

Feminism: "To its credit, the women's movements have raised the issue of women's revolt in terms other than class-struggle ones, class struggle the only historical driving force seen by the Marxists, who have clarified the economic exploitation of women not paid for housework and child-rearing but have not challenged the reproduction of the power male workers wield compared to women workers. Capitalism has an ideological need of this form of social organisation."

FEMINISM and ANARCHY



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Braamfontein, 2017, Johannesburg, South Africa

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This text was downloaded from the Infoshop website.
<http://www.infoshop.org>

Written by *Commission des femmes*, Fédération Anarchiste, 1970

Original French @:
http://increvablesanarchistes.org/articles/1968_81/feminism_anarch.htm

Translated from French by SonofTomJoad, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada

Original source: A-Infos - <http://www.ainfos.ca/>



On April 20, 1870, Sergei Nechayev, in collaboration with Ogarev, wrote a proclamation entitled "The Russian Association of Revolutionary Women," which includes the following:

"Throughout the history of the legal developments in human societies, there is the suggestion that men, in developing their social laws with an eye on their own interests, have made women either their concubines or servants. All laws are written in the spirit that the most talented and intelligent woman is considered inferior to the most foolish man."

Two years earlier, Bakunin had taken up the issue of women by sending to the Third Congress of the IWA a letter in which he stated, "In the name of the intellectual enfranchisement of the popular masses, in the name of the economic and social enfranchisement of the peoples of the world, we want first, the abolition of the right to hereditary property; second, the complete legalisation of the political and social rights of women with those of men; third, the abolition of marriage as a civil, political and religious institution."

A century later, feminist movements still struggle vigorously to attain women's equality with men. In 1905, E. Reclus wrote in "Man and Earth" that "obviously all women's claims about men are just." The masculine sweeps aside the feminine. It is one of the rules of our grammar but also one of the fundamental bases of our society. In human relations, this criterion is deeply inscribed in individual thought structure. On the one hand, men want to preserve their prerogatives and that which they believe nature has designed to benefit them, and on the other hand, women are passive and accept docilely the place left to them, unconsciously co-operating in the role society has determined for them.

Women who accept the position for which they are destined thus accept the role of reproducing capitalist-imperialist society. They make themselves their own executioners and become the executioners of their children by teaching them to obey their parents who will have them submit to the heads of the established order to the detriment of their individuality and for the benefit of that social order. The sexual hierarchy exists in order to force individuals to live in and with unequal relationships.

All the apostles of phallogocriticism and all those who thirst for power have tried to justify the dependence, obedience and inferiority of women compared to men. These profoundly racist theses have been taken up by all those who find, or want to find, advantages in that situation. It is partially on the difference in physical strength

up against an injustice forcing them to live in contradiction with their senses, emotions, desires and true natures.

Whether we all like it or not, the liberation of women creates the liberation of men. Accept it or not, the desire to revolt and the thirst to be free that exist in everyone will not be silenced and will only come about in the process of all people getting their freedom. This evolution cannot be done without some more cracks being made in the rickety, rotten framework of capitalism, but the difficulty that human beings have in challenging what they've been taught about human relations may not allow them to evolve without some discomfort. The slow and painful birth of such different behaviour might require a caesarean! Women's liberation must not strive for some standardisation of personalities. The revolt of both women and men must be tied to the discovery of our own individuality, the diversity of abilities and strengths, ethnicities, genders and values that, far from being a social evil, constitute the richness of humanity.

Anarchist society will be based on providing the opportunity for human beings to realise their full potential. "The old world of States founded on bourgeois civilization with its indispensable complement of the right of hereditary property and the legally defined family is crumbling and will be replaced by an internationally and freely organised world of workers," wrote Bakunin. Women must extricate themselves from the legal and moral yoke of the old world and learn that they are not the property of men but belong to themselves alone. Bakunin continued, "After cannibalism came slavery, and after slavery, servitude, and then wage slavery, which must be succeeded by first, a painful justice, and much later, the era of solidarity." But women must first liberate themselves from their servitude.

Here in the present, we can get some knowledge from the past as we look toward a future in which a new society will burst into history. Through their liberation, women will carry out the work of painful justice that must be done to lead men and women to the era of solidarity.

between women and men that some have built a theory that never includes any consideration that there is equality in that difference. We could reply to those who still claim this principle by saying that there is also a difference among men in physical strength, that he among you who can lift 100 kilos is in no way superior to the man who can only lift 50, and that to look to the difference that nature creates between men and women, and among men themselves as well, in order to apply a theory of inferiority, is an aberration and a reactionary practice approaching racism.

They want to make believe, and have succeeded in showing, that women, endowed by nature to do so, can only function as reproducers of the children men make in them. They have tried and been successful in making her swallow the lie that her role of educator is some sacred trust, nearly a gracious favour, granting to her the right guaranteed to her by nature to keep the family hearth, and in the process allow men to safeguard their own freedom. Men of the people have always accepted these aberrant conceptions supplied so abundantly to them by the most serious and authoritative male thinkers because they are proud and happy not to be on the bottom rung of the hierarchy.

The capitalist-imperialists of both the East and West stay in power because their class reigns over and profits from the working class, because men dominate women thanks to the continuity of patriarchal society, the structures of which make women the property of men while women lose their identity through marriage. Fathers passing their paternal authority as head of the family on to their sons and their grandsons guarantee that no good change will come for women and their daughters and their daughters after them.

