given us, along with suffering, the ability to understand our suffering and the suffering of those who stand and weep in mute pain beside us, this is no shame to us, it is something of which we should be proud. And you reproach us for it?

Apart from your strange, fusty and moth-eaten terminology which is redolent of "class" approach, the article contains another serious flaw, one that is, incidentally, very characteristic of Marxists. I was horrified by your proclamation: "Hail Red Army in Afghanistan!" Obviously, our opponents are in favour of intervention into a foreign country because Muslim fanatics allegedly stop girls from learning to read and force women to wear the veil. Therefore: let us kill the woman! Then she will become literate (presumably, in the after-life?) and her veil will fall by itself. In order to know what we are protesting about, one should read what we have written about the war in Afghanistan. We are not against teaching girls to read, nor are we advocating retention of the veil: we are protesting against the slaughter and the unspeakable tortures to which defenceless women are subjected in Afghanistan by communists, led by the Red Army. We do not fabricate examples, nor do we draw them from statistical analyses: we get them first hand, from witnesses. This is the difference between your approach and ours—you theorize, theorize callously despite the fact that before your very eyes Soviet "liberators" are perpetrating atrocities too horrible to describe. On second thoughts, *not* before your very eyes, for you have taken care to close them tightly. You have no wish to see the glaring evidence of genuine, terrible suffering. At best you will have a little joke about the word "howl," but theory means more to you

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than real pain. You claim that we "care not at all for the liberation of the masses of women" because of our "attitude towards Afghanistan." "Here you have a shooting war," continues your article, "in which the liberation of women from the most backward, feudal oppression is at stake. The Red Army's intervention is the only thing preventing the Afghan mullahs from keeping women enslaved, veiled and ignorant." What a welcome gift such words are to the KGB! Andropov himself would be delighted to fete you. It seems to me that either you do not fully understand what you are saying, or that you are deprived of reason if all you can spot is the fly on the elephant and cannot tear your eyes away from it, deaf to cries and blind to blood, mutilated bodies and disregard for human dignity. You follow with the accusation that we "call on the soldiers to desert, and spit on their 'shameful uniform'." Yes, we call upon soldiers not to become killers, oppressors and butchers. Similar calls came from progressive circles in the United States during the war in Vietnam—and for this they ought to be commended. The second issue of "Maria" is devoted to the struggle of the Afghan people for freedom, and that includes freedom for the women of Afghanistan who made their attitude to the "red liberators" quite clear last spring. We do not set out "logical conclusions," we simply give the facts about the life of Afghan women under the boot of the red soldier. I suggest that you take the time to acquaint yourselves with the contents of this forthcoming issue of our journal, devoting particular attention to the accounts given by witnesses of the specially-devised and refined methods of torture employed against women. I doubt that after reading these accounts you will be able to write so glibly about "liberation."

You say that we "ought to try living the life of a veiled Afghan woman, enslaved to religious obscurantism." We have a counter-suggestion: that you try living the life of a woman whose children are killed before her eyes, after which she receives as "a present" the dismembered body of her husband and then, after monstrous violation, is killed herself. Is such a fate preferable to obscurantism? Are you human, editors of "Women and Revolution"? Let alone women? It is natural for a woman to reject violence, and violence like *this*.... As Bob Dylan asks in one of his songs:

"And how many ears must one man have
Before he can hear people cry?"

In all fairness I must note that we did considerable study of the life of women in Afghanistan before the coming of the "liberators," and know, not merely by hearsay, of the advances in freeing women from oppression in that country. Reading your article made me feel ashamed—for you. How can it be that people who are not facing the barrel of a gun (like the young Soviet soldiers in Afghanistan) or living in fear of reprisals (like most Soviet people do) can voluntarily defend and extol the illegal invasion of another country, the sufferings of innocent women and children? I wish you just one hour in a torture cell, comrades Trotskyists!

There is nothing surprising in the fact that the majority of women in the Soviet Union are against the war in Afghanistan. Nobody wants to lose their

husband, son or anyone close to them for some totally abstract aim. Moreover, the Soviet government is not even pursuing abstract aims or ideals, make no mistake about that! They are pursuing a policy of straight-out territorial gain and yours are the first voices of approval that I have heard in connection with this war.

Your attitude to the problems of women in the Soviet Union is similarly cold-blooded and ill-informed. You say that "the accusation that Soviet women are forced into doing body-destroying labour is a lie pure and simple." Have you ever worked in a Soviet factory? I have. And I was forced to do such work. When I refused to pick up heavy weights, the foreman would declare; "What's wrong with you? A young, healthy woman like you—and you say you can't shift this timber?" And this, I would like to point out, was in Leningrad. Have you any idea what goes on in the provinces? In the hospital of a small town in Siberia one of my friends encountered a woman whose uterus dangled between her legs every time she got out of bed. Nobody had forced her to lift weights—circumstances of life forced her. One must eat, and it is frequently impossible to find any work other than that which is "body-destroying." There is no social security paid to the unemployed: on the contrary, they stand to be charged with "parasitism" (the Soviet euphemism for unemployment) and sent to concentration camps. How dare you make bold pronouncements about matters of which you know nothing but hearsay, from "official sources"? You know the "truth" which is easily expressed in the phrase; "Outside the collective farm sector" (which alone would suffice, incidentally) "there is a free market for labour in the USSR."

We, on the other hand, talk not only about what we have seen and heard, but what we have experienced on our own skins. I spent one month on the "free market for labour" in the Soviet Union, after which I was ill for five months. And it was not the heaviest labour available, either. What is "free" choice? We cannot be free of hunger pangs, of the fear that the children will go hungry if you cannot earn some money to feed them. The child benefits paid in the USSR are so small that they would not even buy food for two days.

After all the above, it would be akin to blasphemy to discuss religious issues with you. Being referred to as "feminist mystics" does not offend us, on the contrary, we consider it a compliment, even though I fear we have not earned it. Your suspicions concerning "Great Russian chauvinism" are simply laughable. Our club consists of women of different nationalities and creeds: Orthodox, Catholic and Baptist. We also have unbaptised members, who do not attend church but pray at home to "God unknown." There are also those who do not believe in God, but who live in Love and selfless service to others. Yet we are all daughters of the Mother of God, Mary, the Holy Mother of not just Russia, but of the whole world. From day to day She sustains us in our trials and difficult moments, gives us strength and steadfastness, helps us to preserve hope. Do you really think that we would be ashamed to be called Her daughters?

* * * * *

Women and Revolution Replies:

It does strike us as odd to be accused of "fustiness" and "sounding like our grandmothers" by such an up-to-date tendency as the Russian Orthodox Church. Nor do we associate that medieval institution with tender mercies. How many crimes have been committed in the name of the Virgin! With priests' blessings time and again the Black Hundreds, Cossack rampages, pogroms of the Jews made old Russia's miserable village streets run red with blood. So Malakhovskaya wants to pray to the blood-stained ikons, wallow in the masochistic myths of feminine suffering—fine. We are more than proud to be associated with such "grandmothers" as Alexandra Kollontai, Vera Zasulich, Clara Zetkin and Rosa Luxemburg.

