

# FEMINISM AND THE CLASS STRUGGLE

(written in 1974)

## 1. A method

Marxism is not a dogma, but a method, a revolutionary, dialectical and materialist method. This method stands in contradiction to that method of social study founded on the misleading basis of "scientific objectivity." Our task as revolutionaries "is not to interpret the world but to change it." And we cannot understand that world without acting. Our research, our striving toward "truth" must <sup>rise</sup> ~~rest~~ on a foundation of ~~an~~ active struggle for liberation.

But liberation of what? It is when we ask such questions that the dialectical character of the Marxian method ~~appears~~ becomes obvious: the task is to liberate "everything" because it is "the <sup>-the totality-</sup> everything" that determines the character and the shape of the parts. The oppression of human beings exists simultaneously in all domains of life and reveals itself in all possible aspects of ~~our~~ our social existence. There is not a juxtaposition of oppressions - of class, of sex, of nation - each of which has its own autonomous roots. Rather, it is all aspects of social life - <sup>in their interaction -</sup> that compose our material reality. All the problems of our society are exposed and raised <sup>simultaneously</sup> by the premises of the method of historical materialism. ~~Mode of production, social formations, social classes,~~

infrastructure and superstructure, ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~  
determination and dominance, ethnicity and nationhood, State  
and family, etc. are the key concepts. The question is not  
whether these concepts should be retained or rejected, but  
whether they need to be enriched with new concepts. If one  
accepts the premises of historical materialism, the  
superstructure is determined in the last instance by the  
infrastructure, <sup>that is by</sup> ~~which is~~ the economic or productive base  
of the society. ~~Now~~ We must know how surplus is generated  
and appropriated in a given social formation, for this  
information is the base of our analysis.

The Marxist method is revolutionary only to the extent  
that it is the method of the worker's movement. It is  
the revolutionary character of the proletarian struggle that  
is decisive in all of life's domains, and it is this  
that makes the proletarian revolt different from <sup>those</sup> ~~that~~ of  
all classes that rose to power in pre-capitalist societies.  
<sup>until the epoch of</sup>  
For ~~it is with~~ capitalism the struggle against scarcity -  
the struggle for the domination of nature - imposed narrow  
limits <sup>to the class struggle,</sup> ~~to the class struggle~~ revealing the religious  
character of alienation, ~~to the class struggle.~~  
Capitalism resolves the problem of scarcity, but it does so  
<sup>cost</sup>  
at the ~~expense~~ <sup>cost</sup> of accumulation, that is to say, at the cost  
of commodity alienation, <sup>a reality</sup> ~~which~~ the transformation of the labor

force itself into a commodity has introduced into our social existence.

The appearance of the proletariat produced the first utopian socialists. These utopians - differing from those visionaries who preceded them - imagined very concretely a world liberated of all forms of oppression: religious, economic, political, familial, national. Since that time we have scarcely attempted to envision a better future. The contribution of Marx and Engels with their material analysis of the system of capitalism was to point out both the possibility and necessity of a transformed future. The dream of a future humane society became more than a series of visions: it became the embodiment of the material interests of a class - the proletariat. Simultaneously, socialism became a necessary agenda for the species because capitalism was heading towards the destruction of humanity.

Before examining how ~~the~~ <sup>the women's movement</sup> ~~has~~ <sup>has</sup> posed the problem of "feminism" it is necessary to recapitulate, <sup>to</sup> go back to the origins of the workers' movement. It is not an accident that the utopians of the first decades of the 19th century conceived the liberation of women in a language shockingly modern. ~~The~~ Fourier's Le Nouveau ~~monde~~ monde amoureux already contained the essential point: the oppressive nature of the family and what Alexandra Kollontai<sup>2</sup> would call the

~~the~~ necessary development of the "potential for love" in society.

Marx and Engels went ~~much~~ further, ~~with~~ <sup>with</sup> their discovery of the key to modern oppression (commodity production), as the ~~most~~ <sup>successor of precapitalist sources of</sup> oppression (man's dependence on nature), ~~opened up~~ <sup>Marx and Engels</sup> opened up new perspectives, perspectives based ~~on~~ <sup>founded</sup> on a new-found consciousness of the alienation of human beings (by commo<sup>d</sup>ities today, by religion yesterday). Engels insisted on the historical character of the family, which he claimed would, like the state and for the same reasons, disappear. He wrote: "The relations between the sexes will transform themselves into relations purely private (personal) relations in which society has no place to intervene.(...) because it (communism) will do away with private property, ~~that~~ it will produce the possibility of raising children communally and will destroy as well the two principle bases of marriage as it is now constituted: the dependence of women on men and the dependence of children on parents."

Commodity alienation, the ideological translation of the requirements of private property, is the ~~XXXX~~ foundation on which the capitalist society is consituted in all its <sup>forms</sup> ~~forms~~ and institutions - state and family included.

Once ~~xxxx~~ rid of this alienation, the relations between the individual and the society will be of a totally new character: ~~from~~ the submission of the individual to ~~the~~ society ~~will~~ be succeeded by the real liberation of the individual. In this vision of liberation ~~lies~~ <sup>lies</sup> the recognition

(1) ~~that~~ the present character of relations between the sexes is ~~is~~ governed by <sup>relations</sup> ~~the~~ that regulate the society and <sup>(2)</sup> that the oppression of women, which has of course aspects unique to it, is nevertheless an integral and necessary ~~from~~ of the general oppression that exists under capitalism.

~~the recognition~~ In this vision of liberation lies ~~the~~ recognition that the organization of the reproduction of the species is not independent of the organization of the ~~xxx~~ reproduction of the social structure in general, ~~the~~ recognition that the family is a social institution and not a necessity for the reproduction of the species, and that the opinion according to which children ought to be brought up <sup>exclusively</sup> by their parents is a ~~myth~~ myth necessary to the present organization of social reproduction.

