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"The phenomenon of women within the Revolution is a revolution within another revolution," Fidel said in December, 1966.

This special section of New Left Notes celebrates March 8, International Women's Day. The day commemorates a demonstration of socialist working-class women in New York City in 1908; the International Socialist Congress in 1910 declared March 8 a holiday of the world proletariat, in honor of women's struggles.

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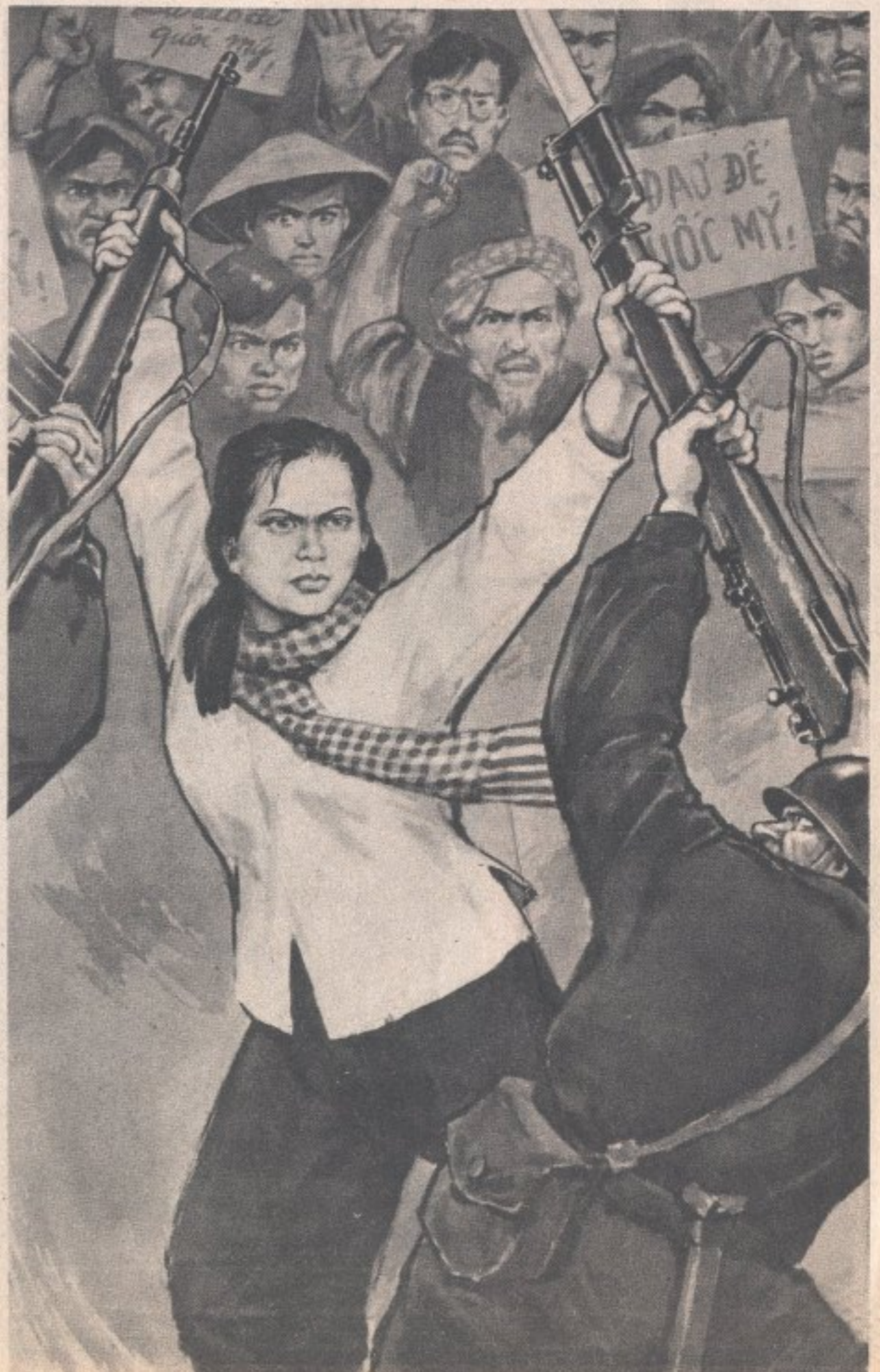
LET THE PEOPLE DECIDE

Special Issue

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY



"The proletariat cannot achieve complete freedom, unless it achieves complete freedom for women." --Lenin



Toward a revolutionary women's movement

by Bernardine Dohrn
Inter-Organizational Secretary

Women radicals are split; there are the politicians (those women who are full time movement organizers, who are conscious of the oppression of women who raise the question as part of their work, and help other movement women to that consciousness, and who discount the revolutionary potential of a women's movement) and there are the "professional women" (those women who are full time women, who feel the priority of developing a women's liberation movement, often separatist, and who are generally cynical about the movement, any ideology, and SDS).