Prayer and miracles have done nothing to relieve the sufferings of women over the centuries. But the Bolshevik Revolution has. In Afghanistan today the Soviet Army is literally the only thing standing between women and continued barbaric enslavement. The Bolshevik Revolution's historic victory in abolishing capitalist exploitation opened the road to the most sweeping possibilities for social change and progress in this century. And even Stalinist degeneration has not reversed the fundamental economic gains of that revolution. Reagan/Haig's drive toward a World War III of nuclear holocaust today is fueled by imperialism's unrelenting hostility to those gains of October.

So N. Malakhovskaya thinks "just one hour in a torture cell" might make us change our tune. Well, our Soviet comrades and our tendency historically have had more than that—the Moscow Trials, exile, the Siberian camps, Vorkuta, murderous Stalinist vendettas from Leningrad to Hanoi and from Spain to Mexico, where Trotsky was murdered by a KGB hitman in 1940. Leopold Trepper, the heroic Soviet spy who created the "Red Orchestra" of World War II fame, recalled in his memoirs that it was the Trotskyists alone who protested Stalin's rise and held fast to their socialist convictions. It was not a question of personal courage alone, Trepper said: "They had the advantage over us of having a coherent political system capable of replacing Stalinism. They had something to cling to in the midst of their profound distress at seeing the revolution betrayed. They did not 'confess,' for they knew that their confession would serve neither the party nor socialism."

Because the Stalinist bureaucracy has trampled into the mud the liberating—yes, even "beautiful and romantic"—goals of Marxism is no reason for us to reconcile ourselves to capitalism. Rather the contrary—it was capitalist "encirclement" of the isolated Soviet workers state which brought to power in Russia a conservative bureaucratic stratum as the purveyor of "peaceful coexistence." We call for communist unity against imperialism through working-class political revolution to overthrow the Kremlin traitors and restore workers democracy. And we defend the USSR today against capitalist restoration—just as the Trotskyists in the Siberian prison camps did—not because of any illusions that the bureaucracy will "reform," but because the Soviet Union remains a society resting on

the historic gains of collectivized property forms and the planned economy. Those gains are very real and their effects can be seen in the position of women in the USSR perhaps most clearly, albeit with all the wrenching contradictions inherent in the bureaucracy's commitment to the family, conservatizing historic prison of women.

The "Dissident" Movement

That Malakhovskaya pretends to want us Trotskyists (whom allegedly no one has ever heard of anyhow) to support her "women's movement" is simple hypocrisy.



Another of our "grandmothers": Nadezhda Krupskaya addressing young Red Guards.

"The West"—i.e., the Ford Foundation, Ms. magazine, bourgeois politicians, Freedom House/CIA-connected organs—has given plenty of support to such reactionary groups. A W&R reporter researching this article was not surprised to find Malakhovskaya's "Open Letter" available at Freedom House. It happens that we do defend the right to free speech for "dissidents" in the USSR, including even the most anti-communist, so long as they do not actively work for the overthrow of the Soviet degenerated workers state. Our position is based not on any sense of shared program between ourselves and tsar-lovers like Solzhenitsyn, but on the recognition that the Stalinist bureaucracy in power is the main internal danger to the gains of October. That monstrous cancer on the Soviet workers state bears heavy

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responsibility for the growth of every kind of reactionary ideology—it is the Kremlin rulers themselves who on a gigantic scale promote illusions in deals with imperialism, uphold the mystique of the family, foster national chauvinism, and have on occasion relied on the Russian Orthodox Church as a prop for social conservatism.

The current generation of Soviet dissidents, drawn from the intelligentsia, has shown little concern for anything outside their own collective suffering at the hands of the bureaucracy. An egregious example was Soviet nuclear physicist Andrei Sakharov's refusal to comment on the bloody 1973 Pinochet coup in Chile on the grounds it was "too far away"! Malakhovskaya's own statement, "It is here in the 'accursed West' ... that we find ourselves shedding the last lingering traces of the illusion that there is something romantic and beautiful in Marxism," is perfectly typical of a whole string of Soviet dissidents, who the minute they get one inch off Soviet soil turn into the most energetic pro-imperialist drumbeaters. Solzhenitsyn, Sakharov, Ukrainian mathematician Leonid Plyusch, Amalrik, Bukhovskiy—it's the same story. Yet we protested their censorship, imprisonment and in some cases banishment by the Kremlin, because we recognize that in the USSR today the heavy-handed and arbitrary Stalinist repression, alienating every section of society and demoralizing the working class, is the main internal danger to socialist consciousness among the masses.

Our defense of the rights of Soviet political dissidents stops at the boundaries of political dissidence. Those who actively organize for bloody counterrevolution, whether with gun in hand or through collaboration with the imperialist spy agencies, are not "dissidents" but counterrevolutionary criminals. Take the case of Anatoly Shcharansky, the Zionist "refusenik" who tried to hand over Soviet defense secrets to conduits to the CIA. In our article (*Workers Vanguard* No. 212, 18 July 1978) we had no kind words for the Stalinists:

"We have no trust whatsoever that the bureaucratic thugs of the KGB can judge Shcharansky's culpability and

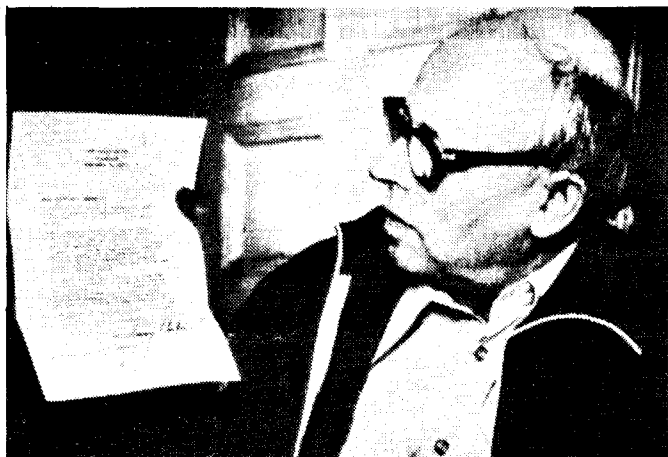
apply proletarian justice accordingly. These are the people who massacred thousands of Trotskyists and Old Bolsheviks... all on fabricated charges of treason and acting as imperialist agents; today they lock up any opponent of the ruling clique in psychiatric hospitals, corner their targets with agents provocateurs...."

But we had no tears for the traitor Shcharansky, and we headlined "Shcharansky Is Guilty as Hell!"

Afghanistan

Malakhovskaya claims to speak for suffering womanhood; she recounts the agony of giving birth in a Soviet hospital, the meager child benefits. How many women in Afghanistan have even seen a hospital? Or "child benefits"—one-half of all Afghan infants are dead by age five. Most Afghan women (and men) cannot read or write, and women's veils are literally death traps: "There is a very high level of tuberculosis, especially among the women. They don't get the sun and they breathe the dust that swirls up underneath when this approximately 30 yards of muslin moves with the breeze, and they choke on it..." points out Spartacist comrade Phyllis Anwar, who lived in Afghanistan for four years.