~~The activity of Marx and Engles~~ ~~contributed~~ <sup>acceptance of bourgeois mystifications of the family</sup> ~~battled against~~ ~~these positions~~ in the workers movement. For the ideology of the bourgeoisie, the dominant ideology of the society, was a constant brake on the development of consciousness among the proletariat. <sup>Bourgeois ideology</sup> ~~tended to~~ limit and coopt the movement without challenging the ~~essential~~

~~essential~~

essentials of the capitalist order. The essential for a class-based society is maintenance of the social division of labor (manual ~~vs.~~<sup>vs.</sup> intellectual, conceptual ~~vs.~~<sup>vs.</sup> physical, etc.) which perpetuates alienation and commodity production. Whole sections of the workers' movement are enticed to reduce socialism to a form of capitalism without capitalists. Except for the substitution of public ownership for private property, nothing is changed in such a society: the division of labor remains, the hierarchy of organization, and consequently the maintenance of institutions necessary to guarantee the ~~functioning~~ functioning of a class society, ~~persist~~ persist as well.

One comes round to a mechanistic philosophy (economistic), idealist and non-revolutionary. There is no gap between ~~vulgar~~ vulgar Marxism and the analysis of bourgeois ~~sociologists~~ sociologists; <sup>in each case</sup> ~~phenomena~~ phenomena <sup>are</sup> observed "empirically", in isolation, and attributed to a unilateral and specific cause. The division of labor and ~~the~~ hierarchy are necessary "techniques"; the family is a requirement of human psychology or of human education; the inequality between men and women - acknowledged or denied - ought to be examined in relation to ~~the~~ the particularities of each of the sexes.

Alexandra Kollontai, <sup>proved</sup> ~~is~~ incapable of reconciling communism with the maintenance of the family and of the oppression of women. Why? Because the end of commodity alienation permits and requires at the same time the development of the "potential for love" in society, the liquidation of individualistic egotism and the blossoming of human relations based on generosity. Cooperation without hierarchy, in all domains, <sup>and</sup> the end of the division of labor are not possible without the resolution of the problem of scarcity, <sup>ie., not until</sup> ~~the~~ the domination of nature is achieved. But this achievement in turn requires a <sup>true</sup> ~~real~~ cultural revolution. This,

~~This~~ requires that the human being become capable of generosity. Today, commodity alienation and ~~the~~ competition reduce the <sup>realm</sup> ~~realm~~ in which one is capable of "reciprocal <sup>recognition</sup> ~~recognition~~ of the rights of the other" of "care and capacity to listen and comprehend the movements in the soul of the other." Constrained to be a <sup>predator towards</sup> ~~predator~~ others in society, can <sup>one</sup> ~~man~~ be <sup>human</sup> ~~man~~ in the <sup>area</sup> ~~realm~~ of life we call "personal life?" One often thinks so because it is necessary to establish an equilibrium between the horror of daily life and the idyllic image of which we have need. From this need stem ~~xxxxxxx~~ ideological myths essential for the reproduction of the system.

The first of these <sup>myths</sup> is "monogamous love". Ideally, such exclusive love becomes "property, <sup>absolute</sup> possession of one's spouse, one by the other." This absolutism, always contradicted by reality, is the transposition to the domain of relations between the sexes of private property. Appearing to be a mutually restrictive situation, this possession is in reality that of the woman by the man. Other necessary aspects ~~■~~ accompany this myth: <sup>notably</sup> the "forever", founded on the false premise of an invariability of the person during the course of ~~his~~ <sup>his/her</sup> life, <sup>an</sup> invariability that testifies, moreover, to an incapacity ~~to~~ <sup>for</sup> progress. ~~with him~~ But the perennial nature of the male-female union fulfills certain <sup>and practical</sup> essential functions. The indissolvability of marriage, is an <sup>necessity</sup> economic ~~■~~ of the bourgeois family, <sup>because the family is the</sup> place of accumulation of riches <sup>It is a</sup> for the transmission of wealth, <sup>and</sup> psychological <sup>necessity</sup> because <sup>Such a</sup> "guarantee of security" appeases and consoles. However, such "security" obviously impoverishes, because it it does away with an integral respect <sup>for</sup> the personality of the other <sup>stemming from</sup> and continual <sup>conscious</sup> reflection. ~~■~~ Such "permanent security" reduces the capacity for ~~continuous~~ <sup>continuous</sup> development of ~~■~~ sensibility, of ~~■~~ intuition, of ~~■~~ the intellect, of ~~■~~ generosity.

The second myth is "exclusive mother love." One is taught that the couple constitutes the essential milieu for the education of infants. Here again, ~~■~~ the society



transforms into egosim the simple fact that each man and each women cannot be a father and a mother to every child; ~~transforme~~ <sup>is changed</sup> this fact into an "eternal truth", founded upon ~~instinct~~ instinct." The family becomes the privileged milieu for the reproduction of impotent persons just like their parents.

It is necessary to understand, as Kollontai wrote, that "it is thanks to the efforts of the proletarians and not ~~of~~ of the feminists that the woman is able to liberate herself progressively from the yoke of the family", or as ~~the~~ ~~proletarian~~ Nelcya <sup>proclaimed —</sup> "the revolution will be proletarian, not sexual or feministic." <sup>3</sup> Brutal phrases that can be interpreted in the wrong <sup>way:</sup> ~~direction of what they mean~~ coopted by male chauvanism in order to deny the importance of the <sup>banded about</sup> female revolt, ~~that~~ by ~~the~~ bourgeois ~~feminism~~ feminists to destroy the solidarity of the working class. The cry: "The revolution will be socialist, not nationalist" was hardly ever met with equal polemics and ideological objections.

2. Autonomy of the female problem?

The hypothesis ~~that~~ <sup>which</sup> we call that of absolute autonomy of the oppression of women can be formulated in the following manner: <sup>4</sup>

1- The oppression of women is specific (unique) because it ~~was~~<sup>was</sup> not related, in the beginning, to an economic situation; ~~the~~ women, by virtue of their function in the reproduction ~~of~~ of the species, ~~are~~<sup>are more</sup> dependent on nature ~~more~~ than men and this specific trait of womanhood has prevailed until our day; it is for this reason that men can place women under their authority.

2 - The historical explanation of the origins of female oppression would be the following: the reproductive ~~function~~ function of women ~~has resulted in a fear among~~ produced in men a fear of this formidable power; such a function was a <sup>source of</sup> superiority, but equally a source of weakness; because women, incapacitated by the reproductive function, were not able to participate equally with men in the fight against nature. Men put ~~to their own advantage~~ this vulnerability, to their own advantage by creating a ~~first~~ division of labor which then became a hierarchy: on the one side the women, destined to the task of reproduction, on the other ~~side~~ side the men, conquerors of the land. This division of labor excluded women from political power. Moreover, men appropriated for themselves <sup>the</sup> ~~the~~ wealth <sup>of</sup> ~~of~~ children - ~~which~~ which women created, by the mechanism of the family, ~~which~~ reducing ~~reduced~~ women to ~~the~~ a dependent status in the reproductive process.