At the same time, women's liberation groups are dividing and multiplying, generally in isolation not only from men but from the rest of the movement. Popular articles on the women's movement, such as the NY Times Magazine horror, promote a pop personality, individualistic view of the

struggle and are based on an unstated white middle class consciousness and perspective.

Most of the existing women's groups are mired. Their legitimate function has been to turn on "new" women to understanding the collective oppression of women, to studying its economic and social basis, and to identifying the ramifications of that oppressed status. Their program is only a cycle which produces more women's groups, mostly devoted to a personal liberation/therapy function and promises of study which are an evasion of practice.

Most of the women's groups are bourgeois, unconscious or unconcerned with class struggle and the exploitation of working class women, and chauvinists concerning the oppression of black and brown women. They practice a false communalism, reminiscent of the early days of SDS p.d. (participatory democracy), where struggle is not allowed under the guise of "respect for

one another" and anti-authoritarianism.

In addition to these woes, the tendency represented by the separatists, the men-haters, the fanatical feminists share many of the reactionary dangers of cultural nationalism. These women begin with the correct assumption that people do not obtain their liberation except through struggle. They convincingly show how the woman question has always been submerged in favor of "more important issues." But their direction leads to a middle class single issue movement—and this at a time when the black liberation movement is polarizing the country, when national wars of liberation are waging the most advanced assaults on U.S. imperialism, when the growth of the movement is at a critical stage.

Instead of integrating (not submerging) the struggles of women into the broader revolutionary movement, these women are flailing at their own middle class images. To focus only on sexual

exploitation and the tyranny of consumption does not develop a mass understanding of the causes of oppression, and it does not accurately point at the enemy.

Class Base

A revolutionary women's movement must be politically based on the most oppressed sectors—black, brown and white working-class women. This does not mean that movement women are not a significant part of that movement, or that we must wait until there is a working class women's movement to support. It does mean that we must be conscious of our perspective and the class interests which our demands represent. It means that our immediate job is to organize masses of women around the full scope of radical demands—including the destruction of male supremacy.

Until now, program has been discussed as if a demand must be found which in itself defines the nature of the oppression of women. This assumption—that we must organize women only around an issue which specifically fights their oppression as women—is wrong. Particularly given the student base in which we work. In addition, single issue movements, whether they be women's vote, the issue of abortions, or the anti-draft movement, are most easily cut off from the masses of people and directed into privileged, dead-end reforms. Everywhere around us there are concentrations of women: dorms, women's schools, education and home ec departments, high schools, jobs—women can be mobilized to fight against imperialism and racism.

Institutionalized Subjugation

For example, it's easy to think of the many ways in which the subjugation of women is institutionalized in education departments and teachers' schools: low wages, male monopoly on advancement, women isolated from other adults to care for (be cops for) children. But to organize there without attacking the racist functions of education is counter-revolutionary—and it also obscures an understanding of the roots and functions of male supremacy. Similarly, there are many corporations, such as DuPont, which particularly exploit women in textile plants and through the garment industry. DuPont recruiters would be good agitational targets for women. But DuPont also happens to be one of the six largest international corporations (racist here and abroad) and the major manufacturer of munitions. Exposing all of the ways in which DuPont functions strengthens the general understanding of each of those "issues", for the issue is the destruction of capitalism.

When we actively start to organize women around the totality of their oppression—when we build struggles within institutions, which are related to other parts of the movement—then many of the current activities of women's groups will exist in a context which gives them purpose. Women's liberation groups can be study groups and a place to learn, with other women, how male chauvinism oppresses women. Guerrilla theatre actions will highlight ongoing education and program. And by organizing masses of radical women, we will be in a much stronger position to destroy male supremacy within the movement, and to build the basis for the future society.

History

(continued from center pages)

supremacy within the abolitionist movement, the active women saw that the woman question had to be confronted and deal with explicitly. There was no other way for them to make themselves heard. They had to begin to develop an explicit ideology for women's rights, one which recognized clearly that their freedom could not be accomplished so long as slavery existed.