Virtually all Western analysts, including those most hostile to the USSR, recognize that the question of women's most basic rights was decisive in igniting the uprisings that led to the Soviet intervention. As a recent American book, which supports the "Afghan rebels" against the Soviet Army, stated: "When Khalq [the left-nationalist regime] forced the enrollment of girls in the schools, resistance could have been expected. Coupled with the prohibition of marriage before age eighteen, female Marxist education raised the specter of young women refusing to submit to family authority.... Incidents of protest mushroomed into local armed revolts.... By the end of 1978 the people had unmistakable evidence that their way of life could not survive unless they could manage to remove the Khalq regime" (*The Struggle for Afghanistan*, Cornell University Press, 1981).



AP

Left Oppositionists in exile colony at Yeniseisk, Siberia raise banner "Long Live the Dictatorship of the Proletariat," circa 1928 (left). Pro-Western "dissidents" like Sakharov (above), shown with supportive letter from Jimmy Carter, openly ally with imperialism against the USSR.

That "way of life" has meant chattel slavery for women; for poor men, a lifetime's savings for the bride price (or more likely, a lifetime's debt to the moneylenders, with a cut to the mullahs). It was obvious that the Khalq regime alone could not modernize Afghanistan or even maintain itself in power against the outraged mullahs, landlords, tribal leaders supported and armed by imperialism. Yes, we say "Hail Red Army in

Afghanistan!" because in backward Afghanistan it is only this outside intervention that can open the road to women's emancipation.

The "Club Maria" couldn't care less. In their "Appeal to Mothers" issued in Leningrad in March 1980, they cried (howled?): "Women of Russia! Don't let your husbands and sons become the victims of this bloody slaughter! Explain to them how disgraceful and criminal it is to be the aggressor in a foreign country. ... Burn the draft papers! Just think, all because of this marasmic and sinister adventure organized by a small group of senile old men, you will lose your son, your brother and your husband forever!" ("Maria" paper No. 2—our translation). Now Malakhovskaya raises the war-atrocity argument, that Red Army soldiers are raping Afghan women, a charge for which she claims to have evidence though none is provided.

We do however have plenty of evidence as to the methods of the Afghan rebels, which include skinning alive any Russian they can find and shooting all prisoners—an unpleasant habit admitted even by their admirers. As for the reference to Vietnam, it is not we who are being hypocritical. We always called for the military victory of the North Vietnamese/NLF forces (inevitable once the U.S. pulled out) because we knew it would lead to the overthrow of capitalism in Vietnam. The defeat of U.S. imperialism and the extension of the social gains of the Vietnamese Revolution into the South were for us the decisive questions. While we certainly do support the right of nations to self-

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determination, this bourgeois-democratic principle is subordinate to the class question. In any case Afghanistan is hardly a nation, but rather a collection of feuding tribes, who have been unable to agree even among themselves as to what sort of government (if any) they want.

The Kremlin undertook the intervention, which may or may not have been wise militarily, for its own defensive reasons. But should Afghanistan become incorporated into the Soviet bloc it would be a tremendous step forward for that mullah-ridden backward society, economically and in every other way (Western ideologues make the same point regarding China's absorption of Tibet—but of course China is currently a U.S. ally).

That even today under the conservative Brezhnev bureaucracy such social progress can be made in backward regions is no credit to the Kremlin, but a testament to the power of collectivized property and a centralized economy. As Trotsky explained in *The Revolution Betrayed* (1937):

“... in the sphere of national policy, as in the sphere of economy, the Soviet bureaucracy still continues to carry out a certain part of the progressive work, although with immoderate overhead expenses. This is especially true of the backward nationalities of the Union. ... The bureaucracy is laying down a bridge for them to the elementary benefits of bourgeois, and in part even pre-bourgeois, culture. ...

“The new social forms are by no means irrelevant. ... The bourgeois pioneers had to invent their technique and learn to apply it in the spheres both of economy and

culture. The Soviet Union takes it ready made in its latest forms and, thanks to the socialized means of production, applies the borrowings not partially and by degrees but at once and on a gigantic scale. ...

“If the October Revolution had given nothing but this accelerated forward movement, it would be historically justified, for the declining bourgeois regime has proved incapable during the last quarter century of seriously moving forward any one of the backward countries in any part of the earth.”

Women, Work and the Family

A recent article in the *Orthodox* [Russian Orthodox, that is] *Monitor* by D. Pospelovsky accurately pointed out the “error” of the “Western media” (and Western leftists, we might add) in thinking the “Club Maria” has anything to do with “women’s liberation”: “If anything, the Russian woman-lib is a reaction against the secular liberation process which has resulted in overburdened women who in addition to all the traditional women’s house chores have to work outside of their homes for forty hours a week. Consequently they come home tired, irritated, with no time for the children, unable to perform the traditional role of wife and mother, the anchor, the disseminator of stability and moral health of the family.”

So the “Club Maria” wants to bring Christ and the Virgin Mary back into the family, have women withdraw from outside work and devote themselves to their “traditional” role as moral-religious guardians. What a sad and stifling prospect this is! Women’s participation in

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Above: Afghan women being trained as parachutists. Left: schoolteacher shot by Afghan rebels fighting Red Army. Malakhovskaya's call for Soviet soldiers to desert means continued mullah terror against women.

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work outside the confines of the individual household is an absolute precondition to emancipation. To quote one of those "grandmothers" Malakhovskaya is so contemptuous of, Rosa Luxemburg:

"As bourgeois wives women are parasites on society, their function consisting solely in sharing the fruits of exploitation. As petit bourgeois, they are beasts of burden of the family. It is as modern proletarians that women first become human beings, for it is struggle that produces the human being...."

—"The Proletarian Woman," March 1914

That "holy family" Malakhovskaya upholds, based on exhausting, mind-deadening female galley labor, is not an eternal expression of "human nature" but a historically evolved institution based on the development of private property. The family is the main social institution oppressing women: this is the core of "the woman question" for Marxists. Our goal is the liberation of women from family restrictions, a liberation made historically possible by the vast technological progress achieved by the bourgeois revolutions and by the opening up of the world of social labor to women. But it took socialist revolution to begin the process of replacing the nuclear family, still necessary to capitalism. The Bolshevik Revolution made a brave beginning indeed, despite desperate poverty, in this: free communal childcare centers were established, thousands of schools opened to women for the first time, equal pay for equal work decreed, divorce made free and easily accessible, and so on.

Yet today in the USSR many of women's gains have been undercut or reversed and the commitment to replacing the nuclear family abandoned. Trotsky

devoted a lengthy section of *The Revolution Betrayed* to this question:

"The forty million Soviet families remain in their overwhelming majority nests of medievalism, female slavery and hysteria, daily humiliation of children, feminine and childish superstition.... It proved impossible to take the old family by storm—not because the will was lacking, and not because the family was so firmly rooted in people's hearts.... Unfortunately society proved too poor and little cultured. The real resources of the state did not correspond to the plans and intentions of the Communist Party. You cannot 'abolish' the family; you have to replace it. The actual liberation of women is unrealizable on the basis of 'generalized want.' ... The fact is that from the moment of the abolition of the food-card system in 1935, all the better-placed workers began to return to the home dining table.... The same conclusion must be extended to the social laundries, where they tear and steal linen more than they wash it. Back to the family hearth!"