3 - This situation is perpetuated in <sup>essentially</sup> the same forms. One knows that women are always excluded from political power. All class societies are exclusively ~~masculine~~ masculine societies; women attain their class status by their association with men - father, brother, <sup>or</sup> husband.

4 - We have come to the decisive moment because ~~the~~ progress in biology <sup>permits</sup> finally ~~to~~ women ~~the~~ control of their bodies, <sup>and thereby</sup> ~~the~~ mastery of the process of reproduction of ~~the~~ species. ~~the~~ For women the recuperation of their physical and psychic potentialities ~~means~~ <sup>means</sup> they can take away from men the power that they had over the children; that is, women have the opportunity to destroy the family. Marx believed that it would ~~be~~ <sup>be</sup> the proletariat that could get rid of the family; no, <sup>say the feminists,</sup> ~~only~~ women can do it. This task is essential ~~because~~ <sup>because</sup> the family is the privileged place for the reproduction of a hierarchical system and oppression. Women must thus rejoin ~~with~~ the proletariat to ~~help~~ <sup>help</sup> them ~~realize~~ <sup>realize</sup> ~~that~~ that the task of human liberation must pass via the liberation of women.

One must distinguish these hypotheses of "revolutionary" feminists from those of other <sup>currents</sup> ~~currents~~ of the feminist movement. There exists, at least in the USA and in Northern Europe, a bourgeois or social-democrat feminist

movement based on reform, a movement of which Betty Friedan<sup>5</sup> is without doubt the most famous advocate, a movement in which the objectives are limited to the suppression of discrimination between the sexes within the system, discriminations that remain still more sly and cunning in the USA than in Europe.<sup>6</sup> Here the critic of the society, often bitter and just, attacks the "institutions", considered one after the other, in isolation, in the good tradition of Anglo-Saxon empiricism, ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ One never rises to recognize and grasp the unity and the significance of the totality. In short, one continues to ignore the fact that American society is a capitalist society!

A more radical tendency has appeared nevertheless, a tendency ~~for~~<sup>for</sup> which Kate Millett has been without doubt responsible for formulating the strategy: to go beyond the suppression of discriminations in order to envisage the collectivisation of domestic<sup>s</sup> tasks and the raising of children.<sup>7</sup> One discovers then that ~~this~~<sup>the</sup> society is sick, but one does not know quite what is the nature of the illness. This radical current pays dearly for the absence of a proletarian tradition having its own ideology, a situation so characteristic of North America. ~~Having been totally~~  
 Having ~~no Marxist grounding,~~<sup>no Marxist grounding,</sup> ~~one is automatically~~<sup>8</sup> one is automatically a part of the Anglo-Saxon populist tradition and of the Friedan left, with all of the ambiguities that such can produce.

This failure to understand the social illness gives way to "feminist nationalism", that is, to say, to a declaration of war between the sexes: to the dream of a ~~feminine~~<sup>female</sup> society, rid of men, as has been proclaimed by Valerie Solanas and Jill Johnson<sup>9</sup>. "Thanks to technical progress, one can today reproduce the human race without the assistance of men (or perhaps soon without the assistance of females)" proclaimed Solanas. One gets a feeling for the horror of the American society, <sup>which produces such a revolt. These feminists</sup> ~~one~~ denounces the money, the competition, the hierarchy, the power and the government, responsible for oppression. <sup>they</sup> ~~one~~ But, because ~~one~~ does not believe in the possibility of revolution (Solanas reduces revolution to a hypothesis of an act made by men"), <sup>they</sup> ~~one~~ come naturally to the point of attributing the unhappiness of humanity to the masculine half of the species - ("to the imperfect genes of the male"). And as a logical conclusion, if one is to destroy the men, heterosexuality disappears. Solanas takes advantage of this logic to reveal her profound hatred of sex in general: "Sex does not permit any relation. On the contrary it is a solitary experience, it is not creative, it is a waste of time. A woman can easily, truly easier than she thinks, rid herself of ~~the~~ sexual drives and become sufficiently cerebral and relaxed to turn toward ~~ed~~ <sup>from</sup> forms of relations and activities <sup>which are</sup> truly valuable." Here we see the reappearance of the old puritanism that <sup>makes</sup> ~~makes~~ the act of love a sin.

(The Solanas position must be distinguished from that of Jill Johnson, a position which simply denies the present possibility <sup>(and that in the foreseeable future)</sup> of meaningful sexual activity with men because they are the oppressors.)

A <sup>parallel</sup> ~~parallel~~ with the black movement suggests itself immediately: oscillation between flat reformism and the anarchistic dream which remains nevertheless unrealizable. Both positions have been coopted ~~by~~, at least until now, by other movements in these countries.

It is necessary to compare this type of feminist movement to those of revolutionary Russia during the 1920s and to that in contemporary China. The Russian revolution tried to "liberate women". It tried seriously, but with the same means and the same methods <sup>with which</sup> it tried to "liberate the proletariat". That is, to liberate <sup>with</sup> ~~from~~ directives from above. The government decreed the abolition of marriage, declared free rigorous love, equality of the sexes, etc. But in this domain, like in the others, no maturation of the masses had prepared the masses, and the State was substituted for the Society. One created child-care centers, one took the children from family education to be educated by "specialists", etc. One knows now how this all ended: "free love" did not liberate women; ~~but~~ it only gave men the occasion to rid themselves

of the last vestiges of "a sense of responsibility"; the child-care centers and the schools reproduced a class-based society, because one did not question hierarchy and the division of labor. And <sup>male hegemony</sup> ~~the patriarchal~~ regained its dominance.