The two movements—to liberate black people and women—grew simultaneously in their fight against the exploitation of their labor and the special oppressions of women and black people.

Women of great courage and political skill emerged from the abolitionist movement. These included Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Harriet Tubman, Sojourner Truth, Susan Anthony, the Grimke sisters, and Lucretia Mott, who risked their lives many times to speak out against racism and the oppression in the North and South and who led in the exodus of black people from the South by the Underground Railroad.

In 1833, when the abolitionists met in Philadelphia, to form the American Anti-Slavery Society, women were allowed to sit in on the meeting but were not allowed to vote or join. The twenty women there, in response to this exclusion, started the Philadelphia Female Anti-Slavery Society, which by 1837 had spread cross-country into the National Female Anti-Slavery Society.

Fighting Slavery

This society was led by Angelina and Sarah Grimke, two Southern abolitionists who fought for freedom for all people through the abolitionist struggles as well as in the early labor and women's rights struggles. They were attacked by the Southern racists and the Church, who wanted to defeat the anti-slavery movement as being un-Christian and un-womanly in their activities. They replied by linking up the issues of slavery of black people and oppression of women and the necessity to end both. On the one hand, they constantly fought the notion that women were inferior to men, and on the other hand they stressed the fact that women had to have political and social freedom in order to fight against slavery and all the increased exploitation that was manifesting itself as capitalism developed. Without the right to speak and organize, they would be by their inactivity supporting the continuation of slavery. The attempt to attack abolition through the women question was not fought by the men in the movement. They feared that defending the women's cause would be "divisive" and "injure" the cause, and begged the women to drop it.

This pattern of reactionaries trying to divide men and women in their fight against oppression was to occur over and over again. It impeded the development of a unified movement that could define the capitalist class as its enemy clearly, due to the acceptance by men and many times women of the doctrine of male supremacy.

(continued next week)



Arab women fight

"It is not a war waged with an active army and reserves. Revolutionary war, as the Algerian people is waging it, is a total war in which the woman does not merely knit for or mourn the soldier. The Algerian woman is at the heart of the combat. Arrested, tortured, raped, shot down, she testifies to the violence of the occupier and to his inhumanity. As a nurse, a liaison agent, a fighter she bears witness to the depth and density of the struggle."
—Fanon, *Studies in a Dying Colonialism*

The requirements of total war, of resistance to the occupier, are again transforming traditional relationships. Arab women guerrillas and masses of Arab women and young girls have been leading fighters in the Palestine liberation movement, Al-Fatah. In mass demonstrations and in sabotage, the women have been prominent, particularly in Israeli-occupied areas.

Three young Arab women were seized by Israeli forces as suspects in a roundup of terrorists in late January. They were tried by a military court in Gaza, and two—Fatma Murtdajar, 17, and Fatma Afamat, 24, were sentenced to two years each for being couriers between terrorist cells. The third woman, Nahala Hafez el Baiyed, 19, received three years for various counts, including collecting information.

After the trial, 4,000 high school girls in Gaza rioted in the main streets, barricading the streets, and stoning cars, including the car carrying Brig. Gen. Mordecai Gur, the military governor of the region. The girls tore down mud and stone walls outside their schools to throw pieces at the Israeli soldiers. The demonstrators were attacked by Israeli troops with nightsticks: 90 teenage girls were injured, 40 were hospitalized.

Four days later, thousands of Arab women staged sit-in strikes in Iraq,

Jordan, and Lebanon in support of Arab women and liberation fighters in Israeli-occupied territory. A week later in Ramallah, in Israeli-occupied Jordan, 200 girls sat in at the Ramallah Teacher Training School. Under banners of Arab commandos and Palestinian flags, they brandished pictures of refugees and the Palestinian people.

On February 19 came the commando attack on the El-Al airliner in Zurich, by four refugees of the '67 war. The woman commando Ammah Ahmed Dabbor fled Gaza after the war when her brother was killed by Israelis; she was a teacher in a refugee camp. Further, the first woman martyr of Al-Fatah, Shadia Abu Ghazali, returned to her home, now occupied Nablus, and as a member of the Palestine Liberation Movement organized demonstrations against the occupying forces, and was killed defending her nation.

This on the fifth year of the Palestinian movement, whose position is: "Our insistence on carrying arms until we liberate our land accompanies our belief in peace, which is threatened by the Zionist structure in league with imperialism and colonialism. Our armed revolution and our people's struggle will continue until victory."

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