Trotsky quotes a bitter newspaper editorial: "A child-care center in which the child feels worse than he does at home is not a child-care center but a bad orphan asylum." He discusses the growth of prostitution, the large numbers of homeless children—and savagely attacks the Stalinist bureaucracy for daring to speak of the "triumph of socialism" in the presence of such open sores.

Above all, triumphant Stalinist reaction required the cult of the family for precisely the same reasons the Moral Majority today pushes it. As Trotsky wrote: "The most compelling motive of the present cult of the family is undoubtedly the need of the bureaucracy for a stable hierarchy of relations, and for the disciplining of

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Spartacist League's Anti-Imperialist Contingent raised defense of Cuba, USSR against imperialism at May 3 El Salvador demonstration, Washington, D.C.

youth by means of forty million points of support for authority and power."

In our critical review of such cheery Stalinoid apologias as William Mandel's *Soviet Women* (see *W&R* No. 10, Winter 1975-76), we have dealt with the Kremlin bureaucracy's pressure on women to bear more children (those "Glorious Motherhood" medals, etc.). To spur the birth rate among women of Great Russian nationality, the bureaucracy has been adopting part of the "Club Maria" program by increasingly excluding women from various categories of heavy industrial work. Women do have the right to abortion in the USSR today (does the Virgin Mary approve?—we doubt it), but in part so many abortions are performed because other methods of birth control are not available, particularly in the countryside. By all accounts even the most basic sex education is not available in the schools, and there are high levels of alcoholism among women as well as men. The USSR has made great progress—but at great and bitter cost.

Nonetheless, the fact that women are so heavily integrated into the workforce in the USSR (over 85 percent of adult women work outside the home) gives them—along with the rest of the working masses—the social power which will be the basis for overthrowing the parasitic bureaucracy. That position is a historical gain which must be preserved and strengthened. We do not doubt that female (as well as male) Soviet industrial workers are sometimes abused by plant managers; such mistreatment mimics but certainly does not equal capitalism's disregard for the health and safety of its workforce—from the hideously dangerous working conditions, the speed-up and forced overtime to the racist and sexist harassment. In a democratically administered workers state, workers of both sexes will defend themselves against managerial abuse through independent trade unions.

Malakhovskaya to the contrary, there does exist a free market for labor in the Soviet Union, much as in the capitalist West. In fact, it is certainly easier for a Soviet worker to change jobs since there is a chronic

labor shortage throughout much of the USSR (unlike West Europe and the U.S.). The British liberal economist Alec Nove, a prominent ideological opponent of the Soviet system, acknowledges: "There are, however, ample statistics showing that millions of people change their jobs annually of their own volition, as they have the formal right to do, and migrate from area to area in total disregard of the planners' intentions" (*The Soviet Economic System*, 1977).

Nor is it at all the case, as Malakhovskaya implies, that women can find only "back-breaking" heavy labor. According to 1975 statistics for the Russian Republic, the largest number of women (almost seven million) were employed in wholesale and retail trade. Almost six million were employed in education and almost five million in public health and social welfare services. Far fewer, about three million, work in the construction trades, and only 1.6 million were employed as production workers in industry (Gail W. Lapidus, *Women in Soviet Society*, 1978). Those women who do work in heavy industry do so because wages are appreciably higher. In 1975 average monthly earnings in the Russian Republic construction industry were 177 rubles compared to only 127 rubles in education.

Even in a genuinely democratic workers state, until the achievement of socialism (i.e., a classless society based on material plenty), higher wages will be necessary to attract workers to arduous or dangerous work. In the capitalist West women have "traditionally" been excluded—forcibly, if you like—from relatively well-paying industrial jobs in the construction trades, mining, steel mills, etc. In the USSR women have generally had far greater access to such jobs. Here again the "Club Maria" is on the side of the most reactionary, male-chauvinist tendencies in the capitalist West as well as within the Stalinist bureaucracy.

Religion and Communism

Among Soviet citizens who still believe in the myths of the church (over 90 percent of the Soviet people

profess themselves non-believers), it is not surprising that women predominate. This residual religious belief is an expression of backwardness and despair, most prevalent among family-bound housewives, the old and ailing, the ignorant. As Karl Marx long ago noted: "Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world. . . . It is the *opium* of the people." It is a poison too, inculcating passivity and resignation at best—and at worst, the institutions of the church provide the rallying points for counterrevolution, as in Poland today.

People who don't like our forthright defense of the Soviet Union are always inviting us to "go back to Russia"—as if we had any illusions as to how our Trotskyist program would be received by the KGB. Nonetheless, our tendency was born in the Soviet Union and we firmly intend that Trotskyism will indeed "go back to Russia." And when it does, then and only then will the working women and men of the USSR once again find their true voice. And it will not be the clang of church bells but the triumphant voice of revolutionary communism, birthright of the Soviet working class. ■

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Trotskyists Confront Mamonova

Adapted from *Spartacist Canada*
May/June 1981

Sponsored, hosted and heralded by a motley collection of feminists and fake-leftists, Russian feminist Tatyana Mamonova was whirled across Canada in March this year. Members of the Stalinoid New Leftist In Struggle! and "dissident" ex-members of the Revolutionary Workers League (RWL—section of the ostensibly Trotskyist United Secretariat) acted as escorts and publicity agents for this man-hating anti-communist. The tour was the occasion for the Socialist Challenge Organization's (another collection of former RWL members) Pamphlet No. 1—"Solidarity with Soviet Feminists!"—an unabashed and unrestrained tribute to Mamonova and her Russian sisters. The Communist Party of Canada handed out Women's Commission leaflets which roundly (and rightly) denounced her tour as helping to heat up Reagan's new Cold War. But it was the Trotskyist League (TL—Canadian section of the international Spartacist tendency), not the CP, which stood up to defend the Soviet Union against this pro-imperialist who spits on the gains of the October Revolution.

In Toronto Mamonova said she "had been born a feminist," that the Soviet government was "an entirely rightist, conservative government." She called for "an international feminist union" as the vehicle for "democratization in the Soviet Union." A TL supporter confronted Mamonova on her denunciation of the Red Army intervention in Afghanistan. "I would like to ask how you can present yourself as a champion of women's rights," the TL supporter said, and yet display such contempt for Afghan women,

"who unlike their sisters in Soviet Central Asia are sold like cattle, smothered under 30 yards of black muslin cotton, never live beyond the age of 40 and never learn to read and write. It is a fact that the main thing standing between the women of Afghanistan and grotesque, barbaric feudal, pre-feudal, institutions is the Soviet Red Army. And you called on Red Army soldiers to desert."

Mamonova replied that the liberation of women in Afghanistan will not be won by "tanks and guns" (what does she suggest—"Western-style consciousness-raising among the Muslim fanatics who shoot teachers and throw acid in the faces of unveiled women?"). When pressed by another TL supporter, Mamonova snarled at her to "go back to Russia." Communist Party members present remained silent.