If the Chinese experience ~~ix~~ has succeeded in advancing women from "a critique of feminity to a critique of society,"<sup>210</sup> it is because the Chinese came to understand the errors of the Soviets. China is attempting to socialize - and not to "statize" - education, maternity, the up-bringing of children, etc. For this China has avoided separating the fight of women from that of the society in its totality, to abolish the division and the hierarchy of labor. China starts with the hypothesis that women and men are deformed and alienated by the oppression of class and by the oppression of the female sex that accompanies it, and that nothing will be attained without the disalienation of the one and the other simultaneously. ~~The~~ The Chinese postulate that, at least potentially, ~~that~~ <sup>the</sup> the sensibilities of men and ~~of~~ of women are identical; that the "male" character is not due to masculinex genes and "feminity" due to female genes. China rejects psychological explanations of such ~~■~~ differences.

Let us return to the position of the radical feminists which we outlined above by putting forward the four theses: Juliet Mitchell and Nelcya, who are the most coherent and the most advanced of the radical feminists, do not distinguish between the fundamental contradiction and the secondary contradictions of a society. They ignore thereby the very question of the articulation of contradictions. However, the fundamental contradiction is always situated at the level of the mode of production, and reveals the generation of ~~surplus~~ surplus and its appropriation by an exploiting class: this ~~is~~ is the sense of historical materialism, of the determination in the last instance by the economic base. The other contradictions, whatever their origins and their particularities, are <sup>secondary to</sup> ~~subordinate to~~ the fundamental contradiction. They are ~~re~~ remodeled in such a way as to serve the interests of the exploiting classes. This does not take away any of the significance of the secondary contradictions, since it is always possible that the whole system will be put in question from the base of ~~its~~ "instable margins" of its "peripheries." But the secondary contradiction cannot become the weak link in the system unless the ~~liberation~~ ~~of the masses~~ ~~and the secondary~~ ~~contradictions correspond is formulated in revolutionary~~ ~~terms~~ corresponding demands of the masses are formulated in revolutionary terms.



The myth of origins is ~~is~~ debatable. Far from being excluded from the fight of man against ~~the~~ nature, women in primitive societies ~~women~~ insured not only the reproduction of the species, but from the neolithic revolution, ~~the~~ <sup>on</sup> sedentary agriculture as well; the first religious cults, established on the basis of two-fold fecundity - of women and of the earth - is testimony to this fact. Women, however, have always been excluded from the highest forms of political power. Why? One explanation is that politics is an extension of war, and that war has been the domain of men, since women have been ~~confined~~ confined because of their role in the reproduction of the species and in agriculture. Up until now, <sup>most</sup> speculations on the historical origins of the oppression of women have served to replace comprehension of the dialectic of the whole with mechanistic, linear interpretations. Such analysis thus becomes a pseudo-scientific justification of an ideology: that of nationalism or that of feminism, ~~is~~ for example.

Things appear more clearly once one considers the myth of the "origins of violence", developed by Duehring. 11  
 Duehring pretends to explain the birth of social classes and of exploitation by war and the submission of the defeated. This linear explanation finds itself in the tradition of Darwin and of the "biological" mechanisms: the survival of the fittest (physically, biologically). The myth serves perfectly its ideological function: it puts the ethnic antagonisms before those of class, it affirms the historical anteriority of racial or ethnic oppression. It serves nationalism in that it affirms that national (ie, racial) oppression, which has existed throughout the ages, is autonomous. It permits us to avoid the essential question, that is to know how national oppression is put to the service of class oppression.

It is the same with the myth of the "psychology of origins", formulated for the first time by Freud, in male a version, in regard to Moses.<sup>12</sup> Freud places at the origin the murder of the father and the combat among the young males for the possession of the females, and makes all derive from this pretended "psychology", that is seen as eternal. From the point of view of Freud-Maxism, the family precedes the social organization, (Father = Patron = Power); in this perspective one need not concern oneself with understanding the generation of surplus. More likely

one views ~~as a consequence~~ the appropriation of surplus as an extension of the psychology that is hypothesized as internal to the family. To this line of analysis, which ~~are~~ non-dialectical (in which factors are juxtaposed and in which explanations are unilateral) we wish to oppose our view - ~~a~~ that of a global analysis, dialectical and historical, of the articulation of oppressions, in a perspective of the liberation of the whole - ~~the~~ <sup>people</sup> and ~~the~~ <sup>their</sup> society.

### 3. State, the family, and modes of production

The simultaneity of the State and the family as social instruments of oppression, is the point of departure ~~of~~ <sup>for</sup> our analysis. But the forms ~~of~~ of the state, as the forms of the family, result from the demands of the dominant mode of production and determine the ~~forms~~ <sup>nature of the</sup> various forms of oppression. In spite of the continuity of oppression, it is always different: that of the proletariat is not that of the slave, and that of ~~the~~ women in capitalist society is not that of women in a primitive economy.

Let us begin with the latest ~~phase~~ <sup>phase</sup> of history - the capitalist world. The discovery of an unconscious by Freud ~~furnished the conditions permitting the analysis~~ <sup>provided the foundation for bridging the gap between</sup> ~~individual psychology and the demands~~ of social reproduction. Freud did not see this, however, and gave an eternal dimension to the capitalist reality. Reich returned to the proposition of Freud and posed the

~~\_\_\_\_\_~~

just and revolutionary question: it ~~does not~~ is not a question of explaining why certain beings revolt (the "nevrosés") but ~~is~~ rather a question of explaining why the majority does ~~not~~ not revolt against oppression.<sup>13</sup>

However, Reich ~~saw~~ the essential function of sexual repression as a universal mechanism of fashioning beings who would accept oppression. We contend that sexual repression functions as one possible mechanism of repression. Indeed, under capitalism this has been a dominant mechanism, but it is not a necessary one. In order for workers to accept commodity alienation it is necessary that they repress ~~xxx~~ recognition that "the right to laziness" and the joy of work are one ~~is~~ <sup>and</sup> the same. Without this recognition the living force of the socialist vision <sup>is</sup> ~~is~~ obscured. Repression and an anti-joy, anti-pleasure ideology are useful, if not essential mechanism of alienation. In contrast certain pre-capitalist societies did not know sexual repression. In some societies there was no need for it; religious alienation was sufficient to assure the social reproduction.

At one stage of its development capitalism was quite able to use sexual repression in order to attain its ends.