The patriarchal family mirrors and reproduces the static, capitalist social structure. There must be some man in charge of the family who dominates his wife and children in his position as head or leader or boss of the household, in keeping with the vaunted and cherished ideal of a chief or head of State at the top of the brutal hierarchy we have had for centuries.

We know that, in a society, all the pretexts individuals have to justify exploitation, to dominate another class, sex, group or other individual only work if that class, sex, group or individual submitted to that exploitation or domination is not conscious of the reality of it. The negation of that social reality begins when the individual revolts against her condition. Throughout history we have learned that human beings always revolt against injustice. These collective or individual revolts, born of a more or less conscious desire to relate in a better way with others, are not always successful.

The great gathering of women the women's movement wanted, took off after May 1968 and was inscribed in an analysis indicating that all women in the society, regardless of social position, are subjected to male domination to some degree and that this subordination of women is one of the pillars of capitalism. Ideological differences quickly appeared within our movement. Some articulate a Marxist class analysis of women's oppression in capitalist society, and others believe that revolutionary struggle must attack the structure of patriarchy itself found throughout history, rather than focusing on capitalism, which they believe to be merely the current

representation of patriarchy. Still others declare themselves against all “isms” (humanism, idealism, socialism), against all ideology, believing that “politics is merely men using their brains to look out for their penises.”

These three main currents demonstrate the complex reality women experience and so can spontaneously engage a variety of women not yet organised. Whether ideological or not, these currents converge on one point - they refuse to accept men into their struggles because men remain the oppressors of women, even though some of them have abundant goodwill toward women. The demands of different women’s movements have engendered an increasingly important consciousness among women, and these movements have attained an overall and inevitable conclusion, even if some are expressed by anti-male violence, at one end of the spectrum, and specific, limited demands at the other end, such as: contraception, abortion, day-care, equal pay. Although these women’s movements have clarified inherent social problems, they have not challenged the society as a whole; at most they have presented a class-struggle sort of model, with men representing the bourgeoisie and women the proletariat.

To its credit, the women’s movements have raised the issue of women’s revolt in terms other than class-struggle ones, class struggle the only historical driving force seen by the Marxists, who have clarified the economic exploitation of women not paid for housework and child-rearing but have not challenged the reproduction of the power male workers wield compared to women workers. Capitalism has an ideological need of this form of social organisation. Destroying class barriers between men by putting all men in the same category of Man the King masks the exploitation of male workers by assigning them the dominant role in families, over women and children, institutionalises domination, subordination and the hierarchisation of the family structure.

It is only through revolt, not patience, that women will liberate themselves, because revolt is the first freeing act an individual must make and so her first true and free demonstration of her own humanity. By revolting, a woman raises the issue of equality:

“We know that equality is only possible through freedom; not that freedom exclusive to the bourgeoisie that is based on the slavery of the masses and which is not freedom but privilege, but that universal freedom of human beings who all have been lifted to human dignity. We also know that this freedom is only possible with equality. [Both theoretical and practical revolt] against all institutions and relations created by inequality, and then the establishment of economic and social equality through freedom for all.”

Bakunin

The revolt of women then raises the issue of the contradiction of men who want emancipation from their own exploitation but who reject the emancipation of women from the male guardianship that is the overriding condition of women’s exploitation.

No human being can claim he wants freedom if he himself is opposed in any way to freedom for all. Neither can he claim he is free if his freedom is a threat to freedom for everyone, because individual freedom only exists when freedom for all exists. There are two levels to the women’s liberation question:

★ The refusal to continue to accept the traditional role the society wants to see women play, but also to raise the issue with regard to men, that is, refusing to be subordinated, dominated and, above all, be part of the hierarchisation existing today that forces men to reject the prerogatives this society imposes on them as necessary to their survival as those who are exploited themselves on another level. Men who try to reject the imposed traditional role in order to live in an egalitarian way with women, and the woman who revolts against the situation keeping her on the last rung of the hierarchy, are raising the issue of the problem of inequality, and accomplish a revolutionary act in the process.

★ Although women come from all the social classes, women workers have nothing to lose and everything to gain, as opposed to women of the bourgeoisie, but if women as a whole are successful in their revolt against men, in the process they will weaken the social structures on which the class struggle depends. It is clear that if bourgeois women refuse to submit to the authority of their husbands as required by the role imposed on women by society, they must also refuse to submit to playing the exploiting and dominating role they play as members of their privileged class, if they want to be consistent, logical and honest with themselves and others. The revolt of bourgeois women as women must go hand-in-hand with their refusal to co-operate in any way with the exploitation from which they wish to disassociate themselves. It goes without saying that this double-edged approach they must carry out is not nearly ready to happen. Bourgeois women, even ones with a consciousness of the women’s struggle, prefer to hold on to their class privileges and accept the place left them as women.

From now on, the interests of bourgeois and working women will not overlap if they cannot find solidarity with each other. The struggle for women’s liberation must greatly surpass the framework of emancipation of women alone to the much vaster fight for all of humanity, or the women’s liberation movement will be condemned to die by its own specificity. The women’s struggle is only one struggle among many in society, all of which are inextricably interwoven, and it is inscribed on the same level as all other specific struggles that strive for a different society, one with an anarchistic character. The refusal of feminist movements to see that men are human beings capable of self-liberation and resistance against the power society grants them, that they can consider that power alienating, is a refusal to see men as capable of rising