In Vancouver a TL comrade denounced Reagan's anti-Soviet war drive, mentioning El Salvador and noting the possibility of a blockade of Cuba. "There are sides to be taken," she said and asked Mamonova "Which side are you on?" Mamonova responded, "The

continued on next page

Soviet Union is the same as the U.S. They are both capitalist." But this self-proclaimed "feminist and socialist" with her admiration for Western "freedoms" and condemnation of the Red Army clearly has a side! She is only too willing to serve as a tool in the imperialists' drive to restore capitalism in the USSR. Again the CP remained silent.

At the meeting in the old CP stronghold of Winnipeg (where a TL supporter was not allowed to speak during the discussion because of his gender) the CP did manage to struggle to its feet. Here Mamonova tried to dramatize with personal anecdotes her account of the "horrors" faced by women at the hands of "vodka-swilling, wife-beating" Soviet men. She told stories of being "almost forced" to have her baby in a hospital—where she had to share a room!—because she had high blood pressure, and of being stared at by Soviet citizens while riding her bicycle—a fact she uses to prove Western women are better off. Manitoba CP leader Paula Fletcher welcomed "Tatyana" and said she was a feminist too, apologizing to this enemy of the international proletariat for spelling her name wrong in the leaflet they put out to expose her! Then, leaning on an article in *Women and Revolution* on Mamonova and her reactionary friends ("Holy Mother Russia's Daughters," *W&R* No. 21, Winter 1980-81), Fletcher asked Mamonova why she had taken money from the Ford Foundation and questioned her on Afghanistan. Mamonova declared, "I don't think that the Red Army will bring freedom to Afghanistan. Rape is a very common crime in Russia."

The real theme of the CP's intervention in Winnipeg was the usual abject plea to world imperialism for peace and disarmament. Despite the Stalinist degeneration of the Russian Revolution which saw the reversal of many of the gains won by women, Soviet women today remain closer to legal, educational and social parity with men than women in even the most advanced capitalist "democracies." This is by no means the least of our reasons for defending the USSR against capitalist restoration and imperialist aggression. But the gains of the October Revolution will not be defended and extended by fostering illusions that the imperialists can be pressured to "peacefully coexist" with the Soviet degenerated workers state. The only real defense of the USSR lies in international extension of the gains of October through proletarian revolution in the capitalist countries and for political revolution in the degenerated/deformed workers states.

At the Toronto meeting an ex-RWL supporter told CP women distributing pro-Soviet literature: "You should be trying to recruit these guys [the TL]. They're better defenders of the Soviet Union than you are." But that's backwards. It is our task as Trotskyists to work to recruit those who really want to defend the Soviet Union to the only program that can do it. Ours is the tradition of the courageous Soviet Left Oppositionists who, even in the face of death in Stalin's forced labor camps, held fast to the defense of the USSR, calling for the overthrow of those who betrayed the revolution. Mamonova's Canadian tour showed one thing—the Trotskyists are still the best defenders of the Soviet Union. ■

Letters

On Women and Heavy Industry

10 February 1981

Dear Comrades,

W&R's otherwise excellent article on the reactionary Russian "feminist dissidents" stated that "there are women who want to work on construction gangs or in coal mines.... In the Soviet Union they can do it." Unfortunately this is not true. According to *Soviet Women*, William Mandel's apologia for the Soviet bureaucracy's women's rights policies, "... the Soviet Women's Committee... states with great pride that it has convinced the government in recent years to bar women from coal-mining." Nor is coal-mining an isolated case. A recent *Novosti* pamphlet, *USSR, 100 Questions and Answers* (1978), says that "Of the 1,165 basic trades, some 200, regarded as being hazardous to the health or calling for strenuous physical exertion, have been banned for women, and the list is continually expanding." Another, on the new Soviet constitution (*The USSR Constitution*, 1979), informs us that "In 1975 ... more than 280,000 women workers were transferred to lighter jobs." Naturally, the "lighter" jobs, which according to both Cde. Brezhnev and Ms. Mamonova are more "suitable" for women, don't pay as well. Perhaps this is one reason why "female industrial workers average three quarters of the pay of men" (Mandel, p. 107). It would be interesting to find out just how voluntary is this large and presumably continuing wave of job transfers.

Whether protective legislation for women workers in the Soviet Union is truly an unalloyed blessing is far from a new question. It was an important issue during the NEP period of high unemployment. According to E.H. Carr, the sixth Soviet trade union congress discussed the question at length in November 1924, and "recommended the removal of the prohibition on the employment in certain unhealthy occupations and on night work as leading to 'the exclusion of women (especially skilled women) from production'." When a shocked German labor delegation touring Russian mines and factories in 1925 queried Soviet trade union leader Tomsky, he admitted women were indeed mining coal in the Soviet Union, and specifically defended night work for women against objections based on "old bourgeois prejudices" (*Socialism in One Country*, Vol. 1).

Soviet policy has vacillated continuously since then on the role of women in the workforce, depending on the economic needs of the moment. The general restitution of women's rights in the Khrushchev period resulted from the desperate need of the war-shattered Soviet economy for women's labor (as *W&R* pointed out in its review of Mandel's book). The Soviet Union's living standards, military capabilities, and economic performance have all risen dramatically since then. According to *100 Questions*, in 1977 the total industrial output of the Soviet Union was 80% of America's, steel



Women coal miners of Gorlovka region of Ukraine, 1930. The Stalinist bureaucracy today increasingly bars women from such occupations.

126%, and oil 134%. While Chrysler falls apart, the Lada is the fastest-rising import in the Canadian market. As W&R put it in the Mandel book review, "Soviet women are particularly vulnerable to reversals in government policy."

Far from weakening the point of "Holy Mother Russia's Daughters," this strengthens it. For the petty-bourgeois feminist poet-reactionaries of Leningrad and the petty-bourgeois Soviet Women's Committee bureaucrats are sisters under the skin. According to Mandel, "In its literature the Women's Committee explains that women have worked too physically hard

under worsening conditions for too long, and with all sorts of other work always available, why permit some to go on endangering and dulling themselves? Upholders of untrammelled individualism may be outraged, but that is how that group feels." It is precisely the Stalinist ideology of "the family as a fighting unit for socialism" which is the breeding ground for anti-Soviet reactionaries like the "Club Maria" and Ms. Mamonova.

Comradely,
J. Horowitz

A rose by any other name...

New York
January 2, 1981
Dear Editors,

When a man uses sexual stereotypes and sexually loaded language to deride a woman with whom he disagrees, we can all agree, I think, that he is behaving in a sexist manner. So what am I to think of *Women and Revolution*, which constantly uses outmoded and patronizing terms like "lady" and "poetess" to dismiss women who do not share its politics, and which feels obliged to inform its readers that Lillian Hellman and Mary McCarthy "really aren't two bitter old ladies locked in senile death-battle over whose cat killed the

canary"? Such language trades on the very prejudices you claim to oppose—on misogynistic views of women as, in the main, frivolous and trivial and faintly comical. For the record: a woman who writes poetry is a poet, even if her poems are no good, women who read *Ms.* are women, not ladies, even if you don't like their politics, and females over sixty should be presumed, in the absence of concrete evidence of cat-and-canary mania, to be as rational as anyone else.

For shame!