One can see also that this was ~~is~~ true of some societies ~~is~~ <sup>during</sup> the transition to capitalism, societies where the vestiges of use value and the taste for delights and enjoyment were still much in evidence, as for example in ~~the~~ <sup>to 19th</sup> 17th <sup>century</sup> England and in Germany of the Hohenzolerns and Weimar. Thus, the important function that protestant puritanism was able to ~~is~~ fill.<sup>14</sup> But this means ~~is~~ <sup>loses</sup> its utility.

from the moment that exchange value is directly accepted as a basis for society, as it is today in the most developed capitalist societies. One can see that already capitalism can offer the luxury of "sexual enjoyment" to the exploited. But at the same time it reduces sexuality to the state of banal merchandise. The sale of instruments in the supermarkets of Scandanavia permitting one to get a mechanical orgasm are good examples of ~~xxxxxx~~ this change. That it is still a question of merchandise stems from the fact that the search for a ~~partner~~<sup>partner</sup> has become unnecessary: the relation of human being and object is substituted for relations among people. Such a relation with an object conforms well to the bourgeois idea of individualism, that is to say, to the necessary isolation of individuals, themselves things to produce a profit.

Herbert Marcuse and the Frankfort school put emphasis on this new form of ~~the~~ cooptation of sexuality: ~~the~~

When commodity alienation becomes totally internalized and use-values are virtually forgotten, "repressive tolerance" and self-repression can be substituted for what were formerly external forms of repression - religion and police forces.

One has reproached these philosophers for remaining in the realm of (ahistorical) psychology, when in fact they have furnished all the elements to leave it behind. Thus, in Eros and Civilization Marcuse attributes to "repressive desublimation" (a psychoanalytic mechanism) an effect that society in fact produces directly by the triumph of commodity alienation.<sup>15</sup>

Both ~~Freud~~ <sup>Pseudo-</sup>Marxism and interpretations of "autonomous female oppression" assume ahistorical forces that remain the same despite evolution of the productive forces. Such interpretations prevent us from understanding the terms of an alternative.

One ~~of the branches of this~~ alternative is characterized by the possible persistence of commodity alienation - and thus of oppression - in spite of the disappearance of the special oppression of women. The universe that George Orwell imagined, that of 1984<sup>16</sup>, is the logical and necessary end of the satisfaction of the demands of bourgeois feminism. In 1984 one makes no distinction between women and men; they are perfectly symmetrical. Orwell's vision is the perfection of capitalist horrors. The family in 1984 is no more the place of the oppression of women, because the domination of nature in the domain of the reproduction of the species is perfect. Rather the family is the place to fashion

beings (symmetrical, men and women, no difference) that accept oppression: the oppression of infants by a father and mother, indistinguishable from one another, in the family prepares for the symmetrical oppression of adults by the State.

In reality, the complaints of feminists founded on the theory of the historical autonomy of the oppression of women serves to accelerate the march toward 1984. The social democratic solution produces the same result - take Sweden as an example.

In the articulation of oppressions that of class is dominant. We must understand how the role of the state and that of the family have combined historically in total systems of oppression, how ideology has developed certain functions in certain societies, and how certain aspects of oppression have interacted to form historical wholes. In other words, what one must do is

to write a history of the family and of women's oppression in ~~the~~ <sup>their</sup> real relations to the ~~history of societies~~ <sup>histories of societies</sup>, of ~~the~~ states and social formations.

In precapitalist formations, that are organized around the direct realization of use values, the family is the unit of production. Women are integrated into ~~the~~ economic life, as ~~are~~ <sup>are</sup> men. Female work is not exclusively "housework". ~~Moreover~~ Moreover, one does not distinguish such work from work in the fields because ~~in~~ in both cases work is a question of creating or producing use ~~xxx~~ values. In capitalist societies the distinction between use value and exchange value is so ~~dominant~~ pervasive and exchange value so dominant that we tend to project this distinction (and domination) backward in time and assume that the domestic work of women in pre-capitalist societies was necessarily devalued as it is in our society. The forms of the technical division of labor between women and men in pre-capitalist societies are immensely variable, as are the forms of family organization. ("Sexual repression" is not the general rule, although it existed in certain cases.) The role of the family in the education of infants is only partial,



society ~~having~~ already <sup>possessing</sup> its own means of intervention ~~F~~  
(age, grading, initiation, schools...). The supplementary  
dependence of women in regard to nature coexists with that of  
humanity in general; it is accepted with the same fatalism  
~~as~~ as other forms of dependence - sickness, famine, etc.

~~It~~ It remains <sup>to explain why</sup> ~~that~~ women were always excluded from political  
power of the dominant classes. And it is on this point,  
and this point alone - but it is of major importance - that  
is reflected the specific ~~of~~ "fatality" of maternity and  
its ideological reflection (the "intrinsic inferiority of the  
female sex). One notes that in all pre-capitalist societies  
marriages and love are unconnected. Marriage is a social  
affair, and ~~its~~ its function <sup>is</sup> to assure the reproduction  
of the species and ~~of~~ of the mode of production (of  
adequate units of production, of dominant lineages, etc.).  
Love is situated outside this social organization, and this  
fact is <sup>regarded</sup> ~~regarded~~ as normal. ~~Moreover,~~ <sup>"love" is</sup> ~~often~~ <sup>the exclusive</sup>  
~~right of the personality, whether male or female,~~ <sup>privilege of the ruling class, who alone</sup>  
persons have ~~the~~ <sup>the</sup> right to exercise their humanity. ~~Note~~ <sup>Note</sup> ~~the~~ <sup>the</sup>  
chivalrous love of the seigneurs and the women of nobility,  
that of the priests and priestesses of Egypt, etc. In sum,  
one sees that the family in precapitalist societies was  
already fulfilling the function of ~~the family~~

~~... its function ...~~ reproducing the society as it was.

Capitalism does not represent, despite some appearances to the contrary, any progress in this domain, because here as ~~elsewhere~~ elsewhere, it is the moment of negation. ~~Capitalism~~ recognition of the possibility of liberation. With capitalism appears in effect the separation of domestic work and social work. The <sup>myth</sup> of the feminists, in so far as it does not recognize the domination of commodity alienation, idealizes social work. Domestic work is not less monotonous <sup>or</sup> more brutalizing than the parcelized nature of social work; what could be more destructive than to turn screws or to fill out bureaucratic forms? ~~It is ...~~

This fact explains

why the women of the proletariat, who know ~~what~~ what their husbands must <sup>endure</sup>, are less sensitive than the intellectuals to the ~~cries~~ cries of this type of feminism. The "advantage" of social work <sup>lies</sup> elsewhere: in its collective character, to which the isolation of the woman in her kitchen is indeed the opposite, ~~and the possibility of ...~~

revolt that can come from <sup>the</sup> social work place, ~~for which~~

The structure of domestic work negates the possibility of collective <sup>to the ascendancy of</sup>

It is thanks ~~to~~ capitalism that marriage and love are no longer separated....in theory of course. Why? Because the family is no longer the unity of production, but that in which one organizes the accumulation of capital for transmission <sup>of wealth.</sup>

~~As~~ As well, it is the unit of consumption. It was ~~so~~ so

until recently, ~~as~~ as long as capital remained personally identified with the capitalist, such as for the bourgeoisie of the 19th and early 20th centuries. In order to reproduce such a form of capitalism it was necessary to reinforce the isolation of the family from other aspects of social life, a reinforcement rendered possible by the fact that the family became the refuge of use value. This isolation increased the oppression of women by men. It introduced as well a new element, or ~~it~~ reinforced it: sexual repression.

But capitalism, <sup>continued</sup> ~~continued~~ its advance. The development of the forces of production forced capitalism to clothe ~~itself~~ itself in more and more social and ~~more~~ more and more abstract forms. The bourgeois capitalist gave way to the anonymous society (the corporation) and the family gave way as the unit of accumulation. Inheritance ~~lost~~ <sup>lost</sup> its importance. The family becomes only a unit of consumption. At the same time domestic work disappeared with the introduction of household appliances for the American middle class. Even the household is no longer the milieu of the production of use values. There is no longer a refuge for the production of use values, no longer a place for sexual ~~enjoyment~~ enjoyment, there is no longer anything: it becomes difficult to convince women that <sup>they</sup> ~~they~~ still play a social role. ~~Society~~ Society strives to give them the illusion that they play a big role in the education of infants and a decorative role whose object is the social promotion of their husband.

Such are the terms of the bourgeois family....and the beginning of its ~~contemporary~~ contemporary crisis.

The fact that the bourgeois family ~~is~~ constitutes a unit of consumption, prevents us from viewing the oppression of women as a class oppression, specifically "oppressed at the economic<sup>s</sup> level" in a system of production - the point of view of Nelcya. - because domestic work does not create exchange value, and because capitalist exploitation is situated at the level of the creation of exchange values. Exploitation ought not to be regarded as a result of a direct relation between the capitalist (as individual) and the proletariat (as individual). Marx insisted on this point - that capital is at once social (global) and at the same time parcelized (individual), as the proletariat is at once a class and a collection of individuals. Social capital exploits the proletariat as a class (and the proletariat consists of families of proletarians). Domestic work, production of use values, <sup>(wageless</sup> ~~is~~ <sup>is</sup> as all direct production of use values under capitalism) acts upon and reduces the cost (the value) of the labor force. In this sense, women are not exploited by their husbands, but are, along with their husbands, exploited by capital (and actually ~~xx~~ superexploited). Analogies can be made here with other situations in which the creation of use values permits ~~the~~ "overexploitation": the African peasant, who produces for the market and

for his own subsistence, is superexploited because his activity of subsistence production reduces for capital the value (the cost) of his labor power. In this sense, it is not women in general that are exploited, although all women are oppressed, but women of the proletariat that are "overexploited".

In this sense one can say that the oppression of women grows with ~~the~~ development of capitalism. Progress is not linear and continuous, and ~~some~~ partial "liberations", which are only such in appearance, are ~~needed~~ <sup>co-opted</sup> to reinforce a renewal of oppression in new forms.

Paradox: Is the American female of the middle classes <sup>today</sup> more oppressed <sup>than</sup> the European woman or even the American woman of yesteryear? Here the danger of being misunderstood is crucial. ~~It~~ women have always been oppressed. But their oppression did not exclude the fact that they were necessary to ~~the~~ reproduction of the social formation in its totality and not just to assure the biological reproduction of the species. For the ~~peasant~~ peasant woman who works in the fields or ~~sub~~ for the housewife who assures the subsistence of her family at the beginning of capitalism, <sup>her work</sup> ~~her work~~ was necessary for society. One hit her, one cloistered her, but she existed; one venerated her in her role as mother, as good worker, and also as sexual object, as ~~was~~ was and is the case in the Latin or Arab world. Because delight ~~and~~

also exists, as use value, although it may well be reserved for men who appropriate, impoverish, and deform women.

In evolved capitalism, the triumph of exchange value is so total that the enjoyment of life is unknown: puritanism need no longer be imposed. Doesn't frigidity become the rule, badly compensated for by pornographic exhibitionism? At the same time domestic work begins to disappear. Women, ~~and~~ qua women, become more and more unproductive, objects simply of decoration, though ~~xxx~~ still necessary for biological reproduction.

It is often said that the societies of the Third World are more oppressive toward women, but very little work has been done on this subject.<sup>17</sup> Our analysis, however, concludes that in each society, capitalism aggravates the oppression of women in comparison to their former situation.

of

4. The alternatives ~~to~~ feminism: reform or revolution

Means of birth control are not a novelty. Every society ~~xxxx~~ knew to some extent how to control births. While in pre-class societies this knowledge tended to be the domain of all women, in most class societies this knowledge came to be strictly regulated by the ruling class and its agents, i.e., religion and the state. In spite of the fact that the simplicity of modern means of contraception and their greater efficacy give women a much greater margin of liberty,

in capitalist societies, this control is still being exercised, partially ~~xxxxg~~ through the medical hierarchy.

The manner of viewing

the means of birth control reveals the nature of the task that is envisioned. One talks always about the "mastery of women over their bodies". Such a view implies ~~that~~ that there is no place to think about the control <sup>by men</sup> of their <sup>own</sup> bodies.

~~One~~ One is not surprised that the research concerning the pill is totally founded upon the vision that the body of women is "imperfect" and it only should be controlled. A liberated society would seek to give to all human beings - men and women - the mastery of their bodies, not only to master fertility, because the domination of nature is the material condition of ~~the~~ free enjoyment.