Sincerely yours,
Katha Pollitt

W&R replies: "Lady" does have a faintly malicious flavor, and given *Ms.* magazine's gooey middle-class moralism, that's what we intended. *Re Hellman-McCarthy*, our comment described how the bourgeois media was playing the case for laughs, whereas our article raised the real political hatreds and issues involved in the lawsuit. We remain unrepentant on "poetesses"—those Russian feminists capable of describing Soviet men *en bloc* as "this mass of alcoholics...this stunted one-celled organism, this gigantic, spineless amoeba" shouldn't complain about a little polemical spleen. ■

Correction

In the article "Women's Liberation Through Socialist Revolution!" in our last issue, the date for the Third National Conference of the Spartacist League, which established W&R as a journal of the SL, was given as "1973." The conference took place in November of 1972.

Stop Solidarność Counterrevolution!

From the Introduction to the
English Edition

As Lech Walesa struts before the Solidarność conference displaying his Madonna lapel pin and boasting how he could easily have secured 90 percent of the vote, the U.S. imperialists see their revanchist appetites for capitalist restoration in Eastern Europe coming closer and closer to fruition. And the "crisis of proletarian leadership" described by Trotsky nearly a half-century ago is starkly illuminated in the response of those in Poland and abroad who claim the right to lead the working class.

Stalinism has squandered the socialist and internationalist historic legacy of the Polish workers movement, demoralizing the working class in the face of resurgent Pilsudskiite reaction. The Polish Stalinist bureaucracy, having already mortgaged Poland to the German bankers in the futile hope of buying off its own working class, now seems paralyzed by Solidarność' bid to sell the country to the imperialists outright. There has emerged in Poland no socialist opposition worthy of the name. And internationally the fake-lefts see in this mortal danger to socialized property in Poland a chance to earn their stars and stripes as a left cover for the social democrats and the pro-capitalist "labor statesmen" who long ago enlisted as junior partners in imperialism's war drive against the Soviet Union. In this the virulently anti-Communist chieftains of the American AFL-CIO show themselves not so different from the ruling Stalinist bureaucrats from Moscow to Peking, sellout heads of workers institutions which they are

I enclose \$_____ for _____ copies of "Solidarność: Polish Company Union for CIA and Bankers" at \$1.00 each.

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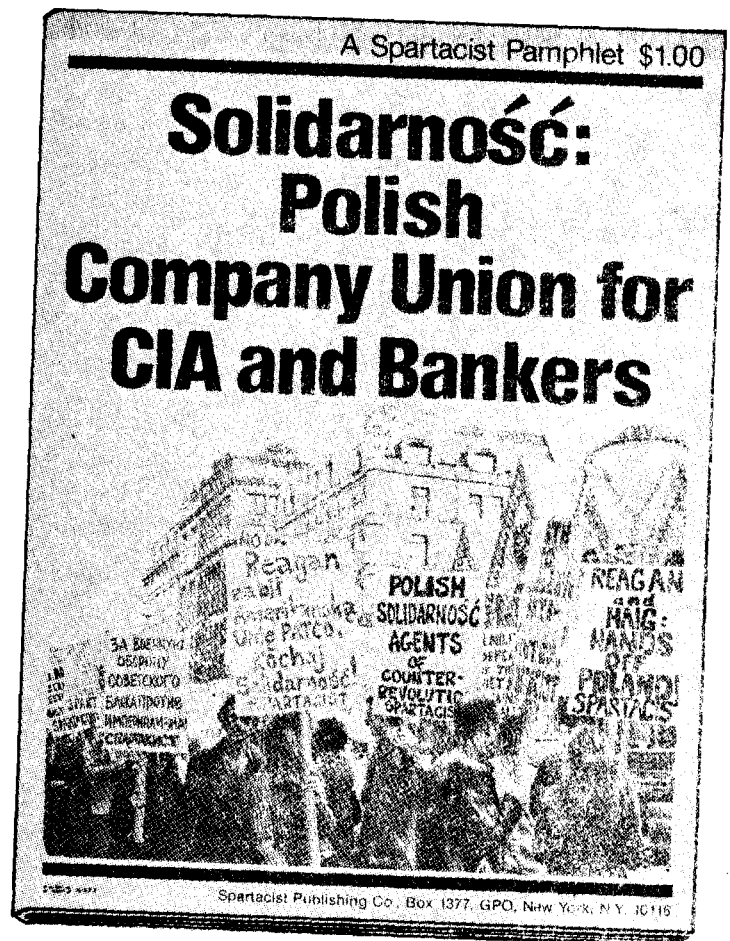
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incapable of effectively defending against the class enemy.

Certainly it is not our job to apologize for the Stalinist rulers who have disorganized the Polish economy, capitulated to the church and the smallholding peasantry, lorded it over the working class with bureaucratic privileges which mimic the invidious inequities of capitalist society, alienated the intelligentia and youth, fostered nationalism and every kind of backward ideology, not least anti-Semitism, and turned "Communism" into a curse word. There is a blood line—the blood of revolutionaries from Indochina to Spain—which separates us Trotskyists from Stalinism, that "great organizer of defeats." But it is very much our job to seek to rally the working class in Poland and internationally behind the defense of historically progressive socialized property in Poland, all the more so since the discredited Stalinists manifestly cannot. The call for "communist unity against imperialism through political revolution," first raised by the Spartacist tendency at the time of the Sino-Soviet split, acquires even greater urgency as the Polish crisis underlines the need for revolutionary unity of the Polish and Russian workers to defeat U.S. imperialism's bloody designs for bringing Poland into the "free world" as a club against the USSR, military/industrial powerhouse of the deformed workers states.

This pamphlet documents the Spartacist analysis of the unfolding events in Poland. Beginning in [August 1980], we recognized in the Polish upheavals both an opening for revolutionary agitation and an awesome potential for reactionary mobilization based on the Catholic church, the peasant "free market," a "dissident" movement which looks to the capitalist West to "democratize" Eastern Europe. As Solidarność consolidated around an anti-socialist program culminating in the adoption of the slogan of "free trade unions," one of the war cries of Cold War anti-Communism, we counterposed the call for trade unions independent of bureaucratic control and based on a program of defending socialized property. The demands raised in the articles in this pamphlet—for the strict separation of church and state, for the collectivization of agriculture, for the cancellation of Poland's debt to the imperialist bankers, for the military defense of the USSR against imperialism—constitute the programmatic core of the international vanguard party necessary to the revolutionary defense of the working masses of Poland against imperialism and capitalist restoration through political revolution in the deformed workers states and proletarian revolution throughout the capitalist world.

8 October 1981

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Moral Majority...

(continued from page 4)

home and country" by the union bureaucracy have taken their toll. We need to build a revolutionary party which will lead workers' struggles, explain the links between capitalist exploitation in the factories and general social oppression and unite all specially oppressed sectors of society under the leadership of the working class.