If we want to achieve disalienated heterosexual relations we must ~~stop~~ stop seeing birth control, birth, and children as female domains. But, despite all, the "pill" gives to the woman for the first time the possibility to fight against rather than

accept the fatality of nature, the heritage - enormous it is true - of religious alienation that preceded commodity alienation. It is in this sense that our epoch constitutes an exceptional moment to knock at this weak link in the chain of oppression.

It belongs to women then to constitute an organization of their <sup>own</sup> ~~own~~. The oppressed are naturally preoccupied by the particular oppression to which they are subjected.

The antagonism between women and men, ~~which~~ by its very nature, <sup>is a source of disunity within the proletariat,</sup> ~~is a source of disunity within the proletariat,~~ <sup>but</sup> ~~is~~ <sup>as a special oppression-</sup> ~~is~~ experienced ~~by~~ <sup>transcend</sup> by women. To recognize their own alienation, to ~~transcend~~ it and inscribe their fight in the general fight against the family, the State, and social classes, women must get together, to express themselves freely. ~~It is obvious in this that~~ Men too must understand that they are oppressors and that they cannot seriously revolt against oppression without coming to grips with their participation in the oppression of women.

<sup>the fact</sup> But <sup>contribute to</sup> that the feminist movement could participate in and <sup>mean</sup> ~~contribute to~~ the general task of liberation does not <sup>do so.</sup> ~~signify~~ that it will automatically <sup>as elsewhere,</sup> ~~do so.~~ Here, there <sup>are two</sup> ~~is~~ <sup>or co-optation</sup> ~~are two~~ alternatives: ~~class struggle~~ reform ~~or co-optation~~ in the context of a system of oppression brought to a new state of its development, or radical transformation of the system and thereby liberation of the totality of social relations.

Each of these two options has his theoretical foundations, <sup>final</sup> its <sup>final</sup> objectives and its own strategy.

The first option is founded on the basis of ~~is~~ a belief in the



autonomy of women's oppression. This gives way to ~~the~~ recognizing an incontestable reality ~~the particular dependence~~ -the particular dependence on nature of the women <sup>as reproducers of the species</sup> ~~the dimension of total autonomy.~~ <sup>But this recognition is only partial and therefore</sup> ~~It~~ nourishes ~~the~~ the illusion that it is possible, in liberating ~~xx~~ women from this dependence, to resolve the feminist problem. Isolated <sup>in</sup> ~~in~~ this way - the parts form <sup>2</sup> the totality - it prevents us from seeing that women cannot be liberated ~~the~~ from their specific oppression without liberating humanity in its totality. This perspective <sup>also</sup> prevents us from understanding that the perspective of pure capitalist horror - 1984 - is also a possibility, ~~that~~ that in this perspective ~~the~~ general oppression is raised to a new and higher level, in spite of the fact that specific oppressions - <sup>of</sup> ~~of~~ race, ~~the~~ sex, age, - disappear.

~~the~~ The strategy that corresponds to this perspective, ~~the~~ revolves around two clear demands. The first is ~~the~~ equality of rights in the system, that is to say, the integration of women as a labor force equal to that of men. The system can give women that, not of course without difficulties, just as it can give salary increases to trade union members. It is even possible that under the pressure of demands by feminists, the present system of "overexploitation" of women by their exclusion from ~~the~~ capitalist

production and their reduction to domestic labor, will become less profitable than their direct exploitation.

The second demand completes the first; it is that of the right to sexual comportment analogous to that of men. Until now, bourgeois marriage ~~has~~ has been the rule, marriage in which the immanent disequilibrium was surmounted by prostitution. The asymmetry, the oppression of women by men, reduced prostitution to that of women. ~~As the~~  
 As the  
 ^ the perspective of equality in the capitalist system, is accepted, we see the commencement of masculine prostitution. ~~the~~. In fact, both masculine and feminine prostitutes ~~prostitution~~ are the complements and companions of the impotence in love in an oppressive <sup>class-based</sup> society.

The liberals of the system proclaim and advocate ~~the~~ free love. However, the <sup>repeated</sup> failure of these experiences should make us understand that impotence in love is due to general alienation, to the general oppression, which prohibits the limited success of only one ~~sector~~ sector of our social lives. Just as "participation" <sup>by the workers</sup> in the capitalist enterprise ~~is~~ becomes a ~~farce~~ farce in the context of the system, ~~so~~ just as the juridic independence of States does not get rid of national oppression, it is illusionary to want to create a secret garden, a territory for individuals to isolate themselves ~~from~~ <sup>from</sup> the society. Some ~~privileged~~ privileged

individuals, here and there, might succeed, more or less, but at the global scale, ~~is~~ failure is certain. ~~In~~ reality, the reformist path seems quite impossible from the outset. Each step of progress realized in this direction, far from attenuating dissatisfaction, exacerbates it: drugs, phonography, supersex merchandise, neo-mysticism all reveal the failures.

In terms of this perspective which sees female oppression as autonomous one must view the tradition of "feminine nationalism." The Lesbian Nation, <sup>the</sup> well put title of Jill Johnson's <sup>book,</sup> leaves one to understand the abandonment of the fight for a transformation of the society in its totality. Failure leads to retreat. But this retreat is ~~is~~ <sup>fed</sup> and even manipulated by the social classes that do not want to change the world, and the feminists, like the nationalists in another domain, risk being the first victims: The nations who refuse to put into question the fundamental cause - capitalism - remain dominated de facto.<sup>18</sup>

What ~~is~~ <sup>will</sup> sexuality <sup>completely</sup> be in a disalienated society we cannot <sup>much</sup> imagine; ~~even~~ <sup>of</sup> less can it be conceived in terms of natural rules "health" and <sup>"abnormal"</sup> exceptions ~~(normal)~~ <sup>however tolerant we may be of the "abnormalities"</sup>. ~~tolerated~~ The concepts themselves of morality, rules, laws, normality, abnormality, tolerance, ~~xxx~~ presuppose the ~~existence~~ existence of the State and the family in charge of their enforcement. For us the only definition of "normal" is "non-alienated". As Engels already sensed, communism is

~~\_\_\_\_\_~~

the liberty of individuals. The dialectic<sup>s</sup> of the superior social being - disalienated - and the animal that remains in him, turned away by centuries of oppression, will retake ~~its~~ <sup>its</sup> ~~rights~~ rights. Heterosexuality, bisexuality, homosexuality will lose their meaning, at least in their present sense.

The theoretical foundation of the revolutionary option resides in the real comprehension of the significance of the universal mission of liberation of the proletariat. But we mustn't make of this mission a religious ~~prophecy~~ <sup>prophecy</sup>; ~~it is a task that requires completion.~~ <sup>it is a task that requires completion.</sup> ~~and neither <sup>is</sup> ~~the~~ ~~mission~~ ~~of~~ ~~words~~~~ ~~is only <sup>that</sup> ~~the~~ ~~paucity~~ ~~and~~ ~~poverty~~ ~~of~~ ~~our~~ ~~language~~~~ ~~corresponds to the poverty of society.~~ For the first time, ~~in~~ ~~fact~~, in history, ~~the~~ nature can be sufficiently dominated <sup>so</sup> that the problem of scarcity can be resolved; for the first time, human beings can ~~be~~ really <sup>be</sup> masters of their bodies. For the first time religious alienation can disappear <sup>but it most often gives</sup> ~~gives~~ way to the most general, the most abstract of alienations - that of ~~the~~ commodities; for the first time the human being is himself reduced to the abstraction of a commodity - a labor force. From now on ~~nothing is possible~~ <sup>the struggle is between</sup> ~~nothing~~ <sup>nothing</sup> or everything; there are no more intermediate solutions.

It is ~~crucial~~ crucial that the women's movement be proletarian and not feminist, because if the fight for the affirmation of their personality coincides for women ~~with~~ of the proletariat with their class interests, it is not the same for the women <sup>who live</sup> ~~in~~ in the world of the bourgeoisie. The proletarian revolt however, will remain ~~with~~ hopeless if it is not directed to liberating humanity in its totality from all forms of oppression. And for <sup>vs,</sup> ~~the~~ the proletariat, is not the sum of "proletarians" (masculine for the most part) directly exploited ~~by~~ in the factories. This narrow vision of the proletariat, that allows at the most to give a condescending <sup>nod to</sup> ~~to~~ the "the women" (and at the same time to the "people of the Third world") who are trying to liberate themselves, is the view of economism. The proletariat is the entirety of men and women at the center and at the periphery who are oppressed by capital: 90% of humanity.

The crisis of the family institution, joins the crisis of the State, <sup>and</sup> of morality, reinforcing the exceptional character of the present moment. The "masculine virtues" - virility - have fallen from their pedestal. They appear more and more for what they are: cowardice, opportunism and ~~care~~ careerism, - in fact the barbarous violence and the lack of

finesse, the impoverishment of the heart and the spirit. At the same time the "feminine virtues" - sensitivity, moral courage, empathy, humanity - can be recognized as belonging to women because they are less well integrated into a brutal system.

Socialists have tended to lose sight of the central importance of "personal" oppression and its counterpart, "personal" dreams and visions of a more humane life. The women's movement is forcing us to confront the question: How will socialism transform all modes of social life, from the macroeconomic to the intimate, from the global to the interpersonal? In evaluating the analyses and demands of the feminists, we must keep clear about this central contribution they continue to make to ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ the struggle.

Notes

- (1) Marx, These sur Feuerbach, Ed. Sociales.
- (2) Alexandra Kollontai, Marxisme et revolution sexuelle, textes presentes par Judith Stora-Sandor, Maspero, 1973.
- (3) ~~(3)~~ Nelcya, Femmes année zéro, Maspero.
- (4) ~~(4)~~ Cette thèse est celle du courant féministe le plus avancé dont les formulations les plus cohérentes sont en Angleterre celles de Juliet Mitchell (Woman's Estate) et en France de plusieurs groupes féminins (voir notamment Nelcya, op.cit. et Claude Alzon, La Femme potiche et La Femme bonniche, pouvoir bourgeois et pouvoir mâle, Maspero, 1973).
- (5) ~~(5)~~ Betty Friedan, <sup>The</sup> One Feminine Mystique, 1963.
- (6) ~~(6)~~ Le fait que le statut réel des femmes est encore plus misérable aux Etats-Unis qu'en Europe, même latine, est constaté "statistiquement" par Rolande Ballorain <sup>de</sup> Le Nouveau Feminisme américain, Denoël, 1972. ~~Le statut réel des femmes est encore plus misérable aux Etats-Unis qu'en Europe, même latine, est constaté "statistiquement" par Rolande Ballorain de Le Nouveau Feminisme américain, Denoël, 1972.~~
- (7) ~~(7)~~ Kate Millett, Sexual Politics; voir également Shulamith Firestone, <sup>The</sup> One Dialectic of Sex.
- (8) ~~(8)~~ Les quelques marxistes, que l'on retrouve surtout dans les rangs du trotskysme (comme E. Reeds), ne représentent pas un courant féministe autonome. Une analyse plus avancée existe néanmoins, celle de Margaret Bentson ("One Political Economy of Woman's Liberation" Monthly Review, sept. 1969).
- (9) ~~(9)~~ Valerie Solanas, SCUM Manifesto; Gill Johnson, <sup>The</sup> One Lesbian Nation.
- (10) Voir Claudie Broyelle, La Moitié du ciel, Denoël, 1973.
- (11) Voir L'Anti-Dühring de F. Engels.
- (12) Voir Freud, Moïse et le monothéisme; Totem et tabou, Gallimard. Pour une critique de ce "psychologisme", voir Robert Castel, Le Psychanalyme, Maspero, 1973, chap. 9 et 10.
- (13) Wilhelm Reich, Matérialisme dialectique, matérialisme historique et psychanalyse; La Fonction de l'orgasme; Irruption de la morale sexuelle, etc.
- (14) Voir Domhoff et Birmingham, Science and Society.
- (15) Marcuse, L'Homme unidimensionnel, Ed. de Minuit, 1968; Eros et civilisation, Ed. de Minuit, 1963.
- (17) ~~(17)~~ G. Orwell, 1984, Gallimard.
- (18) ~~(18)~~ G. Tillion, Le Harem et les cousins, Le Seuil.
- (19) ~~(19)~~ Voir Samir Amin, Le Développement inégal, Ed. de Minuit, 1973.