It can be done. Ten years ago any radical student would have laughed his head off if you said that half a million trade unionists would take to the streets in Washington to protest against the American president. But that's what happened on September 19th, when the extremely conservative AFL-CIO bureaucracy, facing a general government offensive against the labor movement, reluctantly called a demonstration. Half a million angry workers from all over the country showed up, stung by Reagan's open contempt and his firing of the striking air controllers and smashing of their union, PATCO. There was another "mass mobilization" almost as big the same day, the '60s generation with their nostalgic "poetry to protect them" at a free Simon and Garfunkel concert in New York's Central Park. What a striking revelation of class interest: the middle-class students of yesteryear sunk in the music of private life, while the labor movement was marching! The trade unionists in Washington—Southern whites, women garment workers, urban blacks—were fed up with Reagan and many were open to a labor-socialist paper like our *Workers Vanguard* (over 8,000 were sold). Is this the 1950s?—not at all! Reagan can be brought down—and the labor movement can do it, with militant leadership and class-struggle tactics.

And capitalism can be overthrown—the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 proved that. That revolution established a workers state and did more to liberate women than any bourgeois reform in history. And it proved to millions of workers and oppressed peoples around the world that they could *make* history, that they could win. Despite Stalinist degeneration making necessary a working-class political revolution to break the bureaucratic stranglehold and stop the sellout deals with imperialism, the USSR today still stands as an objective roadblock to America's desperate appetite—indeed, economic need—to reconquer the entire planet to renew capitalist profits. That's why Reagan hates Russia, and why those MX megadeath missile silos are going up. And that's why we say it is in the interests of all the oppressed to defend the Soviet Union against America's war drive.

Women and Revolution is part of the Spartacist League's fight for a revolutionary party, like Lenin and Trotsky's Bolsheviks, that will be a "tribune of the people," uniting the struggles of all the oppressed with the driving force of working-class revolution. We seek to build a women's section of a mass workers party, which will address the special oppression of women in the family and in society and make the fight against women's oppression an integral part of the fight for socialism. Forward to women's liberation through socialist revolution! ■

Iranian Leftists Join International Spartacist Tendency: Smash Mullahs' Bloody Terror! For Workers Revolution!

As Khomeini's "Islamic Revolution" slides into bloody chaos—the Islamic Republican Party decapitated by deadly accurate bombings, the economy in shambles, the reactionary war with Iraq stalemated—the shaky mullah regime stakes its survival on mass killings. Over 1,800 have been slaughtered since June, as the mullahs' victims are tortured and mutilated by the very same SAVAK sadists who butchered for the hated shah (80 percent of SAVAKis have been "rehabilitated" by Khomeini).

Now many of those who hailed Khomeini as "progressive" cry "Betrayal!" Khomeini's main target, the Mujahedeen-e-Khalq (petty-bourgeois supporters of Bani-Sadr), along with leftists like the Fedayeen, helped put Khomeini in power! They criminally tailed the clerics as Kurdish villages were bombed, striking workers terrorized, "immodest" women stoned, leftists reviled, beaten and killed. Nonetheless, in the present context we defend them, along with the anti-Khomeini left in Iran, against the murderous mullah terror.

The international Spartacist tendency alone warned, even before the mullahs came to power, that their regime would be as reactionary as the shah's hated police state, raising the slogan "Down with the shah—Down with the mullahs! For workers revolution!" Today regroupments of Iranian militants under the banner of authentic Trotskyism are crucial to cut through the crisis of leadership which allowed the hated shah to be swept away only to replace him with Khomeini. The recent recruitment of Iranian leftists Hosein and Elahe, who struggled through the contradictions which still today wrack the Iranian left, is part

of this process. We reprint below the application of comrade Elahe, which specifically addresses the woman question (from *Workers Vanguard* No. 287, 14 August 1981).

Dear Comrades,

This letter is an application for membership in the international Spartacist tendency [iSt].

My very first experience of politics was at the age of 14. I was quite influenced by my grandmother, who had emigrated from the Soviet Union after the Russian Revolution. Some classmates in school—I later found out they were members of the guerrilla movement—made contact with me and gave me some books by a militant writer. After the end of the school term, these two classmates mysteriously disappeared. Later on I read in a paper that they were both executed by the SAVAK. This naturally had an effect on me.

I was married at the age of 18 and moved to Europe shortly afterward. As in traditional marriages, it was not only unsuccessful, but also ridiculous, empty and full of daily contradictions and bitter experiences of a degraded slave life. From the very beginning I wanted to escape from that devilish circle. However, I was afraid the authorities would expel me from the country, so I capitulated to the situation until I had a daughter in 1977. My "husband" prohibited me from having any kind of social political activity and tried to prevent me from going to university.

The situation lasted until my daughter was almost a year old. At that point getting involved with political activity was an inevitable and unavoidable matter. I

Khomeini...

(continued from page 24)

On that day, once again, hundreds of thousands of toiling and militant women in Teheran and other cities in Iran came into the streets and showed the strong unity of the toilers against U.S. imperialism and Iraqi military attacks. It was the anniversary of the birth of [Muhammad's daughter] Hazrat Fatima—Women's Day."

This was no rally for women's rights, as *IP* went on to explain:

"With the slogan, 'If the Imam gives the order, we will pronounce the ultimatum,' the women announced that they were ready for martyrdom on the road to victory in the war, chanting 'One, two, three, martyrdom!'"

A war rally of veiled women, in the service of Khomeinist reaction!—even the SWP's "sisters" in the bourgeois National Organization for Women ought to be horrified.

The Spartacist tendency uniquely has insisted from

the very beginning that the question of women's liberation in Iran is literally a life and death matter, a question of whether women shall live in slavery or not. The fight for women's emancipation from the barbaric *chador* and the subjugation it symbolizes is a great motor force for revolution in Iran, a force which must be centered on the working class.

Our "Women's Day" is March 8, the historic celebration of working-class commitment to the struggle for women's rights. On 8 March 1979, thousands of Iranian women demonstrated against the veil, for equal pay for equal work, and against mullah reaction. And on 8 March 1917 (February by the old calendar) the women textile workers of Petrograd led a strike of over 90,000 workers, which sparked the overthrow of the tsar and opened the road for the Bolshevik Revolution of October. Under the slogans "No to the veil! For workers revolution!" we fight for International Women's Day in Iran as part of the battle for victorious proletarian revolution. ■

began my political life in a Maoist organization which sympathized with the Mujahedeen (Marxists), corresponding to Peykar today. Being a member of this organization, and taking on some responsibilities as one of the few Iranian women in a male-dominated Maoist student organization gave me some self-confidence and emancipation from domestic life.

I remember it as a terrible period. It was always dark and cold, I felt a sense of sadness, pressure, humiliation and personal and social worthlessness all day long. But my social activity strongly reinforced the logical and rational analysis and conclusions of the current situation. The more responsibility I took on outside the nuclear family the more interesting I found political life and the more determined I became to put a stop to that type of degraded slave life for ever.

So I made up my mind and changed my life. But I lost my child. Both the highly "progressive" laws of Europe, the supposed defenders of equal rights for women in society, and the backward feudal "Islamic" laws of the "Islamic Republic of Iran" upheld the reactionary act of depriving a divorced (and "adulterous") mother of the right of maintaining close relations with her daughter by refusing to condemn the act of kidnapping a one-year-old child. It was an impossible situation. But I had made my choice and there remained no other possibility—except an act of madness, namely moving back to the other side of the barricades and offering myself up to Khomeini's bloodsuckers, the mullahs.

At the time of the "Iranian Revolution" in the fall of 1978, I and comrade Hosein quit the organization that is now Peykar because of its support to Khomeini as the "symbol of democracy." One thing we knew was that we could not give any kind of support to the mullahs, who took power in the name of god and the act of sucking the blood of the Iranian proletariat and forcing women to capitulate to the dark veil.

At that time I did not have any conception of Stalinism at all. But we began studying the teachings of Mao Tse-tung critically so that we could dispose of his ridiculous nonsense once and for all. And we did it. Gradually we came to the conclusion that we knew nothing either about Marxism or revolution, so we started to study the French, German and Russian Revolutions.

The traditions of the left in Iran are those of Stalinism and Maoism. There are reasons for this. After the 1905 struggles for the constitution, Iranian revolutionaries were under the influence of what was happening in Russia. But at the same time religious leaders played an important role. During the years after the Russian Revolution of 1917, Iranian revolutionaries were in contact with Bolshevism. And if the left in Iran never accused the Tudeh party of being Stalinist, it is because they believe Stalinism to be the continuation of Bolshevism.

The spectacular thing about the left's response to the Iranian "revolution" was the support they all gave to the reactionary Islamic mass movement and its leadership, i.e., the mullahs. I studied Peykar's and the Fedayeen's position on the "Iranian Revolution" and had discussions with them. But I just couldn't agree with them on their concept of two-stage revolution,

their belief that the Iranian proletariat was unable to carry out the tasks of a socialist revolution. As a result of this stagist conception, the left not only trusted the bourgeoisie to carry out democratic tasks, but also capitulated to Islamic reaction. So I was not surprised when the Fedayeen supported Bazargan's regime on the grounds that defending the Bazargan regime meant defending the democratic gains of the "revolution." It is impossible to just keep quiet and not take a position when hundreds of Fedayeen and Peykar militants and other leftists were massacred by the very regime they supported.

From studying the Russian Revolution I learned that even with a small working class in Russia, the Bolsheviks with their program carried out a socialist revolution, and that with such a party and program we would be able to carry out the tasks of the socialist revolution in Iran as well. I also learned that we had to be internationalists, in the sense that a workers' revolution in Iran cannot survive without a workers' revolution in the Middle East.

With this new revolutionary understanding, the HKS¹ seemed to have a good program. I was recruited to the local section of the United Secretariat, on the question of Iran. But I was always very critical of the HKS paper, because I had a feeling that although they claimed to have a revolutionary program, things were not expressed clearly in their paper. Unlike all the confusion of the HKS, what I read in the Spartacist press expressed a clear position in just one slogan: "Down with the Shah, Down with the Mullahs."

When I was recruited to the USec, I applied first for a study circle. I got an historic answer: since one of the comrades in the Central Committee knows this comrade, she does not have any need to go through a study circle. Her membership is confirmed by the CC. So they counted me as a member. When I was in the USec, their paper called for the defense of the "Iranian Revolution" and its "gains" week after week—which actually meant a line of betraying the Iranian proletariat and all the national minorities. When in October of 1979 the HKS² called for participation in the "Mullahs' Constitution," it became clear to me that they were nothing but reformists. So what I said to them was that there is no difference between this organization and other reformists—except that you are fake Trotskyists and they are Stalinists.

At that time I met the Spartacist comrades and bought their press. By discussing with the comrades of the Spartacist tendency the Russian question became clear. You don't need to be so wise to be able to understand that an organization that calls for defending the "Iranian Revolution," that is, for defending the reactionary mullahs, cannot take a side for the Red Army in Afghanistan, but would call for the national rights of the reactionary Islamic rebels against "Soviet expansionism," as the USec does.

This is why I want to join the iSt.

Elahe

¹Then the Iranian sympathizing group of Ernest Mandel's fake-Trotskyist United Secretariat (USec).

²Iranian Mandelites, resulting from the split-up of the HKS (dominated by followers of the American SWP).

Khomeini's War on Women

Khomeini's blood-crazed Islamic fanatics have shown no mercy toward women and girls in their *jihad* to exterminate the Mujahedeen and all other opposition. Pasdaran (Islamic militiamen) humiliate arrested girls suspected of supporting the Mujahedeen (they wear head scarves instead of the full-length veil) by publicly stripping them and "examining" their genitals to prove they're not virgins, according to the Iranian women's group "Ettehad-e Melli-e Zanan" (report by the Iranian Students Association, August 1981). Khomeini gives his blessings to the execution of girls as young as nine, stating, "Islam is revived through this bloodshed."

Sickening as these atrocities are, they only highlight the brutal, barbaric subjugation of women Khomeini's "Islamic revolution" has enforced from the beginning. Homosexuals have been whipped and shot, "adulterers" killed, in an escalating frenzy of reaction. Here are some of the mullah regime's attempts to drive women back into the dark ages of medievalism, drawn from an indictment prepared for International Women's Day, 8 March 1981, by the Iranian "Women's Liberation Association" (printed in *Raha'i*, Spring-Summer 1981).

March 1979: Women are prevented from becoming

lawyers and judges. Khomeini decrees women can divorce only if they ask for this right at the time of marriage, whereas ayatollah Mahdavi Kani confirms Islamic law that at any time the man "can unilaterally and easily divorce his wife."

August 1979: A woman in Behshahr is executed for adultery, her lover condemned to 100 lashes. In December 1980 another woman is executed for this "crime" in Resht, her partner whipped and sentenced to a year in prison in Semaran.

October 1979: In an interview with Oriana Fallaci, Khomeini says, "The law that a man can have four wives is very progressive and is written for the well-being of women because the number of women is much more than the number of men. A man needs a woman. So what can be done in this world where there are more women than men? Other than to marry a man with several wives? In my opinion, it's not right that single women become prostitutes because there are not enough men."

July 1980: The Ministry of Education rules that all co-

educational schools will be closed; religious appearance, whether clothing or behavior, will be strictly enforced. Women will be exclusively hired in women's schools, men in men's schools. The Revolutionary Council announces that women employed in government offices must observe Islamic "rules" in their clothing or be prohibited from entering. The general prosecutor warns that "the wages and benefits of those women who do not obey Islamic rules in clothing should be terminated." There are women's protests outside the Prime Ministry building against the



Kargar

April 25, 1981: Veiled Iranian women in pro-war rally chant, "One, two, three, martyrdom!" Incredibly, SWP hailed this as "Iranian Women's Day"! (from *Intercontinental Press*, 15 June 1981).

mandatory veil, in which several are arrested. Meanwhile, the Iranian representative to the Women's Conference in Copenhagen states, "Iranian women are free to choose to wear the Islamic veil"!

No to the Veil! For Workers Revolution!

Criminally, the American Socialist Workers Party (SWP) and its Iranian co-thinkers continue to cheer on the mullahs' bloody terror. In the U.S. the SWP occasionally makes the idiotic claim that "consistent feminism leads to socialism," but in Iran they insist that consistent Khomeinism leads to—women's liberation! This isn't mere idiocy or even bizarre disorientation, but reflects a deadly appetite for collaboration with the mullah regime. The SWP's *Intercontinental Press* (15 June 1981) carried pages of exultant copy on "Women's Day" in Iran this year:

"On April 25, the Iranian masses witnessed one of the largest mobilizations of women during the revolution.

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